LOYOLA PAPERS

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BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This year, Loyola School of Theology marks an important milestone as it celebrates its 25th anniversary as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology. Prior to this, LST has been affiliated since 1985 and aggregated since 1989 to the Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine in Taiwan, through which it had been granting the canonical baccalaureate and licentiate degrees in Theology. During the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II, LST was formally erected by the *Congregatio Pro Institutione Catholica*, then in charge of seminaries and other academic institutions of the Church, as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology on August 13, 1999. This empowered LST to bestow, not only the canonical baccalaureate but the licentiate and doctorate degrees in theology as well. Aside from this, LST, in turn, is now able to affiliate, aggregate and incorporate other ecclesiastical institutions of higher learning, through which it is able to offer the canonical degrees.

Indeed, LST has gone far from its foundation on July 12, 1965—still under the auspices of San Jose Seminary—to the present, especially in the past ten years, when it experienced exponential growth and expansion. Originally established to serve the academic formation of Jesuit scholastics and diocesan seminarians from all over the Philippines, it now caters to more than four hundred students from 43 countries around and beyond Asia. From being an affiliated and aggregated Institute, it now has two affiliated institutions: Saint John Vianney School of Theology in Mindanao and Saint Joseph Jesuit Scholasticate in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Aside from this, it runs other programs in partnership with other key institutions like the East Asian Pastoral Institute, Ruben

M. Tanseco, SJ Center for Family Ministries Foundation, Inc (RMT-CEFAM), Catholic Safeguarding Institute (CSI) of the Emmaus Center for Psycho-Spiritual Formation, Inc., Jesuit Communications Philippines (Jescom). It is also part of the Global Theology Initiative (GTI), a networking consortium of the Seven English-Speaking Theological Centers of the Society of Jesus. These collaborations allow LST to extend its service to the Church, far beyond the confines of its physical campus in Loyola Heights. At the same time, they enrich LST with the plurality of their gifts, perspective and wisdom.

Being an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology is not only an honor or privilege, but a mission and responsibility in the Church. According to the Apostolic Constitution, *Veritatis Gaudium*, ecclesiastical faculties are not only tasked to promote their respective academic disciplines and provide their students with competent training; they are also called "to collaborate intensely, in accordance with their own nature and in close communion with the Hierarchy, with the local and the universal Church the whole work of evangelization" (Art. 3, § 3). Saint Thomas Aquinas attests to the complementary nature of two distinct magisteria in the Church: the *magisterium cathedrae pastoralis* and the *magisterium cathedrae magistralis*. Together, pastors and theologians work to unravel divine revelation and bring it to the realities of the people of their time and place. More and more, however, we realize today that there is no dichotomy nor strict compartmentalization between the two. Pastors are also called to be competent theologians while theologians ought to be pastors in the way they do theology.

This is the frontier where LST is called to serve as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology with the responsibility of forming intelligent pastors and pastoral intellectuals at the service of the local churches. At the same time, as an

ecclesiastical faculty, its mission puts on a much wider scope at the service of Peter and the entire Universal Church to which it is called to contribute its unique gifts. As Pope Francis suggested on February 23, 2023, when he spoke to representatives from various pontifical academic institutions in Rome, all of them must "sing like a choir," with Christ himself as choirmaster, instead of performing like soloists. Each one has a unique voice, yet all must sing together in harmony to produce beautiful music that lifts the soul to heavenly realities.

It is on this happy occasion that we are proud to present this issue of *Loyola Papers* with its diverse lineup of articles:

First, we have **Joshua Paul C. Sadernas**' "To Become Like His Brothers in Every Way: Priestly Solidarity in Albert Vanhoye." His paper sheds light on the concept of solidarity as a defining, if not novel characteristic of Christ's priesthood, as expounded in the work of the French Jesuit biblical scholar and cardinal, known for his contributions to biblical exegesis, particularly in the study of the New Testament. The juxtaposition of solidarity and priesthood is rather interesting since priesthood is usually associated with being consecrated or being "set apart" for the service of God. In contrast, Sardenas argues, through the insights of Vanhoye, that it is the solidarity of Jesus with sinful humanity through the Incarnation that made him our merciful high priest.

Next in line is "Mercy as Embrace: An Understanding of Forgiveness and Reconciliation through Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace*" by **John Mary Francis M. Nuqui**. This timely paper explores the work of Volf, a contemporary Croatian theologian who offers a profound theological reflection on the dynamics of conflict, exclusion, and the possibility of reconciliation. Central to his argument is the idea that true forgiveness involves an "embrace"—a metaphorical and

literal act that transcends mere tolerance or coexistence. This embrace represents an intentional and sacrificial opening of oneself to the other, even in the face of deep-seated enmity and past injustices. Nuqui's paper analyzes how Volf's theology of embrace offers a model for addressing personal and communal conflicts, providing a pathway toward healing.

We also have **Michelle A. Vincoy**'s "Catechetical Formation for PDL Volunteers Based on Pope Francis' Teaching on Accompaniment, Inclusivity and Dialogue." Drawing inspiration from the Pope's call for missionary discipleship, her article looks at the formation program in the National Bilibid Prisons that focuses on equipping volunteers with the pastoral skills necessary to embody a compassionate presence among the inmates. The approach emphasizes personal accompaniment, fostering inclusive environments, and engaging in meaningful dialogue that respects the dignity and humanity of every person. By integrating these principles into catechetical training, the paper proposes a model that not only supports the spiritual needs of the PDL, but also encourages volunteers to become agents of mercy and hope.

Meanwhile, **Fr. Archie R. Magarao, SchP**'s "The Order of the Blessing of Animals in *Collectio Rituum*: Critiquing its Theology vis-à-vis Animal Ethics" critiques the theology underlying the rite as found in the locally published *Collectio Rituum* through the lens of contemporary animal ethics. His analysis explores the ritual's theological implications about the relationship between humans and animals, asking whether the rite adequately reflects the theological development that has been achieved in this area, especially with *Laudato Si'*. By comparing the ritual's seemingly anthropocentric elements with emerging views in animal ethics, the paper argues for a more updated theological approach—and corresponding

changes in the ritual texts being used—that aligns with a broader, more compassionate understanding of creation.

Then we have "Towards a Theology of Migration in the Context of Vietnamese Labor Migrant Workers in Taiwan" by **Fr. Dang Do Nhan, SJ**. Coming from his personal experience as a missionary among Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan, his paper highlights their struggles as well as the Church's efforts to address the unique challenges and spiritual needs of this community. Drawing on biblical and ecclesial teachings on migration, the paper proposes a framework that emphasizes the Church's role in advocating for the rights of migrant workers, offering pastoral care, and fostering a sense of belonging within the broader faith community. By integrating these insights with the specific realities of Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan, the paper aims to contribute to a more inclusive and compassionate approach to migration within the Church.

Michael George M. Villasis' "The History of the *Adoratio Crucis* in the Roman Rite" explores the origins, evolution and significance of the rite of the adoration of the cross presently found in the Good Friday liturgy. In his article, Villasis offers not only a comprehensive survey of sources but also an insightful commentary on the rich theology and symbolism of this profoundly moving ritual. By highlighting the ritual's meaning, the paper underscores the *Adoratio Crucis* as a profound expression of the Church's reverence for the Passion of Christ and its role in fostering a deeper connection to the mystery of the Cross in the life of the faithful.

Last, but not least, we are pleased to have **Josette Khoury**'s "The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure." Her paper explores the theology of history as articulated by the great Franciscan theologian, who presents a unique and compelling vision where history is seen as a journey guided by divine

providence, culminating in the fulfillment of God's plan for creation. Her reflection is enriched by her own personal experiences, particularly her friendship with Lucia, whom she met while working as a missionary in Brazil. Reflecting on the rich drama of *expressio* and *impressio*, or God's revelation and human reception, she emphasizes humility as the essential condition or disposition to properly receive revelation.

For our synthesis papers, we are pleased to showcase two philosophical papers and one theological paper. **Francesco Janne Y. Labuntog, SJ**'s "Does It *Make Sense* to Believe in God?" revisits the perennial question of whether faith in God actually makes sense. We also have **Rogelio R. Nato, Jr., SJ**'s "Dwelling Amidst Things: A Heideggerian Synthesis," in which he tries to bring together essential Heideggerian themes. Interestingly, both philosophical papers are set against the background of deeply personal experiences, particularly from their apostolate. The first poses the question of the reasonability of faith against the blatant senselessness of innocent people suffering. Meanwhile, the second mingles philosophical ideas with realizations drawn from one's Jesuit formation. Lastly, we have **Fr. Richard S. Sumera, SJ**'s "T'nalak: God Weaves Hope Through, With, and In the Church," that interweaves theology with the rich tapestry of the life and culture of the T'boli of South Cotabato.

* * *

As LST celebrates its silver anniversary as an ecclesiastical faculty of Theology, we are filled with gratitude to God who has made all of this possible. Over the past 25 years, LST's commitment to excellence in teaching and research, grounded in the rich tradition of the Catholic faith and Ignatian spirituality, has nurtured countless theologian-pastors who continue to serve the Church with wisdom and zeal. May the next chapter

of our exciting journey be blessed with continued growth, inspiration, and zeal.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo, O.P.

ARTICLES

TO BECOME LIKE HIS BROTHERS IN EVERY WAY: PRIESTLY SOLIDARITY IN ALBERT VANHOYE*

Joshua Paul C. Sadernas

Introduction

It appears necessary to address certain preliminary issues before engaging in the actual discussion of Vanhoye's priestly solidarity theme. First, although Vanhoye employs the term *solidarity* copiously throughout his writings on the priesthood, he does not explicitly define it enough in such a way as to create a systematic oeuvre. This, however, does not diminish the significance of the meaning of solidarity, which he thoughtfully sought to render as a key interpretative concept for the appreciation of the novelty of Christ's priesthood as well as for an appraisal of the theology of the priesthood. The term *solidarity* in the writings of Vanhoye appeared for the first time in *Our Priest is Christ* (1977), where it occurred twenty-seven (27) times. Subsequently, it appeared in *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest* (1986) forty-five (45) times; in *Christ Our High Priest* (2010) thirty-three (33) times; in the article *La nouveauté du sacerdoce du Christ* (2010)[1] twelve (12) times; in *A*

*This paper is taken from Chapter 3 of the thesis entitled, "To Become Like His Brothers in Every Way: The Theme of Solidarity in Albert Vanhoye's Theology of the Priesthood."

1. This article has not yet been officially translated into English. For references, this study will rely on the unpublished loose translation provided by the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission of Manila. See "The Innovation of Christ's Priesthood," in *The Clergy and Consecrated Persons* (Manila City, 2018).

Different Priest: The Letter to the Hebrews (2011) fifty-five (55) times; and in *A Perfect Priest* (2018) seventy-five (75) times. The overwhelming frequency of solidarity in his writings cannot be dismissed as mere indiscrimination on the part of Vanhoye. Instead, the prominent appearance of the term in his writings illustrates the crucial pursuit to express a profound reality, i.e., the novelty of the priesthood of Christ. The attempt to describe the meaning of priestly solidarity will be the subject of this study.

Second, it is rather odd that a biblical exegete like Vanhoye employs a term that does not appear in the scriptures and even applies it as a key concept for Christ's priesthood and the theology of the priesthood. It is challenging to ascertain whether Vanhoye's application of the concept of solidarity aligns precisely with the principle of solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching or introduces a totally new description thereof. However, as will be discussed in the proceeding sections, it is apparent that his interpretation is full of scriptural and doctrinal influences. As a biblical exegete, it can be supposed that his understanding of solidarity and its analogous scriptural concepts significantly shaped his interpretation. Thus, the scriptural correspondence of the concept of solidarity must be considered

Solidarity and the Scriptures

Attention is now given to the scriptural foundations of solidarity. Although the scriptures do not explicitly mention solidarity, parallel ideas that resonate with its meaning and content can be discerned. And it is the task of this present section to extract seed ideas of solidarity embedded in the scriptures.

Old Testament

Sociologically considered, solidarity is a disposition that readily assumes mutual responsibility with the other, the willingness to provide and share resources with the other, and the resolve to share in the common sentiment and fate with the other.[2] This triggers a point of connection between solidarity and the divine characteristics of *hesed* (merciful loving-kindness, covenantal faithfulness) and *hœnan* (gracious inclination, kind-favor).[3] This is expressed in the episode of the story of Exodus which starts with the call of Moses. The fact that Yahweh missioned Moses to lead the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt shows that Yahweh sympathized with the plight of the Israelites. It, thus, suggests an act of solidarity on Yahweh's part. Yahweh assumed the responsibility for the liberation of the Israelites and shared in their suffering fittingly parallels the concept of solidarity thus described above. In similar lines, Schillebeeckx interprets this gracious and kind-favor of Yahweh to Israelites as attesting to the presence of the concept of solidarity in the scriptures. "*Ḥœnan* stresses God's gracious approach, in which the emphasis lies on God's concern for men, above all on *his care for and solidarity* with the weaker and the oppressed, with those in need."[4] He even reads verse 16 of Exodus 3—"I am concerned with you"—as ascribing a new divine appellation, rendering it thus as, "God's name is *solidarity* with the people."[5]

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2. S. Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 27.

3. Carolyn Wilson, "*Hesed*: An Old Testament Basis for Solidarity in Catholic Social Thought," *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 42, no. 2 (2018): 22.

4. Edward *Schillebeeckx, Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* (New York: Seabury, 1982), 89. Italics mine.

5. Ibid, 2. Italics mine.

Prompted with the divine characteristics of *hesed* and *hœnan*, Moses, too, displays the kind of solidarity that Yahweh already expressed. Moses identifies himself with the Israelites as he renounced his royal-like status in the household of the Pharoah and shared with them their plight.[6] He represents the Israelites before Yahweh and at times, it is he who pleads with Yahweh to relent His anger toward them. Not only does Moses demonstrate his solidarity with the Israelites by pleading on their behalf before Yahweh, but he also smashes the tablets of the commandments as he stands in solidarity with Yahweh who is enraged by their idolatry.

Jesus and the New Testament

There are a number of other references in the Old Testament that propose an act of solidarity with the poor and strangers: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the Lord your God," (Lev. 23:22). "Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year and store it within your towns... aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake" (Deut. 14: 28-29). "The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow" (Ps. 146: 9).

While these select passages in the Old Testament anticipate the highly developed concept of solidarity—a kind of solidarity with even those who do not belong to the same kinship and nationality—the social dynamics of the Old Testament solidarity remained heavily characterized by exclusivism and cliquishness. Solidarity at this stage is perceived with

6. Duncan MacLaren, "Solidarity – Beyond the Clichés: A Theological Perspective," *New Blackfriars* 72 (Nov. 1991): 430.

respect to loyalty to kinsfolk, familial circle, local ethnicity, and nationality, but not extended to humanity as a whole, i.e., group solidarity.[7] "Only your kinsperson is to be treated as another 'self.' To regard some as sisters and brothers always involves enmity towards others."[8] Solidarity will be given a new value by Jesus—radical and revolutionary at that—because the expansion of solidarity now includes even one's enemies.

The radicality of solidarity that Jesus advances is intriguingly illustrated in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29-37). But just before Jesus acknowledges the dignity of the Samaritan and qualifies the Samaritan as a good neighbor, an episode in the previous chapter (9:52-53) portrays an unfavorable image of a Samaritan as a hostile neighbor to Jesus and his apostles, as they were refused entry into a Samaritan village. The parable serves as a challenge to reassess the qualifications of who to consider a good neighbor. It enigmatically radicalizes the terms of solidarity as it stretches the inclusion of others, i.e., even one's enemies, into the circle of one's *neighbor*. The placement of the hostile encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan before the Parable of the Good Samaritan is an illustration of a dynamic movement from *injuring exclusion* to *saving and healing solidarity*.[9]

God's Incarnation in Jesus is the basis of the orientation of the Christian vision of solidarity. By becoming human, Jesus expressed God's solidarity with humanity. There is no longer any aspect of humanity, except proclivity to sin, that is not embraced by God. This solidarity is consistently expressed in Jesus' teaching and personal example. Jesus' solidarity is

7. MacLaren, "Solidarity – Beyond the Clichés," 460.

8. Albert Nolan, O.P., *Jesus Before Christianity, 25th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 75.

9. John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Probing the Authenticity of the Parables,* vol. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 207.

specified in terms of solidarity with the poor as he became poor himself; with the excluded, as he endured the exclusion of the religious and political leaders of his time; with the suffering humanity, as he embraced the scandal of death on the cross; and with the undying hope of humanity, as he rose again from death.

This solidarity of Jesus with humanity is the catalyst for Vanhoye to pursue a perspectival reflection on the newness of Jesus' priesthood, i.e., his priestly solidarity. But while it is ready right away to consider what this newness of Jesus' priesthood consists in, it is deemed primarily necessary to give an account of what this newness is being contrasted with. Thus, a word on the ethos of the Old Testament priesthood is proper.

Solidarity in the Old Testament Priesthood

The office of the priesthood in the Old Testament was exclusively exercised by the Levitical tribe. The claim that the priesthood was the exclusive domain of the Levites was a subject of critique in modern biblical exegesis. Was it a priestly tribe from the very beginning of its tribal formation or was it a secular tribe initially? Old Testament scholar Aelred Cody forwards the position that the Levitical tribe was a secular tribe, on equal footing with other Israelite tribes, on account that an entire tribe could not possibly assume priestly functions.[10] It was only at a later developed stage of Israel that the Levitical tribe assumed a unique and exclusive priestly character.

During the stage of the formation of nascent Israel, i.e., from the Patriarchs up to the time of the Judges, the functions of the priest were far less clear-cut, and non-Levitical characters assumed some priestly functions. "Priesthood at this time was

10. Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 35.

not a state but a function or craft, and that a man was a priest not by virtue of any sort of ordination, but because he was actually exercising priestly functions."[11] There are a number of passages in the Pentateuch which, apart from presenting a highly developed theology of Levitical priesthood, attest to the exercise of priestly functions even by non-Levitical individuals: Noah offered prayer and sacrifice to Yahweh after the flood (Gen. 8:20-22); Abraham set up an altar and sacrificed a holocaust (Gen. 22: 13-14); Moses set up an altar and sprinkled blood on it (Ex. 24:4-6); David offered burnt and peace offering and blessed the Israelites in the name of Yahweh (2 Sam. 6:12-20).

At this stage of the development of the Jewish priesthood, one finds also that the responsibility of the priest extends to other sacred functions other than the offering of a sacrifice. "They divined the will of God by casting lots and by other means; they preserved, taught, and interpreted the Mosaic Law, the Torah; they took care of the holy places, guarded the temple treasury, accepted gifts made to God, and officiated over ritual sacrifices."[12] Some of these functions, such as the delivery of oracles, were absorbed later by the prophets and were thus considered the spokesperson of God during the Monarchical period, while the preservation and handing on of the laws and traditions became the exclusive functions of the scribes and rabbis at the Post-Exilic period.[13] It was after the exodus from Egypt, and later re-affirmed in the Post-Babylonian captivity in 520-515 BCE, that the cultic role and

11. Ibid, 59.

12. Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church, Vatican II* Golden Anniversary Edition (Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2014), 467.

13. Ibid.

functions of the priesthood became the exclusive domain of the Levitical tribe.[14]

The transition of the Levites from a secular tribe to an exclusive priestly clan was a clear case of *group solidarity* formation — i.e., primitive solidarity, which is limited to kin and tribe —through the *process of differentiation*. This process of differentiation accounts for the formation of a unique identity of a certain class or group that informs their roles and functions. An institution or society is ready to defer to the competence of a certain class, since it cannot exhaust all its energy in acquiring a body of knowledge or function the way a certain class or group does. Cody was straightforward in pointing out that economic motives were also at play for the exclusive prerogative of the Levitical tribe to the priesthood. He argues that the Levites' economic livelihood depends on group effort, and protection against competition is a matter of the solidarity of a tribe or clan....The natural thing for people in such circumstances to do is to develop as their specialty some craft or activity which does not depend upon land-tenure and for which a demand exists. Some sort of basis for their superiority in the craft has to be established, and this superiority must be vindicated as property of the group.[15]

While this process of differentiation gives a sociological endorsement for the qualification of the Levitical tribe as an exclusive priestly clan, there is certainly a theological validation for allowing such a social and religious setting to arise.

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14. Peter Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999): 5.

15. Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 59-60.

"Fill your Hands": Attainment of the Priesthood

An episode in Ex. 32: 25-29 narrates how the Levitical tribe attained the exclusive privilege of the priesthood. Moses, after having witnessed the infidelity of the Israelites through idolatry — enabled nonetheless by Aaron — challenged the fidelity of the Israelites by commanding them to put to the sword all who were guilty of idolatry, including their own kinsmen, friends, or neighbors. It was the Levites who assembled around Moses and proved their fidelity. After having accomplished the slaying, Moses said to the Levites, "Today you have been *ordained* for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of a son or a brother, and so have brought a blessing on yourselves this day" (Ex. 32:29; italics mine).

The Hebrew word employed for "ordination" in verse 29 (וּמַלֵּאתֶם)[16] is the same word employed in Exodus 28:41 (מַלֵּא), Leviticus 21:10 (מִלֵּא), and Numbers 3:3 (מִלֵּא), all referring to the act of "filling the hands" of the one being "ordained." Thus, other translations render the Hebrew stem word (מִלֵּא) as "filling of hands."[17] The ordination ceremony involved a literal act of "filling the hands." Parts of the slaughtered ram for the sin offering and portions of grain offering "filled" the hands of Aaron and his sons on their ordination (Lev. 8).

In the context of Exodus 32:25-28, "filling the hands" takes on a somewhat ominous meaning as the Levites took into their *hands* Moses' sentence of death upon those guilty of idolatry without sparing their own family, friends, and neighbors. With this incident in Exodus as the background, a dual significance is then intimated by the expression "filling the hands": the

16. The parallel Hebrew text used in this section is taken from https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Tanakh.

17. David Stein, *The Contemporary Torah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 369-370.

Levites, on account of "filling their hands" with the blood of their kinsmen, have "filled their hands" in the sense of being ordained as priests.[18] This partially explains non-conferral of the priesthood other than to the Levites as "it was their fidelity to Yahweh which led to their being ideal priests in the first place, and this fidelity is what basically is being contrasted with the infidelity of other tribes claiming priesthood."[19]

Holiness: A Setting Apart

The emerging theology of holiness as a *setting apart* sets the direction for developing a concomitant reality, i.e., the Levitical priesthood. God alone is holy, and His holiness, i.e., His separateness, "that characterized His being one true God, as opposed to all the pagan gods."[20] This holiness/separateness of God had to be characterized in the dimensions of the life of Israel. In order to approach God, one had to be holy, that is, to be separated or cut off. The urgency of separation in pursuit of holiness cannot be simply stated.

Separation is the concrete, visible expression of the inviolable holiness of God. One must remember that, in temple worship and in Israelite religion in general, "to make holy" ... meant separation from the ordinary world precisely in order to belong to God and his service. The ultimate purpose of all consecration was thus positive, though it did involve separation, spatial and/or moral, as a necessary component.[21]

Hence, this accounted for setting up the ritual purity system, with the priest as the determiner of purity. In the case

18. Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 145.

19. Ibid., 155.

20. John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Law and Love,* vol. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 350.

21. Ibid., 345. Italics mine.

of leprosy, it was up to the priest to verify the diagnosis of the patient and declare if the patient was "impure" or "pure," and eventually allow or refuse participation in social life and worship.[22] The state of being impure did not only mean exclusion from cultic participation; exclusion was even enforced on social participation. These varying degrees of impurity exclusion or restriction followed a gradation: initially, exclusion from religious worship; then, exclusion from proximity to sacred habitations such as the temple and synagogues; finally, exclusion of the impure person from social participation.[23]

The reservation of priestly function to the Levitical tribe of offering sacrifice on the altar was a consequence of this idea of holiness as a setting apart from anything that was perceived as profane and secular, which also gave rise to the notion of the superior holiness of priests over the rest of the people.[24] The more the priest aspired to reach holiness, the more he needed to be separated from the secular reality. Because of this, only the Levitical priests were given the responsibility of taking charge of anything related to temple worship since the temple was hallowed as God's dwelling place .

Holiness had to extend even to the objects of sacrificial offerings. For these offerings to be accepted, they must be carefully scrutinized as pure and not abhorrent to God. They need to be consecrated, that is, to be made sacred, sacrificed, consecrated, and set apart. Vanhoye recognizes that the acceptance of the offerings was also mainly due to the holiness

22. Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament*, trans. Bernard Orchard, OSB (Petersham, Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publication, 1988), 25.

23. David P. Wright, "The Spectrum of Priestly Impurity," in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel*, edited by G. Anderson & S. Olyan (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 164.

24. Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 191.

of the priest. He points out that "as the priest was precisely a person consecrated to go and permitted to enter into a relationship with God, it seemed obvious that he should be the one through whom sacrifices should be made."[25] The system of ritual purity defined the rules of engagement of priests with others. It obliged them to avoid any contact with sin, with whatever would contaminate or defile them, because any contact with the slightest profanation would bar them from exercising their priestly duties. Stretching the interpretation further, the priest had to remain holy, that is, separated/cut off from others.[26]

The acuteness of this separation finds its accentuation in the office of the high priest. Chapter 21 of the book of Leviticus lists the series of prohibitions for the high priest in view of preserving purity and holiness. One of the startling prohibitions forbids the high priest any proximity to the dead, regardless of whether the dead is a nonrelative or his own parents: "He shall not go where there is a dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother" (v. 11). "Contact with the dead was absolutely prohibited to the high priest since it was conceived that there was an incompatibility between the corruption of death and the holiness of God. The high priest did not have the right to mourn for anyone, not even for his mother/father because that would have meant contact with death."[27]

Separateness from anything profane marked the peculiar status of the priest. To maintain the ritual separation was of utmost observance. Becoming a priest necessitated "separating

25. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 24.

26. Ibid., 25.

27. Vanhoye, *Let Us Confidently Welcome: Christ our High Priest*, trans. J. Wallace (Melbourne, Ballan: Modotti Press, 2010), 53.

the priest from other men."[28] Priests were to remain separate and not of the same level as anyone else, they must be distinguished by a mystique of "otherness" because that was what being consecrated to God meant, i.e., to be set apart. This separateness was further illustrated right at the ceremonies of ordination where the high priest, after having been bathed that signified being cleansed from worldly contacts, was clothed with *special* vestments followed by anointing with oil (Ex. 29, Lev. 8 & 9). Returning to the Parable of the Good Samaritan, one can observe how ritual purity impacts the behavior of both the Levite and the priest toward the wounded man, in so far as contact with blood would render them impure and, thus, would restrict them from performing their respective temple duties.

Separateness marked the ethos not only of the Old Testament priesthood but also of the Israelite religion as a whole; and it was deeply infused into its *modus vivendi* and *operandi*. This separateness is expressed on so many levels. First, Israel is a people set apart for God, "Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex. 19: 5-6). Then the selection of individuals being qualified for holiness and service before God was restricted to the tribe of Levi, as "the Lord, set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him, and to bless in his name" (Deut. 10: 8). Holiness and admittance to the service of God were further narrowed to Aaron and his sons as God commanded Moses to anoint and consecrate them, in order that they may serve God as priests (Ex. 30:30). Finally, holiness and being set

28. Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Our Priest is Christ: The Doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews,* trans. Sr. M. Innocentia Richards (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1977), 28.

apart found its highest expression in the person of the high priest, who alone was permitted to enter the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement, a monumental event that occurred only once a year (Lev. 16). Vanhoye stresses that this function on the annual Day of Atonement must surely have been the high priest's most significant act among his liturgical functions.[29]

The foregoing discussions should have led to at least two noticeable observations. First, solidarity between the priest and other people outside the priestly circle seemed to contradict the Old Testament concept of the priesthood and holiness.[30] Priesthood was rather characterized by separateness and peculiarity that rendered it superior and exclusive. Being hallowed, consecrated, or ordained signified being set apart. "The priest's encounter with God requires even further rites of separation."[31] Second, the attainment of the Old Testament priesthood and the pursuit of holiness, whose highest exponent was demonstrated in the office of the high priest, came at a cost: *solidarity* that transcends the boundaries of the affiliated group or class. The Old Testament priesthood, whose function included regulation of the system of ritual separation, inadvertently resulted in a *mutual exclusion* of the pure and those perceived profane. The attitude displayed by the Levite and the priest toward the wounded man in the Parable of the Good Samaritan is but a demonstration of an unyielding adherence to ritual purity at the expense of a far greater divine trait: *solidarity* with the other.

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29. Albert Vanhoye, *A Perfect Priest: Studies in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 184.

30. Vanhoye, *Let Us Confidently Welcome: Christ our High Priest*, trans. J. Wallace (Melbourne, Ballan: Modotti Press, 2010), 54.

31. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests,* 31.

The Priestly Solidarity of Christ

At the very outset of this section, it is important to note that Vanhoye makes a straightforward caveat prior to expounding a reflection on the priesthood of Christ. The statement that Jesus is a priest, and even a high priest, is a startling claim. The gospels are silent on applying priestly terminologies and functions to Jesus. "In the Gospels, many titles are given to Jesus: teacher, prophet, Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God, *but never the title of Priest*."[32] As the only book in the New Testament that explicitly refers to Jesus as a priest, the Letter to the Hebrews engages in a painstaking hermeneutical jigsawing and theological exploration for applying priestly categories to Jesus and qualifies him as a High Priest. The theme of solidarity appears within this larger context of the Priestly Christology of the Letter to the Hebrews.

Jesus and the Levitical Priesthood

The preceding sections on the scriptural antecedents of solidarity and the Old Testament priesthood must have led to a realization that *Jesus does not belong to the group solidarity of the Levitical Priesthood*. "It is the simple fact that Jesus was born a Jewish layman, conducted his ministry as a Jewish layman, and died a Jewish layman. There is no reliable historical tradition that he was of Levitical or priestly descent."[33] He came from the tribe of Judah, which outrightly disqualifies him from the priesthood. The obscurity and the notoriety of his Nazarene origins illustrate his—in the description of the renowned

32. Vanhoye, *Let Us Confidently Welcome*, 28. Italics mine.

33. John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: The Roots of the Problem and the Person,* vol. 1 (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1991), 345.

biblical scholar John Meier—"marginal"[34] status within the religious circles in Jerusalem.

Moreover, the gospels portray a rather negative image of priests and seem to pit them against Jesus. As a case in point, the chief priests are shown to have some share of responsibility for the passion and death of Jesus. Their involvement in the betrayal of Judas, the arrest and trial of Jesus, and his eventual crucifixion are avowedly attested to in the gospels.[35] Jesus himself predicted that he would suffer greatly at the hands of the *priests*, the elders, and the scribes (Mt. 20: 17-19). Concerning the practice of ritual purity and separation, which principally fall under the domain of the priests, certain passages in the gospels indicate Jesus' recognition of the significance of such a system. While Jesus emphasizes the priority of reconciliation and conversion over the cultic system of his times, he acknowledges its significance (Mt. 5: 24). On two occasions, Jesus instructed those he cured of leprosy to submit themselves to the priests, who are responsible for purity and sanitary supervision of the lepers, and to make the offering for healing as prescribed by the Mosaic law (Mk. 1:44; Lk. 17:12-14). However, beyond these instances, the attitude of Jesus concerning ritual purity and separation remains largely controversial and often suggests a polemical import. The admonition "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Mt. 19:13) stands as the *fundamental evangelical option*.[36]

Recalling again the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus here recoils the sheer indifference of the *priest* and the Levite

34. Ibid.

35. The chief priests plot to kill Jesus, Luke 22: 1-2, John 11:47-48. They bribed Judas to betray Jesus, Mt. 26:14. They put Jesus on trial, Luke 22: 66-71. They pressured Pilate to sentence Jesus to death, John 18: 28-40.

36. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 7.

to the wounded man. Legalism to the observance of ritual purity is used to hide their failure to render help and love to a neighbor. Through this parable, Jesus rebuffs the limitations imposed by ritual purity and prioritizes compassion and *solidarity* over ritualistic holiness. Solidarity with those considered impure and sinners "is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mk. 12:33). There are still several occasions in the gospel that show Jesus prioritizing the restoration of *solidarity* with the community to those deemed ritually impure and separated: he touched those inflicted by leprosy (Mt. 8:1-5), he talked with a Samaritan whom the Jews considered defiled as a result of intermarriage with the Assyrians (Jn. 4), and he committed the most abhorrent of the ritual restrictions: he had contact with the dead on two occasions (Mk. 5:21-43; Lk. 7:11-17). Jesus' teachings and actions challenged traditional expectations and emphasized the importance of compassion and solidarity with others, regardless of social or religious boundaries. These differences in mindset and attitude of Jesus and the Levitical priesthood help to understand better the reason "why Jesus purposely recoils from any *solidarity* with the positions taken by the Jewish priesthood and why he does not call himself a priest."[37] Vanhoye's exploration of the thorny topic of the priesthood of Christ stems from the acknowledgment of this conflict. The ritual preoccupation for purity and holiness "must give way to the dynamism of a generous love"[38] and a more inclusive solidarity. "A radical re-formulation of the priestly categories was essential in order to make their application to the mysteries of

37. Jean Gallot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 37. Italics mine.

38. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 7.

Christ possible."[39] This, then, gives rise to a new type of priesthood and a new concept of holiness *as* solidarity.

Solidarity: A Paradoxical Novelty

That Jesus was a Jewish layman by all historical accounts triggers a curious question about his priestly status: What kind of priesthood is being referred to here? His non-Levitical ancestry already disqualified him from any priestly link. To this, the Letter to the Hebrews has to account for its claim that Jesus is a High Priest by invoking the figure of Melchizedek. It is quite intriguing that the priesthood of Jesus, a daring theological claim, should be likened to the priesthood of Melchizedek, whose scant appearance in the Old Testament evokes a more inquisitive restlessness than the present subject at hand.[40] But transcending this predicament, the invocation of the figure of Melchizedek in the Letter to the Hebrews as a *typology* simply serves to establish the divine sonship of Jesus, i.e., filial rela-

39. Albert Vanhoye, S.J., "La nouveauté du Sacerdoce du Christ," *Église et Vocations: La Revue De La Pastorale Des Vocations* no. 9 (Février 2010): 9.

40. For the sake of pressing the discussion a little further, the appeal to the figure of Melchizedek as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ serves several interpretations. "This 'Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him,' and to him Abraham apportioned 'one-tenth of everything'" (Hb. 7:1-2). This passage argues for the superiority of Melchizedekan priesthood over the Levitical priesthood which belongs to the Abrahamic ancestry. By invoking Melchizedek, the Letter to the Hebrews illustrates in the same way the superiority of the priesthood of Christ over the Levitical priesthood. In another passage, "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever" (Hb. 7:3). The omission of the ancestral genealogy of Melchizedek, and the silence on his birth and death illustrates the divine origin of his priesthood as it was not acquired hereditarily. Applied to Christ, his priesthood is a totally new order as his origins do not indicate linkage with the Levitical clan.

tionship with the Father; one of the necessary conditions for the attainment of the high priesthood.[41] "So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest but was appointed by the one who said to him, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you,' as he also says in another place, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek'" (5:5-6). This passage alludes to the promise of the eternal kingship of David and his offspring.

Moreover, the allusion to the oracle of David suggests the promise of the coming of a priestly-kingly messiah. "In accord with the concept of sacral monarchy, the king was regarded as the ultimate authority in both civil and religious spheres, and so exercised some priestly roles."[42] Therefore, Jesus, the son of David and the promised Messiah, possesses this dual identity and function.[43] "Melchizedek became an antitype which described some of the attributes and roles of the royal and priestly Messiah."[44]

Having established the priesthood of Christ by surpassing the Levitical priesthood and by linking it to the likeness of the Melckizedekan priesthood, the Letter to the Hebrews now describes how Christ attained the office of the high priest through *solidarity with the human condition*. Vanhoye proceeds to consider how Christ attained the priesthood through solidarity by explicating the *antitheses* presented in the Hebrews. He identifies at least two antitheses propounded therein: an innovation in the concept of *priestly mediation* and *holiness*.

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41. Vanhoye, *A Different Priest: The Letter to the Hebrews* (Florida, Miami: Convivium Press, 2011), 206.

42. Fruto Ramirez, S.J., "Melchizedek: A Minor Character of Great Importance to Biblical Theology." *Landas* 33, no. 1, (2019): 27.

43. Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 207.

44. Ramirez, "Melchizedek," 30.

I. First Antithesis

Priestly Mediation: Trustworthiness before God and Solidarity with Humanity

Whenever Vanhoye refers to "priestly solidarity," it is almost always bonded with another theme of "filial docility with the Father." The latter describes Jesus' filial relationship of Jesus with the Father, i.e., his trustworthiness before God, while the former describes Jesus' fraternal relationship with humanity, i.e., his solidarity with humanity.[45] This composite phrase—trustworthiness before God and solidarity with humanity—indicates the reputation of Jesus as the priestly mediator.

The function of mediation has been considered a fundamental feature of the priesthood.[46] In the Old Testament priesthood, this mediatory function was demonstrated in the passing on and interpretation of the Law in which the priest was regarded as *mediating* God to humanity. The offering of holocausts was also considered a role of *mediating* humanity to God.[47] Vanhoye argues that the concept of priestly mediation remains valid in the New Covenant. "The essential goal of priesthood has always been the establishment of mediation between God and humankind. This is true in the Old Testament, and is confirmed all the more in the New."[48] It is even made perfect by Jesus, whose person the divine and human find unity; thus, he is the perfect mediator. Jesus' priestly meditation is most excellently

45. Vanhoye, *Let Us Confidently Welcome*, 25.

46. Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in The Old Testament," 9.

47. Ronald de Vaux, O.P., *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), 357.

48. Vanhoye, *A Perfect Priest*, 31.

established because it is a mediation of a man who is consubstantial with the Father.

Pertinent to the current discussion is the need to elaborate on the novelty of Jesus' mediatory role *through* his solidarity with humanity, given that his "trustworthiness before God," i.e., his filial relationship with the Father, is already overwhelmingly established. The essential purpose of the priesthood has always been to establish a mediation between humanity and God.[49] However, the vertical relationship with God was primary in the Levitical priesthood. The priesthood was esteemed as the greatest honor in society, as he alone had the exclusive privilege of a relationship with God through the temple sacrificial system. The unilateral accent of the Levitical priesthood had foundations on the command of God to Moses to "bring near to you your brother Aaron and his sons with him, from among the Israelites, *to serve me as priests*" (Ex. 28:1). Priests were ordained for nothing else than for the service of God. This being set apart for God was regulated through the system of ritual purity and separation and was most apparent in the office of the high priesthood. "To go into the sanctuary he had to be alone. Cut off from other people...he did not effectively fulfill the role of mediator."[50]

It is in this situation that the priesthood of Christ stands out as a paradoxical novelty. "In order to become a high priest, it is not written that Christ had to separate himself from other men."[51] On the contrary, Hebrews states that "he had *to become like his brothers in every way*, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God" (Hb. 2:17). The following verse says that, "Because he himself was tested by what he suffered,

49. Vanhoye, "La nouveauté du Sacerdoce du Christ," 11.

50. Vanhoye, *A Perfect Priest*, 31.

51. Vanhoye, *Our Priest is Christ*, 29.

he is able to help those who are being tested" (v. 18) and this immediately evokes the remembrance of the passion and death which is the price for his solidarity with humanity. It may be a little bit soon for the Hebrews to allude to the mystery of the passion and death of Jesus as the ultimate manifestation of his solidarity with humanity. It is rather crucial to put this episode of passion and death under the overarching mystery of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is the pivotal aperture to understanding Christ's priestly solidarity. Jesus is a High Priest as far as Hebrews are concerned, and this is already apparent in its application of priestly categories to the death of Jesus on the cross. However, Hebrews does not explicitly address the crucial question of *when* Jesus became a high priest. To this question, John Chrysostom forwards the position that the Incarnation itself implies that Jesus' human existence is already priestly.[52] He argues that "He [Jesus] did not come first and then become High Priest, but came and became [High Priest] at the same time."[53] In other words, Jesus Christ is a High Priest only insofar as he was incarnated. For it is through his flesh, his incarnate existence, that Jesus was able to offer a sacrifice to the Father. Through his earthly existence, Jesus obtained the office of the high priest. The incarnation is the very first instance of Jesus' manifestation of solidarity with humanity, and has become an essential characteristic of his new high priesthood. Priestly solidarity in passion and death follows the trail of the Incarnation.

After having placed the death and passion of Jesus within the framework of the mystery of the Incarnation, one can now

52. Gerard O'Collins, S.J., *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80.

53. John Chrysostom, "Homilies on Hebrews," trans. F. Gardiner, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Library of the Christian Church*, vol. 15, edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989), 455.

advance to the consideration of interpreting them as Christ's priestly solidarity, thus gaining a novel imprint on the concept of mediation. To illustrate this, Vanhoye designates the following verses as *textual keys* to understanding Christ's priestly solidarity:

Heb. 2:10-11 It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect *through sufferings*. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (italics mine).

Heb. 2:17-18 Therefore, he had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. Because he himself was *tested through what he suffered*, he is able to help those who are being tested. (NABRE; italics mine).

Heb. 5:7-10 In the *days of his flesh*, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, *with loud cries and tears*, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned *obedience through what he suffered*, and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (italics mine).

Following the line of thought of these verses, it is discernible that suffering and death is a necessary precondition for the attainment of the high priesthood. Christ's passion and death "is the consequence of his *solidarity* with humanity and, at the same time, the means by which he establishes a *new* solidarity. By accepting suffering and death like every other human being, the Son of Man shows that the incarnation was no mere game."[54] This is in stark contrast to the Levitical priesthood, which identifies the priest as an exulted being among others. As

54. Vanhoye, *A Perfect Priest*, 25.

a recapitulation of the topic of Levitical accession to the priesthood — as had already been discussed in the preceding sections — one gets the impression that the priest, and especially the high priest, is like "a being exalted above normal mortals."[55] This exalted impression was pronouncedly marked out at the ordination rites where the *ordinandi* had to be washed, clothed with special vestments, anointed, and "filled the hands" with the sacrifices. Thus, when recalling the memory of the priesthood of Aaron, the book of Sirach acknowledges that God "exulted Aaron" (Sir. 45:6). One has to follow the succeeding verses to gain insight into how Sirach goes on to describe the splendor and glory of such a priesthood. So glaring was the honor of the priesthood that it became a source of ambition and jealousy among the Israelites. An episode in the book of Numbers narrates the revolt of Korah against Aaron as they were perceived to have "privatized" the priesthood. Korah, together with Dathan and Abiram "assembled against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, 'You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. *So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?*'" (Num. 16:3). In the book of Maccabees, the high priesthood was such a coveted position. Jason obtained the high priesthood by corruption (2 Macc. 4:7) and was later outbid by Menelaus by three hundred talents of silver for the position of the high priest (2 Macc. 4:24).

The accession of Jesus to the priesthood takes on an opposite direction. In order to become high priest, "Christ must reject all privilege and, instead of remaining above the people, 'he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every way', even to the point of accepting the extreme humiliation of

55. Ibid., 30.

the passion."[56] Jesus, far from seeking to exalt himself above others, renounced the appearance of divinity and descended to the lowest level of sharing, even in humanity's suffering and death.[57] The statement of Hebrews in 2:17, "he had to" is the only instance in the New Testament where the verb *opheilō* ('had to, ought to') is applied to Christ. This word alludes to a moral obligation concerning financial debt.[58] Such employment of the term to illustrate the extent of Jesus' new mediation through solidarity with humanity, i.e., to become like his brothers in every way, parallels the description of solidarity referred to in its legal, moral, and social aspects.[59] Solidarity in the legal sense is described in terms of the *assumption of a common responsibility* for the insurance of members in a group and the security of *repayment of debt*. Applied to the concept of priestly solidarity, Christ has shown his solidarity with humanity in his passion and death on the cross and has thus *repaid the debt* sinners owe.[60] As regards the moral aspect of solidarity — described in terms of readiness to *supply and share* assistance with those in need — Jesus has demonstrated his solidarity by *supplying and sharing,* as he continues to intercede on humanity's behalf. "He is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hb. 7:25).

Moreover, Hebrews is insistent on assigning a profound value to the aspect of suffering as a condition of perfect solidarity of Jesus with humanity: "he *learned* obedience through

56. Ibid.

57. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 71.

58. Ibid, 24.

59. See Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 21.

60. One may refer to the literature of soteriological theories to gain a more comprehensive grasp of the various theological schools of thought concerning the mystery of salvation.

what he suffered" (Hb. 5:8). The educative value of Jesus' embrace of suffering enables him to *supply and share* help with those being tested as well. "Because he himself was tested by what he *suffered*, he is able *to help* those who are being tested," (Hb. 2:18; italics mine). Lastly, concerning solidarity's social aspect—which pertains to a common sentiment, a sense of being a community, and sharing in their fate—Jesus' identification with sinful humanity illustrates such an aspect. Hebrews states that Jesus "is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters" (2:11) and, through his incarnation, shared with them their "flesh and blood" (2:14) as well as their death (2:9). Priestly solidarity is Jesus' total assimilation of anything human except sin. One might falsely think that this diminishes his solidarity inasmuch as he never sinned. In response to this, Vanhoye argues that sin "makes no contribution at all to the establishment of true solidarity"[61] because sin always sows division, which is in stark contrast to solidarity. Furthermore, Vanhoye insists that "real solidarity with sinners does not consist in making oneself an accomplice in their fault; it consists in generously taking the disastrous consequences of the sin along with them."[62]

A. Merciful High Priest

More than qualifying Jesus as a high priest, Hebrews introduces a profoundly new quality to this priesthood: Jesus is a *merciful* High Priest. He is a merciful high priest because the Levitical high priesthood seemed to have manifested a rather stringent and unyielding attitude toward sinners. "To emphasize that God had set the priest apart,"[63] he had to stand

61. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 114.

62. Vanhoye, *A Different Priest*, 159.

63. Vanhoye, *Let Us Confidently Welcome*, 48.

firmly against sinners and the defiled who were considered abominable to God. To be on the side of God and on the side of those considered profane and sinful at the same time was an impossibility. This situation describes the relationship between God and sinners as one of enmity, with God's wrath directed towards sinners. Some passages in the Old Testament seem to confirm this view, as in the episode of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32, where the Levites, to prove their loyalty to God, had mercilessly "filled their hands" with the blood of those guilty of the abominable sin of idolatry. In a similar unmerciful way, Phinehas acquired a "perpetual priesthood" for himself and his sons after manifesting his religious zeal by putting to death a Midianite woman and an Israelite caught sinning with her (Nm. 25:6-2).

Jesus, however, is a high priest with a quality of mercy because he is able to sympathize with their weakness through what he suffered and has thus attained the glory of the high priesthood. Mercy towards humanity, which is wounded by sin, is an indispensable disposition of a priest. Far from a mere superficial sentiment that is very often caricatured as *mercy*, the mercy of Jesus' priestly solidarity involves a total and *personal* experience of suffering.[64] "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to *sympathize with our weaknesses*, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15. Italics mine). The extent of Jesus' priestly solidarity led him to take upon himself the consequences of human sin.

In the final analysis of this first antithesis, Jesus replaces the pronouncedly unilateral view of the Old Testament priesthood, i.e., priests solely set apart for God, with a "bilateral

64. Ibid.

perspective."[65] Aware of this profound novelty, Hebrews, instead of saying that priests were set apart for the service of God, says rather that "priests were taken among men, and made their *representative before God*" (Hb.5:1). He is a priest, i.e., representative of humanity before God, rightly so, because he alone could *credibility* (because of his total solidarity with humanity, even accepting the death that is theirs) and *authoritatively* (because he is God's own Son, sharing fully God's divinity) present before God God's most wondrous salvific work, his self. The act of Jesus' self-abasement with his wretched flesh on the cross, i.e., his solidarity with all that is wretched in humanity, would effect a totally novel understanding of the concept of *holiness*.

II. Second Antithesis:

A New Concept of Holiness

Jesus' priestly solidarity stands as a startling contrast to the concept of holiness as regulated by ritual purity and separation. The whole of Jesus-event, especially shown in the Paschal mystery, illustrates that "ordination" to the priesthood is in no way accomplished through the rites of purity and separation.[66] Solidarity with humanity, embracing its blessings and woes, now marks the new ethos of attaining the priesthood and achieving holiness.

It need not be reiterated here how the insistence on the necessity of separation guaranteed the ethos of the Old Testament attainment of holiness. However, to forward a vivid presentation, mentioning select practices for securing holiness in the Levitical priesthood might prove helpful. The

65. Vanhoye, "La nouveauté du Sacerdoce du Christ," 12.

66. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 73.

annual entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies was the most demonstrative act of his holiness. There, he was totally cut off from people as he could enter it alone. The worthiness of the high priest to enter the holy of holies was secured by the stringent prescriptions laid down in Leviticus 16. These preparations for the Day of Atonement were nothing more than a series of *separations*, the apex of which was the high priest's separation from the people in order to enter the Holy of Holies.[67]

In this context, Hebrews introduces the new concept of holiness as the priestly solidarity of Christ, which is strongly accentuated in his Paschal Mystery. Rather than resulting in separation, Jesus' holiness leads to contact and engagement with others.[68] Unlike a kind of holiness that is achieved through withdrawal from the world, Jesus' holiness is established in his *entrance* into the world. Holiness through rituals of separation is radically replaced by the dynamism of communion with those deemed profane and forsaken by God. "To become like his brothers in every way" not only refers to the assumption of Jesus of human nature in the Incarnation but also involves the aspects of humanity that are most tragic and humiliating: suffering and death.[69]

Jesus' total commitment to solidarity brought him filial obedience and willing acceptance of the humiliating death on the cross. He died "outside of the gate" (Hb. 13:12) which meant that he did not die on sacred grounds and died an accursed death. The cross was anything but holy. It did not present any resemblance to a liturgical sacrifice. *Jesus tasted death and had descended to the dead*, as the Creed confesses. As already

67. Vanhoye, *A Perfect Priest*, 31.

68. Gallot, *Theology of the Priesthood*, 44.

69. Vanhoye, "La nouveauté du Sacerdoce du Christ," 13.

indicated in the previous sections, the prohibition against priests having any contact or least proximity with the dead would render them profane and thus could not achieve holiness through ritual worship. Vanhoye points out that "complete incompatibility was seen between the corruption of *death* and holiness of the *living* God."[70] Death is the total separation, and the "abode of the dead," i.e., Sheol, is a place of *godforsakeness*. H. von Balthasar cannot more emphatically state the horror of this separation,

> [A]ccording to the sense of the classical Old Testament texts, the dead person is lifeless, powerless, without effect, and above all without contact with God or thus either with his fellow human beings. In Sheol, in the Pit, all that reigns is the darkness of perfect loneliness. But to be without contact with God *means* to be without the inner light of faith, hope and love—which, as long as the bonds of death have not been broken through, are limited in the Old Covenant to earthy and mortal life (Is 38:11; Ps 6:6, 88:11-13): "For Sheol does not praise you; death cannot extol you" (Is 38:18).[71]

The extent of Jesus' solidarity led him to the unimaginable abode where holiness unimaginably asserted its potency through his descent. If in the former priesthood, perfection in holiness was attained through being "set apart" from the slightest profanity—much more death—now, it is through entering into the *godforsakeness* that is death by which Jesus paradoxically was "made perfect" in holiness (Hb. 5:8-9). This solidarity was brought to its farthest limit, i.e., death as total separation, but now embraced by Christ so that one who is at the point of death, would be guaranteed a promise of solidarity with God in Jesus Christ.

70. Ibid. Italics mine.

71. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Descent into Hell," in *Explorations in Theology: Spirit and Institution*, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 408.

A. Existential Priesthood

Another concurrent novelty under the second antithesis is the concept of *sacrifice,* which the priest is appointed to offer God. The Hebrews interpreted the death of Jesus on the cross in the light of ritual sacrifice categories. Sacrificial offering primarily belongs to the office of the priesthood. Priests are "appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer (Hb. 8:3). Whereas in the system of Levitical priesthood, the priest's offering is external to his person, Jesus' priestly offering is his personal and filial obedience even unto death, i.e., the offering of his very existence.

The crucifixion of Jesus on the cross had no resemblance to a liturgical ceremony of offering a sacrifice. On the contrary, it stood in stark contrast to a liturgical sacrifice insofar as it was a punishment imposed as a consequence of a legal condemnation. Unlike a sacrifice, which is a ritual act of glorification that lifts the offering to God — thus, the necessity that the offering be unblemished — and establishes a relationship of the *offerant* with God, a legal penalty e.g., crucifixion, severs the condemned from the community, as well as separates him/her from God.[72] For a priest to be made worthy to offer sacrifices, he had to maintain separation from defilement (Lev. 16). But his offering of sacrifices posed the question of its efficacy on the grounds that he remains a sinner as anyone else. No matter how exalted the office of the priesthood used to be, it could not offer a perfect, innocent, and undefiled offering. Speaking on the inefficacy of the priestly ritual offering, Vanhoye asserts that the "priest remained imperfect and tainted by sin (Hb. 7.18–19, 27–28). The sacrifices he offered did not really give him access to God. When he ceremonially entered the Holy of Holies, his

72. Vanhoye, *A Perfect Priest*, 28.

approach had only symbolic value."[73] Due to this unfitness to offer a perfect offering, the priest resorted to offering an external and impersonal oblation. He could not present himself as an offering because he lacked worthiness. He lacked credibility because he was a sinner himself. And so, his ministry consisted of performing exterior rituals. The relative efficacy of the priestly offering was even acknowledged right in the prescriptions for the high priest on the Day of Atonement; Aaron had to atone, first for his own sins, and then for his household (Lev. 16).

What the ritual offerings sought to effect remained at the level of external transformation, i.e., ritual purity and holiness through separation. The immolation of animals could not accomplish an integral personal transformation because the offering stood outside the constitution of the person. It is due to this that "one is bound to admit the powerlessness of the Old Testament worship and its radical ineffectiveness."[74] In similar lines, H. von Balthasar is convinced of the time-conditioned character of ritual sacrifices, as they could not establish an interior religious transformation.[75]

Prescinding from this external ritual system, Hebrews insist on the need for an offering that can effect an integral transformation. In a tone of critique on the ancient sacrificial system, Hebrews argues that its repetitious offering indicates that these "gifts and sacrifices...cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper" (Hb. 9:9). Jesus' offering rendered the ancient sacrificial offering ineffectual in respect to two qualifications: he is the unblemished sacrifice (Hb. 4:15), and he offered his sacrifice once for all (Hb. 9:12).

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73. Ibid, 31.

74. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 188.

75. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Priestly Existence," in *Explorations in Theology: Spouse of the Word*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 377.

These key texts in Hebrews prepare the concept, described by Vanhoye as the *existential priesthood*. The New Covenant does not totally abolish the offering of sacrifice, for, in fact, the New Covenant was established in the blood of Jesus (Mt. 26:27-29; Mk. 14:23-24; Lk. 22:20). There remains a sacrifice, but for Jesus, "it is a matter of a personal, existential sacrifice and not a ritual sacrifice."[76] In the old sacrifice, one finds a maintained distinction between the sacred and the profane, priesthood and sacrifice, and the office of the priesthood and the person of the priest. In the priesthood of Jesus, however, these distinctions collapsed. Instead, there is a sanctification of suffering through his death, interior transformation through personal offering, and unity of office and person. There can be no apt description of the *solidarity* of all these aspects than the *existential priesthood*. The integration of these aspects forms the basis for authentic worship. To be pleasing to God, an oblation must be an offering of the whole heart, as God cannot be satisfied with an exterior oblation that conceals the docility of the heart.[77] Jesus' self-offering on the cross illustrates this offering of his whole heart. His filial obedience unto the point of death on the cross shows the docility of his heart.

In Christ, all those separations are henceforth abolished. Christ does not need to look for victims outside himself; he has offered himself. He offered his personal obedience, even unto death. He did not look for symbolic, conventional, ceremonies but he *offered his own existence*. The distinction between priest and the victim is abolished, as also between worship and life.[78]

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76. Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 197. Italics mine.

77. Vanhoye, "La nouveauté du Sacerdoce du Christ," 22.

78. Albert Vanhoye, S.J., "Common Priesthood and Ministerial Priesthood: Difference and Relations," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 23 (2016): 6. Italics mine.

Conclusion

Bishop Pablo David of the Diocese of Caloocan relates a story wherein he was led to reflect on the significance of calling the Black Nazarene image of Quiapo as *Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno*. He was perplexed as to why the Black Nazarene is called Nuestro *Padre* whereas Jesus is the *son* of God and our *brother*. Would it be better to call him Nuestro *Hermano* (Our brother)? Bishop David asked a Nazareno devotee regarding this. He got this reply: "It is because Jesus is a priest, isn't he? Don't we call our priests '*padre*?' So Jesus is *Nuestro Padre*!"[79]

Jesus carrying and enduring the weight of the cross, suffering with humanity the burden of its pain and sin—how could not it be a perfect image of solidarity with humanity? No wonder millions of Filipinos identify themselves with that image of the Black Nazarene. He is rightly, then, the Nuestro Padre, he is our priest because through his solidarity with our human condition, he proved himself to be worthy to become a merciful high priest (See Heb. 2:17). And this paper on the theme of priestly solidarity of Vanhoye has considerably pondered on that; Jesus attained the priesthood, not because he distanced himself from the lowly human state and thus preserved his purity to be able to have access to God, but precisely because he chose in love, through his incarnation, to be in solidarity with everything human except sin and taste death (See Heb. 2:9), making his obedience a priestly sacrifice of worship to the Father.

79. Pablo Virgilio David, "Homily for the Feast of the Black Nazarene," 9 January 2021, *Veritas.ph*, accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.veritasph.net/ang-padre-nazareno/.

MERCY AS EMBRACE: AN UNDERSTANDING OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION THROUGH MIROSLAV VOLF'S *EXCLUSION* AND EMBRACE

John Mary Francis M. Nuqui

Introduction

Human history and experience—especially in the world's entry into the twentieth century—tell stories of violence such as terrorism, wars, genocide, and murder. People continue to experience injustice, murder, oppression, abuse, and exploitation in their everyday lives. Such a tragic reality makes the offense look unforgivable. This created a tension between the cry for justice of the oppressed and the call to forgive. Caught in this situation, will forgiveness and reconciliation still be possible?

A contemporary theologian, Miroslav Volf, has written extensively about forgiveness and reconciliation. He developed his works in a context fraught with disturbing wars and out of deep concern for today's social and political realities. This article presents Volf's theology of Mercy as seen in one of his works, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. The discussion outlines Volf's concepts of "identity and otherness" and "exclusion," against which he subsequently constructs his central argument on "embrace."

This paper systematically analyzes theological texts, carefully examining the articulation and development of Volf's

understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation vis-à-vis the Catholic Church's theology of Mercy. Integrating Volf's theology of embrace leads to an understanding of Mercy as an embracive identity, as exercising double vision, and as the will to embrace.

Miroslav Volf's Concept of Exclusion and Embrace

The concepts of Identity and Otherness, Exclusion, and Embrace guided the discussion of Volf's theology of forgiveness and reconciliation. He pins his theology of embrace on the premise of God's reception of humanity into divine communion. The personal experience of and faith in a merciful God can shape one's identity as an embracing identity patterned in the Trinitarian understanding of relationships – the mutual interiority of the Trinity, the decentering and recentering of the self in Christ, and the power and grace of the Holy Spirit that moves one from exclusion to embrace.

Identity and Otherness

Because he observes the imbalance between wealth and power among cultures, Volf argues that the formation of identity—the kind of selves people need to be rather than creating social arrangements—plays a crucial role in any attempt at reconciliation. A healthy understanding of 'distancing' and 'belonging' about the self and culture allows for creating space to receive the other. An identity, both bounded and not self-enclosed, can pursue reconciliation.

The journey to becoming this type of self begins with revisiting the life of Abraham and Paul. For Volf, Abraham and Paul exemplified the proper and healthy distance from and belonging to their culture in the continuous pursuit of embracing

all cultures and people. Abraham's response to God's call by departing from his country depicts the Volfian understanding of distance. In a sense, distance means becoming a stranger to one's given culture. It requires a departure from a "particular culture and give ultimate allegiance to the God of all cultures."[1] Distance allows room for others, reveals the truth about oneself and one's culture, and enriches each other's culture and identity.

But how does a culture keep its identity as it opens itself to others? How is the true *universal* God revealed to a *particular* people? How does the promise to one family become a blessing to all people? How can the tension between cultural particularity and God's universality be solved? In answering these questions, Volf turns to the framework provided by Paul: the cross of Christ. Volf explains Paul's "creative re-appropriation of the original Abrahamic revolution."[2] In his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 3:1-4:11.), Paul admonishes the Galatians to understand that it is neither by the law nor genealogy that they become descendants of Abraham and children of God, but by their faith in, and through God's grace. Further into the epistle, Paul emphasizes the unitive and all-embracing qualities of Christ's cross and resurrection. A new community is formed through them, "the one body of Christ." In this Body, the diversity in members is not wiped out. Still, it is gathered and united as a "complex interplay of differentiated bodies – Jewish and Gentile, female and male, slave and free."[3]

As seen in Abraham's life and Paul's writings, both cultural distance and cultural belonging are essential. "Belonging without distance destroys; but distance without belonging isolates."[4] While

1. Cf. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 39-40.

2. Cf. Ibid., 50.

3. Ibid., 48.

4. Ibid., 50.

the Abrahamic call to depart remains, Paul made it possible to depart without leaving. For Christians to practice this healthy dynamic between distance and belonging, they will have to "distance themselves from their own culture because, following the Crucified, they understand that there is an ultimate reality more important than their culture, and so they are ready to give an ultimate loyalty to God and his promised new world"[5] – their distance always involves belonging, and their belonging takes the form of distance. Departure is indeed "part and parcel of Christian identity."[6] As Lyotard and Gruber write, "Never simply distance; a genuinely Christian departure is always also presence; never simply work and struggles; it is always already rest and joy."[7]

Exclusion

Following the discussion on identity and otherness, Volf then develops his theology of embracing the counter-experience of exclusion, particularly from his personal experience of ethnic cleansing. In terms of identity of formation, exclusion entails drawing boundaries to distinguish the self from the other. While healthy, the process may lead to practices of exclusion manifested in acts of expulsion, assimilation, subjugation, and abandonment. Constructing identities opposing the other leads to a dynamic where difference becomes a basis for conflict, division, and violence.

Volf proposes that an adequate reflection on exclusion must satisfy two conditions: it must help to name (with confidence) exclusion as evil, and it must not dull our ability to detect

5. Corneliu Constantineanu, "Exclusion and Embrace: Reconciliation in the Works of Miroslav Volf," *Kairos, Evangelical Journal of Theology* Vol. 7, no. 1 (2013): 50.

6. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 40.

7. Jean-François Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber, *The Hyphen: Between Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 16.

the exclusionary tendencies in our judgments and practices.[8] He argues that exclusion springs from a misconception and misconstruction that one's identity is "pure" without "the other." In contrast to this prevailing misconception, Volf offers a better model of understanding and constructing identities through his definitions of differentiation, exclusion, and judgment.

To differentiate often means to highlight specific characteristics or constitute a contrasting element that distinguishes one from the other or the rest. However, for Volf, differentiation is not mere separation; the latter would result in self-enclosed, isolated, and non-identical beings.[9] Instead, differentiation is the creative activity of "separating and binding." The self is separate, connected, and related to the other. Identity, thus, is a result of the distinction from the other and the internalization of the relationship to the other; it arises out of the complex history of "differentiation," in which both the self and the different take part by negotiating their identities in interaction with one another.[10]

If this is how identity is defined, then whatever diverges from the "separating-and-binding" is exclusion, which entails cutting off bonds that connect and erasing separation.[11] In any way it manifests, exclusion is the constant search for purity of the self with little or no regard for another, a radical independence sovereign over the neighbor. While Volf clarifies that

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8. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 66.

9. Cf. Ibid., 68.

10. Ibid., 69.
The idea of *négritude*, introduced by the poet and first president of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Sengho, also reflects Volf's understanding of differentiation. The concept of négritude says that "a self does not exist apart from a self with the other; it is always a self-created by an "encounter with the other. (Cf. A.N. Williams, "Assimilation and Otherness: The Theological Significance of *Négritude*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 3 [2009], 250.)

11. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 70.

exclusion differs from drawing boundaries, he maintains that exclusion happens "wherever impenetrable barriers are set up that prevent a creative encounter with the other."[12] While passing judgment in popular cultures is deemed exclusionary, Volf argues that the distinction between differentiation and exclusion aids in making a non-exclusionary judgment. This judgment names exclusion as evil and regards differentiation as a positive good.

In a world where the reality of evil is prevalent and presents itself as if "there is no choice," where captivity to the cycle of sin and exclusion is inescapable, Volf firmly asserts that "there is a choice." The possibility of reconciliation comes from acknowledging that no one is wholly and purely innocent, and thus, "no one should ever be excluded from the will to embrace."[13] Is this not also what the mandate "to love your enemies" shows—that at the "core of Christian faith lies the persuasion that 'others' need not be perceived as innocent to be loved, but ought to be embraced *even when they are perceived as wrongdoers* (Volf's italics.)"[14]

If the will to exclude comes from the desire for identity (Cf. Volf's understanding of *differentiation*,) the will to embrace, on the contrary, comes from the Spirit of the crucified Messiah. Consistently and convincingly, he wraps up,

> The Spirit enters the citadel of the self, decenters it by fashioning it in the image of the self-giving Christ, and frees its will so it can resist the power of exclusion in the power of the Spirit of embrace. [...] By this seemingly powerless power of the Spirit—the Spirit who blows even outside the walls of the Church—selves are freed from powerlessness to fight the system of exclusion everywhere—in the structures, culture, and self.[15]

12. Ibid.

13. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 90.

14. Ibid., 91.

15. Ibid., 98.

Embrace

Opposite exclusion is the practice of embracing and reconciling. Modeled after God's embrace, the self can seek reconciliation through giving and readjusting identity and welcoming and creating space for the other. Having the will to embrace, the self can pursue the movement from exclusion to embrace. This movement has four essential moments: repentance, forgiveness, making space for the other, and memory healing.

Repentance

"For reconciliation to take place," Volf argues, "the inscriptions of hatred must be carefully erased and threads of violence gently removed."[16] Turning to Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God, Volf presents the first move from exclusion to embrace as a repentance of all. Jesus called everyone to repentance. His proclamation of the Kingdom of God speaks of God's unconditional love and Mercy and, at the same time, calls people to repentance. "To repent means to make a turnabout of a profound moral and religious import. Repentance implies not merely recognizing that one has made a bad mistake but has sinned."[17] By calling everyone to repentance, Jesus had removed the "victim-oppressor" distinction as seen in the modern models of oppression and liberation.

Volf affirms that social change cannot occur without a change of heart and repentance. This is reflective of what Volf considers the truly revolutionary character of Jesus' message and proclamation: "the connection between the hope he gives to the oppressed and the radical change he requires of them."[18] Thus, to repent means "to resist the seductiveness of the sinful

16. Ibid., 113.

17. Ibid., 114.

18. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 118.

values and practices and to let the new order of God's reign be established in one's heart."[19] Genuine repentance is challenging and is more of a divine gift or grace than a human capability. Caught in the cycle of violence and exclusion, the human instinct is not only to refuse to accept guilt but also to reject it by offering excuses or claiming relative innocence. Repentance can only be genuine if "we refuse to explain our behavior and accuse others, and [...] simply take our wrongdoing upon ourselves."[20]

Volf consistently argues for the necessity of repentance—yes, of both the victims and the oppressors—to restore human dignity and pursue social change. Victims must repent of wrongdoing that may emerge from hatred for perpetrators and strive to prevent such hatred from springing to life.[21] The repentance of perpetrators must lead to the willingness to offer restitution for wrongdoing, in an "injustice of superabundant restitution, which seeks to offset the injustice of the original violation,"[22] As a sign of true repentance and the fruit of forgiveness. By discussing the victims' need to repent, Volf continues to hope that this contributes to the "creation of the kind of social agents that are shaped by the values of God's kingdom and, therefore, capable of participating in the project of authentic social transformation."[23]

The Practice of Forgiveness

The second step towards reconciliation is forgiveness.

In his article *"Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Reflection in the Wake of Ethnic Cleansing,"* Volf describes the strong pull of revenge in the minds of the Serbians, Croatians, and Muslims

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 119.

21. Ibid., 117.

22. Ibid., 117-118.

23. Ibid., 120.

during the Balkan tragedy. While everyone has reasons for wanting revenge, Volf notices that "the greater their success at revenging themselves, the more they feel justified in their aggression."[24] Continuous oppression and unrepentant perpetrators inspire constant mutual hate and exclusion and an indistinctive desire for revenge. Thus, the spiral of vengeance is set into motion endlessly: a 'just' revenge leads to a 'just' counter-revenge.

Volf argues that there is a way out of this spiral of vengeance through forgiveness. Jesus' words and deeds always speak about forgiveness. He asks his disciples to forgive, not only seven times, as Peter thought, but seventy-seven times (cf. Matthew 18:21-22). Hanging on the cross, Jesus became the ultimate example of his teaching: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). And for Volf, this stands as the supreme example embodying the truth and power of forgiveness.[25]

Why forgiveness? What about justice? Why not follow the *lex talionis* (cf. Exodus 21:22; Leviticus 24:19-21) and impose the exact extent as repayment, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth? Is forgiveness a substitute for justice? Volf immediately answers no to these questions, saying forgiveness is not a substitute for justice. Forgiveness implies an affirmation of justice. Forgiveness affirms justice since forgiveness requires the naming of wrong as wrong. Recognizing and declaring wrongs as wrong is an act of justice. Forgiveness does not violate justice; instead, it contextualizes and transcends it.

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24. Miroslav Volf, "Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Reflection in the Wake of "Ethnic Cleansing," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 13, no. 6 (1993): 14.

25. Cf. Constantineanu, "Exclusion and Embrace," 42.

Christ expresses forgiveness most vividly in his passion and through the cross. By not returning violence for violence, he refused to be defined by his perpetrators. Christ forgives by not holding their transgressions against them. He does not suffer the wrongdoing passively; "rather, suppressing the rightful claims of strict retributive justice, Christ actively makes his suffering into a prayer for the forgiveness of those who have tortured and killed him."[26] In Christ, "God tells the truth about the sinful world, enthrones justice, and sets things right, for there is no redemption unless the truth is told and justice is done."[27] God names and condemns human sinfulness—not for revenge or retribution but to forgive and embrace. Pursuing and practicing forgiveness is a continuous call to imitate God's embrace and forgiveness in Christ.

Space for the Other

Forgiveness is necessary but not completion; it is the boundary between exclusion and embrace. Hanging on the cross, Christ extends his arms so that God and humanity may "fall into each other's arms and restore broken communion."[28] On one hand, forgiveness heals the wounds of exclusion and breaks down the wall of hostility. On the other hand, it leaves a certain distance between people, "a space of neutrality, that allows them either to go their separate ways in what is sometimes called 'peace' or to fall into each other's arms and restore broken communion."[29] But peace is more than just the absence of hostility; *it is communion between former enemies*.[30] Thus, to continually move from

26. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 126.

27. Ibid., 289.

28. Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), 125.

29. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 128.

30. Ibid.

forgiveness to reconciliation, Volf presents the third step towards embracing: making space for the other.

The passion of Christ on the cross and the "mutual indwelling of the others" in the life of the Trinity ground Volf's third step. The cross offers not only forgiveness but also aims at reconciliation.

> At the heart of the cross is Christ's stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in. [...] It is the consequence of God's desire to break the power of human enmity without violence and receive human beings into divine communion. [...] The arms of the crucified are open—a sign of a space in God's self and an invitation for the enemy to come in.[31]

Thus, the cross is neither an inability for enmity (leaving perpetrators victorious) nor enmity (brewing desire for revenge; the possibility of victims becoming perpetrators themselves.) Instead, it bespeaks of an "enmity toward enmity,"[32] i.e., the refusal to become entrapped in hatred and violence. The cross is the beginning of the embrace. It aims for something more: restoring communion between former enemies. Christ makes space in himself for the enemy to enter and dwell together in peace. The cross "is the giving up of God's self in order not to give up on humanity; it is the consequence of God's desire to break the power of human enmity without violence and receive human beings into divine communion."[33] As to what this embrace looks like, Volf turns to the life of the Trinity.

Self-giving love and the creation of space to receive the other are dimensions of the passion of Christ; the same two

31. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 128.

32. Cf. Ibid., 129.

33. Ibid., 127.

dimensions are characteristics of the Trinity. The life of the Trinity is a life of self-giving and other-receiving love. None of the three persons can be defined without the other two. Each person includes the other two in what Volf calls "mutual interiority," a re-expression of the divine perichoresis.[34] "When the Trinity turns toward the world, the Son and the Spirit become, in Irenaeus' beautiful image, the two arms of God by which humanity was made and taken into God's embrace"[35] — the very love that makes space "in God" for humanity, as most profoundly expressed at the cross.

As mentioned, forgiveness is not yet embraced. While forgiveness ends a cycle of violence and retribution, it does not automatically form an embrace. Thus, to move past this boundary, one must create space in themselves for the other. More importantly, one must be willing to accept the enemy into their life in such a way as to transform the self and the other—all reflective of the Trinity's acceptance of humanity into its own through Jesus Christ. In imitation of how God pursues reconciliation with humanity, should people pursue reconciliation with one another?

Healing of Memory

After repentance, forgiveness, and making space for the other, one final act must complete the reconciliation process. Volf states that this step requires a*n inevitable forgetting* of the

34. *Perichoresis* describes the "necessary being-in-one-another or circumincession of the three divine Persons of the Trinity because of the single divine essence, the eternal procession of the Son from the Father and of the Spirit from the Father and (through) the Son, and the fact that the three Persons are distinguished solely by the relations of opposition between them." (Cf. Randall E. Otto, "The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54, no. 3 [January 2009]: 366.)

35. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 131.

evil suffered. It is a forgetting that assumes that matters of truth and justice are dealt with, the oppressors have been named, judged, and transformed, and the victims are safe and healed of their wounds. While Volf strongly argues as well for the "obligation to know, to remember, and not to keep silent"[36] about the injustices suffered and hurts endured, he also suggests the need for non-remembering to remember rightly and be finally redeemed. The proper goal of such remembering is non-remembrance.

Can victims forget the atrocities? What are the significance and dangers of remembering the wrongs inflicted? In his book *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, Volf reminds us that memory is a Janus-faced organ: a shield and a sword. As a shield, the memory of inhumanities can help form a person's identity, bring about healing, strengthen the pursuit of justice by acknowledging the reality of wrongs, generate solidarity with victims, and protect them from further violence. [37] However, as a sword, it can also wound, breed indifference, reinforce false self-perceptions, and re-injure.[38] Given these images, Volf asserts that remembering injustice is crucial, but adds that it must be truthful and not embellished.

So, in what way is forgetting redemptive? Volf argues that remembering and forgetting are crucial to forming the identities of the victims and perpetrators. Remembering rightly, or a healthy non-remembering, frees the oppressor from the chains of unredemption and non-reconciliation. "The memory of wrongdoing," Volf writes, "superimposes on the image of the other a narrative of transgression; even a forgiven sinner

36. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 134-135.

37. Cf. Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 19-35.

38. Cf. Ibid.

is still a past sinner if her sins are not forgotten."[39] At the same time, a non-remembrance of the wrong suffered paves the way for the victims' redemption through the redemption of a remembered past—since as long as the memory remains, the "past is not just the past; it remains an aspect of the present."[40]

How one remembers the wrongdoing suffered will be decisive for forgiveness or revenge. Thus, healing of memories entails remembering rightly. And for Volf, to remember rightly means to remember truthfully. It means remembering proportionately—so to speak—so that the injuries do not acquire disproportionate significance in one's lives. Volf further asserts that one can move toward reconciliation when one remembers rightly.

While Volf asserts that this particular kind of forgetting is ultimately in the eschaton, he still hopes that the "indispensable remembering should be guided, however, by the vision of the dawn of the new age whereby even now we may move the shield of memory cautiously to the side by opening our arms to embrace the other, even the former enemy."[41] This is all possible because even God Himself forgives, remembers rightly, and forgets iniquities and sins (cf. Jer. 31:34). Just as a woman cannot forget her nursing child, so God cannot forget Israel even when she has offended and forgotten God (cf. Is. 49:15-16).

The Drama of Embrace

Volf's phenomenology of embrace—the logic of grace—is also a four-part movement: opening of arms, waiting, closing of arms, and opening again of arms.

39. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 135.

40. Ibid.

41. Belle Miller McMaster, "I Have Been Reading: An Important Contribution to Political Theology, Addressing the Toughest Questions of Our Time," *Church & Society* 90, no. 2 (November/December 1999): 161.

Act one: opening the arms. Open arms express a desire for an embrace, a gesture of invitation, an initiated movement of the self toward the other. The idea of the other as unavoidably a part of the self is the foundation of Volf's alternative conception of identity. It indicates that the self has created space for the other to come in. "Open arms," Volf writes, "suggest the pain of the other's absence and the joy of the other's anticipated presence."[42] Moreover, open arms suggest a fissure in the self. "They signify an aperture on the boundary of the self through which the other can come in. The desire for the other can be fulfilled, and the space for the other created by self-emptying is occupied only if the boundaries are passable."[43]

Act two: waiting. Waiting is a sign that, although the embrace comes initially from the self, it cannot achieve its goal until the other moves toward the self. This entails respecting the other's boundaries. "The other cannot be coerced or manipulated into an embrace; violence is so much the opposite of embrace that it undoes the embrace."[44] This waiting for a response is perhaps the point at which the actual practice of embracing will likely stall. There seems to be no possible alternative that does not force the other in some way, and the refusal to wait may suggest an ingenuine desire for an embrace. Still, waiting is necessary not to subsume the other into the self.

Act three: closing the arms. It takes two pairs of arms to make a single embrace. In a movement of reciprocity, arms are locked in a proper embrace. Volf writes, "Though one may receive or give more than the other, each must enter the space of the other, feel the presence of the other in the self, and make its presence felt."[45]

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42. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 144.

43. Ibid., 145.

44. Ibid., 146.

45. Ibid.

The embrace requires a careful balance between differentiation and sameness. Volf is seeking the transformation of the self in light of an experience of the other, not the alteration of the self to be the other.[46] In addition, a *soft touch* is necessary in an embrace.

Act four: opening of the arms again. "The opening of the arms underlines that, though the other may be inscribed into the self, the alterity of the other may not be neutralized by merging both into an undifferentiated 'we' [...] the other must be let go so that her alterity—her genuine dynamic identity—may be preserved."[47] The end is not to make or fuse the two into one being. If the two selves merge into one, both lose their identity. Volf explains that "in an embrace, the identity of the self is both preserved and transformed, and the alterity of the other is affirmed as alterity and partly received into the ever-changing identity of the self."[48] Thus, the opening of the arms signals that the self lets go of the other so that the other's genuine dynamic identity may be preserved even as each has been changed by receiving some part of the other into the self; it also allows for an embrace to begin again.

Volf's phenomenology of embrace begs the question, "Why, then, should the self embrace the other?" Volf responds: "Because the others are part of my true identity."[49] Shaped by the cross of Christ and reflecting the life of the Trinity, the self seeks to open its arms toward the other, for an embrace includes the other, even if the other is an enemy. While nothing can guarantee an embrace or what will happen after an embrace, Volf asserts that "only one outcome is not possible: a genuine

46. Bethan Siân Willis, "Enlarging Justice: Miroslav Volf's Theology of Embrace and the Problem of Justice in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Croatia" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2013), 130.

47. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 144.

48. Ibid., 147.

49. Volf, Exclusion, and Embrace: Theological Reflection in the Wake of "Ethnic Cleansing," 16.

embrace cannot leave both or either completely unchanged."[50] An embrace is a risk, but more so a grace.

Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Mercy in the Catholic Church

Understanding Mercy and justice in the Old Testament involved revisiting the *lex talionis* and the Israelites' experience of God. Considering the various Jewish codes and laws, the *lex talionis* is seen as an expression and reflection of the system of values that mold the identity of Israel as a nation. A non-literal application of the talion reveals the Jewish understanding of Mercy and justice. Furthermore, the Old Testament speaks of a gracious and merciful God, profoundly expressed through the words *hesed* and *rahamim*. Mercy not only describes who God is but also characterizes Israel's relationship with God. Through God's fidelity and continuous acts of saving, His Mercy and justice are at work.

In the New Testament, God's Mercy and justice are embodied in the person of Jesus, His revelation's fullness, the fulfillment of the law, and the prophets. Jesus calls the disciples to a better righteousness exemplified through their relationship with others. Instead of seeking retribution through the *lex talionis,* Jesus commands the disciples to love their enemies. The grace to live out this call springs not from how others treat him but from one's experience of Jesus. Having received love and Mercy from God, Christians ought to requite hostility with love. Among the parables and teachings of Jesus, the parables of the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son beautifully exemplify a merciful God. The call to discipleship is a life of imitation of the Father, just as how the Good Samaritan and the Father showed Mercy, so, too, Christians must do.

50. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 148.

Evident in all his homilies and writings, Pope Francis describes Mercy as God's identity card. Mercy is not only what God does and gives, but ultimately who He is. To respond to the call to be merciful like the Father, Francis reminds the faithful to return to one's personal experience of God's Mercy. Thus, discipleship is not primarily a following a set of commandments, but of a person, of Jesus, the face of the Father's Mercy. More concretely, the Church proclaims the message of Mercy through her corporal and spiritual works of Mercy by going to the margins and by being inclusive and all-embracing. The more the Church centers her life in Christ, the more she is decentered, moving towards the peripheries – always meeting people where they are, always accompanying people with patience and tenderness, love and Mercy.

Towards a Synthesis and Integration of Miroslav Volf's Theology of Embrace

The concepts of Identity and Otherness, Exclusion, and Embrace sum up Volf's theology of forgiveness and reconciliation. Springing from a very personal experience, his central thesis that "God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion is a model for how human beings should relate to the other" offers a general structure for drawing out the practical significance of the call to love one's enemies. Adopting and integrating Volf's theology of embrace with the Church's teachings and understanding of Mercy assists in drawing out a more holistic response to the call to be "merciful like the Father." In both Volf's and Pope Francis' theology, the underlying principle is similar: just as the will to embrace underlies both divine and human efforts at reconciliation, so does one's personal experience of Jesus' Mercy direct and move the response to the call of discipleship. Walking the path

of reconciliation and living out the commandment of loving the enemy is derived from an indicative of faith in the God of unconditional love and forgiveness.

Among the many possible contributions and valuable insights of Volf's theology of forgiveness and reconciliation, the succeeding paragraphs shall focus on three significant elements in an enriched and deepened understanding of Mercy. Integrating Volf with the Catholic Church's theology of Mercy—especially with Pope Francis—gives the following perspectives: Mercy as an embracive identity, Mercy as exercising double vision, and Mercy as the will to embrace.

Identity as Embrace

Volf consistently states—and positions himself as one of the recipients of this critical point—that the individual, who is morally compelled by his experience of God's forgiveness and his merciful relationship towards humanity, bears the responsibility for himself, others, and the rest of the world. Thus, to respond appropriately and practically to the call to "embrace the enemy," one must start with the kinds of selves each must become instead of concentrating on forming social arrangements that accommodate diverse identities. Just as Jesus emphasizes the character of "the one who showed mercy" in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Volf also advocates for forming an embracive identity.

The question and formation of identity are crucial to the question and application of forgiveness and reconciliation. Volf observes that conflicts often rage around discrete identities – of cultural groups or individuals. Culture and gender are always embodied within particular selves and given shape by being situated in specific persons. He argues that the problem of identity and otherness are connected to 'situated selves'

"who, through the cross of Christ, are the foundation of a new community; out of this particular context, they embrace the other by creating space through 'distancing' and 'belonging.'"[51]

Identity is not simply what the other is not; it encompasses what is distinct from the person and what binds him to another person. A more dynamic way to make the same point is to say that boundaries should be porous, allowing traffic to go back and forth between the self and multiple others, including the institutions in which one finds oneself. The result is a discrete but fluid sense of identity. Only such a fluid sense of identity could account for who human beings are in their interchanges. Such identity is capable of and open to an embrace.

Seen through the lens of Volf's theology, conflicts exist partly because of the resistance to changing boundaries or oneself. Accordingly, people aren't reconciled partly because they don't want to transform their identity to accommodate the person with whom they are in conflict. Such dynamics are at work in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. When left by the younger son, the Father is no longer the same but, in a sense, is now the prodigal's Father. Disavowing the son is one approach to dealing with that identity and maintaining one's identity intact or at least less harmed. However, as seen in the story, being the Father of the Prodigal means "traveling into the far country with the son, changing one's own identity, and then altering it again when the son returns."[52] Thus, the will to embrace the prodigal is, at the same time, the Father's will to shift his own identity and his own journey along with his son. The other belongs to the self, and the self to that other.

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51. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 35-55.

52. "Conversations with Miroslav Volf," transcribed from a pastor's seminar led by A. James Reimer at Conrad Grebel College. Waterloo, Ontario, on March 17, 2000.

An embracive identity shows the ideal of embrace, not as the coming together of two fundamentally separate individuals "hugging it out" when it comes to their differences, but rather as a complex dance in which they realize that they cannot be what they ought to be until they learn to genuinely love and forgive those that they have despised, and even more that they find it in themselves to mercifully love those who have despised them.

Furthermore, an embracive identity deepens Pope Francis' call to reflect the great Mercy received from Jesus. The Church's mission of forgiveness and reconciliation is integral to and reflects God's Mercy. Looking at the resurrection stories—in particular, the stories of Thomas, Peter, and the disciples walking toward Emmaus—one sees a transformation of identities springing from each of their encounters with God's Mercy. Such an identity can understand, hope, inspire confidence, not give up, not burn bridges, and can forgive.[53] The grace of Jesus Christ changes the heart, from sinners to saints, from an exclusionary to an embracive identity. God's Mercy is the immense grace that changes the heart.

The love of one's enemy is perhaps the most humanly difficult demand of Jesus, and yet it is, at the same time, one of the most central Christian commandments. It is rooted in the innermost essence of the Christian mystery and represents the specific character of Christian behavior and identity. Jesus calls the disciples to a better righteousness, a life imitating the Father. Bonhoeffer calls this "*person*" the characteristic which distinguishes Christians' identity. In his messages, Pope Francis constantly reminds us that to be followers of Christ is to be instruments of the great Mercy received. Thus, integrating

53. Cf. Pope Francis, "The Embrace of God's Mercy," in *The Church of Mercy: A Vision for the Church* (Loyola Press: Chicago, 2014).

Volf's notion of identity—built upon embrace, begins with a movement from the self to the other—now provides an even more practical way of living out and proclaiming the gospel of Mercy. "God's reconciling self-giving for the ungodly" bears consequences for the Christian life, i.e. the practical and deliberate decision to show God's unconditional love and Mercy towards the wrongdoers. As God loves, Christians ought to forgive and love their enemies.

Exercising Double Vision

For Jesus, the command to love one's enemies is the apex and highest expression of Mercy and love that is demanded in the Sermon. He establishes this demand—extreme from a purely human perspective—based on God's extreme behavior toward sinners. In his writings and homilies, Pope Francis consistently reminds the Church of God's constant renewal of His merciful love and initiative towards every person. Thus, adopting God's vision toward humanity is vital in responding to the call to forgive. Forgiveness is only possible in the power and at the prompting of God's saving activity in Christ. It is possible only in the light of the statement that God has reconciled everyone to himself, even when still enemies. According to God's vision and model behavior, Christians should also forgive.

Delving into Volf's theology of embrace—evidently influenced by liberation theology—one observes his inclination towards polarities and dualities such as oppression and freedom, perpetrator and victim, exclusion and embrace, and vertical and horizontal reconciliation. These highlight Volf's importance to a healthy and balanced understanding of different and opposing sides. Thus, integrating this perspective in a theology of Mercy and patterning in God's vision towards humanity, one draws another vision that practically assists the

response to love and forgiveness. Mercy as embrace involves the necessity of exercising "double vision."

The philosopher Hannah Arendt speaks of "enlarged thinking." This "enlarged thinking" speaks of accommodating the perspective of others—especially those in conflict with them—allowing their voices to resonate with oneself, and if needed, readjusting one's perspective on account of their perspectives. However, more than an "enlarged mentality," "double vision" calls for opening oneself to the other, allowing the enemy to speak, acknowledging opposing justice, and learning from other traditions.

The most important theological reason for exercising "double vision" lies not only in Jesus' example but most especially in the cross. It is because "on the cross, God made space in God's very self for others, godless others, and opened arms to invite them in."[54] What is essential in "double vision" is not simply taking the position of the other, or indifferently and shamelessly denying the victim's or the perpetrator's status, but rather acknowledging in faith that God, on the cross, "receives the godless," and "exposes their godlessness in the very act of providing for its forgiveness." According to Volf, this movement is drawn from the fundamental premise of faith, which is "that we are the perpetrators who crucified Christ, we are the godless whose godlessness God exposed."[55] The logical conclusion is that Christians need to make space within themselves for the experiences and perspectives of others in order to be consistent with Christ.

Furthermore, this "double vision" enriches the connection between justice and Mercy. According to Volf, to achieve justice, it is necessary to suspend the righteousness of one's own

54. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 214.

55. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 214-215.

perspective and be willing to see justice through the eyes of the other. It is imperative to transcend one's self-centeredness to move closer to the embrace. This entails stepping away from oneself and moving towards the embrace of the other person. The "will to embrace the unjust precedes agreement on justice,"[56] Volf concisely claims. However, creating new injustices does not lead to the attainment of justice. As there is no justice without a will to embrace, there is, likewise, no embrace without justice. Neutrality[57] is not an option, and one cannot consider differing points of view as equivalents. Volf emphasizes God's "bias" in favor of those in need. He does so by recognizing that in "double vision," one must maintain both the "initial suspicion against the perspective of the powerful" and the "epistemological privilege of the oppressed."[58]

Volf's unique contribution is consistent emphasis and conviction that God's "bias" extends beyond the poor and oppressed. God is perceived as "unjust" and "biased" because of His inexplicable Mercy toward every person, including the sinful and ungodly. God's relationship with each individual is characterized by forgiveness. He approaches each person with unconditional love and compassion, "and by the movement of justice which is concerned with the wellbeing of each person, and his or her own 'measure' of Mercy, following the definition

56. Ibid.

57. "Even more than just encouraging inaction, neutrality is positively harmful. For one, it gives tacit support to the stronger party, independently of whether that party is right or wrong. Second, neutrality shields the perpetrators and frees their hands precisely by the failure to name them as perpetrators. Third, neutrality encourages the worst behavior of perpetrator and victim alike." (Volf, *End of Memory*, 219).

58. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 219.

of justice to give each his own: to each his accompanying grace."[59]

"Double vision" does not deny justice and truth. By embracing one another in pursuit of the truth, one can establish a community composed of righteous and truthful individuals. Just as justice needs to be told and done, so is truth. Christians need to ensure that the truth does not become, as was the case with Pilate, a despised truth, the truth of power, social status, and position, which is ultimately nothing more than the power of violence.[60] The person and identity of others should not be sacrificed to a personal and relative understanding of truth, as was the case with the chief priests and elders of people about Jesus.

The truth, more importantly, is freeing because it is nonviolent. "The cross of Christ breaks the cycle of violence constituted by the truths of the powerful."[61] It is difficult to practice nonviolence in a violent society, but refusing to take revenge and striving to act like Jesus is the only type of discipleship worthy of the Christian name and identity. For what is redeemed in the cross of Christ is not just the truth of the victim, but also the truth of the enemies.

Thus, Mercy is concerned with more than justice; it involves being aware of and sensitive to the tangible needs of others. To exercise "double vision" is to overcome the self-centeredness that causes one to become deaf and blind to the material and spiritual needs of others. It is a matter of dissolving the hardening of hearts to God's call that one hears in the encounter

59. Ivan Šarčević, "Reconciled in the Embrace of the Crucified: The Notion of Enemy in the Theology of Miroslav Volf," in *Envisioning the Good Life*, eds. Matthew Croasmun, Zoran Grozdanov, and Ryan Mcannally-Linz (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 218.

60. Cf. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 264-271.

61. Šarčević, "Reconciled in the Embrace of the Crucified," 219.

with others' adversity.[62] Mercy as exercising "double vision"—all within the process of forgiveness and reconciliation—is offered as a possible way of true reconciliation, a possible way of new relationships between the opposing persons, and as a way of coming together in big and small worlds, ridden with conflicts and hostilities. Volf makes this personal expression of faith: God has already accomplished it, and continues to do so with people throughout history, but most entirely in the person of Jesus Christ. Without equating the victim and the offender, without denying justice and truth, every individual finds their reconciliation in the cross of Christ, for all are sinners and need to be justified.

When the Church preaches God's Mercy, it communicates the deepest truth about God and the deepest truth about human beings. Because the ultimate truth about God is that God is love, which bestows itself and is always willing to forgive. Taking inspiration from one of the prayers during Christmas, Kasper writes, "The deepest truth about human beings is that God in his love has wonderfully created them, that he has not forsaken them even when they have distanced themselves from Him, and that He has mercifully reestablished them and their dignity in a still-more wonderful way."[63]

Adopting God's vision towards every person and exercising "double vision" bring about important realities of Mercy, justice, and truth. Mercy without truth would be an inauthentic consolation, empty promise, and meaningless talk. On the other hand, truth without Mercy would be callous and hurtful, cold, and insensitive. Therefore, the Church can only authentically communicate the gospel of God's Mercy if Mercy likewise

62. Cf. Christoph Schönborn, *We Have Found Mercy: The Mystery of Divine Mercy*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco, Ignatius, 2012), 102-105.

63. Kasper, *Mercy*, 161.

shapes her words and vision. Above all, it is essential that the Church not only proclaims the truth about God's Mercy but also demonstrates her teachings in practice. The Church's proclamation of God's Mercy—through an exercise of "double vision"—must affect its concrete praxis and result in a culture of Mercy in her entire life. As a result, "double vision" paves the way for an authentic and merciful dialogue that presupposes a listening heart and reciprocal listening to each other.

The importance of the Will to Embrace

In light of Volf's theology, the love of enemies is interpreted as forgiveness in the movement from exclusion to embrace proceeding from one's experience of God's Mercy, i.e., the will to embrace. Such an interpretation more clearly articulates how Christians are invited and empowered to imitate Christ in pursuing the difficult work of reconciliation according to the law of embrace, a power no less than divine grace. The strength of Volf's argument calls the Church to visualize the beauty and drama embedded in the concept of embrace and realize how important it is to offer it as a work of love. An embrace rooted in God and imprinted on every person becomes translated as a work of love that promotes life and reconciliation.

The call to embrace mirrors back to one's neighbor, who has profoundly shaped one's relationship with relationship with God. Forgiveness and the will to embrace must come from the depths of a person's own heart and willingness; in that sense, even the will to embrace the other results from an act of prior grace.[64] Volf's quick move from *being embraced* by God to the *will to embrace* others—since to receive grace means to become an agent of grace—reflects his strong practical emphasis. As a result, he employs the interpersonal categories of self and

64. Cf. "Conversations with Miroslav Volf," Part II, 91.

other, identity and difference. The grace of embrace gives the person a new identity by decentering the self and patterning it upon Jesus, making him capable of the will to embrace. The will to embrace the other through self-giving love is truly a mark of a Christian.

Mercy as the will to embrace assists in retrieving a robust theology of grace. It empowers the person to forgive and love his enemies despite their transgressions. This springs from the experience of God's unconditional and indiscriminate love—that is why, precisely, the will to embrace, as Volf consistently claims, is indiscriminate. The claim is radical, and its radicality is socially significant. The will to embrace is before any judgment about others, except identifying them in their humanity; everyone, regardless of their background, actions, or identity, should be viewed with a predisposition of acceptance and openness. This is the initial posture or stance one takes toward the other—a willingness to embrace and an openness to make space for the other. Volf reminds us that "at the heart of the cross is Christ's stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating a space in Himself for the other to come in. The arms of Christ are open—a sign of space in God's self and an invitation for the other to come in."[65]

No one is outside Volf's indiscriminate will embrace; however, the embrace itself is discriminate, for the truth must be told and justice attended to. Hence, the will to embrace intrinsically entails the determination of justice and the recognition of wrongdoing. "The will to embrace includes the will to rectify the wrongs that have been done, and it includes the will to reshape the relationships to correspond to justice."[66] The will

65. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace,* 126.

66. Volf, "Forgiveness, Reconciliation, & Justice: A Christian Contribution to a More Peaceful Social Environment," *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, eds. Raymond G. Helmick, S.J. and Rodney L. Petersen (Philadelphia & London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001, 43.

to embrace Mercy becomes a dynamic and relational process. It is not simply about pardoning sins but actively attempting to build bridges of understanding and compassion—in fact, this is a recurring theme throughout Pope Francis' teachings. This approach challenges individuals and communities to rethink their attitudes toward justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It suggests that genuine Mercy involves a willingness to go beyond the self and to create a space where healing and new relationships can flourish.

Furthermore, placing emphasis and importance on the will to embrace brings to the fore a critical dimension of Mercy as an active and dynamic choice. The "will" signifies intentionality and volition, suggesting that Mercy is not merely a divine attribute to be admired but a divine action to be emulated. It involves a continuous and conscious decision to extend oneself toward the other, reflecting God's unceasing desire to reach out to humanity. Kasper describes this reaching out as God's "yes" to humankind. He writes, "Mercy is the good, comforting, uplifting, hope-granting message, on which we can rely in every situation and trust and build upon, both in life and death. Under the mantle of Mercy, there is a place for every one of goodwill. It is our refuge, our hope, and our consolation."[67] Thus, embodying this merciful embrace calls for a responsive and proactive spirituality. It requires that the Church, as the Body of Christ, perpetually manifest God's Mercy through her actions—be it through liturgical expressions, pastoral care, social justice initiatives, or ecological stewardship.

In light of Pope Francis' theology, mercy as the will to embrace involves decentering the self and reaching out to others. Mercy as the will to embrace excludes and deprives

67. Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life, trans. William Madges* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2013), 111.

no one of God's Mercy. In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Francis writes, "Mercy is the foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in Mercy."[68] Without denouncing the rich and the powerful, the Church must have a heart for the poor, the sick and the disabled, the marginalized and discriminated by society, the drug addicts, alcoholics, criminals, the homeless, and those experiencing great deprivation. Of course, the Church cannot justify the sin, but Mercy as the will to embrace moves the Church to attend to sinners with great Mercy.

All attempts to respond to and live out Jesus' commandment to love one's enemies is impossible by sheer human power alone—with it is the power that comes from the love of God. This call—Mercy as the will to embrace—demands a human and Christian largesse and restraint that breaks up the cycle of evil and the vicious cycle of violence and counterviolence, establishing peace in their lives. Just as God's self-giving love has embraced the person and is capable of the will to embrace the enemies through self-giving love, so Christ's love provokes love in him for the forgiveness of sins and the love of neighbor, including the enemies. The offer of forgiveness—Mercy as the will to embrace—in the movement from exclusion to embrace is divine. The will to embrace stresses the connection—within the grace of one's experience of God's Mercy—between the possibility of repentance, forgiveness of sins, and the love of enemies.

68. Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus,* paragraph 10.

Conclusion

A Theology of Embrace

Looking at human experience and history, the command to love one's enemy is undeniably challenging, and yet is one of the most important Chrisztian commandments. While it seems more difficult to practice in contexts of wars—because simply suppressing personal feelings of hatred towards the enemy is not enough since Jesus calls for concrete action—the struggle to embrace the call to love one's enemy is also evidently tricky in the life and mission of the Church. Whether it was the persecution of Jews and heretics, the crusades, or the wars of religion, the Church's behavior and actions reflect her constant efforts to be faithful to Christ's commandment.

The call to love the enemy includes wars, church history, and societal conflicts. It also extends to everyday situations – whether towards the unfriendly neighbor or among strained family relationships between professional rivals, political competitors, and other aspects of life. Is it even realistic to love one's enemies? Is this commandment merely utopian, placing an excessive burden on individuals? Can a mother forgive and love the person who took the life of her child? Can forgiveness be extended to the murderers? How can a daughter forgive her Father for sexually abusing her? Can a nation forgive a government responsible for the tortures and killings of thousands of its citizens? Moreover, what happens if there is no offer of resistance to evil and people choose to pardon instead of demanding justice? Does this reward the unjust?

Mindful of and as a response to these situations, a theology of embrace challenges the idea that renouncing violence and practicing forgiveness leads to a loss or disadvantage. Instead, it raises the question of what happens when there is

no forgiveness and when people respond to wrongs with more wrongs – a retributive mindset of seeking an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This attitude perpetuates a cycle of violence and revenge. As stated more positively, a theology of embrace empowers each person by highlighting and emphasizing his will to embrace and his capacity for forgiveness and reconciliation.

In light of the horrific atrocities of the twentieth century, a theology of embrace offers a fresh perspective and practical framework for heeding the call to love and forgive. It has become evident that Mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation —while often deemed extraordinary acts—are also practical, possible, and sensible. Just as God continuously desires, welcomes, and embraces humanity, a theology of embrace offers a vision of forgiveness and reconciliation as the constant desire for a relationship with the other—all grounded in love, Mercy, justice, and truth.

Mercy and the Human Experience of Embrace

The act of embracing is very close to the human experience. It presents itself in various relationships and situations—be it between friends, couples, parents to children, or during moments of welcoming and farewell, as well as celebrations and losses. Whatever the case may be, embrace demonstrates close encounters. It is always relational and thus includes a desire for and step toward the other person. Through such characteristics, the image of embrace makes Mercy a very human, personal, and concrete act.

Just as embrace entails movement from the self toward the other, Mercy is the movement from the victim toward the oppressor. It pictures a dynamic relationship where the offer of forgiveness and reconciliation, respect, and justice are at

work. The offer of forgiveness and pursuit of reconciliation are movements of decentering of the self. As embrace, Mercy calls for an active desire and will of the other. Mercy is always the grace-driven movement from exclusion to embrace.

Furthermore, human experience reveals the reality of embrace as a risk and place of vulnerability. As seen in Volf's phenomenology of embrace, the second step entails waiting – a phase that opens up the possibility of rejection. As with any embrace, the offer of forgiveness and reconciliation should not be forced or coerced. It is non-threatening, non-aggressive—as any offer and show of Mercy should be—but does not also lessen the gravity of offenses. A transformative embrace entails a willingness to listen, openness to dialogue, and the courage to forgive. At the same time, it constantly seeks for and does not discard truth and justice. Mercy as embrace is a risk—sometimes hesitant, yet always the hopeful will to embrace—but always a grace.

The image of embrace places Mercy at the heart of the Church's theology and pastoral praxis, all because Mercy is at the heart of God's self-revelation. Thus, Mercy is not only what Christians do but should be at the heart of their identity. As an embrace, the offer of forgiveness and reconciliation is not only a response to the call to love one's enemies; more importantly, it is a bold affirmation and declaration of the experience of being embraced by God.

Embrace is one of the first human experiences. After the long, tiring, and risky labor, the mother tenderly embraces and brings her baby close to her heart. *Nang may pag-aaruga at pag-ibig, niyayakap ng ina ang kanyang anak.* Same goes with Mercy. It is one of the first experiences we have of God. Even before we can embrace others, God has already embraced us in his love and Mercy – even made more concretely and tangibly

in the person of Jesus Christ. God, the prodigal Father, always desires for us, runs towards us, and welcomes and transforms us with his merciful embrace. *Bago pa man tayo magpatawad, pinatawad na tayo ng Diyos. Bago pa man tayo makapagmahal, minahal na tayo ng Diyos.*

CATECHETICAL FORMATION FOR PDL VOLUNTEERS
BASED ON POPE FRANCIS' TEACHING ON ACCOMPANIMENT, INCLUSIVITY, AND DIALOGUE

Michelle A. Vincoy

Introduction

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). This is the missionary mandate of the risen Jesus sending his followers to preach the Gospel to every corner of the earth. "...It is incumbent upon every believer to be a bringer of the Good News to others: 'It is unthinkable that a person should believe the Word and submit himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn'" (*EN*, 24).[1]

Jesus' "'mandate words': go, teach, proclaim, make disciples, baptize, announce"[2] still echo until today, the twenty-first century. In our present era, the Second Vatican Council declared that "the entire Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is the fundamental task of the People of God" (*AG* 35). In its essence, the mission of evangelization is not just a

1. Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr., *Faith and the New Evangelization* (Manila, Philippines: Gift of God Publications, 2013), 56.

2. Ibid., 7.

private obligation of a few individual Christians but a common task and mission of the entire Church.[3]

Pope Francis and new evangelization are closely associated since he started his papacy in 2013, just after the Synod on New Evangelization was concluded. This was the major theme in his first exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, in 2013, immediately after his election to the papacy. He writes at the start of this important evangelization document:

> I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord" (*EG* 3).

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* serves as a blueprint for new evangelization. In that document, he outlines his vision for the Church's mission in the modern world and the principles of the new evangelization. Some of the important key principles are encounter with Christ, inclusivity, empowerment of the laity, missionary discipleship, accompaniment, and synodality.

The Call to Missionary Discipleship

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes, "Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: We no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries,' but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples'" (*EG* 120). In his desire to encourage

3. Matthew Vellanickal, *Church: Communion of Individual Churches Biblico-Theological Perspectives on the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (India: St. Pauls, 2010), 283.

everyone to be a missionary, Pope Francis particularly coined the term *missionary discipleship* in *Evangelii Gaudium.*

Succinctly, this calls for all the baptized to become "missionary disciples" (*EG* 119, 21). In those moments that we fail to recognize that the laity are members of the Body of Christ, Pope Francis reminds the Church is all the baptized, and that includes the laity, which is also called to become missionary disciples.

Missionary discipleship signifies disciples who are proactive and intentional when it comes to looking for opportunities to encounter Christ and to help others do the same. It is an interpersonal approach to evangelization that requires a commitment to engaging others on a personal level and deepening that relationship to allow faith-sharing to take place. Becoming a missionary disciple is never an initiative of a believer or group, or a consequence of ordination but bore out from our baptism. Pope Francis explains this in his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*:

> In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients (*EG* 120).

In the hope of Pope Francis of a Church that is "missionary disciples" (*EG* 24, 119-21), there is no more dichotomy between the two—there is no disciple nor missionary but missionary disciples as the Church as a whole is both "anointed" and "going out to others." In Pope Francis' effort to call all the baptized to engage in active evangelization, he has proposed several

themes, concepts, and ideas in order to advance the missionary renewal of the Church through missionary discipleship.

Pathways Towards Missionary Discipleship According to Pope Francis

The Call to Accompaniment

The word accompaniment has been related to the Spanish word *compañero* meaning a friend and in the most casual sense, accompaniment simply mean a person being in the presence of or journeying with another. It denotes an expression of solidarity with other human beings, of journeying on a common path.

From this, we can interpret accompaniment as an expression of love, mercy, and solidarity with the poor and marginalized—to all those who are excluded. In simple terms, accompaniment is the ability of the Church of being with and walking with the poor, neglected, and marginalized. Accompaniment requires the formation of listening and attentiveness to what happens to the lives of others... "becoming like Jesus as he reveals himself in the Gospels: close to people, able to listen, to heal, to console; patient, and not seeking to demand but to manifest the tenderness of his Father's heart."[4] Cultivating the values of encounter using active listening—without agenda, but simply being present to the other person is an important component of accompaniment.

In the case of the PDLs, it is evident that there is a deeper need for them to be accompanied as they serve their sentence in the penitentiary. Based on the interviews, it is apparent that

4. *Final Document of the Amazon Synod*, http://secretariat.synod.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html (accessed August 8, 2023).

there is a profound longing for someone to accompany them on their faith journey. Accompaniment involves journeying with the PDLs not only physically but, more importantly, spiritually and emotionally. They must be accompanied in terms of providing spiritual guidance, prayerful support, and opportunities for religious exploration and growth, such as a regular recollection in addition to attending the catechetical program. In this way, PDLs are initiated into deeper faith formation, motivating them to "walk with" and accompany their fellow PDLs.

The Call to Inclusivity

Pope Francis calls for an inclusive Church. Pope Francis reiterated the Second Vatican Council image of the Church as the "People of God" where everyone is invited without distinction, because God's mercy wills that everyone will be saved as God excludes no one. According to Pope Francis, inclusivity is an aspect of mercy that reaches out to everyone without regard for social conditions, language, race, culture, or religion. It is manifested in the love of each person as God loves them.

In the interview with the PDLs, the age range of those who attend the catechetical program ranges from 19 to 80, with the majority being adults, and there are also several senior citizens. The many predicaments of the PDLs show the need for inclusivity in the catechetical program, inclusive in the sense that everyone's needs are looked after and those with greater needs are given immediate attention.

Inclusivity ensures that all PDLs, regardless of their background, ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics, are treated with dignity and respect. It acknowledges and values the diversity within the prison population. Inclusive environments foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect, which can help reduce tensions and conflicts among inmates. When

PDLs feel included and supported, they will feel more motivated to participate in the catechetical programs, recollections, and other opportunities for self-improvement.

The Call to Dialogue

Pope Francis has held up dialogue as the path toward renewed evangelization. This is the path of evangelization that Pope Francis is calling the missionary disciples to live, becoming zealous for a "culture of encounter" and seeking to discover Christ in all people and in all situations. He said, "You can't evangelize without dialogue. It's impossible" for it is obvious that dialogue is a necessary moment of evangelization but "during dialogue, you begin from where these people come from."[5] Dialogue opens the heart to Christ and allows the missionary disciples to move in the living vitality of the Holy Spirit, thus allowing the missionary disciples to be used as instruments of healing and transformation for the world.

The catechetical formation program, such as that offered by the PJPS, creates opportunities for PDLs to build supportive relationships and networks within the prison community. Through various activities, sharing, and reflection provided by the catechetical formations, PDLs can connect with their fellow inmates. Here, they can find emotional support, encouragement, and solidarity, which are crucial for coping with the challenges of incarceration. Hence, the need for good dialogue between and among PDLs is reinforced by having more updated and tailor-fit catechetical modules. Meaningful dialogue can contribute to rehabilitation by promoting personal growth,

5. "Pope Francis Homily: Pope: Grace, Docility and Dialogue Are Keys to Evangelization," *National Catholic Register,* May 8, 2014, https://www.ncregister.com/news/pope-grace-docility-and-dialogue-are-keys-to-evangelization (accessed August 8, 2023).

self-reflection, and positive behavioral change among the PDLs.

The above reflections on accompaniment, inclusivity, and dialogue as pathways to missionary discipleship were extracted from Pope Francis' documents, speeches, messages, and general audiences and are not exhaustive of all his contributions towards missionary discipleship. For him, an initial step, such as responding to the call of accompaniment, inclusivity, and dialogue, contributes towards missionary consciousness and engagement.

Directory for Catechesis 2020: Call to a Renewed Catechesis

As the Universal Church seeks a path to missionary renewal that struggles through a pandemic-ridden world, the long-awaited *Directory for Catechesis* from the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization arrives when the Church needs it most. The new Directory confirms the intricate link between evangelization and catechesis that unites the Church to witness the Gospel, ongoing formation, maturation of faith, and forming a community of disciples.

Catechesis is within the realm of evangelization. Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, said in a press conference on June 25, 2022, "In this relationship, the primacy belongs to evangelization, not to catechesis."[6] This was thoroughly explained in the *Directory for Catechesis* 2020. The Directory carefully explains that catechesis accompanies a dynamic process of internalizing the Gospel involving the whole person,

6. Arch. Salvatore Fisichella, "Press Conference to present the Directory for Catechesis," *Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization*, June 25, 2020, https://press.vatican.va/ (accessed August 17, 2023).

including his/her life experience, which is a form of spiritual action—typically an inculturation of Christian faith. It is a document of the Universal Church that encourages the drafting or revising of national and local directories to adapt to the local catechetical opportunities and challenges in particular churches. The Directory gives more emphasis on (1) the primacy of the kerygma in all catechetical activities; (2) the dynamic process of evangelization and catechesis within it as a spiritual action above all; (3) the pedagogy of God that inspires the pedagogy of the Church in catechetical tasks of initiation, education, and ongoing formation in Christian discipleship; (4) catechesis in digital culture; (5) the globalization of culture; (6) bioethical issues that impact catechesis; (7) the "way of beauty" in catechesis; and (8) catechesis that accompanies with mercy the poor and people with disabilities, migrants, and *prisoners.*

The new Directory emphasizes not only the teaching of the faith but also the accompaniment of those being instructed/catechized as it states, "In his proclamation of the Kingdom, Jesus seeks, encounters, and welcomes people in the concrete life situations" (*DC* 198). Concrete life situations include people in the various stages of life such as children and teenagers (*DC* 236-243), young people (*DC* 244-256), pre-adolescents (*DC* 246-247), adults (*DC* 257-265), elderly (*DC* 266-268), and those persons with disabilities (*DC* 269-272), migrants (*DC* 273-276), and prisoners (*DC* 281-282).

The desire of Pope Francis to have an inclusive catechesis is so clear in the Directory as it includes catechesis for persons that are usually not the priority of the majority such as the migrants, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and prisoners. This is precisely the inspiration of the writer to create context-based/adult catechetical modules adapted for the prisoners.

Philippine Jesuit Prison Service' (PJPS) Catechetical Formation Program for the PDL Volunteers of NBP

For more than a decade now, the writer has had the opportunity to visit the four camps of the New Bilibid Prison, the largest prison facility in the Philippines, and has done outreach activities inside this national penitentiary that houses more than 20,000 persons deprived of liberty (PDLs).[7]

PDL refers to a detainee, inmate/prisoner, or another person under confinement or custody in any other manner. However, to prevent labeling, branding, or shaming by the use of these or other derogatory words, the term "prisoner" has been replaced by this new and neutral phrase "person deprived of liberty" under Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

PDLs in the national penitentiary are classified according to their sentence—they can either be put in Maximum, Medium, or Minimum Security Camps for the whole duration of serving their sentence. Most, if not all, PDLs inside the Maximum compound stay for ten years and more inside the Maximum Security Camp. PDLs inside the maximum camp can also be assigned to other camps (Medium and Minimum) to complete their sentence.

7. The New Bilibid Prison (NBP) in Muntinlupa, Metro Manila is the main insular penitentiary designed to house the prison population of the Philippines. Currently, there are about 33,000 PDLs that are incarcerated in NBP. Being the largest prison facility in the country, NBP also caters to several traditional faith groups--Catholic, Muslim, and Jews aside from the various religious denominations that are active in prison ministries such as *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, Evangelicals, Aglipayan and other Christian groups including Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Orthodox, Methodist, and Seventh Day Adventist.

The writer collaborated with the Philippine Jesuit Prison Service (PJPS),[8] a socio-pastoral apostolate of the Society of Jesus (Philippine Province). PJPS caters to the needs of the PDLs and the immediate family of the PDLs. They provide services and holistic rehabilitation to the corrections community, particularly with the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor)[9] in Muntinlupa City. With PJPS' advocacy with the poor, the writer sees an opportunity to live out her call to respond to Jesus' invitation to care for the needs of the poor. The writer has been serving the prison facility since 2012, preparing programs and activities where her students interacted with the PDLs. From these brief encounters and experiences with the PDLs, the writer observed that there are many opportunities to help in the spiritual formation of the PDLs inside the camps and to cope with life inside the prison facilities.

In her interview with the former PJPS Directors about the conduct of religious activities in the prison camps, she learned that regular liturgical celebrations such as Eucharist and Confession are held in the chapels of each camp. Through interaction with the PDLs, the writer has seen the sincerity and religiosity of the many PDLs manifested particularly during liturgical celebration. She deeply senses the prayerfulness whenever the Eucharist is celebrated.

Aside from this liturgical celebration in the prison camps, there is also a catechetical formation for the PDLs. The PJPS organizes the program and they have been using the diocesan catechetical modules for their catechism classes. The modules are adjusted "on the spot" based on the needs of the PDLs.

8. Philippine Jesuit Prison Service Foundation Inc., (PJPS) is a non-stock, non-profit organization that provides services, holistic rehabilitation, to the corrections community particularly with the Bureau of Corrections.

9. Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) in Muntinlupa City.

The chaplains give the catechesis and train the PDL chapel volunteers to become catechists. Most of the attendees of the catechism are the chapel workers/volunteers and other PDLs who are Catholics. This does not usually exceed 20-30 PDLs per session.

In this context, the writer sees an opportunity to improve the quality of catechetical formation given to the PDLs because the catechetical modules given to them are diocesan modules, which are basically generic and do not fit the context of the PDLs. Given the contexts of the PDLs inside the prison facility, they must use a tailor-fit module that would fit their needs and context/situation for their integral faith formation.

Catechesis with Adults as Chief Form of Catechesis

The Church has not only recognized but also prioritized catechetical renewal, especially after the Second Vatican Council. This validation of the importance of catechesis can be found in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, which stated, "It (catechetical instruction) should be carefully imparted, not only to children and adolescents but also to young people and even to adults" (*CD* 14).

The *General Directory for Catechesis* has forcefully invited the Church and Christian communities to effect a paradigm shift for the whole catechetical ministry as it proclaims that the catechesis of adults is the central element and point of reference for all other forms of catechesis.[10] To quote *NDC*, "Because of its importance and all other forms of catechesis

10. Jerome Vallabaraj, *Delving into the World of the Catechetical Education of Adults: A Multi-Perspective Elaboration* (Bangalore, India: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2008), 7.

are oriented in some way to it, the catechesis of adults must have high priority at all levels of the Church."[11]

The ultimate goal of catechesis with adults is to lead individuals to "attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). This involves growing in likeness to Christ, embodying his virtues, and living by his teachings. Thus, catechesis should not just be given to children but to adults, as they also need a catechesis that will support and promote the growth of an adult faith in an adult Church.

Furthermore, "many Catholic adults practice their faith and desire to deepen it...others who have been baptized but who have not received a comprehensive catechesis or who no longer practice their faith need to be renewed through an enthusiastic preaching of the word and a vibrant re-evangelization."[12] In this vein, the author was motivated to craft an adult catechesis for adult PDLs.

Catechesis with Prisoners: Special Form of Catechesis with Adults

Catechesis with prisoners is considered a special form of catechesis with adults, emphasizing the unique challenges and opportunities for spiritual growth in the context of penitentiary. It requires a pastoral and contextual approach that recognizes their particular circumstances and their needs as individuals within correctional facilities. Effective adult catechesis for prisoners prioritizes personal encounter and accompaniment, offering the PDLs an opportunity to encounter Christ's love and mercy in a tangible way. Some of these may involve providing spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, and

11. Unites States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington DC, USA: USCCB, 2005), 187

12. *NDC*, p. 188

opportunities for sacramental reconciliation and Eucharistic celebration, etc.

Adult catechesis with prisoners aims to integrate faith formation with the lived realities of incarcerated individuals, helping them to find meaning, hope, and redemption in their circumstances. Catechesis with prisoners also plays a pivotal role in their reintegration and rehabilitation into society after completing their sentence. Good adult catechesis will help them prepare for "free" society upon release. As such, the catechetical formation to be given to PDLs may include providing practical support and assistance with social and spiritual resources to facilitate a positive transition into the community. An example may be regular spiritual recollections or retreats to deepen their catechesis.

Catechesis with PDLs/prisoners as a particular form of catechesis with adults seeks to proclaim the Gospel message of hope, redemption, and reconciliation within the unique context of correctional facilities, offering them the opportunity for spiritual growth, healing, and renewal amidst the challenges of being incarcerated.

The *Directory for Catechesis* 2020 mentions the various places where catechesis can be given, including "the home, the office, educational, cultural, and recreational environments, prisons, etc." Often less formal than Christian community settings, these places are suitable for "casual catechesis" because they foster more familiar relationships (*DC*, 223). Indeed, as a Church that responds to the call of the new evangelization, we cannot overlook the space of prison as an informal place to conduct casual catechesis with adults.

The Need for an Updated Adult Catechesis with PDLs in the National Bilibid Prisons

Given that all individuals incarcerated in the National Bilibid Prisons are adults, it is fitting to offer them catechism tailored to their age group. Consequently, the author suggests that catechesis serves as an ongoing education in faith that adapts to the various life stages, as indicated by the statement, "catechesis is thus a permanent school of the faith and follows the major stages of life" (*CT* 39).

In giving catechesis, aside from considering their readiness and age, it is also essential to consider that the prisoners, as a community, belong to a group of believers in particular situations. The *Directory for Catechesis* 2020 mentions the basic content of the catechesis directed to prisoners:

> The fundamental content of catechesis among prisoners, which often has a casual and experimental character, is the kerygma of salvation in Christ, understood as forgiveness and liberation. The direct encounter with Sacred Scripture is the setting for the proclamation of the faith, which if accepted can console and heal even the life most devastated by sin, in addition to opening spaces for reeducation and rehabilitation (*DC* 282).

Since prisoners are persons who live in a specific environment and with special social conditions, they must be given an adapted and context-based catechesis in order "to help them respond to God's uniquely personal love for them within the context of their situation."[13] Prisoners/incarcerated individuals are also members of the Church. Hence, the Church has special concern for them.

From the informal and formal interviews and observations conducted by the writer, it is evident that the PDL volunteers of PJPS for their catechetical formation program urgently need

13. *National Catechetical Directory,* 210.

a catechetical program that is context-based and tailor-fit for them, which we refer to as "adult catechesis" since all catechetical ministries with adults are contextual.[14] Adult catechesis holds significant importance for PDLs for several reasons: adult catechesis provides prisoners with opportunities for deeper spiritual growth and development as it offers a deeper understanding of their faith, allowing them to grow their relationship with God as mature adults. Furthermore, adult catechesis can play a crucial role in the process of healing and redemption for PDLs as it provides a space for reflection, forgiveness, and reconciliation, allowing individuals to confront their past mistakes and seek spiritual renewal.

Participation in adult catechesis programs for PDLs also allows them to connect with others who share their faith and values. It provides them with a sense of community and support, which can be instrumental in their personal growth and rehabilitation. With adult catechesis, PDLs are further empowered to take ownership of their spiritual journey and encouraged to reflect critically on their faith, leading them to rehabilitation and transformation in their lives.

Methodology

The writer applied the descriptive and exploratory-qualitative approaches to research. However, in the context of theology and pastoral ministry, the method is *Pastoral-Theological Approach* using Fr. Albert Alejo's *D.A.R.E. Framework* using the following steps.

First, personal and informal/semi-structured interviews and observations with the PJPS chaplains, BuCor personnel in charge of education, and selected volunteer PDLs will be

14. Vallabaraj, *Delving Into the World of the Catechetical Education of Adults*, Introduction, 11.

conducted to better grasp of the situations and the process of the faith formation program given to the PDLs. This is the contextualization aspect of evangelization and catechesis as reflected in the Church in the Philippines, noting that catechesis in prison is just part of the overall catechetical ministry of the Church in the Philippines.

As this is a qualitative study, the PDLs who will participate in the small group discussion will be chosen by snowball sampling. A small group of 15-20 PDL chapel volunteers inside Maximum Security Camp was interviewed and consulted. In the D.A.R.E. framework, this is the *descriptive* part.

Second, the writer will synthesize and analyze all the data gathered during informal interviews and observations will be synthesized and analyzed by the writer. Thematic analysis of the transcripts will be undertaken, which involves labeling the themes, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting them to focus on the themes and subthemes of the interviews. This is the a*nalysis* part of the D.A.R.E. framework.

Third, after analyzing the data taken from the interviews and observations, this step will involve a *reflection* stage. The writer will use the interview results, the writer will use the results to correlate with theology and Church teachings specifically regarding the Church's mission of new evangelization. The writer will take a closer look at specifically the ministry of laity people referred to Pope Francis as missionary disciples highlighting the ways of forming missionary disciples through the themes of accompaniment, inclusivity, and dialogue.

Fourth is the *engagement* taking place as this will be the stage where the catechetical modules will be crafted. Using the information/data that may be gathered from the PDL volunteers' informal conversations, group discussions, testimonies, sharing, reflections, and interviews it will generate a variety of

learning activities such as liturgies, scripture readings, prayer experiences, ecumenical dialogue, and other related activities that can be used to contextualize the catechetical modules.

The final step is the production of catechetical modules for the group of PDL volunteers and catechists. The modules are adapted to the needs and situations of the PDLs in the NBP camps inspiring them into becoming missionary disciples using the topic accompaniment, inclusivity, and dialogue.

Key Findings from the Interviews and Thematic Analysis

With the interviews and the analysis of the writer, it is indeed glaring that there is a need for some balance between the constraints of time, resources, and the goals of catechetical instructions for the PDLs. While the emphasis on chaplain-led talks and minimal activities may limit the depth of engagement and interaction, there are opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of catechetical instructions through innovative teaching methods and a responsive approach to meet the PDL needs. These can be done by checking the structure and content of the catechetical program and whether it is adapted to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the inmate population. Flexibility to the schedule and responsiveness to the evolving needs of the inmate community are key to ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the catechetical program within the prison setting.

In this case, it becomes obvious that there is a lack of context-based catechetical modules for the PDLs of New Bilibid Prisons; generally, the modules being used in the PJPS catechetical classes are either the general modules provided by the Diocese of Muntinlupa which are not context-based or a

draft module created by the chaplain to respond to the needs of the PDLs.

The acknowledgment of the lack of context-based catechetical modules for PDLs at NBP underscores the importance of addressing this gap better to serve the spiritual needs of the incarcerated population. By developing materials that are specifically tailored to the realities of prison life and the experiences of PDLs, chaplains and pastoral ministers can enhance the effectiveness and relevance of catechetical efforts within the prison setting. An appropriate content, presentation, and methodology would greatly contribute to the transformation of those being catechized; it has the potential to facilitate transformation in the lives of those being catechized in this case, the PDLs.

By integrating contextualized content, the modules aim to inspire conversion, deepen spiritual growth, and empower the PDLs to live out their faith in authentic and meaningful ways such as becoming missionary disciples within the prison setting.

The "AID" Catechetical Modules[15]

The adult catechetical modules with the prisoners of National Bilibid Prisons take on these three pivotal themes of A-I-D (Accompaniment, Inclusivity, Dialogue) with the hope to initially form the PDLs into becoming missionary disciples inside prison camps and even outside the confines of prison halls once they are released from the prison facilities. The writer carefully analyzed and reflected upon the three themes, which are the felt needs of the PDLs based on the interviews and observations.

15. The structure of the modules (3R's) was formulated by Fr. Renato De Guzman, SDB, the author's second reader. It was his personal template.

These themes can be easily remembered by the PDLs as they are relate to the support (*ayuda*) they have been asking for and receiving since the time they entered the prison facilities. Aid, or "*ayuda*" in Filipino, is a very important word for prisoners. It means help in whatever form it may be—food, money, or other material things that would help alleviate their suffering in the prison facility.

In this case, *ayuda* is not in the form of food, money, or anything material, but rather a religious formation that will motivate and inspire them to "re-hear" the call of Jesus to become his missionary disciples and hopefully make Jesus and his Kingdom a visible reality in the context of their daily lives inside the prison facilities. In this article, the acronym AID, which stands for accompaniment, inclusivity, and dialogue, is explored as pathways to live out the call of Pope Francis to missionary discipleship

The general lesson structure is the 3Rs: Remember, Reflect, and Respond. There are three major themes: Accompaniment, Inclusivity, and Dialogue—each comprising four lessons or sessions. There are twelve sessions for the AID catechetical program for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). The three major themes of AID were subdivided into four sessions, bringing about twelve sessions. For each theme, the same Word of God has been used to emphasize the continuity of each topic. The doctrines, worship, and moral aspects were also given emphasis as they were not presented all at once in one session.

The catechesis proper starts with an Opening Prayer and a short Introduction to the lesson. This is followed by '*Remember*,' where the Text in Context is placed, exposing the participants to the story of the Word of God.

The topic is then developed in the Exposition/Deepening. This is the *'Reflect'* part, in which the participants are

immersed in the essential content of the faith taken from the primary source (Sacred Scriptures), secondary sources (Church Teachings), and the Filipino human experience. This is where the *kerygma* of faith happens. In this part, the PDL participants are provided with the dynamic mutual relatedness of the three dimensions of faith, i.e. doctrine, worship, and moral (D-W-M).

The importance of human experience was also reaffirmed by the *Directory of Catechesis* 2020 when it mentioned that "human experience is integral to catechesis, in its identity and process and also in contents and method, because it is not only the place in which the word of God is proclaimed but also the space in which God speaks..." (*DC*, 197).

The integration of human experience in adult catechesis with prisoners can serve as a bridge to discovering God in the ordinariness of life inside prison camps.

The last part is the '*Respond*' part where the integration of life values and individual and common action are situated. The *synodal* aspect of catechesis is integrated in the individual and common action part as it encourages the participants to not only personally reflect on the theme but also encourage their fellow participants to reflect as a community of missionary disciples journeying together. The integration of the Synthesis of Kerygma and Mystagogy before the conclusion is a response to the call of the Church to the call of new evangelization.

To cap the module, a *celebration* of faith is included. This celebration aspect is the *mystagogical* aspect of the catechetical module. It is usually in the form of a Marian prayer service, a celebration of the sacrament, or Filipino popular piety.

Scope of the Modules

The adult catechetical modules are prepared for the Catholic male adult PDLs of National Bilibid Prisons (NBP)

camps who participate in the PJPS Catechetical Program. Male adult PDLs are between 21-75 years old. The module is designed to be given by a volunteer, formator, and/or facilitator inside the prison camps. They may be a volunteer, religion teacher, catechist, pastoral worker, and/or chaplain. The modules are contextualized or tailor-fit for male adult PDLs and, hence, can only be given to NBP PDLs. The module can also be used by other prison chaplaincy in the country, such as those in the city or provincial jails with male prisoners.

Any jail chaplaincy office could find such a module helpful, especially in the efforts to raise consciousness within their communities concerning evangelization of inmates inside prison facilities. A copy of the module can also be shared with the diocesan or parochial catechetical ministry offices as the modules can be considered as a local catechism. *DC* 2020 emphasized the importance of the local catechisms in catechesis:

> Local catechisms are invaluable instrument for catechesis, which is called to bring the newness of the Gospel into the different cultures of the peoples. In them, the Church communicates the Gospel in a way that is accessible to the person, so that he may encounter it where he lives, in his culture and in his world (*DC*, 403).

Generally, the modules can be utilized for evangelization and Christian formation of male PDLs. The author proposes AID catechetical module composed of twelve sessions inspired by Pope Francis' teachings. Although the catechetical modules are not exhaustive of Pope Francis' teachings, they nevertheless contribute to the much-needed adult catechetical materials for the prisoners of the National Bilibid Prisons (NBP).

The modules are designed to impart knowledge about the Catholic faith and facilitate a deeper encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. The PDLs are invited to experience the

conversion of heart, healing, and spiritual growth through encounters with Christ in Scripture, prayer, sacraments, and community. This transformative journey empowers them to live as authentic disciples of Christ, bearing witness to His love and mercy daily.

Using the "AID" (Accompaniment, Inclusivity, and Discipleship) of Pope Francis' teachings and the kerygmatic-mystagogical-synodality framework, this article has attempted to present a sample catechetical module (see Appendix A and B) using a contextualized template—Remember, Reflect, and Respond. Aside from the key themes of AID, the proposed adult catechetical modules with the PDLs showcase the three important themes of the New Evangelization which are Conversion (Dialogue), Encountering Christ (Inclusivity), and Communion (Accompaniment). Capping the modules is the theme of missionary discipleship which is the living out of the call of Pope Francis.

In the effort of the Church for missionary renewal, catechesis, as one of the tasks of evangelization, is re-emphasized here. A renewed catechesis is a tool for forming missionary disciples out of the believers. Including those in prisons as "as authentic mission territory for evangelization and a frontier laboratory for pastoral action..." (*DC*, 281). Indeed, even inside the prison facility, the call of Pope Francis to missionary discipleship remains all the more pertinent. The prisoners, despite their desperate condition, can be formed to become missionary disciples once they respond to a renewed encounter with God's love.

In the context of the PDLs, it is relevant that they are given an appropriate formation program—one that is context-based and fits their situation. In this way, the PDLs will be further assisted in the deepening and maturing their Christian faith.

Ultimately, a renewed and adaptive catechesis in a prison setting aims to facilitate personal transformation and spiritual growth among incarcerated individuals. By inviting them into a deeper encounter with Jesus and inviting them to respond to His call, catechesis becomes a catalyst for positive change and inner renewal.

Although the challenge of giving authentic formation to these marginalized persons (PDLs) in their difficult situations is vast and demanding, it is consoling to know that even inside prison facilities, PDLs long for a deeper relationship with God. Ironically, many PDLs would share that their experience of incarceration led them to a deeper relationship with God. From the many sharings of the PDLs, they admittedly shared that despite their sins, they still feel loved. In the book of Fr. Eli Lumbo, SJ, he mentioned that PDLs many times have "expressed their gratitude for being imprisoned and called their imprisonment a blessing because this made them know and experience God's love concretely. This was like a breath of fresh air. Amid sin, God's love was experienced."[16]

Lastly, the writer anticipates that the adult catechetical formation will empower the PDL participants to engage meaningfully with their communities, within the prison setting and beyond. Hopefully, the modules will equip the PDLs to contribute positively to their communities' well-being and flourishing and actively participate in building a more just, compassionate, and inclusive society.

16. Eli Rowdy Lumbo, SJ, *Redemption Behind Bars* (Quezon City, Philippines: Jesuit Communications, 2023), 55.

THE ORDER OF THE BLESSING OF ANIMALS IN *COLLECTIO RITUUM:* CRITIQUING ITS THEOLOGY *VIS-À-VIS* ANIMAL ETHICS

Archie R. Magarao, SchP

Introduction

The Rite of Animal Blessing in the *Collectio Rituum* published by St. Pauls Publications-Philippines raises important questions concerning its operative theology. Its operative theology points to how the Catholic Church understands animals vis-à-vis the salvific plan of God, which without question is significantly anthropocentric, and why it blesses animals. To identify the operative theology of the Rite of Animal Blessing, the paper further explores its positive and negative aspects. Moreover, it asks the question of whether the operative theology behind the rite adequately addresses the ethical concerns for animals.

Brief Introduction of The Order of Blessing of Animals in *Collectio Rituum*

The *Collectio Rituum* is a book of rites used in the Philippines which serves as a manual and guide for the celebration of the sacraments and the sacramentals.[1] Its primary purpose is to aid priests and authorized ministers in the celebration of the sacraments and the sacramentals as reformed by Vatican II.[2] The celebrations stipulated in this handy manual are not meant to replace the liturgical celebrations found in the liturgical

1. Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, *Collectio Rituum* (Manila: St. Pauls Publication, 2012), iv.

2. Ibid.

books.[3] In this *Collectio* is found the Rite of Blessing of Animals of which is the main concern of this paper.

Exploring the Theological Foundations of the Order of Blessing of Animals in the *Collectio Rituum*

First, animal blessing is not counted as one of the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church. This suggests that blessing animals, although a ritual practice, is not at the level of being a sacrament, so to speak. Nevertheless, it is given some space in the sacramental[4] life of the Church. Although it is not enough, it is admittedly a good start for animal welfare/concern. This section deals with the non-exhaustive discussion about the operative theology or understanding of animals within the Rite of Animal Blessing in the *Collectio Rituum* of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

On the Introductory Rites

Animal theology can be gleaned primarily from the words of the Introductory Rite of the Order of Blessing of Animals.[5] It is as follows: (1) the animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea; (2) they share in the fortunes of human existence; (3) they have a part in human life; (4) God

3. Ibid., v.

4. By *sacramental,* this paper refers to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (*CCC*) 1667-1668 explication of the term as "sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church...: They are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life... and the use of many things helpful to man." Furthermore, *CCC* 1677 says that "sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church. They prepare men to receive the fruit of the sacraments and to sanctify different circumstances of life." And, compared to the Sacraments, sacramentals are not instituted by Christ.

5. Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, *Collectio Rituum*, 527-528. The enumerations that follow this footnoted sentence are from the Introductory Rites of the Order of the Blessing of Animals.

uses animals in terms of service and as symbolic reminders of the gifts of salvation; (5) animals are made part of the covenant, especially in the covenant with Noah; (6) animals share in Christ's redemption of the entire creation of God; (7) humans thank the Creator for setting them over other creatures of the earth. The following is the referred section of the Introductory Rites:

The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea. They share in the fortunes of human existence and have a part in human life. God, who confers his gifts on all living things, has often used the service of animals or made them symbolic reminders of the gifts of salvation. Animals were saved from the flood and afterwards made a part of the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:9-10). The paschal lamb brings to mind the Passover sacrifice and the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt (Exodus 12:3-14); a giant fish saved Jonah (Jonah 2:1-11); ravens brought bread to Elijah (1 Kings 17:6); animals were included in the repentance enjoined on humans (Jonah 3:7). And animals share in Christ's redemption of all of God's creation. We therefore invoke the divine blessing on these animals (through the intercession of Saint N.). As we do so, let us praise the Creator and thank him for setting us over other creatures of the earth. Let us also ask him that, remembering our human dignity, we may walk always in his law.

It is interesting to note that none of the enumerated precepts above explicitly speaks of the intrinsic value and dignity of nonhuman animals. Perhaps, part of the reason is that the Order of Blessing of Animals came out before magisterial teachings recognizing the inherent value and dignity of animals became a prominent view concerning nonhuman animals. *Laudato Si'* renowned for its magisterium about ecology which includes the recognition of animals' intrinsic

value apart from humans[6] came out only in 2015. Therefore, the text cannot be criticized for such limitation. Yet, it proves that there is a need for a more developed animal theology that informs liturgy.

There are notable insights into animal theology within the text of the Introductory Rites. First, it understands that animals are created by God placed on the same earth as humans. Thus, animals should be respected because they are also willed by God just as humans are. Second, it recognizes that animals have some share in the goods that life can offer. Third, the text is cognizant of the fact that animals are part of human life. Most probably, it considers animals as food and companions to humans, an idea taken up by the *Intercessory* section of the Order of the Blessing of Animals. Fourth, it highlights that animals are God's symbolic reminders of his gift of redemption and that God uses them at his service. This segment reflects the Biblical accounts of animals attending to prophets, e.g. Jonah in the belly of the whale (Jonah 2:1-11) and Elijah being served by ravens with bread (1 Kings 17:6), to name a few. It can be said of the same thing of saints in the Catholic tradition being attended to by animals like St. Anthony of Egypt being assisted by lions and birds, the renowned St. Francis of Assisi who tamed a wolf, St. Anthony de Padua who preached to the birds, etc. This fourth precept speaks theologically of what Paul Tillich asserts regarding humanity's dependence upon the rest of creation that: "salvation of one without the other is unthinkable."[7] Fifth and sixth, it reminds us that animals are part of the covenant between God and humans. God's offer of salvation through the covenant is not exclusive to humans

6. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* no. 140.

7. Paul Tillich, "Redemption of Other Worlds," in *Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings,* ed. Andrew Linzey and Tom Regan, eds. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 106.

but inclusive of nonhuman creatures. Hence, the redemption brought about by Christ embraces humans and nonhumans alike. This eschatological destiny of nonhuman animals should inform our treatment of them.[8] Last, though commendable for its gratitude to the Creator, it goes back again to the theology of dominion. It is assumed that dominion in this context relates to caring stewardship[9] of God's creation, and not the absolute dominion (produced by tyrannical anthropocentrism) Pope Francis is warning against.[10] If "setting over" other creatures is understood in this manner, nonhuman animals are in good hands.

On the Readings

The Creation Narrative in the book of Genesis is the best start concerning animals, particularly Genesis 1:1, 20-28; 2:19-20a; 6:17-23 and Isaiah 11:6-10. These biblical texts are used in the Rite of Animal Blessing in the *Collectio Rituum.* Gen 1:1,20-28 is captioned by the ritual book as "have dominion over all living things that move on the earth" while 2:19-20a carries the subtitle "the man gave names to all the animals." These texts, especially Gen. 1:28, have encouraged, pointed out by Pope Francis, an "unbridled exploitation of nature."[11] Adding up to this is the further interpretation that animals are Godly creatures ordained to be ruled upon and named by humans.

8. Christopher Steck, *All God's Animals: A Catholic Theological Framework for Animals* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University press, 2019), 5.

9. Stewardship is defined in this paper as humans possessing the God-given mandate to take responsibility of caring for the world and all its nonhuman creatures. It rests on the theology of the *Imago Dei* wherein humans, created after God's image, have the special role in creation: a role that sets humans apart from animals.

10. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* no. 68 & 83.

11. Ibid., no. 67.

The notion of dominion, however, has been corrected recently by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* wherein he teaches that dominion is not domination.[12] He has magisterially proposed that God's command in the Book of Genesis rather means tilling and keeping God's Garden, God's world.

'Tilling' refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while 'keeping' means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.[13]

Pope Francis makes it clear that the command in Genesis ought not to be construed as humans having absolute and unlimited rights over other species. Only God has absolute dominion over creation (Lev 25:23), adds *Laudato Si'*.[14] Dominion, in this respect, should be appropriately interpreted as humans acting in God's place, as secondary agents, to take care of creation while benefiting from the mutual and fraternal response of nonhuman creatures to such act of stewardship. This goes to say that when God commanded humans to dominate and name animals, it was not about lordship, but stewardship—a stewardship that recognizes kinship with nonhuman creatures.

Genesis 6: 17-23 in *Collectio Rituum* is subtitled as "of all other living creatures you shall bring two into the ark to live there with you." This, besides what has been aforementioned, notes that nonhuman animals should live *with* humans. Palpable in this text is the divine mandate of kinship among living creatures of God. A similar injunction is observable in another

12. Ibid., no. 67.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

selected text of the readings in the *Collectio Rituum* from Isaiah 11:6-10 subtitled: "Animals will be tame and there shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain." Moreover, the text points out that the knowledge of the Lord guarantees peace among living creatures as stipulated by Isaiah, a knowledge about the eternal will of the Creator that harmony and peace shall reign throughout creation. This sounds like a universal appeal to the inclusive redemptive plan of God—a plan where no one is left behind and all live in everlasting peace. The text further denotes kinship among God's creatures over stewardship. More importantly, the text excludes suffering and pain among nonhuman animals.

The rite uses Psalm 8. Despite the introductory verses about praising God for his creation, the psalmist is noticeably anthropocentric (see verses 4-8). It again picks up the idea of the dominion of humans over God's works (verse 6) emphasizing that God has divinely sanctioned that all of God's nonhuman creatures are put under humanity's feet (verse 6b). It is quite alarming how this psalm can be used to legitimize the destruction of fauna and flora if it is not tampered with by the notion of stewardship or kinship. The optional psalms, namely Psalm 104:1-2a, 10-12,25,27-28 and Psalm 147:5-6,7-8,9-11, are significantly better at being non-anthropocentric as they concentrate on God's care and provision to creatures of their needs.

On the Intercessions

As the intercessory prayer opens with the notion of stewardship, it refrains with the praising of the wonders of God's handiwork. However, the rest of the petitions are anthropocentric. The first petition blesses God for granting humans the ability to train animals to aid human toils. The second blesses

God for giving animals as food for humans. The third petition blesses the Creator for giving animals as companions in view of human comfort. The fourth petition blesses God for his providence because he takes care of the birds of the air. The fifth petition praises God for giving His son, the "Paschal Lamb", to call and make humanity God's children. The last petition praises the Creator for making the lowest creatures means of drawing humans to God's love. Despite some subtleties in the anthropocentrism of the petitions in the rite, the texts remain heavily human-centered. It also understands dominion in terms of nonhuman animals being expedient for human needs. It perceives nonhuman animals as "means" rather than ends in themselves *vis-à-vis* their God-given intrinsic value and dignity. Obviously, the texts do not promote the intrinsic value of nonhuman animals. It sees animals as valuable with respect only to human aid, food, comfort, care, adoption, and means. These all mark a strong anthropocentric theology at the risk of nonhuman animal exclusion and the risk of becoming utilitarian rather than Christian.

On the Prayer of Blessing

The Prayer of Blessing is the highlight of this rite. It is, therefore, important to look closely at its operative theology. There are two options for the prayer. The first option indicates that animals are part of divine provision to humans for both needs and labor. It then invokes the intercession of a saint, most probably St. Francis of Assisi, the dubbed patron saint of animals, for God to grant availability for human use the things they need to maintain, as the prayer goes, decent human life.[15] On the other hand, the second option begins with praise to God for having created all things wisely and on whose goodness

15. *Collectio Rituum,* 535.

has made humans in the divine image to care over other living things,[16] noting the use of the word "over" in relation to caring for other living things. Care is tampered with the anthropocentric notion of dominion. Its succeeding words, again, return to the anthropocentric petition that animals may serve human needs in view of reaching eternal life.[17]

On the Concluding Rite

Similar to the human-centered petitions within the rite, the concluding rite once again perceives nonhuman animals as created by God to help humans. It does not reflect any theological recognition of the intrinsic value of animals. The value it sees in nonhuman animals is always indexed to human needs. It further sees animals in a utilitarian way and nothing else.

The Overall Theology of the Order of Blessing Animals

Imago Dei is the dominant theology operating in the rite for animal blessing. *Imago Dei is* understood as being granted power over other nonhuman creatures, a statement which is directly written in the rite itself. However, the theology of stewardship can also be glimpsed within the rite. To a certain extent, it can even be deduced that the rite has already an inkling of Pope Francis' teaching regarding the interconnectedness of creatures. However, it fails in the aspect of recognizing the intrinsic value of nonhuman creatures. Despite some thrust towards stewardship, the theology of *imago Dei*, which empowers the principle of human domination of nonhuman creatures, overshadows all attempts at a sound theology of

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

stewardship. To some extent, it even eclipses the theology of kinship with other creatures.

Critiquing the Operative Theology of the Rite of Animal Blessing

First, the rite is heavily anthropocentric. Its anthropocentrism grounds itself in the *Imago Dei* which is understood as being created *as* God's image, the human "person is expected to function as God's representative (or steward), advancing the goals and desires of God within the created order."[18] In the rite is found an unfortunate reality that despite epistemic progress in animal concerns, the book of prayers is still caught up in the mire of dissonance concerning theology about animals.[19] The formulation of the rite itself cannot be blamed entirely on the Church's Thomistic framework regarding animal welfare. However, no matter how noble Thomism is, Aseneta has warned that Aquinas remains anthropocentric and his ethical sympathy for animals is deficient.[20] The same deficiency is apparent in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 2415-2418, which the rite adheres to as the go-to official teaching regarding animal welfare. In its human-centeredness, nonhuman animals are inferiorly indexed to humanity. Yet, on a more positive note, the *CCC* still espouses legitimate care for animals by highlighting God's love for them and the saints' kindness to them.[21] This implies further the rejection of the needless suffering and death of animals.

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18. Christopher Steck, *All God's Animals: A Catholic Theological Framework for Animal Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019), 66.

19. Ibid., 43-45.

20. Anatoly Angelo R. Aseneta, "*Laudato Si*' On Non-Human Animals," *Journal of Moral Theology* 6, 2 (June 2017): 231-232.

21. *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* no. 2416.

Second, the rite's repeated notion of animals as aiding human toils; as food, companions, etc. are the perception of animals enshrined in the Catechism itself. These are so-called "legitimate use of animals" as stipulated in *CCC* 2417. However, the same precept grants that the legitimate use of animals must be within reasonable limits. Yet, questions such as what is acceptably "reasonable limits" beg for answers. What does the Church mean precisely by reasonable limits? Indeed, the *CCC* does not clearly define this, but somehow assumes its comprehensibility. What principles and values govern such reasonable limits? What measurement shall be used to guarantee that we are operating within reasonable limits vis-à-vis our use of nonhuman animals? It is again anthropocentric in its theology but a bridled one, no less. But it has to be noted, argues Andrew Linzey, that "the Bible nowhere says that animals are *just* made for human use."[22]

Third, the rite is impoverished of animal care. Andrew Linzey's observation regarding Christian worship is correct as evidenced by the rite critiqued in this paper alone.[23] God is worshipped as if nonhuman animals and plants are invisible.[24] The presider's prayer for the offertory gifts of the bread and wine as fruits of the earth and work of human hands and those sections of prayers in the Sacramentary that mention *all creation rightly gives you praise* have usually escaped liturgical consciousness. For a very long time, liturgy moves as if humans are the only creatures of God! There is an anthropocentric obsession with the self's own value/superiority. Thus, it is not surprising that the prayers, readings, and petitions within the rite for animals talk more about humans and are impoverished

22. Andrew Linzey, *Creatures of the Same God* (New York: Lantern Book, 2007), 103. Italicization is used for emphasis.

23. Ibid., 105.

24. Ibid.

with animal care and definitively deficient with theology on animals. For this reason, the Church still has a lot of things to work on regarding theology on animals and informing its worship with a nuanced and ethically sound theology that is not indexed to humanity's value.

Fourth, the rite is theologically commendable for its consideration that nonhuman animals are likewise part of the Christian sacramental[25] life. The rite in itself speaks of the recognition that nonhuman animals are beneficial in the Christians' journey towards the Creator. It also points out the theological and spiritual truth that nonhuman animals aid human redemption. This can be read in Option 2 of the Prayer of Blessing, where the petition speaks of animals who are serving human needs, being part of God's bountiful resources in earthly life, animals may aid to compel humans to seek eternal life.[26] Moreover, this affirms the covenant between God and Noah—a covenant that includes nonhuman animals—and the cosmic redemption brought about by Christ. For in His saving act, He did not just save humans but the entire creation.[27]

Fifth, the rite, especially in its introductory section, despite admitting that nonhuman animals, "share in Christ's redemption of all of God's creation,"[28] the application of this theological principle is nowhere found in the entire rite. Rather, dominion theology governs all throughout. Hence, it would be good to revise the text of the rite according to the theology of Christ's cosmic redemption: Christ redeemed not just humans but nonhumans as well.

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25. See footnote 4 for the explanation of the terminological use.

26. *Collectio Rituum,* 535.

27. St. Irenaeus, "All Things in Christ," in Andrew Linzey and Tom Regan, eds., *Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2007),

28. *Collectio Rituum,* 528.

Sixth, kinship should supplement the notion of stewardship of creation. While stewardship is laudable with its understanding that humans are God's representative in caring for the rest of creation, it presupposes still a certain amount of human superiority over animals. Meanwhile, kinship diminishes the superiority complex of humans over nonhumans by making them all *relative creatures* or kin to each other. With kinship, the sense of human superiority is replaced by utter respect for nonhumans' God-given intrinsic value and dignity. This view can likewise put an end to abuses toward animals. Peaceful coexistence between humans and animals is better achieved when kinship goes hand-in-hand with stewardship. Stephen Webb notes that "the use of the phrase 'all flesh' in Genesis joins together the human and the animal in a basic kinship of creatureliness under the shared providence of a merciful God."[29]

Ethical Concerns *vis-à-vis* The Order of Blessing Animals

Primarily, one obvious ethical concern towards the rite is its non-signification of nonhuman animals. It is nowhere to be found in the petitions and prayers of the rite. The texts in the rite pay no particular attention to explicating the idea that nonhuman animals are significant in themselves. However, it can be argued that the importance given to animals is present but only in relation to humans. The rite is ethically deficient in recognizing the intrinsic value of nonhuman animals apart from their human use. The rite conveys the idea that the blessing of animals in itself is done out of human prioritization and as an address to human needs, not because nonhuman animals

29. Stephen Webb, *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 20.

are valuable in themselves. It sees the animals' value as being dependent only on humans but not necessarily on God. The fact, however, is that nonhuman animals' value is indexed on God, not on humans! Hence, animals are significant whether they are valuable to humans or not. Moreover, nonhuman animals are included in the cosmic salvation of God. It can be recalled that the teaching of St. Paul in Ephesians 1:10, in this regard, Jesus Christ summed up all things in his redemptive work. Again, this stresses the point that animals' value is indexed on God and not on humans.

Secondly, the rite prays for God's blessing over useful animals to humans. This leaves the question about the fate of those nonhuman animals that are judged not useful to humans. Does the rite morally permit their misuse and abuse? Or are they simply left out into moral oblivion because following the "logic of the line," they are of less moral concern at the moment? Considering these questions can help refine the contents of the prayers within the rite.

Thirdly, the rite also does not care enough about the nonhuman participation in the eschaton. It shallowly recognizes the sharing of nonhumans in Christ's redemptive act to all of God's creation and ends there. The rite pays no more attention to nonhumans' participation in the final redemption brought about by Christ. No petitions or prayers within the rite after the Introductory Rites include the theology of nonhumans' participation in the eschaton. This is important because the present moral attitude toward nonhuman animals is significantly conditioned by the understanding of the eschaton. If, from the start, that the eschaton is understood as an exclusively human event, it will be no surprise that in the here-and-now nonhumans are excluded and that there will be no rendering of the respect they deserve as fellow creatures of the same God.

Fourthly, the Order of Blessing of Animals lacks the zeal for respecting all forms of life. It is too human-centered that it has diminished the value of animals. It has reduced their value to mere utility. It sees them as expendables. Moreover, it has made humanity the reference point in assessing the value of nonhuman creatures, which is tantamount to the refusal of recognizing the Creator's value for nonhuman creatures at the beginning of the creation of the world. On this note, the story of Balaam's ass, who after beatings pleaded for respect and fair treatment, is a strong reminder that animals ought to be respected as well.[30]

Fifthly, if some pedagogical or educative matters regarding animal welfare is sought, it is better to look elsewhere. The rite does not teach ~~so~~ much about holistically caring for nonhuman animals as God's beloved and gifted with intrinsic value. It is roughly anthropocentric that anything it teaches about animals is indexed to the superiority and special value of humanity in the scale of creation. Once *imago Dei* (which is understood as the guarantor of human supremacy over nonhuman animals) notion is removed from the rite, everything else about nonhuman animals crumbles.

Sixthly, the rite needs revision to tone down its anthropocentrism. Its primary focus on animals as serving human needs, companions, food, or aids in labor raises concerns about the treatment of animals as mere tools or resources for human benefit, rather than recognizing their God-given intrinsic value and dignity. Biblically speaking, with regard to animals as food or resources, they were not intended in the first place as food.[31] God has given plants as food for humans and nowhere did he permit them to have animals as food (see

30. Ibid., 23.

31. Ibid.

Gen 1:29). This also applies to outsourcing animals for clothing and labor. Killing animals was not even granted.[32] The Sabbath law itself includes giving respite to animals who aid human toils (see Exodus 20:10).

The revision should include the direct recognition of the intrinsic value and dignity of animals. Perhaps, doing so reduces its penchant for utilitarianism regarding the treatment of animals and its fondness for the "logic of the line." Yes, human concerns should be attended to, but at least not at the expense of excluding within moral obligations the welfare of those other than human. Humans ought to learn how to "expand compassion." This means that humans should not feel compassion only for other humans but for other nonhumans as well. Compassion must be inclusive and comprehensive, so to speak. If compassion is not inclusive at all of everything that God has created, then this compassion is suspect of being fake and insincere. And the effort to expand compassion should be evidenced by tamed anthropocentrism. This then invites to discern the balance between loving animals and loving humans. An invitation no less that challenges how far can discipleship to Christ—the lover of *all*—make humans expand the capacity to love. It is the nature of love to be expansive and inclusive to the point of being taxing and painful. For it is not unconditional love or Christian love at all if does not hurt. And Jesus made it clear to us with his Paschal Mystery: humans cannot love without getting hurt. Yet the hurt that tags along with *truly* loving is in itself the road to redemption.

Lastly, in the Order of Blessing of Animals, despite the recognition of animals within the rite, there is a notable absence of emphasis on animal welfare or the ethical treatment of animals. Thus, the appropriate moral concerns for

32. Ibid.

animal well-being and suffering are left untouched. This has to be attended by the revision of the rite itself.

Conclusion: *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*

While the Rite of Animal Blessing acknowledges the presence of nonhuman animals in the Christian life—a commendable action nonetheless—it significantly falls short of fully recognizing their intrinsic value and dignity. There is therefore need for a liturgy and Rite of Animal Blessing informed by a more nuanced and ethically sound animal ethics and theology. It proves that efforts to rectify deficient animal ethics and theology are not just lip service.

Rectifying and informing the liturgy about animal ethics and theology is definitively a form of *expanding compassion.* Compassion given exclusively to humans is no compassion at all. If humans are truly God's images in creation, humans ought to be like the Creator who loves all. More than valorizing a privileged position in creation as *Imago Dei*, humans should rather use it as a means to love all of creation. Humans must be compassionate to all. This is the true human calling: to have a heart that is compassionate to all. Humans must not just content themselves with sympathies towards nonhumans. Better than sympathy is compassion for compassion compels humans to act alongside thinking about others' well-being. Jesus is the best measure on this. He did not just show sympathy but *acted* compassionately. May humans also do likewise. And doing likewise can start with our animal theology and should end with liturgy.[33]

33. The assumption here is that liturgy includes morality. This means that ritual actions are not cut off from morality. Just as much as theology deals with moral actions and principles, so must be the liturgy. It cannot be rightly called liturgy if it is devoid of morality and theology. They all go together.

Since the rite is heavily anthropocentric—anthropocentrism that determines how nonhuman animals are viewed in its liturgy (a perception that is uninformed, if not ignorant)—it thus needs some corrections. Its anthropocentrism has to be informed by current papal teachings on nonhuman creatures alongside sound animal ethics and theology. In this regard, a new edition of the rite is highly commendable. This paper would not burden itself on this matter since it is not its primary concern. Its concern is to critique the rite, not to make an alternative liturgy in its place. The writer believes that this matter can be best addressed by liturgists who have the canonical right and expertise to perform such a task. Nevertheless, the paper appends at the end a suggested alternative *Prayer of Blessing* animals based on the current edition.

No matter how influential Thomism[34] is in our Church magisterium, its relevance should be properly assessed concerning procuring magisterial teaching that involves animals. It has to be updated and refined, if not diminished, by recent theologies and ethical theories. It has to be noted that Thomistic teachings belong to their own time which is not necessarily the same as today. Thomism should not be the one-time big-time solution of the Church about teachings concerning nonhuman creatures. This is not to say, however, that Thomism is the sole culprit of the Church's deficient moral theology on nonhuman animals for indeed it goes back to the Old Testament: in Genesis 1:26-28 where humans were given "dominion" over all animals, in Genesis 9:2 ("The fear and dread of you shall rest on every

34. Christopher Steck, SJ *All God's Animals: A Catholic Theological Framework for Animals* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019), 9-15. Steck argued that Thomism is a key starting point regarding the view that animals will not participate in the eschaton because their souls are not immortal, a view that ramified into a diminished valuation of nonhuman animals and was adopted by later teachings on nonhuman animals.

animal of the earth and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered"), and in Psalm 8:6-7 (You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field").[35] On this note, Roderick Nash comments that this image of a conqueror exerting absolute domination has allowed the Christian understanding that God has granted humanity the power to conquer nature and enslave it leading thus to the exploitation of nature.[36]

Kinship with all creatures and stewardship should inform the liturgy. This should be both the Church's *rule of prayer* and *rule of faith.* Sticking to dominion theology does not improve any concern for nonhuman animals. Although it acknowledges responsibility toward them, it interprets its responsibility as dominion rather than kinship or stewardship. Rendering animals their God-given dignity and intrinsic value will be difficult if humans keep holding onto dominion theology, which has a penchant for utilitarianism.

Humans ought to remind themselves that the rite is representative of the contents of the faith, attitudes, and conception of God in relation to nonhuman animals. Gratitude to God for companion animals, for example, falls suspect of hypocrisy if it remains oblivious of the intrinsic value of all creatures, a value that is independent of human utility. Their intrinsic value conveys the fact that they also reveal God's presence in the world. Manifesting God's image is not the exclusive turf of humans. As all are created lovingly by God, so all technically

35. Ibid., 19.

36. See Robert Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 90, as quoted in Christopher Steck, *All God's Animals: A Catholic Theological Framework for Animals* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019), 19.

are capable of revealing God. He so charged the world with His presence that from the macrocosm down to the microcosm, God can actually be found.

Appendix

Prayer for the Blessing of Animals

O God, the author and giver of every gift,
We thank You for giving us animals as companions
and fellow creatures of this earth.
In Your goodness, You have given us stewardship of
all that You lovingly created.
In Your wisdom, You taught us kinship with animals.
Grant, we pray, that You bless this(ese) animal(s).
Make them the enduring presence of
Your abiding grace among us.
And may they aid us in our journey towards
eternal life with You.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF VIETNAMESE LABOR MIGRANT WORKERS IN TAIWAN

Dang Do Nhan, SJ

Introduction

I am a Vietnamese Roman Catholic Jesuit priest who was sent to Taiwan as a missionary in November 2013. During my time there, I had the privilege of serving at the Jesuit Social Service, Rerum Novarum Center (RNC) as a Chinese language teacher for migrant workers. Our office warmly welcomed individuals from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Given my own Vietnamese background, I was particularly assigned to meet and assist Vietnamese labor migrants.

Following my ordination as a priest, I extended my ministry to various Vietnamese communities in different parishes, where I would celebrate Mass for them on a weekly basis. Throughout my service, both as a religious brother teaching Chinese and as a priest presiding over the Holy Mass, I had the opportunity to attentively listen to the struggles faced by migrants in Taiwan. I provided a compassionate ear as they shared their hardships, aiming to reassure them of my presence and let them know they were not alone in their journey.

During my time at the RNC, I have witnessed notable transformations in the office's approach, with a focus on enhancing services for impoverished and marginalized migrants. One noteworthy initiative was our annual winter outreach to seaports across Taiwan, where we provided warm clothing

to seafarers, many of whom hailed from Indonesia and the Philippines.[1] Recognizing that these seafarers often had their passports confiscated by employers to restrict their mobility, we aimed to alleviate their plight by collecting and distributing warm coats. This support was crucial, as without travel documents, they were unable to disembark and purchase basic necessities ashore.

To address the legal challenges faced by exploited migrants, we established a specialized Lawyer's Office within the RNC. This dedicated team offered legal advice and assistance to individuals who had experienced mistreatment or abuse at the hands of their employers. Furthermore, recognizing the immediate need for shelter and security during legal proceedings, we provided housing options or helped migrants find temporary accommodations while awaiting litigation.

These initiatives exemplify the RNC's commitment to advocating for the rights and well-being of migrants, working tirelessly to improve their circumstances and offer practical support in their times of need.

As a Jesuit institution, the center embraced the practice of discernment guided by Ignatian Spirituality, always seeking the "more" (*Magis*) in order to serve migrants, seafaring workers, domestic workers, and the brokers who employ migrants. Some years ago, we embarked on a journey of study, discernment, and exploration to develop a theological vision that could be applied to this evolving situation.

In extending our care to migrants, regardless of their background, the center firmly believed in the imperative to express

1. Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific, "Sending warmth to foreign fishermen in Taiwan," *Chinese Province*, accessed Apr. 22, 2022, https://jcapsj.org/blog/2020/01/10/sending-warmth-to-foreign-fishermen-in-taiwan/.

love for the least among us. We sought to be the voice for the voiceless, drawing inspiration from the wisdom of Proverbs 31:1-9. We recognized our calling to be advocates for genuine love, for "there is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). With these teachings in mind, we aspired to embody perfect love when encountering migrants, following the example set by Jesus in His instruction to "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

Furthermore, we recognized the importance of setting aside differences and breaking down historical or background barriers in order to genuinely encounter migrants in our daily lives. True love compelled us to embrace inclusivity and transcend all prejudices, understanding the profound truth that "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). Indeed, our Lord manifests Himself in all migrants of our contemporary world. The Jesuit Social Service in Taiwan, including the Rerum Novarum Center, embraces this understanding. We wholeheartedly welcome, protect, promote, and integrate[2] our migrant brothers and sisters, irrespective of their identities and origins. Gender, religion, and cultural differences hold no sway as barriers but rather serve to enrich our lives.

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis eloquently emphasizes the transformative power of love, which shatters the chains that isolate and divide us, instead fostering the construction of bridges. Love enables us to forge a global family where all can find a sense of belonging. Compassion and dignity emanate from love, as the Pope asserts: "Love exudes compassion and dignity" (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 62). In dealing with the issues faced by migrant workers in Taiwan, we are steadfast

2. Vatican News, "Pope Francis' message for 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees," *Vatican News*, accessed Feb. 02, 2022, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2017-11/pope-message-world-day-of-migrants-and-refugees.html.

in following the teachings of our Jesuit Pope, who guides us in fostering a spirit of solidarity, compassion, and love.

By embracing the call to love unconditionally and recognizing the inherent dignity of all individuals, regardless of their migrant status, we strive to create a society that truly reflects the teachings of Christ and the vision of Pope Francis.

A General Picture of Vietnamese Labor Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Firstly, the issue of "recruitment fees" emerges as a critical aspect impacting Vietnamese labor migrant workers in Taiwan.[3] A research conducted in 2017 reveals that migrant workers often find themselves agreeing to pay exorbitant recruitment fees, surpassing the equivalent of their one-month salary—a practice common in many countries where such fees are permitted.[4] This situation is particularly prevalent for those seeking employment in Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Taiwan.

Prospective migrant workers are faced with substantial pre-departure fees, including non-refundable recruitment fees and refundable safety deposits. The safety deposit is intended to dissuade workers from absconding to their destination countries, as it is only refunded upon their return to Vietnam without any record of desertion.

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3. Cf. Huynh Tam Sang, "Addressing Challenges Faced by Taiwan's Migrant Workers: The Taiwanese government has not paid sufficient consideration to migrant workers," *The Diplomat*, accessed Apr. 18, 2022, https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/addressing-challenges-faced-by-taiwans-migrant-workers/.

4. Cf. Mauro Testaverde, Harry Moroz, Claire H. Hollweg, and Achim Schmillen, Migrating to Opportunity Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia, 2017, World Bank Group, accessed Apr 20, 2022, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28342/9781464811067.pdf.

These findings shed light on the financial burden imposed on Vietnamese labor migrant workers, as they are compelled to bear substantial costs upfront, often exceeding their initial earnings. The practice of charging high recruitment fees coupled with safety deposits reflects a system that seeks to control and restrict workers' mobility, contributing to their vulnerability and limiting their agency.[5]

Understanding the prevalence and impact of these recruitment fees is crucial in comprehending the challenges faced by Vietnamese labor migrant workers in Taiwan. By highlighting this issue, it becomes apparent that addressing the exploitative nature of recruitment practices is essential for improving the well-being and rights of migrant workers.

Secondly, the presence of migrant workers in Taiwan has had a significant impact on Taiwanese society.[6] However, at the onset of this labor migration, negative reports and stereotypes about migrant workers fueled hostile attitudes among many locals. This initial perception was in stark contrast to the reality that these foreign workers were filling the demanding 3Ds jobs that the majority of Taiwanese citizens were unwilling to undertake.

Regrettably, previous studies and reports on Taiwanese migrant workers have often overlooked their subjective perspectives and experiences. Local newspapers and a significant portion of the populace tended to view them solely as

5. Daniele Belanger, Kayoko Ueno, Thu Hong Khuat, Emiko Ochiai, "From Foreign Trainees to Unauthorized Workers: Vietnamese Migrant Workers in Japan," *Sage Journal* (2011), accessed Apr. 18, 2022, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/011719681102000102?download=true.

6. Cf. Tam Sang, "Addressing Challenges Faced by Taiwan's Migrant Workers, *The Diplomat*, accessed Apr 18, 2022, https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/addressing-challenges-faced-by-taiwans-migrant-workers.

carriers of disease and representatives of uncleanliness. The contributions made by migrant workers to Taiwanese society were largely overlooked, as highlighted by Hsin-I Cheng, who found that out of 506 news articles on migrant workers, only five mentioned their positive contributions.[7]

These findings reveal a significant disconnect between the lived experiences of migrant workers and the perceptions held by the Taiwanese public. The negative portrayal of migrant workers in the media and the general lack of recognition of their contributions perpetuated a narrative that further marginalized and devalued their presence in Taiwanese society.

Recognizing and challenging these negative stereotypes is crucial in fostering a more inclusive and empathetic society. Highlighting the significant contributions made by migrant workers, as well as promoting a deeper understanding of their experiences, can help shift public attitudes and perceptions. By acknowledging their role in filling essential jobs and their positive impact on Taiwanese society, a more balanced and appreciative narrative can emerge, fostering a more harmonious coexistence between migrant workers and the local community.

In addition to the challenges faced by migrant workers in Taiwan, such as negative perceptions and limited recognition of their contributions, the burden of exorbitant recruitment fees further exacerbates their plight. These high fees create immense debt for migrant workers, leaving them financially constrained and unable to terminate their employment contracts even in cases of contract violations. Rather than protecting their rights, existing policies often restrict their options and reinforce an unequal power dynamic between

7. Hsin-I Cheng, "On Migrant Workers' Social Status in Taiwan: A Critical Analysis of Mainstream News Discourse," *International Journal of Communication* 10 (2016), accessed Apr 18, 2022, https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3905.

employers and workers. It is crucial to establish a labor relationship based on mutual agreement, moving away from the exploitative master-slave dynamic that has led to an increase in domestic workers fleeing ineffective policies.[8]

Despite warnings and punitive measures against mistreatment, a "blind eye" bilateral policy between the governments of Vietnam and Taiwan allows some instances of mistreatment to persist.[9] While Taiwan permits the employment of migrant workers to address labor shortages, flawed policies contribute to human rights violations and the emergence of a significant number of runaways. This phenomenon not only poses a social problem within Taiwan but also affects the home countries of migrant workers, including Vietnam, attracting international attention.

Several factors contribute to the plight of migrant workers in Taiwan, including economic challenges, poor working conditions, restrictions on the right to transfer to new employers, and pressure to return to their home countries. Research by Dinesh Bhugra and Matthew A. Becker suggests that the degree of cultural differences plays a role in determining the likelihood of migrant workers fleeing their employment.[10]

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8. Cf. Piyasiri Wickramasekara et al., "Something is Better than Nothing Enhancing the protection of Indian migrant workers through Bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding," *Migration Forum in Asia* (2012), accessed Apr. 18, 2022, http://mfasia.org/migrantforumasia/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/FINALFormat_Wickramasekara_MOUs%5EFeb2012_V4.pd.

9. Cf. Susan Meiselas, "Swept Under the Rug: Domestic Workers Abused Worldwide," *Human Rights Watch*, accessed Apr 18, 2022, https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/07/27/swept-under-rug/abuses-against-domestic-workers-around-world.

10. Cf. Dinesh Bhugra and Matthew A Becker, "Migration, Cultural Bereavement and Cultural Identity," *Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association* (2005): 18-24, accessed Aug. 04, 2022, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1414713/.

When faced with significant cultural differences, workers may fear difficulties in adapting to their new environment and tend to remain within their legal employment. Conversely, if the cultural differences are minimal, workers can adapt more easily. However, if their current working conditions are substandard compared to available opportunities, they are more likely to choose to leave.

Addressing the plight of migrant workers requires comprehensive measures that tackle the systemic issues they face. This includes reforming recruitment practices, ensuring fair labor relationships, protecting workers' rights, and addressing the cultural and social factors that contribute to their vulnerability.

Thirdly, it is important to acknowledge the contradictory treatment of migrant workers in Taiwan. While they serve as a remedy for the labor shortage,[11] their invaluable contributions to the nation's development are often overlooked. Instead of recognizing their efforts, many Taiwanese perceive these foreign blue-collar workers as a social threat. Research sponsored by the Ministry of Science and Technology of Taiwan indicates that migrant workers are viewed as "complimentary labor forces" rather than fully recognized as essential foreign workers. Despite this, an increase in research from various perspectives has shed light on the comprehensive range of issues faced by migrant workers and their impact on Taiwanese society.

11. Cf. JianBang-Deng, "Labor migration from Southeast Asia to Taiwan: issues, public responses and future development," *Asian Education and Development Studies* (2020), accessed May 26, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341493857_Labor_migration_from_Southeast_Asia_to_Taiwan_issues_public_responses_and_future_development.

This research has provided a more nuanced understanding of the challenges migrant workers encounter and their effects on various aspects of Taiwanese society. It has helped to paint a clearer picture of the problems and complexities surrounding their treatment, including the social biases and negative perceptions that persist. By examining the multifaceted dimensions of their experiences, researchers have been able to identify the systemic issues that contribute to their vulnerable position and advocate for meaningful change.

Efforts to bridge the gap between perception and reality, and to recognize the significant contributions of migrant workers, are crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society in Taiwan. By highlighting the positive impact of migrant workers and challenging negative stereotypes, it is possible to shift the narrative and promote a more just and respectful treatment of these individuals who play a vital role in the nation's labor force.

These are my overall impressions of Vietnamese migrant laborers in Taiwan. Vietnamese labor migrants choose to migrate to Taiwan primarily due to economic disparities between the two countries.[12] Their decision to seek employment opportunities in Taiwan reflects the complex reality of economic-driven migration and raises important questions about how we perceive and address the inequalities and differences between migrant workers and the local population.

The challenges faced by economically driven Vietnamese labor migrants in Taiwan encompass various aspects, including official policies, living conditions, and health, with a particular

12. Through interviews with Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan, I have seen that they come to Taiwan just because they are poor; the economy in Taiwan is better than in Vietnam. Most of migrant workers I interviewed said that they wanted to come back Taiwan, even the coming back put them in the state of being illegal.

focus on psychological well-being. Official policies related to migrant labor can often be restrictive and fail to adequately address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of this migrant population. Moreover, the living conditions experienced by Vietnamese labor migrants may be substandard, further exacerbating their challenges and limiting their quality of life.

It is also essential to consider the health issues faced by Vietnamese migrant laborers, including psychological ailments. The migration process itself, along with the demanding working conditions and the experience of being far away from home, can contribute to mental health issues among migrant workers. The lack of social support networks and cultural unfamiliarity may further exacerbate their psychological well-being.

Understanding and addressing these challenges require a comprehensive approach that involves policymakers, employers, civil society organizations, and the broader society. Efforts should be made to develop inclusive policies that protect the rights and dignity of migrant workers, promote safe and healthy working environments, and provide support services to address their specific needs. It is important to recognize the humanity of Vietnamese labor migrants and acknowledge the inequalities they face, striving for a more just and equitable society that values the contributions and well-being of all its members, regardless of their national origin.

From my perspective, supported by a video clip highlighting the experiences of migrant workers in Taiwan,[13] it becomes evident that Vietnamese labor migrants face significant challenges in navigating the complex labor migration system,

13. "Recruitment of Women Migrant Workers in Taiwan," accessed July 28, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ui6EIWiiCJc&pp=ygVBcmVjcnVpdG1lbnQgb2Ygd29tZW4gbWlncmFudCB3b3JrZXJzIHJlc3BvbnNpYmxlIHJlY3J1aXRtZW50IDIwMjI%3D.

particularly in relation to recruitment processes. Due to a lack of understanding about the intricacies of the system, many Vietnamese workers find themselves trapped in situations where they are burdened with exorbitant recruitment fees and subjected to restrictive guest worker policies.[14]

These unfavorable circumstances often push them towards desperate measures, including attempting to escape from their employment. The accumulation of substantial debts for recruitment fees and the limitations imposed by guest worker policies contribute to their vulnerability and create a sense of powerlessness. Chin-Ju-Lin's research highlights that, apart from the financial motivation to support their families and fulfill their personal aspirations, these workers experience societal disadvantages and discrimination based on their nationality.[15]

Biblical Reflection on the Plight of Vietnamese Labor Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Why am I required to be kind to others? Why must I treat them with respect? Why must I include "they" in "we" and love them as I do myself? How can I claim to love God while refusing to love strangers? Almost every book of the Bible explicitly or implicitly explores the interconnected themes of travel, alienation, and encountering strangers. The prevalence of migration themes can be attributed to the fact that God's people frequently wandered or were exiled to foreign lands.

14. Cf. Vu Le Toan Khoa, "Outlaws On The Jade Island: Runaway Vietnamese Migrant Workers In Taiwan," *JATI-Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 24 no.1 (2019): 151-172, accessed Jun 18, 2022, https://jati.um.edu.my/index.php/jati/article/view/18672.

15. Cf. Chin-Ju Lin, "Filipina Domestic Workers in Taiwan: Structural Constraints and Personal Resistance," Taiwan Grassroots Women Workers' Center, accessed Jun 20, 2022, http://chinju.dlearn.kmu.edu.tw/pwithublication/6-1.pdf.

By narrating human reality, biblical emigrational stories confirm that Vietnamese labor migrant workers in Taiwan, like Abraham and Jesus, are foreigners and sojourners. They pray to God for assistance as they travel to their destination.[16] Jacqueline Hagan discovered that greater than three-quarters of her sample prayed to God, a saint, or a religious icon, or sought advice from trusted local clergy, in order to make the decision to migrate.[17] Priests also provided "religious sanction for the migration, a kind of spiritual travel permit that has huge symbolic value."[18] Daniel Groody observes that "immigrants speak spontaneously of a spirituality of sacrifice, a spirituality of the desert, and a spirituality of the cross."[19] Because He is always "I am," God promises to protect them on the way they go. We also recall numerous biblical figures whose names are associated with migrations. In this section, the researcher will discuss the migration experiences of Abram in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament, as well as how the Old Testament established laws to protect strangers and sojourners. These rules describe how to extend hospitality to Vietnamese migrant workers in accordance with God's will. Taiwanese Christians are called to express their consolidation and hospitality to these marginalized people. Undoubtedly,

16. "Hear my prayer, Lord, listen to my cry for help; do not be deaf to my weeping. I dwell with you as a foreigner, a stranger, as all my ancestors were." (Psalm 39:12). All Bible verses or sentences in this paper are taken from The Catholic Study Bible, *New American Bible,* including the Revised Psalms and the Revised New Testament, translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the Ancient Sources (Oxford University Press, Inc., 1990).

17. Jacqueline Hagan, "Faith for the Journey: Religion as a Resource for Migrants," *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration,* eds. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2008), 14.

18. Ibid., 7-8.

19. Ibid., 14.

people all have an emigrational DNA[20] that they inherited from their God, *Deus Migrator.*[21]

Old Testament

Abram-Go Forth (Gen 12 – 25)

In Genesis, chapters 12 through 25, readers are introduced to the account of Abram's life, beginning with his migration from Ur in southern Mesopotamia to Harran, which is located on the southeastern edge of modern-day Turkey near the Syrian border. From there, he journeyed with his extended family to the land of Canaan and then to the Negev in the south.[22] From these narratives, we recognize that Abram never settled down. He was a wanderer, a sojourner[23], and his walk with God was of one always on the move.

> The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you."[24]

George Arthur Buttrick stated, "the glory of human history is in its pioneers. Pioneer is defined by Webster as 'one who goes before, as into the wilderness, preparing the way for others to

20. Cf. Father Peter Phan: Migration and Theology, accessed Sept. 25, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B79oEzelxho. We also see in Gen 1:27: "So God creates man and woman in His own image."

21. Cf. Peter C. Phan, Deus Migrator—God the Migrant: Migration of Theology and Theology of Migration, *Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2016): 24.

22. Cf. E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible - Genesis* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 86 – 88.

23. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the author said that Abram sojourned "as in a foreign land, living in tents," (Heb 11:9).

24. Gen 12:1.

follow.'[25] The pioneer may be motivated by various passive or active factors. Whatever propels him forward, he is frequently a creative force in the course of human history. In this sense, Abraham is a pioneer, but more than a pioneer."[26] Why was Abraham a more-than-pioneer? That is because he responded to an imperative call of God to lead his people out of a world of chaos, of instability, of barrenness to the "promised land". Yes, that Abram, a more-than-pioneer, led the group of this nomad clans from the desert to the "land flowing with milk and honey" echoes the story of migrants[27] nowadays. The migrants today through their social web[28] of their fellow man/woman or by or pioneer in their group choose to flee from their chaotic worlds to other stable, fruitful worlds. They do so just because they want to respond to a divine mission – "go forth". Today's migrants choose to flee from their chaotic worlds to another stable, fruitful world (or that's what they thought before) through the social network of their fellow man or woman or a pioneer in their group. They do so because they desire to fulfill a divine mandate – "go forth." Indeed, Vietnamese labor migrants are obligated to seek out greener pastures in order to provide for their families.

25. George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), 570-571.

26. Ibid.

27. International Organization for Migration, "Who is a Migrant?", accessed Oct. 12, 2022, https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant.

28. Cf. Lucia Kurekova, "Theories of Migration: Critical Review in the Context of the Eu East-West Flows," Best Participant Essays Series, 9-10 (2009) accessed Oct. 10, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228279066_Theories_of_Migration_Critical_Review_in_the_Context_of_the_EU_East-West_Flows.

Abram-Belief

The imperative commandment that God gave to Abram was followed with five promises:

> I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great; so that you will be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you." Abram went as the Lord directed him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.[29]

Today's Vietnamese labor migrant workers have the same experiences as Abram. Once they arrive in this "promised land," they will realize Taiwan is not a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8). They frequently daydream about the promised lands, where they anticipate finding greener pastures. They set out to accomplish their goals. On their journey, they encounter a variety of obstacles frequently. Sometimes they face a border patrol and sometimes they face gangs (human trafficking), but the most serious problem in Taiwan is brokerage. They are unable to reach their destination, but they never lose faith. If they maintain optimism, another opportunity will present itself.[30] They do so because they believe there will always be a God behind them, one who gives them promises: promises of prosperity![31]

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29 Gen 12:2-4.

30 "Riding 'The Death Train' to America's border," accessed Oct 27, 2022, https://www.yout.ube.com/watch?v=RSwwO00qeB0.

31. Cf. Jacqueline Hagan, "Faith for the Journey, Religion as a Resource for Migrants," in *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration*, eds. Daniel Groody and Gioacchino Campese (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame, 2008), 3-19.

Abram-Blessing

In the narration, God said to Abram "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."[32] God commanded Abram not only to go to the land He had promised to give him, but also to bless the people. God wants Abram or the Israelites to "go forth" on another "Missio Dei" in order to receive and bestow blessings.

The vocabulary of blessing[33] in Hebrew, despite the weakening the word has undergone in our language, is derived from a single root *brk* possibly related to knee and adoration and serves to designate all forms and levels of blessing. Blessing is both a given and a gift, and the formulation of this gift consists of three Hebrew words: the noun *beraka,* the verb *barak*, and the adjective *baruk*.

Beraka-Blessing

Even in its most profane form, its most material sense, that of gift, the word blessing carries a very discernible human interaction nuance. The term 'blessing' conjures up images of pious prosperity, but also of generosity to the unfortunate, and it is always the result of God's goodness.

Barak-To bless

The verb lends itself to a vast array of applications, ranging from the standard street greeting to the customary expression of courtesy. God blesses humanity, but humanity can also bless God.

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32. Gen 12:2.

33. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 48-51.

Baruk-Blessed

This is the most powerful of all words of blessing. The formula "Blessed be N..." is pronounced as a cry before a person to whom God has recently revealed His power and generosity and whom He has chosen "among all."

Inferred from the terminology of *brk* – blessing/to bless/ blessed is the function of migrants in their emigrational lives. Regardless of their religion or status, they are to be a blessing to those with whom they share a home: in their profession of faith and worship, as well as in the exchanges of daily life. This call extends to the settled as well as the nationals, for all people are sojourners and strangers who are to be and become a blessing to the world.

As Vietnamese migrant workers, they are a boon to themselves, their families, and the host nations.[34] By sending remittances back to their families, they bestow their blessing upon them. The remittances can help those left behind live a better life and improve their children's education by sending them to reputable schools. Moreover, this action can help the Vietnamese economy recover from its current state, as IOM says: "On one hand, countries of origin benefit from labor migration because it relieves unemployment pressures and contributes to development through remittances, knowledge transfer, and the creation of business and trade networks."[35] In addition, the nation's status could change from underdeveloped to developing. This is because migrant workers' remittances and labor skills can benefit the education systems of their

34. Xpress Money, "How Immigrants Benefit the Host Economy," accessed Oct. 04, 2022, https://www.xpressmoney.com/blog/industry/how-immigrants-benefit-the-host-economy/.

35. International Organization for Migration, "Labour Migration & Health," accessed Oct. 04, 2022, https://www.iom.int/labour-migration-health.

home countries. Occasionally, the contribution of "Vietnamese migrant force labor" "blesses" Taiwan's economy.

In addition to receiving nations, migrants can help share the burden of 3-D jobs (Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning) that citizens of these nations fear to accept.[36] Indeed, the economy of the receiving countries is "blessed" by the contribution of migrant force labor. For example, in numerous ways, immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy. In some industries, they constitute more than a third of the labor force and have high employment rates. Their geographic mobility enables local economies to respond to labor shortages, thereby smoothing out hiccups that would otherwise weaken the economy. Increasing the number of workers relative to retirees and bolstering the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, immigrant labor helps support the aging native-born population. And children born to immigrant families are upwardly mobile, which promises future benefits not only for their families but also for the U.S. economy as a whole.[37] The host nation is able to acquire low-cost skilled labor. In the case of physicians, nurses, computer engineers, etc., European and American nations can hire individuals from India, the Philippines, China, etc., who are paid less but are more effective than local candidates. In

36. International Labour Organization (ILO), accessed Oct 04, 2022, "Access to Justice for Migrant Workers in South-East Asia," https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/.

37. Ref. Arloc Sherman, Danilo Trisi, Chad Stone, Shelby Gonzales And Sharon Parrott, "Immigrants Contribute Greatly to U.S. Economy, Despite Administration's 'Public Charge' Rule Rationale," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 2019, accessed Oct. 04, 2022. https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/immigrants-contribute-greatly-to-us-economy-despite-administrations.

some cases, qualified labor migrant workers can fill skill gaps in their host countries.[38]

In Taiwan, the development of a multiethnic society between cultures flourishes in addition to the financial resources or economy that migrants contribute to the individuals regarded.[39] There are numerous ethnic retail stores, ethnic foods, and ethnic services in host countries, such as Little Saigon, China Town, and Korean Town in the United States and elsewhere.[40] Eventually, interactions occur between the majority cultures of host countries and the minority cultures of migrants. These cultural interactions are evidence of the blessing and blessing that God intends for humankind to bestow upon one another.

Overall, blessing is a central theme of the narrative.[41] It has various effects on the lives of both Taiwanese and Vietnamese labor migrant workers. Existing individuals are influenced by God's blessing. It is concerned with the tangible manifestations of material prosperity, the economy, and culture from a spiritual standpoint. It is absolutely accurate to quote Pope Francis: "When we apply this perspective to migrants and refugees, we find that they do not arrive empty-handed. They bring their courage, skills, energy, and aspirations along with the treasures of their own cultures, enriching the lives of the nations that welcome them. We also witness the ingenu-

38. Settling in 2018, "Indicators of Immigrant Integration", *OECD iLibrary*, (2018), accessed Oct. 10, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307216-en.

39. Henri Giordan, "Multicultural and Multi-ethnic Societies," United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 4, (1994), accessed Aug. 10, 2022, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000111561.

40. Population Reference Bureau, "America's Racial and Ethnic Minorities," Esource Library (1999), accessed Oct. 05, 2022, https://www.prb.org/americasracialandethnicminorities/.

41. Leander E. Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 425.

ity, tenacity, and willingness to sacrifice of the innumerable individuals, families, and communities around the world who open their doors and hearts to migrants and refugees despite scarce resources."[42]

Abram–Trickery (cf. Gen 12:10-20)

Abram's departure from the Promised Land due to the threat of famine was depicted in the story. He and his wife traveled to Egypt. Concerned that his beautiful wife could become a formidable obstacle, he deceived the ruthless Pharaoh using a deception. His wife was instructed to refer to herself as his sister. According to E.A. Speiser, the topic "wife-sister" has generated countless comments. In Hurrian society, marriage bonds were strongest and most sacred when the wife had the legal status of a sister, regardless of actual blood ties."[43] Regardless of the comment or compliment, it is evident that Abram lied. Life-threatening circumstances caused him to lie. Due to the hopelessness of the situation, Abram "acted in an unprincipled manner, even endangering Sarah in order to save himself."[44]

Abram's story is the story of today's Vietnamese labor migrant workers in Taiwan, who must deceive Taiwan's unjust systems in order to enter the "promised land" and escape the "famine" in Vietnam. In any case, their precarious

42. Vatican News, "Pope's message for 2018 World Day of Peace is released," 2017, accessed Oct 05, 2022, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2017-11/pope-s-message-for-2018-world-day-of-peace-is-released.html.

43. E.A.Speiser, *Genesis – Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 92.

44. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis – Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 128.

circumstance frequently leads to yet another precarious circumstance. In *FT*, Pope Francis says,

> There is at times a tendency to deliberately fabricate enemies: stereotyped figures who represent all the characteristics that society perceives or interprets as threatening... This has made all the more dangerous the growing practice in some countries of resorting to preventive custody, imprisonment without trial and especially the death penalty."[45]

Vietnamese labor migrant workers in Taiwan, because of being stereotyped, threatened of being custodies, and so on have to subterfuge by all kinds of tricks.[46] Similar to Abram's situation, the trick could be discovered and become more dangerous. Nevertheless, the God of Mercy, the "Always Is or Am" One, always appears to save the helpless. The Law He gave to Israel reveals His ever-present presence.

Old Testament Law to Protect the *Ger*

Typically, ger is translated as "sojourner", "alien", or "foreigner" or "stranger". These terms appear in both masculine and feminine forms, but ger is always masculine in its nearly one hundred instances. Ger is predominantly singular (81 occurrences) and refers to an unnamed person in 61 instances in legal texts, primarily in the book of Deuteronomy (20 times). Its occurrence in biblical legal writings is distinctive because "alien" or "stranger" are not listed among the protected individuals in any other ancient Near Eastern legal code. Its occurrence in biblical legal writings is distinctive because "alien" or

45. *FT*, no. 266.

46. Marco Funk, "Trickery in Dublin's Shadow," *Forced Migration Review* (2016), accessed Oct. 06, 2022, https://www.fmreview.org/destination-europe/funk.

"stranger" are not listed among the protected individuals in any other ancient Near Eastern legal code.

Although God promised Abram that He would give this land to his descendants, the Promised Land that he and his descendants received was actually a place where sojourners were welcome.[47] That is because God is a true owner of the land, the Israelites are the *ger* of God, and therefore they are only the tenant of the land or His guest[48]. Since the Israelites are always the *ger* of God, eventually, God always wants them to treat other *ger* as God treats them. We can see the law of treating the *ger* in Deuteronomy "Thou Shalt Not Oppress the *Ger*"[49]. The law can be explained as follows.

The legislation characterized to aid the vulnerable *ger* group in a sense of welcoming and compassion.[50] In fact, Israel's legal treatment of the ger is unprecedented among ancient legal codes. The law expresses concern for the ger in Lv 19:34: "You shall treat the alien who resides with you the same as the native-born among you; have the same love for him as you have for yourself." The Israelites fulfill Leviticus 19:18, which instructs them to love their neighbor, by obeying the commandment to "love the *ger*." Indeed, for Abram's descendants, the best indicator of their willingness to love their neighbor is their affection for the *ger*.[51]

Eventually, what the Israelites do to protect the vulnerable *ger* group from the social pressure makes us recognize the

47. Cf. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 584.

48. Cf. Ps.15.

49. Ex 22:21.

50. Cf. William H.E. Propp, *Exodus 19-40, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 258.

51. Cf. George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), 1007.

Merciful God. For instance, to prevent bias in the legal system, the law mandated that sojourners be treated impartially in legal proceedings (Dt 1:16–17; 24:17– 18; 27:19). Their labor was not to be exploited, and they were to be compensated fairly and promptly (Ex 23:12; Dt 24:14–15). In addition, they were permitted to rest on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10; Deut 5:14) etc...[52] God's mercy was consistently extended to the *ger*, the wretched condition of Israel's weak and helpless. He desires that those who seek to love Him also seek to love all mankind. The attitude of hospitality toward the *ger*, which is also found in the Bible, is a manifestation of love.

In his recent encyclical *FT*, Pope Francis explains who *Ger* is in contemporary society. According to him, these individuals are "frequently attracted to Western culture with inflated expectations, leaving them vulnerable to severe disappointments." Unscrupulous traffickers, frequently affiliated with drug cartels or arms cartels, prey on the vulnerability of migrants, who endure violence, trafficking, psychological and physical abuse, and unimaginable sufferings on their journey. Those who emigrate frequently experience uprooting and separation from their native culture and religion. Fragmentation is also experienced by the communities and families they leave behind, especially when one or both parents migrate and leave their children in their native country.[53]

Hospitality to the Foreigner

When the Israelites extended hospitality to the ger, they simultaneously recalled their former status as a ger before God or as a traveler on earth[54]: "Look away from me, that I may

52. Cf. Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 584.

53. Cf. *FT*, no. 38.

54. Cf. Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 243.

enjoy life again before I depart and am no more."[55] The ger required the same level of adoration as the Israelites showed God. Surely, the Israelites' affection for the ger stems from their devotion to God. Abram's example of hospitality towards unexpected guests exemplifies generosity.[56]

In Gen. 18: 1-8, the first instance of Abraham's hospitality is described. Consider Abraham's actions to see how his hospitality extends to uninvited guests, as though we were inside his tent. During the heat of the day, he observed their approach from the entrance of his tent. This figure resembles the refugees who emerge from their hardships today. Abraham then ran to meet them, honored them, and extended an invitation. His extraordinary hospitality revived them; he prepared and served them food. He did his best for the guests, was concerned about their circumstances, and traveled with them. This example of hospitality is instructive for natives as they welcome their unwelcome guests, *ger*, the labor migrants.

Abraham's hospitality towards the *ger* can serve as a model for how the nationals treat the *ger.* According to Walter A. Vogels, Abraham's guests were unanticipated, uninvited, and unknown travelers; therefore, hospitality entails transforming them into guests.[57] Yes, Abraham made them his guests through his wholehearted hospitality and treatment of God's sojourners in the *ger.* The manner in which Abraham greeted sojourners is echoed in the recent *FT.*

Pope Francis, in *FT*, encourage people "to create a different culture, in which we resolve our conflicts and care for one

55. Ps 39:13.

56. Cf. Gen 18:1-8.

57. Walter A. Vogels, "Hospitality in Biblical Perspective," in *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (Fall 2002): 164, accessed Sept. 29, 2022, https://www.scribd.com/docment/372733483/Hospitality-in-Biblical-Perspective.

another,"[58] and to gradually expand the boundaries of love.[59] Overall, according to Pope Francis, "love does not care if a brother or sister in need comes from one place or another, love...builds bridges. Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home;"[60] love keeps us far from being indifferent to suffering of others; love does not allow anyone to go through someone's life as an outcast[61]; love "leaves no room for ideological manipulation and challenges us to expand our frontiers. It gives a universal dimension to our call to love, one that transcends all prejudices, all historical and cultural barriers, all petty interests."[62] Yes, only by expressing our hospitality like Abraham did, we are able to build a different culture, a culture of love, a culture which Pope Francis unceasingly calls, "culture of encounter."[63]

The narrative of Abraham is characterized by the numerous obstacles similar to those encountered by Vietnamese labor migrant workers in their pursuit of better lives. The narration reveals an enduring desire for the "Promised Land," a place where people can find their place, feel safe, and construct bridges rather than walls.[64] Therefore, Vietnamese labor migrant workers' daily lives are characterized by their ability to be "*ger*" and "at home" in any country. They hope that wherever they go, the places they visit will resemble the

58. Cf. *FT*, no. 57.

59. Ibid., no. 59.

60. Ibid., no. 62.

61. Ibid., no. 68.

62. Ibid., no. 83.

63. Cf. Pope Francis, "For A Culture Of Encounter," *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, (2016), accessed Oct. 13, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20160913_for-a-culture-of-encounter.html.

64. Cf. *FT*, no. 27.

country they abandoned. These migrants have no difficulty heeding the call to "go forth" or adjusting to life in a foreign land. The problem arises when nationals reject a migrant's desire to integrate with them.[65] In the eyes of Taiwanese citizens, Vietnamese migrant workers are always considered outsiders. They object translating "them" into "us or we-ness". Vietnamese labor migrant workers are somehow like Abraham who lived an outsider, a stranger in a foreign land. Abraham was a prefiguration of Jesus who also was not considered an outsider, a stranger in his hometown, and was rejected by his own people.

New Testament

"The phenomenon of human mobility evokes the very image of the Church, a pilgrim people on earth who is perpetually en route to her heavenly homeland."[66] Moreover, the way to lead people back to heaven is the way of the Cross, the center of Christian Revelation.[67] In addition, Aloysius Pieris emphasized the significance of tying the cross and resurrection to baptism in the Christian life. Jesus was baptized into Israel's spirituality at the Jordan River with John, according to the gospel of Mark. Jesus was re-baptized on the cross into the historical suffering of the oppressed."[68] Let us move to the message of the Gospel

65. Ibid., no. 39.

66. Pope John Paul II, *Message for World Migration Day*, 1998, Messages, 1998, accessed Oct 19, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/migration/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_09111997_world-%20migration-day-1998.html.

67 .Cf. Alan Smith, "The Cross is at the Center," *Cruciform Church of Christ*, 2019, accessed Oct 19, 2022, https://www.cruciformcoc.com/sermons/the-cross-is-at-the-center/.

68. A. Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (N.Y: Orbis, Maryknoll, 1988), 45-50.

where we can see our Lord, Christ died "outside the gate,"[69] rejected by his own people. Nevertheless, he rose and gave His people life. Vietnamese migrant laborers follow Christ's example when they make sacrifices for their families in order to give their children hope for the future.

"And The Word Became Flesh and Made His Dwelling Among Us" (Jn 1:14)

In an article of Christopher Magezi,[70] he criticized Daniel Groody about his conceptualization related to the Incarnation. I will use the Christopher Magezi's ideas to assert that anhypostatic and enhypostatic are applicable to Groody's theory. In addition, according to Peter C. Phan, Jesus of Nazareth is the ideal imago *Dei Migratoris*, God the Migrant, and the "exact imprint of God's very being" as a migrant.[71] In addition, according to Donald Kerwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz, "through Jesus, God enters the broken and sinful terrain of the human condition in order to help men and women who have become lost during their time on earth find their way back to God" (Jn 13:1-3).[72] From this perspective, the incarnation is the great

69. Heb 13:12.

70. Christopher Magezi, "A Critical Assessment of Daniel Groody's Conceptualization of the Incarnation and Its Implication in Challenging the Church to Embrace and Respond to Migrants' Needs," *AOSIS Publishing,* vol.54, no.1 (2020), accessed Oct. 19, 2022, https://indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/view/2627/6665.

71. Peter C. Phan, "Embracing, protecting, and Loving the Stranger: A Roman Catholic Theology of Migration," *Theology of Migration in the Abrahamic Religions,* eds. Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 100.

72. Jill Marie Gerschutz, "Integration Yesterday and Today: New Challenges for the United States and the Church," *And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*, eds. Donald Kerwin, and Jill Marie Gerschutz (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 123-37.

migration of human history: God's loving movement toward humanity makes humanity's return to God possible.[73]

Groody used anhypostatic and enhypostatic thinking by Karl Barth to describe the exaltation of the Son of Man. These two concepts are used to describe the unique ontological nature of Christ's humanity as the God-man. Similar to Barth's interpretation, Groody saw in the two concepts that "Christ identifies with all people through his incarnation."[74] Moreover, the two concepts "illustrate the relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ's person."[75] Grounded in the anhypostasis and enhypostasis, we can see the person of Jesus Christ, "not in the static being of very God and very man"[76] but in the event of God's movement towards humanity.

In fact, through Jesus of Nazareth's revelation, the Son of Man is united with the Son of God. Jesus Christ, the fully human deity of humans, is now also the deity of migrants. In submission to the Father, as Jesus of Nazareth, he emptied himself and assumed the lowliness of humanity. He reveals to us the desire of his benevolent Father to elevate humanity as adopted children, God's children "God, in the person of Jesus Christ, loved the world so much that he migrated into the sinful and broken existence of humanity from his homeland. On the cross, he sacrificed himself so that we could be reconciled with God

73. Cf. Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., "Catholic Social Teaching and Migration: Perspectives from the US-Mexico Border," *Review: Pensamiento Social, Instituto de Estudios Social Cristianos, Lima*, no.1, (2013): 41-50, accessed Oct. 15, 2022, https://ordosocialis.de/wp-content/uploads/Catholic_Social_Teaching_and_Migration.pdf.

74. Ibid., 45.

75. Ibid., 46.

76. Ibid., 46.

and return to our homeland."[77] He accepted being his people's impure and rejected Mestizo.[78]Alternatively, from the image of the *Liminal*, the condition of marginalization, yet He can *communitas* among people.[79] From the role of *Mestizo* or *Liminal*, the reconciliation of Jesus Christ of Nazareth has brought us back to our homeland where there is "peace, harmony, justice, and life."[80]

"Can Anything Good Come from Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46)

Can anything positive originate in Nazareth? Nathanael despised the birthplace of Jesus.

He was skeptical that the Messiah would emerge from a city he knew so well. Regardless, conflicts between municipalities and villages were prevalent in Israeli society. Jesus' "Nazarene" ancestry infuriated Jewish elites, who disregarded his inferior ancestry.[81] In addition, non-Jewish audiences of John may have known nothing about Nazareth other than what they had heard in other Jesus stories. Why would John inform them of this negative assessment of Nazareth if they were likely unaware of it? John assumes that even those hearing his Gospel for the first time will have heard the verses preceding this one, regardless of what his audience already knew about Galilean villages.

77. Cf. Daniel G. Groody, "A Theology of Migration: A New Method for Understanding a God on the Move," *America: The Jesuit Review*, 3-4 (2011), accessed Oct. 18, 2022, https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/763/article/theology-migration.

78. Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 51.

79. Cf. Sang Hyun Lee, *From A Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 68-73.

80. Cf. Groody, "A Theology of Migration, 3-4.

81. There are numerous examples of this in John 7:41-42; 7:52; 18:5-7; 19:19 and Acts 6:14; 24:5.

Jesus is not only from Nazareth, but also from God, according to John (cf. John 1:1-18; 1: 29-34). Jesus may have been born in a humble village, but he is far more significant as the king of all Israel (cf. John 1:49; 12:13). In John's theology, the most significant "geographic" context for Jesus is not a Galilean village, but rather the fact that he is from God (John 1:29-34) and is a bridge between heaven and earth (John 1:51). Philip's assertion that he had found the one about whom Moses and the prophets wrote prompted Nathanael's contempt for Nazareth (John 1:45). This saying can be understood by John's audience in light of the Gospel's proclamation that "while the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17).[82]

Come and see, Philip replies to Nathanael's contempt (John 1:46). These words echo the words Jesus spoke to his disciples in John 1:39: "Come, and see." John considers the phrase "come and see" to be an invitation to strangers.[83] Certainly, interacting with strangers can result in new life.[84] Eventually, this invitation is echoed when we see the migrant workers' contribution to Taiwan's economy.[85] Despite being reviled, xenophobic, and discriminated against, migrant workers make substantial contributions to the economies of both the host country and their home countries. "Come and See" those who are despised and carrying out the work of Jesus of Nazareth in the mountains, bathrooms, ships, etc. In his work, Jesus of Nazareth represents these migrants. The migrant works

82. Cf. George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 444.

83. Cf. Susanna Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012), 174.

84. Cf. Ibid., 175.

85. **新聞與活動**, "移民和移工都是我們臺灣的一份子," 總統府新聞, accessed Oct. 18, 2022, https://www.president.gov.tw/NEWS/20973.

nonstop to support his family in his home country. So that his children can attend school and his wife can raise pigs or chickens to provide for the family, he performs difficult labor and earns very little money. Despite this, "Jesus of Nazareth" continues to be ridiculed by the people of his time because of his Nazareth origin.

Rejection at Nazareth

In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6; and Luke 4:16-30), the story of Jesus' return to his hometown scandalized his contemporaries due to his origin. People inquired, "Is this not the carpenter, Mary's son?" Even his neighbors held a contemptuous view of Jesus. They refused to accept a person they knew well who had become famous. Indeed, the Gospel of John reveals how his people rejected him. "He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him."[86]

Residents of Nazareth acknowledged the brilliance of Jesus' teaching and his "mighty deeds," yet they rejected him! According to the Hebrew Scriptures, Nazareth was an insignificant village, so they rejected him. In addition, the Nazarenes placed a high value on self-respect, and they did not want Jesus to achieve fame. In Taiwan, migrant workers are required to relinquish their belongings in order to begin a new life in a distant land where they have no prior claims. Many Taiwanese, however, reject migrant workers because they believe that these outsiders destabilize their society. Because of this biased attitude of employers, migrant workers are more often at risk. Even though Taiwanese offer the opportunity for a secure employment, being a foreigner accentuates their vulnerability.

86. Jn 1:10-11.

They are, like Jesus of Nazareth, the most helpless marginalized members of society!

Jesus of Nazareth was the archetypal rejected person. Even though Jesus spent his ministry reaching out to the last, least, lost, and lonely people of his time who were invisible and therefore excluded, many Israelites rejected him. Despite the fact that migrant workers sacrifice their adolescence for Taiwan's economic development, many Taiwanese reject them. It's quite ironic!

Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews (Jn 19:19)

It was customary for candidates for crucifixion to have a tablet containing the reason for their execution. Pilate penned "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews" in three languages so that everyone could read it, according to John. It was written in Hebrew so that Jews could understand it, in Latin so that Romans could understand it, and in Greek so that the entire world could gain knowledge of it. Nobody protested or defended on his behalf. Even the member of the twelve he placed at the head of the group denied knowing him. It appeared that everyone had rejected Jesus and joined in his condemnation. Even God appeared to retreat. Jesus died by himself, apparently rejected by all.

However, Jesus did not condemn or reject anyone. What he had to do, he did with compassion and love. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."[87] He forgave everyone. He remained true to his forgiveness teachings. Jesus was a truly free man who would not compromise his teachings under any circumstances. He could have severed ties with everyone, but he did not. As one of his qualities, he always loves to the very

87. Lk 23:34.

end. Jewish leaders jeered at him as he hung on the cross, but he remained silent. Jesus willingly laid down his life to save the world; this is evident.

Rejected-Jesus was a symbol of the rejection of Vietnamese labor migrant workers in Taiwan, who are also rejected due to their race. Fabio Baggio notes that enforcement policies "have revealed disturbing manifestations of xenophobia and racism, raising questions about the international community's commitment to building a 'global village' capable of appreciating differences and celebrating the unity of humanity."[88] However, what the world rejects, God chooses as His own.[89] Actually, throughout Scripture, God chooses the rejected as His own. We see how God seeks solidarity and union with all who are thrown away. Pope Francis denounces a culture of disposability in which even human lives are considered expendable. He also cited the dangers of this culture in relation to immigration, stating, "A change of attitude toward migrants and refugees is required on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – and toward attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of constructing a better, more just, and fraternal world."[90] God demonstrates His love, mercy, concern, and omnipotence with, within, and through them. As His agents, He chooses the rejected and marginalized. Jesus says in the book of Matthew, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of

88. Fabio Baggio, C.S., "Introduction," in *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, eds. Fabio Baggio and Agnes M. Brazal (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2008), vii–xx.

89. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey*, 91.

90 .Cf. Pope Francis, *Papal Messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Messages, accessed Oct. 20, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20150912_world-migrants-day-2016.html.

these least brothers of mine, you did for me."[91] Consequently, we acknowledge our kinship with migrant workers and do not separate ourselves from them or from what God desires of us.

The Triumphant Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God

The fact that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of God, became human, died, was resurrected, and appeared to many people is beyond the scope of scientific and historical investigation, as is His ultimate validity. This is the cornerstone of our Christian faith. He was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit. This newly discovered joy is so great, so extraordinary, and so evident that it cannot be concealed. It had to be made public. Mary immediately reported to Peter and the others that she had witnessed the Lord. The apostles and early Christians understood that they were obligated to share the good news that they had personally experienced. Joy and its source need to be shared. The source of their joy was Jesus of Nazareth, who "...killed, using lawless men to crucify. But God raised him up..."[92]

The disciples' joy at Jesus' resurrection marked the beginning of their quest to discover the ultimate significance of His life and teachings. When they attempted to witness to Him without hesitation, they felt His presence. Multiple times, they claimed to have seen Jesus physically alive. After observing his crucifixion and spearing, they engaged in lengthy conversations and shared meals with him. When told not to speak about the resurrection of Jesus, they replied, "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard."[93] Eventually,

91. Mt 25:40.

92. Act 2:23-24.

93. Act 4:20.

these disciples risked their lives to proclaim what they were certain of: Jesus' resurrection from the dead.[94]

According to Virgilio Elizondo, in the book of "Galilean Journey: The Mexican – American Promise": "...the revolution aspects of Christianity was...the new hero who in the power of the Lord...now strong enough to give life."[95] This hero is now the symbol of migrant workers who use their weakness in the eyes of conventional wisdom to challenge their system of injustice.[96] The world's weapons are useless against them. Even in death, they radiated an inner peace and joy that worldly wisdom had never been able to accomplish.[97]

The happiness of the disciples represents the contentment of the Vietnamese labor migrants regarding their offering. They migrate to Taiwan in search of a better life and to provide for their children back home. They come here to assist their spouse in amassing sufficient funds to build a house so that they can provide shelter. Consequently, they come here for a win-win situation. Everyone within the service circle possesses this happiness. Taiwan is ecstatic about its flourishing economy and cultural exchange. The Vietnamese migrant workers delight in the remittances they send home.

Conclusion

When Moses asked God his name so he could tell the Israelites who had sent him (Ex 3:12-13), God replied that His

94. cf. 1 Cor 15:20.

95. Elizondo, *Galilean Journey*, 116.

96. Cf. Ibid, 117.

97 Cf. Ibid, 118.

name is "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh" (I am who I am).[98] (Ex 3, 14) John I. Durham states, "Moses is not given a name. It is an assertion of authority and an admission of a fundamental truth." What are the facts? Reality is the reality of "Always Is or Am" This interpretation demonstrates that, according to Miguel H. Diaz, "God's name is a promise of physical presence." Specifically, according to John Courtney Murray, "the revelation of God's name conveys God's promise to migrate toward God's people at all times." God would be present prior to the Israelites' arrival. He went before them to protect, nurture, and direct them. He is constantly in motion with His people.

God's constant movement alongside His people is exemplified by the Son, Jesus. In his role as God's servant, the Son accepts his burden, even though it will lead to his death. However, according to Ellacuria, the servant has triumphed because "he sacrifices his life for the sake of others"[99] and it is for this reason that "he shall be raised and greatly exalted" (Is. 52:13).

Ellacuria continues: "We gain life when we surrender it to others."[100] Ellacuria asserts that God supports the oppressed and opposes the oppressor (which is in itself good news). In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is clear that the promise applicable to Moses and the Israelites is also applicable to Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan today. God accompanies them physically and gives His life for them. This enables us to view God as *Deus Migrator*. Taiwanese Christians are called to

98. Walter Houston, "Exodus," *The Oxford Bible Commentary,* eds. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 70-71.

99. Ignacio Ellacuria, "The Crucified People," *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theory*, eds. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria (New York: Orbis Book, 1996), 592–598.

100. Ibid., 395.

approach the ecology of Faith[101], which calls them to be open, welcoming, and compassionate. Certainly, the Bible provides a collection of emigrational tales that comprise the human condition. If the God of Israel had previously commanded his people to flee to the "Promised Land," He now commands His displaced "people" to move to a place where they can find refuge and live a decent life. Let us now examine what the Catholic Social Teaching reveals about labor migrant workers.

"Go and Do Likewise" (Luke 10:35)

Jesus' command to his disciples to "go and do likewise" (Luke 10:35) has echoed throughout Christian tradition, and his statement "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:31-46) remains the passage of Scripture most frequently cited by Christian hospitality practitioners. *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, on the other hand, acknowledges that "the challenge we face in migration today is not an easy one, as many different spheres are involved: economics, sociology, politics, health, culture, and security."[102] In spite of this, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants emphasizes that "All Christians must respond to this challenge because it is not simply a matter of good will or charismatic individuals,"[103] and "Christians are called to demonstrate and practice not only a spirit of tolerance, but also respect for the identity of the other."[104]

In the final statement of the 1974 Plenary Assembly, in the section titled "The Local Church: In Dialogue with the People, Especially the Poor," the FABC also acknowledged the

101. Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church,* 163.

102. *EMCC*, no.3.

103. Ibid., no. 3.

104 Ibid., no.9.

widespread poverty in Asian nations. The concrete call of the Plenary is to live in solidarity with suffering humanity and to work for liberation from all that oppresses human life and degrades creation.[105] At Plenary Assembly VII, the FABC discussed in detail the evolution of its approach to issues, including migration, in light of its experience teaching on social issues. The federation had become more conscious of the need to think and act holistically in accordance with our Mission of Love and Service.[106]

Pope Francis brought his concern about migrations to the Catholic Pastoral Center in an effort to transform the existing perspective. He demands that "an attitude of defense and fear, indifference or marginalization, which ultimately corresponds precisely to the culture of discarding, can be transformed into an attitude that has at its core a culture of encounter, the only attitude capable of constructing a more just and brotherly world, a better world."[107] Therefore, in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, he promotes a "culture of encounter" rather than a "globalization of indifference"[108] which he used in Lampedusa. Pope Francis used the phrase "globalization of indifference" asking people for more solidarity with the excluded by employing the

105. Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR., ed., *Fifty Years of Asian Pastoral Guidance* (Yannawa: Hemmarus Prepress, 2020), no. 19-24.

106. FABC, "*Final Statement of the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the FABC*," part 3, no. 8, accessed Oct. 21, 2022, https://secureserver-cdn.net/160.153.138.42/djk.047.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/VII-AsIPA-GA-Publication-2015.pdf.

107. Pope Francis, "Mexico/Holy See Colloquium On Migration And Development," *Migrants/Refugees*, (2014), accessed Oct. 22, 2022, https://migrants-refugees.va/mr_article/message-pope-francis-occasion-mexico-holy-see-colloquium-migration-development/ .

108. Cf. Pope Francis, *Holy Mass on the Anniversary of the Visit to Lampedusa, Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis*, Homilies, 2020, accessed Oct. 22, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200708_omelia-anniversariovisita-lampedusa.html.

verb "encounter" 44 times. Migration, according to the Pope, provides the church with an opportunity to demonstrate its universality and motherhood, *i.e.*, as a community that is not divided by international borders and cares for all people. As we saw in chapters three and four of this *tesina*, this identity has a significant missionary component as a result of the encyclical, the joy of brotherly friendship, which becomes an appeal to societies not to allow fear to lead to the exclusion of migrants.

How do we build "bridges instead of walls"[109] which Pope Francis often mentions, to foster our relations with foreigners and strangers and create the culture of encounter instead of the culture of fear of exclusion and rejection? How do we promote justice for Vietnamese labor migrant workers? Pope Francis in *FT* mentions the 4 verbs[110]: to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate. These four verbs serve as a compass for providing pastoral care to migrants. In fact, by executing these four verbs when we encounter migrants in our daily lives, we can express a very practical act of hospitality towards them.

To Welcome

Welcoming the stranger is thus intrinsic to the nature of the Church itself and bears witness to its fidelity to the gospel.[111] Pope Francis used to ask local churches to host those migrants, give them a sanctuary, a home to satisfy their thirst for

109. Cf. Gerard O'Connell, "Pope Francis: Build Bridges, not Walls," *America The Jesuit Review* (2019), accessed Sept. 10, 2022, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/03/31/pope-francis-build-bridges-not-walls.

110. Cf. *FT*, chapter 4.

111. *EMCC*, no. 22.

"homing desire."[112] In reality, "home desire" is the migrants' primary desire to live in a foreign country. Catherine LaGugna in the book "Re-enchanting the Earth" states, "A person is thus not an individual but an open and ecstatic reality, referred to others for his or her existence. The actualization of personhood takes place in self-transcendence, the movement of freedom toward communion with other persons."[113] Therefore, churches in Taiwan can offer them a suitable sanctuary. In each parish, individuals are invited not only to join the church but also to create their own church, their own community where they can feel at home. Indeed, local churches in Taiwan are invited to become migrants' own "family where all kinds of cultures or people, races, etc. can be hosted."[114]

Local churches in Taiwan can also serve as a meeting place for people in similar circumstances, e.g., the provision of advice, activities, and excursions, and participation in festivities. In reality, justice as an option for the poor/migrants must be constructed and comprehended within the context of love. The embodiment of justice is love. It is neither a pleasant feeling nor a romantic bond. Love is a mode of worldly existence. Justice is the moral act of love. Actually, justice equals love. Evil exists where neither moral acts of love nor justice exist. Evil is the act of malice or wrongdoing. It is the commission of a moral wrong, specifically the severing of a relational

112. Stephanie Kirchgaessner, "Vatican to take in two refugee families as Pope calls for 'every religion' to help ," *The Guardian*, 2015, accessed Oct. 25, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/06/pope-francis-calls-on-catholics-to-take-in-refugee-families.

113. Cf. Ilia Delio, *Re-Enchanting the Earth: Why AI Needs Religion* (New York: Orbis Books, 2020), 27.

114. Cf. Emmanuel S. de Guzman, "The Church as "Imagined Communities" Among Differentiated Social Bodies," *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, eds. Fabio Baggio and Agnes M. Brazal (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 118-154.

bond in a manner that renders one, both, or multiple parties incapable of growing, loving, or living.[115]

To Protect

The dwelling is a safe haven for its occupants. As a home and family for migrants, Taiwanese churches can become hospitable, familial communities. It is now a location that can accommodate mixed and permeated cultural conditions. It creates a community in which members' differences are respected and accepted. It is a place where people from diverse backgrounds can peacefully coexist. Now, the small, foreign, and disadvantaged community feels at home. Maintaining their own traditions, adjusting without assimilation, and living "beyond" status in a foreign country are presently ways for migrants to endure hardships in the hope of returning home. Members of the same religion fortify their identity and acknowledge their contribution to the economy, culture, and society of the receiving nation. On their journey back to their homes, where their families are waiting, the migrants feel safe and at home.

Churches, dioceses, and men's and women's congregations in Taiwan must also collaborate with churches in their home countries. Clearly, this type of collaboration is very beneficial because the participating churches can effectively reach out to migrants and their families left behind by sharing the necessary information. Many dioceses with ties to migrant workers have currently established migrant desks and other facilities to assist migrant workers. However, in many cases the operational aspect of such local structures is inadequate due to a lack of personnel or funds. Frequently, their effectiveness is contingent on the individual sensitivity of bishops or parish

115. Isabel Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* (New York: University Press of America, 1982), 18.

priests. However, a religious commitment between the sending and hosting churches is necessary. The church can support, among other things, bilateral agreements between Taiwan and Vietnam in the area of recruitment.

In response to the trend of East Asian migrant workers seeking employment in Taiwan, the Taiwanese Church has expanded its provision of social and legal aid, psychological assistance, and housing in special shelters for all foreign workers. Numerous pastoral agents advocate and lobby for the rights of migrants on the front lines. Spirituality is present, although it is often delegated to priests and religious from abroad. Lou Aldrich SJ describes the exploitation of migrant workers in Taiwan and uses CST on labor to critique the situation and suggest solutions.[116] The church must become the voice of the voiceless.[117] The letter argued that the church should provide assistance alongside those meeting the religious and spiritual needs[118] of migrants, refugees, and newcomers including beyond the sacramental services, and regardless of their immigration status. Since then, bishops have solicited financial support from numerous parishes and Catholic organizations

116. Lou Aldrich, "A Critical Evaluation of the Migrant Workers' Situation in Taiwan in Light of the Catholic Social Tradition," *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, eds. Fabio Baggio and Agnes M. Brazal (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 49–67.

117. Cf. Proverb 31:1-9.

118. *Erga Migrantes*, Part II, 70: Workers in a Pastoral Care of Communion, 70-80. Understood under the term "workers are the following: Pastoral care takers in the home and host churches of the migrants as Episcopal conferences, National Coordinators for Ethnic Chaplains, Chaplains for Ethnic Communities of immigrants, Parish priests, all pastoral workers, and lay associations involved in the pastoral care of migrants. - "To ensure that the pastoral care of migrants may be one of communion. That is born from an ecclesiology of communion and serving a spirituality of communion, it is essential that the Churches of departure and arrival establish an intense collaboration with one another."

for the development of networks providing social services to migrants and their families during the period of settlement. "Whenever possible, provide legal services at reasonable prices or for free to those who have been arrested in Taiwan's numerous prisons."[119]

Furthermore, Taiwanese churches must adapt their pastoral care to the increasing feminization of migrant workers. Recently, several case studies and theological reflections have been published, most notably by Gemma Tulud Cruz.[120] She argues that the maintenance of familial relationships and responsibilities is the most significant gendered change for mothers who migrate.[121] Their remittances, gendered roles, and family relationships are the factors that motivate them to migrate to Taiwan for the benefit of their family. According to her, "the patriarchal and romanticized concept of love motivates or compel[s] women to risk their lives overseas or to remain in problematic living and working conditions for the sake of their loved ones."[122] Therefore, it is crucial to place a greater emphasis on the unique experiences and gendered nature of migrant women.

In "Burning Center, Porous Borders," Eleazar S. Fernandez told the story of a Hong Kong domestic worker. "Is it not true, Big sister, that I am similar to a roll of toilet paper in a store?" If I am not purchased, I remain on the shelf; if I am purchased,

119. Regina Fuchs, "Human Trafficking of Legal and Illegal Migrant Workers in Taiwan," *Hope Workers' Center Taiwan*, 2011, accessed Oct. 19, 2022, http://mfasia.org/migrantforumasia/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/fuchs_humantrafficking_feb2011.pdf.

120. Cruz, *Toward a Theology of Migration*, 35.

121. Ibid., 37-39.

122. Ibid., 47.

I am consumed and discarded. "I am uncared for..."[123] This is one of the stories in the book about migrant workers. Their lives are so disposable and they are frequently treated as trash. This is the issue that Pope Francis addressed in his explanation of the many facets of the "throwaway" culture, both in and beyond *Laudato Si'*. The Pope considers this issue to be pervasive. Therefore, he requests an investigation into law and policymaking if the "throwaway" culture is eliminated - and what might replace it.

Besides, the churches can become a "just broker" by assisting migrant workers in finding employment with Taiwanese employers, thereby combating systemic injustice. Migrant workers are vulnerable because they must endure not only physical but also mental stress as a result of their jobs and because they reside in a foreign country without family. In Taiwan, migrant workers must rely on brokers as their first helpers, but if these helpers fail in their obligations, "it is the responsibility of the public authority to prevent and punish injury, and to preserve everyone's property."[124]

If the broker plays a significant role in this group of four actors (employers, migrant workers, the government, and brokers), its activities will have a negative impact on the development of the other sections. Employers and migrant workers, two of the most important participants in this employment process, will be impacted the most. Employers, on the other hand, have their own authority, property, residence, and support system in Taiwan, so they can easily find a replacement migrant worker, whereas migrant laborers must always struggle to survive in Taiwan. They could be in debt and defenseless

123. Eleazar S. Fernandez, *Burning Center, Porous Borders* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 207-236.

124. Cf. *RN*, no.37.

in a foreign country. Therefore, migrant workers suffer the most when brokers fail to meet their obligations.

Initially, employers and employees were required to rely on brokers for recruitment procedures; however, when brokers fail to perform their duties properly, their role is no longer required. Those who perform their responsibilities properly tend to foster harmony between employers and migrant workers. The more a broker adheres to his responsibilities, the more he demonstrates his indispensable role as an intermediary; conversely, the more he goes against his responsibilities, the more he rejects his intermediary role. Therefore, it will eventually be eliminated and stripped of its intermediary function. However, it is necessary to clearly differentiate the intermediary role from that of a broker, as a failing broker cannot destroy the intermediary role's fundamentals. Therefore, if brokers are eliminated, it is necessary to prepare another unit to assume this role in order to prevent additional management issues.

It is true that a broker can be eliminated, but the role of a middleman is essential and must be filled by another unit. Regardless of whether the entity is public or private, it must be subject to strict management by the government and the conscience of the responsible unit.

Otherwise, the private property of migrant workers is still violated. Governments, employers, and migrant workers heavily rely on middlemen. In addition to manual labor, a low-skilled migrant worker[125] has nothing in common with a

125. Hồng Chiêu, "90% lao động đi làm việc nước ngoài có tay nghề thấp," *VnExpress*, 2022, accessed Oct. 20, 2022, https://vnexpress.net/90-lao-dong-di-lam-viec-nuoc-ngoai-co-tay-nghe-thap-4500367.html. (The study from Vietnamese Labor Bureau shows that Vietnamese labor migrant workers in foreign lands are less-skilled laborers).

high-skilled foreign worker, as the latter can contact employers directly and complete the necessary paperwork on their own. Agents must assist migrant workers with the recruitment process and other concerns after their arrival in Taiwan.

In addition, businesses rely on brokers to assist them in locating qualified workers, managing procedures, and overseeing the administration of foreign workers. Employers prefer workers represented by brokers because they can be guaranteed and because they can file complaints with brokers more easily than with government agencies. According to the government, Taiwan's labor force is insufficient to meet the massive demand in the migration industry and the difficulties associated with the influx of a large number of migrant workers. These issues appear to be resolved by both business and government brokers. Brokers are entrusted by governments to act as intermediaries, and it is their duty to mitigate the negative effects of this solution. Despite this, the government must tolerate the grave threat posed by the brokers' deceit, so it disregards their unethical behavior. In other words, the government is reliant on brokerage services to some extent.

RN Center previously handled a case involving a Vietnamese part-time worker who was injured on the job. His legal employer fired him for working illegally, but the Ministry of Labor cannot provide evidence that he worked for an illegal employer. The unlawful employer instructed him to keep his employment a secret and offered to assume responsibility for him.

Unpredictably, the illegal employer reversed course and urged him to sign the excessive compensation agreement while he was still hospitalized. His legal standing in Taiwan was favorable given his circumstances. The Center assisted him in obtaining a free attorney through the Legal Aid Foundation and accompanied him throughout his case. After nearly a year

of fighting for his rights, the illegal employer agreed to pay six times the compensation he initially requested. Even if this compensation is inadequate for the suffering he must endure, he must accept it. Loss of mental health and incapacity to work are severe consequences of industrial accidents, as victims and their families worry about the future and their loved ones. They will be severely depressed if they lack the strength to overcome obstacles and do not receive family support.

After all, Pope Leo XIII emphasized that on Sundays and certain holy days, individuals should temporarily forget about their jobs, contemplate heaven and eternal life, and worship.

Religion is a potent support for the spiritual lives of employees, particularly those who are far from their home country and face numerous challenges. They can utilize religion as a defense. Therefore, both religious and nonreligious individuals must have a day off so that they can worship, rest, and reflect on their goals, as well as visit friends and family or engage in other activities of their choosing. The benefit of the day off is that it allows them to escape their stressful workplace. "As a general rule, a worker should have leisure and rest proportional to the wear and tear of his strength, since the loss of strength can only be recovered by ceasing to work hard."[126]

To Promote

The Asian Bishops correctly noted that the Church should unite with all those who care about the rights of migrants and their situation, recognizing that the migrants themselves are

126. *RN*, no. 42.

the primary agents of change.[127] Promoting migrants' rights is "a universal aspect of our call to love, a love that transcends all prejudices, all historical and cultural barriers, and all petty interests."[128] To do so, people need to be internal conversion[129] that is because "this new reality based on intercultural relations, in which diversity is not a threat, does not justify power hierarchies of one over the other, but rather dialogue and celebration of difference, interrelationship, and a revival of hope."[130]

Certainly, the concept of building cultural bridges between migrant workers and Taiwanese should be promoted. It takes courage and generosity to confront the differences. Other cultures are not "enemies". As Agnes Brazal says in her exploration, the possibility of speaking of the cultural rights of migrants[131] "cultural rights can be theologically based and understood within a Trinitarian social model of rationality and mutuality, equality in diversity, creativity, and fecundity."[132] The author proposes a Trinitarian social model of equality in diversity and creativity as a fertile theological basis for the right to cultural expression, growth, and identity. "As a community of friends, the Trinity challenges us to be hospitable to 'others' who do not immediately belong in our 'circle,'

127. FABC, "The Final Statement of the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences, *A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service,*" *For all the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002 to 2006,* Franz-Josef Eilers, S.V.D., ed., vol. 3 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications), 2007, 89.

128. *FT*, nos. 114 – 117.

129. Cruz, *Toward a Theology of Migration*, 35.

130. Pope Benedict XVI, "Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to The Bishops of Latin America And The Caribbean," 2007, no. 97, accessed 25/10/2022, https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf.

131. Cf. Brazal, "Cultural Rights of Migrants, 88-110.

132. Ibid., 104.

such as migrants and refugees. Furthermore, mutuality within the Trinity requires that we recognize the economic, cultural, and social contributions of migrants.[133]

Indeed, she encourages a respectful attitude toward cultural rights in her essay. According to her, once a person can express a respectful attitude toward different cultures, his or her attitude demonstrates the Trinitarian unity of self and others. She provides a framework for respecting the cultures of migrants while allaying fears of permanent migrant enclaves or ghettos by extending the duty of hospitality. Whereas the new migrant typically possesses less social, economic, and political capital while living in "a betwixt and between" situation, Agnes Brazal highlights the creativity that results from such tension and the obligation that a right to cultural expression imposes (e.g., antiracism policies beyond benign neglect).

Agnes Brazal also notes that the theological foundation for human rights is our inherent dignity as persons created in the image and likeness of a triune and relational, diverse, and unique God.[134] She investigates how these characteristics impact migrants' cultural rights. As manifestations of the Holy Trinity, we are social rather than solitary beings. Interaction and discourse with others shape our identities and cultural practices. The manner in which others perceive and respond to us influences our sense of self. Brazal prefers an image of the Trinity as a community of friends, which "challenges us to be hospitable to 'others' who initially do not belong to our 'circle' as migrants and refugees."[135]

In addition, "mutuality in the Trinity requires us to acknowledge the gifts migrants bring—their contribution to

133. Ibid., 68–92.

134. Ibid., 82.

135. Ibid., 84.

economic development and their cultural capital—and to work toward social reforms that would grant them greater access to economic capital."[136] The relationships within the Trinity serve as a model for relationships between those who are both similar (in essence) and dissimilar (distinct persons). Respect for cultural rights exemplifies this triangular relationship by embracing the stranger, migrant, and alien.[137] She asserts that all living things are inherently creative and procreative because the Trinity is characterized by creativity and procreation. Thus, "the right to cultural expression, development, and identity allows us to actualize this imprint of the Trinity within us," and, as in the Trinity, "cultural creativity and fecundity will result from a process of dynamic communion and interdependence, mutual relations with peoples of other cultures, including that of the migrants."[138]

It is needed to mention Pope Paul VI who called to mind the task of the Church with respect to non-Christian migrants, underlining that by settling down, they create new occasions for contacts and cultural exchanges.[139] The parish represents the space in which a true pedagogy of meeting with people of various religious convictions and cultures can be realized. In its various expressions, the parish community can become a training ground of hospitality, a place where an exchange of experiences and gifts takes place.[140] The parish is a privileged expression of community[141] Priests, called to be ministers of

136. Ibid., 84.

137. Ibid., 84-85.

138. Ibid., 86.

139. Message for the 87th World Migration Day, 2001, no. 6.

140. Ibid., 2002, no. 3.

141. Message for the 85th World Migration Day, 1999, no. 6.

unity in the parish community.[142] Tolerance in this scenario is not enough; sympathy and respect[143] are required in all possible ways, especially in reference to cultural identity. This is the reason why dialogue, listening, trust, and empathy are needed.

To Integrate

On World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2015, Pope Francis declared, "The Church without borders, Mother to all."[144] This statement encourages Christians to spread a culture of acceptance and solidarity throughout the world because they have the "right to be assisted in integrating into a new country."[145] The Pope stated:

> The Church is a pioneer in the globalization of charity and solidarity. The Church are all called to the sublime mission of collaborating, as the Churches of origin, transit, and destination of people who are compelled to move, in order for them to feel welcomed, protected, promoted, and to have a solid foundation for proper integration. At a time when various forms of fundamentalist intolerance are damaging relationships between individuals, groups and peoples, let us be committed to living and teaching the value of respect for others, a love capable of welcoming differences.[146]

In *FT*, the Pope said:

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142. Ibid.

143. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis uses the word "respect" 58 times.

144. Cf. Jamie Orillion, "Pope Francis' message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees: 'A Church without frontiers, mother to all,'" *Global*, 2014, accessed Oct. 26, 2022, https://stjoerayne.org/2014/09/23/pope-francis-message-for-world-day-of-migrants-and-refugees-a-church-without-frontiers-mother-to-all/.

145. *GS*, no. 84.

146. Cf. Message for the 85th World Migration Day, 1999, no. 5.

> The priority of the dignity of every human being over his or her ideas, opinions, practices and even sins. Even as forms of fanaticism, closed-mindedness and social and cultural fragmentation proliferate in present-day society, a good politician will take the first step and insist that different voices be heard. Disagreements may well give rise to conflicts, but uniformity proves stifling and leads to cultural decay. May we not be content with being enclosed in one fragment of reality.[147]

Migrant workers, regardless of who they are, what religion they practice, or what they do, are created in the image of God. In order to encourage migrant workers to combine their own culture with Taiwanese culture, it is necessary to take steps toward social integration, such as enrolling in Chinese language classes through a church-affiliated group. Precautions must be taken and workplace laws and regulations must be followed to prevent excessive differentiation.[148] In addition, the "Instruction on the Pastoral Care of Migrating People" states, "Migrants bear witness to and promote the unity of the human family, and confirm that communion of brotherhood among peoples in which each participant is simultaneously a giver and a receiver.[149] Certainly, we are commanded to love them with a love that "integrates and unites."[150]

In addition, according to *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, Christian migrants "must be the principal protagonists of pastoral care."[151] Before the establishment and development

147. *FT*, no. 191.

148. Message for World Migration Day, 2005, no. 1.

149. Cf. *De Pastorali Migratorum Cura*, "On the Pastoral Care of People who Migrate Sacred Congregation for Bishops," 1969, no. 2, accessed Oct. 14, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19690815_pastoralis-migratorum-cura.html.

150. *FT*, no. 190-192.

151. *EMCC*, no. 91.

of ecclesiastical structures for migrant ministry, migrants were already actively engaged in pastoral ministry among their fellow migrants. They look for members of their religious denomination and people of the same linguistic-ethnic background in the host country so that they can continue to nourish their religious tradition, which gives them a sense of security and purpose in a foreign land. Numerous instances exist of migrant workers in Taiwan organizing Christian worshipping communities and inviting priests from their home countries to join them in order to receive the sacraments. Migration benefits individuals, families, economies, cultures, relationships, and societies.

However, these benefits are accompanied by a number of disadvantages, including uprooting, isolation, and social marginalization, which result in numerous psychological and emotional issues, such as feelings of stress, loneliness, and meaninglessness. In Taiwan, immigrant Catholic communities are formed and shaped by their respective rural societies and cultures, which instilled in them a fundamental sense of belonging and unity with others.

General Conclusion

As Christians, we must increase our understanding of the workings of the Word and the miracles of the Holy Spirit in people's lives in light of prejudices. We believe that humans are created in God's image. Therefore, we are obligated to help our migrant brothers and sisters.

Humanity is exemplified by the hospitality shown to others. As a person with a calling to love, extending our hands to those in need comes naturally. For this to occur peacefully and justly, many people's attitudes must change, and the Church's role and presence in this process are essential. However, we must

go beyond this calling, loving as Christ instructs: "whatever you did for one of my least brothers, you did for me" (Mt 25, 40). When we extend our hospitality to the least by welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating them, it is not because they are pathetic, but because they are the image of Christ. Our Lord asks us to carry the cross and daily follow him (cf. Mt. 16, 24-26). Certainly, the cross that we bear is also the cross of the migrant workers. When we actually carry or assist others in carrying their "cross," we obey the Lord's command. Christians and other people of good will can be mustard seeds in these regions if the appropriate conditions are created.

In the context of Asia, for the Church in Asia to be relevant to its life and mission, it must engage in the process of a Triple dialogue: a dialogue with the poor, people of other religions, and their cultures.[152] By welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating them into the foreign land, the church is carrying out the triple dialogue. Let us use the poem written by Bishop Romero to honor the valor and sacrifice of Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan and to wish them well in their new home.

152. Cf. FABC, "Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees: A New Way of Being Church's Study Days on Undocumented Migrants and Refugees," *For all the Peoples of Asia. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002 to 2006*, vol. 4, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers, S.V.D. (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2007), 89.

The Violence of Love

How beautiful will be the day when all the baptized understand
that their work, their job, is a priestly work,
that just as I celebrate Mass at this altar,
so each carpenter celebrates Mass at his workbench and each metalworker, each professional,
each doctor with the scalpel, the market woman at her stand,
is performing a priestly office!
How many cabdrivers, I know, listen to this message there in their cabs;
you are a priest at the wheel, my friend, if you work with honesty,
consecrating that taxi of yours to God, bearing a message of peace and love
to the passengers who ride in your cab.

(St. Oscar Romero, The Violence of Love, November 20, 1977)

THE HISTORY OF THE *ADORATIO CRUCIS* IN THE ROMAN RITE

Michael George M. Villasis

Origins of the *Adoratio Crucis*

The Annual Commemoration of Easter and the Paschal Fast

There was, in the first centuries of Christianity, originally no separate celebration of the Passion and Death of the Lord on Good Friday. The earliest evidence of an annual commemoration, in the second and third centuries, is that of a period of fasting, followed by an all-night vigil and the celebration of the Eucharist at dawn.[1] This vigil, which consisted in psalms, readings, and prayers, not only focused on Easter and the Lord's Resurrection, but encompassed the entirety of the mystery of Christ, including his Passion and Death, towards joyful anticipation of his coming again.[2] As such, the commemoration of Easter was eschatological and not just historical.[3] It is in this way that the celebration of Baptism was intimately linked to the celebration of the Vigil; the Christian through this sacrament enters the Lord's Passion and Resurrection.[4]

There was a tendency, in Rome and elsewhere, to extend the fast before the Paschal Vigil in preparation for Baptism,

1. See Philip J. Goddard, *Festa Paschalia: A History of the Holy Week Liturgy in the Roman Rite* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2011), 4-5.

2. See ibid., 5-6. The Vigil was popularly believed to be the time when Christ would come again.

3. See ibid., 21

4. See ibid., 12.

observed both by catechumens and some of the baptized faithful.[5] This would begin to take shape as the period of fasting now known to us as Lent. In Rome itself, though the original length of fasting is unclear, Lent eventually assumed a span of six weeks, beginning on a Sunday, and which incorporated a total of thirty-six fast days. To make up the total of forty days, four more fast days were added by the seventh century, and Lent now began on the preceding Wednesday, according to the Old Gelasian Sacramentary.[6] This has become the Lenten observance in the West until the present—a six-week period beginning on Ash Wednesday.

The Origins of Good Friday in Rome

The services on Lenten weekdays in Rome in ancient times consisted of a non-Eucharistic service known as the *synaxis*, celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays.[7] Good Friday was no exception to this—as evidenced by the eighth-century Lectionary of Würzburg,[8] the readings given for the Roman synaxis on that day are from the Prophet Hosea and the Book of Exodus.[9] Both are chosen in view of the coming Vigil rather than the commemoration of the crucifixion and death of the Lord. The synaxis on Good Friday had originally no separate

5. See ibid., 15.

6. See ibid., 15-16. The Old Gelasian Sacramentary represented the Roman "presbyteral" tradition, for use in the Roman *tituli*, or parish churches, in contrast to the Gregorian Sacramentary, which represented the "papal" tradition. See Cassian Folsom, "The Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite," in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies* vol. I, 248-249, and Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 49-50.

7. See ibid., 17.

8. *Comes Romanus Wirziburgensis* is the earliest extant Roman lectionary. For a description of the manuscript, see "Comes Romanus Wirziburgensis," *Virtuelle Bibliothek Würzburg*, http://vb.uni-wuerzburg.de/ub /mpthf62/ueber .html

9. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 168.

Cross-rite which made it different from the other synaxes of the weekdays of Lent; as with the other days, after the readings, the homily and the solemn intercessions or prayer of the faithful follow.[10]

Fourth Century Origins: Egeria and the Adoratio Crucis in Jerusalem

As noted above, the earliest celebration of Good Friday in Rome was the *synaxis*, which contained no separate rite of the *adoratio crucis*. The earliest account of the *adoratio* locates the rite not in Rome, but Jerusalem. This account, from the diary of a fourth-century consecrated woman from Galicia named Egeria (or Aetheria)[11], describes her journeys to Jerusalem, and the celebration of the liturgies of Holy Week.[12] This diary, the *Peregrinatio Egeriae*, thus gives a unique look into the early practice of the *adoratio crucis* in the East.

The Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday should be seen in view of the "representational nature" of the Jerusalem liturgy; the interplay of "historical and liturgical space" had given rise to the celebration of rites that commemorate history, and feasts that were originally "expressions of theological truths" and not of specific episodes of salvation history were gradually emphasized as historical commemorations.[13] Thus, the adoration itself is part of a series of such representational ceremonies on Good Friday, all connected to the Passion and Death of the

10. See ibid., 178.

11. See George E. Gingras, "Introduction to Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage," trans. George E. Gingras, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Work of the Fathers in Translation*, no. 38 (New York: Newman Press, 1970), 8-11.

12. See ibid., 23-43.

13. See ibid., 32-33.

Lord in Jerusalem.[14] This historical commemoration included, quite decisively, also the instrument of the Passion itself: the cross-relic:

> [T]he liturgy of the church in fourth-century Jerusalem embraced not only the event (Christ's death upon the cross and resurrection from the dead) but also, and especially, the object at the heart of that event (the cross itself), prizing that sacred wood both as relic and as symbolic synecdoche for (and therefore sacrament of) that happening at the center of the earth.[15]

According to Egeria, the *adoratio crucis* was celebrated from the second hour until noon, after the celebration of rites, first at Gethsemani at cockcrow (commemorating the agony and the arrest of Jesus), and then at the Cross at Golgotha, (commemorating his trial).[16] The bishop comforts the people for their labors and, urging them not to be weary, tells them to rest for a while and return for the *adoratio crucis*: "Around the second hour of the day let everyone be on hand here, so that from that hour until the sixth hour you may see the holy wood of the cross, and thus believe that it was offered for the salvation of each and every one of us."[17]

At the second hour, the people gather at the place of the Crucifixion. Behind the Cross (the *Post Crucem,* which is a chapel), the bishop sits on his throne, while a table is placed before him, on which is placed the "gilded silver casket" containing the wood of the Cross and the inscription on the Cross. Then the bishop, still seated, grips the wood of the Cross,

14. See ibid., 38.

15. Cody C. Unterseher, "The Holy Cross in the Liturgy of Jerusalem: The Happening at the Center of the Earth," in *Worship* 85, no. 4 (July 2011): 332.

16. See Gingras, "Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage," 110.

17. Ibid.

while deacons stand guard, while the faithful enter the Post Crucem to venerate the Cross.[18] The veneration proceeds as follows: "All of them bow down, touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and after kissing the cross, they move on. No one, however, puts out his hand to touch the cross."[19] After this, the faithful also venerate "the ring of Solomon and the phial with which the kings were anointed."[20]

The veneration goes on until the sixth hour, when all go "before the Cross" (the *Ante Crucem*, a courtyard[21]) and readings appropriate for Good Friday are proclaimed,[22] amid the weeping and groaning of many. At the ninth hour, the account of the Lord's Death from St. John is read, after which the people are dismissed. The day ends with the *synaxis* at the *Martyrium*, and the commemoration of the burial at the *Anastasis*.[23]

There are several things to note in the *adoratio crucis* in Jerusalem. First is the time and place of the celebration – it takes place before noon, and outside of the liturgical synaxis, which follows from the sixth to the ninth hour. Egeria notes no readings, psalms, or hymns recited or sung during the adoration.[24] Second, and connected with the first, is the presence of the bishop and clergy during the rite for security rather than liturgical presidency.[25] Third, the presence of relics other than

18. See ibid., 110-111. This is a practical arrangement, as Egeria recounts that parts of the true cross have already been stolen.

19. Ibid., 111.

20. Ibid.

21. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 32-33.

22. See Gingras, "Egeria, Diary of a Pilgrimage," 112.

23. See ibid. 111-113.

24. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 36.

25. See Donald G. LaSalle Jr., "Devotion Searching for a Place in Liturgy," in *Worship* 88, no. 2 (March 2014), 98.

the wood of the Cross makes the veneration markedly different from the *adoratio crucis* as it appears in the West, where the relic of the Cross is primarily venerated alone.

All these point to an emphasis on personal devotion within the context of the Paschal celebration. Amid the many liturgical observances of Holy Week, where Word and Eucharist are the focus, in the *adoratio crucis* the faithful are given time to personally show devotion to the Cross by venerating its relic. This emphasis is strengthened by the fact that other relics are also venerated, and that the Cross-relic itself is prepared for veneration very simply, without accompanying rites.[26] This does not imply, however, a strict delineation between private devotion or popular piety on the one hand, and public worship on the other—this act of personal devotion for the faithful still takes place within the greater context of the Holy Week liturgies of Jerusalem.[27]

The *Adoratio Crucis* in the Roman Liturgy

Adaptation in the West

The earliest description available of the rite of adoration in the Roman Rite is found in the eighth century. How it entered the Roman liturgy is not known, but Philip Goddard speculates that popes of Eastern origin in the seventh and eighth centuries may have imported it.[28] Donald LaSalle observes one salient point in its adaptation: from the act of personal devotion afforded to the faithful in the midst of the Good Friday

26. See ibid., 99-100.

27. See ibid., 100.

28. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 178.

rites, the adoration is given a place within the liturgy itself. This was done in varying ways, as shall be seen.[29]

The Ordines Romani and the Old Gelasian Sacramentary

The earliest attestations of the adaptation of the rite from the east are found in the *Ordines Romani* and the *Liber sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae* (the so-called Old Gelasian Sacramentary). The *ordines Romani* (sing. *ordo*) are descriptions of a liturgical rite, meant for the good ordering of the liturgy. Michel Andrieu had compiled fifty such *ordines*; several of these describe the liturgies of the Triduum, and as such give insight to the various ways the *adoratio* was incorporated into the liturgy of Rome.[30]

Ordo XXIII

Ordo XXIII, written around the year 700-750, was the work of a Frankish monk who witnessed the Triduum liturgies in Rome.[31] As the earliest extant description of the *adoratio crucis* in the West, it is a valuable witness to its early adaptation in public worship, and still shows Eastern influences, such as the proclamation of the readings while the adoration is on-going. That this was written during a period of Eastern influence in the city may show the primary reason for the adaptation of the *adoratio* in Rome.[32] Anne-Madeleine Plum contends that the

29. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 101.

30. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 53-56.

31. See ibid., 53.

32. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 102.

Eastern influence is shown most clearly during the procession, where the Pope carries the censer rather than the relic.[33]

The Ordo situates the *adoratio* in the Basilica of *Santa Croce in Gerusalemme*, the stational Church on Good Friday.[34] At the eighth hour, the Pope, walking barefoot and holding a censer, processes with the other ministers from the Lateran to *Santa Croce* while the psalm *Beati inmaculati* is sung. Immediately behind him is a deacon who carries the wood of the Cross in a jeweled and gilded reliquary. Once they enter *Santa Croce,* the deacon places the reliquary on the altar, and the Pope opens it. After they prostrate themselves in prayer, the Pope rises, goes to the altar and kisses the relic. The relic is then venerated by the faithful with a kiss; it is placed at the entrance of the sanctuary for the men, and then brought by ministers to the women, who are not allowed to enter the sanctuary.[35] While the veneration is ongoing, Scripture is proclaimed, the last of which is the Passion according to St. John.[36]

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33. See Anne-Madeleine Plum, "*Adoratio Crucis* in Ritus und Gesang: Die Verehrung des Kreuzes in liturgischer Feier und in zehn exemplarischen Passionslieder," (PhD diss., Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz, 2004), 39.

34. See Ordo XXIII, in *Les Ordines Romani Du Haut Moyen Age*, vol. III, ed. Michel Andrieu (Louvain: Spiciliegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1974), 270. LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 101.

35. See Ordo XXIII, 270-272. The Ordo describes the relic as being brought from the *altar super arcellam ad rugas*, the *ruga* being the movable fence delineating the sanctuary and the nave. Louis van Tongeren, "*Crux mihi certa salus*. The Cult and the Veneration of the Cross in Early Medieval Europe," in *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, no. 2 (2009): 361. Then, it is brought by the *oblationarii* and other subdeacons to the women for their veneration. See Ordo XXIII, 272.

36. See Ordo XXIII, 271. The readings are as follows: from Hosea, read by the subdeacon; the tract *Domine adiuvi* and its verses, sung by the cantor; then from Deuteronomy, and then the tract *Qui habitat*, and finally, the Passion according to St. John, read by the deacon.

After the veneration, the Pope leads the faithful in the solemn intercessions, after which he and the ministers proceed back to the Lateran. There is no communion in this Papal rite; those who wish to communicate do so with the reserved Sacrament, or in the other churches of Rome.[37] At which point this optional communion is given is not specified; the ordo states only the two abovementioned options. In any case, this clear separation between *Adoratio a*nd Communion represented the "suburbicarian" tradition in Rome; in contrast, the "Gelasian" tradition representative of the titular churches (*tituli*) would closely connect Communion and adoration, as will be seen below.[38]

Its Eastern influences notwithstanding, the rite differs from the rite in Jerusalem in different ways. First, the *adoratio crucis* begins at the eighth hour instead of before noon, and within the context of the liturgy itself. Second is the different role of the clergy—instead of serving as custodians of the relic of the cross, they are the first to venerate it, followed by the faithful. Third, the relic alone is venerated, and is placed on the altar, and then moved for the veneration of the people. Fourth, the *adoratio crucis* takes place simultaneously with the reading of Scripture. LaSalle contends that though the veneration has been inserted into the liturgy, the rite of Ordo XXIII maintains the *adoratio crucis* as an expression of devotion by the faithful. The participation of the faithful remains an important element in the rite, though the pontiff and his clergy have been given a more prominent role.[39]

37. See ibid., 271-272.

38. See Plum, "*Adoratio Crucis*," 40. This would suggest that the *adoratio* in the *tituli* takes place during or after the *adoratio in Santa Croce*.

39. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in Liturgy," 102.

Ordo XXIV

Ordo XXIV was written in the latter half of the eighth century by a Frankish monk, describing the rites in Rome for Holy Wednesday to Saturday. [40] Andrieu, citing the absence of the pope, the clergy of the Roman basilicas, and the papal entourage in the *ordo*, surmises that the celebrant described is a bishop, officiating in an unnamed church, and accompanied by an indeterminate number of priests, deacons, sub-deacons, and acolytes.[41]

Unlike Ordo XXIII, the *adoratio crucis* takes place in the afternoon or early evening,[42] and is preceded by a morning service in a church, presided by the bishop.[43] The *synaxis* begins at the third hour with a procession towards the altar, in front of which the celebrant prostrates himself and prays silently. He then rises, goes to his chair, and sits for the readings, psalms, and the Passion according to St. John.[44] After the solemn orations, the altar is stripped and all go out in silence. This synaxis is repeated in the same order by the presbyters in their own churches.[45]

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40. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 54.

41. Ordo XXIV, in Les Ordines Romani Du Haut Moyen Age, vol. III, ed. Michel Andrieu (Louvain: Spiciliegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1974), 280.

42 "*Ad vesperam*." See ibid.

Ph.ilip Goddard interprets this as an evening service, although Donald LaSalle contends that this is done in the afternoon. In any case, this is to be done after the solemn orations ("post orationes"). See Goddard, Festa Paschalia, 179, and LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 103.

43. "*[I]n ecclesia statua infra urbem, non tamen in maiore ecclesia*." Ibid., 292.

44. See ibid., 291-292. Like Ordo XXIII, there are two readings and two psalms/tracts, *Domine audivi* and *Quo habitat* or *Eripe me*.

45. The only change mentioned is that they substitute the name of the bishop in place of the Holy Father. Ordo XXIV, 293.

The *adoratio crucis* itself is celebrated in both the church of the morning service, and in the other churches. After the solemn orations, the cross is placed some distance before the altar, supported by two acolytes. A kneeler (prie-dieu) is set up before it, and the celebrant comes to adore the cross with a kiss. He is followed by other bishops, priests, deacons, subdeacons, other ministers, and finally by the faithful. Unlike Ordo XXIII, the readings are now separate from the *adoratio crucis*; in their place, the following is sung: "*Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit. Venite adoremus*," [46] along with Psalm 118, *Beati inmaculati*, which had been sung in procession in Ordo XXIII.[47] When the veneration has been completed, the reserved Sacrament is brought out by presbyters and communion follows.[48]

Ordo XXIV, much like Ordo XXIII, retains the simplicity of the rite of veneration, though it deviates in some ways. Gian Paolo Ropa contends that this ordo reflects the "early Roman model" of veneration, which is distinctly Roman in its simplicity and austerity.[49] The cross itself is placed without ceremony in front of the altar for the veneration, and the rite occurs in a simple manner.

There are some things to be noted in the development of the *adoratio crucis* from Ordo XXIII. First, the *adoratio* is separated from the reading of Scripture, which had previously taken

46. The English translation of the *Editio Typica Tertia* is as follows: "Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the Salvation of the world. Come let us adore." "The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord," in *The Roman Missal, For Use in the Dioceses of the Philippines*, 3rd Typical Edition (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 2010), no. 15.

47. See ibid., 294.

48. See ibid.

49. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 104.

place simultaneously. In its place, chants are now sung during the rite. The *Ecce lignum crucis*, still found in the liturgy today, is first mentioned in this *Ordo*, (though not sung thrice as the cross is lifted, as in later developments, but instead during the individual veneration of the Cross). For Donald LaSalle, this chant serves to highlight the connection between the liturgical action of Good Friday and the "salvific action of Jesus' death."[50] Second, the cross itself is not moved from altar to sanctuary but remains in front for veneration by all. Third, the rite is done before Communion, which immediately follows it, though once more, in a simple and austere manner (it is to be recalled that in Ordo XXIII, there is no communion by the faithful, and the pope immediately proceeds back to the Lateran palace). Lastly, and most importantly, there seems to have been a change from the veneration of the *relic* of the True Cross to the veneration of an *ordinary (wooden) cross*. The parish churches in which the Good Friday liturgy would take place would probably not have a relic of the True Cross. This points to a change of emphasis of the *adoratio crucis*: from the veneration of a relic, the wood of the Cross it is now the veneration of the Cross as "embodying the salvific event of Christ's death."[51]

It is to be noted that Ordo XXIV gives a definite structure to the Good Friday liturgy and the *adoratio crucis*, a structure that, with some modifications and development, will remain and continue in the *Missale Romanum* of 1570 (the "Tridentine" Missal). This structure, in which the elements pertaining to the *adoratio crucis* are now joined, and the rite itself clearly distinct from the other parts of the Good Friday liturgy (that is, separate from the readings, in contrast to Ordo XXIII above, and separate from communion, in contrast to the Gelasian

50. Ibid., 105.

51. Ibid., 103

Sacramentary below), is as follows: Liturgy of the Word, solemn orations, *adoratio crucis*, and communion.[52]

The Old Gelasian Sacramentary

Unlike Ordo XXIII, which described the papal Triduum liturgies, the *Liber sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae* (the so-called Old Gelasian Sacramentary) pertained to the Roman presbyteral tradition, and consequently, was a book intended for use in the titular churches (*tituli*) of Rome. While the book is undoubtedly of Roman origin with Frankish additions, its Roman origin is not of a unified structure, but a compilation of different Roman "*libelli*" of different periods. In any case, in terms of the liturgies of the Triduum, it shows exclusively the practice of the presbyteral tradition in the *tituli*.[53]

While the Old Gelasian also incorporates the *adoratio crucis* in the liturgy of Good Friday (called *Feria VI, Passione Domini* in the Sacramentary), it does so in a different way. The service in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary started at the ninth hour, where all proceed into the Church; the Cross is placed on the altar during this time. After this, the presbyter proceeds from the sacristy in silence, and, coming to the altar, says the first collect. This is followed by a reading and responsory, after which the sequence of collect-reading-responsory is again repeated.[54] The Gospel of the Passion is then proclaimed, followed by the solemn orations.[55]

52. See Plum, "*Adoratio Crucis*," 44.

53. See ibid., 41.

54. Before each collect is the priest's invitation to prayer (*oremus*), followed by the deacon's command to kneel (*flectamus genua*) for a short while and then to rise (*levate*). This will be repeated in the solemn orations but is not mentioned in the veneration. See The Old Gelasian Sacramentary: Liber sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae, ed. H.A. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 74-75.

55. See *The Old Gelasian Sacramentary*, 75-77.

The *adoratio crucis* itself is found within the context of Holy Communion. After the solemn orations, the deacons enter the sacristy and process with the Body and Blood which had been reserved from the previous day. After they had placed it on the altar, the priest venerates the cross on the altar by kissing it, says the *Pater noster* and the *Libera nos*, and all receive Communion under both kinds after making their own veneration towards the Cross.[56] This simple rite, as with the rite of Ordo XXIV, soon spread outside Rome as attested to by its reproduction in Gelasian Sacramentaries of the Eighth Century, used in Gaul.[57]

In contrast to the Papal liturgies as found in Ordo XXIII, the Old Gelasian does not contain a procession with the Cross; it is simply placed on the altar before the silent entrance of the presider. Furthermore, the *adoratio* is celebrated after the solemn orations, at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, and within the context of communion, which is given to all and under both kinds. This "Gelasian" tradition integrates the act of adoration with communion, unlike the "suburbicarian" tradition of no one communicating within the rite. The "parallelism" between the *adoratio* and readings are avoided; in its place adoration and communion are joined together in a single rite.[58] Another detail to be noted is the placement of the *adoratio* of the presider before the *Pater noster*, and those of the clergy and faithful after it. In this change of placement of the *adoratio* to the end of the service, the change of the object of veneration can be gleaned—if at first, the *adoratio* began due to the importance and meaning of the relic, the reversal of the order of the *adoratio* may point to the

56. See ibid, 77. The Order of Good Friday ends here ("adorant omnes sanctam crucem at communicant"), and there is no order of veneration mentioned, nor any rite after the veneration and communion.

57. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 179. For the description of the Gelasians of the Eighth Century, see Folsom, "Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite," 249-250.

58. See Plum, "*Adoratio Crucis*," 41-42.

absence of such a relic. In its place, a plain Cross ("*ein schlichtes Kreuz*," according to Anne-Madeleine Plum) is venerated.[59]

Ordo XXXI

Ordo XXXI, dated to the later part of the ninth century, was written in northern France and described the liturgies of Holy Week and the Easter octave.[60] Andrieu notes its use of the Roman tradition, while at the same time exhibiting Gallican influences, showing how the redactor has not only copied the liturgies but adapted and edited it using different sources.[61] With respect to the Good Friday liturgy, it represents a development of the general outline of the entire celebration and the *adoratio crucis* found in Ordo XXIV.[62]

The morning service mentioned in Ordo XXIV is moved to the afternoon in Ordo XXXI, but proceeds in much the same way, with the double collects, readings, and psalms, the Passion according to St. John, and the solemn orations or prayers of the faithful.[63] After this, the reserved Sacrament is placed on the altar by two presbyters for communion,[64] and the pontiff alone adores the relic of the true Cross, which is set on the altar. Having said the *Pater noster* until the *Pax domini*, he alone receives communion.[65]

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59. See ibid.

60. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 55.

61. See Ordo XXXI, in *Les Ordines Romani Du Haut Moyen Age*, vol. III, ed. Michel Andrieu (Louvain: Spiciliegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1974), 481-487.

62. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy", 105.

63. See Ordo XXXI, 496-497.

64. One presbyter carries the Sacrament, the other a chalice with unconsecrated wine; these will be mixed for Communion. See ibid., 497-498.

65. Ibid.

The ordo is the first to mention a covered cross and a procession in three successive stages. The covered cross, placed behind the altar, is supported on either side by an acolyte, while two cantors bow before it, singing the *Trisagion* in Greek: *Hagios ho Theos*, with the choir responding in Latin: *Sanctus Deus*.[66] This *Trisagion* is an antiphon in which God is praised thrice, followed by a plea for mercy, sung in both Greek and Latin.[67] The cross is then brought nearer to the altar, and the cantors and choir chant the *Trisagion* for a second time. It is then brought all the way to the altar, and the *Trisagion* is sung for the third time. After this, the pontiff immediately uncovers the cross and begins *Ecce lignum crucis*, with the clergy finishing the antiphon: *in quo salus mundi pependit. Venite adoremus*, and all genuflect before the cross. The cantors then carry the cross to an appropriate place for veneration.[68] During the veneration, Psalm 118 is sung, just as in Ordo XXIV. Once the veneration has finished, the rite of communion begins, during which the antiphon *Crux fidelis* and the hymn *Pange lingua* are sung.[69]

In the change of the shape of the rite from its origins in the East and the earlier *ordines*, several important points could be gleaned. First, the *adoratio* has been joined to the rite of Holy

66. This is the first time the *Trisagion*, part of the liturgy of the Eastern Churches, has been mentioned in conjunction with the adoration of the cross. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 106.

67. See Louis van Tongeren, "The Cult of the Cross in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: A Concise Study of Its Origins and Development," in *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, Band 38 (2007/2008): 66.

The entire antiphon is as follows: "*Hagios ho theos, hagios ischurros, hagios athanathos, eleison himas; Sanctus Deus, sanctus fortis, sanctus inmortalis, miserere nobis*." Ibid.

68. See Ordo XXXI, 498.

69. See ibid. The Pange lingua is not the one sung on Maundy Thursday, but the *Pange lingua gloriosi lauream certaminis*, which is reproduced in the Romano-German Pontifical below. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 181

Communion; the Sacrament is brought out before the *adoratio crucis*, and the people receive the Eucharist immediately after adoring the cross.[70] From a rite separate from the *synaxis* (and the reception of communion), it has now become an integral part of the rite, and indeed has a "symbolic significance" in being joined with Communion: "After kissing the cross, which is highlighted as the instrument of salvation, one approaches to receive the eucharistic Body of the crucified one."[71] Second, a crucifix has now probably replaced the wooden cross for veneration; its covering and ceremonial unveiling point to this.[72] Third, by means of the procession and the unveiling of the cross, the communal dimension of what has previously been an act of individual adoration within the liturgy has now been reinforced. The chant, procession, and unveiling do not simply serve as a "prelude" and preparation, intensifying through drama the devotion of individual believers before they come before the cross to venerate it. Rather, these are already part of the entire rite of the *adoratio crucis* and are means by which the entire community is united in an act of communal devotion and veneration.[73] The *Ecce lignum crucis*, now part of the unveiling of the cross, strongly suggests this communal dimension – all are invited to adore the cross together.[74]

Ordo XXXI thus has a significant impact on the history of the *adoratio crucis*. As mentioned above, it represents a confluence

70. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 106.

71. Ibid. This joining of the rite to Communion is representative of the "Gelasian" form of the liturgy. As will be noted, the structure of Ordo XXIV which clearly separates Adoratio and Communion, in contrast to this, will remain in the Missale Romanum. See Plum, "Adoratio Crucis," 46.

72. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 181.

73. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 106-108.

74. See ibid., 108. Previously, in Ordo XXIV, it was sung during individual adoration; at that time, the Cross was not yet unveiled.

of Roman and Gallican practices and shows the adaptation and spread of the liturgy; the simpler Roman manner of veneration has been changed to a more dramatic procession and the unveiling of the Cross.[75] This rite, though adapted and changed in some ways, will remain essentially as the form of the *adoratio crucis* in the West until the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council.[76]

Later Adaptation: The *Adoratio Crucis* in the Pontificals of the Middle Ages

The Romano-German Pontifical

The Romano-German Pontifical (*PRG – Pontificale Romano-Germanicum*),[77] which has its origins in St. Alban's monastery in Mainz, is of decisive importance in the liturgy of the Roman Rite. The liturgies contained in this pontifical illustrate the "cross-fertilization" of the Roman Rite (transplanted into Frankish lands) with Frankish and Gallican traditions. The result of this centuries-long process eventually found itself in Rome through the same pontifical; in the tenth century it was brought into the city and used in its churches, replacing the liturgical traditions celebrated previously.[78] The liturgy of Good Friday and the *adoratio crucis* found in this pontifical portrays this confluence of traditions.

In the *PRG*, Good Friday contains a double service: in the morning, and in the evening (the latter with the *adoratio crucis*), just as in Ordo XXIV, and so represents a development

75. See ibid., 106.

76. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 181.

77. The Pontifical is a liturgical book used by a bishop, containing all the prayers and rubrics needed for different sacraments and rites. For a brief description of the development of the Pontifical, see Folsom, "The Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite," 296-300.

78. See ibid., 56-57.

of the said Ordo. In the morning, clergy and faithful gather in a church other than the "major church" where it is customary to venerate the cross.[79] The bishop, or his delegate, proceeds with the ministers to the altar in silence.[80] They all prostrate before the altar, after which the bishop, rising, goes to his seat. A reading from the prophet Hosea, and the tract *Domine audivi* follows, at which point the bishop says the Collect, *Deus a quo et Iudas*, et al. The second reading, from Exodus, follows, and then the tract *Qui habitat* or *Eripe me, Domine*. The Passion according to St. John is then proclaimed.[81] The solemn orations then follow, after which the service ends. This service is repeated by the presbyters in their own churches in the evening. [82]

In the evening, both in the church of the morning liturgy and in the other churches, after the solemn orations, the cross is placed before the altar, supported by two acolytes and a prie-dieu is placed in front of it.[83] During the veneration the *Trisagion* is sung with the *Improperia*, the *Ecce lignum* with the psalm *Beati immaculati*, as well as other antiphons.[84] The pontiff is the first to venerate the cross with a kiss, then the bishops, priests, deacons, other ministers, and the faithful. Evidently,

79. "*In ecclesia statute infra urbem, non tamen in maiore ecclesia ubi mos est salutiferam salutare crucem*." Cyrille Vogel, *Le Pontifical Romano-Germaine du dixieme siècle* II (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963), 86.

80. All wear Lenten vestments, namely dark (black) chasubles. "*Vestibus quadragesimalibus induti, scilicet planetis fuscis*." Ibid.

81. In a dramatic gesture, after the Gospel is read, two deacons snatch the altar cloth away ("*in modo furantis*"). Or, in some cases, two cloths from the altar are snatched away when the verse *Partiti sunt vestimenta mea sibi* is said. See ibid, 87.

82. See ibid., 86-87.

83. See ibid., 90. These are quoted verbatim from Ordo XXIV. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 181.

84. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 181. Some of the other songs to be sung, *Crux fidelis*, *Pange lingua*, *Crucem tuam adoramus*, are also still found in the *Missale Romanum*.

the cross is approached with three genuflections, as in some manuscripts, three prayers, one for each genuflection, are prescribed. After all have venerated, the reserved Sacrament is brought out in a paten, mixed with simple wine in a chalice, and all receive Communion in silence. The service ends with this; there are no prayers mentioned after Communion.[85] In its basic structure, the *adoratio crucis* in the *PRG* is that of Ordo XXIV, which has the double celebration; the *adoratio* is done during the evening service.[86] What is added to the basic structure includes the threefold genuflection before the cross, a "typically Frankish" element[87], as well as the place of the Trisagion—it is sung during the veneration itself, and not, as in Ordo XXIV, during the procession with the cross.

The pontifical contains a series of prayers recommended to be recited, most probably individually, while genuflecting before the cross. These prayers reveal the pervading Germanic religious culture in which the Romano-German Pontifical was created. They speak of the image of the cross as protection and implored its strong help against evil forces; this reflected both a warrior culture, and belief in the strength of images and symbols in mediating power.[88] The Pontifical thus not only shows a development in the shape of the ritual through its employment of different cultures and traditions, but also in its meaning—for salvation, for protection, for aid in warfare against diabolical forces.

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85. See Vogel, *Le Pontifical Romano-Germaine du dixieme siècle II*, 91-93.

86. See Plum, "*Adoratio Crucis,*" 50.

87. See ibid., 49.

88. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 109-111.

The Pontifical of Durandus

In the Pontifical of Durandus (*PGD – Pontificale Guillelmi Durandi*), the service of Good Friday begins at the sixth hour. The pontiff, barefoot, goes in procession[89] with his ministers from the sacristy, and makes the prostration in front of the altar. He says the collect silently, and the readings and the solemn orations proceed as in the manner of the *PRG*. The *adoratio crucis* itself is done in three successive stages, as in Ordo XXXI. The pontiff removes his chasuble, and, proceeding to the rear right corner of the altar, receives the veiled cross there. Facing the choir, he uncovers the cross a little from the top and intones the *Ecce lignum crucis*. The ministers and choir take up the chant, and all genuflect after the *Venite adoremus* is sung. Then, the pontiff goes to the front right of the altar, uncovers the arm of the cross, elevates it, and once more intones the *Ecce lignum crucis*; all respond and genuflect as in the first stage. Lastly, the pontiff goes to the middle of the altar and, uncovering the whole of the cross, elevates it, chanting once more the same antiphon. As with the first two stations, all genuflect.[90]

After this, the pontiff puts the cross in a prepared place before the altar. He is the first to venerate it, immediately followed by the ministers in this way: they genuflect three times and then kiss the cross. The clergy and people venerate and kiss the cross in a similar manner. While the adoration is going, songs are sung, notably the *Improperia* or *Populе meus*. After the veneration, the cross is placed on the altar which is now covered with a cloth. The Blessed Sacrament is brought

89. The procession is simple, done without solemnity; only the Gospel Book is carried. See Michel Andrieu, *Le Pontifical de Guillame Durand, III*, *Le Pontifical Romain au Moyen-Age*, *Studi e Testi* 88 (Vatican City: Biblica Apostolica Vaticana, 1950), 582.

90. See ibid., 582-584.

to it, and Communion follows. After the service and evening prayer, the cross is taken away and the altar is stripped.[91]

The confluence of different sources could be seen in the *PGD* - the threefold uncovering of the cross from Ordo XXXI, the threefold genuflection during individual veneration from the *PRG*.[92] The unveiling of the cross and its corresponding genuflections emphasized the communal dimension of the rite, but it could be argued that the displacement of the *Trisagion*, which had been sung in procession in Ordo XXXI, has toned down the dramatic embellishment of the rite.[93] What is now more central is that all adore together as the cross is uncovered, even before it is adored individually.

The *Adoratio Crucis* in the *Missale Romanum*

The Missale Romanum of 1474

The *Missale Romanum* of 1474 (*MR 1474*) was the first printed Missal and formed the basis for the liturgical reform of Trent and the *Missale* promulgated by Pope St. Pius V in 1570.[94] Drawing on earlier sources, it maintained the general shape of the *adoratio crucis*.[95] The service still begins at the sixth hour, and once more, with the simple entrance by the ministers and prostration before the altar in prayer.[96] The arrangement of readings, psalms, and the collect follow the order in the

91. See ibid., 584-587.

92. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 181-182.

93. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy", 112-113.

94. See Folsom, "The Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite," 265-267.

95. For a description of the compilation of MR 1474, see Anthony J. Chadwick, "The Roman Missal of the Council of Trent," in *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, ed. Alcuin Reid (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 108-109.

96. See Missale Romanum Mediolani 1474, ed. Robert Lippe (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1899), 161-162. Hereafter MR 1474.

Romano-German Pontifical.[97] The *adoratio* itself follows the order from the Pontifical of Durandus, with the three-fold uncovering of the cross, the chanting of the Ecce lignum, and the three genuflections. The cross is placed over or on the altar after the veneration, which is followed by the communion rite, in which only the celebrant communicates.[98] This last point, the abstention from communion by the people, seems to have been the case since the twelfth century, though communion by the people would survive in some places.[99]

The Missale Romanum of 1570

The *Missale Romanum* of 1570 (*MR 1570*), the Missal of the Council of Trent, was based on the *Missale Romanum* of 1474; [100] and as such, represented the development of older forms of the *adoratio* in Franco-Germanic and Roman sources. It is thus no wonder that the *adoratio crucis*, enhanced and embellished from its simple Roman manner, is that which had survived until the postconciliar reform of the liturgy. In the Tridentine Missal, one could see that the general shape of the rite had remained.

One important change over the course of the centuries however was that even though the earlier Pontificals and *MR 1474* prescribed that the liturgy start in the sixth hour, in the intervening centuries, it became the custom to celebrate the Good Friday liturgy (and the rest of Triduum) in the morning.[101] It proceeded in a manner similar to *MR 1474*: simple procession,

97. See Vogel, *Le Pontifical Romano-Germaine du dixieme siècle II*, 92.

98. See MR 1474, 170-174

99. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 188-189.

100. See Chadwick, "The Roman Missal of the Council of Trent," 118-119.

101. See ibid., 173..

prostration before the altar, first reading, psalm/tract, collect, second reading, psalm/tract, Gospel, solemn intercessions.[102]

The *adoratio crucis* proceeded similarly from *MR 1474*. The priest, taking off his chasuble, receives the cross from a deacon at the Epistle side of the altar.[103] The unveiling takes place in three stages. First, at the rear right corner of the Epistle, he uncovers the upper part of the cross, at the front right corner, the right side of the crucifix, and then finally, at the middle of the altar, he uncovers the entire crucifix. Each time, the celebrant lifts the cross and intones the *Ecce lignum*, which is taken up by the ministers and choir; at this point, all except him genuflect. The cross is then taken to its place before the altar.

The celebrant, removing his shoes, is the first to venerate the cross, genuflecting three times before it and then kissing it. The ministers follow, then the clergy and faithful. As the *adoratio* goes on, the celebrant, deacon, and subdeacon chant the *Improperia,* the *Crucem Tuam*, and the *Crux Fidelis*.[104] After the veneration ends, the cross is brought back to the altar and placed there. A procession then forms, led by a processional cross between two candles, and goes to the place where the Sacrament is reposed, which is then brought to the altar. The communion rite follows; the celebrant alone receives Communion.[105]

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102. See Adrian Fortescue, *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1920), 303-304.

103. See ibid., 301-302.

104. See. *Missale Romanum* 1570, 222-226.

105. See Ibid. 226-228. The Communion service which follows the adoratio crucis had been elaborated with the addition of the solemn procession, incensation, and insertion of texts; it was commonly known as the Mass of the Presanctified, referring to the absence of the consecration of the elements. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 184-189 and Fortescue, *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite*, 309-311.

In the codification of the *adoratio crucis* in the liturgical books following the reform of the Council of Trent, this act of individual and popular devotion in fourth-century Jerusalem had now become a "normative liturgical act for the Roman Rite."[106] From a myriad of forms by which this individual act of devotion was inserted in the Roman liturgy in the *Ordines* and the Pontificals, it is now given a stable order in the Missal of Trent, operative until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The Tridentine liturgy of Good Friday represented not only a movement from individual devotion to public worship, but also a development and incorporation from myriad cultures and sources:[107]

> The rite of veneration that found its way into the *Missale Romanum* of Pius V bears the imprint of several cultures and pieties. An Antiochene Christological piety linked to the holy places of Jerusalem, a Gallican dramatic sensibility, a Germanic approach to the cross as a protective talisman in the battle against hostile diabolical forces, and, finally, Roman sobriety all played a role in the development of this ritual.[108]

The *Adoratio Crucis* in the 1955 Restored Order of Holy Week

One of the decisive moments in the history of the Roman Rite was the reform of the Holy Week liturgy initiated by Pius XII. Because of what had occurred in the intervening centuries, which included the decreasing attendance and participation of the faithful, as well as the celebration of the Triduum liturgies not at their proper hours but in the morning, measures were taken to restore the celebration of the Paschal feasts. The first measure was the reform of the Easter Vigil in 1951, now

106. LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 113.

107. See ibid.

108. Ibid, 117.

celebrated in the evening. Following positive response to this, the entire order of the liturgy of Holy Week was revised, and the *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae Instauratus*, the Restored Order of Holy Week (*OHSI*), was published in 1955, taking effect the following year.[109]

In *Maxima Redemptionis*, the decree publishing the *OHSI*, the "unique commemoration" of the Lord's Paschal Mystery in Holy Week is emphasized. It talks of the dignity of the rites and their power and efficacy in nourishing the spiritual lives of the faithful, which consequently, could not be simply replaced by devotional practices. The *OHSI*, created after study by experts, pastors, and bishops, would address the problems mentioned earlier by the restoration of the liturgies to their proper times, and the promotion of fruitful participation by the faithful.[110] For Good Friday in particular (now called the Friday of the Passion and Death of the Lord[111]), Holy Communion, which had been generally reserved to the celebrant, would now be given to those disposed and wishing to receive, as was the custom in past centuries.[112] As for the *adoratio crucis*, the decree reiterates its place within the liturgy, calling the cross the "trophy of our redemption," which the entire Christian family is called to venerate with utmost devotion.[113]

In the *OHSI*, the celebration of Good Friday started at around the ninth hour, recalling the death of the Lord. The entrance

109. See Goddard, Festa Paschalia, 264-266.

110. See Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Maxima Redemptionis, General Decree to Restore the Liturgical Order of Holy Week*, Catholic Culture Website, accessed Aug. 20, 2023, https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=1113.

111. *Feria VI in Passione et Morte Domini*; previously it had been called Feria VI in Parasceve. See ibid.

112. See ibid.

113. "*...a familia christiana, clero et populo, sancta Crux, nostrae redemptionis trophaeum, devotissime adoratur.*" Ibid.

proceeded in the same silent manner, but now the prostration is before an altar that is completely bare. The readings and oration proceeded at a similar manner, but with two collects, as had been the practice before the Tridentine Missal: two sets of collects, readings, tracts, then the Gospel of the Passion.[114] The Second Part of the liturgy followed, now called the Solemn Intercessions or the Prayer of the Faithful (*Oratio Fidelium*).[115] The *adoratio crucis* is the Third Part of the Liturgical Action, now called the Solemn Adoration of the Holy Cross.

The showing of the cross proceeded in this way. The cross, veiled in violet, is now brought from the sacristy in procession instead of being received at the Epistle side of the altar. The priest, deacon, and subdeacon remove their outer vestments (the cope, dalmatic, and tunicle, which they had worn for the solemn intercessions). Flanked by two acolytes with candles, the deacon bearing the cross proceeds in procession towards the middle of the altar, where it is received by the celebrant. The celebrant proceeds to the foot of the altar (*in plano*) by the Epistle side and uncovers the cross a little from the top. He intones the *Ecce lignum*, and after the response, all except him kneel. This is repeated as he ascends to the Epistle side of the altar, and then again, in the middle, where the entire cross is unveiled.[116]

Individual adoration now follows in this manner. The cross is brought to front of the altar, where, it is supported

114. *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae Instauratus*, *Editio Juxta Typicam* (Manila: Catholic Trade School, 1956), 80. One difference it had with the MR 1570: the priest, deacon, and subdeacon did not wear the chasuble, dalmatic, and tunicle respectively. They will wear outer vestments (the priest substituting the cope for the chasuble) during the Solemn Intercessions and will remove these again for the *adoratio crucis*. See ibid., 77-92. Hereafter OHSI.

115. See ibid., 84.

116. See ibid., 92-93.

by two acolytes. Two other acolytes, place a candle on either side of the cross and kneel facing it all throughout the rite. The manner of veneration—the triple genuflection and the kiss—and the order are the same. After the clergy venerate, the cross is now carried by the acolytes to the entrance of the sanctuary for veneration by the people. The chants remain the same: the *Improperia*, the *Crucem tuam*, and the *Crux fidelis*. The cross, preceded by two candle-bearers, is then brought in procession to the altar and placed there such a way that it could be viewed by the faithful. The communion rite, which is greatly simplified, follows.[117]

Despite the widespread changes introduced by the restored Ordo of 1955, one may note that the basic shape of the *adoratio crucis* has remained the same, barring a few details. Among the changes is the introduction of the procession of the cross and candles—this was "without apparent precedent, introduced to 'increase the solemnity of the rite'."[118] Here one can note again the emphasis of *Maxima Redemptionis*—the fruitful participation of the faithful in the great mysteries of our salvation. The rite is once more embellished to point to the communal adoration of the cross by the faithful, and to direct them to the cross as the symbol of our salvation. The rubric directing the cross to be placed at the altar in sight of the faithful also points to this emphasis; the pre-1955 rite had no such directive.[119]

117. See ibid., 93-100. There is no more incensation; after the Sacrament is brought to the altar, the Communion rite begins with the Lord's prayer.

118. Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 276.

119. See *OHSI*, 97.

The *Adoratio Crucis* in the Postconciliar *Missale Romanum*

The changes to the liturgy brought about by the reforms following the Second Vatican Council meant that the Paschal celebrations would again be changed. For the Good Friday celebration (now called *Feria VI in Passione Domini*), this meant further reworking, aside from its restoration to the ninth hour and the opening of communion to the faithful. The rite names the three distinct parts which make up the celebration: the Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Holy Cross, and Holy Communion. The first part now reflects the structure of the Liturgy of the Word of the reformed liturgy—entrance, collect, readings.[120] The readings themselves have been changed but the Passion according to St. John had been retained. The solemn intercessions follow the basic structure of the previous Missals. Furthermore, the color also had been changed, from black and violet, to red.[121]

There are now two options regarding the showing of the cross, drawing from elements found in the earlier liturgical books; the form more appropriate to pastoral requirements is to be chosen.[122] The first form reflects the 1955 rite, with the cross coming from the sacristy, preceded by two ministers carrying

120. Previously, there were two collects, two readings, and two psalms, and then the Gospel or, as in the Missale before the Pian reform, reading, tract, collect, reading, tract, Gospel.

121. The change to red would be explained as emphasizing the shift from the emphasis of the celebration to the triumph of the cross, and as signifying martyrdom as well as the Holy Spirit, "through whom Christ offered himself" to the Father. See Paul Turner, *Glory in the Cross: Holy Week in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2011), 80.

122. See *Celebratio Passionis Domini*, no. 14., in *Missale Romanum ex decreto sacrosancto oecumenici concilii vaticanii instauratum, auctoritate Paulus PP VI promulgatum, Ioannnis Pauli PP II cura recognitum, Editio Typica Tertia* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008).

candles. The cross is received by the celebrant before the altar; he remains there throughout instead of gradually ascending to the middle of the altar. The three-fold uncovering and the *Ecce lignum* remain. In the second form, the celebrant himself or the deacon (or another minister) carries the uncovered cross from the entrance of the church to the altar, stopping three times (at the door, in the middle, and in the sanctuary) and chanting the *Ecce lignum* each time. The cross, after having been shown to the people, is now placed at the entrance of the sanctuary or held by ministers for the veneration. The celebrant after having removed his chasuble and shoes, if possible, is the first to venerate with a simple genuflection, or another appropriate sign, for example, a kiss. He is followed by the ministers and the faithful.[123] The hymns remain the same, which are sung by the choir as the adoration is ongoing.[124]

There is only one cross to be venerated; if the large number of the faithful precludes individual adoration, general adoration may follow the showing of the cross. In this case, after the cross is adored by the celebrant and some of the clergy and faithful, the celebrant says a few words of invitation and holds the cross up for all the faithful, who adore it silently.[125] After all have venerated, whether individually or generally, the cross and two candles are now placed on or near the altar. Communion follows, which again has been simplified; the liturgy ends with the Postcommunion, the Prayer over the People, and the recessional, during which the ministers genuflect towards the cross once more.[126]

123. See ibid., no. 14-18.

124. See ibid. no. 20. These are the *Improperia*, the *Crucem tuam*, and the *Crux fidelis*.

125. See ibid., no. 19

126. Ibid., nos. 21-24.

While the postconciliar reform has greatly simplified the celebration of the liturgy, it is noteworthy that the *adoratio crucis* itself has retained much of its ancient and medieval elements. In some instances, it has even been enhanced, as with the procession and the general adoration given as legitimate options. What is then highlighted is the pastoral and communal dimension of the *adoratio crucis* and the fruitful participation in it by the faithful – pastoral sensibilities and requirements play a role in the celebration of the rite, and these options are designed so as all may be able to see and venerate the cross on Good Friday. Indeed, the reformers of the liturgy were aware that though the theological importance of the Liturgy of the Word was greater, "in the soul of the people the adoration of the cross was psychologically of greater importance."[127] Its place in the liturgy is once again established and concretized in the *Missale Romanum* of Vatican II –the devotion of the people, from Egeria to Vatican II, is given centrality in the liturgy of Good Friday.

Some Comments on the History of the *Adoratio Crucis*

East and West

The history of the *adoratio crucis* shows that it has been conditioned by many influences. It does not represent a Roman rite that is "pure" and unmixed with other rites and customs from other countries. Rather, it shows a rich development, from its simple origins in the East, to the embellishment and enhancement of its liturgical celebration in the West. It shows not only its Eastern influences, but the variety of the rites in the West–the simplicity and sobriety of Rome (as in

127. Quoted in Turner, *Glory in the Cross*, 93.

Ordo XXIV), the dramatic emphasis of the Frankish lands (as in Ordo XXXI), and the warrior culture of the Germans (as in the Romano-German Pontifical). It therefore shows not a one-sided transplantation of the Roman rite, but its "mutual fertilization" with cultures which have also had an impact on Rome—elements of such local adaptations have found their place in the Roman Missal and have persisted until today.[128]

Eschatological Celebration and Historical Representation

As stated earlier, Easter was in the earliest centuries of Christianity a unitary celebration. There was no separate commemoration of the Passion; in Easter was celebrated the entire mystery of salvation—the Lord's life, passion, death, and resurrection. Furthermore, the Easter celebrations had an eschatological accent—the commemoration of the Paschal mystery was the hopeful anticipation of Christ's joyful and triumphant coming again. What the *adoratio crucis* represents is part of the gradual separation of the days before Easter into distinct commemorations of the Lord's Passion—his Supper on Thursday, his death on Friday, his laying on the tomb on Saturday, and his rising on Sunday, and hence the Triduum as has come down to us today.

Added to this is the influence of the Jerusalem liturgy, which were representational in nature—the Church in Jerusalem commemorated not just the theological significance of various feasts but their history—hence the importance of venerating the relic and of the true cross and the entire celebration of Good Friday in the place of the Lord's passion and burial. What has then developed in the rite of adoration is a re-emphasis

128. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 113.

on the suffering of the Lord on that day, as represented and symbolized by the cross. This is even made clearer in the post-conciliar liturgy, as Philip Goddard writes. The readings, which previously had spoken of the Resurrection and the Passover, are now turned to the suffering of the righteous one (Isaiah 53:11), the high priest who suffers in solidarity with humanity (Hebrews 2:17).[129] One must not forget, however, the dimension of Good Friday as intimately connected with the joy of the Resurrection, though it is a joy that is muted. The celebration speaks not only of suffering but of the joy that has come to the world through the Death and Resurrection of the Lord.[130]

History and Symbolism

In the history of the rite, the relic of the True Cross was gradually replaced with a wooden cross, and then a crucifix. This did not have only practical significance (in that not all churches have such a relic) but also contained a symbolic meaning. From the celebration and veneration of what is historical, the rite turns to the veneration of the cross as a symbol of the universal and cosmic salvation of Jesus. Though it is not the cross on which the Savior *actually* died, nevertheless, the faithful adore Christ the savior represented by the cross before them, and as Amalarius of Metz remarks, the power of the Cross is not lacking in these simple crosses.[131] From a "localized devotion" the rite has then moved to a "general devotion" towards the mystery of salvation:

> The words 'adoration' and 'veneration' continue to be used to describe the ritual action long after the relic of the true cross is replaced by the altar cross or some other

129. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 300.

130. See *Celebratio Passionis Domini*, no. 20.

131. See Goddard, *Festa Paschalia*, 179.

> cross. It is clear from the context that it is no longer the physical material of the cross presented to the assembly that is the object of adoration but rather the salvific event of the crucifixion.[132]

Paul Turner points to a change of the object of veneration—it is no longer the wood of the Cross that is venerated or adored, but Christ himself and his saving action, and not only Christ as the suffering, dying one, but the resurrected, glorious Christ, symbolized by his saving cross—once more the point about the connection of the *adoratio crucis* to the Resurrection is made.[133]

Individual Devotion and Public Worship

From its origins as a devotional practice by individuals within the many observances of Holy Week in Jerusalem, the *adoratio crucis* found its way into the West not as a separate observance for the faithful, but as part of official public worship. Its transition was not uniform; attempts were made in the *ordines Romani* and the *Gelasian Sacramentary* to incorporate it in different ways. Finally, in its codification in the *Missale Romanum* of 1474, of Trent, and of the 1955 and 1970 reforms, by way of the earlier Pontificals, the rite has now been given a relatively stable shape and order in the Roman rite. With this, the individual dimension of this popular devotion has been given a dramatic and communal counterpoint—the cross is venerated not only individually, but as a community, as the "family of God," according to the 1955 reform.[134]

In the adaptation of the rite, there has been a tendency towards clericalization; once the cross occupied a central

132. LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 114-115.

133. See Turner, *Glory in the Cross*, 95.

134. See Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Maxima Redemptionis*.

point in the sanctuary as well as the celebration, the role of the clergy became more prominent, coming first in the order of procession before the people. Still, there have been attempts to bridge the gap between clergy and people, for instance, in physically bringing the cross over to the faithful for their own adoration.[135] The 1955 and 1970 reforms furthermore emphasized the importance of pastoral sensibility in carrying out the rite, as well as its impact on the fruitful participation by the faithful. As the decree of the 1955 reform says, the Paschal rites "contain a particular sacramental power and efficacy for nourishing the Christian life."[136]

135. See LaSalle, "Devotion Searching for a Place in the Liturgy," 116.

136. Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Maxima Redemptionis*.

THE THEOLOGY OF HISTORY IN SAINT BONAVENTURE

Josette Khoury

In his thesis, Ratzinger presents Bonaventure's vision of Revelation. For Bonaventure, Scripture is not something static in the letter but a revelation with a historical dimension, a development in the Church, God's people. It is the Spirit who writes the Bible, and he does not do it just on paper but within the life of a people, whether in interpretation, understanding, or realization, so it's alive. Bonaventure's very dynamic vision is God's unveiling in creation, the reverberation of divine light in the created. As a result, the human path to God is also dynamic, and theology, in turn, is called not to be static or a purely intellectual work but rather a dynamic inner transformation of the human being on his way to God. Thus, for Bonaventure, *history* too becomes "*theological*," the place and path of that divinization to which God calls humankind through revelation and knowledge.

The Notion of Time: Theology of History

In his development of the "theology of history," Bonaventure insists that Scripture cannot be understood outside the "historical" time in which it is set,

> Certainly, Scripture is closed objectively. But its meaning is advancing in a steady growth through history; and this growth is not yet closed. As the physical world contains seeds, so also scripture contains seeds; that is seeds of meaning. And this meaning develops in a constant process of growth in time. Consequently, we can interpret many things which the Fathers could not

> have known because for them these things still lay in the dark future while for us, they are accessible as past history. Still, other things remain dark for us.[1]

Bonaventure emphasizes that, since no human being can live through the whole of history (all the centuries), the Holy Spirit enables us through Scripture to have this "contemplative and prophetic knowledge of the times." Time and order are important because Christ became incarnate at a specific moment in history. And even sin could not annihilate this order, this beauty in creation. The starting point of theology, and its culmination, is God Himself revealing Himself through Christ, and we, in turn, are called to let ourselves be seized and drawn into this Revelation, this fullness. Bonaventure refers to the *multiformes theoriae*—as the third dimension of interpretation of Scripture[2]—to underline the immensity of the theories that Scripture can contain, that only God can englobe through knowledge. That intelligence can only be discovered through small drops of water drawn from the sea of history. Bonaventure compares Revelation to the waters of the sea, and to seeds, for these mysteries are so deep that a human being cannot grasp them, cannot penetrate them to the bottom despite all his efforts. "Who can know the unlimited number of seeds which exist? For from one single seed, entire forests grow up, bringing forth innumerable seeds."[3] Bonaventure underlines the importance of these theories, which reveal the unity of Revelation over time through history. This is why these theories—while reflecting the times to come in the future (the seeds)—can only be grasped by those who know the past. Revelation unfolds along a meaningful

1. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 9.

2. The first two are as follows: *The spiritual meaning* (the allegorical meaning beyond the literal meaning); the *figurae sacramentales* that speak of Christ and Anti-Christ.

3. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure*, 7.

line, within a continuity guided by God's Providence, through the events of history. The interpretation of Scripture cannot disregard history (past as well as future) since Christ himself did not disregard it through his incarnation in a concrete time and place in history. A historical-theological interpretation of Scripture is therefore necessary, revealing its harmony.

More widely than Scripture, for Bonaventure, the whole of Revelation is not static. Hence, he often speaks of "revelations" in the plural rather than "Revelation" in the singular, like seeds that never stop germinating and that we never stop discerning. For him, Revelation is a process of several revelations through which God addresses the Church, the depository of that revelation, so there is an aspect of *uniqueness* and *duration* at play here. Scripture is certainly complete as "letters" since its canon is closed, but this does not prevent it from containing seeds of meaning that can germinate over time, constantly producing new interpretations. Scripture can only be called "revelation" if it is received, interpreted, understood, and appropriated... through faith, within a personal and communal relationship as Church: "Only Scripture understood in faith is Holy Scripture. It is only through faith that a person enters the Church's living understanding of Scripture, and thus, and only thus, receives Revelation."[4]

Revelatio **Through Contemplation**

This appropriation is not a subjectivist sentiment but is lived as a Church (depository of every revelation) while passing through that Christian method *par excellence*, that of personal encounter. Bonaventure profoundly links this revelation to messianic hope, which is affirmed as "interior to the world and

4. Joseph Ratzinger, *La Théologie de l'Histoire de Saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007), 8.

to history" despite its limitations and sins...this revelation can only be deployed *within* history and its events. For Bonaventure, the interpretation of Scripture is profoundly linked to contemplation, to a "new way of considering Scripture," and this way can only be revealed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the very author of Scripture. According to Bonaventure, the people of God in the last days will be characterized as a "contemplative Church," and this last "contemplative order" will receive the *Revelatio*, which is of the mystical order. Bonaventure illustrates this *Revelatio* through the figures of Paul, John and Francis. Paul in his delight before *this wisdom which comes from God and not from men;*[5] John represents this order which, according to the Lord's promise,[6] is called to remain until the Lord's return; and in Francis, of course, is laid the historical beginning of this order, through the stigmatization received in his own flesh:

> Bonaventure recognized that Francis' own eschatological form of life could not exist as an institution in this world; it could be realized only as a break-through of grace in the individual until such time as the God-given hour would arrive at which the world would be transformed into its final form of existence.[7]

Bonaventure distinguishes six degrees of knowledge, indicated allegorically by the six days of creation, which are at the same time the figurative presentation of the six ages of salvation history. In this, we distinguish a gradual growth of knowledge according to historical stages. Ratzinger mentions the announcement of a tremendous contemplative order, to which Bonaventure refers in his *Hexaëmeron*. This order will correspond on earth to the angelic order of Seraphim, mystically close to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Bonaventure then

5. 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians.

6. John 21:22.

7. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure*, 51.

draws a parallel between the Old and New Covenants, saying that just as Christ came to earth at the end of the Sixth Age of the Old Covenant, so must the Sixth and Final Age of the New Covenant finally engender the contemplative Church. Of course, this order already belongs to the 7th time, evoked by Ezekiel's prophecy about the city that will descend from heaven (while specifying that the Church militant here on earth is meant). The interesting comment regarding this 7th time is that Bonaventure insists that the Church in question is the "militant Church," which means the one "within history" in the existence of pilgrimage. Thus, this lapse of time offers a path of salvation during this earthly pilgrimage. So, for Bonaventure, the 7th and 6th time are side by side: "peace and salvation" are given in parallel with "tribulations within the history of this world." For Bonaventure, as for Joachim, this new order in which the contemplative Church of the end of time is to find its true form of existence must be contemplative. Thus, this "contemplative order" or "contemplative time" is destined to flourish in the peace of the end times, and its greatest mission would be to praise—through the gift of the lives of its members—God's presence, to *fly*, like the Seraphim. Here, too, Bonaventure makes a fine distinction between the two orders' degrees of approach: the task of the *cherubic order* is that of "*speculation*," reaching out and trying to understand God, while the intention of the *seraphic order* is *sursumactio*, the vision of God: "For of what use is it to know much and to savor nothing?"[8] This contemplation is nothing other than a new insight into Scripture, a wisdom revealed by the Spirit of God through the mystical life.

8. Ibid., 52.

7th and 6th Time are Side by Side

"Peace and salvation" are given in parallel with "tribulations, within the history of this world," a very confusing statement that is worth dwelling on for a moment. Bonaventure insists on this salvation given here and now, within our condition as pilgrims. This peace given at the very heart of tribulations seems so contradictory and even hallucinatory! Our modern world seeks at all costs to evacuate suffering, to reduce peace to a very superficial well-being, "they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; They have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."[9] Is not it one of modern society's great illusions to think it can offer true peace? While thinking that once suffering is evacuated, peace will be granted. Doesn't this seem like an illusion? How could suffering be evacuated? It sounds so ideological! Life and reality constantly show us that suffering is part of our lives, and we cannot escape it.

This contemplative attitude Bonaventure speaks of reveals how much God has so loved the world that He offers to enable humanity to live the greatest miracle of all: peace in the midst of anti-peace experiences. Is there a greater miracle than this? Removing or sparing tribulation would be a 'normal' way to live in peace. But to live in peace amid tribulation is disconcerting. How often do we experience this in our lives?

Already in our flesh: our humanities seem to be mixed of mud and gold, and there lies their beauty. Jesus didn't wait for his disciples to be perfect before calling them. Mysteriously, tribulations and sufferings seem to open unexpected doors toward unexpected peace. Throughout my mission, I've lived in very tough, impoverished neighborhoods, which have nothing outwardly appealing in terms of comfort or well-being, where I've met friends who have been deeply broken by life's

9. Jer. 2:13-15.

circumstances. And yet, I experienced some of the greatest and most memorable and meaningful moments of my life. This still amazes me... I'm reminded particularly of Lucia,[10] whom I knew in Brazil, in one of the most dangerous parts of Bahia, but which became my neighborhood, inhabited by my friends, and where I felt "at home" through their hospitality.

Lucia was one of the women I knew who suffered most in her life, one of the poorest, not materially, but on many levels! From an early age, she struggled to recover from several mistakes she made that have cost her a lot in her life. Unhealthy relationships deeply destroy her in a very tough neighborhood, with very tough living conditions. A bicycle accident caused her to lose a lot of her brain's capacity, which in turn caused her to have several children - some of whom she lost, not remembering to whom she had given them in the street after birth. This was a huge suffering in her life.

In addition to her psychological and psychiatric problems, Lucia met a man who dragged her down even further by pushing her into drugs, and she ended up catching AIDS for over ten (10) years... A life full of suffering! But Lucia was also capable, in the few moments of lucidity she had, of returning to those beautiful desires that dwelt in her heart, of saying with great gratitude "thank you" for our friendship. A life full of ups and downs but also of little glimmers of friendship and small daily joys slipping in between two sufferings. Despite all the chaos in her life, she was able to recognize at moments this peaceful presence of God through the incarnate faces of her friends. She used to tell us: "Your friendship is the sign and consolation of God's presence in my chaotic life."

During all the tribulations in Lucia's life, I can't deny the moments of peace that were given to her at times alongside

10. The name has been changed out of discretion.

these sufferings, side by side. And that is a very surprising miracle, which can only be given by God, the only one capable of providing it, the only one capable of the impossible, and especially of disconcerting!

I confess that during my mission in Brazil, I prayed unceasingly for magic miracles in Lucia's life (that she would no longer have AIDS, that she would have more strength and determination to take steps to overcome her illness, that her son would no longer be autistic, that she would find her children...) so that she could live more "peacefully." I may not have received any of those physical miracles I was praying for. Still, I can't deny that I received an even greater miracle, that of those little moments of peace, of simple joys that she was able to experience in her life, of that friendship that we were given to live in Christ and that she always recognized as a consolation from God in her chaotic life. This peace can only come from God, for the events of her life offer her everything but peace.

This is the revolution of the Christian message: God becomes flesh and present at the heart of the events of our lives, whether joyful or painful, and it is His presence that gives us true peace, which no one and no event can take away, except our freedom to refuse it. This leads us to an authentic experience of profound freedom, as lived by the first Christians, who, in the simplicity of their hearts, were always turned towards this presence of Christ, the true source of all authentic peace, confessing His presence as the most triumphant of all situations, no matter how absurd they may appear.

Expressio-Impressio

The created mind can only achieve full contemplation through a revelation from the Holy Spirit, through *inner illumination*, through a personal rather than external encounter, and through *imprinted knowledge*. God's revelation to Francis through

the Seraphim has had a profound impact on Bonaventure's theology since it is not just a passive revelation but an active one, imprinting itself (the Seraphim imprints his wounds) on Francis through the Holy Spirit. That's why these two words are constantly echoing each other. Of course, the intensity of the expression comes only from God, from the Crucified One, and not from Francis. But these *stigmata* could only have been imprinted because Francis had already become himself, in spirit, by grace, and by his burning love, an expression of the love of the crucified one. So, the *stigmata* are both an expression of God, of His power, and of Francis' loving spirit. This is a very important point in Bonaventure's aesthetic theology: at the very moment when the soul perceives divine Beauty, this divine Beauty also takes on its earthly form. For this reason, for Bonaventure, ecstasy is the opening of the world to God. This unity between *Expressio* and *Impressio.* It's at the very core of this *Expressio-Impressio* that the Scriptures, Tradition and Revelation take shape and remain dynamic: it is this movement between *Expressio and Impression* that ensures that they are neither static nor rigid, keeping them at the level of the personal relationship between God and his people, throughout history (in a specific place and time).

This Expression-impression movement opens our hearts to a more contemplative attitude by plunging it into profound gratitude, that of receiving all reality as a gift, an expression in which God has left us the imprint of his expression. This descending movement reveals God's humility, showing his freedom, his immense love and his humility to imprint his impression on what is limited, finite, and to make this ephemeral impression eternal. This expression-impression approach humbles us as we approach reality. Reality belongs to us without really belonging to us; creation belongs to us without really belonging to us; all the people we meet belong to us without

really belonging to us. How so? Everything that lives comes deeply from the God Creator, who chose to imprint his expression on it, and therefore, each creature takes on God's beauty and becomes unique accordingly. This descending movement of expression and impression gives back to the beauty of a flower, as to the beauty of a person, their uniqueness and their particular beauty of being the choice of God's expression and impression... this approach shifts so much the way we consider what is entrusted to us, allowing us to approach it with greater humility, not as something or someone that belongs to us and that we monopolize, but as a person or a source of God's expression and impression, and which therefore takes on a unique beauty and goodness, before which I am called first to delight, and then to preserve and sustain, since this expressed and imprinted beauty entrusts itself to me through this creation, just as the Child of Bethlehem entrusted himself to the astonishment and protection of Mary and Joseph, the Magi and the shepherds... expression and impression are at the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation, which not only converts our gaze and our approach to reality, but also affects the most concrete details of our lives. Is not this the Christian method par excellence? Our lives are not set in motion by a theory or a law but by a presence that provokes us and reveals itself to us, imprinting its newness on our lives, changing them. We see this continuously in all Jesus' encounters in the gospels: The Samaritan woman, Matthew, Nicodemus... but also in our own lives: what sets our lives in motion if not this presence that expresses itself and imprints its expression in our innermost being?

Bonaventure – Augustine – Joachim de Flore

Through knowledge, humanity is not called to fall into the pride of its own knowledge, but rather to divinize itself through a pilgrimage. Here, too, Bonaventure corrects Joachim

de Flore,[11] whose division of the ages emphasized horizontal history as the space of revelation. Whereas Bonaventure, on the contrary, shows that history is a dialogue directed towards the divinization of the created being. So, Bonaventure places Christ at the center of history, as the "axis of world events," the "turning point of history." Unlike Joachim, Bonaventure asserts that history cannot be mathematical since it depends on God's will and human response, and thus, on human freedom. In Joachim de Flore's vision, human freedom is, as it were, taken away (it is God who governs the world through ages already specified, independently of humankind, of creatures). Bonaventure responds in the *Hexaëmeron* that during the six days of Creation, God commits Himself, and that is why God is at the center of everything: *Christocentrism.* Unlike St. Augustine, for example, who in his scheme would place Christ at the end of time as plenitude, finality, and fundamental end... Bonaventure places Christ in the middle of time as the *center.* For him, the fullness of time will not come at the end of time but is to be found at the center of time, through Christ, the median person in the Trinity and the center of all creation, mediator between God and humankind. a hope that is not only to be awaited in the future, but is already present here on earth, in the history of this world. Through this Christocentric vision, Bonaventure profoundly links history to Providence, to a place of eternal encounters and expression of the Trinity: The Father expressing Himself in the Son, the Son emerging from the Father and bringing everything back to the Father, through the Holy Spirit, recapitulating all history, accompanying His people in the events of their history, of their pilgrimage

11. Dividing history into three ages (of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) gives a more mathematical approach to history, removing the freedom of the individual, since everything is already predestined, and each person of the Trinity will act when the turn of his age comes.

on earth. So, history is no longer reduced to a succession of random events but is unified and enlightened by the revelation of Scripture and tradition, which become the sign of God's benevolent Providence. Therefore, Bonaventure gives great importance to this salvation given within history, within the limits of this world age: a new *messianic* hope for Bonaventure is affirmed here, a hope within the world, within history. And the content of this time of salvation is summed up under the word *peace*. Like Joachim, Bonaventure said that history moves in opposition between the Old and New Testaments, taking the image that "these two testaments are the two cherubim placed on the Ark of the Covenant." Bonaventure offered us a way out of this fragmented schema of history, reduced to calculations, and to see how the Trinity does not flatten history into a system that works like a good factory, but, on the contrary, how the Trinity is manifest in creation.

Sapientia **– Scripture – Interpretation**

Bonaventure divides wisdom into 4 degrees: *Uniformis,*[12] *Multiformis,*[13] *Omniformis*[14] (all-form) and *nulliformis* (formless). For Bonaventure, formless wisdom is the apogee of revelation through the absence of all form:

> It is through love's union (the union that produces true knowledge) that we unite with God, who remains unknown to the intellect. It is in this mysticism that we find, in fact, the original and precise point of origin

12. Linked more to philosophy, to the knowledge of eternal rules that lead to God but without being able to grasp Him (e.g. Moses).

13. It's about understanding the mysterious language of Scripture through Revelation (veiled for the proud but revealed only to the humble (e.g. Paul).

14. Also based on Revelation, this wisdom searches for the trace of God in all creation, groping, with the temptation to stop at the creatures themselves, without going back to their Creator.

> for the concept of love, which creates knowledge in the darkness of the intellect.[15]

This is the total night of the intellect, which now receives EVERYTHING from God, whatever God wants to give him, and it is the mystical experience par excellence. The mystic's delight in receiving the Scriptures brings us back to the process of their inspiration: "Since Scripture is born from a mystical contact of the hagiographers with God, it can be understood ultimately only on a level which must be called 'mystical.'"[16] And here, Bonaventure agrees with Augustine's *intellectual vision*. In a certain way, Bonaventure historicized the mystical experience so that the latter is not approached as something that disconnects from reality but as its fulfillment.

For Bonaventure, Scripture is called Revelation according to its depth of understanding, its spiritual apprehension, which profoundly unifies all the dimensions of the believer's life, as it enables the latter to appropriate Scripture through concrete events in the history of his life and that of the Church. This spiritual sense of approaching Scripture is threefold: *Allegorical sense* (for what to believe = faith), *Anagogical sense* (for what to await = hope), and *Tropological sense* (for what to do = charity).[17] Without this spiritual intelligence, the true spiritual meaning of the Scripture behind its letters cannot be found:

> The letter by itself is merely the water which is transformed into wine in the spiritual understanding; the letter is a stone, which much be changed into bread; the letter is the skin around the true fruit (...) it is in the spiritual understanding that Scripture becomes the Tree of Life.[18]

15. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure*, 91.

16. Ibid., 65.

17. Ibid., 62.

18. Ibid., 63.

Thus, the letter must always be surpassed by the Spirit. Is the true content of faith and revelation not to be found behind the letter? In the grasp of its spiritual meaning, in a personal appropriation that is not linked to individual subjectivism but to the faith and living interpretation of the Church, the very depository of this Revelation: "Only Scripture as it is understood in faith is truly holy Scripture. Consequently, Scripture in the full sense is theology, i.e., it is the book **and** the understanding of the book in the faith of the church"[19] It is through this faith and this *mystical attitude* that Scripture must be approached and interpreted, according to Bonaventure, to receive Revelation, and that the "The credible moves in the direction of the intelligible."[20] Bonaventure points out that even the fixed, established canon "carries within itself the seed of its own *dépassement*"[21] and must therefore be approached through this same dynamic understanding of revelation, without imposing a definitive temporal limit on it: "All tradition is of no avail against the immediate word of the Lord; this is the bold wisdom of the word with which Bonaventure discovered the break-through to the immediate encounter with Scripture."[22] This dynamic, progressive interpretation of Scripture in history provides the basis for a new understanding of tradition. In this way, Scripture historically reveals itself, so that ALL its meaning can never be ultimately manifest; part of it is already revealed, and the rest will be in the future. That is why the greatest danger for human beings is to stop at the letter of any type of Revelation (creation, Scripture...), to focus on the literal exterior of that Revelation, and ignore the true meaning intended by its Author:

19. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure*, 67

20. Ibid., 69.

21. Ibid., 80.

22. Ibid., 81.

> So, there is a striking parallel between the revelation of Scripture and creation. In both cases, the revelation is hidden behind the letters that veil it; in both cases, the unveiling of the revelation is the task of the Spirit, who transcends the level of the literal in a living, existential movement that penetrates the realm of the intellectual-spiritual.[23]

Conclusion

On the one hand, Bonaventure developed a new theory of Scripture interpretation, which, in contrast to the interpretation of the Church Fathers and Scholastics, which focused more on the "immutable and permanent," emphasized the "historical character" of Biblical statements. On the other hand, he affirmed that history is not reduced to a random succession of events but is the place par excellence of Revelation. Scripture, Tradition, and interpretation are all received within a movement of *expression and impression*, within an initiative that comes only from God, and that human being's part is only to keep the wax of their heart soft to receive. So, the condition for receiving this revelation—after that of God's free and gratuitous grace to reveal Himself—is the humility of the human heart: "There is an essential relationship between *humilitas* and *revelatio*. This relation is such that anyone who is entirely lacking in *humilitas* is also the degrees in the understanding of revelation."[24]

It is surprising to witness that the seraphim appearing to Saint Francis brings him no vocal message or new revelation, or answer to the crises of the Church of his era. The only message he brings is the stigmata, the impression of the expression of God's presence, reminding us of St. Paul's

23. Ibid., 85.

24. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Saint Bonaventure*, 71.

words: "*My grace is sufficient for you*,"[25] all is said through the expression of my presence. So, what kind of *humilitas* are we talking about? Perhaps that of desire, of purifying our hearts so that they desire only God's presence and the impression of its expression in our lives, according to the way He wills. The temptation is always strong to "practically explain to God" in our prayers how He should manifest Himself in our lives (by removing such and such a problem, by giving us such and such a grace, by avoiding such and such a cross or trial, by sending us to this or that country...) so that we may have peace. But perhaps *humilitas* lies precisely in the fact that we desire only His presence and let Him express Himself as He wills, accepting to let ourselves be surprised:

> Bonaventure warns straight away that the contemplation of this marvel is not possible unless a great desire burns in the soul. To truly appreciate a meal, one must have an appetite. The soul, immersed in the contemplation of divine light, will obtain that in its firmament—faith—shine the sun, the moon, and the stars. And more than reasoning, it is the purity of the soul that opens itself to the full illumination of the divine sun, which, with its unifying ray, transforms created reality into a serene spectacle, received in the mind as in a mirror. When this occurs in fullness, the soul transcends itself in what Bonaventure calls *'eccessi mentali*,' which surpass all explanation, like the inexpressible groaning of which Saint Paul speaks in the letter to the Romans, and which corresponds to an obscuration or blindness which is an illumination beyond all curious investigation of the intellect.

25. 2 Cor 12:9.

BACCALAUREATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY SYNTHESIS PAPERS

DOES IT *MAKE SENSE* TO BELIEVE IN GOD?

Francesco Janne Y. Labuntog, SJ

"I don't believe in God anymore," Gary (not his real name) said when I accompanied him during a recollection period as part of his school formation. It is difficult for him to logically reconcile the years of suffering and pain he and his family experienced, given the idea of a benevolent and caring God.

I was at a loss for words. Gary was clearly in pain. It seemed that the most reasonable thing to do at that moment was to make him feel that I was there to listen without dismissing what he was going through. Although I must admit, as a religious, I was initially tempted to preach about the existence of God. But a stronger inner calling invited me to empathize and desire to understand the depth of Gary's disbelief and the pain that led to it. Gary's disbelief *makes sense.*

As I reflect on Gary's struggle, it becomes apparent that his conclusion about God's existence mirrors a broader trend among today's younger generation. Research indicates that a significant portion of millennials and Gen Zers are departing from religion and belief in God for intellectual reasons or because they feel they have outgrown their faith.[1] Like Gary, they have encountered inconsistencies, contradictions, or compelling rational arguments that challenge their belief systems. These made them feel that their intellectual growth had pulled them away from their previous religious beliefs.

1. Aaron T. McLaughlin, Daryl R. Van Tongeren, Kelly Teahan, Don E. Davis, Kenneth G. Rice, and C. Nathan DeWall, "Who are the religious 'dones?': A cross-cultural latent profile analysis of formerly religious individuals" *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 14(4): 512–524. https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000376.

I was born in 1996 and share a generational identity with Gary, straddling the line between millennials and Gen Zers. My conscious and deliberate engagement with my Catholic faith was only fostered in college prompted by various opportunities, including involvement in college organizations. Despite this, my family did not prioritize religious practices in my upbringing. Without my experiences in college, my religious commitment would not be as profound today.

This pattern is not unique to me; it mirrors a wider trend among young adults nowadays. Many in my generation do not embrace religion, partly due to their upbringing. Compared to previous generations, parents of millennials and Gen Zers have been generally less proactive in fostering religious participation or modeling religious behaviors for their children.[2] This shift may stem from various factors, including the prevailing hyper-secular culture, materialistic influences, and a utilitarian mindset that prioritizes utility over spiritual beliefs. Consequently, many in my generation see little practical value in believing in, let alone worshipping, God.

As I explore the decline of belief within my generation, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon and remain receptive to various factors at play. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the two primary influences (mentioned earlier)—religious contradictions and social upbringing—may significantly shape the religious inclinations of young individuals today. Among these influences is the inclination to scrutinize the relevance and reasonableness of belief in a god. On this note, one cannot help but ponder: does it still ***make sense to believe in God?***

2. Daniel A. Cox "Generation Z and the Future of Faith in America." *The Survey Center on American Life* (2022), https://www.americansurveycenter.org/.

Concerning the Question

In this synthesis paper, I aim to explore the question mentioned above. Before embarking on this exploration, I must first clarify some operational definitions. *What does "make sense" mean? What is "belief" in God? Who (or what) is "God?"*

When something *lacks sense* entirely, it appears nonsensical, disconnected from reality. But when something *makes sense*, it is comprehended , mainly when it is logically coherent. In other words, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, to make sense means to be *reasonable*[3] whether that refers to a person, a belief, an opinion, or a situation.

Immanuel Kant might argue that making sense involves organizing and interpreting knowledge coherently and rationally, guided by the principles of reason.[4] These definitions of making sense resonate more with the rationalist perspective, as they align with reason and logical coherence in understanding what makes sense. Yet, it is essential to recognize that Kant's philosophy does not end with rationalism. While he emphasizes reason, Kant also acknowledges the importance of sensory experience and empirical evidence, recognizing their inherent value. Nonetheless, his framework tends to rely on reason and logical coherence for its comprehensibility.

Gabriel Marcel expands the notion of *making sense* beyond the boundaries of reason. He argues that true meaning and understanding often emerge from encounters with others and a deep engagement with the *mysteries* of existence. Marcel offers a more holistic perspective that goes beyond the limitations of strict rationality, inviting individuals to explore the richness of human experience and the complexities of the

3. "Make sense," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Merriam-Webster.com*, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/.

4. Cf. Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason."

human condition.[5] For him, there are other realms beyond mere reason and logical coherence when making sense.

Our exploration of *making sense* will initially stem from the perspective of reason. However, we will progressively deepen our approach to encompass alternative understandings of what it means to make sense, especially in the context of God's existence. Ultimately, our goal is to engage in philosophical inquiry and pursue an understanding of fundamental truths that transcend a single and limited perspective.

What exactly do we mean by "belief" in God? We must first differentiate between 'belief' and 'faith' to grasp this. Søren Kierkegaard distinguishes between the two: faith involves reliance, trust, and wholehearted commitment, while belief accepts something as true based on logic and empirical inference.[6]

Mark Wrathall, a philosophy professor at the University of Oxford, notes that while belief and faith are often deemed synonymous, they are distinct concepts.[7] However, they can coexist and complement each other.[8] In this paper, our exploration of belief aligns with the common understanding of acceptance based on logic and empirical inference. Nevertheless, we will also explore beyond this concept, recognizing the realm of mystery and faith.

Finally, what do we mean by "God?" Who is God, and what is God's relationship with us? This paper aims to explore various concepts of God and His implied relationship with us from

5. Cf. Gabriel Marcel, "Being and Having."

6. Z Quanbeck, "Kierkegaard on Belief and Credence," *European Journal of Philosophy*, https://philarchive.org/archive/QUAKOB-2.

7. From Simon Laraway, "Belief: Necessary or Not?" *Bringham Young Universtiy - College of Humanities*. https://hum.byu.edu/difference-between-faith-and-belief.

8. Ibid.

different philosophical perspectives. Alongside these questions, we seek to address the question, *"Does it make sense to believe in God?"* with the guidance of the following inquiries: *Is it rational and logical to believe in God's existence? If not, do non-believers possess intellectual superiority over believers? Are believers merely fools and blind followers of religion? To what extent can human comprehension grasp the concept of God, and is this sufficient?*

God: Emanating from Our Human Needs

I have friends who identify as atheists and agnostics. During college, I encountered individuals who distanced themselves from religion because it was no longer reasonable to them. One friend, who, like me, was a Psychology major with a keen interest in Evolutionary Psychology, saw Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as sufficient to explain our belief in God. From this perspective, our inclination towards belief in a higher power arises from evolutionary adaptations for survival. To my friend, it *made sense* to abandon belief in God and anything supernatural, as these all seemed to emanate from our human need for survival.

Like Darwin and many other evolutionary thinkers, my friend subscribes to *naturalism*.[9] This viewpoint suggests that all phenomena, including religion, can be explained through natural processes without resorting to supernatural explanations. Belief in God and anything supernatural does not make sense because they cannot be tested or verified scientifically.

Renowned philosopher Daniel Dennett explores this naturalistic perspective in his article *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. He introduces the concept of the *Hyperactive Agent Detection Device (HADD)*, a cognitive mechanism inherent

9. Cf. "Naturalism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/.

in humans and other animals.[10] This device predisposes us to detect agency in anything that moves and evokes awe or fear, eventually influencing how we interpret coincidental actions and their effects. This cognitive predisposition likely evolved as an adaptive trait to help our ancestors navigate a complex and often dangerous world.

Consider a scenario in which a community is facing an extended period of drought. As a member of this community, I notice the clouds gathering overhead. Desperate for rain, I attribute agency to a higher power responsible for natural phenomena. In this state of heightened sensitivity, any correlation between my actions and natural events (such as performing a specific ritual and coincidental rainfall) might reinforce my belief in a direct link between my actions and the weather. Over time, these associations can develop into superstitious beliefs, eventually evolving into the concept of gods controlling certain elements. I might then pray to a rain goddess, seeking her compassion to bring rain to the dry farmlands to ensure survival. Ultimately, these evolving beliefs culminate in the formation of formal religions, resembling those found in monotheistic faiths.

Dennett's observation is scientifically compelling. For him and many naturalists, God is perceived as nothing more than an illusion. The concept of God has emerged from our genetic and biological makeup and has been pragmatically helpful for our survival.

Another prominent figure who embraced this perspective is the renowned psychologist Sigmund Freud, known for his contributions to psychoanalysis. He believed that religion emerged from fundamental human psychological needs. He

10. From Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking, 2006).

portrays God as nothing more than an illusion born from our innate desires for security, comfort, and a sense of purpose.

In his book *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud suggests that humans have a primal longing to return to the safety and security of childhood.[11] In early childhood, we perceive our fathers as perfect guardians who provide us protection and security. However, as we mature, we recognize the imperfections of our protective figures, yet our innate yearning for security persists. In response to this yearning, we seek solace in the concept of God, viewing Him as a divine father figure who can shield us from anxiety and helplessness. In Freud's words, "God is nothing more than an exalted father."[12] For Freud, God serves as a *psychological coping mechanism*, providing believers with knowledge, consolation, and guidance to confront the harsh realities of adulthood.

Reflecting on Freud's psychological perspective, I must acknowledge that some form of coping mechanism somehow drove a part of my decision to embrace religion . It stems from my fear of death and subconscious desire to escape its inevitability. The prospect of becoming religious invokes a certain fantasy within me—a belief that I am somehow special and that death is not my ultimate end, in accordance with Catholic doctrine.

Embedded within my Catholic faith is the concept of heaven—an assurance of eternal life after death, a life free from pain and filled with peace alongside God. It has become evident to me that a part of my belief in God is a coping mechanism for my denial and fear of mortality. This struggle with mortality and religion is not unique to me; it is a shared

11. From Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1928).

12. Ibid.

human experience. The profound fear and avoidance of death often lead individuals to firmly adhere to "cultural worldviews," such as religious beliefs. This phenomenon has been substantiated by a study conducted by Mark Rubin in 2018 on the Terror Management Theory (TMT). The study sheds light on how the apprehension of death influences human cognition and behavior, particularly in fostering belief in God to manage *existential anxieties*.[13]

Reflecting thus far on scientific and naturalistic explanations, belief in God appears rooted in our biological needs and psychological mechanisms for *addressing survival needs* or *existential anxieties*. These scientific perspectives hold considerable sway over my generation, serving as the dominant figure in explaining what (or who) God is—"nothing more than an exalted father."[14] It reveals why believing in God, let alone adhering to a religion, may no longer make sense.

The inclination to this perspective is understandable. After all, the methods of naturalism and science stand out as one of the few things that *fulfill* our *natural craving for certainty*, particularly in this profoundly uncertain world.

However, I firmly believe that relying solely on naturalism and science to conclude God's existence may not make sense, as they are *inherently limited* in their ability to do so.

Firstly, it is *illogical* to conclude that the origin of a belief determines its truth value—a concept known as the *Genetic*

13. Mark Rubin, "Fear of Self-Annihilation and Existential Uncertainty as Predictors of Worldview Defense: Comparing Terror Management and Uncertainty Theories," *Journal of Social Psychology* 158, no. 3 (2018): 298–308, https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2017.1341375.

14. From Sigmund Freud. *The Future of an Illusion*. trans. W. D. Robson-Scott. *New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation* 1928.

Fallacy.[15] This fallacy occurs when someone argues that the origins of a belief determine whether it is true or not. For example, saying, "Because belief in God comes from human needs, God does not exist" is flawed. Why? Because the origin of belief cannot disprove (nor prove) the existence of God. So, recognizing that belief in God might come from human experiences does not mean that God does not exist. Moreover, is it possible that God could have utilized our human condition to help us comprehend Him?

Secondly, the dominant figure of science often reduces belief in God to its perspective, known as *scientism*. This ideology asserts that everything can be understood solely through science, disregarding the limitations of human intellect.[16] Relying solely on this *overlooks the complexity* of human experience and the potential for realities beyond empirical observation.

Claiming that science and human intellect alone can explain everything implies placing ourselves as ultimate authorities, akin to gods. This assertion is self-defeating because not everything is comprehensible through scientific framework or human understanding. Limiting everything to science may lead to bias and reductionism, forcing more complex phenomena into narrow scientific frameworks.

It is clear now that naturalism and science give us *a sense* of the motivations behind our beliefs in God. However, using them to deny God's existence is illogical and reductionistic.

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15. Louis Catalan, "Religious Non Realism" (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, February 13, 2024).

16. Anthony Rizzi, "The Science before Science: The Grounding and Integration of the Modern Mind and Its Science." In *Reading the Cosmos*, edited by Giuseppe Butera (n.p.: American Maritain Association, 2011): 10, https://maritain.nd.edu/ama/Reading/.

God exceeds science and human intellect, being *that which nothing greater can be conceived.*

God: A Logical and Pragmatic Choice

When I think of God, I imagine someone who is all-powerful and all-knowing. Yet, according to St. Anselm of Canterbury, God surpasses even these grand attributes. Anselm believes that God is, by definition, the absolute best thing we can imagine—being *that which nothing greater can be conceived*.[17] He argues that God transcends human understanding, as any concept we conceive is inherently lesser than God. Yes, even the framework of science cannot fully and reductionistically capture the magnificence of God and all His qualities.

Anselm delves into the whole concept of God by pondering the difference between *existence in reality* and *existence in the mind.* He suggests that it is better for something to *exist in reality* and not only in our *minds*.[18] For instance, I am aiming for an A in my Philosophy class. It is way better for that A to be real, and not simply an idea in my head. Otherwise, I would just be fooling myself.

This principle applies even more profoundly to God. If God is to be *the greatest of greatest conceivable Being* (surpassing all other conceivable beings) then His existence must exist both in the realm of the mind and the realm of reality. To confine God's existence solely to mental conception would imply that other beings (existing in both the mind and reality, such as my Philosophy grade) could potentially surpass God in greatness. According to Anselm, this notion is inherently illogical, as

17. From *Monologion and Proslogion, with the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, trans. Thomas Williams.

18. Louis Catalan, "Ontological Argument" (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, February 20, 2024).

it would undermine the very essence of God as the greatest conceivable existence. Simply put, it is illogical to say that God exists only in our minds.

Anselm's argument is known as the *Ontological Argument*. René Descartes presents a similar line of reasoning, asserting that the concept of God as a supremely perfect being inherently entails existence. Just as mountains and valleys are inseparable—both being "existents" in themselves, reliant on each other for existence—so too is the concept of *God* inseparable from *existence*.[19] Descartes contends that *existence* is a *necessary perfection*, and since God is the most perfect conceivable being, He must necessarily exist.

The ontological argument has encountered various counterarguments, including Gaunilo's *Lost Island* analogy[20] and Kant's assertion that real existence is not necessarily a predicate of God.[21] However, what is worth noting about it is its endeavor to provide a logical analysis of the concept of God's existence. It seeks to establish the existence of God through logical coherence, suggesting that *believing in God* does indeed *make sense*.

Not only is it logical to believe in God, but it is also *pragmatic*. Blaise Pascal offers a compelling argument for this. His famous argument, *Pascal's Wager* suggests that it is pragmatic to believe in God, even in the absence of irrefutable evidence.

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19. René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy" translated by Michael Moriarty (*Oxford University Press Inc.*, New York, 2008) chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/ https://personal.lse.ac.uk/ROBERT49/teaching/ph103/pdf/ Descartes_1641Meditations.pdf.

20. Cf. Thomas Williams, trans. *Monologion and Proslogion, with the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*.

21. Louis Catalan, "Ontological Argument" (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, February 20, 2024).

This is because the potential benefits of belief outweigh the potential costs of disbelief.[22]

Pascal invites us to imagine someone deciding whether or not to believe in God. *Situation A*: If he believes in God and God does exist, he gains everything. He goes to heaven and experiences eternal happiness. *Situation B*: If he believes in God and God does not exist, he loses nothing. He simply lived believing in something untrue, but he has not lost anything tangible. *Situation C*: If he does not believe in God and God does exist, he loses everything. He will miss out on heaven and face eternal suffering or separation from God. *Situation D*: If he does not believe in God and God does not exist, he gains nothing. He simply lived without believing in anything supernatural, which is fine if there is no afterlife or divine consequences. The preferable choice is *Situation A*, suggesting that belief in God is a pragmatic decision.[23]

While it may seem logically satisfying to approach the existence of God through the lens of pragmatism and logical coherence, I find that there is still a *void* in my heart. It is just not enough. Both the ontological and pragmatic arguments present God in abstract terms, focusing on philosophical definitions and logical deductions rather than empirical phenomena.

In this case, who, then, is God? God is primarily an intellectual deduction or a rational justification rather than a tangible presence in our lives. St. Anselm coined the term "faith seeking understanding," implying that faith and belief are

22. Giuseppe Butera, "Introduction: The Philosophy of Nature is the Beginning of Wisdom," In *Reading the Cosmos*, edited by Giuseppe Butera (n.p.: American Maritain Association, 2011): 2. from https://maritain.nd.edu/ama/Reading/.

23. Butera, "Introduction: The Philosophy of Nature is the Beginning of Wisdom," 2.

prerequisites to appreciate fully these deductive and abstract concepts of God. But what about individuals like Gary? What about the younger generation, who may need a strong foundation in belief and faith? Those who identify as agnostics? Indeed, while the deductive reasoning of Anselm or the pragmatic justification of Pascal may satisfy their logical inquiries, it may fall short of convincing them that believing in God truly makes sense in their personal lives.

Even as a believer, I am frankly unsatisfied with logical deduction and pragmatic justifications. Pascal's approach simply asks me to believe in God because the potential benefits of believing outweigh the potential costs of not believing. Somehow, God is mere utility or subjective usefulness. If this becomes my sole reason to believe, it may lead to a transactional relationship with God—lacking genuine connection and rooted only in my self-serving motives.

Indeed, the ontological argument inspires a certain awe toward God, seeing Him as the greatest imaginable being beyond human comprehension. However, it also makes Him feel somehow distant. God is described as *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*, entirely beyond human understanding and beyond reach in His greatness. This feeling of distance makes me grapple with the incomprehensibility of God. I wonder philosophically, as an agnostic might: *how is God, which is too immense to comprehend, different from no God at all?*[24]

24. Cf. Mark Geldard, "Why Study Philosophy of Religion?" *Themelios 9.3* (1984) chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/journal-issues/9.3_Geldard.pdf.

Glimpses of God

"Why is there something rather than nothing?" wondered Wilhelm Leibniz.[25] Why are we here instead of not here? Why does the Earth exist instead of being in a state of nothingness? And why does the universe exist instead of not existing at all? Leibniz suggests that there are no random or unexplained occurrences. Everything has a reason for existing or happening.

Leibniz's thoughts resonate with the phrase attributed to the Greek philosopher Parmenides, "ex nihilo nihil fit," which means *out of nothing, nothing comes*. It does not make sense for something to pop into existence without a cause. Thomas Aquinas asserts that every existing being has a prior cause that brought it into existence. Aquinas refers to these dependent beings as contingent (or possible) beings.[26]

I, for example, as a contingent being, exist not out of nothing but because of my parents. Mountains are not formed out of nothing, but because of the movement of the Earth's lithospheric plates. Stars do not exist from nothing; they form through stellar nucleosynthesis within nebulae. Every possible being is dependent on a prior cause that made it be. Out of nothing, nothing comes.

Now, it is easy for me to apply this concept of efficient cause to reachable things, but when I extend it to phenomena vastly larger than myself and the world I inhabit, I am filled with awe and humility. One such phenomenon is the *universe*. I am humanly challenged to comprehend that the vast and seemingly infinite universe is merely a contingent being – implying

25. Louis Catalan, "The Existence of God: St. Thomas Aquinas's Argument from Possibility to Necessity" (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, February 6, 2024).

26. Thomas Aquinas "Five Ways," trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Saint Augustine's Press).

a prior cause. Like Aquinas, this notion naturally leads me to contemplate the ultimate cause—the genesis of everything and the driving force behind all causes.

To grasp the notion that the universe is a mere contingent being, let us use a language comprehensible to us: science. In 1912, astronomer Vesto Slipher first observed that galaxies were highly *redshifted*, indicating they were moving away from Earth.[27] A theoretical physicist, Georges Lemaître, furthered this understanding, concluding that the universe is expanding.[28] Lemaître suggests envisioning the cosmic clock running backward: galaxies move farther away as time progresses.[29] However, in the past, they were closer together. If we rewind time, everything in the universe converges into an incredibly dense entity—what Lemaître termed the *primeval atom*.[30]

The primeval atom originated as all its energy condensed into a tiny point. This dense point exploded with unimaginable force, generating matter and propelling it outward, ultimately forming the billions of galaxies in our vast universe. Astrophysicists coined this monumental explosion as *The Big Bang*.

While it is generally accepted that the primeval atom serves as the cause of the universe, this raises additional questions:

27. Chelsea Gohd "What is Dark Energy? Inside our accelerating, expanding Universe" *NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory* 2024 https://science.nasa.gov/universe/the-universe-is-expanding-faster-these-days-and-dark-energy-is-responsible-so-what-is-dark-energy/.

28. Simon Mitton. "The expanding universe of Georges Lemaître" *Astronomy & Geophysics*, Volume 58, Issue 2 (2017): Pages 2.28–2.31 https://doi.org/10.1093/astrogeo/atx060.

29. "The Big Bang, Cosmology, part 1: Crash Course Astronomy #42" [YouTube video, 13:22 mins] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B7Ix2VQEGo.

30. Michael Ner E. Mariano, "Cosmology, Cosmogony, and the Big Bang Theory," (lecture, Loyola School of Theology, September 21, 2022).

What caused it, what caused that cause, and so on? Indeed, it did not arise from nothingness—*ex nihilo nihil fit*. In other words, the primeval atom is simply a contingent being, as is the series of phenomena that caused it—all dependent on prior causes for their existence. When viewed within a larger framework, we perceive an even more immense system of efficient causes, suggesting that the totality of this system might also be a contingent being, dependent on a prior being for its existence.

While we can endlessly question chains of prior causes, it may be counterproductive. It may be more logical to infer that a *necessary Being* exists beyond these laws, capable of initiating this seemingly infinite chain and immense system of causes without being subject to it. For Aquinas, this *absolutely necessary Being*, the uncaused cause, is *God*. God serves as the ultimate primordial cause for the existence of all contingent (or possible) beings.

For Gary and many of my generation who identify as agnostics and atheists, the word "God" may act as a trigger word, unconsciously sparking skepticism. However, they could at least agree that it makes sense to infer that an *absolutely necessary Being* can initiate this seemingly infinite chain of causes without being subject to it.

If there is anything worth acknowledging that does not seem to make sense, it is *life* itself—our existence and those around us. The probabilities involved are simply too vast to explain confidently the essence of certain phenomena leading to life. This is the sentiment I often find myself in when I reflect on the *Fine-Tuning theory*.[31]

Let us again seek the aid of science to explain this theory. In the 1960s, astronomer Carl Sagan outlined two criteria for

31. Cf. "Fine-Tuning," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fine-tuning/.

a planet to support life: the *right kind of star* and *a planet at the right distance from it*.[32] Given the vast number of planets in the universe, scientists anticipated that billions would meet these criteria. This led to an optimistic expectation for finding extra-terrestrial life. This optimism led to the launch of a project called Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), to listen for signals from outer space that might be signs of intelligent life.[33] However, as time passed, the anticipated signals failed to materialize, leaving SETI with profound silence.[34]

As our understanding of life and the universe has expanded, it has become apparent that far more factors are necessary for life to exist than initially thought. Sagan's initial two criteria expanded to include over a hundred parameters, each requiring precise alignment for life to flourish.[35]

This realization means that significantly fewer planets can support life than previously assumed.[36] As the parameters broaden, the stock of potential life-supporting planets decreases from billions to millions, from thousands to hundreds, and now potentially down to just one. Thus far, it is only Earth that possesses these more than a hundred

32. "What is the Habitable Zone or Goldilocks Zone?" *NASA* https://exoplanets.nasa.gov/faq/15/what-is-the-habitable-zone-or-goldilocks-zone/.

33. Carl Sagan and Frank Drake, "The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence," *Scientific America* (1997) https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-search-for-extraterre/.

34. Ian Crawford. "Where Are They?" *Scientific American* Vol. 283, No. 1 (2000): pg. 38-43 http://www.jstor.org/stable/26058784.

35. Tim Boyle, "Does Life Exist On Any Other Planet In The Universe? Another Look At SETI," *Kwansei Gakuin University, in Nishinomiya, Japan* https://www.konkyo.org/English/DoesLifeExistOnAnyOtherPlanetInTheUniverseAnotherLookAtSETI.

36. "Does Science Argue for or against God?," *Prager University* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjGPHF5A6Po.

parameters necessary for sustaining life;[37] parameters that other planets lack.

What is more impressive is that the fundamental forces governing the system of the universe are *finely tuned* to an incredible degree. Even the *extremely slightest changes* would make life impossible. For instance, scientists have found that gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces were set within a fraction of a second after the Big Bang.[38] If the balance between gravity and electromagnetism had been different in the tiniest fraction of the tiniest inconceivable fraction, stars would not have formed.[39]

When one factors in all the other necessary conditions, the chances of the universe existing are unbelievably tiny. The universe itself is a miracle. The idea that this happened by chance is hard to grasp; it is like flipping a coin and getting heads ten quintillion times in a row.[40] This raises profound questions about the likelihood of life emerging by random chance, compared to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

It is as if someone "fine-tuned" or designed this apparent miracle. Could this be glimpses of God or, to use a more inclusive term, a necessary Being? The cosmological and analogical (that is, the fine-tuning theory) argument may lead to a potential image of God as the sustainer of life, let alone the creator of it.

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37. Boyle, "Does Life Exist On Any Other Planet In The Universe?".

38. Simon Friederich, "Fine-Tuning," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2023 Edition, Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/fine-tuning/.

39. "Does Science Argue for or against God?" *Prager University* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjGPHF5A6Po.

40. Ibid.

At this juncture, it appears reasonable to assert that believing in God makes sense. This is supported by logical and pragmatic considerations and empirical glimpses that can be inferred through cosmological and analogical arguments (drawing upon data from cosmology and physics).

Contrary to the belief of many in my generation, the absence of belief in God does not necessarily equate to intellectual growth or superiority. Believers should not be dismissed as foolish; indeed, we can employ reason to support our belief and faith.

However, it is crucial to recognize that these assertions are human inferences contingent upon our cognitive abilities and the limitations of human intellect. Nevertheless, one might question: *Is reason alone* really *sufficient?*

God Beyond Reason

To reach a specific certainty, René Descartes doubted. He began by considering that many of his beliefs might be false.[41] Engaging in radical skepticism, Descartes questioned the validity of everything he had previously accepted as true. Ultimately, this introspection led him to the seminal conclusion that rationally validates our existence: *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am).[42]

Descartes' dedication to the pursuit of certainty echoes a fundamental human longing for assurance. We are creatures of certainty. We often seek what is certain, yearning for validation that is both reasonable and assured. Uncertainty is a threat to our human survival. Uncertainty challenges our ego

41. From René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2008)

42. Ibid.

and sense of superiority. As a result, we often seek refuge in comprehensible frameworks that offer certainty—rationalism, empiricism, scientism, naturalism, and many more.

I am not attempting to criticize the use of these human frameworks; they serve as valuable tools, guiding us to better understand and navigate our world and existence. They help fulfill our innate longing for certainty—a perfectly normal inclination. However, arriving at a conclusion that promotes an *absolute human framework* (or ideology) as the sole interpreter of reality raises concerns for me.

It is essential to apply a healthy skepticism, a degree of Descartes' doubt, toward these human frameworks. I emphasize "human" frameworks to highlight their inherent limitations. They are bound by our cognitive and emotional capacities, including logical reasoning and memory, which are inherently limited. They rely on language, which shapes and confines our thinking. And while language is a tool for communication and conceptualization, it can also limit our ability to articulate some ideas or concepts, particularly those that lie outside the scope of our linguistic framework. Again, human frameworks are inherently limited.

Søren Kierkegaard recognizes this, acknowledging the inability to provide solid rational evidence, especially concerning God's existence. Hence, for Kierkegaard, belief in God necessitates a leap of faith, a recognition that rational evidence alone may not suffice.[43]

A concept that challenges our obsession with certainty is *embracing mystery*. This term carries weight—it is almost perceived as a threat, a countercultural notion, a value that

43. Søren Kierkegaard, "Fear and Trembling," in *Selections from the Writings of Kierkegaard*, trans. L.M. (Hollander, Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1912).

does not make sense. Yet, we now understand that it holds significance, particularly when viewed through the lens of recognizing the inherent limitations of our human frameworks.

Gabriel Marcel embraces this realm of mystery and incomprehensibility. It is essential to clarify that he does not deny the significance of human frameworks or reason in comprehending God's existence. He acknowledges that a sufficient amount of it aids us in understanding our world and potentially grasping aspects of God. Such an approach is intrinsic to disciplines like science and philosophy, and it has been our method thus far in addressing the question, "Does it make sense to believe in God?" This may align with Marcel's *Primary Reflection* concept, which seeks to understand lived experiences through a certain level of abstraction and objectification.[44] However, he suggests that there is a deeper dimension beyond this level of engagement with God—he calls this *Secondary Reflection.*

Within this deeper dimension, one is invited to find personal meaning in belief in God, transcending mere reason. The secondary reflection is not about dissecting or analyzing; it is about integrating and unifying our personal experiences of the world.[45] While the primary reflection aids in objectively inferring the existence of God, dwelling solely at this level may constrain our understanding. The secondary reflection surpasses these limitations, urging us to reflect: " *Who is God for me ?*" Admittedly, this does *not easily make sense.*

Indeed, understanding secondary reflection can be challenging, but it is not abstract; it simply respects the realm of mystery inherent in our experiences. An analogy of this may be about how we relate with others, say, a loved one.

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44. Gabriel Marcel, "Primary and Secondary Reflection: The Existential Fulcrum," with an interpretation by Manuel B. Dy Jr.

45. Ibid.

My knowledge of this loved one of mine can be analyzed and dissected through sets of objective categories (primary reflection): " She is a woman, she is a member of..., she is 28 years old, and so on." However, this set of categories is not enough for me to conclude or encapsulate my most accurate knowledge of this person. She becomes a mystery! Yes, she can be identified through these categories, yet she is also beyond them. Only my lived experience and direct encounter (secondary reflection) with her make me say, "I truly know her!" and sets of objective categories are not enough to encapsulate such depth of familiarity.

Marcel suggests that this understanding can be applied to our understanding or relationship with God. Who is God to me? How can I genuinely know Him? Is it enough to comprehend Him through a set of objective (logical) categories? Or is He a Being who partially reveals Himself through these categories, while simultaneously transcending them entirely? Perhaps, akin to relating with a loved one, genuine understanding of God comes through personal relationship and direct encounters, implying that God is ultimately a mystery.

Marcel also warns against our inherent inclination to possess, suggesting that our pursuit of certainty and articulation might be intertwined with this desire—the notion of "having" a particular idea or knowledge. He encourages us to avoid becoming overly fixated on "possessing" definitive explanations, as this can lead to a rigid adherence to our limited human understanding and frameworks. Let us not allow scientism, naturalism, rationalism, and empiricism to overshadow or diminish moments of deep transcendence, hope, and love. While these frameworks offer valuable guidance, they should not overshadow the profound and incomprehensible connections we experience with others and with God.

Conclusion

In the realm of reason, ***believing in God makes sense.*** Such belief is supported by logical and pragmatic considerations and empirical glimpses inferred through cosmological and analogical arguments. Believers should not be dismissed as foolish; we can use reason to support our faith.

Contrary to the prevailing belief among many in my generation, the absence of belief in God does not necessarily signify intellectual growth or superiority. The human frameworks that non-believers often adhere to, which they consider sufficient to conclude the absence of God, are inherently limited. One might argue that it sometimes requires even more faith for non-believers to maintain their stance than believers.

In the realm of mystery, I go back to my encounter with Gary. Words and reason seem inadequate to reconcile Gary's relationship with God, particularly in light of the deep pain he and his family have endured. I hesitate to categorize him simply as a non-believer, sensing there is a deeper truth behind his perspective. At a certain point, I realized that it becomes less about convincing Gary that it still makes sense to believe in God, but rather more about simply being present for him.

"Tell me more about it, Gary. I am here to listen and offer support in any way I can," or "Gary, your experiences are really difficult, and I can only imagine the pain you are experiencing now. Know that I am here for you." In these moments of presence, I hold faith that within and beyond my encounter with Gary, as well as his encounter with me, lies the presence of a Being who is beyond us yet remains intimately involved with us, guiding us through the complexity of this uncertain world.

And as I dive deeper into this manner of *presence-ing* with Gary and him to me, it is slowly making sense to me that perhaps

beneath his conclusion "I don't believe in God anymore," lies ***a deep longing for God.***

DWELLING AMIDST THINGS: A HEIDEGGERIAN SYNTHESIS

Rogelio R. Nato, Jr., SJ

Why is there something rather than nothing? Any student of philosophy is not unfamiliar with this perennial metaphysical question. I remember this being asked as a principal question in ancient philosophy, finding some grounding in God in medieval philosophy, subjected to investigation and certitude in modern philosophy, and then being recovered and rearticulated in contemporary philosophy.[1]

Why is there something rather than nothing? It is only recently, as I engage in thinking through this synthesis paper, that I have noticed a fundamental assumption in asking the said question. This question holds water because it assumes that there *is* something. Metaphysically, one must ask, "Is there something?" before one can ask, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Epistemologically, one will also ask, "How do I know there is something?" I belong to those who posit that there *is*, indeed, something. But instead of dwelling on why there is something rather than nothing, I am drawn to question essentially—for "questioning is the piety of thought"[2]—the way this something is, or even the way that nothing is if it is at all.

1. I am limiting the historical divisions of philosophy to the Western tradition. I am not speaking here of the development of philosophical thought in the Eastern tradition.

2. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 35.

For this short paper, I shall focus my questioning on this "thing" to which either "some" or "no(ne)" is attached. What is the thing in some-thing and no-thing?[3] Again, this assumes that there is a thing, that it exists. So what is this thing? What is the thing? What is a thing? What are things? While this attempt appears to take off from a mere play on morphology, its buoyant force proceeds from an ardent desire to recover the essential unfolding[4] of the thing. Let me preface this inquiry with a story.

Dearest freshness deep down things

At the end of every academic year, Jesuit *formands* are sent to various Jesuit communities and ministries across the country. During last year's intersession, I was sent, with two others, to Xavier University (XU) – Ateneo de Cagayan. We spent one month in El Gaucho (literally, the cowboy), a land that belongs to XU and on which about 139 families have informally settled. We joined a team of community organizers assisting the community in transitioning to a new settlement. We would spend the whole day with the community and then come home to XU.

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3. I am treating the "thing" in "something" and in "nothing" as the same reference to the thing because precisely by stating that something is, by virtue of composition, then by virtue of division, I am also stating what there is not, which is nothing.

4. I am using Dr. Remmon Barbaza's preferred translation of the German noun *Wesen* as "essential unfolding." Its traditional translation is "essence," but Martin Heidegger's use of *Wesen* means the way something is, and not just what something is as in the Latin *quidditas*. I believe "essential unfolding" very aptly captures the understanding that Heidegger attempts to recover in his fundamental ontology. For further details, see footnote 1 in "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 3.

Once, at breakfast, the three of us were seated with a Jesuit priest who taught us English Literature when we were Juniors.[5] He asked, "So how has your apostolate been going?" "Oh here, Father," I said, "we've just been asked to create three modules: one each on values formation, good governance, and waste management."

"Given your context as *formands*, the first two are certainly doable," he replied, "but the last?" Then he continued, "All three of you majored in English, didn't you?" I knew he was hinting at something, but I was yet to figure it out until he said, "And English seems far-off from waste management!" We all laughed!

Then I said, "Well, Father, what about 'the dearest freshness deep down things'?" At that moment, I knew I made him proudHe jokingly replied, "Uhm, not fresh at all!" But really, who could ever forget that poignant, ever-arresting, calm and soothing, inexhaustibly rich line from Gerard Manley Hopkins's "God's Grandeur"? "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things."[6] The same question arises: "What are things?"

The English Jesuit poet himself must have grappled with "things," "deep down" which, "[t]here lives the dearest freshness," even after "[g]enerations have trod, have trod, have trod."[7] In 1889, he left this world that "is charged with the grandeur of God."[8] That same year German philosopher Martin Heidegger was born. He, too, would investigate—in a sense

5. "Juniors" is the term used to refer to newly vowed Jesuits who are studying the humanities and the arts in the Juniorate, which is the next phase of Jesuit formation after Novitiate.

6. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poetry Foundation*, n.d., accessed Feb. 5, 2024, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur.

7. Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poetry Foundation*.

8. Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poetry Foundation*.

proper to his ontology[9]—the essential unfolding of things in the world.

Nearness, Thingness, and Handiness

In his lecture, "The Thing" (*Das Ding*), which he delivered on June 6, 1950,[10] Heidegger prefaces the question of the thing with the question of nearness. He says, "Nearness, it seems, cannot be encountered directly. We succeed in reaching it by attending to what is near. Near to us are what we usually call things."[11,12] This is why in *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks of useful things in their handiness,[13] thereby positing that the primordial relationship that the human being, Dasein,[14] has toward things is understanding. Being-in-the-world, Dasein is always already situated in the world. This world Heidegger understands in the ontic sense,[15] that is this world is this world of things in which the human being "moves and lives and has

9. "Ontology is possible only as a phenomenology." [Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, revised and with a foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 34.]

10. Remmon Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 66.

11. Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 165.

12. This reminds me of the ontological difference (which he would later refer to as the "duality of being") that Heidegger spells out in *Being and Time*, namely, "The being of a being is itself not a being" (5) and "Being is always the being of a being" (8). It is through things that nearness is encountered, much like how being may be encountered through the human being for whom being is a question.

13. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68-9.

14. In ordinary German, *Dasein* simply means existence. Heidegger uses it in *Being and Time* as *Da-sein* (there-being) to denote the being of the beings that we human beings are.

15. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 65.

his being."[16] Thus, human beings always understand things in this world. Heidegger writes, "Dasein always already *is* in this way; for example, in opening the door, I use the doorknob.... In our dealings, we find utensils for writing, utensils for sewing, utensils for working, driving, measuring."[17]

The human being always already understands things in their inconspicuousness. One does not stare at a doorknob. Instead, as Heidegger mentions above, one uses it to open the door. Heidegger calls this the thing's primordial handiness or readiness-to-hand.[18] He writes, "What is peculiar to what is initially at hand is that it withdraws, so to speak, in its character of handiness to be handy."[19] However, when what is ready-to-hand becomes unusable, it becomes conspicuous and jumps out of itself, as it were, becoming present-at-hand. It enters the mode of obtrusiveness until it is returned to its primordial handiness, when it is inconspicuous again. When I touch the doorknob, for instance, and I cannot turn it to open the door of my room, then I begin to notice the doorknob and investigate why it is not functioning as usual. The doorknob jumps out of itself and presents itself to me as a thing in a totality of things.[20] As soon as I fix the doorknob, it returns to its inconspicuousness, and I readily use it to open the door of my room as I have always already done before. Indeed, Heidegger's question of the thing is intimately connected to the question

16. An allusion to Acts 17:28.

17. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67-8.

18. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

19. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

20. Heidegger writes in *Being and Time,* 68, "Strictly speaking, there 'is' no such thing as a useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is... A totality of useful things is always already discovered before the individual useful thing."

of nearness because things constitute what is near to human beings. And what are things?

Just as the forgotten question of being can be attended to through the human being for whom being is a question, then the question of the thing (or the thingness of the thing) can also be addressed through things. As such, Heidegger takes a jug nearby because a jug is a thing. I must clarify at this point that "things" can be generally divided into two: those that are physically palpable and those that are considered non-palpable or spiritual, like God.[21] Regarding the latter, in ordinary usage, human beings hesitate to call God a thing; nor do they consider animals as things, even though they may belong to "living things."[22] Of course, human beings do not call themselves things. In the history of ideas, I can only think of René Descartes as the thinker who once referred to the existence of the "I" that is delivered in the act of doubting as a "thinking thing."[23] If I would reduce that human being to this "I," then, following Descartes, the human being would be but a thing.

With regard to the former, included are both useful things and "mere things," as Heidegger refers to them in *Being and Time*.[24] Again, useful things are those that belong to one's world or "context of references," what Heidegger calls *Verweisungszusammenhänge*.[25] "Mere things" do not have immediate significance to one's world.[26] One must be careful,

21. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 39.

22. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 40.

23. René Descartes, "Second Meditation," in *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.

24. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68.

25. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 74.

26. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 40.

however, not to fall into the trap of dismissing what may initially be "mere things" as mere things.

As a young boy, I noticed my mother's penchant for keeping cellophane and plastic bags from any purchase of dry goods. She would carefully fold and compile them in an empty, rectangular food container. To me, they had no use anymore, so it would be better to dispose of them. I thought they were "mere things," until I realized that it was from this collection that my mother would retrieve carefully folded cellophane she would insert in my backpack every time I had an out-of-town school trip. Those cellophane served me well whenever I felt the need to throw up due to motion sickness. Those cellophane concretely reminded me of my mother's abiding love during those days when I was not at home. The usefulness and meaningfulness of things, then, consists in their belonging to the totality that is the world in which the human being dwells near them. With this in mind, let us return to the thing that Heidegger provides in his lecture—the jug.

Dominant interpretations of the thing

The jug is a thing. What kind of thing? A vessel. As such, it is capable of containing something else within it. Heidegger acknowledges this in the lecture. He affirms that the jug, in that sense, is a useful thing. As mentioned earlier in this paper through the doorknob example, useful things lie inconspicuously, ready-to-hand when we need them. As a useful thing, the jug remains in inconspicuousness wherever it is stored until it is, for instance, broken, and so we can readily replace it by acquiring a new one, or, in the spirit of kintsugi, we can repair the broken jug using lacquer with some precious metal

like gold or silver.[27] Once replaced or repaired, we have a new jug to use, and this supports what we have been saying about its being a vessel, a useful thing: that it stands there on its own, in the sense that it is there whether we notice it or not.

Might we then leave the jug alone to stand there on its own? Might we let it be the vessel that it is? Might we simply let the jug jug as jug?[28] Heidegger does not deny that the jug, indeed, stands on its own. What he is wary about is assuming that the standing-on-its-own of the jug alone already reaches the thingly character of the thing.[29] Beneath this assertion is Heidegger's firmness on rejecting the preconception that the standing-on-its-own[30] of the thing already frees the thing from being conceived merely as an object.[31] Heidegger writes, "An independent, self-supporting thing may become an object if we place it before us, whether in immediate perception or by bringing it to mind in a recollective re-presentation."[32]

I understand Heidegger's rejection of thinking the thing merely as an object in the context of the epoch within which he is questioning as a philosopher. He is avoiding reducing the thing to its mere objectness. He must have learned aplenty

27. In case I break a jug, I doubt the latter will ever be an option. A poor Jesuit that I am, where shall I get the precious metal with which to repair its cracks?

28. To let the jug jug as jug is to let it be in its essential unfolding. In this case, the jug's essential unfolding consists in its standing-on-its-own. It is not just Heidegger who has attempted to capture essential unfolding by turning a noun into a verb, like when he takes "being" to mean "be-ing." Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J. translated "being" into Filipino as "*pagmemeron*." Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J. writes in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire": "I say móre: the just man justices."

29. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 71.

30. Again, by standing-on-its-own, I mean the jug's lying in inconspicuousness.

31. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling,* 71.

32. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 167.

from the Cartesian wound that ruptured the original unity between subject and object, or between knower and known. Treated as an object, the thing is abstracted from the world. It is de-worlded. It is taken out of the totality of things, and so the problem of the bridge persists, because Dasein is precisely being-in-the-world, wherein the world includes things. To leave the jug to stand on its own is to abstract it from its context vis-à-vis other things. There is more to the jug than this.

If our shared understanding of the jug as a useful thing that stands on its own (and so, may be presented before one's immediate awareness or re-presented in the mind's recollection) does not capture the jug's essential unfolding, to where must we turn our gaze to discover the jugness of the jug or the thingness of the thing? Heidegger invokes traditional metaphysics but only to disagree with it! Traditional metaphysics teaches us that the essential unfolding of the thing can be grasped in terms of the way it typically looks like, its *eidos* or *idea*.[33] Heidegger writes, "But what the vessel of this aspect *is* as this jug, what and how the jug *is* as this jug-thing, is something we can never learn—let alone think properly—by looking at the outward appearance, the *idea*."[34] Then, he critiques Plato,[35]

33. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 72.

34. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168.

35. Given that the eternal and the unchanging only exist in the world of Forms, such that things in this world of appearances merely participate in the former, then, by way of Platonian metaphysics, I do not think we can ever reach the thingness of the thing because what is here in this world of appearances are just copies of thereal in the world of Forms. This is also why, for Plato, works of art – as I learned in Aesthetics distance us from the really real because they are copies of copies, illusions of illusions.

Aristotle,[36] and all subsequent thinkers[37,38] for missing the thingness of the thing by reducing it to an object of making.[39] In other words, the jug is made to stand forth. Heidegger asserts, "The jug is not a vessel because it was made; rather, the jug had to be made because it is this holding vessel."[40] Viewing

36. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle posits that there is only one world, which is this world in which we are. There are no eternal Forms outside the physical world. Why a thing is as it is can be explained by the four causes: material, formal, efficient, and final (Nemesio Que, "Heidegger's Critique of Metaphysics," *Philo 203: Metaphysics*, February 13, 2023). Material cause is that out of which something is made. Formal cause is that in a thing which makes it to be such a thing. Efficient cause is that by which something is made. Final cause is that for the sake of which something is made. Heidegger's critique here is quite obvious. Aristotle's four causes all refer to the thing as an object of making. Even the formal cause, which sounds quite near to the thingness of the thing, reinforces the thing in its outward appearance, which, for Heidegger, distances us from the thingness of the thing.

37. I would like to mention Descartes again. After Descartes had arrived at the indubitable, the *res cogitans*, he must have realized that he needed to account for the reality outside of the "I," which we call the problem of the bridge. Indeed, such was a significant turning point in philosophy, signaling the modern period because subsequent thinkers devoted themselves into bridging that divide. It must be noted, however, that Descartes himself had already attempted to bridge it by talking about the wax in his "Second Meditation" (22). When all else has been extracted from the wax, what remains is a thing that is flexible, mutable, and extended (ibid.). Descartes' wax is but a *res extensa*, an extended thing. This is precisely Heidegger's point when he speaks of the oblivion (and the flattening) of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), which, in this case, is the thingness of the thing.

38. The other thinker that I can recall is Immanuel Kant. For him, only things as they appear and are processed by the categories of the mind are knowable. But things-in-themselves? No. And then I ask, "How can Kant ever think of 'things-in-themselves' when he cannot, after all, have access to them?" Heidegger is clear that such a concept does not exist. There are no "things-in-themselves." There are things, which are always already in the world. Again, "The being of a being is itself not a being" (*Being and Time*, 5). At the same time, "being is always the being of a being" (*Being and Time*, 8).

39. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168.

40. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168.

the jug as what stands forth (*Herstand*) because it is an object of making (*Gegenstand*) falls under the representational, merely objectifying kind of thinking that does not reach the thing as the thing that it is.[41] What it does is to distance us from the jugness or the jug-character of the jug. Again, shall we not experience the jug as the vessel that it is?

Heidegger's critique of traditional metaphysics can be scandalizing. But as I pour myself into thinking through his assertion, I begin to experience anew the "dearest freshness" that it brings forth, a glimpse into unconcealment that, while beyond me, speaks to me. He goes on in the lecture, "The jug's thingness resides in its being *qua* vessel."[42] One might ask what else could be new in such a statement. Common understanding has already informed us of the obvious fact that the jug is a vessel, so why does Heidegger direct our attention to this? Could it be that we have only been seeing the jug as standing-on-its-own and standing-forth as an object of making and nothing else? In these two senses, the jug remains far from us. Dasein, indeed, we are, and so we are, as Heidegger claims, essentially de-distancing.[43] We always desire to be near. This is also why Heidegger prefaces his lecture on the question of the thing with the question of nearness. What is near to us are things. Ah! We must then experience the jug as the vessel that it is! This we can only do when we pour something into it. However, as soon as we think of the jug in its being *qua* vessel, Heidegger warns us not to fall into the trap of scientific thinking.[44] Yes, we might pour water or wine into the jug, and physical science would say that a liquid had displaced the air

41. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 73.

42. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 169.

43. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 108.

44. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 169.

that used to fill the jug. The holding void is gone. It is but a hollow filled with air. Scientific thinking has extinguished it! Even water and wine have been reduced to mere liquids that can fill the empty space. Or was there an empty space at all to fill? Heidegger calls what scientific compulsion does as the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the thing.[45]

At this point, then, we know that, in arriving at the essential unfolding of the thing, Heidegger is not only critical of what common understanding posits (that the jug stands on its own) or what traditional metaphysics has passed on (that the jug is an object of making that is made to stand forth), but of physical science, too. In all three, I think what Heidegger warns against is a representational, objectifying, abstractionist, and reductionist thinking of the thing. Representational thinking objectifies the thing, inasmuch as abstractionist thinking takes the thing out of the world to which it rightly and harmoniously belongs. Reductionist thinking annihilates the thing. All these, I would say, cannot be considered thinking[46] at all. They are but thoughtless attempts into the thingness of the thing. Instead of bringing near, they contribute to the distance, and worse, the estrangement that the human being experiences from what was a primordial relationship of understanding that the human being has toward things. So let us accompany Heidegger as he recovers the thingness of the thing.

45. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 170. Heidegger did not mean the annihilation of the thing primarily in the physical sense, as in physical destruction. What he meant was its further concealment and forgottenness.

46. I say this in the Heideggerian sense of "questioning as the piety of thought" ("The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 35).

The thing in its thinging

We recall once more that the jug's thingness resides in its being *qua* vessel. The jug is a thing. It is a vessel. As a vessel, it holds. Its void holds. But this void is not a hollow filled with air that can be displaced by liquids such that filling a jug means exchanging one filling for another. The call is to let the jug's void be the jug's void that it is, so that the jug that shows itself might show itself from itself.[47] Let me quote Heidegger at length.

> How does the jug's void hold? It holds by taking what is poured in. It holds by keeping and retaining what it took in. The void holds in a twofold manner: taking and keeping. The word "hold" is therefore ambiguous. Nevertheless, the taking of what is poured in and the keeping of what was poured belong together. But their unity is determined by the outpouring for which the jug is fitted as a jug. The twofold holding of the void rests on the outpouring. In the outpouring, the holding is authentically how it is. To pour from the jug is to give. The holding of the vessel occurs in the giving of the outpouring. Holding needs the void as that which holds. The nature of the holding void is gathered in the giving. But giving is richer than a mere pouring out. The giving, whereby the jug is a jug, gathers in the twofold holding—in the outpouring. We call the gathering of the twofold holding into the outpouring, which, as a being together, first constitutes the full presence of giving: the poured gift. The jug's jug-character consists in the poured gift of the pouring out.[48]

47. Heidegger (*Being and Time*, 32) describes phenomenology as letting what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself.

48. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 171-2.

First, we have seen that the outpouring is itself the purpose[49] for which the jug has been made in the first place. This is the opposite of what common understanding, traditional metaphysics, and scientific thinking propose. This outpouring unifies the belonging together of the taking and the keeping, which both take place in the jug as the vessel that it is. Then, in this very outpouring, which is a giving (*Schenken*) and not just a mere pouring out (*Ausschenken*), a gathering (*Versammlung*) occurs, wherein the essential unfolding of the holding void is gathered (*versammelt*) in the giving.[50] This is why, as Heidegger says in the block quote above, the holding is authentically how it is in the outpouring.

Authenticity here becomes understood—more richly—as gathering or being gathered. I remember telling myself to gather myself first before speaking or acting when I was caught in a difficult situation, whether internally or externally. I also remember being told by my spiritual director to allow the Lord to help me in gathering myself, especially those bits and pieces of me that need integration in the context of my broken yet graced history. Human as I am, I am not immune to dissipation and disintegration. As such, I appreciate our regular recollections in the formation community when I am called to drop academics, apostolate, and other engagements for one day and focus on gathering myself, on recollecting what might have dissipated and what needs to be brought near and one again. An intensive, prolonged version, of course, is the annual eight-day retreat, a renewal of my experience of the 30-day retreat, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

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49. But how is this different from the final cause? I think it is different in that it does not approach the thing in its mere instrumentality. Instead, it opens itself to the thing's essential unfolding.

50. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 78.

The jug, therefore, is the vessel that it is – authentically – in its gathering. This gathering brings forth the poured gift. And precisely because Heidegger speaks of gathering in this way,he is making it clear that this is not a gathering that challenges forth or demands out. This latter gathering is characteristic of modern technology, whose essential unfolding, for Heidegger, is Enframing (*Gestell*).[51] It has standing-reserve in view. But the gathering that the jug as a thing does is one that lets be and sets free. It is faithful to the essential unfolding of "technology[52] as a way of revealing."[53] Again, the jug is the jug—the thing—that it is in the poured gift.

The thing's thinging of the world

This has been a lengthy exposition. Have we already reached the thingness of the thing? Partly yes. Why? Because the gathering that happens in the gift of outpouring does not only concern the essential unfolding of the holding void of the jug.[54] An even wider gathering happens. Heidegger's thinking takes us towards this even wider gathering when he begins to speak of the spring that stays on in the water, the rock that dwells in the spring, the dark slumber of the earth, and the earth that receives the rain and dew of the sky.[55] Then we come

51. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 20.

52. There is an intimate connection here between the question of technology and the question of the thing that I will no longer explore in this paper. Suffice it to say that because technology is a way of revealing, then it is poetic (because poetry is bringing-forth). Similarly, because the jug (a thing) gathers in its outpouring,the jug can be considered technology, in the latter's pre-scientific, ontological sense.

53. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 12.

54. Barbaza, *Heidegger and a New Possibility of Dwelling*, 79.

55. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 172.

into the picture, we drink the gift of the pouring out, whether water or wine, quenching our thirst, refreshing our leisure, enlivening our conviviality.[56] Yes, we who are mortals drink of the poured gift, we who are "capable of death as death,"[57] we who are "being towards death."[58] Heidegger also speaks of the jug's gift as being given for consecration. The poured gift is not just drink for mortals but libation for the immortal gods.[59]

In all, the wider (and greater) gathering that takes place in the gift of the outpouring is the gathering of earth and sky, mortals and divinities. These four – thought as one – are what Heidegger calls *das Geviert*, the fourfold. He writes, "Earth and sky dwell in the gift of the outpouring. In the gift of the outpouring, earth, and sky, divinities and mortals dwell *together all at once*. These four, at once because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold."[60] This fourfold Heidegger names the world.[61] Thus, Heidegger claims, "The thing things world."[62] The world is itself the fourfold gathering of earth and sky, divinities and mortals.

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56. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 172.

57. Heidegger claims that only human beings are capable of death *as* death. Other beings, such as plants and animals, perish, but they do not die ("The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 178; "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 150). They simply perish because nothing remains "outstanding" in them. They are, in that sense, already complete. The mortals are not, precisely because they – the being of the beings that they are – stand out there in the openness of possibility.

58. Refer to "Division Two" of Heidegger's *Being and Time,* 221-416 for a more detailed unfolding.

59. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 172.

60. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 173.

61. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 179.

62. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 181.

Have we reached the thingness of the thing? We understand that we have arrived quite close to nearness, whose question prefaced the question of the thing. In thinging, the thing brings near to one another the four in their remoteness.[63] What else could this bringing-near be but nearing? And, for Heidegger, nearing is the presencing of nearness.[64] Indeed, it is near things that human beings dwell. This is perhaps why, in a lecture somewhat parallel in structure, "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger notes that "[o]nly if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build."[65] I think this dwelling of which he speaks is in the fourfold and the building here has things as its orientation, so I am hazarding to edit the statement into, "Only if we are capable of dwelling in the fourfold, only then can we build things." And we will build things that correspond to the way we dwell.

To dwell in the fourfold is to recognize that we stand on the earth and dwell under the sky, that we are mortals before the divinities (or shall I say, we are creatures before the Creator), that we are capable of death as death. First, standing on the earth is remembering the concrete ground on which we dwell. As I write this paper, my feet are on the floor of the computer room, which belongs to a wider structure that is the formation house I am in, which ultimately rests on the ground. Far from being the object of the sciences, this earth is the concrete earth on which I live as a human being, together with fellow human beings in the community, and always already near things.

Second, to dwell under the sky is to receive the sky as the sky, for instance, as it determines the rhythm of daily living.

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63. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 177.

64. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 177.

65. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 160.

Sunrise signals the time to wake up, for a new day is beginning. Sunset points to another day that is ending, regardless of how it has been spent. I am amazed that two persons of different backgrounds both enjoy looking at the night sky: Ignatius of Loyola and Immanuel Kant. Of Ignatius, Pedro de Ribadeneira writes, "I would see him on a rooftop, or in some high place, from where he could see the horizon and a large part of the sky, fixing his eyes on it. And after some time spent in rapture and amazement, he would come to himself, moved, and with tears pouring from his eyes because of the great delight that his heart felt..."[66] Of himself, Kant writes in the first line of the conclusion of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within."[67]

Third, to dwell in the fourfold is also to live with finitude in view. It is to come to terms with dying, which is ultimately inseparable from living. My awareness and acceptance of my being towards death and my being capable of death as death impels me to dwell in this one life that I have, so that, in the midst of many possibilities, I shall choose that which frees me most. Many have asked me why I entered the religious life at twenty-one, when I could explore the world further and savor its joys. I must say I am most joyful where I am now.

And fourth, as I speak of mortality, I cannot but think of that which is immortal, whom Anselm believed to be "that

66. Pedro de Ribadeneira, *The Life of Ignatius Loyola*, trans. Claude Pavur (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2014), 5.1.15.

67. Immanuel Kant, "Conclusion," in *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. and ed. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 129.

than which nothing greater can be thought"[68] and "that which cannot be thought not to exist."[69] In thinking of one, I am thinking of the other three. For instance, when I stand on earth, I always already stand under the sky. I am rooted on the earth, even as I am awed by the sky. At the same time, I am made to recall that I come from dust, and to dust I shall return—which humbles me and redirects me to my Creator. Indeed, only if we are capable of dwelling in the fourfold, only then can we build things.

We have reached the thingness of the thing, haven't we? At this point, I find it important to approach this ultimate question with ontological and epistemological humility. Heidegger himself says in the thing lecture, "When and in what way do things appear as things? They do not appear by means of human making. But neither do they appear without the vigilance of mortals."[70] Ontological humility means we can only respond to the question of the thing in the light of unconcealment. It is through this same light that we find ourselves humbled with how we know the thing epistemologically in its thinging of the fourfold in the worlding of the world in which we human beings dwell.

My brothers and I left El Gaucho after one month of presence and engagement and returned to the hill that is Ateneo de Manila. The people were yet to move to a new settlement. But in the present location on which they have perched a dwelling, I am humbled that they have been thriving with just the few

68. Anselm of Canterbury, "Chapter Two," in *Proslogion*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 93.

69. Anselm of Canterbury, "Chapter Three," in *Proslogion*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 94.

70. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 180.

things that they have. In a world flooded with objects, wherein the modern technological age prostitutes the earth, manipulates the skies, denies mortality, and profanes the sacred, I have experienced in the people I met in El Gaucho a fidelity to their primordial relationship to things, "deep down" which "lives the dearest freshness," even after "[g]enerations have trod, have trod, have trod."

T'NALAK: GOD WEAVES HOPE THROUGH, WITH, AND IN THE CHURCH

Richard S. Sumera, SJ

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving epochal changes of our contemporary world, marked by technological advancements and social complexities, the question of God's presence and the role of the Church takes on profound significance.[1] Growing up in the realities of Polomolok, South Cotabato—a municipality in Mindanao where agricultural capitalism brought in by an American international corporation in the early 1960s contributed to the advancement and development of the community on the one hand and the social structures of injustice against the indigenous people and environment on the other, brings forth this existential question of where or how God is present in all of these oppressive contexts. In the same way, where and how is the Church present in the experiences of injustice and suffering of the indigenous people with their rich cultural heritage often overshadowed by a history marred with discrimination, violence, and displacement from their ancestral domains?

Against this backdrop, the Indigenous *T'boli* people of Lake Sebu in Mindanao, with their sacred cultural tapestry

1. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*: *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, Vatican*. 24 Nov. 2013, par. 52-67, accessed January 5, 2024, https://www.vatican.va.

embodied in *T'nalak*,[2] offer a unique perspective on how God weaves hope across space and time. The rich tapestry of salvation history unfolds across generations, revealing God's active engagement with humanity. God has already been desiring to draw us into him; God has a universal salvific plan to bring about the communion of humanity and the world with God. From the time of the Jewish people's enslavement in Egypt to the proclamation of the Decalogue, to the Jesus Christ event, and the Church two millennia later, God's presence remains. Each thread contributes to the intricate design of God's plan for salvation. In this context, the cyclical patterns and motifs of *T'nalak* symbolize the recurring themes of hope, justice, and divine intervention across time and space of human existence—the timeless nature of God's salvific plan and the role of the Church in perpetuating the threads of hope across history. The Church, then, weaves its strand into the tapestry of salvation history and actively engages with the challenges and triumphs of each era—ensuring that the message of hope continues to be interwoven with the human narrative.

This synthesis paper explores the intertwining threads of salvation history, the Incarnation, and the Church's mission in the context of *T'nalak*, delving into the challenges faced by marginalized communities, particularly the indigenous peoples, and their call for justice and compassion. Rooted in the papal encyclicals and the theological frameworks of Karl Rahner, Jacques Dupuis, and Edward Schillebeeckx, this exploration also delves into the role of the Church in weaving hope

2. Emmanuel Hernani, Ma Rosita Hernani, and Delmo Dulay, *Dancing With the Dreamweavers: A Narrative Discourse of the T'bolis of the Southern Philippines*, 2021, 206–207. *T'nalak* is a sacred woven textile of the *T'boli* tribe made from abaca fibers tediously crafted into patterns believed to arrive to the dreams of the *T'boli* women from *Fu Dalu*, the spirit of the Abaca, thus, the popular term "dreamweaving."

through the threads of suffering, injustice, and displacement experienced by the indigenous peoples.

The Incarnation: God Becoming a Divine Strand in the Weave

God has already been desiring to draw us into him; God has a universal salvific plan to bring about the communion of humanity and the world with God.[3] At a pivotal moment in history, God chose to become part of the tapestry by incarnating as Jesus Christ—the "Incarnate Word, the Son is present among us."[4] The Second Person's Incarnation reveals God's salvific desire for all of us and at the very "heart of its message will always be the same: the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ."[5] The Word became flesh[6]—somewhat like God inserted Godself as a tangible divine strand interwoven with the tapestry of humanity, bridging the gap between the divine and the human. When God chose freely to undergo a descent through the Incarnation, it was a way for us to understand and assimilate Godself through Jesus' entering into our human context—our stories, languages, space, and time.[7]

Rahner backdrops God's salvific desire with the human being's universal experience of longing for God, their transcendental nature, which leads them towards the Absolute.[8]

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3. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Seabury, 1978), 201–2.

4. René Latourelle and Rino Archbishop Fisichella, eds., *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 912.

5. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* par. 11, accessed January 15, 2024, https://www.vatican.va.

6. John 1:14.

7. René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Alba House, 1966), 45.

8. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 181.

The *T'nalak* is a testament to this anthropological inclination of the *T'boli* people towards the Divine as described by their elder Gumbay Sulan—"since time immemorial, even before the coming of the church, we already know that there is *D'wata*, the Great Spirit up there... *D'wata* is the ultimate mystery and gives strength to everybody."[9] The *T'boli* people were considered animists—believing in an array of gods and nature spirits, but currently, most of the *T'boli* living around Lake Sebu have been integrated into the Church.[10] The Church, through the apostolic works of the Passionist Fathers in the Sta. Cruz Mission has "launched several development projects which are aimed at helping the tribespeople respond effectively to change"[11] and "courageously addressed the pressing social issues such as dam building, deforestation, and mining... and stood up for the well-being of the indigenous peoples and withstanding potential harms."[12]

As the ultimate weaver of hope, Christ's words and deeds inspire the Church to stand in solidarity with the marginalized, confronting the systemic injustices that perpetuate *negative contrast experiences.*[13] The Church—as an extension of

9. *Preserving Culture: The T'boli of Mindanao, Philippines*, Video, Part 1, 2010.

10. Ted Vincent Emboltorio, *Remembering the Past Passionist Mission to T'bolis in the Local Church of Marbel in the Light of Dangerous Memory* (MA thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, 2023), 34–43, 150.

11. Emboltorio, 150.

12. Emboltorio, 30.

13. Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 5–6, 28–29. Schillebeeckx defines "negative contrast experience" as an "experience of injustice, oppression or suffering that gives rise to protest and spurs us towards active transformation" by "issuing in the attempt to focus attention and resource on their immediate alleviation."

the Incarnation,[14] participates in God's ongoing act of weaving hope into the fabric of human existence and becomes a "special sacral space set apart from secular developments and from culture, within which we grow in intimacy with God."[15] Like the Passionist Fathers' Mission with the *T'boli*, the Church strives to be a visible manifestation of the divine presence, a golden strand woven into the fabric of humanity, illuminating the path of hope and redemption.

The Church Across Ages: Weaving "the Bride Bedecked with Her Jewels"

Following the Christ event, the Church continues to participate in God's weaving of hope across historical epochs. Pope Francis encapsulates the two thousand years of Christianity by stating that "countless peoples have received the grace of faith... each in accordance with its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity and shows forth the 'beauty of her varied face'... [and] takes up the values of different cultures and becomes *sponsa ornata monilibus suis*, 'the bride bedecked with her jewels.'"[16] From the early Christian communities to the complexities of modern times, the Church persists as a dynamic force in God's redemptive plan. Pope Francis describes this evolution wherein from the "original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world."[17] In this complex interweaving of many realities across history, the "unrecognized genuine witness of the Christian in this profane world

14. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 213.

15. Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face*, 99.

16. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* par. 116, accessed January 15, 2024, https://www.vatican.va.

17. Ibid., par. 11.

finds the source of its strength in that explicit Christianity which is shaped by active participation in the life of the Word and of the Sacrament of 'Christ's Church.'"[18]

In marginalized communities' negative contrast experiences, the Church emerges as a sacrament of hope**,** taking on a transformative role within the context of suffering and injustice. The Church is not only a *koinonia*—a "communion or sharing of grace with Christ, the fruit of his redemptive work," but it is also an "institution for salvation to which the keys that make entrance possible into the kingdom of God have been entrusted."[19] Through acts of compassion, advocacy, and solidarity, the Church—through God's grace, becomes a visible sign of God's redemptive presence.

The Church, then, like the weavers of *T'nalak*, must be attuned to the changing patterns of society, ensuring that the threads of hope are woven into the fabric of the human experience of suffering. With the establishment of agricultural colonies in Mindanao during the American occupation and the influx of settlers from Luzon and the Visayas after the Japanese occupation,[20] the *T'bolis* were "cheated of their lands by greedy land grabbers and driven back into the forests and mountains."[21] The establishment of the Passionist missions in Lake Sebu provided the *T'bolis* with "an integrated program of human development tailored to the peculiar cultural needs of the tribe,"[22] and a prophetic voice against the proposal to

18. Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church and Mankind* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1965), 101.

19. Schillebeeckx, *The Church and Mankind*, 78.

20. Emboltorio, 31.

21. Don Gielas, "Local Priest Helping Isolated Tribe Adjust to Modern World," *Pittsburgh Catholic* Volume 122, Number 14 (May 31, 1974 edition).

22. Emboltorio, 39.

build a massive dam project set to "displace several thousand people most of whom are native *T'bolis*."[23] The Church, rooted in Christ's words and deeds, becomes a woven sacrament of hope that calls for action against the structures of injustice and oppression experienced by the *T'bolis* of Lake Sebu.

Inculturation and Ecumenism: Weaving Hope Towards Unity in Diversity

The diverse motifs and patterns within *T'nalak* invite reflections on inculturation and ecumenism—the movement toward unity among Christian denominations. The various symbols, unique hues, and patterns can be seen as a metaphor for the diverse expressions of Christian faith in a particular cultural context. Pope Francis points out that "cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity... [because] the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity."[24] For example, in liturgical matters, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* affirms that the use of the vernacular language—a concrete example of inculturation for divine worship,[25] provides this avenue for people to understand God speaking to them through their "full active participation... in these liturgical celebrations."[26]

The weaving of *T'nalak* bears witness to this sacred dialogue between Christianity and indigenous culture. The Gospel, rather than imposing itself on indigenous communities, becomes interwoven with their cultural identity, creating a

23. Reginald Arliss, "Two Voices, One Theme: DAMS," *MSPC Communications* (January 1978): 24.

24. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* par. 117, accessed January 15, 2024, https://www.vatican.va.

25. Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963, par. 36.

26. Ibid., par. 41.

tapestry that celebrates the harmonious integration of faith and culture. When the Passionist missionaries expanded their apostolates, they established organizations to support the *T'bolis* in their "pursuit of self-determination, self-empowerment, sustainable development, and liberation from any threats that compromised their existence," and also to foster "dialogue on matters of faith, education, inculturation, and the promotion of Schools of Living Traditions (SLT)."[27] These SLTs provide the "children of the tribe the opportunity to learn about their own heritage in their own language... [wherein] their skills, values, and traditions will never be forgotten but can and will be preserved and passed to the future generations."[28]

Similarly, *T'nalak* also becomes a cultural bridge in the context of ecumenism, inviting Christians from different denominations to appreciate the richness of indigenous spirituality. The message of hope woven into *T'nalak* becomes a unifying force that invites Christians to celebrate their shared faith and commitment to Christian unity, the pursuit of social justice, and the promotion of environmental stewardship, recognizing that the threads of justice and love are universal, weaving through the fabric of all Christian traditions.[29]

Missionary Call: Weaving Hope in the Negative Contrast through Synodality

Edward Schillebeeckx's theological perspective on negative contrast experiences emphasizes the transformative potential

27. Emboltorio, 37, 104.

28. Lee Ayn Poncardas et al., *Reconnecting with the Past in Understanding Today and Tomorrow: Folklore of the T'boli People* (General Santos City: Mindanao State University, 2017), 28.

29. International Anglican – Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, March 23, 2007, par. 118.

within suffering, asserting that God is present amid adversity. The Church, summoned to be a Church with a human face, must confront the structures of sin in the name of progress or modernization that perpetuate suffering and inequality.[30] Pope Francis calls us to hear and respond to the cry of the poor: "Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society."[31] All of the baptized are called to participate in God's ongoing act of weaving hope and mercy in the peripheries towards a future filled with justice, joy, love, solidarity, and hope[32]—to be "more sensitive to the needs of others... to reach out to others and seek their good."[33] As a religious sent into the mission, there is an invitation to be more open to the call to "cooperate with him [God] and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit."[34]

Drawing inspiration from the cyclical and interconnected patterns of T'nalak, synodality[35] encourages a collaborative approach in recognizing that each thread, representing different ecclesial realities and local contexts, is essential to the overall beauty and resilience of God's tapestry. This reflects how the force of sensus fidelium can promote the "active role of the whole Church, especially the contribution of the lay faithful, in preserving and transmitting the Church's faith."[36]

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30. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* par. 214, accessed January 15, 2024, https://www.vatican.va.

31. Ibid., par. 187.

32. Ibid., par. 120.

33. Ibid., par. 09.

34. Ibid., par. 12.

35. Synodality, a term gaining prominence in contemporary ecclesial discussions, refers to the participatory and collaborative governance of the Church.

36. International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (Pasay City: Paulines, 2014), para. 34.

The local Church of Marbel today, where the T'bolis and other Indigenous peoples belong, continues to weave justice and hope in the IP communities by keeping the "suffering people at the heart of her mission, promoting sensitivity to their appeals against destructive mining [SMI Tampakan Copper Gold Mine] and dam constructions... to advocate for a suitable culture and environment that prioritize the integral lives of the local people, addressing environmental imbalance and social divisions."[37] The bishop of the diocese has stated that the Church will "never stop campaigning against mining as senior priests and bishops [who]... long stood adamantly against the penetrating companies that might destroy the humanity and the biodiversity."[38] The Church is driven to build hope for the future through the reversal of the sufferings of people because our present experience of salvation is what the future will hold—"eschatology is man's view from the perspective of his experience of salvation, the experience which he now has in grace and in Christ... the present as the beginning of the future is what man knows it to be in his Christian anthropology."[39] By actively engaging with the narratives of those at the margins, the Church extends its presence as a compassionate and transformative force.

Conclusion

The *T'nalak* tapestry is a potent symbol of God's ongoing act of weaving hope throughout history. It beautifully intertwines threads of salvation history, the Incarnation, and the Church's mission, particularly in the context of marginalized communities, i.e., the *T'boli* people. God's presence is woven

37. Emboltorio, 18.

38. Emboltorio, 91.

39. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 433.

into the *T'nalak* through the Incarnation, where Christ became the ultimate divine strand , bridging the gap between the human and the divine. The Church, then, becomes an extension of this weaving, called to participate in God's redemptive plan by confronting injustices and standing in solidarity with the suffering. The *T'nalak* also celebrates the harmonious integration of faith and culture, inviting collaboration and dialogue between Christian denominations and even recognizing the spiritual richness of indigenous traditions. Through interreligious dialogue, the Church embraces the diversity of threads that contribute to God's tapestry, extending beyond the Church's boundaries. Synodality, inspired by the interconnected patterns of the *T'nalak*, encourages a collaborative approach within the Church, recognizing the value of each individual thread in weaving a tapestry of hope and justice as a compassionate and transformative force in the world.

As the Church embraces its role as a weaver of hope, all are actively engaged in the ongoing transformation process, recognizing that God, as the ultimate weaver, is present in every thread of suffering and redemption. The Church, the Passionist missionaries in the Diocese of Marbel, become a strand of hope interwoven with the narratives of suffering and redemption, contributing to the divine masterpiece of God's tapestry across space and time. As a religious, the invitation is to be open to the Spirit to weave hope in the peripheries and people's sufferings. The *T'nalak*, with its rich symbolism, becomes a metaphor for the Church's mission in the world, inviting Christians to actively confront negative contrast experiences and weave threads of justice, love, and hope into the fabric of human existence recognizing the universal presence and action of God in the whole of creation.

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