Luis Antonio G. Tagle, DD

"IT IS THE LORD!"

Occasional Lectures at Loyola School of Theology

LANDAS LECTURES

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Those who know Bishop Chito can see and hear him *in vivo* as they read. There are some instructive, more properly theological pages; there is sharp insight which suddenly strikes one unexpectedly and strongly. There is much human and religious richness in these addresses, which I trust will be recognized and appreciated, not only by those who already know him well, but by others who will make his first acquaintance through this collection. These speeches and papers will reveal Bishop Chito as a figure of intelligence and learning who has already earned an enviable place in the Christian community in our country and other Asian countries, and even beyond. They will reveal him as a man of *gaudium et spes*, of joy and hope.

—Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ

Most Rev. Bishop LUIS ANTONIO "CHITO" G. TAGLE of Imus, STD, DD, finished his theological and graduate studies at Loyola School of Theology (Manila) and Catholic University of America (Washington, DC). Aside from being pastor of Our Lady of the Pillar Cathedral (Imus), he continues to be rector of Tahanan ng Mabuting Pastol (Tagaytay City), consultant to the Philippine bishops' Commissions on the Doctrine of the Faith and on Seminaries, and member of the Editorial Board of *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II, Istituto per le scienze religiose* (Bologna). For many years, he was also a member of the International Theological Commission (Vatican City) prior to his episcopal ordination. He continues to be a member of the LST faculty, teaching courses of systematic theology.



Diocese of Imus

Loyola School of Theology
Ateneo de Manila University

Landas Lectures

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LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Manila, Philippines

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SERIES FOREWORD

Landas Lectures

In years past, Loyola School of Theology (LST) was very much engaged in understanding and clarifying the crucial issues facing the Church and the nation. This work was all the more necessary for the Church, in the wake of the call of Vatican II for renewal and *aggiornamento*, and for the nation, particularly during the turbulent times of the Marcos regime.

The School sought to make available to the general public resources for reflection and discussion, and to provide concerned Filipino Catholics a reasoned, balanced and Christian response to the glaring problems of the day. This effort was embodied in two now-defunct series called *Loyola Papers* and *Logos Monographs*.

Through *Landas*, the semi-annual journal of LST, the School continues to publish articles in the areas of biblical studies, the various theological disciplines (like Ecclesiology, Christology, Trinity, Moral Theology, Mariology) and Church history.

Today, after a rather long hiatus, LST is once again ready to provide resources to help members of the Church and concerned citizens reflect more profoundly and more competently on the new issues at hand.

We are very happy to launch two new series of publications. The first, *Landas Lectures*, aims to gather lectures and talks on various relevant topics by experts in their field, both theological and pastoral. The second, *Landas Monographs*, aims to publish material of a more scholarly nature, such as graduate school dissertations and theses that, in our estimation, make a valuable and important contribution to their disciplines.

If we were to speak of continuity, *Landas Lectures* would correspond to *Loyola Papers*, and *Landas Monographs* to *Logos Monographs*. Today, both series wish to continue to engage the issues facing the Church and the nation: a Church still struggling to define herself as Filipino and Asian, and a nation still mired in abject poverty, troubled by political uncertainty and tried by the new challenges offered by a globalizing world.

As our first offering under the *Landas Lectures* series, we are pleased to present this collection of lectures by Luis Antonio "Chito" G. Tagle, Bishop of Imus and longtime professor of Systematic Theology at LST.

Throughout his years of teaching at LST, Bishop Chito has always been available and generous in sharing his thoughts and theological reflections. This was true whether they were for the Theological Hour, Christology Update, the Holy Week Triduum, or other academic fora of the School. His thoughts and reflections have always been marked by lucidity, simplicity and a genuine concern for their pastoral dimension. We are grateful to Bishop Chito for giving the School permission to publish a number of his lectures and gather them under one cover.

Many dedicated persons contributed to the production of this book. We thank, first of all, Mary Ann Charity B. Durano for transcribing the talks so they could be properly edited, for her suggestions on how to arrange them in some logical flow, and for helping out in editing and improving the book. We also thank Vernon R. Totanes, Assistant Editor of *Landas*, for his usual talent and professional expertise in the overall editing and preparing the manuscript

for publication. Last but not least, we thank Fr. Antonio F.B. de Castro, SJ, Director of Publications at LST, for patiently supervising the production of the book. Without them, the book would not have seen the light of day.

May this issue of *Landas Lectures* featuring Bishop Chito's talks be LST's simple way of honoring one of her illustrious professors as he is called to be the Shepherd of the Church at Imus.

May this issue of *Landas Lectures* be the first of many, many more and may you enjoy reading it!

Victor R. Salanga, SJ
President
Loyola School of Theology
25 March 2003
Feast of the Annunciation

FOREWORD

"Saying God" and "Saying Hope"

- I -

A theology teacher, a Jesuit from Europe, who has an experience and familiarity with a number of Asian countries and peoples unequalled by any other Jesuit I know, once shared something of what he had learned in his many years of teaching. He said that from his experience, when people in Asia listen to a speaker—in theology or spirituality, for instance—they first want to know as much as they can about the speaker, where s/he comes from, what his/her life has been like, how s/he has come into and "inhabits" his/her area of expertise. Not that only Asians are like this, but this trait is especially marked in them.

An American missionary also told me that a Japanese teacher once said to him: "We Japanese like to make the distinction between a teacher who teaches from books, and one who teaches from life. When I studied in Europe, almost everything that mattered about a teacher seemed to be, 'How many books has he read and written?' But it is different with us. What we value most is the teacher who has read widely and deeply, yes, but who—with all that in his mind—really teaches from life to life."

"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. XI-XVI.

Those who pick up this book, many (if not most) of them, already know Bishop "Chito" Tagle. At least they will have heard of him. In an "ecclesial" rather than "secular-populist" sense, they would know that he comes from his people, inhabits their world and has the gift of going back to them. It is because of this that he is so effective a communicator with a large variety of audiences. Many would say that the most affecting part of his episcopal consecration rites was the offertory procession, when about a hundred or more people from all over the Imus diocese brought up their gifts, dancing the Caviteño *caracol.* At the end of the long and joyous procession were his parents, carrying their offerings for the liturgy. As they drew near, the newly-ordained bishop, in full episcopal regalia and wearing the miter, joined the procession, spiritedly dancing with his parents. People who knew their new bishop recognized this as something spontaneous and authentic, in no way put on as showbiz *palabas.* They saw it as Bishop Chito's being truly one of their own.

For those who don't know the details, a couple of "CV" paragraphs might be helpful at this point. Luis Antonio G. Tagle grew up in Imus, Cavite, went to St. Andrew's parochial school in Parañaque before moving to the Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU) for his college level studies. He was then already a major seminarian at San Jose Seminary (AB, 1977). His pre-ordination theological studies were completed with highest honors at the Loyola School of Theology (LST), also at AdMU (MA, 1982). Almost the first assignment his bishop—Bishop Felix Perez, who loved him as a son—gave him right after his priestly ordination (27 February 1982) was to appoint him Rector of the Imus seminary—Tahanan ng Mabuting Pastol—at Tagaytay. And his first job as Rector was to direct the 30-day retreat for that year's ordinands. (Since then he has given these 30-day ordination retreats each year.)

A few years later came graduate studies at Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington, DC (1985-1992). His doctoral dissertation, which received high commendation, examined the teaching of Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council on episcopal collegiality (STD, 1991). At CUA he worked under the direction of

Fr. Joseph A. Komonchak, the most highly-regarded ecclesiologist in the North American theological community.

Back in the Philippines, it has been a piling up, one after another, of tasks and responsibilities: lecturing at practically every major theological institute in Metro Manila and throughout the country; giving talks and retreats to every kind of audience, from grade school tots to college and seminary faculties; conferences and retreats to the Philippine bishops and, later, their counterparts in the United States.

In 1997, he was appointed a member of the Holy See's International Theological Commission, which is made up of thirty theologians chosen by the Holy Father and the Congregation on Doctrine from all over the world, only two representing the Churches in Asia. Increasingly, he was asked to serve as resource person to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and, finally, in the Synod of Asian Bishops in Rome in 1998. At the end of that historic assembly, he worked in the commission which prepared materials from that synod for the Holy Father's apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, published toward the end of the year 1999.

On 12 December 2001, Luis Antonio G. Tagle was ordained to the episcopal office and posted as bishop of his home diocese of Cavite.

From 1992 to the present, one loses track of the number of talks he has given, and of conferences in which he has participated. He has traveled all over our country and much of Asia; Europe (Rome especially) and the United States have been frequently visited on Church business. All this has obliged Father/Bishop Chito to be involved at the "growing edge" of the life of the Filipino Catholic community, taking up the principal concerns of bishops at one end, and grassroots ecclesial communities at the other. He has thus been effectively placed at the intercross of the most significant action-and-reflection in the Church in the Philippines. Thus his "theologizing," which begins in the area of more academic ecclesiology in 1992-1993, moves steadily into those "places" where the Church is crucially in mission, in local and Asian contexts.

Noticeably, his addresses touch more and more the life-experiences of communities and people; they touch and are touched by stories and people's "histories." His ability to enter into and move people's minds and hearts grows also. The gift has been there all along; now it is ever more generously called into play.

The eleven talks which have been brought together in this book have, as dates, from 26 June 1992 to 30 March 2002. All but two were delivered at LST. Surely this first collection is only a beginning. Surely we can expect more publications in the years to come.

- II -

Most of us are familiar with David Tracy's several publics which contemporary theology must address: the Church, the university and society. Theology today, we have been told again and again,

> must address the pastoral concerns of church leadership, assuring that theology be faithful to Catholic tradition. It must meet the concerns of truth and historicity raised in the halls of the university. It must meet the pressing needs, concerns and questions of the culture and society. So often in the present situation this means addressing the needs and concerns of the poor (Peter Schineller, following David Tracy).

Practically every one of the papers here published was originally addressed to an academic community, almost always the faculty, students and guests of LST. And yet, even a quick perusal will indicate that they are not, at least most of them are not, what we might call "formal academic lectures." I have myself been told again and again, that "there does not exist a truly theologically literate audience anywhere in the Philippines." (The operative words here are "theologically literate"; but this is not the place to enter into this question.) They are typical of what local audiences in seminaries and universities can "take" in this country at the present time.

Father/Bishop Chito always tries to communicate to the audience in front of him; he is invariably—as readers will see—a skilled and lively communicator. He does not speak with a to-be-published

lecture in mind. He speaks to people who want to listen and learn from what there and then he is sharing with them. The reader rightly keeps this in mind as s/he hears his words through these addresses.

A number of these papers have learned footnotes. Quite a few don't; they are "popular" talks, with a good deal of the theological in them and much "spirituality." That is what the audiences addressed were expecting and could receive. Thus the talks here given also tell us much about the audiences whom Father/Bishop Chito was addressing. We can thus reflect on what "theologizing" with live audiences in our present Asian context can be like.

Perhaps what is most interesting about these talks is what they tell us about the questions and concerns the author has been asked to address, and what he believes is relevant to the people who care about them. Too, what the speaker directs people's attention to, toward seeking answers or solutions. More deeply still, what could be said to be of greatest value in these papers and addresses is an underlying ecclesiology, Bishop Chito's ongoing endeavor to spell out what "being Church in Asia" means, and means concretely. These are hurried but thoughtful essays on *ecclesiogenesis* in the Asian situations today.

From discerning spirit and seeking heart, with extensive personal experience showing the way, a route is traced toward a renewed Church of solidarity and mutuality with "the little ones" of the Gospel, with the *maralita* and *walang kuwenta* "on the underside of history"—a route toward the Church of the *very real* poor. The Second Plenary Council of the Church in the Philippines (PCP II) voiced its conviction that this is the way to go, but there seems to be yet a long way to travel. Bishop Chito believes that Church leaders, ordained and lay, have ever so much to learn still from the "little ones," a learning which will come only through true conversion and compassionate love.

In many ways this is a very personal book. I am sure Bishop Chito didn't intend it to turn out like this. But he makes his points by sharing stories, often from his life. (Many will say, "Thanks be to God for

that!") There is the Filipino couple, cook and driver, at a lunch in Rome. There is the despairing fire-victim with the little child from Payatas; the distraught friend whose sister has just been raped. There is a moment of shared pain with Bishop Gomes of Bangladesh; there is a word of honest puzzlement from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. There is the moving account of his "adventure" at the papal nunciature, receiving the news of his appointment as bishop. The report on the Asian Synod of 1998 comes alive through personal experiences: participants' stories, conversations, contacts with bishops from other lands. The Asian scene is portrayed through these, and so etched more deeply in mind and heart.

Those who know Bishop Chito can see and hear him *in vivo* as they read. There are some instructive, more properly theological pages; there is sharp insight which suddenly strikes one unexpectedly and strongly. There is much human and religious richness in these addresses, which I trust will be recognized and appreciated, not only by those who already know him well, but by others who will make his first acquaintance through this collection.

These speeches and papers will reveal Bishop Chito as a figure of intelligence and learning who has already earned an enviable place in the Christian community in our country and other Asian countries, and even beyond. They will reveal him as a man of *gaudium et spes*, of joy and hope. His sharing with fellow alumni of LST, for instance, presents us with an agenda of substance and promise, moves us with its inspiration and courage and, above all, with its faith and hope. In many ways, it is—as so much of this book also is—a portrait of the young Bishop of Imus, Filipino theologian and priest. *Pauperes evangelizantur*—may we allow him to preach the Gospel to us anew.

Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ

PREFACE

"It is the Lord!"

I would like to thank Loyola School of Theology (LST) for gathering into one book some of my lectures. All of these texts were lectures delivered at LST except for two: "The Renewal that Awaits the Church in Asia" was delivered in Bangkok, Thailand; and "The Church's Mission Toward Minorities" was originally written for Missio in Münich. Since they were given at various occasions and at different times, these lectures were neither formulated following a particular structure nor were they intentionally connected to one another following common themes.

For the sake of this publication in book form, my lectures have been organized under three headings. The first part gathers conferences that dealt with theological issues about God, Jesus Christ and the Spirit. The second part contains lectures dwelling mainly on the Church, paying particular attention to the burning issues of renewal and reception that affect the Church's life in Asia and in the Philippines. Finally, the third part brings together lectures focusing on mission, not only as an essential component of the theology of the Church, but also in terms of the spirituality of mission. It is a privilege to have been chosen by LST to be featured as the first publication of its *Landas Lectures* series.

"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. XVII-XX.

Let me introduce these conferences by pointing out some observations regarding their occasion, genesis and intention in published form.

The first observation concerns the original form of these texts. They were orally delivered as lectures. It is very seldom that I write out in full the text of my conferences. I usually come to the conference with an outline. In my way of giving lectures, the outline suits my personality, manner and method very well. Why? As I give my lecture, the audience determines to some extent the questions I raise, the stories I remember and the images I use. Actually, my reflections are my response to my listeners' eyes, smiles, laughter, tears and even boredom. While listening to me, they, without knowing it, are the ones speaking to me. They call me the speaker, but what I do during my lectures is to listen to my audience and, while listening to them, I speak.

And so my lectures are grand conversations, if you want to put it that way. It is an interaction, a dialogue between the hearers and myself. And my outline just provides a guide for me. Usually, I abandon the outline depending on what the hearers are trying to communicate to me. I do not know whether the written form that these conferences have now taken in this book can fully capture that flavor of conversation. I hope that, with the help of the expertise and the great job done by the editors, this flavor will be conveyed to the readers.

A second observation: these lectures as now printed are not strictly scientific in their presentation and form. They cannot be characterized in terms of what the Germans would strictly call *wissenschaftlich*. Although these ideas are theological, they may not pass in their presentation as a purely technical and scientific work. And I do not claim that the ideas contained in these lectures are original to me. No. I owe these ideas to so many people. These conferences have been made possible by unnamed authors, writers, thinkers and professors greater than I. They people these conferences.

You will also notice that my conferences are very much peopled by ordinary men and women, by children, by the poor, by the hungry,

by fathers who are despairing of life, by mothers who are struggling with life, by bishops, priests and sisters who are looking for the meaning of life. Their flesh-and-blood stories provide life to these conferences.

I would like to think of my conferences as faith-commentaries on life and the stories of people. And I hope that by reading these conferences, you will also get a glimpse of what is happening in your life and in the life of the Church, and in the life of the whole world and of creation.

Finally, my talks are not so much attempts of the mind to discover truth by dissecting events and ideas. My talks take the posture, most of the time, of beholding. My talks come from the posture of allowing the mystery of God's presence to unfold before our eyes in people's stories of pains, sorrows, defeats, and also stories of hope and triumph. I firmly believe that the mystery of the faith moulds our stories. I believe that God's story in Jesus and the Spirit continues to unfold in people's lives and in the life of the Christian community. My talks, for whatever they are worth theologically, wish to be nothing else but a graced recognition by someone of the presence of the Lord in the real-life stories of God's people.

"It is the Lord!" This is the beautiful cry of the beloved disciple in John 21 after the miraculous catch of fish. "It is the Lord!" This is what I have chosen as my episcopal motto. "It is the Lord!" This is how the beloved disciple, out of love, expressed his recognition, not as proof but as a sign of the Lord's presence. I would like to think that theology is not just about analysis. It is not just about a scientific gathering of data. It is not just about a rigorous exploration of truth. Theology is also a Spirit-filled recognition of the Lord—as the Lord moves in and shapes history and people's lives, and as the Lord moves in and shapes the very life of the Church. Theology as recognition of the Lord leads to doxology, to praise, and praise leads to transformation for mission.

Once again, I thank the administration, the teaching staff and the students and everyone who make up this wonderful community

called Loyola School of Theology. You have taught me so much, both as a student and as a teacher, and now as a bishop. The lectures published in this book are much more the fruit of your efforts at forming me, and now I share them with the wider public. Let these lectures, which are really LST's way of drawing out from me my recognition of the Lord, be now its contribution to the wider Church and to the wider Philippine society.

+Luis Antonio G. Tagle, DD
Bishop of Imus
14 February 2003
Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius

Part One
God, Jesus Christ and the Spirit

CHAPTER ONE

This Risky Business of Saying "God"*

We are at the commencement exercises of a school of theology. But what precisely have you studied? What is this theology? What is it that we taught you in this school? And what is the business of this school as a school of theology?

I was quite struck by an article written by a Canadian Dominican, Jacques Lison who wrote, "*La préoccupation essentiel de la theologie est de dire Dieu.*" He says, "The essential concern of theology is to say 'God.' " This statement struck me because we are so used to hearing that theology is talking *about* God, that it is the *study of* God. But Lison says, "No, the concern of theology, the essential concern of theology, is to say 'God.'" I wonder whether this is what you learned and whether this is what we taught you. Has it been the business of Loyola School of Theology (LST), and of other schools of theology, to say "God"?

Theology is not just talking *about* God. It is also doxology. It is a mystical reality. It is recognition. It is contemplation. It is participa-

*Address delivered at the Commencement Exercises of Loyola School of Theology, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, 13 March 2002.

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tion in God. But as Saint Paul tells us, "No one can say Jesus is Lord and no one can say, '*Abba*, Father,' except in the Spirit." Therefore, if theology is about saying "God," then theology must be an action primarily of the Spirit, and of people who will be open to the Spirit so they can say "God."

I want to think that you graduates, including current and future LST students, have heard many ways of saying "God." Not only because every professor of theology espouses a particular theory, uses a certain framework or has a unique way of saying "God," but also because, in your different courses, you have been initiated into this great tradition of the Church—the Church handing on its own life. Theology is always at the service of the Church.

You must have heard and seen so many ways of saying "God" in the history of the Church. I still use much of what I learned from my professors when I was a student here some 25 years ago. Only now, there are a few things, here and there, that I also add—new ways of saying "God." Let me indicate a few changes in the history of the Church, as indicated in one study of Peter Schineller, SJ.

Who does theology? Who says "God"?

In the past, seminary professors in their black cassocks—all male—said "God." Later, even university professors could say "God." Then, both males and females could say "God." I saw a photograph of the first student body here at LST and it had only one woman student in the person of the petite and cute Immaculate Heart of Mary sister, Vicky Palanca. Now, there are new voices that dare to say "God." These new voices express God from their worlds, their experiences and their concerns; and they produce varied ways of saying "God."

Where was theology done? Where do you say "God"?

In the early Church, saying "God" was the domain of the bishops—the episcopal setting. Then the monastic setting became the place for saying "God." The great universities and, after Trent, the seminaries became the places to say "God." All of these events oc-

curred mainly in Europe; it was in Europe where they had to say "God." Today, so many places are saying "God." In every country, "God" can be said. Even in villages and basic ecclesial communities, "God" is uttered.

For whom do we do theology? For whom do we say "God"?

In the early Church, we said "God" to convert pagans and heretics so they could see God and follow the true faith. Later, theology was done for future clerics in seminaries. Today we say "God" for victims of society, for the non-persons, for those who are forgotten. To them we say "God" to assure them there is One who does not forget them. According to David Tracy, now theology addresses many publics, many audiences. You say "God" to the Church. You say "God" to the university. You say "God" to society.

With whom do we say "God"? With whom do we do theology?

In the past, theology was done with philosophy. Now, it is more interdisciplinary. At all levels, whether within the Church in order to understand our tradition and our history better or *ad extra*, we need to say "God" with the human sciences. More importantly, we have to say "God" in a way that engages the social, economic, political and cultural realities of peoples' lives. We say "God" with all of these things.

And how does one say "God"?

There was a time when you said "God" by following the Denzinger method. You have a thesis. You know the biblical foundations. You know the teachings of the Councils and the popes and then you add a few things here and there. You have said "God." Then it moved more and more into a historical way of saying "God." Now, people engage in what they call critical correlation. Some even engage not only through orthodoxy but also through orthopraxis. Today, we have many different ways of saying "God."

You have been initiated into these varied ways and this school of theology certainly encourages us to get in touch with this vitality of ways, all at the service of the Church, her life and mission. Part

of LST's mission is to prepare men and women to be able to say "God" meaningfully in their worlds and in accordance with their charisms and vocations.

THIS RISKY BUSINESS OF SAYING "GOD"

We are very sure that what we have offered to you students is not exhaustive but it is, nevertheless, valuable. Even if you should forget LST or your professors' ways of saying "God," please do not forget to say "God" lest the world forget and believe that God is superfluous. Perhaps more important than remembering the specific ways of saying "God" is to just say "God" with the conviction to engage in this rather risky business of saying "God" in our times. It is not easy to say "God." It is quite risky. Let me offer a few suggestions.

First, in this world of globalization, properly called "elite globalization," Nicanor Perlas notes that this elite globalization is actually a ruthless growth—*paglago na walang puso* [growth without a heart]. It is also a futureless growth because it is growth without jobs. It is rootless growth because it is growth that cuts us from the roots of our values and traditions. And it is a meaningless growth because many times people lose their direction in life. In the midst of all these challenges, the world is convincing us to forget our neighbor, to forget God, all in the name of profit and competition. It is not easy to say "God" in a world that wants to forget neighbors. When we forget our neighbors, we will not be able to utter "God." However, we hope that your training here in this school of theology has taught you how to say "God" meaningfully.

As you have learned from us, please also learn to say "God" with the little ones of the world, those whom globalization wants to forget and to deny. Learn from the forgotten ones. Learn from the nonpersons. Allow them to teach you how to say "God."

Simbang Gabi—the novena Masses attended at dawn by Filipinos in preparation for Christmas—had already started on the first Sunday after my ordination as bishop. After celebrating the Eucharist in

the cathedral and still wearing my full episcopal regalia, I greeted the people as they went out the door. As I stood there, I saw little children who were selling flowers impeding the progress of the people leaving the church. "*Bulaklak po! Bulaklak! Bulaklak!*" [Flowers! Flowers! Flowers!] I ran after them, scolding them until we reached the road. I was still in my full regalia as I was shouting at those children. I told them, "Look, we have not forbidden you from selling flowers but let us put some order here! You can sell flowers here at the gate. The people who are attending Mass and the people who are leaving the Church will certainly pass through the gate."

The children were all trembling before me. I looked at them and I spotted the tallest girl and I asked her, "You! How old are you?" She said, "Fourteen." I replied, "You see! You're fourteen years old. Is it difficult to understand what I'm saying? That you can sell at this point and not beyond it?" And she answered, "No. I can understand."

Then I looked at the smallest boy, a very dirty looking boy. I said, "You! How old are you?" He looked up, smiled and said, "Seven." I said, "You're seven years old. Can you understand what I'm saying?" It was then that he hugged me. He was so small that his hands only reached my waist. He hugged me and again smiled the sweetest smile. He started stroking my back and gently said, "Father, *obispo ka na. Obispo ka na.*" [Father, you are now a bishop.] I stopped and I said, "Yes." God was calling me again and asking me to utter "God" to these children in compassion.

I have never experienced selling flowers. I have never wanted for anything; as a child, all I had to do was go to school. These children had to work every Sunday to have something. There I was, uttering laws, policies, order and cleanliness. And this young boy uttered a word addressed to my heart, to my identity.

For the next half hour, I just stayed with the children at the gate, still in my full episcopal regalia, and had a grand time talking with them. After a few days of being ordained bishop, those children taught me how to listen to God and how to say "God."

Last Saturday, I was invited to bless a chapel in Mendez, Cavite,

where I was first assigned as a young priest and pastor. Father Reddy Corpuz said maybe we could use the occasion for a pastoral visit. Not the formal pastoral visit where the bishop looks at the books and the accounts but just a visit. So I said, "Yes, sure." It was also an occasion for me to see my former parishioners.

When I arrived at the site of the new chapel, all the bands were playing and I was given a big, big key to the town. As I entered the chapel, I saw the elderly woman who used to take care of us in 1982. After Mass, she would serve us coffee and *pan de sal.* I approached her and I said, "*Lola Juana! Buhay pa pala kayo!*" [Grandmother Juana! You are still alive!] She grabbed my hand and said, "You still remember me. You still know my name." Then she said, "I'm dying of cancer. I have not been home here for years. Now I live in Manila to be close to the hospital but when I learned that you were coming here as a bishop, I forced my nieces and nephews to take me." She added, "It was worth it. It was worth the travel and all the pain. You still know me. You still know my name." Still holding my hand, she put it near her breast and said, "Pray to God. Pray that I may be healed." But within me I was protesting, "I cannot heal you. I cannot." Yet she was looking at me in total faith, believing that somehow, through this thin bishop, God would heal her.

At the end of the Mass, I could not leave the chapel. People were crowding around me—in front of me, behind me, to my left, my right, even above me. I was afraid people would be under me! True enough, I saw a little boy trapped there. I pleaded with the people, "Please give this small boy enough space." Then an elderly woman said: "We apologize, Bishop! But you are the first bishop I have seen and I will probably not see a bishop again in my life. Please don't deny me this opportunity."

In these ways, people say "God." Very simple. And I could not believe it.

Theology says the bishop possesses the fullness of sacred order. At the recently concluded Synod of Bishops on Bishops, the main theme that kept recurring was, "The Bishop is the *apparitio Dei* [ap-

parition of God]. The Bishop is the *visitatio Dei* [visitation of God]." It is, as it were, asking people to look at me, to focus on me. I will never teach that in my class! I will have to resign first before I even include that in my course! But I also need to listen to how people say "God"—they say it by stroking your back or clutching your hand. They say it by telling you: "You are now a bishop," or "This is a unique experience and it may not be repeated."

Rather, learn from the people, the forgotten ones, your neighbors. Remember that *our* way of saying "God" is not the *only* way. Learn from them. Learn from the victims of senseless violence and suffering. Learn how they say "God" in hope. Learn from those pushed to the limits of the paradox of saying "God," who sometimes leave it unsaid but never forget God. Learn from them.

For several days now I have been reading the letters of Father Pavel Florenski, a Russian Orthodox priest, mathematician, philosopher, artist, theologian, patriarch and martyr. He was imprisoned for a long time at the Gulag and died in Leningrad on 8 December 1937. One of the most precious gifts I received at ordination was a collection of his letters to his wife and family. In his letters, I think Father Pavel is saying "God" in the name of many victims of society. Let me end this sharing by quoting a few lines from his letters.

On 3 October 1933, he wrote to his wife: "I always think of you and I live only by this. I am extremely worried for not having received from you even a line. I don't know how and by what means you live. How is the health of your mother? How is my own mother? Do the children still remember me? Or are they beginning to forget me?" This is a prayer. Someone who knows he will lose his life but, for one last moment, says "God" by saying, "*Non dimenticarmi.*" Don't forget me.

On 13 May 1937, he wrote to his wife: "I kiss you with affection. Find time to rest this summer. Take a walk often, if not in the forest at least in the open field. Take a walk especially in the afternoon when the sun is low and remember me."

"Remember me," a way of saying "God." "I'm alone. I feel aban-

doned but God, don't forget me." This reminds us of that great person who said "God" all his life and those who heard him were offended. He uttered "God" in love and called him "*Abba*." He uttered "God" in pain: "Why have you abandoned me?" He said "God" in hope: "Into your hands I commend my spirit." He uttered "God" in the silence of death and in the rising to life in the Father's bosom. He is the one who really teaches us how to say "God."

Now dear graduates, continue saying "God" with all the joys and pains and risks it involves. Continue saying "God" with all the praise and lament it invites. Continue saying "God" with all the silence that that mystery creates and evokes. Continue....

CHAPTER TWO

Breaking the Isolation of the Dead*

There are many ways of reflecting on the Easter events especially from Holy Thursday up to the Easter Vigil. This year, I was quite fascinated by a framework presented by one of the greatest theologians of our time, Hans Urs von Balthasar. He describes the Paschal Mystery in terms of movement, movements involving comings and goings. On Holy Thursday, Jesus goes to the upper room and to the garden of discernment. On Good Friday, he goes to the cross. On Holy Saturday, he goes to the dead. At Easter, he goes to the Father. For this morning, I will concentrate on these last two movements.

On Holy Saturday, or Black Saturday, Jesus goes to the dead. This is part of the creed but, many times, we do not notice it nor pay much attention to it. We just say: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended to the dead, on the third day he rose again." It is part of the creed and yet the power of this belief for our pastoral life and our Christian living—espe-

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cially for our involvement in the world and in the transformation of society—has not been fully explored. Reflecting on this part of the mystery of Jesus' passion and resurrection can be a powerful force for our conversion and also our apostolic involvement in the world today.

DEATH AS ISOLATION

First, let me say something about the Jewish worldview regarding death and the place of the dead. After all, the early formulations of the Faith were very much influenced by this Jewish worldview. For the Jews, death, like sickness, is an event of isolation. When we get sick, we become isolated. Some are even quarantined. You are given your own room and nobody is supposed to go into that room. You are also given your own plate, your own glass, your own spoon and fork, which nobody else should use. Therefore, sickness is the beginning of a slow process of isolation.

You cut down on social functions, like not eating with your family, not attending your ballroom dancing lessons, not going to your *mahjong*. There are many things about social life that just collapse with sickness. Someone takes care of you but no amount of care can remove the fact that with sickness comes a bit of being isolated.

In the Jewish worldview, death is the culmination of that isolation. When someone dies, that person, in some sense, is cut off from the world of the living. Where do you go? You go to the place of the dead. The Greeks have a beautiful name for it—Hades (in Hebrew, Sheol). The dead go to Hades and are called shades. They are like shadows. The shades exist in a form of non-existence. Why? In Hades, there is no communication between the shades. It may be heavily populated by shades but one thing is missing—communication. The absence of communication is one characteristic of the place of the dead. The dead may be next to each other in Hades but they do not commune with one another.

Worst of all, in Hades, there is no praise of God. People cannot communicate with God. In Hades, that non-communication with God

is real death. Communication with God especially in the form of adoration or praise simply stops. Hades is a place where communication with God is not possible. The God of life and the place of the dead simply cannot meet. God who is Life cannot have any place in Hades. Therefore, the place of the dead is a place where communion stops, where communion is disrupted—communion among the dead but, worst of all, communion with God.

Death is not just biological. Death is the termination of communication. A person truly dies not only because the biological systems have collapsed. True death is experienced when the possibility of communion, the possibility of personhood is no longer present. Personhood is actually being in communion with others. If I am not in communion, not able to communicate or lose my capacity to be one with others, then I am dead. More importantly, when I am no longer able to communicate with God, I am *truly* dead. That is why the dead in Hades do not really exist. They are there physically existing but non-existent nonetheless because of the absence of the core of life—communion, communication with others and communication with God.

We do not need to die a physical death to be in Hades. Many people are already in the place of the dead because they do not communicate; they are not in communion. You may be in a beautiful mansion and yet live in Hades. When there is no full communion with one another in the same house and full communion with God, then we are *the living dead.* You can suspect that there are many who are already dead. Simply lonely. Not having anybody to communicate with. Not having someone with whom they can share—not so much their sorrows but, much more difficult—their joys.

I remember one of my most difficult moments as a young priest. I had thought that the most miserable experience was when you were lonely and in pain with no one to share it. That was bad enough but what was worse was when you were happy and you had no one to share your happiness—then you were really dead. And we are increasing. The number of dead people is increasing.

Some people say that the cellphone is a way of "bonding" or communicating. Really? Or does it produce more dead people? Once I was invited to bless the house of a family I did not know. The priest who was supposed to bless the house had an emergency and he gave my name to the family. Since it was an emergency I agreed but I told them that I had another appointment. I would bless their house and leave immediately for my next appointment. They said, "Good, good. It's okay, Father."

A car came to collect me. The family's three children came along, with one driving the car. No one greeted me. When they learned that I was Father Chito they just opened the door and I got into the car. From our place to their house, no one was communicating with me. Of course, the driver should not be communicating with me. He had to mind his driving. The two other siblings were not communicating with me because they were busy "texting." I said to myself, "Well, it's okay. If they don't want to talk to me then what can I do? I cannot impose myself." But I was already feeling bad.

Where was our traditional Filipino courtesy? *Magandang hapon man lang* [A "Good afternoon" would have sufficed]. I wanted to remind them, "*Uy inaabala niyo ako ha.*" [You are inconveniencing me.] *Iyan na lang sana yung consuelo eh. Yung i*-recognize *ka naman na, "Ah kayo pala yung taong inaabala namin.*" [That would have been my consolation, for them to recognize that what they were asking me to do was an inconvenience.] Since there was no possibility of communicating, I could not communicate my own frustration, which was building up.

What somehow calmed me was when I realized that these two siblings were texting one another. They were there in the same car and they could not even talk with one another. One of them asked the other, "Hey, what is this that you sent? I cannot understand your text. I cannot understand your message." Instead of explaining it, the other sibling said, "Oh, okay. I will send you another message." I do not know. Maybe the new name of Hades is "cellphone."

I do not know if we are really bonding in the sense of achieving

the fullness of personhood where there are people who can enter my heart and with whom I can also share my heart. In the Jewish worldview that is what life is all about. Life means being in communion with others and with God. When you go to the place of the dead that communion is cut off. To go to the dead means to go to a place where we experience death in the form of non-communication, isolation, loneliness, and aloneness.

THE SON OF GOD GOES TO THE PLACE OF THE DEAD

Jesus did not invent going to the dead. It is part of the Jewish worldview and as Christians we have retained it. Every person who dies goes to the place of the dead. Given this Jewish background, let our Christian imagination grow and imagine Jesus being buried and going to the dead.

Who goes to the dead? The Son of God. The Son of God goes to the place where God cannot communicate. The Son of God initiates a communication that is impossible and even forbidden by the reality of death. By going to the dead, the Son of God opens a form of communication in a place where communication is not possible. By going to the dead, the Son of God breaks the isolation imposed by death, and he does this freely.

How was he able to go to the place of the dead? By dying himself. The one who goes to the dead is also dead. The One who goes to the place of the dead is someone who has also experienced isolation, abandonment, and loneliness. This is why he was able to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Quite surprisingly, though he used to call God "*Abba*," an endearment of familiarity, he did not use "*Abba*" on the cross. He went back to the formal address, "My God, My God." There is no familiarity on the cross. There is only abandonment and isolation. He saw his friends watch the crucifixion but they stood at a distance. The cross was a true death. Not only in the sense that Jesus breathed his last but also in the sense that he experienced the loss of communication, the loss

of communion. He experienced the agony of isolation. The cross was a real death. When he was alone, it was finished. The death was complete. Now this person who truly died goes to the place of the dead.

Not only is it that the Son of God breaks the isolation of the dead by going to the place of the dead. What is more fascinating is that he was able to go to the place of the dead by being dead himself. He joined the dead in solidarity. What type of solidarity? A solidarity in true death. He did not go to the place of the dead as someone who was strong, as someone who could bring life. No. He went to the place of the dead as someone who also died, who also suffered isolation, abandonment and aloneness. The one who would break the isolation was isolated himself, only he could break the isolation through solidarity.

Solidarity. By going to the dead Jesus shows the true meaning of solidarity. You go to the dead not with your strength, not with your power, not with what you can give. You go to the dead in solidarity by being dead yourself and by being dead, you are in deep communion with others. This is the mystery of Holy Saturday. This is the silence of Holy Saturday. Jesus truly dead goes to the place of the dead and breaks the isolation of the dead, but he had to be in isolation himself.

How do we live Black Saturday? A Dutch author said it well. He said, "In our age, we need solidarity, not support." Some people think that when they support a cause or a community, they are already in solidarity with that cause or community. No. The hard teaching of Black Saturday is that solidarity means, like Jesus, I go to the dead to be able to conquer death. But first, I should be like the dead. I should be dead myself because, if I am not dead, how can I go to the place of the dead?

Solidarity means going to a particular community not because I am bringing my strength, not because I am bringing my contribution and not even because I am bringing something they lack. Solidarity means I go because I am also in need. I bring my needs to their needs.

I bring my weaknesses to their weaknesses. I bring my fear and trembling to their fear and trembling. I do not come as someone alive going to the dead. Solidarity means the dead goes to the dead.

It seems that support is easier than solidarity. This world does not lack for support because it is easy to do. I send a check and then continue on my own way. By sending a box of instant noodles, I am already able to show my support. My life goes on without significant changes. Black Saturday tells us about the hard lessons of solidarity. We have to remember—the one who goes to the dead is also dead. Only the dead can conquer the isolation of death.

Let me give you a few stories. Sometimes stories better illustrate the mystery. We see that the mystery is truly alive when we look at the facts of life and how these mysteries are lived by people.

In 1989, I did some research in Rome and stayed with the Immaculate Heart of Mary fathers. I was the only Filipino in a small community of eight student priests. At that time, the superior of the house was a Belgian who had been a missionary here in the Philippines. He had a married cousin who was a bank executive in Rome. During one of his visits with his cousin, he mentioned that there was a Filipino priest living with them. They told him, "Why not invite him to join us for dinner?" And so I was invited. But I told this Belgian priest, "I don't know your cousins. I might not enjoy the evening." I thought that a meal with strangers would be too uncomfortable so I declined the invitation. "But my cousin is insisting because their maid is Filipino and their driver is Filipino."

When I heard his explanation, I was somewhat offended. It was as if I was invited so that they could show that they had a Filipino maid and a Filipino gardener (they were husband and wife). It did not sound good to the ears. I was really offended. But the Belgian priest kept on insisting and so I agreed to join them for dinner.

True enough, when we arrived at the house, it was the Filipino dressed in regular maid's uniform who greeted me at the door. I was introduced to her and when she found out that I was Filipino too—I look Chinese—she reacted in a typically Filipino way. "Father! How

is the Philippines?" "From where are you in the Philippines?" I told her I was from Cavite. She and her husband were from the Visayas but grew up in Manila. She was trying to look for some kind of connection between us. You could feel the deep sense of isolation, of losing contact and then, suddenly, there was this chance contact.

She kept asking me about so many things and I answered however I could. I did not even know her but we continued exchanging stories. At that time I was still living in the United States and so I really did not know what was happening in the Philippines. It then struck me that I was also isolated. They were isolated and here I was with them. The ones in isolation met. The dead went to the dead and there was an explosion of life.

I learned she had a master's degree in education and taught in one of the universities in Manila. Her two children went to medical school and they could not support them with just their teachers' salary. Her husband had finished criminology and taught at the Philippine National Police Academy. She told me, "Father, everyday we just forget about our degrees. When we start picking up the laundry or do the dishes, we just try to keep those things from our minds. I don't let it enter my mind that I received a higher education than my master. I just think of my children." We kept exchanging stories and tears were even shed.

After several minutes, the lady of the house came out and said dinner was ready. Her maid was surprised. "Oh my! I was not able to help out in the kitchen!" She panicked saying, "Father, just a few minutes. I have to rush to the kitchen." But the Belgian lady stopped her and told her to change her clothes. "No, tonight you will be my guests. Go to your room and get dressed." The Filipino couple protested. I spoke to them in Filipino and said, "Go ahead. Give in to their request. Change your clothes." They went to their rooms and came out wearing beautiful clothes that had obviously not been used for a long time. The woman wore make-up and her husband wore a *polo barong*. You could see the creases from the folds. They also looked as if they felt awkward in their clothing.

What a dinner it was! The maid sat at one end of the table while the driver sat on the other end. Three of us priests sat with them and the Belgian couple did not eat. Instead, they served us dinner. I could not eat for sheer joy. Do not ask me what was served, I do not even remember. There was a real sense of liberation. The king and queen of the house became the maid and gardener. They joined the ranks of the dead and started serving. You forgot who was who at that dinner—who the lord of the house was, who the maid was, who the priest was—because it was just one community of life and love.

I am sure it was back to normal the following day. Their roles would still be the same. The lord of the house would still be the lord of the house. The maid would still be the maid. However, I am sure that new life has entered that family, a bit of difference, a bit of liberation. That is Black Saturday. People willing to die and in their death—not in their strength, not in their being the giver, but in their nothingness too—life emerges.

I have another story. This happened in one of those counseling situations we priests find ourselves in. When I was a much younger priest, even after all the lessons in school, my concept of counseling was that the counselee was someone in grave need. *Kaya nga pumupunta iyan eh.* [That is why they go to you in the first place.] This person is a bundle of needs, wants and crises and he chooses to come to me. In other words, he needs something and I am the one to give him what he needs. He is confused while I am the picture of lucidity and clarity. Hopefully, after our encounter he will leave with a lucid mind and I will be left problematic. But that was not what we learned in school.

I was an eager, young counselor and spiritual director. I was so eager that when someone came, one look and I knew what was the problem. It was also as if I had a reservoir of solutions. Given such and such a situation, I would give such and such an answer. If the counselee said, "Father, I grew up with my grandmother." Aha! He grew up with his grandmother! He has anger towards his parents. "You have anger." Even if he has yet to tell me his story, I already know what happened. Then you try to convince him that he is angry.

He denies it. "You know you have anger." "No, Father. I do not feel anything like that." "You see, you are beginning to raise your voice! Your anger is showing. I am projecting to you the father figure and you, you were not able to release your anger towards your real father. You are doing it to me now."

Ganyan lang tayo eh, lagi tayong magaling. [That is how we are, always the clever ones.] We are not only *magaling* [clever] but we are also omniscient. For every human situation we have an analysis and a ready answer. The answer is usually a solution to a problem. Up to now, I am very, very thankful to one seminarian who had the courage to tell me in the middle of one spiritual direction session, "Father, there is something I have to say to you. You know, you talk too much. I haven't even told you my story and yet you already think you know. You're too clever but what I need is empathy." I stopped at that point and started reflecting.

What is empathy? Empathy is Black Saturday. You encounter people, especially in their neediness, in their darkness, in their worst confusions. As you encounter them, encounter them as dead yourself. Do not pretend that you are the stronger one or the wiser one. *Hindi totoong kulang-kulang sila at ikaw buo* [It is not true that they are incomplete and you are whole]. For me, that was a wonderful lesson.

I was also taught another lesson in a counseling situation. As this person told me the story of his life, I was amazed at how he had managed to survive. How could a person with all those experiences still be here? He told me about the tremendous dying that he had undergone and all I could do was just sit there and listen. I could not really do anything but simply cry with the person, to be at a loss and admit that I did not know what to say. As I listened, I also recalled the darkness and shadows in my own life. I began to wonder whether I was listening to his story or to mine. In the end, you think to yourself, "I understand. I know how it feels to die. I know how it feels to be confused. I know how it feels to be in darkness."

When you have no more words and what you bring is your own helplessness before someone who is equally helpless, problems dis-

appear and the mystery takes over. The person before you is no longer a problem to be solved. That person becomes a mystery that you behold and you are able to enter into their mystery by accepting your own mystery. In the meeting of these two mysteries, new life erupts. Problems may remain but you now know that you are not alone. You have a friend. You have a companion. You have someone you can empathize with—his tears are your tears, his cries your cries. His gasping breath is your own. Empathy. Solidarity. Black Saturday.

My other story is related to Christmas. I was still a student in Washington, D.C. when a Filipino woman friend decided to go home for Christmas after having stayed in the United States for 15 years. She was so excited that she wrote to a lot of friends and relatives about her vacation. Her friends and relatives were also excited about her visit especially since it was Christmastime. They wrote her back but, in their letters, they would always caution her about the peace and order situation in Manila. She ended up calling me and telling me about having second thoughts of going home. I told her to go home but also to be careful and not flaunt her dollars.

She went to Manila for Christmas but her fear took over. She recalled that anywhere she went she clutched her purse tightly to her chest in case someone might grab it. In her head she was thinking, "These children, these poor people on the streets, they're only out for one thing, out there to abuse. They're out there to steal. I'm the one who just came from the States. I'm the rich person they'll want to steal from." She had a worldview that neatly split the place of the dead—the dirty, the poor, those in need—from her own, which she had to protect.

Just a few days before Christmas, she and her brother were driving along one of Manila's main thoroughfares when their car broke down. Her brother who was driving said, "I will call a mechanic. Do you want to stay inside the car? We can lock it or you can stay outside. We can lock it so if anything happens you can just make a run for it." She said, "Okay, I'll stay outside." Standing next to the car, she kept praying, "Lord, protect me from hold-uppers. Lord protect me from beggars. Lord protect me from this. Lord protect me from

that." Everything she was afraid of, she asked the Lord for protection. "Lord, protect me. Don't send any children to me. Don't send any beggars to me." But God sent a beggar, a little boy.

"Miss, we haven't had lunch yet. My mother said that you might be able to help us. Can you give us some money to buy food?" said the boy. She panicked, opened her purse and without looking, gave the first bill she got hold of—500 pesos. When she saw it she thought, "*Naku!* 500!" [Oh my, 500!] But she gave it anyway. She gave it not out of charity but with this in mind, "I've given you something now leave me alone. Don't bother me anymore. I'm just minding my own business." Thinking about the 500 pesos, she thought, "That boy might tell other people that there's a woman giving away 500 pesos in the street. There might be more people who will come asking me for money." All kinds of thoughts were just entering her mind. The boy might return and tell her that they do not have food for dinner. She could not stop thinking about it.

The boy did return. He said, "Miss, my mother said the money you gave was too much. There is so much food. You might want to eat with us. Please join us for lunch at our house." She answered, "I can't go with you. I am watching over the car." "But we live just right there," the boy said, pointing to a shack near the road. The shacks along Roxas Boulevard had plastic shopping bags for walls. "While we're eating, we can see your car." Something must have happened to my friend because she followed the boy. She went to the place of the dead.

She went to the shanty and saw the boy's mother, an infant and three other small children. The first words of the mother to her were, "Miss, the money you gave was too much. Here is the change. I just really did not know where to get food for my children. My husband hasn't gotten his salary yet. I am so embarrassed but I cannot do anything else." My friend then told her, "Go ahead. Keep the money. You might be able to use it for tonight or for tomorrow, on Christmas."

The mother invited my friend to eat with them and she joined

them. She ate with them. She carried the baby and played with the children. She told me that she forgot all about the car. She was just magnetized by this setting. She also told me that it was the best Christmas dinner she had during that vacation. It was the first time she had ever entered a shanty or held the hand of a poor woman. "That was the first time I was able to carry an infant born to a squatter's family," she said. Then she added, "They're wonderful people."

She went to the place of the dead but she had to be willfully dead—dead to all of her pretensions and emotions—and only then, by a stroke of grace when she forgot all about the car and what that car stood for, was she ready to enter the place of the dead. New life sprang forth. It was the best Christmas for her, the best meal. And I'm sure, for that family, it was also a kind of visitation, an experience of grace.

That is Black Saturday. That is solidarity.

Let us join Jesus, the one who embraced death. Let us join him as he goes to the place of the dead and open our eyes to the many manifestations of Hades in our times. Let us hear Jesus calling not only for support but for real solidarity, real empathy, real dying. For only those who have died can break the isolation of the dead.

I would like to conclude these reflections with a prayer:

"Heavenly Father, we do not only thank you for the gift of Jesus, but we also want to express to you our puzzlement. This man, your Son who is the giver of life, dies because of our sinfulness and rebellion. Yet we also see that his dying was his solidarity with all who have died—a solidarity that conquers death and its isolation. Thank you for this holy death. Thank you for his descent to the dead.

"Help us to die ourselves and give us the humility and courage to go to the place of the dead, not bearing our own strength but bearing our own dying and weakness. For it is only in such solidarity that we can create communities, families, neighborhoods and a whole nation of true communion and life.

"We beg the Blessed Mother, the woman who died so many deaths,

who joined Jesus in his going to the dead through her own pains and sorrows, to always accompany us as we carry our own crosses, as we are crucified, as we die.

"Bless those who feel deep loneliness and isolation, those who are poor and victimized because of ignorance, discrimination, and the violence that is in the world. Assure them that the Crucified One has visited them, that they are not alone in the place of the dead. Amen."

CHAPTER THREE

Encountering the Asian Face of Christ*

A few years ago, Orbis Books published a book entitled, *Asian Faces of Jesus*. Not just one Asian face, but Asian *faces* of Jesus. The book also makes the distinction between Jesus and Christ. Why would we even consider something like the Asian face or Asian faces of Jesus Christ? What is in the face? What is the face?

Greek philosophers say that we find in the face a window to the deeper reality that a person possesses. If we want to hide what is really happening within us, many times what we do is "change" our face. There are faces that are very transparent. You see if they are angry, happy or if they are by nature good. There are faces that cannot hide anything, but there are those who, if they want to hide something, will change their face. That is why some people wear different masks.

The face is really a window into a deeper reality. Some people would even say that the face, to use a more theological term, is one

*Lecture delivered at the Update on Christology Seminar at Loyola School of Theology, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, 24 April 2001.

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of the most powerful sacraments of who we truly are. The human face is an instrument that conveys something that people do not always see—what we have in our hearts—and, at the same time, veils a deeper reality. We cannot think that everything a person is can be found in his or her face.

There are also certain things that we can only know through the face. Even in Filipino we say, "*Sige, ipamukha mo sa akin ang totoo*" [Go on, show me the face of truth]. Thus do we use the word "*mukha*" [face] in various ways.

What is the face of Christ? Why do we even wonder about the *Asian* face of Jesus?

Jesus, just like any human being, has a unique face. What is the point of talking about the Asian face of Jesus? He has one face. If you are Filipino, then you have a Filipino face. We do not worry about our African face, our South American face or our Caucasian face. In fact, people will laugh at us, and we will look stupid if we force our Filipino faces to look American by wearing colored contact lenses to have blue or green eyes, or even by dyeing our hair blonde while our black eyebrows give us away. For myself, however which way you look at it, I am Filipino but I look Chinese. Now, will it make sense for me to explore the African face of Jesus or the Caucasian face of Jesus?

How is it that when you are talking about Jesus, this particular Jew, it is quite legitimate to speak of the Asian face of Jesus? For example, in some parishes in North America that are predominantly African-American, you will find Jesus depicted as a black person. When you go to China you will find Our Lady depicted as a Chinese woman and the baby Jesus looking just like me. Why is it that for us who are also human beings, we find it ridiculous to explore different faces coming from different cultures? We insist, "No. This is my only face." Whereas in the person of Jesus Christ, spiritual writers and theology teachers talk about the different faces of Jesus. What does this say about Jesus?

THE PARTICULARITY OF JESUS AND HIS UNIVERSALITY

Now we shall talk about this dynamic tension between Jesus as a particular person—who lived in a particular place, a particular time and within a particular culture—and his universal significance. We do not deny the particularity of Jesus. If we deny it, it is tantamount to denying the very humanity of Jesus. For to be human means you belong to a particular family; you belong to a particular race; you belong to a particular generation; and you survive and live in a particular place. To deny this concrete, cultural and human face of Jesus as a Jew is also to deny that the Incarnation is real. It might be that you think of Jesus as an abstract reality. Jesus was truly human, with a particular human face. He was a Jew of the first century, belonging to a particular family and a particular economic class. Jesus had *that* face, a *specific* face.

However, our faith also tells us that Jesus has universal significance, especially in his resurrection. Many theologians will say that, in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the human Jesus—this particular Jew—has been universalized in the power of the Spirit so that the risen Jesus is no longer to be equated purely and simply with this particular Jew. The universal Jesus is now able to penetrate different cultures and enter our hearts through the power of the Spirit. As the Risen Lord made universal by the power of the Spirit, Jesus becomes available to all. Annie can now have a unique experience of Jesus which allows her to say, "My Jesus. My experience of Jesus. This is the face of Jesus that I have encountered." Annie's experience of Jesus may be quite unique when compared with Marilou's experience of Jesus. They can see the same Jesus but, because of the universal quality of the Risen Lord, Jesus can now be experienced by individuals from different cultures and according to their situations.

For example, what if I had to preside at two funeral Masses, one after the other? Let us say the first is for an 8-year old girl. Yesterday on a flight back to Manila, I read in a newspaper article that an 8-year old girl in Bologna, Italy, was murdered by her own brother-in-law. When they caught the brother-in-law, he just said, "For a number of

days now I've been wanting to have sex with a girl. She was the first person I saw." When asked by investigators why he went to the extent of killing her, he replied, "Because she scratched me. I don't want anyone harming me that way. It irritated me so I had to kill her." The girl's body was discovered on the eve of her ninth birthday. If I were to preside at her funeral Mass, how would I preach about Jesus? What face of Jesus would I manifest to this family? And what if, right after that funeral, I had to preside at the funeral Mass for a Chinese millionaire who died in the intensive care unit of a fabulous hospital? What face of Christ should I show?

It will be the same Jesus Christ but in a different way. It is not only Jesus that must be shown. The different situations of human beings—our needs and conditions—elicit the face of Jesus. Even during Jesus' ministry, he had one message—the reign of God—but that reign of God took on different faces depending on the people Jesus encountered. For the widow of Naim, the kingdom of God was shown through the return to life of her child. For Zacchaeus, what was the face of the reign of God? Restitution. "I give half of my belongings to the poor." And so there are different ways; even in the Bible, the message of Christ takes on different faces.

In the resurrection, Jesus has become a universal presence. When we say that he is universal Lord and the savior of all, he is now able through the power of the Spirit to enter human hearts set in different cultures, different families, and different human conditions. As Jesus enters them and assumes them, we find that we discover a different face, a rather unique face of Jesus.

Before I went to Rome last week, I spoke with two people, one of whom was a woman. I asked how she was and she replied that she did not have a lot of health problems. I said, "Oh, we have to thank God because you are not so sick." Before, she would complain of such and such illness. She said, "But of course I'm not supposed to get sick. I'm a good person. I'm helpful to other people so it's only just that God reward me." For her, that was the face of Christ.

The other person I spoke with was a young man whose sister was

raped a few years ago. "How is your sister?" He replied, "We seem to have reconciled ourselves a bit to what happened." I remember this man because he went on retreat after that incident. He was really struggling and as I talked with him during his retreat he said, "I do not understand why God allowed this to happen. Why was God not able to rescue my sister? Why did he not help my sister?" Some nights he would think about her struggle, her being overpowered, and ask, "God, where were you? Why did you not use your power? Why did you not intervene?"

He went on to pray and after a few days he said, "You know Father, the Lord showed me something." He said that it was as if the Lord told him in prayer: "How could I have helped your sister? I was also suffering with her. She was not the only victim. I was a victim with her. And I am a victim like her—torn, unjustly treated. I am one of you." His is a different face of Jesus. It consoled that man. He said, "For me, it is enough that my sister was not alone, that Jesus was being crucified with her. There was someone with my sister." I do not know whether people will like that face of Jesus or whether you think his conclusion is justified.

Yes, this topic is all about the formal theological question of the particularity of Jesus and his universality. As a particular individual, he had a definite Jewish face. Yet our faith also tells us that he has universal significance. This universal significance allows Jesus to be incarnated in an analogous way—not that the incarnation that happened in the womb of the Virgin Mary will happen again—the universal savior Jesus Christ is now able to assume different human conditions; and from within those human conditions—different cultures, different human struggles—Jesus is now able to show the power of the same Gospel addressing the unique experience of each individual.

This discussion is not merely because it is a fashionable topic. This is about a very, very difficult question: the particularity of the human Jesus and his universal significance. There is a tension. Later, let me indicate a few problems being raised by our brothers and sisters in Asia on this area of the particularity of Jesus and his universal significance.

THE FACE OF JESUS, HOW CAN IT BE ASIAN?

Religious and Cultural Realities in Asia

An important background to this issue is that in Asia, we have two-thirds of the world's population. It is also in this most populous section of the world where Jesus is the least known and accepted. In fact, half of the Catholic population in the whole of Asia is found in the Philippines. We make up half of the Christians in the whole of Asia. Half of the Christians in Asia are squeezing into this small country of ours, whereas the continent is so large. With our birth rate, it might even be that we will have more than half of the Christians. And then you have the Filipinos who go overseas but they go to the United States, Canada or Europe. They should just go to Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, or Indonesia. I'm asked to give so many lectures here in the Philippines, especially if there are conventions or congresses. It makes me think sometimes, "I'm giving another talk in this place, but these people are already Christians."

This is the problem: Jesus is least known in Asia, the most populous area of the world. There is also the accusation that Jesus is not easily accepted in Asia because he is perceived as Western, a foreigner. Some say that many Asian peoples find Jesus as some sort of an outsider, an intruder who—at least in some sectors of Indian society—will destroy their Indian culture. There are those who say that you have to abandon your being Asian the moment you accept Jesus Christ.

When the Holy Father came to Asia in November 1999, specifically to New Delhi, for the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, I was asked to attend. It was really a sad occasion. From the airport in New Delhi to the cathedral, I saw only one welcome sign for the Holy Father. It was a big poster saying, "Welcome, Your Holiness, Pope John Paul II." That was it. During those three days, some extremists went on national television and in the local papers saying, "Pope, get out of India." "Catholic Church, get out of India." I saw an interview of one leader who said, " We do not want Christianity here in India because Christianity will destroy our

Indian culture. Christianity does not respect India. Jesus is like those *conquistadores* from the West who will come here in order to invade and take over."

In *Ecclesia in Asia,* we find the Holy Father making a vigorous assertion—Jesus was born on Asian soil. Jesus is Asian. Do you believe that?

The "Asian-ness" of Jesus

Ecclesia in Asia is like a compilation of the fruits of the Synod of Bishops for Asia held in Rome in 1998. During the synod, I distinctly remember something that happened as the Holy Father was leading us in prayer to open the session of that day. After the chanting of the psalms, the Holy Father grabbed the microphone, looked into the eyes of the bishops of Asia present in that hall, and said, "Let me remind you, Jesus was born on Asian soil." As he said that, there was complete silence. It was as if nobody could believe—even among the bishops of Asia—that Jesus was really one of us. Afterwards, everyone stood up and everyone clapped. It was as if in people's minds they were thinking, "Wow! It is not true that Jesus is Western. Jesus is one of us."

That fact was verified by the attendance of bishops in the Synod of Bishops for Asia. In the thinking of the Church, Asia starts in what is called the Middle East and extends until the Far East, or Southeast. But the Holy Father was also saying that Jesus was born in a part of Asia that was open to the rest of the world—the Mediterranean area. While Jesus was Asian, he cannot be claimed by Asia as though he does not belong to the rest of humanity. Yet, one point that the Holy Father kept on repeating during the Synod was, "Remember, Jesus was Asian."

For all the faults of this document, that is one thing, I think, that people have not explored. How do we rejoice over the fact that Jesus, the Incarnation of the Word of God, is Asian? How do we rejoice over God's mysterious plan to send his only Son as a human being and choose a particular people for his Incarnation? And that particular people has an Asian heritage? A heritage from the East?

Since 1999, I have been invited three or four times to talk about the Asian qualities of Jesus in the United States and Europe. These Westerners are very excited about it. For two years in a row, I have been asked to give a similar workshop, "the Asian qualities of Jesus," in Los Angeles, California. At the end of these workshops, they would come and congratulate us, "We're very happy. Jesus is one of you!" "What does it mean to be Asian?" "Help us understand the Asian face of Jesus through Scriptures."

With the Holy Father, the bishops of Asia have affirmed that we in Asia should recover the "Asian-ness" of Jesus and rejoice that the Incarnation happened in Asia. Abraham was Asian. Miriam and Mary were Asians. Joseph was Asian. Aaron and other women and men of the faith were all Asians. Jesus himself was Asian.

If we want to discover the Asian face of Jesus, that is, his true face as an Asian, we should go to the Scriptures. Let us look at how he taught, how he talked with people and how he related with them. Look at how he bore suffering. Look at how he dealt with erring people. Look at how he touched. Not only will you see Jesus' face but you will also see yourselves as Asian. If you calmly and prayerfully try to discover the Asian qualities of Jesus, you will come to discover who you are.

Let me just tickle your imagination. How did Jesus talk about the reign of God? Through the parables—with images of the yeast, fishing, a wedding banquet—which is very Asian. His method of teaching was story telling. Is it not the case that we Asians like to tell stories? It is difficult to have a teacher who is always talking in abstract concepts. I always tell stories. If you do not understand the stories, then you will not be able to understand the concepts. That is the Asian way. The Asian understands stories and Jesus knew that.

The mind of Jesus is also very relational—the Father and I are one. I do only what I see the Father doing and I say only what I hear the Father say. For the Western mind, it is unacceptable that a 33-year old does not know what decision to make or is not able to work on his own. We Filipinos try to do the same thing. Young people are

already supposed to be independent. Look at Jesus. He is near death and what does he say? "I do not do anything of my own accord. I do only what I see the Father is doing." There is no dichotomy in Jesus between his submission to the Father and his independence. His autonomy is precisely located in his full submission of self.

At an early age, our children are told to be independent. When they grow old, they have a mid-life crisis and we give them a seminar: "Healing the Inner Child." Well, maybe we should not hurt them in the first place.

Jesus was perpetually a child. That is Asian. And the Asian parent, no matter what you tell them, cannot let go. That is also part of the suffering of God. God suffers the Asian way. The tears of God are the tears of someone who cannot let go of children, even if the children are already erring children.

God says in Hosea, "Get out of my sight. Go back, Ephraim. I send you back. *Wala na akong pakialam*" [I do not care anymore]. But after a few verses, he says, "How can I give you up, Ephraim?" Very Asian. "I will never abandon you." Now this is a suffering that saves. Instead of venting my anger to destroy you, my suffering saves you. I suffer but, as I suffer, you are saved.

Jesus, even in the resurrection, continues to be Asian. His students already failed their test during the crucifixion but when he rose from the dead, he told Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brothers." He still calls them brothers. If I have a student who is failing, I just give him a passing grade. I do not want to see him anymore the following year. But Jesus is really Asian. He was the one who was hurt. He was left behind and yet he is the one who reaches out to them. Look at his teachings, his manner, his style of debating; look at his suffering and you will discover the Asian face of Jesus. You will smile at one point and say, "We are like this."

Of course Asia is not a monolithic homogenous reality. There is chopstick Asian, curry Asian, chopsuey Asian, and even shawarma Asian. But there is a common thread. The discovery of the Asian face of Jesus will help us with our mission approaches in Asia by

leading people back to the basic story of Jesus. It is a beautiful story. And when you are talking with Asian people, if we are faithful in presenting the story of Jesus, they can easily listen. If they cannot feel the Asian-ness of Jesus, it is because we tell the story differently from how it is written in the Bible.

Remember the parable about the workers hired at different hours? People who have been influenced by a strict understanding of justice, that is, give what that person deserves, are the ones scandalized. One time I attended a Bible sharing of mostly elderly women who were all mothers. I asked them, "Is there a problem with this story?" They said, "None." That is because if you are a mother, all your children are equal. It is not because the eldest is 30 years old and another is just 12 years old that you give less to the 12-year-old child. They do not even have to go into speculative thinking or reflection regarding the Asian face of Jesus when they read the Scriptures.

What do we understand about the cry of Jesus, "My God, my God why have you abandoned me?" For us Asians, this sense of abandonment can be the cause of our death. When Jesus saw his friends—with whom he had spent so much time but who nevertheless abandoned him—what was he supposed to feel? Is it not that it was as if God left him? One way to understand this is my own experience as a student during the last week of my stay in the United States before coming back home in 1992.

My dentist discovered I had a cyst near my sinuses and warned me that it might affect my brain. It had to be removed and I had the operation a few days before I left. I was trying to pack my things and I noticed that the community, made up of American priests and seminarians, was avoiding me. No one was talking with me. I said to myself, "This is too much. I lived with them for five years and they know that I will be leaving soon. They are not even talking with me. And they know that I had surgery! They are not even commiserating with me."

I was really feeling bad. Then one night, the telephone rang in my room. It was one of the seminarians, an American, who whispered,

"How are you?" I said, "Oh, not so good." He answered, "You know I have been avoiding you." "Why?" "Well, you need to rest. You will take this long trip back home and also you don't need any infections right now. An infection is the last thing that you would want." So that was what they were thinking. I told him, "Yes, thank you but you forget, I am Filipino. We Filipinos don't die of infection. What we *really* die of is—isolation! So if you don't want me to die, come down and talk with me."

He had a good intention. But in the hospitals here in the Philippines, isn't it the case that there is an extra bed in the rooms? If you want to kill someone, isolate that person. That was what happened to Jesus. His heart was broken. It was an Asian heart.

During the closing liturgy of the Synod in 1998, the Holy Father repeated his reminder that Jesus was born in Asia. Therefore, it is the obligation of Asian Christians to be able to present Jesus in our preaching, in our manner of life, in our Church structure, as truly Asian. One proposal is this—can we develop a hermeneutics and biblical exegesis that will be more attuned to the Asian mentality, the Asian way of interpreting texts, in such a way that the "Asian-ness" of Jesus may also shine forth?

One essay in the book *Asian Faces of Jesus* used the model of Hindu and Buddhist ways of reading texts. While the historico-critical approach is very good and very precise, I do not know if, for the Asian mind, that is the only way of reading a text. What happens to the figure of Jesus, at least for the Asian, when he is presented to us in this form, as a product of such and such an investigation?

When I was still studying here, I remember my class spending one whole week, four days, four hours that week, talking about the word "dog" in the Gospel where Jesus said, "It is not good to throw the food for the children to the dogs." We spent four hours talking about the word "dog." What kind of dog was it? Was it small? Big? Our professor's conclusion was, "Well, in the end, it doesn't change the conclusion of the text." It was a good exercise. But for the Asian mind, is that the way we study and examine things?

From one point of view, the Asian face of Jesus is not a matter of speculation. As affirmed by the Asian bishops and the Holy Father, Jesus was born an Asian. Through Jesus, Asian approaches, Asian ways of relating have been incorporated into the Word of God and into the Gospel. The Gospel is not only a written text but also a way of life, a liberating way of life.

PROBLEMATIC

When we seriously take the Asian face of Jesus, we also get in touch with the reality of Asia. There are many non-Christian faiths in Asia, with some more ancient than Christianity. Since they are more ancient, they are more extensive in their influence. The different cultures of Asia have been shaped by these religions resulting in an intimate union. They really belong together—the cultures constructed by the religions and the religions that are supported by the cultures. Just like here in the Philippines. There are those who say that we have a Christian culture because we are predominantly Catholic. The culture supports the Church.

Here is the problem. Part of our faith says that this particular human being—Jesus who had a definite face, an Asian Jewish face—is proclaimed by us as the Christ, the Savior. He is not only a savior to a few, but he is the Savior of all. We are making a universal claim for Jesus. He is the Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life. We see this in Scriptures. "Nobody comes to the Father except through me." "Jesus is the mediator." The Letters of Saint Paul and the Catholic epistles would even say, "There is no salvation except through the name of Jesus. There is only one way by which salvation is wrought and it is in the name of Jesus." For us Christians, for us Catholics, this is very normal. The face of Christ, which is very Asian, is also the face of the savior of all.

However, this poses a particular problem in Asia because we have so many religions with their own theologies; or, if you want, their own theologies of salvation. These religions all have their own savior-figures. The moment we present the Asian face of Jesus, which is at the same time the face of the universal savior, people from other faiths just do not want to accept that face.

In fact, there are many Asian theologians who believe that our exclusive claim of salvation in Jesus destroys the harmony of cultures in Asia. Some propose that we should consider all religions equal so that the face of Jesus is just one of the many possible faces of the Incarnation of the mystery of God. They say, "Do not focus so much on the human face of Jesus. Focus on the divine face of the mystery. Be God-centered rather than Jesus-centered." They note that all the other religions focus on God. Our way to God is Jesus Christ. Their way to God is their other savior-figures. Then they say, "The Asian face of Jesus. Yes, that's good for you Christians, but do not impose that Asian face of Jesus on all of us as the face of the savior of all."

Then there is a theory of religious pluralism where all religions are seen as willed by God. It is not just the Judaeo-Christian faith that is willed by God but all religions are willed by God. In other words, all religions are ways to God. So, can the different religions respect one another in the sense of allowing each one to prosper? In this theory, are we Christians being asked to relativize our absolute claims about Jesus and the Church? In the past, we Christians held to the teaching that the only true religion is the Catholic religion and that baptism is necessary for salvation. We even had a dictum, which was variously interpreted as: "Outside the Church, there is no salvation."

The Asian face of the unique savior is becoming a problem in Asia. Despite this, we continue to seek the Asian face of Jesus. The Asian face of Jesus can be found in our brothers and sisters in Asia. We do not have to go far to realize that most of those who are suffering and poor in the world are mostly in Asia. In this the most populous continent of the world, the majority are poor. Therefore, it is mainly in the faces of the suffering victims of Asia, those whom our societies want to bury and forget, that we see the faces of Jesus.

In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, the Holy Father describes Asia not as a geographic space, but as a people with deep thirst and hunger and a yearning for life. The face of Asia then is the face of a people searching for life. The Asian face of Jesus is not a

topic for speculation. There are some aspects that require serious speculation based on tradition; but in our day-to-day living, the Asian face of Jesus may be the face of the next person you meet on the road—hungry, looking for the meaning of life, lonely.

It is like the song that Father Eduardo Hontiveros, SJ, wrote:

Tulutan mo aking mata	Grant that my eyes
Mamulat sa katotohanan	May truly see
Ikaw Poon makikilala	That you Lord may be found
Sa kapwang mapagkumbaba	In the lowly neighbor
Hesus na aking kapatid	Jesus my brother

Jesus was born Asian. Today, he is "incarnated" in this world in myriad Asian ways, especially in the faces of the poor and suffering millions of Asia.

Part Two
The Church: Renewal and Reception

CHAPTER FOUR

Bishops, the Pope and Collegiality*

Aspects of the theology of Vatican II are often presented and transmitted in the form of caricatures and slogans. Unfortunately, many believe that there is nothing more to Vatican II than what is contained in those impressionistic evaluations of the council. This approach can lead not only to minimalism and reductionism, but also to a failure in creative and dynamic reception of the council.

Let us dwell on episcopal collegiality in Vatican II not so much as doctrinal content, but as one of the turning points in the drama that characterized the council. We will try to present the confusion, hesitation, uncertainties and quarrels involved in giving birth to an ecclesiology. We will end not with a neat formulation of the ecclesiology of Vatican II, but with an emerging ecclesiological project which has not been completed and in which we are all invited to engage.

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"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. 41-53.

There are three parts to this address: 1) an introduction to the conciliar debate on collegiality; 2) examples of how collegiality can affect aspects of Church life; and 3) the emerging ecclesiological project of Vatican II as gleaned from the drama surrounding collegiality.

COLLEGIALITY: THE CONCILIAR DEBATE

The question of the existence and role of an episcopal college or body was not raised, even before the opening of Vatican II, as an isolated issue but always within the wider search for a new ecclesiological equilibrium and synthesis. This search often appeared under the rubric of the completion or expansion of Vatican I.

In such an expansion, the following elements entered: the need to complete the one-sided doctrine of Vatican I on papal primacy of jurisdiction and infallible magisterium by a doctrine on the episcopate and other components of the Church; to break away from the homogeneous Church that ecclesial practice built up after Vatican I in order to accommodate various peoples and cultures; and finally, to evolve a more holistic ecclesiological approach than that provided by a highly juridical model.

It is not true, therefore, that episcopal collegiality, as debated upon by Vatican II, simply concerned bishops. From the time of the council down to the present, the doctrinal and institutional controversies surrounding the search for appropriate expressions of the collegial principle have revealed that collegiality concerns the very nature of the Church as communion and as the subject of its self-definition and self-determination. Episcopal collegiality serves as a door through which one enters on the way to a much bigger ecclesiological project.

In the history of the conciliar debates, collegiality came to the fore during the discussions on the proposed texts of *De Ecclesia* and *De Episcopis*.[1] The questions asked and deliberated upon were manifold:

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[1]For historical accounts with solid theological interpretations, see Antonio

1) What is the most appropriate term to use—*collegium*, *corpus* or *ordo*?
2) Does the college have a sacramental basis?
3) How does one enter the college?
4) What are the effects of episcopal consecration? Are the powers to sanctify, to teach and to govern given as a unity at episcopal consecration? What is the place of canonical mission and determination in the reception and exercise of episcopal power?
5) What is the role of the college in the Universal Church? By what right does it possess this role? How is it exercised?
6) What is an adequate understanding of apostolic succession?
7) With papal primacy and infallibility securely set in place by Vatican I, how are collegial jurisdiction and infallibility to be explained? What is the source of collegial jurisdiction and infallibility?
8) How do we explain the relation within the college between bishops and the pope, who is both a member and the head of the college? How does the pope's headship of the Church relate to headship of the college?
9) How does a bishop's headship of a local Church relate to his membership in the college?
10) What are valid institutional expressions of collegiality? Do ecumenical councils constitute the only instance of a truly collegial act?
11) How does the relation between the Universal Church and local Churches affect the understanding of the bishops' role within the college?
12) What does the mission of the Church have to say about collegiality?

These are a few of the issues touching episcopal collegiality. During the council, each of these questions became a stage on which different theological frameworks presented their respective cases and challenged each other's merits and in the process brought questions into sharper focus.

Acerbi, *Due ecclesiologie, ecclesiologia giuridica ed ecclesiologia di comunione nella 'lumen gentium'* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1975); Umberto Betti, *La dottrina sull'episcopato del concilio Vaticano II* (Roma: Antonianum, 1984); and Gérard Philips, *L'Église et son mystère au deuxième concile du Vatican*, Tomes I et II (Paris: Dèsclee, 1967).

We must realize that this was a real drama, often causing deep and bitter divisions among conciliar Fathers. All this was happening during an ecumenical council, the collegial act *par excellence*. It fell especially on Pope Paul VI, the head of the college and of the council, to show to the Church and to the world how a collegial act of bishops is achievable in the first council after *Pastor Aeternus*, Vatican I's dogmatic constitution which provided a reflex and canonized consciousness of papal supremacy.[2]

As the fierce collisions between groups of bishops constantly shifted from the high visibility of the conciliar *aula* to the privacy of papal arbitration, the council was constantly being challenged to show in practice that it was indeed a college that could operate as one and that the gathering of the college in council was not made superfluous by the definition of papal primacy.

Let us briefly describe the two predominant theological models and methods operative during the debates on collegiality.[3] For the so-called minority group, paramount in the episcopal office is the jurisdiction over local Churches. Every form of jurisdiction comes from one source, the papacy, which alone has been willed by Christ to perform a function of universal scope in the Church.

Bishops indeed succeed to the apostles but not in the extraordinary powers that accrued to the latter as founders of the Church, and certainly not in the form of a college of equals who co-govern with their head. There is no permanently existing episcopal college which exercises full jurisdiction over the Universal Church by divine right. Such existence *iure divino* of the college is tenable only if it is brought about by the pope's convocation; otherwise, the college must be held as a mere institution of ecclesiastical law. Episcopal consecration, which confers a higher jurisdiction than that possessed by a

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[2]See Guiseppe Colombo, "Presentazione del colloquio," *Paolo VI e i problemi ecclesiologici al concilio* (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 1989) 15.

[3]See Acerbi, *Due ecclesiologie*, 267-94; Betti, *Dottrina*, 117-83; Philips, *L'Église*, 25-29.

presbyter and not a new order, gives bishops that capacity (not the power or right) to be called by the pope to participate in his exercise of universal power.

As the council approached the final vote on *Lumen Gentium* and its promulgation, the minority camp intensified its dissent.[4] It disputed the sacramentality of the episcopate and the sacramental origin of the powers of teaching and governing. They saw in the argument of favoring sacramental origin of the powers to teach and to govern a desire on the part of some bishops to affirm the transmission of power independently of the pope. They considered dangerous to the papacy the teaching that incorporation to the college happens at sacramental consecration.

The most serious fault was found in the teaching on the college as subject of supreme and full power in the Universal Church, for it would compel the pope to always act collegially and would change the Church's structure from monarchial to episcopal-collegial. This amounts to an admission of the infidelity of the Church to its divine constitution. Thus, the juridical independence and discretionary freedom of the pope within the college and the Church universal became the over-arching concern of the minority.

The so-called majority position generally rested on the sacramental nature of the Church and episcopacy. Of major concern was not jurisdiction but the mission which Christ entrusted to the apostles and to their successors, for the fulfillment of which, powers are given. Since the apostolic mission covers the pastoral government of the whole Church, apostolic powers are received as a unity (sanctifying, teaching and governing). Episcopal consecration is the sacrament of succession to the apostolic mission and powers through incorporation into the episcopal college. The episcopal college, always exist-

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[4]See the documentation offered by Giovanni Caprile, "Contributo alla storia della 'nota explicativa praevia,' " *Paolo VI e problemi ecclesiologici*, 587-697; Betti, *Dottrina*, 442-539; *Primauté at collégialité, le dossier de Gèrard Philips sur la nota explicativa praevia* (Leuven: University Press, 1986).

ing with and under its head, does not exist transitorily and occasionally. Rather, it participates permanently as one body in the common mission and responsibility of guiding the Church. Together with its head, the college is the subject of supreme and full power in the Church, which belongs to it by divine right and not by derivation from papal power.

Although it would be an over-simplification to claim that the minority and majority groups were always unanimous in their respective positions, we can safely say that our description is faithful to their general orientations. Part of the drama of the council was the attempt to clear a path toward consensus among these diverse theological positions or a communion of minds and judgments among people who all loved the Church and desired to be faithful to the will of Christ. In other words, the council was waiting not only for the outcome of the doctrinal debate on collegiality within the council. The conciliar Fathers were not only talking about collegiality; they were trying to find their way into a collegial act.

While some of the conciliar Fathers resorted to activities worthy of being called outright fraud, deception, propaganda and blackmail just to win votes for their positions, still many others expended effort toward achieving compromises and eventual unanimity befitting a collegial act.

For example, a vote of orientation on key points of the doctrine on the episcopacy as contained in the earlier schema of *De Ecclesia* was proposed and held, after much controversy, on 30 October 1963. Many conciliar Fathers and experts sought doctrinal formulations that would be acceptable to all (Yves Congar, Gèrard Philips, and Cardinals Frings and Suenens easily come to mind in this regard). Some issues were deliberately left unsettled in order to allow opinions to mature, e.g., the question of whether there is one or two subjects of supreme power; whether the pope is the head of the Church because he is head of the college or vice-versa; the connection between canonical mission and incorporation into the college.

In May 1964, Pope Paul VI proposed changes to some parts of

the text in order to respond to the fears of the minority regarding the dangers posed by collegiality to papal primacy. In the promulgation of conciliar documents, he also used a formula that captured the communion of judgments and of powers involved in a conciliar act, i.e., *una cum patribus* instead of the usual *sacro approbante concilio.*[5] He listened to all sides, studied their arguments, consulted with experts and, at the risk of losing personal popularity even among the conciliar Fathers, made decisions that slowed down the restless and made it less difficult for the fearful to accept the doctrine contained in the document. The famous *nota explicativa praevia* falls under this category. This principle was: no one defeated; all convinced.

The overall end product of all these compromises was the lack of synthesis in the formulation of the doctrine. Statements supportive of diverse frameworks followed each other, often without any organic development. The title of a famous book on the ecclesiology of the council aptly describes it: *Due ecclesiologie: ecclesiologia giuridica ed ecclesiologia di comunione nella 'lumen gentium'* (Two ecclesiologies: juridical ecclesiology and ecclesiology of communion in *Lumen Gentium*).

EXAMPLES OF COLLEGIALITY'S EFFECTS

All these attempts to achieve a common doctrinal and pastoral ground with regard to collegiality through compromise did not totally succeed in ending all controversy and tension, even up to now. Let us indicate three areas that were shaken by the conciliar debate and continue to experience the unsettling effects of collegiality.

First, there has been a continuing battle over the very notion of collegiality itself, especially when the collegial nature of structures—like the synod of bishops and national and regional episcopal conferences—is being discussed. Three major lines of interpretation are discernible:

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[5]See Guiseppe Alberigo, "Una cum patribus," *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta, Mélanges théologiques, Hommage à Mgr. Gérard Philips* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1970) 290-319.

a) the papal line, namely, that it is the presence and authority of the pope that makes the college what it is;[6]

b) the ontological line that sees episcopal collegiality as rooted in the communion, the conciliarity, the synodality that is an immutable element of the theological nature of the Church. This view allows for multifarious historical forms of co-responsibility and varying degrees of actualizing collegiality;[7]

c) the strictly episcopal line which sees collegial acts happening when bishops are truly granted a deliberative voice in matters affecting their regions and the Universal Church.[8]

Second, the notion of the identity and mission of bishops who form the college has not been freed of tensions. During the council, and to a lesser degree nowadays, bishops were fighting for the universal dimension of their mission. They were longing for an unmediated union with the head of the college in exercising responsibility over the whole Church. This thrust gave birth to the synod of bishops and the reform of the Roman Curia. As will be noticed, this universalist dimension has a centralist movement because the bishops' awareness of their universal responsibility led to structural changes in the center of government. The universalist direction moves toward the center. It is intensive.

As the universal-centralist dynamic operated, a definite localist and decentralist movement was also at work. If the bishops were to be considered true pastors, co-responsible for the Church and not sheer vicars of the pope, then in their local Churches, they should be accorded such dignity. The clamor was for subsidiarity and decentralization, all in the name of the demands of mission among varying

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[6]Some representatives of this interpretation are Wilhelm Bertrams and Vincenzo Fagiolo.

[7]Scholars who follow this general pattern: Yves Congar, Angel Antón, Edward Schillebeeckx, René Laurentin, Eugenio Corecco, Jospeh Ratzinger and Gian Piero Milano.

[8]Guiseppe Alberigo and Johannes Neumann follow this line.

cultures and peoples. National and regional episcopal conferences responded to this aspect. Note, however, that this localist direction moves away from the center. It is more extensive.

It is quite obvious that the deeper theological question is the relationship of local Churches within the Universal Church as the context for understanding the dual thrust of the bishops' role. The universalist pole that tends toward the center and the localist pole that pulls away from the center simply reveal the dynamic tension in the very Church that bishops serve: It is truly universal only in its concrete localness. But other questions remain. For example, how far does this mission—where Church and world intersect—influence the theological understanding of collegiality? Is mission simply a stimulus for collegial structures which are purely functional? Quite recently, the effects of sacramental consecration have been questioned in view of keeping the offices of teaching and governing dependent on the pope not only for their exercise, but for their origin.

Third, the papacy itself needed re-thinking on account of collegiality. One barometer indicating the influence of collegiality on a person's thinking is that person's conception of the papacy. Let us take Paul VI's own journey. In the beginning of his pontificate, Paul VI wrote a meditation which was revealing of the understanding of the papacy that he brought with him as he inaugurated his Petrine ministry:

> I need to take account of the position and the function which are mine from now on, which characterize me and which, of necessity, render me responsible to God, the Church, to humanity. The position is unique. Meaning to say that it constitutes me in extreme solitude. It was already great before, now it is total and tremendous. It makes one feel dizzy. Like a statue on top of a pinnacle, indeed even like a living person, such as I am, on top of a pinnacle. Jesus also was alone on the cross... Even so I must emphasize solitude: (*Anzi io devo accentuare questa solitudine*): I should not fear, I should not seek external support which would exonerate me from my duty which is that of willing, of deciding, of assuming every responsibility, of guiding others even if this would seem illogical or maybe absurd. And to suffer alone. The consoling intimacies

> cannot be but scarce and discreet: the depth of the spirit remains with me. I and God. The dialogue with God becomes full and without measure.[9]

This solitariness, in the form of "assuming every responsibility" and being accountable only to God (*uni Domino devinctus*) is being challenged by the collegiality and communion among bishops. Furthermore the ministry of Peter as center of communion is also being critiqued by the actual state of Christian disunity. In a later document (*Ecclesiam suam* 206), Paul VI brought a new style of papal self-reflection:

> A thought, in this regard, distresses Us. And it is that which makes us see how We, promoter of such reconciliation, are actually considered by many separated brethren the obstacle to it because of the primacy of honor and jurisdiction that Christ has conferred on the apostle Peter and that We have inherited from him.

The pope of the council, Paul VI, opened himself to a new manner of leadership and became aware of the ironic quality of his ministry. But he also lived through the constant tension between fidelity to the definition of Vatican I regarding papal prerogatives and promptness to respond to the call of collegiality, co-responsibility, Christian unity. If one, especially the pope himself, takes collegiality seriously, the theology and exercise of the Petrine office cannot be left unchanged.

THE EMERGING ECCLESIOLOGICAL PROJECT

Having seen three sample areas that have been and continue to be challenged by the council's teaching on episcopal collegiality, we ask a final question: What do we learn about the ecclesiology of Vatican II from the drama of collegiality?

First, from the final product as contained primarily in *Lumen Gentium* and *Christus Dominus*, we can say that the ecclesiology of Vatican II is a transitional ecclesiology, just as the council itself is transi-

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[9] *Notiziario dell'Istituto Paolo VI*, 1, 53.

tional.[10] It provided a passage from one phase of ecclesial self-definition—dominated by the social form called "Roman Catholicism" centered on the pope—to a new phase of testimony and proclamation.[11] This transitional character is characterized by both fidelity to Tradition and critical distancing from the relative values of preceding ecclesial forms in view of the needs of the time.

But continuity and renewal did not always blend well in Vatican II, as seen in the doctrine on the episcopacy. The method of juxtaposition is the major proof of this. Language and statements supportive of a pre-conciliar tendency were made to stand alongside those open to new orientations. Though often taken pejoratively as a sign of the two-sided character of the council, the compromise can also speak of the relativization of the old aspects of a teaching achieved by new insights. Juxtaposition spells less a failure than a limitation of a transitional council which could not have succeeded in presenting a new synthesis. It indicates a modest advance in the acceptance of the new incompleteness of Vatican I. But it also cries out for a new synthesis.

Second, as shown in the long painful journey into collegiality undertaken by the conciliar Fathers, the assimilation of what the council offered by way of ecclesiology requires time, for it involves re-thinking, conversion, and acceptance of the breakdown of the logic that gave coherent form to "Roman Catholicism"—thought by many for so long to be sacrosanct. But interior renewal must be coupled with structural reform. Without structural reform, the inner dynamism of renewal is not given the opportunity to influence laws,

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[10]See Hermann Pottmeyer, "A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II: Twenty Years of Interpretation of the Council," *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Guiseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua, Joseph Komonchak (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1987) 27-43.

[11]See Joseph Komonchak, "The Enlightenment and the Construction of Roman Catholicism," *Annual of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs* (1985) 31-59. See also idem, "Interpreting the Second Vatican Council," *Landas* 1:1 (1987) 81-90.

procedures and institutions. It became clear after the council that the institutional reforms initiated by the council and Paul VI were also transitional in character. Praxis in history has been a good teacher. It has opened up insights into the reality of collegiality and its proper working.

Third, ecclesiological issues other than those directly concerned with the episcopacy arose due to the debate on collegiality. Some of them are: the relation between the Universal Church and the local Churches; the role of the bishop especially in the Eucharist of the local Church; the place of mission in determining the Church's being and self-understanding; and the components of an ecclesiology of communion.

Regarding the ecclesiology of communion which is at the heart of collegiality, one main weakness of the approach of Vatican II to collegiality was the lack of a solid pneumatology. All discussions about bishops focused on Jesus Christ and his direct and explicit will to establish offices. Hence, the key word becomes *institution.*

The path leading to preoccupation with the ecclesiastical power is wide and clear, whereas pneumatology brought closer to ecclesiology would dwell upon *constitution*, the dynamic self-realization of the Church as the total Christ in the Spirit.[12] For us to achieve this, christology also needs to be informed by pneumatology. The debates on collegiality at Vatican II exposed this underdeveloped aspect of Latin ecclesiology.

Fourth, in connection with the papacy, it became clear that the continuity of Vatican II with Vatican I was not necessarily promoted by mere repetition of the latter's honored formulae. Continuity can be located more in the integration of papal primacy within the enlarged subject of ecclesial identity.

The liberty of the pope will not be restricted but rather will be

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[12]See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985) 22.

more engaged as the Church expands its self-consciousness through collegiality, through the participation of all in local Churches and through structures of communion.

CONCLUSION

Vatican II is not the ultimate point of arrival for the doctrine and practice of episcopal collegiality and for the doctrine on the Church. But in refraining from uttering (or failing to utter!) the final word, Vatican II has preserved collegiality as a reality that must be ever discovered by the Church as it actualizes itself in history. In making known its hesitations and doubts, the council deepened its fidelity to Tradition. Collegiality is one aspect of the Church's self-definition, already undertaken by Vatican I and continued by Vatican II. It is but part of the dynamic by which the Church broadens its self-understanding as a historical subject, a fruit of a living Tradition to be appropriated at every new moment and in every singular situation. And the Church's growth in self-understanding is promoted by people who love the Church and who are willing to suffer on account of that love, for love expands one's person toward full communion, toward ecclesial collegiality. Collegiality is love.

Let us close by listening to Paul VI's confession of love for the Church as he approached the end of his ministry and life:

> I could say that I always loved the Church; it was the love of the Church that took me out of my narrow and fierce egoism and set me to its service; and for the Church, not for any other, I seem to have lived. But I would like the Church to know it; and I would like to have the strength to tell it to the Church, like a secret of the heart, which only at the final moment of life one has courage to do.[13]

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[13]Paolo VI, *Pensiero alla morte* (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 1988) 28-29.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Synod for Asia as Event*

While preparing for this lecture, I was confronted with a very difficult question: How do you present an occasion like the Synod? The Synod was not just a gathering held from 19 April to 14 May 1998. It was not just the assembly of 118 bishops and superiors general and 58 auditors and experts, with a total of 252 delegates. It was not just a meeting of people coming from 22 episcopal conferences and Oriental Churches in Asia. There was something more to the Synod.

In the same way, if I am asked to describe what Vatican II was, I could spend years and years talking about it and not really end with a definitive statement about what it was or what it still is. To those of you from religious orders, when you have a general chapter or congregation, what is it all about?

That was my first question. Not the details. Not all the inside stories which I am sure many of you want to hear. But what was the

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"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. 55-68.

Synod all about? What does it mean to say that Vatican II was an event and not just an experience or a happening? What does it mean to call the Synod of Bishops an event? This questioning led me to further reading, and I would like to situate the Synod of Bishops for Asia within this framework of "event" using three short descriptions.

I. THE NEW IN THE SYNOD EVENT

Let me start with the first element in the description of an event. According to the French writer Pierre Nora, an event presents something new, a novelty which comes in the form of discontinuity. It is experienced as a break from the routinary, and generates surprise, disturbance or even possibly trauma. By causing such, it also generates a new routine, a new ordinariness of life. Another Frenchman, Pierre Grégoire, echoes this, saying that for an occasion to be identified as an event, it must stand out or distinguish itself from the repetition and regularity which constitute the flow of everyday living as a whole. Both writers then describe an event from the perspective of discontinuity, not necessarily violent nor negative.

Though they do not deny that an event is also continuous with previous ones, it produces discontinuity which opens up new possibilities or visions. So concepts, notions, lifestyles, structures, attitudes, options—what constitute the status quo—are at least questioned and new possibilities offered.

Given Nora and Grégoire's description of an event, I would definitely consider the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia an event in all its phases.

Preparations

Pope John Paul II indicated in *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* that part of the preparatory stage for the Great Jubilee would include continental synods. This in itself brought questions to many, because it is not ordinary to have continental synods. This announcement alone—which he reiterated when he came to Manila in 1995 for the Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

and World Youth Day—made it clear that it was meant to be an event, something extraordinary convened by the Holy Father.

As part of the preparations, the famous *Lineamenta* was produced and distributed to the many bishops. And what an event! The *Lineamenta* was torn apart by the bishops. The most celebrated episcopal conference—whose comments on the *Lineamenta* literally led to it being thrown out—was the Japanese Episcopal Conference. You could see from the reactions of the episcopal conferences that the bishops wanted something new! The bishops were ready for a disturbance and were looking forward to a rupture, but the *Lineamenta* kept on repeating old things.

The *Lineamenta* was sent back to Rome with all the bishops' comments, and the *Instrumentum Laboris* came out in February 1998—much better than the *Lineamenta.* The bishops were very happy with it, and their attitude showed that this document was part of an event. There was hope for something wonderful for Asia.

Initial Report

The day after the assembly opened on April 19, Cardinal Paul Shan, a Jesuit from Taiwan appointed by the Holy Father as the general relator, delivered his report (called *relatio ante disceptationem*) before the plenary discussion. He pulled items from the *Lineamenta*, the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the suggestions of the bishops, and his report proved to be a beautiful document.

The rather long report was read in the afternoon of April 20, following Cardinal Bovone's funeral in the morning, and was applauded sincerely by the assembly. While we were leaving the synod hall, a number of bishops told us, "Oh, we can go home tomorrow!" The report already contained everything that we wanted for the Asian Church. And many of them thought it was even better than the *Instrumentum Laboris.* Each document generated excitement—suggesting that the Synod had spoken.

Interventions and Subsequent Report

Then followed the interventions in this order: the bishops, officials and auditors. From the quality of the interventions, you could see that an event was really coming.

Tensions were inevitable in such a big and varied assembly. The Roman Curia officials tended to remind the bishops about prudence, the integrity of the faith and the necessity of the service of the dicasteries. The bishops were more inclined to propose new ways of doing things and to be critical of some official procedures. Even the auditors freely expressed criticism of some practices and persons in the Church. Only the Holy Father was spared.

After a week of interventions that truly gave us a taste of an event, Cardinal Shan together with some experts prepared another report meant to highlight the concerns raised by the bishops, officials and auditors in their interventions. The report was called the *relatio post disceptationem*, or the report after the deliberation. It was supposed to summarize the current state of the discussions and so many looked forward to it.

After the report was read, the bishops said, "It seems that we have not accomplished much if that report accurately reflects the state of the Synod." Many found the report dry and incomplete.

Group Discussions

After this letdown at the end of the interventions in the plenary assembly, the delegates were divided into 11 small groups. Each group had to formulate propositions which Cardinal Shan and his assistants would synthesize into one list to be approved by the body. This approved list would then be given to the Holy Father as material for his apostolic exhortation.

The delegates now pinned their hopes on the small groups. The common sentiment was that the voice from the grassroots would finally be heard. In my group, the discussion was conducted in freedom, sincerity and openness. People worked very hard together and

stayed beyond the prescribed hours. This was another beautiful part of the event.

After a few days, all groups submitted their propositions. When the first draft of the unified list of propositions was given to us, it was a letdown again. You could feel the frustration because the expectations for something new were not met. But all this disappointment and anger was part of the event. Good came out of it. We went back to the small groups and sent many modifications to the drafting committee. The delegates did not want to give up until the last moment.

Two days before the closing, when the final list of the propositions to be given to the Holy Father was read, the sense of well-being and euphoria broke through, "At least our voices will reach the Holy Father." The reaction to the list showed that the delegates were able to identify with its contents.

I look back and say, "Yes, from that almost external review of the succession of events, we saw that, as a whole, what was celebrated there was an event. You could see the birthing of a new consciousness." There was a lot of pain, but the resilience and perseverance of the delegates was also apparent. They really wanted something new for the Church of Asia. What kept coming back from the delegates was the insistence that, "We, the Churches of Asia, need to keep our voices clear because this is our contribution to the Universal Church." This was the reason—not pride—that they did not want to give up and made sure that their voices were heard loud and clear.

Final Propositions

Allow me to go to the final propositions which contain the points of convergence in the discussions. These points constitute the objective reference points of this Synod event and without them, the Synod could quickly pass into oblivion.

I have identified 15 points of agreement out of the total 59 propositions submitted:

1. The need for an Asian approach to mission, theology, church life, etc.
2. The universal acceptance of the FABC intuitions and programs, especially the triple dialogue with cultures, other religions and the poor.
3. The FABC focus on a "New Way of Being Church" as "Communion of Communities."
4. The centrality of the proclamation of Jesus the Savior, yet observing the absence of a uniform pattern in Asia for such a proclamation.
5. The Spirit's movement in the triple dialogue of the Church in Asia.
6. The reaffirmation of inculturation and the need for continuous exploration of its possibilities.
7. The need to enhance communion and participation in the Church on all levels.
8. A renewed biblical apostolate and biblical formation.
9. The emphasis on authentic witnessing and spirituality, which are the soul of mission and evangelization in Asia.
10. Holistic and contextualized formation of all Church personnel.
11. A solid foundation in the social teaching of the Church.
12. The missionary and evangelizing role of the laity with special focus on the family, women and youth.
13. Special issues such as migration, tourism, the debt crisis, globalization, ecology, abortion, social communications.
14. Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, calling for effective structures on the continental level.
15. Churches in particularly difficult situations—like China, North Korea, Iraq, Lebanon; and Churches in new areas—like Kazakhstan, Siberia, Kirghizstan, Nepal, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia.

Now after hearing these points of convergence, you might complain, "There's nothing new here, except maybe the reaffirmation of these things." Yes and no. The first thing that made these concerns constitute an event—the birth of something new—is this: these concerns were elevated from the level of the FABC and the national episcopal conferences to that of the Universal Church. If they become part of the apostolic exhortation of John Paul II, they will not only be addressed to the Church of Asia but the Universal Church.

Second, what the delegates tried to express constituted what was new: "We want to contribute, even our problems, even our struggles. That is our contribution to the Universal Church precisely as Asians." The bishops were unabashedly Asian. In fact, some of the staff working for the Synod of Bishops said, "In comparison to the delegates of the two previous synods [for Africa and America], the delegates to the Asian Synod were bolder, more courageous. They said what they wanted to say in front of the Holy Father!" A Latin American cardinal told me, "I thought you Asians are serene, peace-loving, and quiet. Why are the bishops talking that way?" It was the delegates' desire to make a contribution that fired them up.

The content may not have been new, but if you had been there, you would have sensed something new—the fervor, the courage, the willingness to contribute, and the readiness to stand with the other Churches of the world and say, "We Asians are not just recipients of your goodness, your evangelizing mission. We can stand beside you and we have something to contribute to you, even our problems. Share our problems and learn from us."

II. THE CONTEXT OF THE SYNOD EVENT

If the first element of an event focuses on discontinuity which opens up new possibilities, there is a second which I borrow from Paul Veyne. He says that an event becomes an event only because of the context in which it is situated. An event needs a context for it to have sense. Isolate the event from its proper historical context and the event ceases to be an event. An event then goes back to a plot—a story plot—of which the event is simply an episode.

All the interventions suggested that the Synod could be appreciated more as an event if we were attentive to its context, not only the context of Asia as a continent, but the personal context of the bishops. If you were aware of their countries and Churches, then you would understand why they were sharing, formulating statements and fighting for a particular point in a certain way. Remove their contexts and the event fizzles out.

The stories we heard in session, exchanged over food and told during walks revealed the special context, the ground within which the event was being born. They also revealed the diversity and complexity of the Asian situation—concerns, problems and the richness of the resources that we have.

The following stories serve to illustrate the personal and ecclesial context of the different interventions. Some interventions—like that of Archbishop Topo of India, who asked for a greater role in evangelization for his indigenous people—raised profound issues. Others, like Patrick D'Souza's singing or Bishop Shimamoto's plea in Latin for inculturation, were even surprising. All were poignant and moving, like Hong Kong Auxiliary Bishop John Tong Hon's story about the telegram of Bishop Matthias, a 90-year old bishop from the mainland whose petition to leave the mainland was denied: "Oh sweet Synod, from where we could learn a lot of things! I am with you."

Bishop Hamao from Japan spoke on "The Church and Peace." He recalled how Japan invaded many countries in Asia. We felt his pain when he said, "We were aggressors. We must admit that the Church of Japan failed to realize and proclaim how inhuman and out of harmony with Gospel values the elements of that war were." He then followed with an appeal for peace—which would have meant nothing without its context. People applauded and you could feel that he and the whole Japanese people were somehow forgiven at that point.

Valerian D'Souza then told us about the problems with baptism in a Hindu setting. People there cannot afford to be baptized because they will lose their families and be disowned. He asked, "Why

don't we study more closely the 'baptism of desire?' " He told us the story of a woman who approached him and said, "Father I believe but I cannot be baptized. I will lose my father, mother and husband." Of course it is easy for us to say, "Who is more important, Jesus Christ or your family?" But if you listen through him to the woman saying, "But I believe in Jesus. I believe," what do you do?

Then there was Cardinal Ratzinger, known to be formal and exacting, but humbly struggling in his own way. After one session of our small group, we walked together and discussed the question of Jesus as the only Savior. He turned to me and said, "You know, that question is very difficult. I would not know how to handle it."

Bishop Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan of Vietnam narrated how he prayed while in prison, "Lord, I cannot perform my mission anymore as a bishop." The Lord seemed to have answered him, "Continue your mission in prison. Every moment live in love. That is your mission now." That is why he now says, "I don't want to be invited by people who ask me to talk about the atrocities of the Communist government. I learned what my new mission was."

The new churches in Kazakhstan, Siberia and other places also have their stories. Some Jesuits there shared stories of going through streets, locating sites of destroyed churches, and finding some families with Catholic roots. One of them said, "After seven years, Mass attendance jumped from twenty to two hundred." In Mongolia today, there are 25 missionary priests and sisters, mostly Filipino.

These stories and many more are behind all of those proposals about inculturation, evangelization, communion. Those big terms are supported by a context—stories of life, stories of struggles. And I say they are part of an event because through the interaction and intersection of the different stories so wonderfully shared by the bishops, you could feel a merging of all these stories into the one story of Christian life. The possibilities for Christian living simply open up to us in its wealth and depth. Your hearts and horizons are broadened after hearing those stories, and no one leaves the hall the same person again. You leave always with others, bearing their sentiments,

pains and successes. I am sure that, after the Synod, each one went back to his own place but no one went home alone. An event had happened through the sharing of stories.

III. THE END OF THE SYNOD EVENT

If the first two elements of an event are newness and context, the third focuses on the question, "When does an event finish?" When did the Synod end? Some say it ended on May 14 with the closing Mass of the Holy Father. Others believe it will end with the publication of the apostolic exhortation to be written by the Holy Father.

When has it ended or will it still end? Here we find some help from Bernard Lonergan who writes that, "It is the occurrence of later events that place earlier events in a new perspective." History, then, is an ongoing process within which the context of events keeps enlarging and perspectives shift.

Lonergan would probably answer our question this way, "No, the Synod as an event has not ended." Part of the Synod would be the new perspectives that might follow. We can say then that the Synod did not end on May 14, nor will it end abruptly with the publication of the exhortation, or solemnly with the visit of the Pope to Asia.

What happens in the local Churches in Asia after the celebration of the Synod is still part of the Synod as an event. What will happen to us after that celebration is very crucial because that will determine whether the Synod really made a difference or not. What will happen later on will tell us whether the Synod was really an event.

For Schools of Theology

The Synod also indicated nine concerns for schools of theology which need to be part of our planning, teaching and research.

1. *Inculturated approaches to the proclamation of Jesus as the only Savior.* We are asked to reflect on Jesus in the face of multiplicity of religions which believe in many mediations, but also to be mindful of the different stages or phases of evangelization.

2. *Theological research in understanding the Bible in an Asian context.* The bishops proposed programs that help form people in the biblical apostolate with an emphasis on applying the Word of God to life.
3. *The role of all schools, especially schools of theology, in proclamation.* One area where schools can start showing their option for the poor is in the recruitment process. Maybe more scholarships can be made available for the poor.
4. *Formation in the social teaching of the Church.* Solid programs and formation modules on the social doctrines of the Church are needed.
5. *Adapting seminary formation to the demands of evangelization in the light of Asian realities.* Since the school of theology is a component of total formation, teachers and formators should consciously incorporate Asian realities in their programs.
6. *The role of professors and staff of seminaries and schools of theology as formators, not just teachers.* Faculty members should not be allowed to teach right after specialization, but must spend time studying Asian spirituality.
7. *Setting up lay formation centers focusing on action for social transformation.* There is need for a pastoral-theological school for lay people.
8. *Training in ecumenical dialogue.* This is not new anymore.
9. *Social communications.* Pastoral leaders, including priests and seminarians, should be educated in this area.

For the Philippine Church

Let me now say something about the role of the Church in the Philippines after the Synod. I did not know how to react every time a bishop mentioned the situation of other Churches—whether persecution, minority status or struggles with non-Catholics and non-Christians. They would always say, "Except in the Philippines." When they spoke of the Church's powerlessness and the dearth of vocations, they would always add, "Except in the Philippines."

On the one hand, they seemed to recognize that Christian living in the Philippines has reached a certain level of maturity compared to their assessment of their own position. On the other hand, I have

this suspicion that, at the same time, we are also seen or looked upon as a sore thumb—that we are unable to share fully the situation of our brothers and sisters in Asia.

Allow me to give three instances. Bishop Jacques Ishaq, an Oriental bishop of the Chaldeans in the whole of Iraq, has twenty priests. Toward the end of the Synod, he asked me about the number of students at Loyola School of Theology (LST). When I told him, he exclaimed, "What? Around four hundred?" And I added, "But that's only one school of theology in the Philippines." Then he continued, "How about in the seminary where you are rector?" I replied, "Oh we are a small seminary with only 41 seminarians last year." He said, "Forty-one and that's a small seminary?" I felt I was being so insensitive giving out the data. Then he told me at breakfast, "Send priests to us." I retorted, "But Bishop, we're from the Latin rite and you were just talking about the need to minister to Oriental Catholics according to their rite." He insisted, "That's in the hall. I'm talking to you now. It doesn't really matter to me. Send us priests. Our Church is dying."

Then there was Bishop Anthony Lobo of Pakistan. The Pakistani bishops did not finish the Synod because one of their bishops shot himself in protest over Pakistan's Anti-Blasphemy Law used against Christians. Before he left, Bishop Lobo approached me and said, "Can you accept seminarians from Pakistan? We have nowhere to send our seminarians." "Sure," I answered. I could not say "No." Imagine bishops pleading with you, "Please."

Finally, Bishop Theo Gomez of Bangladesh, a very lovable bishop, told me, "We want to send priests to the Philippines for renewal but we don't have money. We cannot pay for their tuition or room and board. Can you do something there from your side? Our priests need renewal." And of course, I said, "Yes. We will do something. We will find a parish where they can stay. We will find some families that can pay for their tuition. Whatever! Whatever!"

These bishops seem to look to the Philippines and invite us to go out of our country to be with them. At the same time, they invite us

to stay where we are so they can come here, learn from us and be renewed. Right there in the Synod, you could see that when leadership was needed, the Philippine bishops would always be called upon to help. We played a special role in this Synod.

But aside from sending missionaries and accepting our less fortunate Catholic brothers and sisters for whatever needs they have, we need to learn to listen to them, their hopes and their struggles. Even if they are very far from us, we must be converted and changed somehow—in our lifestyle, in our way of being Catholics. We should step down from the position of power and influence that we just take for granted here in the Philippines. This is a call to solidarity.

A PERSONAL NOTE

I thought that LST, our school, was very much part of the Synod event and I hope it will be part of the same event in the future. During the opening Mass, the different Churches were asked to contribute. The Gospel was read in the Syro-Malabar rite. For the preparation of gifts, Indonesian men and women performed a colorful and beautiful dance of offering. And then the acclamation after consecration was done by some Indian women.

But the *Gloria* was Father Hontiveros's "Papuri sa Diyos." It was very special for me, because I remember the day Father Hontiveros finished composing that song for the Barangka parish choir I was directing. When he gave it to me, he said, "Study this so that you can teach it." When the choir at the Synod liturgy started singing, I was transported to that day with my parish choir. I realized, "This song has gone a long way from Barangka to Saint Peter's." And now that Father Hontiveros cannot sing anymore because of his stroke, he continues to help Asians worship God with their own words and melodies.

The Filipino delegates who studied at LST and San Jose Seminary had their picture taken with Father Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Jesuits. Archbishop Quevedo said, "We are the group of Filipino delegates who, you know..." Father Kolvenbach contin-

ued, "Who were corrupted by the Jesuits?" And we all agreed. He said that it was a privilege for him to join us. This small group, which included Bishops Bacani, Claver, Lagdameo, Quevedo, Rosales, and myself, remembered professors who prepared us for our participation in the Synod through the FABC.

In 1994, I was introduced to the FABC by Father Arévalo, one of my LST professors. During the Synod, people whom I had met in Thailand and the 1995 FABC seminar in Manila greeted me, "Father, we listened to you in Manila." As I expressed my surprise, I realized that Father Arévalo was very much present at the Synod.

The Synod as an event is far from over. I think it is just beginning. And it will depend on us who are here in the Philippines—LST, communities, religious congregations and parishes—whether the Synod will become a truly wineskin-bursting event.

CHAPTER SIX

The Renewal that Awaits the Church in Asia*

Yves Congar, the great Dominican theologian and cardinal, once said that there is "a geography of ideas" ("*une géographie des idées*").[1] Ideas do not arise from a vacuum but from a confluence of factors that shape a particular people, place and historical moment. Conversely, ideas help shape human, social and cultural geographies. Strictly speaking, there are no ideas per se but only ideas and their times and contexts.

For this Seventh Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the question of *renewal* needs to be addressed from within the realities of the Church's concrete life at a concrete moment of history, in a concrete locality called Asia, which really is made up of various "worlds." Understanding renewal requires an appreciation of the rich heritage of the Christian Tradition,

*Conference delivered at the FABC Seventh Plenary Assembly, Sampran, Thailand, 4 January 2000. Previously published in *Landas* 13:2 (1999) 14-35; and *FABC Papers* 91 (2000).

[1]Yves Congar, OP, "Situation ecclésiologique au moment de 'Ecclesiam Suam' et passage à une église dans l'itinéraire des hommes," *Ecclesiam Suam. Première lettre encyclique de Paul VI* (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 1982) 79.

which is the very life of the Church anywhere and at any time. It must take into account the many FABC assemblies, workshops and meetings that have influenced the Church in Asia these past three decades. It must face the dawning of the new Christian millennium and the challenges of the Great Jubilee, as indicated by the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia and by its fruit, the post-Synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA).[2]

How can we best conceive of the renewal of the Church in a continent where Christianity actually began but where, in most places, the Church has barely begun? How do we renew what is not "old"? What does it mean to renew the Church in cultures shaped by other faiths and ancient civilizations and which are being radically changed by emerging global, materialistic and post-modern values? What does renewal of the Church entail in the midst of political and social upheavals where the Church's voice is almost unheeded? How does the Church pursue its renewal among an economically strangled people? In what sense is the Church to be renewed in Asia where people have deep yearnings for life itself?

The reflection that follows will offer one possible way of exploring the *renewal* of the Church in Asia. It does not pretend to be able to cover the whole "geography" within which true renewal is to be understood and pursued in Asia. It is meant to be a simple guide and tool for our reflection and discernment.

My presentation will be divided into two major sections. The first part, in classical theological style, attempts to mine the riches of the Christian Tradition on the theme of renewal. Three sub-sections comprise this section: first, an investigation into the New Testament data on renewal; second, a consideration of the concept of renewal in the Second Vatican Council; third, a presentation of how contemporary theologians envision renewal in the Church. The second,

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[2]John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999).

lengthier part, building on the findings of the first section, is a constructive attempt, through the use of images, to articulate five key issues that the renewal of the Church in Asia must face and reflect on.

I. RENEWAL IN THE TRADITION

A. Renewal in the New Testament

It will be profitable for us to begin our investigation of renewal by going to its biblical basis, especially to the New Testament.[3]

1. Kainós

Two Greek words denote "new things." *Neos* signifies what was not there before or what is new in time or origin. *Kainós* signifies what is new in nature, what is different from the usual or what is better than the old or superior in value. *Kainós* is qualitative, while *neos* is temporal.

Theologically, *kainós* depicts the wholly different and miraculous brought by the time of salvation in Jesus Christ. Images of the new reality inaugurated by salvation in Jesus Christ abound in the New Testament: "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1), "the new Jerusalem" (Rev 3:12), "a new creation in Christ" (2 Cor 5:17). The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). Saint Paul portrays Jesus Christ as the initiator of the new dispensation surpassing the regime of sin initiated by Adam (Rom 5:12-21).

The reality of salvation given by Jesus to humanity, most especially to Christians, is far superior to the worthlessness of the former life of sin. "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). Paul

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[3]This portion relies heavily on the entry *kainós* and its derivatives in Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965) 447-54.

also declares, "But now we are released from the law, dead to what held us captive, so that we may serve in the newness of the spirit and not under the obsolete letter" (Rom 7:6). The Church—the community of the baptized and believers in Christ—is the new humanity, bearing the new reality of salvation already present in Christ.

2. *Anakainóow* (to renew) and *Anakaínowsis* (renewal)

In early Christian writings, making new is connected with regeneration in faith in Christ, formalized in the reception of baptism. Saint Paul reminds Christians that the subject of the inner renewal of human beings is the Holy Spirit poured out by God. "Now the one who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the Spirit as a first installment" (2 Cor 5:5). "If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8:11).

Christians, however, must strive to show in their conduct that they truly possess the Spirit of renewal, that they belong indeed to the new age and the new humanity. "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

3. *Summary*

Renewal in the New Testament is a multi-faceted reality with the following dimensions:

a. *Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological and Soteriological:* Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of the Father's plan and in the power of the Holy Spirit, generates a new humanity, a new heaven and a new earth through the gift of salvation. This thrust of renewal in the New Testament blends well with the theme of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia: *Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia: 'That they may have life, and have it abundantly.'* The saving mission of Jesus is aimed at and is the beginning of the definitive renewal of all things.

b. *Eschatological*: the newness brought about by salvation in Christ is already present and operative, yet humanity and the world still await its fullness in hope.

c. *Anthropological and Ethical*: those renewed in Christ need to strive daily to discard the old person, the old life. They are to live by the new life shared by Christ and to manifest the renewal of the inner person in a life of righteousness and holiness.

d. *Ecclesiological*: the Church is the new humanity, the presence or "sacrament" of salvation that renews the world.

In the New Testament, we learn that the renewal of the world and of humanity is a gift that has already been offered by the Triune God, thanks to the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The renewal of the world and of humanity is the fruit of the *missio Dei*. Following Karl Rahner, we can say that the very offer of the gift already effects a new objective situation in the world and humanity, prior to the acceptance or rejection of the gift. Renewal is a gift, an irrevocable gift, waiting to be received, to be appropriated, to be made one's own by people, by the community and by humanity. If only they would dare to receive it.

B. Renewal of the Church in Vatican II

In the twentieth century, the great moment of renewal of and for the Catholic Church has been the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Attempts of various local and regional Churches to renew themselves, including those of the FABC, have been inspired by the directions mapped out by the council. It might be profitable to note the ideas on the renewal of the Church of the two popes who guided the council, John XXIII and Paul VI, for they influenced the council's agenda.

1. Pope John XXIII

For John XXIII,[4] the renewal of the Church that Vatican II aims

[4]The main texts of John XXIII used in this section are: the Apostolic Con-

to promote must have two trajectories. First is the inward movement (*ad intra*) or renewal as rediscovering the Church's true identity, inner vitality or interior life. Second is the outward movement (*ad extra*), where the Church is renewed in its mission in the modern world.

While preserving the Christian doctrine and the patrimony of truth, the Church needs to bring the "energies" of the Gospel in contact with the modern world, so that it may respond to the needs of the times. In view of mission, the renewal of the Church's identity does not mean a mere repetition of what it believes in. Neither is interior renewal to be equated with immobility. Rather, it urges the Church to offer the gospel truth in a manner effective for the men and women of our times. Through the Church, Jesus continues renewing the world. Renewal therefore involves the Church's fidelity to itself and discernment of the signs of the times for its "prolongation" of Jesus' mission in the world.

2. Pope Paul VI

Paul VI[5] follows the main lines set by his predecessor while putting his unique stamp on the understanding of renewal. First, ecclesial renewal has a christological motivation. The Church is renewed only by being more conformed to Christ and his intention for the Church.

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stitution *Humanae Salutis* of 25 Dec 1961; the radio message of 11 Sep 1962; the speech at the solemn opening of the Council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, on 11 Oct 1962; and the speech at the closing of the first period of the Council on 8 Dec 1962. These texts are found in *Enchiridion Vaticanum I, Documenti del Concilio Vaticano II. Testo ufficiale e versione italiana* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1981) 2-19, 24-31, 32-53 and 68-81, respectively.

[5]The main texts of Paul VI used in this section are: the speech at the opening of the second period of the Council on 29 Sep 1963; the speech at the opening of the third period on 14 Sep 1964; the speech at the opening of the fourth period on 14 Sep 1965; the homily at the Seventh Session of the Council on 28 Oct 1965; and the speech at the Eighth Session on 18 Nov 1965. Ibid., 80-119, 140-63, 192-215, 248-55 and 256-71, respectively. See also Antonio Ugenti, *La Chiesa dei tempi nuovi. Il rinnovamento della Chiesa nel magistero di Paolo VI* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983).

Second, ecclesial renewal is for mission. The inner vitality of the Church is reawakened to equip it better for its missionary vocation. Renewal therefore does not lead to a Church closed in upon itself but produces a Church more open to humanity, rendering Christ more present to all. Third, renewal is a process of purification. Although the Church, due to the Holy Spirit's guidance, cannot be accused of substantial infidelity to the Tradition, it still must be cleansed of impurities that could impede it from fulfilling its mission more effectively. So a return to the mind of Christ is not "historicizing" the Church but purifying it to meet the new conditions of the world. Renewal involves purifying both hearts and structures of the Church, all for fidelity to Christ and the mission he entrusted to the Church.

3. Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council treats explicitly the theme of Church renewal mainly in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* and the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio.* The terms used quite consistently are *renovatio* and *renovare.* Only in some isolated cases does the council utilize the term *reformatio.* There seems to have been a conscious decision to distinguish renewal from reform. At the risk of oversimplifying the teaching of the council, let us identify the major lines of Church renewal in the two documents mentioned.

First, the council identifies the agents of renewal of the Church. Jesus Christ, who makes all things new, renews the Church and calls it unceasingly to renewal. Christ renews the Church through the Holy Spirit that he has given to vivify, unite and move his Body. The Church community also acts to renew itself but always under the impulse of the same Holy Spirit.

Second, why is there a need to renew the Church? To be sure the Church is indefectibly holy.[6] But because it contains sinners in its own bosom, it is always in need of purification (LG 8). In its pilgrim

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[6]The teaching of Vatican II on the indefectible holiness of the Church and its need for constant renewal is discussed in Francis A. Sullivan, SJ, *The Church*

state and as a human institution, the Church is in need of continued reform (UR 6). Although the Church is endowed with all divinely revealed truths and the means of grace, its members fail to live by them (UR 4). The council openly admits the sins and failures of the members of the holy Church, thus the need for renewal and purification.

Third, the goal of renewal is to increase the Church's fidelity to its own calling (UR 6), to Christ's will for it (UR 4). Through purification and renewal, separated Christians will grow in unity so that the Church as sign of Christ may shine forth more clearly in the earth (LG 15).

Fourth, there are various forms of renewal and purification. These include penance (LG 8), the biblical and liturgical movements, the preaching of the Word and catechetics, the apostolate of the laity, new forms of religious life, the spirituality of married life, the Church's social teaching and activity (UR 6).

4. Summary

Vatican II and the popes who guided it depict renewal primarily as a rediscovery, a retrieval of a life, a goal, and a mission that are already the possession of the Church as a gift of the Triune God. But the members and children of the Church are not always up to that new life, mission and finality that are theirs, hence the need to be purified. The Church is not renewed only for its own sake but also for mission, for the changing world that needs to see Jesus. The Church also embarks on its renewal for Jesus who is its Lord. The modern world beckons the Church to speak the renewing word of Jesus. The Spirit of Christ already present in the Church and who is also in the world awaits the Church to be made ever new in Jesus.

In many ways, the plenary assemblies and other activities of the FABC these past thirty years have been attempts to "give flesh" to

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We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988) 66-83.

the framework of renewal provided by Vatican II. This observation can be verified by perusing the statements emanating from the FABC sessions and offices. At this point, it might be profitable to articulate the understanding of renewal found in the FABC documents. This task, however, is massive and cannot be done here with justice because it requires bringing to the explicit level what is latent but powerfully present in the life and "rhythm" of the FABC. To my knowledge, this seventh plenary assembly is the first plenary assembly that will tackle renewal as a theme rather than a context. The FABC understanding of Church renewal deserves a fuller study than can be contained in these few points.[7]

C. Theological Conceptions of Renewal

Wilbert Shenk[8] and Avery Dulles, SJ,[9] in separate studies, have identified various ways theologians have envisioned renewal of the Church, especially in relation to modern culture. Their respective categorizations can be a useful tool for assessing the different approaches to renewal. Each strategy will be described briefly in terms of what it considers as the source, goal and process of renewal. Some strengths and weaknesses of each will also be indicated.

1. Renewal as Reaffirmation of Tradition

In this view, the source of renewal is ecclesiastical identity, while its goal is the self-preservation of the Church. Renewal is the recap-

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[7]Seminal studies on the ecclesiology of FABC include C.B. Putranta, *The Idea of the Church in the Documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences 1970-1982* (Roma: Tipografia Poliglotta della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1985) and Miguel Marcelo Quatra, OMI, *At the Side of the Multitudes: The Kingdom of God and Mission of the Church in the FABC Documents* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2000).

[8]Wilbert R. Shenk, "Mission, Renewal, and the Future of the Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21 (1997) 154-59.

[9]Avery Dulles, SJ, *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977) 29-44.

turing of the genius and integrity of its tradition, appealing to the past for authority in the face of possible changes. Renewal for this option is primarily a matter of spirituality, quite inward and ecclesiocentric.

2. Renewal as Restructuring the Church

For those who espouse this model, the source of renewal is efficient and effective ecclesiastical organization, while its goal is a "streamlined" and efficient Church. The Church needs to update its structures if it wants to be a credible witness to contemporary society. Inefficiency discredits the Church. Restructuring by itself, however, does little to stimulate vision and commitment.

3. Renewal as "Mainstreaming" the Church

This particular strategy looks to general cultures as the very source of renewal, while its goal is the active participation of the Church in cultures. In other words, a renewed Church finds its place in the culture in which it exists. So the Church must package and market itself in culturally acceptable forms. "Mainstreaming," however, may not provide the Church with enough motivation to be a distinctive presence in society or even a counter-culture.

4. Renewal as Restoring the Primitive Church

The source of renewal for this approach is the primitive apostolic Church, while the goal is the replication in our time of this original Church. Based on the assumption that the Church was perfect in its inception, renewal therefore means a re-pristination, eliminating accretions or corruption by returning to the beginnings. While providing motivation for correcting abuses, this theory is criticized for idealizing the period of Christian origins and ignoring its defects. It also tends to ignore the action of the Holy Spirit in the more recent past.

5. Renewal as Development

The source of renewal is the vital principle that impels the Church to grow, while the goal is the actualization of the Church's potenti-

alities. This developmental concept of reform rests upon an optimistic estimation of human powers to grow, to the neglect of the pervasiveness of sin. The discontinuous and irregular character of historical change is also ignored and is not integrated into the process of renewal.

6. Renewal as Missionary Engagement or Creative Interaction and Response

The source of renewal is the *missio Dei*, while the goal is the intensified witness of the Church to the reign of God. Renewal is concerned with recovering the Church's *raison d'être* which is mission on behalf of the world. Authentic renewal is manifested in intensified witness in the world to the reign of God. This involves a dialogic and relational view of the Church as it responds to the shifting human environment in which it lives and carries out its mission.

7. Summary

The final strategy, renewal as missionary engagement, seems to be the most appropriate umbrella within which the other strategies of renewal can be viewed and implemented. It is closer to the biblical data regarding renewal and corresponds to the thrust of Vatican II and the various assemblies of the FABC.

II. RENEWAL AS A THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL QUESTION IN ASIA

The rich fruit of the preceding survey indicates the complexity and depth of the question of Church renewal. Far from being a merely pragmatic question, renewal is a matter that raises significant theological, ecclesiological and anthropological questions. As the Church in Asia at the start of a new Christian millennium asks itself whether it dares to receive anew the renewing gift of salvation in Christ in order to become a sacrament of a new humanity and a new earth, she must face at least five key issues. I shall attempt to stimulate reflection on these key points through the use of images.

A. The Renewed Church as Door or Window

One key issue in renewal concerns the tension between the pole of identity and the pole of going out to the world on mission.

On the one hand, a renewed Church must preserve its identity by rediscovering and re-embracing it. In the process, the Church becomes clearer about who it is and what it is meant to be in God's mysterious purpose for the world. After all, Christianity is fundamentally an "instituted" religion.[10] Its identity is a mystery that is given to it and to which it must be faithful. We want to see in Asia a Church that takes "holy pride" in its identity, a confidence or security in the gift entrusted to it.[11]

On the other hand, the Church cannot be an end in itself. Renewal cannot just be about diminishing membership and attendance or sagging monetary contributions and, in Asia, increasing the number of baptized Christians. True renewal in Church identity happens only when the Church engages the world and its cultures "missionally" so that its presence in society invites people to a reconciled relationship with God, neighbors and creation, to justice and peace.[12] A Church does not renew itself for its own sake but so that it might follow its Lord more faithfully as it journeys in history.[13]

The church door can symbolize a renewed Church working itself out in the tension between identity and mission. The Christian community that comes in through the door and goes out again is a people seeking an identity and mission in Christ. Renewal means being able to locate the mystery of salvation on both sides of the door—in

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[10]Yves Congar, OP, "Renewal of the Spirit and Reform of the Institution," in *Ongoing Reform of the Church* (*Concilium* 73), ed. Alois Müller and Norbert Greinacher (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 48.

[11]John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* 31.

[12]Shenk, 154.

[13]Robert Schreiter, CPPS, "Renewing the Church in China," *Origins* 22 (1993) 710.

identity and in worldly life.[14] A window can also be an image for a renewed Church. "A window that no longer lets us see the wide open spaces outside, but gets in the way of the view, has lost its reason for being."[15] In other words, renewal happens anew when the Church in Asia becomes the locus of the holy covenant between the Word and the world, the *sacramentum Christi* and *sacramentum mundi.*

This involves engaging courageously and missionally the worlds and cultures of Asia. Not just the traditional cultures formed by ancient faiths and civilizations but also the emerging cultures shaped by global, consumerist, post-modern cultures which the bishops of Asia and John Paul II alert us to in EA 6, 22. The Church needs to read critically and in a discerning way the post-modern culture emerging in Asia, with its denial of absolutes and meta-narratives, pluralism, fragmentation, skepticism, decentered and multiple selves, individualism.[16]

A renewed Church dares to tell the story of Jesus to this world that has no use for meta-narratives. A renewed Church in Asia retells the story of Jesus from the perspective of the life realities of Asian peoples, and also looks at the situations of Asia from the mystery of the Jesus event. But the story must be told, re-told, more and more beautifully, through words and living parables of life and witness. In

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[14]From a talk of Mary Collins at a Notre Dame Symposium on 2 Dec 1995, quoted in Nathan Mitchell, "The Amen Corner," *Worship* 70 (1996) 167.

[15]Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, trans. Adrian Walker from the German original, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen: Kirche heute verstehen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 145.

[16]See the enlightening studies of Daniel Patrick Huang, SJ, "Emerging Global, Postmodern Culture in the Philippines," *Landas* 13 (1999) 48-58; Samuel H. Canilang, CMF, "Post-Modernity: An Emerging New Cultural Milieu and Consecrated Life," *Religious Life Asia* (1999) 71-83; Martin Henry, "God in Postmodernity," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 63 (1998) 3-21; Julio César Barrera Vélez, "Descripción del fenomeno religioso en la postmodernidad," *Cristianismo y Sociedad* 36 (1998) 7-27.

hearing the story of salvation, the world might "look through" the window or even "pass through" the door and see not just the mystery that the Church possesses, but understand its deep yearning, thirst and hunger. The renewed Church as door also allows the experiences of non-Christians to uncover for the Church itself the mystery of Christ it possesses, in the same way that it shares that mystery to peoples of other faiths.

B. Renewal as Sitting at One Table

Another concern in renewal is the question of who initiates renewal, who promotes it and who benefits from it. This issue has a direct bearing on renewing the spirit of communion in the Church.

On the one hand, renewal initiated by those in authority enjoys "officiality" and can utilize the resources of ecclesiastical office. The Church can point to Vatican II as a renewal "from above" which was a fairly unusual phenomenon because it was not prepared from below.[17] One danger, however, of a renewal exclusively handled by officials is bureaucratization in the Church. "Bureaucratization means the process by which the skills and knowledge necessary to the conducting of life at all levels become centralized in a professional 'knowledge class' operating through a businesslike administrative structure."[18] A highly bureaucratized Church is not our image of a renewed Church, for bureaucratization often results in fragmentation, break-down of traditional institutions, politicization of ideas, ideological thinking.[19]

Renewal must have room for initiatives "from below" or from the "periphery" or the "margins." "An 'official' reform can lead more speedily to clear and binding results, yet it is actively hindered by

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[17]Congar, "Renewal of the Spirit," 45-46.

[18]M. Francis Mannion, "Cultural Fragmentation and Christian Worship," *Liturgy* 90 (1990) 5, quoted in Mitchell, 163-64.

[19]Ibid., 164.

many ecclesio-sociological factors. A reform arising from the community has more prospects of being creative, but it does run the risk of remaining non-binding and diffuse."[20] Programs drawn up "from above" need feedback from the base.[21] Renewal listens to the negative experiences as well as to "constructive disobedience."[22] Reception, not just submission, becomes the preferred process for renewal. The traditional concept of reception is based on a fabric of relationships, a mutual give and take between persons in the Church and the local Churches between themselves.[23]

The point is: the renewal of the Church in Asia is and must be the concern of all. The very process of renewal that allows participation and recognition produces a community of mutuality, communication, inter-dependence, and participation. Renewal enables the Church to celebrate diversity, firm in belief that this diversity is a gift of the Spirit that makes the body one. No one will, therefore, be alienated in a renewed Church. No poor person will be turned down because of poverty. No indigenous person will feel foreign in it. No woman will be looked down upon. No young person will be reduced to a "problem." No non-Catholic will be treated as an enemy. No idea will be dismissed a priori because it does not come from those with authority or influence.

Renewal involves receiving the gift of communion that is the identity and mission of the Church. Communion and mission are inseparably connected (EA 24). The image of table fellowship may be utilized here, an image close to the experience of Asian peoples. In a renewed Church, all are children of God, all will have a place at

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[20]Alois Müller, "Practical Theology of Church Reform," *Concilium* 73 (1972) 69.

[21]Adolf Exeler, "Change of Consciousness and Church Reform," *Concilium* 73 (1972) 84.

[22]Ibid., 82-83.

[23]Hermann Pottmeyer, "Reception and Submission," *The Jurist* 51 (1991) 269.

table, all will have enough to eat, all can laugh and enjoy, all can talk and be listened to. In that communion, which could only be the gift of the Spirit, the mystery of salvation and of the reign of God is experienced especially by the poor and needy. One blessing that God has given to the Church in Asia through the FABC is the "eruption" of the mystery of Church in the exchange of stories and personal interaction of participants in its assemblies.

Renewal of the Church in Asia also means that we take our rightful place in the Universal Church, fully participating in the mutual give and take among the local Churches and the in Church universal. In the history of the development of Tradition, the whole Church can be the receiver of a decision or initiative that comes from a local Church.[24]

In many parts of *Ecclesia in Asia*, the Holy Father celebrates with the Synod Fathers and delegates the Asian roots of Christ and of Christianity. Can the Churches in Asia bring their noodles, curry, *adobo*, papaya, guava, to the grand table of Christian fellowship and also enjoy the pasta, steak, sausages, croissants, nachos, brought by our brothers and sisters from other lands? A renewed Church in Asia humbly shares what it possesses and gladly receives what others offer. In so doing, the Church also contributes to universal peace and communion at a time when many Asian countries are feeling the adverse effects of globalization (EA 39).

C. Renewal as Letting Go for New Life

A third issue in renewal is evoked by the image of grieving.

It is true that because the Church is essentially Tradition or transmission of faith-life, it cannot renew itself by discarding everything that has been handed down from the past just because it is past. One can recreate only the forms of what one has already received. That is why renewal involves knowledge of the content of the Christian

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[24]Ibid., 289-90.

realities that have been received and are to be handed on.[25] Renewal that seeks to break with the past, to ignore history and wants to make a totally fresh start without any regard for continuity could not be true renewal of the Church.[26] Renewal means being rooted again in "the faith of our ancestors."

It would be a mistake, however, to think of Tradition as merely past. Tradition is the very life of the Church, the past that is ever new as present and as future life of the community. Thus, fidelity to Tradition does not mean simply repeating or imitating what was done in the past, mulling over the idealized past with nostalgia and longing. True renewal acknowledges that some things will not be the same again. Fidelity to Tradition is never idolatry or a sterile imitation of the past but a courageous shaping of a future that grows out of the Tradition.[27] Of course, it demands real discernment to be able to separate the Church's true life from its passing sociological forms. The process of grieving, as described by those who have studied it, might be helpful at this point.

Restorationism, rather than renewal, results from "the refusal to grieve and to risk the new."[28] There are stages of societal and cultural grieving: a feeling of sadness together with symptoms of resistance; the tension between the attraction of the past and the call to face the future; and the stage of recovery of marked detachment at what has been lost. Life must go on now "with the best of the past being carried over into the future."[29]

In a similar vein, John Paul II calls for a purification of memory

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[25]Congar, "Renewal of the Spirit," 48.

[26]Karl-Heinz Ohlig, "The Theological Objectives of Church Reform," *Concilium* 73 (1972) 52.

[27]Ibid., 53.

[28]Gerard Arbuckle, SM, *Refounding the Church* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1996) 180-81.

[29]Ibid., 183.

through an examination of conscience—asking forgiveness and offering forgiveness—so that the Church can let go of unacceptable and sinful ways of the past as it faces the future.[30] Without proper grieving, a Church engages in chronic denial. It would blame others for whatever is chaotic, it would pass on to outside agencies whatever is painful or dangerous, it would not tolerate people who see the truth. "Following Christ demands from the Church the constant readiness to give up everything that has become dear to it over the course of time—its traditions, all that it holds to be its life, and to walk in poverty beneath the cross towards the hope of new life."[31]

A renewed Church in Asia cannot be but deeply immersed in its Christian Tradition, drawing from its treasure what is old and what is ever new (see Matt 13:52). Cardinal Henri de Lubac, SJ, earlier emphasized the need for commitment to the *living* Tradition if renewal is to be fruitful.[32] A renewed Church in Asia will also be reconciled with its past, will learn how to let go and to risk facing the future with hope. Blaming others for ills of the past will have to stop somewhere. The present and the future beckon. The mystery of the hope coming from the Christian heritage awaits the response of the Church in Asia as its future. Old forms of being Church which now shackle genuine Tradition need to be courageously abandoned, not for the sake of novelty but for the mission of the Church in Asia today.

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[30]John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994) especially nos. 31-36.

[31]Ohlig, 54.

[32]See Christopher J. Walsh, "De Lubac's Critique of the Postconciliar Church," *Communio* 19 (1992) 404-32 and "Henri de Lubac in Connecticut: Unpublished Conferences on Renewal in the Postconciliar Period," *Communio* 23 (1996) 786-805.

D. Renewal as Conversion of Hearts and Structures

There is no doubt that renewal of the Church will happen only when there is moral renewal,[33] a transformation of the human and ecclesial spirit according to the standards of the Gospel, the following of Christ and the values of the reign of God.[34]

> At the heart of our commitments lie our attitudes. Our thoughts and feelings towards people and organizations determine our willingness to commit ourselves to them. Commitment means focus. Focus means concentration, intensity, direction and clarity, but it also means freely chosen limitations, defined contours and real surrender. Our question is not relevance but simply, "Is it loving?" Success is not one of the names of God. To struggle is to love.[35]

Renewal happens only when an appropriate consciousness has been formed among those involved in the process. When reforms are put into effect without the necessary change of consciousness, they may well produce the opposite effect to that intended.[36] Archbishop Rembert Weakland, OSB, recommends a revival of spiritual consciousness through the rediscovery of the mystical and contemplative traditions of the Church if it wants to bring to the world a sense of the sacred and the transcendent.[37]

The memory of martyrs and saints serves the renewal of the Church since they manifest the power of Christ's redemption in their renewed persons (cf. TMA 37). As Ratzinger notes, we need people interiorly transformed by the faith, who live by it with joy and hope,

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[33]Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 150.

[34]Congar, "Renewal of the Spirit," 41.

[35]Erik Riechers, "The Elusive Reality of Church Renewal," *Review for Religious* 54 (1995) 197.

[36]Exeler, 78.

[37]Rembert Weakland, OSB, "Church Reform: What Remains to be Done," *Doctrine and Life* 41 (1991) 175.

becoming saints or persons who live in love.[38] Saints, in a real sense, are not only agents of renewal but also powerful signs of the renewal worked out by the Spirit in every age.

Renewal, however, includes renewing or rebirthing institutions as well. The function of an institution is to mediate the relations between the self and the world.[39] As far as the Church's mission is concerned, institutions—the right institutions—are necessary. Institutions are moral communities shaping character and vocation. They play a normative function because they are based on a vision of what is right and good.[40] However, as Ratzinger once pointed out,

> Ecclesiastical institutions and juridical organizations become obsolete. They risk setting themselves up as the essence of the Church and thus prevent us from seeing through to what is truly essential. This is why they must always be dismantled again, like scaffolding that has outlived its necessity. Reform is ever renewed *ablatio*—removal, whose purpose is to allow the *nobilis forma*, the countenance of the bride, and with it the Bridegroom himself, the living Lord, to appear.[41]

Renewal happens when the mystery of salvation in Christ is lived in the hearts of persons and in the mediating structures of the community. It is never a choice of one over the other.

> It is true that purely spiritual attitudes also have an impact on social structures. This shows that the spiritual element does take effect. It is necessary; yet it is not sufficient. There is in fact a density proper to impersonal and collective structures which has to be reached.[42]

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[38]Joseph Ratzinger, *Il Sale della Terra. Cristianesimo e Chiesa cattolica nella svolta del millenio*, trans. Giuseppe Reguzzoni and Cinzia Patella from the German original entitled *Salz der Erde. Christentum und katholische Kirche an der jahrstausendwende* (Milano: Edizioni San Paolo, 1997) 204.

[39]Robert N. Bellah, *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage, 1992) 10, 287, quoted by Shenk, 156.

[40]Shenk, 158.

[41]Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 142.

A renewed Church in Asia must work hard to awaken the Spirit of Jesus and his values in hearts and lives of persons. It was observed during the Special Assembly of the Synod for Asia in 1998 that the Church in Asia is known and appreciated for providing quality education, quality health care, quality social and advocacy services. But when Asians want spiritual guidance, they prefer to go to Buddhist, Zen and Hindu prayer masters. Why? This observation makes us pause. But a renewed Church must also ask whether its structures mirror the values of the reign of God.

Access of the poor to the Church and its services, the lifestyle and options of the faithful and the leaders, the heroes and heroines of the Church—all these must be evaluated. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, for example, challenged the Church in the Philippines to be a Church of the Poor, one trait of which is "to orient and tilt the center of gravity of the entire community in favor of the needy."[43] Can the Church receive the mystery of a new heart, a new humanity offered to it and translate these into liberating structures?

E. Renewal as Daring Waiting

Because of the human and sociological dimensions of the Church, renewal involves planning, decision and effective action. Answers must be sought for the pressing queries of our time. After all, Christians are sent to the world not just as innocent doves, but as wise serpents (Matt 10:16)! The Church cannot and must not escape from the use of human tools for enhancing its life and mission.

Many people in the Church, however, have come to realize that while "reforms can be planned, predicted, promoted and evaluated, renewals cannot. Reform invites vigorous action; renewal invites self-

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[42]Congar, "Renewal of the Spirit," 43.

[43]*Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Acts and Decrees* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1992) par. no. 134.

surrender."[44] To renew is to welcome an arriving presence that, when it fully and finally appears, will wrap our hearts in wonder, shock and surprise. "We can define and describe a reform; but we are defined by a renewal."[45]

Renewal is promoted by the wonderer and not only by the maker or doer. If the maker were to dominate renewal, the Church will become a self-made institution reduced to the merely empirical domain.[46] The maker values his own activity, the wonderer opens himself to the horizon of the eternal and the infinite.

Renewal is promoted also by "poets and poetic images that create a disequilibrium, a thrilling sense of vertigo, a shuddering disturbance deep at the center of things that spreads outward to apprehend the whole range of reality and to alter our experience and perception of it."[47] The artist uncovers, releases rather than makes.[48]

If the Church needs to be a wonderer, poet, artist, then it must be at home with surprises, with God's "anarchical plots and surprises."[49] In the theological scene of Asia, fruitful renewal has occurred when theologians like Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ, and Michael Amaladoss, SJ, to name a few, dared to be open to the mystery of the faith as it led them to unknown, surprising and disturbing lands to be explored.[50]

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[44]Mitchell, 164.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 140.

[47]Mitchell, 172.

[48]Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 141.

[49]Werner Jeanrod, "Some Criteria for Church Reform," *Doctrine and Life* 42 (1992) 361.

[50]See Catalino G. Arévalo, SJ, "A Life in the Service of the Church in the Philippines and of Asia," *Yearbook of Contextual Theologies 95* (Aachen: Missionswissenschaftliches Institut Missio) and Michael Amaladoss, SJ, "Faith

Let it not be said that the Church in Asia suffers from a collective crisis of imagination and will.[51] Christ has renewed all things. The Church has only to dream it again, to see it again, to sing it again, to celebrate it in ritual and dance, to hope in it again, to live it again against all the death dealing forces in Asia. "The renewal that awaits us cannot be engineered into existence. We can only dare and dream our way into it."[52]

CONCLUSION

A renewed Church is a Church that dares and dreams its way into the Triune God's renewal of all things, a renewal that awaits it. The mystery of salvation that has renewed all things is awaiting the Church in Asia. Will the Church dream to enter it? Will the Church dare to live by it? Will the Church dare to discover that mystery in itself and in the thirst, yearning and hunger of Asian peoples?

We have reason to believe that the Church in Asia will not let renewal wait in vain. Already, we see manifestations of the courage and daring that mark a renewed Church. Pope John Paul II, echoing the sentiments of the Synod Fathers in the Special Assembly for Asia, said,

> Those who believe in Christ are still a small minority in this vast and most populous continent. Yet far from being a timid minority, they are lively in faith, full of the hope and vitality which only love can bring. In their humble and courageous way, they have influenced the cultures and societies of Asia, especially the lives of the poor and the helpless, many of whom do not share the Catholic faith. They are an example to Christians everywhere to be eager to share the treasure of the Good News "in season and out of season" (2

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meets Faith. Living with Cross-cultural Experiences," *Yearbook of Contextual Theologies 98.*

[51]Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, "A Vision for the Church of 2010," *Origins* 25 (1995) 151.

[52]Mitchell, 166.

> Tim 4:2). They find strength in the wondrous power of the Holy Spirit who, despite the generally small numbers of the Church in Asia, ensures that the Church's presence is like the yeast which mixes with the flour in a quiet and hidden way till it is all leavened (cf. Matt 13:33; EA 50).

For these intimations of a renewal *already* happening in the Church in Asia, we are grateful. For the fullness of renewal *not yet* with us but towards which the Church in Asia is journeying, we are hopeful!

CHAPTER SEVEN

What Have We Become?

*Ten Years After PCP II**

It is very difficult to evaluate events in the Church in the Philippines *after* the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) without having an understanding of what kind of council PCP II is. This understanding, therefore, will be our starting point. Then, we will discuss the ecclesiological notion of "reception" and how the Philippine Church has so far received PCP II. Finally, we will have points for reflection.

WHAT KIND OF COUNCIL IS PCP II?

Let us take Article Seven of the conciliar documents of PCP II as a way to understand the self-professed type of council that PCP II had in mind. Article Seven says that the Council was convoked "to take stock of where we are; to look where we are going; to re-animate our life in Jesus Christ; to unite all things in Him." These are four important features of PCP II.

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PCP II was convoked to take stock of where the Church in the Philippines was after Vatican II. It asked: Where have we gone? Where are we standing now? Those who convoked it thought that a second plenary council was the best venue for the Church in the Philippines to understand where it was standing after the Second Vatican Council. The convenors presupposed that Vatican II was still the main reference point for renewal.

Twenty-six years after Vatican II, PCP II's Article Six says, "We have changed." Now, we hope to assess where we have grown. How have we changed? How have we been changed by Vatican II? We not only look at where we are standing now but also at where we are supposed to go, and how to re-animate our life of faith in Jesus Christ so that our direction will be motivated by an effort to unite all things in Jesus Christ.

Let us try to extract from the four important features of PCP II what type of council it is by looking at the presuppositions. The first presupposition is that Vatican II is the great event of renewal in the Church, and that the Church in the Philippines can say that we have received that renewal initiated by Vatican II.

The other presupposition is that the Church in the Philippines must not lose the momentum of the original People Power EDSA event in 1986.[1] The preparation for PCP II started in 1988, two years after EDSA. All through the document, EDSA is referred to. In those important paragraphs where EDSA is mentioned, one goal of PCP II is for the Church to continue reaping the fruits of that moment of grace called EDSA.

These are the two major factors that would shape the orientation of PCP II—the renewal occasioned by Vatican II and the moment of grace that was EDSA which tried to renew Philippine society.

After acknowledging the wonderful things we have received from

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[1]Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, the highway on which the peaceful revolution that ousted President Ferdinand Marcos occurred in February 1986.

Vatican II and the miracle of EDSA, the Church in the Philippines still needs to renew itself, especially in the face of the changing realities of the Philippines. There are two major areas of renewal that PCP II calls for.

First is the renewal in the Church's self-understanding. Here PCP II proposes several images—community of disciples, Church of the Poor, a community in a state of mission. Concomitant to this is the second—a renewal also in the Church's mission. This is labeled as renewed integral evangelization.

This double renewal must happen in the context of Philippine society, which itself is also very much in need of renewal. Renewal of the Church's self-understanding and of the Church's understanding of its mission are not totally ends in themselves. They are also at the service of the renewal of the wider Philippine society.

The images used by PCP II in the Church's self-understanding and the Church's mission arise from an analysis of the situation in the Philippines.

In PCP II 665, it says that the Philippines is a country of "chronic, almost compulsive dividedness." What a description! Dividedness is bad in itself but to characterize it as chronic, and even compulsive, makes it ugly. There is a compulsion to be divided. We cannot control it. We look for it. We search for it.

Because of this situation, the theme of PCP II is to unite all things under Christ. The direct response of PCP II to the chronic, compulsive dividedness of the country is unity. This movement towards unity is seen in the Church's renewed self-understanding—communion, community of disciples, Church of the Poor—which leads to universal love.

When you go to the side of mission, you will see it qualified as *integral*—renewed integral evangelization, no salvation without liberation, integrated spirituality. Let us not divide Filipinos among themselves. Let us not divide faith and justice. Let us not divide worship and ordinary life.

Everything is moving towards unity—unity within the Church, unity in mission. Why? Because the country is chronically and compulsively divided.

Thus, what type of council is PCP II?

We can say that PCP II is a council of *renewal*:

1) renewing the Church's self-understanding;
2) renewing the Church's understanding of its mission; and hopefully
3) renewing the performance of its mission at the service of the transformation of Philippine society.

I think any evaluation of the Church in the Philippines and the impact of PCP II on that Church must take into consideration the nature of PCP II. When we try to evaluate the impact of PCP II on the Church in the Philippines, I would use those three aspects of renewal.

Look at your communities. Look at your parishes. Look at your dioceses. Is there a renewed understanding of the Church? Is there a renewed understanding and performance of mission? And is Philippine society also renewed into a more united society because the Church has been an effective agent of communion, an effective agent of integral development and evangelization?

THE LENS OF RECEPTION

One way of reviewing PCP II is by using the category of reception. Instead of just describing what has happened in the Philippine Church after PCP II, I would re-phrase the question as, "How did the Church in the Philippines receive PCP II?" The ecclesiological notion of reception means that by the very act of receiving a council, the Church is actually shaping itself according to the vision of that council.

I will use the concept of reception which was made famous by Yves Congar, the great French Dominican theologian who was later made a cardinal. He tried in one long study to retrieve or to recover this notion of reception, most especially perceived in the history of the Church after councils.

Normally after councils or synods, there follows a period of reception. Whatever a council—be it an ecumenical council or a provincial council or a plenary council or a local synod—legislates or offers to the people, it must go through a process of reception, a process of assimilation. Moreover, one can see, even in our recent history, that so many synods have been convoked but their reception is practically nil. Those synods have been forgotten.

It is easy to hold synods but the crucial process of reception is not guaranteed to be successful. Will the output of the synods be received? Will they be assimilated? Will they be implemented? Thus, I would like to review the ten years after PCP II from the optic of the ecclesiological notion of reception.

One author, Hermann Pottmeyer, says that reception is basically a spiritual process—it is the acceptance of the gift of God recognized by a Church in a council or synod. There is a faith dimension here. People discern that this council is a gift of God, that the Spirit is offering a gift to the local Church, or in the case of Vatican II, that the Universal Church is receiving a gift from the Holy Spirit through the ecumenical council.

Reception is actually an act of discernment—the community discerns that a beautiful gift indeed is given by the Lord. The gift that is offered is received, made its own, appropriated and allowed to work itself in its power so that the Church is transformed in the very process of reception. I receive the gift; I allow the gift to change me.

Reception is actually the key to being transformed but I can receive only if I recognize the gift of God. If people do not receive a council, it is an indication that the people do not see the giftedness of that council, because if people recognize the gift, how can they refuse the gift?

When we talk of the reception of a council, we examine two major elements of reception. One is interpretation and the second is movement.

Reception as Interpretation

Reception as interpretation involves primarily an interpretation of the documents, the texts, and the decrees of the council. Very often, this interpretation part of reception is done on an official basis because it is the officials of the Church who are authorized to interpret councils and issue pronouncements. They give addresses, issue pastoral letters, make decisions, call synods, hold prayer services. What I am saying is this: very often, reception of a council on the level of interpreting documents happens as official reception—how the leaders of the Church, how the leaders of a community or congregation interpret a council. That is one aspect of reception.

And this is easily verified. In a week's time [a week after this lecture was delivered], bishops will report on the results of the consultations held to review PCP II, and I am sure that many of their reports will be on the level of official interpretation of PCP II—the dioceses that have convoked synods, the offices that they have set up, the pastoral letters that the bishops of the Philippines have issued from 1991 up to now. These are very important, but incomplete, because the council still has to be received by the whole community, by the whole people of God.

Reception as Movement

Reception of a council must be by the whole body. Which brings us to the second aspect of reception—reception not just as interpretation of documents but also as movement.

Reception as movement is much more difficult to evaluate and to determine because it means the elaboration—in ordinary life, in attitudes, in values, in relationships, in priorities, in lifestyle—of the renewed self-understanding and the renewed sense of mission. We are going beyond letters, synods, desks and offices to an elaboration in life. That is why it is called movement—the dynamism, the so-called spirit of the council is so powerful that it impels individuals and communities to adjust their lifestyles, their attitudes, their frames of minds, their relationships, according to the new understanding of Church and the new understanding of mission.

Reception as movement involves a lot of self-critique—the Church critiquing itself and maybe even distancing itself critically from what it may call its old self, the old person, the old ways. But not because everything old is bad. When we use "old person" here we use it in the sense of Saint Paul—the old person under the Law, vis-à-vis the renewed person in Jesus Christ.

Reception as movement involves a painful and courageous act of critical distancing from the old self and owning the intellectual, spiritual and moral impulses that have generated the renewed self-understanding and renewed sense of mission.

Although this cannot be measured in the same way that we can measure the number of pastoral letters issued and the number of desks assembled and the number of offices established, it remains a crucial aspect of the reception of any council.

Has PCP II been received in a way that the council can be seen as the source from which a self-critiquing movement, a movement of conversion emanates? After all, it is a council of renewal. Have the people, has the Church in the Philippines, because of PCP II, owned the intellectual, moral and spiritual energies that PCP II offers to us as impulses for a renewed understanding of Church, a renewed understanding of mission and a renewed society?

To arrive at a holistic view of what has happened to the Church in the Philippines after PCP II, and how the Church in the Philippines has received PCP II, I think we should consider the two aspects of the notion of reception—not just official interpretation, but also movement.

We hope that the pastoral letters which will tell us about the review of PCP II will help serve the movement of renewal because, in the end, that is more important—the movement, the conversion, the intellectual, moral and spiritual conversion brought about by a new way of looking at Church and a new way of looking at mission.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

We have to be realistic in assessing PCP II and the Church in the Philippines after PCP II. We should avoid two extremes. One extreme is the position that says PCP II amounts to nothing. Immediately after PCP II, some theologians and pastors already declared that PCP II was only a big show, that it should be dismissed. They said that the following year we should call for PCP III because they considered PCP II obsolete from the beginning. I think some people made such statements out of mistrust for anything conciliar and headed by bishops. Another extreme is for people to put so much burden on PCP II, wanting PCP II to accomplish a lot and appealing to PCP II for everything.

Yes, we have to admit that many good and significant things have happened to the Church after PCP II, but let us not be blind. In the ten years from 1991 up to 2001, it was not only PCP II that was the concern of the Church in the Philippines.

We had the Ramos presidency. For the first time, the country elected a non-Catholic president. That was a big concern for the Church. In 1994 came *Tertio Millenio Adveniente.* In 1995, the Philippines hosted the World Youth Day and the 25th anniversary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. That took a lot of work. In 1997, the year of Jesus Christ. In 1998, the year of the Holy Spirit. In 1999, the year of the Father. In 2000, the Jubilee. If you count all that, a good seven years of the past decade were devoted to things not necessarily connected, at least explicitly, to PCP II.

By stretching our pastoral imagination, we may connect the year of the Father, the year of the Spirit, the year of Jesus Christ and the Jubilee to the themes of PCP II. But as an explicit theme, PCP II was literally buried this past decade under the preparations and concerns for the Jubilee. Therefore, we cannot totally blame the Church in the Philippines for forgetting PCP II. We also cannot blame PCP II for being ineffectual.

Still it is important to evaluate the reception of some specific points of PCP II. Using the framework of interpretation and move-

ment, let us see how much the Church in the Philippines has been changed because it has received the themes of PCP II, not only on the official level of interpretation but also as movement.

Let me point to this wonderful image of a community of disciples becoming the Church of the Poor. In fact, I would argue that if there is anything that has the potential to be used as the interpretative key for the self-understanding of the Church in PCP II, it would be that of being Church of the Poor.

Unless the poor are included, we are not a full community. For as long as the poor are in the margins, we cannot be considered a community. The Church as full community needs to be Church *for* the Poor. If you re-read PCP II 122-136, you will still be moved by those wonderful paragraphs on being Church of the Poor.

Just dwell on that important aspect—there is no true community of disciples in the Church unless the Church in the Philippines becomes also a Church of the Poor. Not only a Church that cares for the poor, not only a Church that lives by evangelical poverty, but a Church where the poor are the evangelizers, a Church where the poor feel at home, a Church where the poor are the center of gravity, a Church where the leaders are also poor because they do not vie for the highest honors or the best parishes or titles, a Church where the poor are the bearer of Good News for everyone, including the leaders.

Now I suggest that you read that portion, i.e., PCP II 122-136, and then, using the framework of reception that I have given, ask yourself: How has the Church in the Philippines received that? Has the Church in the Philippines been transformed into the Church of the Poor envisioned by PCP II—both on the levels of official interpretation and as movement?

Let me express my opinion. On the level of official interpretation, just gauging the mindset of the Church after PCP II and using primarily the pastoral letters of the CBCP, we can say there is a definite movement towards being Church of the Poor. The pastoral letters of the bishops these past 10 years have been all pro-people, and most especially pro-poor.

How about on the level of movement? In matters of lifestyle, have we become poorer because of PCP II? For example, look at local communities, parishes, and gauge the involvement of the poor in pastoral councils. Are they really heard? Have they become the center of gravity for the Church? When we construct new churches, we want them to be durable, but will the poor and simple feel at home in them? Or will they think that they look like *basura* [trash] in the nice church, feel embarrassed and say to themselves, "We better not enter." This is what bothers me.

As I told you, the original PCP II came after EDSA. We will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of PCP II next week and another EDSA event is looming large before us. But I have also been quite disturbed since the start of this impeachment crisis.[2] The painful question is: Where are the poor? *Where are the poor?*

Where are the simple people? How come there is a Mendiola[3] and there is an EDSA? And what almost killed me was this: I very seldom watch TV but before New Year's day, I turned on the TV and saw a program reviewing the presidency of Joseph Estrada. It was very beautifully done. What kept getting repeated was the antiphon—"*Ang Pangulo ng maralita. Ang Pangulo ng maralita. Ang Pangulo ng maralita*" [The President of the poor. The President of the poor. The President of the poor]. It was very beautifully crafted.

It was very difficult, but I tried to bracket off my biases and be a *tabula rasa*, just an empty vessel. How would I be affected by the moving images? You would really be convinced that this man was the President of the poor. And there was no shame in saying that—"*Ako ang Pangulo ng mga maralita*" [I am the President of the poor].

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[2]Brought about by the impeachment of President Joseph Estrada in December 2000, and which, after this talk was delivered, culminated in another peaceful revolution known as EDSA II.

[3]The road that leads directly to Malacañang Palace, the official residence of the President of the Philippines. Mendiola is known for the rallies and demonstrations held by the organized poor, who are usually linked to "leftist" groups.

Even the anchorwoman was convincing. She was able to convey the message beautifully, "*Magpasalamat tayo sa pagtatapos ng taon. Biniyayaan tayo ng Diyos ng Pangulo ng maralita*" [Let us give thanks for the ending of another year. God has blessed us with a President of the poor].

What bothered me then was this: How come someone like him does not have any hesitation in claiming to be the President of the poor? Which bishop can claim to be the bishop of the poor? Which priest can stand up here and say, "*Ako po'y pari ng maralita*" [I am a priest of the poor]? Which diocese, in its report next week, can say, "*Kami po ay Simbahan ng Maralita*" [We are a Church of the Poor]?

Someone told me that the rhetoric of President Estrada—who is claiming the poor for himself—is probably succeeding. Perhaps the absence of the simple and the poor in some of the movements initiated by Church leaders is a form of silent protest against the Church. The poor know they have to protest against President Estrada but they are also saying, "Look, why don't we protest against *you*, too."

I remember a grandfather who, after a storm, brought his grandson to a church for baptism but was rejected by the pastor because they came three minutes late; so they had to come back the following week. Then this old man saw how the pastor conducted a special baptism for a group that came late in a number of cars. They explained that they were caught in traffic and the pastor suddenly understood, "Yes, I know how bad the traffic is. It's not your fault that you're late." So he baptized the baby. This grandfather told me, "How come the priest understands those who are caught in traffic but the priest cannot understand those of us who have to walk?" Do you expect that man to believe our rhetoric about the Church of the Poor?

I do not know what this new EDSA event will bring. But it is quite disturbing. Who will gather in EDSA? Who? Will it be the official interpreters? Will it be those whom PCP II proclaimed to be the center of gravity of the Church? *At doon ho ako nagagalit. Parang ang galing-galing ng mga propagandista nitong si President Estrada. Talagang magaling kung papaano niyang nahati ang tao. Tapos yung sinabi ng Simbahan sa PCP II na walang epekto, sa kanyang ilang buwan pa lang ng propaganda,*

epektibong epektibo [And that is what makes me angry. It appears that President Estrada's propagandists are more effective. In a few months, they helped him divide the people, whereas what PCP II proclaimed ten years ago has had no effect].

Another thing mentioned by PCP II concerns the Church and the political community (PCP II 330-347). The bishops of PCP II, speaking about renewed integral evangelization, called on the laity and the pastors to really collaborate—the pastors, especially through their teaching of moral principles, to help in the transformation of Philippine society; and the laity, especially through active involvement, including partisan politics, to evangelize the secular world.

Now may I ask, of the eleven senators [who voted *not* to open the second envelope at President Estrada's impeachment trial], how many of them are Catholics? If we use them as the gauge of the success of PCP II, how will you grade PCP II? How will you grade the laity, especially those in partisan politics and their service in renewing society? Well, we can always excuse ourselves and say, "They were politicians even before PCP II." Has anything changed?

In PCP II 627, the section on Catholic education states,

> We must sadly admit, however, that many of the graduates of our schools, despite these distinct advantages of their schooling, do not seem to have sufficiently assimilated Christian values in such a way as to renew their Christian living.

Many graduates of Catholic schools have been successful economically and politically, but they have also contributed to the dismal economic and political imbalances existing in our country. Has the situation changed after ten years?

Can we put the blame on PCP II? Not really. We have to be realistic. The Philippine Church has a lot of receiving and assimilating to do. Perhaps we have hardly begun. But that has been the history of the Church. Reception, assimilation for renewal, usually takes time to take effect. It takes time for re-thinking. It takes time for conversion. It takes time for the acceptance that we need to be renewed.

PCP II still has to be received and the context of the Philippine Church and Philippine society has been shifting so fast. How can we continue receiving this renewal movement in constantly shifting contexts? Yes, there are a lot of valid things in PCP II because what it has to offer has already been offered by Vatican II, but what we have to discern, most probably, is how to receive PCP II in our context and to identify areas of reception.

We are still in the process of receiving and we must pray that we may have the courage to receive PCP II fully. It would require a lot of dying to self. Is the Church in the Philippines willing to die in order to receive the new life that is being offered? For as long as we cling to what is convenient, to what is comfortable, to what we have been used to, and we do not take the risk of dying, then renewal will never happen. We may be interpreting texts and we may be producing wonderful letters and decrees but, in terms of movement, we will still be inert if we are unwilling to die to self.

Many of the changes in the Church have occurred because of Vatican II. What we are being asked in PCP II is to elaborate these changes locally in the situation of the Philippines, most especially in becoming the Church of the Poor and in being a leaven in the transformation of society. In receiving PCP II, let us begin with those who are formed in our own Catholic institutions.

Part Three
Mission: Theology and Spirituality

CHAPTER EIGHT

Transformed into an Apostle*

I would like to attempt to do a fresh reading of what people have been saying regarding mission. The theology of mission that I would like to present does not wish to explain again the why and how of mission, but to indicate a few points coming from the grace of the moment. Hopefully, the missionary calling and fervor is reawakened in every baptized Catholic in the Philippines as we anticipate the coming National Mission Congress. The Congress is being held during the Great Jubilee of Redemption, the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. It is significant and not a mere coincidence that we will have this Mission Congress as we commemorate the Jubilee of the Incarnation. The Incarnation of the Word of God should lead us in understanding mission.

There are many doors through which we can enter to understand mission. What does the Incarnation of the Word of God tell us regarding mission? If we enter this particular door of the Incarnation, what type of mission or understanding of mission will be opened up to us? Let me focus on three points.

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*Lecture delivered during Theological Hour at Loyola School of Theology, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, 20 September 2000.

"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. 109-119.

THE INCARNATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF MISSION

In Gal 4:4, Paul says, "When the fullness of time came, the Father sent his son born of a woman." Very simply put, but very dense. In its simplicity of formulation, it strikes the heart. The Incarnation of the Word of God as planned by the Father is the fullness of time, of history, and of human existence. This taking flesh through a woman is the fullness of time that conquers the emptiness of life, of time, and of human existence. This fullness of time coincides with the Incarnation. But what is in the Incarnation that makes it an experience of the fullness of time?

The Incarnation of the Word of God is also the fullness of God's self-communication. It is the fullness of God's self-disclosure in love. Such is the reason why even in your ordinary daily life a feeling of emptiness may already be an indication that self-communication in love is not happening. When you are with a loved one and both of you freely show your inner selves and accept each other's full disclosure, time stops because time is full. When you look at your watch you wonder, "We've been talking already for five hours and we did not notice it." Time is so full. But, when you are in the classroom listening to your teacher and there is no fullness of communication, time becomes empty. You are bored and wonder, "When will this end?" Then you fall asleep.

The Incarnation is the fullness of God's manifestation of love in human form bringing with it the fullness of time. The Incarnation is making God known in a full way, in a way that is not to be compared with Moses' making God known, with Elijah's making God known. No matter how great these people were, nothing can compare with the fullness of God's manifestation of Self in the Incarnate Word.

Gal 4:4 is to be read with Col 1:15. After a long description of who Jesus is, Paul says that this Jesus, this Son of God, is the image of the invisible God. This text reflects one of the deepest longings of humanity. We want to see God. Nowadays, people do not want only to see God but they also want us to point to where God is. This question is just one of the many painful questions of people who are

victims of society, victims of war in Mindanao, victims of rape, and even those who are victims of their wealth but find their lives empty. At one point they ask, "What is the face of God? Where is God?"

This is not a new question. In John 14, Philip himself asks Jesus, "Master, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied." If we see God, then we will no longer want for anything. If we see God, we will find the satisfaction of our hearts and the satisfaction of life. But Jesus was quite peeved when he said, "Philip, how come I have been with you and you still do not know me? He who sees me, sees the Father." This Jewish person, a seemingly ordinary human being called Jesus, is actually the image of God. So when people want to see God, we can always tell them, "You want to see God? Go to Jesus. He is the image of God."

If you take Gal 4 and Col 1 and use them as guides to understand what the Incarnation is, then you will find that the Incarnation is simply making God known and seen so that the hearts of people, like Philip's heart, will be satisfied. When the deepest longings of their hearts find fulfillment, the fullness of time and of life is experienced.

Therefore, to describe mission within the horizon of the Incarnation means using Jesus and his Incarnation as the paradigm of mission itself; mission is making God, making the Father, known and seen as the fullness of love by being fully human the way Jesus was fully human.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MISSION OF JESUS

How was this basic principle of the Incarnation as the manifestation of God's love in a fully human form manifested in Jesus? Hopefully, by exploring this principle we would also be given some signposts for understanding the challenge of mission for us during this Jubilee Year of the Incarnation. There are many, but let me indicate three important things regarding the mission of Jesus arising from the principle of the Incarnation.

God is involved in human history

The Incarnation is not just God becoming flesh or becoming human. In fact, when we look at the life of Jesus and his ministry, the Incarnation shows the depths of God's involvement in human history and human affairs. The Incarnation is not just about *being* human. There are so many human beings but they do not get involved in human history. Just having flesh and blood does not automatically mean I am involved.

The Incarnation as a mission paradigm does not mean that Jesus simply assumes the human body. The assumption of the human body for Jesus meant that God was really getting himself messed up. He became entangled in this mess called human existence. Jesus' identification and solidarity with the human condition—its problems, longings, sufferings, failures, dreams, and hopes—is a missionary element of the Incarnation. This I think is the root of what we call Incarnation. The Incarnation of Jesus is a mission of getting involved. You have to get involved in human things.

Gustavo Gutierrez says that mission is not to be tied only to a geographic space. For example, the men and women of the Philippine Church are constantly challenged to be missionaries in Asia. But Asia is not just a geographic space where you can say, "I've been to Bangkok. I was in Hong Kong. I was in China." If you do, then you were merely a tourist, not a missionary! Gutierrez rightly notes that mission must tie Christians, just like Jesus, to *human* space because that is the very principle of the Incarnation. This is the reason why in *Ecclesia in Asia,* the Holy Father and the bishops of Asia depicted Asia not only in terms of place, but also in terms of the longings, thirst, hunger, dreams, values, history, and heritage of a people. If the Philippine Church wants to follow the mission of Jesus, she must operate from the perspective of revealing a God-in-this-world, for many people feel that God does not care, that God is silent, that God has abandoned human beings.

A few weeks ago, a beggar appeared at the door of our seminary in Tagaytay. The man was very dirty and he carried a baby sucking

from a bottle with what looked like dirty water, brownish water. You knew the baby was very hungry from the way it sucked at the bottle with full force. It was so innocent that it probably did not know the difference between milk and dirty water. The man stood outside my window and I asked where he was from. He said. "I'm here from Payatas. We lost our house." He came to Tagaytay to look for his siblings but he did not know where they were living. I asked him, "Do you want to eat?" "I want to eat," he said and then he asked me, "Are you a priest?" I said, "Yes." "Father, where is God?" I did not know how to answer him. I tried to avoid the question and told him, "Somebody will come with your food."

My encounter with that man was an invitation to mission. Can I get involved? Can I cross that window that divides me from a victim? Can I leave my room and somehow, even just for a few minutes, get involved? I may not be able to solve his problem but can I be a mirror of the God who, in Jesus, is involved in the dreams of the people? It is not so much my being able to do something but my being in solidarity with God's people. Based on the principle of the Incarnation, the mission of Jesus is to make God known as the God who is involved in human history.

God reigns over every aspect of life

Many exegetes and theologians agree that if we want to find the central message or the central symbol of the mission of Jesus it is in the image of the reign of God, the kingdom of God. This kingdom of God declares to the world that now, the only ruler will be God and that all false and pseudo-rulers of the world will be proven false and exposed for what they really are. False and pseudo-rulers are not rulers who will lead people to the real meaning of their lives. It is only when God rules that we will find what it means to live, what it means to be human. We all agree that this reign of God also demands from us a radical decision to choose God—to choose to belong to the reign of God.

If you look at the Gospels, this symbol of the reign of God takes on different forms depending on the type and context of the people

being addressed by Jesus. For example, when Jesus encounters a person possessed by demonic powers, he brings the reign of God in a way appropriate to the condition of that person. When Jesus meets with the rich man Zacchaeus, the reign of God is brought in a way suited to this rich man. When he encounters a tax collector like Levi, it is the same kingdom of God but with a bit of difference. When Jesus encounters a widow who has lost her only child, the reign of God comes, but in a way special to this widow. When Jesus encounters a thief on the cross, the kingdom of God is also promised, but in a way that is unique to this thief.

What am I pointing to here? From the perspective of the mission of Jesus focused on the reign of God, we also have the polyvalence and richness of mission. Jesus enables people to proclaim the reign of God in a way suited to each person's experience. The reign of God speaks to all people such that God will be all in all. Therefore, Jesus enables us to hear and to see God in our own experience—to see God in times of plenty, to see him in times of peace, in times of war, to see God in times of economic crisis, or in times of personal loss. At every moment of our lives, God can reign. There is no moment in life when the reign of God is not an appropriate message.

Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says that evangelization is supposed to bring the Good News to all strata of human existence—from human conscience to human structures—economic, political, social and cultural. The reign of God must penetrate all areas of human life and at the same time, this reign of God will expose the false gods and rulers that we have allowed to dominate our lives. If we allow God's reign to penetrate all conditions of life, all of our pseudo-rulers including our pride and our desire for recognition will be exposed. Hopefully, they will be dethroned and only God will rule.

There is no human condition that is alien to God. Jesus assumed the human condition in its totality. He knows what it means to be hungry, to be full, to smile, to cry, to dream, to be frustrated, to win some, to lose a lot, except sin. Because the Incarnation brought Jesus to an assumption of all these aspects of human life, the reign of God

can be brought there too. There is no human condition that is alien to mission. Part of the mission of Jesus is to reveal a God who can rule in every aspect of life.

God rules in insignificance

The mission of Jesus in the Incarnation happens in insignificance, in hidden-ness and in seeming failure. This point is not to be dismissed. It is not just by chance that it is part of Jesus' proclamation of who God is.

Jesus in his mission reveals a God different from other rulers—a God who will rule but in a different way. God does not rule by power, by success, by popularity nor by a sense of achievement. The mission of Jesus is to be carried out in the spirit of insignificance, in hidden-ness and in seeming failure.

For the Church in Asia, mission could be done in the spirit of the Incarnation by going back to Jesus and the early Church—the Church without privileges, the Church of martyrs, and the Church in catacombs rather than the Church of fame, wealth, and power. I also want to think of the Church in the Philippines being fired up by the National Mission Congress saying, "We want to be missionary." But I want to see that Church make the decision to be a missionary in Asia in hidden-ness, in insignificance and in poverty. The mission of the Incarnate Word of God took the form of servanthood, a servant who washes the feet of others, proclaiming a God who rules but who rules as servant. The mission of the Incarnate Word took the form of someone in solidarity with the suffering and persecuted ones.

Our own Asian theologian Felix Wilfred reminds us that mission in Asia can only be effective if it takes the perspectives of the victims and poor whose dreams and hopes will explore for the Church the hopes of the Asian peoples for the coming millennium. We are back to *Gaudium et Spes*—the hopes and joys, the griefs and anxieties of the men and women of our time, especially of the poor and those who are in any way deprived, these are the same hopes and joys, griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.

How can we be missionary? How can we be a mission Church following the Incarnation if we come in pomp and circumstance? The mission of the Incarnate Word reveals a God who stands by victims, who allows himself to be a victim along with the other victims. The God that Jesus reveals fulfills the God already seen in Exodus, the God who said to Moses, "I have seen the afflictions of my people. I have heard their cries. I know their sufferings." After seeing, hearing and knowing these things, God made them his very own. All of this is fulfilled in the mission of Jesus.

Now, could the Church in the Philippines be missionary in some other way? I do not know. I do not know what type of God we would be revealing if we do not tread the path of insignificance, simplicity, poverty, and even the readiness to become failures. A Church that always wants to succeed and prove its achievements—I do not know whether such a Church will be in harmony with mission understood within the horizon of the Incarnation.

In sum then, the mission of Jesus flowing from the Incarnation is making known: 1) a God who gets involved in human history; 2) a God who is able to penetrate and rule every aspect of human life and existence; and 3) a God who rules in insignificance, in hiddenness, in pain and in poverty.

THE GENESIS OF CHRISTIAN MISSION

I go to the First Letter of John as the paradigm for understanding the origins of Christian mission. We are all familiar with this text where the apostle says and I paraphrase, "What we have seen with our eyes, what we have touched with our hands, what we have heard, about the word of life, we now proclaim to you so that you may have communion with us and our communion is a communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

I think it is a beautiful summary of how Christian mission began. Christian mission began with an experience. It began with someone who had seen, touched and heard Jesus, the Incarnate One, and who had seen, touched and heard the Father in Jesus. That experience

was a gripping experience of faith, an experience that turned someone into an apostle. Such an experience is the essence of an encounter with the Risen Lord, like the one that transformed a timid Peter into a courageous apostle. It is this gripping experience that transformed Paul the persecutor into the greatest apostle to the Gentiles.

Christian mission ultimately arises from a gripping experience of the God revealed by Jesus. Not the God that I have read about, nor the God that I have put in a footnote in my grand dissertation. Not the God that I have heard others talk about but the God that I have seen, touched and heard—the God revealed by the Incarnate One. This experience can transform me. It can make me an apostle. It can make me a missionary with a very simple code, not to conquer the world but simply to narrate my story so that those who hear of my experience may be drawn to the same experience.

When you have good news coming from a lived encounter, you do not even need to be told to proclaim it—the very power of the experience impels you to proclaim it. And, like Saint Paul, I will say, "Woe to me if I keep quiet." This is a cardinal rule of every zealous missionary involvement—a gripping experience of the Word of God made flesh. This is Good News; and this is so good I cannot keep it to myself. I have to go around running, walking, even kneeling just to tell it so that other people may also experience this Word of God. And if two of us have the same experience, that communion is our communion with God in Jesus Christ.

THE FIGURE OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY

Who is the Christian missionary? What is a Christian missionary Church? I think the Christian missionary is someone who has experienced Jesus the Incarnate One and whose identity, life and work are shaped by this experience in faith. Therefore, the missionary becomes through this encounter the embodiment of mission. There comes a point where mission is not simply work-to-be-done; rather, mission and the missionary fuse and become one. This must arise from a gripping experience similar to the one that Jesus, the original missionary, had.

Jesus was possessed by this experience of "*Abba.*" He was so in love with *Abba*, fascinated by *Abba*, that he could not stop talking about *Abba.* He could not stop telling people, showing people the love of his Father, even if it would take him to the cross, to the last moment of his life. There was no stopping him because it came from a transforming experience. If Jesus became a missionary because of such an experience, then how could we not follow the same path? We have Lorenzo Ruiz and Pedro Calungsod—people who were transformed by their experience of Jesus.

Once I was walking in the Imus market when I saw a member of El Shaddai, whom I knew was a market vendor, waiting for a jeep. I asked if she was opening her stall that day. She said, "Father we have an outreach program." "Oh, on a Saturday? Many people will be going to the market," I replied. "But Father this is for the Lord. When I got to know the Lord, this earning for my family became secondary," she told me. Then she looked at me and said, "And you are a priest, Father." It was as if she was telling me, "How come your faith is less than my faith? I have seen the Lord so there's no stopping me. I can sacrifice my income for today." She is a missionary.

Remember Richie Fernando, SJ, who prayed for the grace and the courage to die for his people.* This was not sheer adventurism. It must have come from the gripping experience of being loved by the Father in Jesus and showing that love in return.

A few weeks ago I was in Malaysia. I was invited to be an evangelizer. I had thought that I was the missioner giving lectures for six hours. I thought that it bore some fruit. At the end of the day, some participants who graduated from Loyola School of Theology and lay leaders spoke about their difficulties as Christians in Malaysia. One lawyer was imprisoned for helping a Muslim woman who wanted to convert to Christianity. She had to leave Malaysia and was baptized

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*Richard Michael "Richie" R. Fernando, SJ (1970-1996), a Jesuit scholastic who died in Cambodia while preventing a disturbed student from hurling a grenade into a classroom.

in Australia. Later on, she married a Catholic. The Malaysian government went looking for the woman but they could no longer find her. Instead, they found and imprisoned him. As these participants spoke of mission, this lawyer said, "We should not keep quiet. We should not keep quiet out of anger. No. We should tell people about God and how God liberates in Jesus. I'd go to prison again." He is mission.

Mission is not just work. Jesus, the Incarnate One, is mission. The El Shaddai vendor is mission. Richie is mission. Hopefully, I am mission. Hopefully, we are mission. And hopefully, the Church in the Philippines may become mission. We pray for that.

CHAPTER NINE

The Church's Mission Toward Minorities*

Theological reflection on the mission of the Church toward minorities is the aim of this presentation; I choose a more "theoretical" in comparison to "existential" approach. While it is true that no serious reflection is done apart from people's life experiences and situations, it is equally true that no experience occurs divorced from a horizon of understanding and interpretation. My first goal in this article is to serve theological reflection by articulating a framework within which the Church's mission toward minorities can be more adequately understood. A second goal is to help direct, or redirect, the actual performance of mission toward minorities.

In the first part of the article, the situation of being minority or belonging to the minority will be dwelt upon. In the second part, it will be shown how the Church's appropriation of the situation of the minority can reinterpret the understanding of its mission. The type of Church that emerges from mission recast according to the optic of the minority will be considered.

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*Originally published as "Der Auftrag der Kirche gegenüber Minderheiten," in *Zeichen unter dern Völkern. Die prophetische Kraft christlicher Minderheiten* (München: Missio, 1996) 83-86. Also published in *Landas* 14 (2000) 129-39.

It will be obvious, as the argumentation of the article unfolds, that mission will not be interpreted exclusively as work or task performed for minorities. Rather it will be approached as a moment of mutuality between the Church and the world of the minorities. Consequently, mission will be considered as generative of the *ekklesia*, of the Church's being, identity and rebirthing rather than simply a pragmatic "spelling out" of an a priori ecclesial essence.

DESCRIBING THE MINORITY REALITY

We begin by reflecting on the situations of people who are part of a minority. Talk about minorities usually focuses on people who, as a group, are numerically fewer than other groups who make up the wider society. This quantitative notion of the minority status is easily verifiable in the case of migrants and foreigners, of cultural, religious and ethnic groups who form small pools or pockets within a much larger population. It is in this numerical sense that Christians are considered a minority in most countries in Asia. This signification also lies behind the observation that, within the Church, the Caucasians—who were 80 percent of the whole Christian population in 1900—will be a minority by the year 2020, when they will comprise a mere 20 percent of the total number.[1] On this level of understanding, to belong to the minority means "to be one of the few" living in the midst of the "others" who en masse constitute "the more, the majority" of society. The statistical approach to the minority situation, however, does not capture the full reality of belonging to the minority.

When the discussion moves to the level of quality of life, the minority condition acquires a new configuration. The focus shifts from numbers to *actual people* who experience being regarded as lesser in rank or importance within a societal hierarchy. In some cases, it comes in the form of being considered as not having come of age or

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[1]Robert Schreiter, "The Theological Meaning of a Truly Catholic Church," *New Theology Review* 7 (1994) 7.

as not possessing the normative "maturity" supposedly already achieved by other sectors of society.

This qualitative dimension of the minority situation deserves greater attention because of the neglected and, therefore, powerful truth it forces upon our consciousness. The numerical minority does not automatically become the qualitatively "least" in a given society, as evidenced in the cultural superiority of a small elite. Conversely, the statistical majority may, in fact, be living in a minority state of existence. When the Church is called to conversion to the cause of minorities, it is primarily in the qualitative sense that "minorities" is taken. Let us turn to three examples of people whose living experiences illustrate minority situations.

The first big group of minorities, who incidentally make up the larger part of humanity, is the so-called "Third World," the reality of which exists even within countries of the so-called "First World." These are people who suffer subjugation at the hands of holders of power. Deprived of real opportunities to attain a decent human life, and often of their cultures and identities, they are subjected to different forms of crucifixion, meriting for them the name "crucified peoples," victims who remind us of the presence of executioners.[2] From the eyes of the Third World, belonging to the minority is perceived as poverty imposed on the weak by dominant powers.

A second group is composed of the migrants. Now present globally, they are living narratives of life as minority. Whether refugees, skilled or unskilled laborers, they remind the world of ethnic conflicts, political persecutions, religious or tribal wars, famine and imbalances in international political, economic and cultural relations that have forced them into geographical and cultural displacement.[3]

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[2]Jon Sobrino, "The Crucified Peoples: Yahweh's Suffering Servant Today," in *1492-1992: The Voices of the Victims* (*Concilium* 1990/6), ed. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (London: SCM Press, 1990) 120-21.

[3]Silvano Tomasi, "The World-wide Context of Migration: The Example of Asia," in *Migrants and Refugees* (*Concilium* 1993/4), ed. Dietmar Mieth and Lisa Sowle Cahill (London: SCM Press, 1993) 3-4.

The presence of migrants often generates xenophobic and discriminatory reactions from the dominant racial or cultural group, thereby making the migrants the easy scapegoat of national ills and restrictive laws. Though they contribute also to the economic and social life of the receiving countries, the positive side of their cultures is not appreciated. Defensiveness and self-centered restrictions are the responses they usually get.[4] Effectively excluded from what is significant in society, they are debased mainly on the basis of their ethnic background or race, which is judged to be inferior to that of the dominant sector.[5]

Finally, we will consider women. According to feminist scholars, the minority status of women is due to sexism, a pattern of attitudes and structures analogous to ethnocentrism and racism. Sexism considers women as essentially inferior to men and flawed in humanity on the basis of physical and psychological traits. Women stand on the margins of society, being part of the whole yet outside the main body. "Being there [on the margins] signifies being less, being overlooked, not having as much importance."[6]

The faces of the less in rank or importance that we have presented are just a few of the many that could be encountered. But they give us sufficient insight into the world of the minorities, a world generated by the "lack of ease" in dealing with "the others" or with *other-ness*. The experiences of minorities indicate that, very often, difference is understood in terms of exclusive definition or mutual exclusion. In this sense, a person or group acquires a unique identity by defining oneself or itself over and against "the others." Other-ness is not a function of relatedness but of segregation.

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Paul Schotsmans, "Ethnocentricity and Racism: Does Christianity have a Share in the Responsibility?" in *Migrants and Refugees* (*Concilium* 1993/4), ed. Dietmar Mieth and Lisa Sowle Cahill (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993) 87-89.

[6]Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 22.

This isolationist perspective, when influential in viewing "the others," often operates on both cognitive and emotional levels, shaping not only ideas but charging them with strong affective reactions.[7] Because "the others" in fact show us who "we" really are, we tend to ignore, cover up or distort "the others" in order to eliminate the threat that they pose to our identity.[8] To appreciate ourselves, we engage in depreciating "the others." To preserve society harmony, the plurality that "the others" bring is not tolerated. Uniformity is imposed by the logic of domination, not recognition; the logic of assimilation, not respect.[9]

If the Church is to serve minorities, it needs to enter the world created by this ill-at-easeness with other-ness. From the Spirit of communion and the Word of love, it hears the question, "For you, Church, do they also count as 'the others'?" The mission of the Church takes shape in the very event that it helps create a world and a Church where other-ness is not the stumbling block that it is made to appear.

THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO MINORITIES

The story of Babel tells of how other-ness, symbolized by different languages, led to confusion, scattering and abandonment of the city being constructed (Gen 11:1-9). Babel speaks of other-ness as a curse. The day of Pentecost reversed Babel. Mysteriously, the Spirit did not eliminate the diversity of languages but enabled people to understand one another, to gather and to construct a new community (Acts 2:5-12). Pentecost assumes other-ness as a blessing in the unifying power of the Holy Spirit. The Church's mission toward minorities takes on the Pentecostal thrust of overturning Babel.

Within this general perspective, we can identify some priorities that must characterize the Church's mission to minorities.

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[7]Schotsmans, 91.

[8]Sobrino, 120.

[9]Johann Baptist Metz, "With the Eyes of a European Theologian," in *1492-1992: The Voices of the Victims,* 116.

Solidarity-Communion

One mark of the Church's service to minorities is facilitating the creation of a new hermeneutical culture both within and without the Church, where the recognition of others in their other-ness happens within the horizon of a covenant relationship.[10] This entails breaking the prevailing hermeneutic of defining ourselves by withdrawing from "the others" or, in the words of Metz, defining "ourselves exclusively with our backs to such faces."[11] Among the manifestations of this prevailing hermeneutic are the tendencies toward mental isolationism, tactical provincialism, existential distance, privatization of lives and the voyeuristic approach of onlookers—all contributory to the suffering of many in the world. A covenant resting on common humanity needs to be forged again with renewed vigor.

For this to happen, the Church must spearhead the movement toward constructive tolerance,[12] not a grudging accommodation of differences but a calm and joyful recognition and integration of other systems of meanings or cultures, allowing them to build up the whole. Inter-culturality therefore becomes an indispensable element of the Church's life and mission. Even outside the explicit question of serving minorities, the Church needs to grow in this area, especially concerning the concrete communion of local Churches within the Universal Church. The Church after Vatican II continues to search for adequate theological and structural responses to the demands of the concrete catholicity of the one Church—the one Church that exists in and out of local Churches (*Lumen Gentium* 23).

Respect for human dignity is central to solidarity. In the world of minorities, the Church has a privileged opportunity to witness to the gratuitous love of God that looks to humans as they are and not to lovable qualities they have to offer or from which one could profit.

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[10]Ibid., 117.

[11]Ibid., 114.

[12]Schotsmans, 93.

This *agape* is the soul of mission.[13] The power of this love impels the Church to be of universal service to people as people, to really exist for people even outside its fold, to be universal sacrament for the world.[14] The mission of solidarity requires an "empathetic mysticism of opened eyes"[15] which sees a neighbor in "the other," in a wounded "foreigner," in the "Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37).

Solidarity with minorities becomes solidarity with all peoples, especially the suffering and victims. Solidarity, however, becomes truly dynamic and militant only in the practice of radical charity that breaks down barriers that stand in the way of peace.[16] It is commonplace to think of serving minorities in terms of kind acts that are necessary and laudable. But if the world of the minorities becomes an interpretative key to understanding mission, we cannot allow the Church to treat the minorities simply as beneficiaries of the Church's benevolence. Neither is it sufficient for the Church to respond to their needs occasionally, or only in times of emergency. "Solidarity instead of support" is necessary.[17]

In the face of minorities, the Church cannot fall back on the inadequate responses of institutionalized *diakonia*—performed by social action centers and diocesan offices—that somehow absolve Christians from effective *koinonia* with the real men and women who inhabit the minority world.[18] Solidarity implies the conversion of the

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[13]Yves Congar, "Dieu, qui envoie en mission," *La vie spirituelle* 148 (1994) 494-95.

[14]Ottmar Fuchs, "Church for Others," in *Diakonia: Church for Others* (*Concilium* 198), ed. Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) 47.

[15]Metz, 119.

[16]Frei Betto, "The Prophetic Diakonia: The Church's Contribution to Forming Humanity's Future," in *Diakonia: Church for Others*, 57.

[17]Hermann Steinkamp, "Diakonia in the Church of the Rich and the Church of the Poor," in *Diakonia: Church for Others* (*Concilium* 198), ed. Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) 70.

world and of the Church to partnership with the minorities who are clamoring for change in the world order. The Church, therefore, is critically questioned by the minorities themselves regarding its role in the perpetuation of barriers, of ethnocentrism, of the curse of Babel.[19] Solidarity demands of the Church vulnerability and sensitivity to the transforming influence of the world of the minorities.

Mutuality-Complementarity

True communion or solidarity, resting on the foundation of respect for our common human dignity, presupposes a sense of equality among peoples. Christians are a people of the conviction that in Christ all are one—Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28). Equality in turn is manifested in the attitude of mutuality or reciprocity that allows and celebrates interdependence and exchange. The power of Pentecost propels the Church's mission and creates a world of mutuality within the Church—a Church of diverse elements that complete each other and make the body whole (1 Cor 12).

While solidarity affirms the blessing in other-ness, mutuality affirms as strongly that we are and become what we are, not in spite of, but because of "the others." Other-ness is rooted in a deeper communion of equals from whom differences or manifestations of other-ness spring. This communion is not lessened or threatened by other-ness because it is precisely other-ness that makes the whole what it is. Other-ness is assumed within a more fundamental unity by making that unity depend on the mutuality of those who are "other." Mission toward minorities attempts to make mutuality a pillar on which human relationships in the world and in the Church should stand.

If mission is set within the perspective of promoting mutuality and complementarity, then the Church will become a community

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[18]Ibid. Cf. Fuchs, 45.

[19]Walter Lesch, "Nationalism and the Oppression of Minorities," in *Migrants and Refugees* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993) 118-19.

where so-called "helpers" and those "helped" assume both roles. The Church will be the first to learn that the suffering people do not only have a claim to the help of others. "They always have something important to say as well."[20] Mission is concretely experienced in the birth of a "complementary community" described by Fuchs as mutual fellowship of helpers and those who need help, the healthy and the sick, the strong and the weak, where roles can be exchanged. "The others" are not looked upon in a patronizing manner but appreciated in their potential for enriching others as they are. Talking of this complementarity, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines said, "In the Church, nobody is so poor as to have nothing to give, and nobody is so rich as to have nothing to receive."[21]

When we consider the minorities in terms of their victimhood, mutuality demands that their "salvific role" in the history of the world and the Church be recognized. As we bring the crucified peoples down from their crosses, we receive from them the salvation that they so eloquently bring to humanity: hope, great love, forgiveness, solidarity, and faith.[22] The minorities have an evangelizing and humanizing potential in their offer of community, cooperation, simplicity, and openness. They shed a light that unmasks the lies and pretensions of societies. Often the minorities evangelize through the disquieting yet salutary questions they put to the "helpers" who must recognize their own poverty and need for help. "The person who suffers always has an essentially critical, transforming and intensifying quality for all concerned."[23]

Again, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines states that

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[20]Fuchs, 46.

[21]*Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Acts and Decrees* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1992) par. no. 98. Hereafter referred to as PCP II with paragraph number.

[22]Sobrino, 125-28.

[23]Fuchs, 46.

the "Church of the Poor" is not only a Church that evangelizes the poor but where

> The poor will themselves become the evangelizers. Pastors and leaders will learn to be with, work with, and learn from the poor. A 'Church of the Poor' will not only render preferential service to the poor but will practice preferential reliance on the poor in the work of evangelization.[24]

Thus a vision of a renewed community—where everyone has an indispensable and active role in the building up of the whole—is opened up. The minorities are no longer regarded as less in rank, importance, maturity or culture. They possess the dignity of evangelizers and helpers.

Prophetic Witness to Eschatological Hope

Very briefly, we have to articulate how mission, understood as solidarity and mutuality, becomes the very prophetic witness to eschatological hope that the Church is meant to offer. Certainly the "Church is not primarily a moral institution, but the bearer of a hope. And its theology is not primarily an ethic but an eschatology."[25] The hope that Christians bear is not a false optimism that denies the cries of sorrow and mourning arising from the bowels of history and the earth. Hope, rather, assumes the ambiguities of human situations, the pains of victims, the degradation of "the others," and from within them continues to believe in a future firmly held out to us. Hope asserts that the dehumanization of "the others" does not have the last word; rather, the reconciled and redeemed humanity born on the cross of Jesus has won and will triumph.

This mission of hope is the only way for the Church to witness to the Christian God, the God of life. Other gods are kept alive by the sacrifice of human lives, especially of the poor. By struggling for a form of solidarity that respects mutuality, the Church does not only

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[24]PCP II 132.

[25]Metz, 116.

struggle for the liberation of minorities but at the same moment gives witness to the God of life and the God of love.[26]

CONCLUSION

Whether the Church in a particular human setting occupies a qualitatively majority or minority position becomes rather immaterial in the perspective of mission we have taken. Whether the Church is influential or not in its given human space, the calling to opt for the least, for the marginalized "others" is constant. By taking on the world created by alienating other-ness, the Church renews its mission and itself in a vision of blessed other-ness. Solidarity and communion, mutuality and complementarity, and hope become the foci of its mission and its identity. In the "performance" of mission, the Church becomes, cannot help but become, the community where "the others" will find a home, a truly catholic Church, a credible universal sacrament of salvation, a prophetic bearer of hope. Then the Church truly becomes an icon of the one God it believes in: one God in three different persons whose other-ness springs from their related-ness and communion of life and mission.

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[26]Betto, 61; Congar, 491-92.

CHAPTER TEN

Agents of Hope in the Third Millennium*

Let me start with Father Francis Clark's wonderful historical account of the beginnings of Loyola School of Theology (LST).[1] What captured my imagination when I was reading his address was the reference to the 38 years of wandering until LST found a home. And those 38 years were years of discernment. Where does a school of theology belong? Where will it fulfill its mission well? Is it in the city? Is it in the countryside? After 38 years and for various reasons, which were not really planned by Father Clark or Father General, LST is now settled in one place—this place.

But we also want to believe that—through its professors, students, alumni and staff—LST continues to wander. In many ways, LST has not settled in one place. Through us, especially through our

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[1]See Francis X. Clark, SJ, "In the Service of the Church," *Landas* 16:1 (2002) 134-43.

"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. 133-144.

missionary outreach and our ministries, LST continues to wander through different styles of life, through different involvements in the Church and in the world, through different ministries in cities, in barangays, in cathedrals, in chapels, in factories, in schools, in convents, in formation houses, in families. And now, as we start the new millennium, I think it is just proper to look at LST as continuing her journey, her wandering, still trying to locate where we belong, where we should be.

The results of the alumni survey show us very wonderful things about how LST has influenced our lives.[2] I want to single out one basic contribution of LST identified by many of the students. It is how theology—how their theological studies here at LST—helped them to get more involved in the realities of the world. You would think that theology would give people wings so that they can escape from the world. But no. What people appreciated in their stay here at LST was how their theological studies brought them closer to the world, brought them into a new presence in the world. So, without being self-congratulatory, I can say that, based on the results of the alumni survey, we are trying and, probably in our own ways, we are succeeding in doing theology at its best—theology which is pastoral in intent and very missionary in its soul, a theology that does not disdain the world, a theology that helps people enter the world and understand its cries, its hopes, its anguish, its sorrows.

The LST Alumni Association (LSTAA) has a strong desire for theological updating. I would like to understand updating not so much in terms of alumni just listening to talks given by first-rate theologians. We can understand updating to mean that as we confront new realities—as LST, through its alumni, professors, and students, continues to wander—we want to be able to look at these realities with fresh eyes, with ever new eyes, because the faith always gives us a fresh look at reality. Can we be brought closer to new realities? How can we bring theology to intersect with those new realities? Hope-

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[2]Unpublished survey conducted by the officers of the LST Alumni Association prior to the 2nd LST Alumni Homecoming.

fully, as we continue with our journeys and our wanderings, the Christian faith could be made more vibrant through our contribution.

I will address the concern about the role of the LSTAA in two parts. I will start with a description of the third millennium. Then, within that context, I will suggest some directions for the LSTAA.

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

In many ways, the new millennium is very exciting. New possibilities are being opened to us. The third millennium has started with a lot of promise but, at the same time, it has started with a lot of uncertainties. We really do not know where we are going. We face a lot of ambiguities. We do not even know the meanings of words now.

Tomorrow I will address the *Pambansang Samahan ng Sikolohiya* [National Association of Psychology]. They are celebrating their 25th anniversary and their theme is: "*Ang Kaugnayan ng Espiritualidad at Sekswalidad sa Kamalayang Pilipino*" [The relationship between spirituality and sexuality in the Filipino consciousness].

Nagbabasa ako at karamihan sa sinasabi ng babae, "Kapag gagamitin ka ng iyong asawa...." Gagamitin. Anong spirituality *iyan*? "*Kapag ginalaw ka....*" *Ginalaw. Parang pagkalayu-layo ng tinuturo natin dito tungkol sa kasal at matrimonyo. Pero nasa kamalayan. Gamit. Kapag ginamit ka ng iyong asawa. At yung iba ang sasabihin, "Kapag inano ka...." Inano. Ano yung "ano"*? [I was reading for my address and women say repeatedly, "When I am used by my husband...." Used. What kind of spirituality is that? "When I am handled...." Handled. It seems to be very different from what we teach here about weddings and matrimony. But it is in women's consciousness. Use. When your husband uses you. And the others say, "When he does that to me...." That. What is "that"?]

Even the meanings of words have been shifting. But let me, in quick fashion, just give some signposts that will help us understand the third millennium of Christianity.

Global Economies

The most obvious is that this is the age of global economies, when boundaries are being broken down and the transfer of capital happens so swiftly. But of course, the transfer of capital is true only for those who are already economically strong. They have the capital to transfer and they do not need to fear boundaries. For them, the boundaries have collapsed. But if you talk to the owner of a *sari-sari* [variety] store down there in Barangka, you tell him or her, "*Uy* Trese, globalization *na*, no more boundaries, you can go and set up a shop there in Manhattan." *Magagawa ba naman ng pobreng Trese iyan? Hindi* [Can poor Trese do that? No]. Globalization is actually some sort of a glamorized version of a new invasion.

More frightening I suppose—disturbing and more related to our concern as a school of theology—is the globalization of culture. There seems to be one culture that is being exported and it is now being proposed as *the* unifying element: the culture that will unify humanity, the culture that will provide communion, the culture that will provide a Catholic spirit, the culture that will form us into men and women who will somehow understand one another.

In one conference, Father Romeo Intengan, SJ, said that this global culture which is being exported and bought uncritically by many is no longer inspired by religious values.[3] This global culture is quite neo-pagan in inspiration—very secular, very conservative, very materialistic.

Irreverence

Another aspect of the culture that is developing in the present millennium is irreverence. I do not know whether this is part of globalization but there is much irreverence right now. Everything is demythologized. The sense of the sacred is gone. If you are very sacral,

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[3]Romeo J. Intengan, S.J., at the Meeting of Superiors and Directors of Work, Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, at the Institute of Social Order, Ateneo de Manila University, on 17 Jul 2001.

then you are corny. You are out of this world. Even we contribute to that. When people call priests "Father," they tell people, "*Kuya na lang.*" Or, *kung hindi "kuya," "lolo" na lang. Pero yung mga ganoong* reverential terms, *parang wala na* [Just call me "older brother." Or, if not "older brother," "grandfather" will do. But reverential terms like these are used less and less].

Gone are the days when people walking along Roxas Boulevard, as they approached the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, would stop their chatting momentarily and make the sign of the cross. *Ngayon wala na. Saan tayo nagmimisa ngayon*? [That is no longer the case. Where do we say mass now?]. In the malls—the centers of consumerism and materialism. Now, I do not know whether this is evangelization. Once I was asked in one meeting to address this issue: What happens now to the eucharist when it is not celebrated where your regular community is located? What happens to the eucharist when it is celebrated by people who are communities at the moment and afterwards disperse and go to their different concerns? What does it mean now when we say, "The Church makes the eucharist and the eucharist makes the Church"?

Still, we have to study these transparochial realities which are, in a way, more vibrant than the base communities. Some phenomena are emerging which indicate that our sense of the sacred is shifting. Where is the sense of the sacred now? Is it no longer in the cathedral? If not, where is it? It is in the mall. When you celebrate Mass in the malls, you see that the people are very fervent and they sing the *Ama Namin* [Our Father] with eyes closed. But when they go to their regular parishes, they do not show the same fervor. *Ano na kaya ang nangyayari*? [What is going on?] This must be studied.

Disillusionment and Dissipation of Energy

A third aspect of our culture right now is disillusionment. From the last century, we survived two World Wars and held on to the promise of a good life, a more peaceful life, a more just humanity, a more humane human family. But all of those promises collapsed. What we have hanging over our heads is a pall of disillusionment.

Human progress is now considered a myth. We see this outlook manifested in the lack of trust and confidence in human institutions and human leaders. Talk to the tricycle drivers when election time comes and they will always say, "It doesn't matter. *Kahit sino nandiyan, wala namang nababago sa buhay namin. Ayoko nang umasa. Mabibigo pa uli ako*" [Whoever holds power makes no difference in our lives. I don't want to expect anything anymore. I will only get frustrated again]. And even the Church leadership and its institutions are affected by a similar disillusionment.

Another concern is the continuing exclusion of the poor. Even with all the technological and scientific progress that, among others, produces better food, provides people with cures, and makes life more comfortable, not much has changed for the poor. They remain poor and they are increasing in number. Many poor people have just resigned themselves to the reality that their children, and their children's children, will not be better off than they are right now. What is painful is their continuing exclusion. PCP II has already said that the Church should be a Church of the Poor—the poor being the center of gravity in the Church—and that the poor will evangelize the whole Church. *Pero ten years* later, *nung nagmiting yung* pastoral consultation, *ganoon pa rin ang tanong*, "*Sino ba talaga ang* 'poor'?" [But ten years later, when a pastoral consultation was held, the question is still the same: "Who are the 'poor'?"].

Exclusion continues—not only of the materially poor, but also of the socially and culturally poor. The crucifixion of the poor is a daily occurrence in our third millennium. With all the sophisticated weapons and arms that we have, this persecution, this crucifixion could even lead to the annihilation of the whole human family beginning with the environment.

Notice also the dissipation of human energy. This disturbs me because I see this even among the young. Before coming here I had a conference with a group of deacons who were to be ordained priests in two weeks. After the first fifteen minutes of my sharing, they were already tired. They looked like they had lost their energy. I could not determine whether the problem was with me or with them.

One indication of this low energy level is boredom. Young people get bored so early in life. They have not yet lived enough but they are already bored with life. To remedy the boredom, they create—according to them—a lot of "gimmicks"; or according to the young priests, "happenings"; and according to the not-so-young, "rackets." People are looking for occasions to shift. For me—I've told this to many audiences so many times—the best symbol of this desire to keep on shifting is the television remote control. *Lipat nang lipat* [We keep on changing channels].

Shifting has been made comfortable, effortless. In a short span of time, you can see so many shows without beginning anything decently, without ending anything decently, and this is what we call relaxation. We call it recreation. My worry is that, apparently, the solution to the dissipation of energy and boredom is to be content with bits and pieces even if these are not connected in a meaningful whole. People are getting used to life as segments that may not be interconnected with one another. What I fear is that people will start thinking like this: A complete life is a boring life; a complete story is a boring story. An interesting story, an interesting life, is a life that has had numerous shifts. Unity of life is not a goal anymore. It makes your life boring. It means our attention span and our excitement with life are confined to one segment.

I just returned from Naga where I attended a meeting of the seminary formators of Southern Luzon. One question they asked was this: "Is it still realistic to expect of our present candidates a lifetime commitment, when mentalities, minds and hearts are already formed into this normal state of fragmentation of attention? How true will a lifetime commitment be to them?"

These questions apply to marriage as well. It is now common to get phone calls from people who have been married three years, four years, to tell you, "Father, I just want to leave my wife." "Why? Is there any serious reason?" *Wala. Sasabihin lang, "Sawa na ako eh"* [Nothing. They will simply say, "I am bored"].

When we reflect on this boredom, we ask: What gives energy?

What gave our parents energy? What gave the founders of Loyola School of Theology energy? What gave a Martin Luther King the energy to fight and to die?

Vision. Dreams. "I have a dream." When there are dreams, when there are powerful, gripping dreams, we always have energy, spare energy. We can always find some silent, dark nook there in our hearts where we will find some new spring of life and energy. But those are discovered when we have vision, when we have dreams. And the person with vision will have something to die for, and if one has something to die for, then one will have something to live for. One will have energy to die and, of course, one will have energy to live.

I remember Bishop Felix Perez of Imus. Before he suffered his fatal heart attack, he prepared a recollection to be given to the seminarians of Tahanan ng Mabuting Pastol but he was not able to give that recollection. However, they discovered his retreat notes and on the first page were written the words,

> The reason for my dying is the Jesus whom I love and the people whom I have loved. And therefore, the reason for my living is the same Jesus and the people whom I have loved.

A man of vision. He would willingly die. He would have the energy to die. And it bothers me when I see young people without energy. My fear is, are we facing a millennium where people do not have compelling visions, no compelling dreams and therefore no energy?

What are the dreams of our people now? To own a cellphone. I was talking with a young woman who just graduated from college. I asked her, "What is your dream in life?" "Father, my dream is I want to have the best cellphone available." You call that a dream? If that is a dream, you will not have energy, for that is not the type of dream that will stir in us the flames of energy.

In talking to you about this dissipation of energy, this boredom, this heaviness, I hope I am mistaken when I say that this could be an indication that we are beginning the millennium without a clear gripping vision for ourselves and for the next generation. This lack of

vision leads to a kind of violence committed by people who are frustrated and bored. They grasp for control in their desire to engineer the kind of life they would like to have but which is beyond their reach. This violence is coupled with intolerance of the other which is a very puzzling thing. At a time when globalization is being sold to us—as one humanity, no more frontiers, no more boundaries, a global culture, a global civilization, a global economy—we become more and more intolerant of the other, and the others are becoming scapegoats for the ills that we find in our society. *Akala ko*, global *na pero lumalakas pa rin ang pagka*-parochial [I thought we had already gone global, but the parochial mindset is still getting stronger].

Just take Cavite. It is one of the fastest growing urban and industrial centers of Luzon and I hear the old Caviteños, especially my relatives, talking this way, "*Mabuti pa noong panahon namin*" [Things were better during our younger years]. Cavite was very peaceful. The air was fresh. A lot of mango trees, bamboo, etc. You know everyone. The idyllic past. And they say, "*Ngayon, tingnan mo na. Ang gulugulo. Ang dami nang* drugs. *Ang dami nang ganito. Ang init-init. Ang dami-daming dayo kasi, yung mga taga-labas pumasok na eh*" [Now, there is a lot of disorder. A lot of drug problems. A lot of other things. It is very hot. All because there are a lot of migrants; outsiders have begun to settle here].

And I tell them, "*Pero nung wala iyang mga iyan magulo rin naman ah. Nandiyan si* Nardong Putik. *Nandiyan yung mga* holduppers. *Nandiyan yung mga* carnappers." *Pero hindi iyan tinitingnan na masama. Hindi.* You cannot use yourselves as scapegoats. *Pero hayan, meron nang* scapegoats: the others ["But even before the migrants came, there was already disorder. There was Nardong Putik. There were the holduppers. There were the carnappers." But these are not considered evil. No. So you look for scapegoats: the others].

Is this a very dark description of the millennium? Yes, but at the same time, as in the past lessons that we learned as Church, it is usually in those dark moments when the Spirit blows mightily. The Spirit of hope. This millennium is a millennium not only of ambiguities and uncertainties, but also a millennium of a lot of promise and

hope—hope for the search of a new humanity, the search for a new way of being human and being a human family.

THE LST ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

With that, let me go to the last portion of my talk, the role of the Loyola School of Theology Alumni Association. If this is the context of the present millennium, let me make a few suggestions. I know the alumni cannot make the LSTAA *their* life's concern, so let us be realistic. Let us try to be modest but at the same time make a dent.

First, picking up from Father Clark's history of LST, I would like to see the alumni of LST continue the itinerant nature of the school. Through the alumni, let LST continue its wandering in the world of the present millennium. By that I mean let us engage the hard realities of the world as we see them unfolding right now. Let us engage them in theological reflection so that we will be led by the new phenomena into a re-reading of the Christian sources. Let us allow the phenomena to challenge the Christian tradition so that the Christian tradition will be able to reveal more of its wealth to us. The Christian tradition still has a lot of wealth to offer. We just have to draw out its richness. And this is a wonderful time for the Christian tradition to show much more of its resources and its wealth.

At the same time, let us look at the world, let us engage the world with the eyes of faith. From what we got here at LST—fidelity to the sources of faith—we look to the world with the eyes of faith and we look to the faith with the eyes of the contemporary world. If you are a school teacher, then do this in school. That way you are the continuation of LST's wandering in your school. Wherever we are, let us continue engaging the world in the name of LST and theological reflection.

Second, I suggest that the LSTAA form communities of critical faith reflection. The survey results show a strong desire among the alumni that the LSTAA provide fellowship, communion. Can we possibly, as an association, form even informal communities of critical faith reflection? Through these communities of critical faith re-

flection, the alumni association may serve as a clearinghouse of experiences, of questions, of ventures, of debates, of pastoral and missionary reflection.

Third, may I suggest that the LSTAA feed the school with our own questions, the questions that we are hearing in the world, especially in our areas of ministry. Maybe we can help put flesh to the world and make it present in the classroom. The world must not disappear in the classroom. Perhaps we alumni—because we are already there, wandering in the different corners of the world—can bring the concerns and questions arising from our experience in the contemporary world into creative and critical class discussion and reflection.

Finally, I see that the LSTAA can be an agent of hope, individually and corporately, in our world of ambiguities, darkness and uncertainties. We can be beacons of fidelity to God in this ambiguous and uncertain world, but more than that, I hope LST alumni could opt for change. Who are agents of hope? Agents of hope are tho[se] who long for change. I hate to say this, but people who enjoy benefits of the status quo seldom become agents of hope. For wh[y] will they desire change? They are already benefitting from the world as it is.

Hope will come from people who are crying out for change. I hope the LST alumni will not be too comfortable. I would like to see the graduates of LST restless, not comfortable, not people who will sit on their laurels and say, "The world is treating us very well." When people learn that we graduated from LST, they bow and give us all the comforts. When that happens, that is a danger signal. It means we will be buying into the status quo, we might not opt for change and we might not be agents of hope.

LST began with 38 years of wandering. I suppose its vocation is to keep wandering. Wonder and wander. LST cannot be settled in one place. Even if it has already found a place, wonderfully in union with San Jose Seminary and the Ateneo de Manila University, LST will need to continue to wander because it looks to the reign of God

and it moves from corner to corner, from hut to hut, from province to province, from country to country, from diocese to diocese, from heart to heart, evoking hope in men and women.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A New Person with a New Mission*

We join Jesus in the event of Easter and tonight we shall already celebrate that passage from the darkness of death to the dawn and the light of the Risen Christ. Of course, the whole Paschal Mystery cannot be chopped up as though the different segments can stand by themselves without relying on how we think in terms of time and space. We need to think of a Holy Thursday. We need to think of a Good Friday. We need to think of a Black Saturday. But we have to remind ourselves that this is one total mystery. I cannot say, "My favorite is Good Friday. I don't care about Holy Thursday, Black Saturday and Easter Sunday." Others say, "My favorite is Easter. Just don't let me pass Good Friday and Black Saturday." We cannot choose one and neglect the others. It must be a total approach to the one mystery.

But since we are conditioned by time and space, we have to dwell on the different dimensions and locate them in terms of a time frame. However, as different Bible scholars and theologians try to recover

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"IT IS THE LORD!" 2003. 145-162.

this sense of mystery, sometimes the consideration of time and space disappears. This is a reminder that the descent to the dead already brings with it the promise of resurrection. The way we tell these stories seems as if Easter and the descent to the dead actually coincide. It is one mystery. As you go to the dead, new life is already erupting.

Let us now devote ourselves to the reconsideration of Easter. Borrowing from Hans Urs von Balthasar, Black Saturday is going to the dead, and Easter is going to the Father, or maybe even a return to the Father.

Strictly speaking, even if we look at the accounts of the resurrection in the Bible, there are no witnesses to the resurrection. We really do not have anyone who can tell us how the resurrection of Jesus happened. What we have are accounts of people who have already experienced the Risen Lord, to whom the Risen Lord had already appeared. They are people who had encountered the Risen Lord, or better, those who had been graced with an encounter with the Risen Lord. But still, there are things that we have to be clear about.

It is now generally accepted, and I think it is a good reminder, that the resurrection is not resuscitation. The resurrection is not simply the return to life of a corpse. Some think of the resurrection as that—what was dead before is now breathing again. If that were the case, then Jesus cannot claim this unique experience of resurrection. It happened to someone already—Lazarus. But we do not say Lazarus resurrected. Did Lazarus die again? I hope so. If not, where is he? He should be very old by now. But definitely, he died again. In fact, according to the account of the Gospel of John, when many people started believing in Jesus on account of Lazarus, the chief priests, Pharisees and the scribes thought of killing Lazarus. We do not know; maybe they had him killed. But definitely, Lazarus died again. The daughter of Jairus was brought back to life. Jesus said, "Why are you wailing and crying? Why all this noise and din? The girl is asleep." I also think that the girl became an adult woman and eventually died.

But we are proclaiming something else. It is not just resuscitation but resurrection. Resuscitation is a return to life. What kind of life? It is a return to the earthly, historical life. It is life as usual. Business as usual. The drudgery of life. All the crises of life. You just return to all of that. You are resuscitated. When I give talks, I ask the people in the audience if they want to go to the kingdom of God. Many people raise their hands. But no hands are raised when I ask, "How many of you want to enter the kingdom of God tonight?" Deep down, what we want is resuscitation, not resurrection. We do not want to leave this world. The faith of Christians proclaims that Jesus is risen. The way it is proclaimed by Saint Paul and other writers leads us to a deeper faith in the resurrection.

We can agree with von Balthasar that one way of looking at the resurrection is that Jesus—the One who was sent by God, came from the Father, humbled himself and fulfilled his mission—returns to the Father when his mission is completed. Now, Jesus lives in the full presence of the Father. His is not just a return to earthly life but an assumption of a new life in the presence of the Father, which is the fullness of life. In the return to the Father, the human life of Jesus and everything that went with it are neither negated nor eliminated. Everything that Jesus said and did was taken by the Father, accepted by him, confirmed and made part of the eternal now, and will not die anymore. It will not pass away. It will not be touched by sin or conquered by death. It will be forever. This life is the acceptable life.

One author even says that when Jesus returned to the bosom of the Father, the Father must have shouted again, "This is my beloved Son!" On the cross, Jesus said, "My God why have you abandoned me? Where are you?" In the resurrection, what he was waiting for was proclaimed. "You are my son. I am well pleased with you. Your life will be eternally present. It will not end anymore. It will not be touched by sin." It is permanent because it is now a human life that has been glorified, accepted by God and now belongs to the realm of God, to the inner life of God.

This event of the resurrection happened in history, but at the same time, because we talk about eternity, it is meta-historical. It is

beyond history. The Letter to the Hebrews says that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was completed in the heavenly sanctuary. We are crossing the boundaries between earth and heaven, between time and eternity. If you find me struggling for words, it is because this is such a difficult subject. For how can we talk about eternal things with our limited minds and our limited senses? How can we capture eternity? That is why the resurrection, how Jesus actually rose from the dead, is an object of silence in the Bible. And we are happy there is silence to indicate that what was happening was probably beyond what can be written by a human being. Maybe it is even beyond what human beings can think about and see. As you will see during the celebration of the Easter vigil, and even tomorrow, the resurrection will be celebrated with a lot of symbols. That is what we can afford to use to depict the resurrection—symbols.

There will be darkness and light. The vigil will start with darkness and then the new fire will be lit. Let the symbolism speak. We will be using water—symbols of life and cleansing. We will have many stories—readings from the creation to the liberation of the people Israel to Abraham and so on until we reach Jesus. The whole symbolism of history and what God is doing in history. There will be plenty of songs tonight. And, of course, the greatest song—the *Exultet.* I have been singing the *Exultet* for twenty years as a priest and have yet to memorize it. I keep forgetting the tune and I always choke with tears when singing it—you come to that proclamation recalling all the past events leading to this resurrection; you recall how this person is humiliated and insulted; and you even praise God for the sin of Adam, "O happy fault." When you sing this and you feel the tension, how do you sing it? What is the mood? Are you happy? Are you sad? This is all part of the symbolism and your mind just cannot retain everything.

Easter is eternal. It does not get old. Every year we sing it. We just have to do it in song. Some even dance. Tomorrow we have this *encuentro* [encounter] where the black veil of the Virgin will be removed by some child who will be very nervous and afraid as s/he is lowered from a tower or bamboo pole. Easter is full of symbols. One

single symbol is not enough. We keep multiplying the symbols every year but even with the multiplication of symbols we are still poor. We cannot fully capture the mystery of Jesus' resurrection. The multiplication of symbols simply alerts us to the fact that we are getting poorer and poorer every year. How do we really embrace the mystery of resurrection?

More important for our purposes is for us to realize that the resurrection is meta-historical, beyond history. We are entering eternity. However, we also realize from Scriptures that this event created new histories in the lives of peoples. It was not only Jesus who rose from the dead and entered the eternal realm of the Father. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, new life and new histories are being experienced by people. It is true that the resurrection was uniquely experienced by Jesus, but it is not contained by Jesus alone. The resurrection is a mystery that is at the heart of our lives too, especially of the baptized.

Let us look at how the resurrection of Jesus Christ has created new histories in the lives of people so that we will be confirmed in our faith that the resurrection is real—Jesus is truly risen. In the end, it is not just words that will proclaim the resurrection of Jesus but the power of this risen life of Christ to generate new histories. This is the type of proclamation that our world needs right now. *Madaling sabihin, "Nabuhay siyang mag-uli." Pero kung titingnan naman yung buhay natin, parang wala namang bagong kasaysayan. Maraming nagtatanong, "Nabuhay nga ba? Na mag-uli?" Nasaan ang muling pagkabuhay kung wala namang nakikitang bagong kasaysayan?* [It is easy to declare, "He is risen!" But if we examine our lives, there seem to be no new histories. Many people ask: "Did he really rise from the dead? Did he live again?" Where is the resurrection if no new history is visible?]

I will first dwell on biblical characters and I am sure you will be able to resonate with them. From there, we will go to our daily lives and our daily experiences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus

Let me start with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)—two disciples, and according to some Bible scholars, one of them was probably a woman. When the disciples reached their house, one of them invited Jesus to stay for a while and eat with them. According to some scholars, in the custom of the time, it was the woman who usually invited guests to the house. Therefore, one disciple might have been a woman.

The story begins with the very ordinary experience of frustration. The two disciples were filled with frustration and close to despair. They hoped that Jesus would be the savior, the liberator of Israel and then he was put to death. There were even rumors that the tomb was empty. I am sure all of us have had experiences with frustration. We are frustrated with our economy, with peace and order and even with the garbage. You are frustrated with your husbands and your children. When you are frustrated, you are on the road to Emmaus. Find someone you can talk with, not necessarily someone who will process you, but just someone who will listen.

The daily experience of frustration is the beginning of an Emmaus experience—when you walk and someone joins you, someone who looks very ordinary, a stranger. Those of us reading the Gospel know that it is the Risen Lord, someone whose mystery of resurrection we cannot fully understand. But when he comes, he comes in a very ordinary manner. He visits us in very ordinary times, in times when we fall and just want to talk about it. He comes and he comes like someone ignorant. "What are you talking about?" You pour your heart out, "Are you the only one who does not know?" The Risen Lord comes as a stranger, as someone who seems to be out of touch and does not care about what has been happening in Jerusalem. In his ignorance, he tells you, "O you fools. O you people of little understanding. Do you really understand?" This is a question of the Risen Lord, "Do you really understand? Do you really know what is happening?"

The situation has been reversed. The stranger who looked ignorant will now reveal the disciples' lack of understanding by going to the Scriptures. He will open to them the prophets, the law of Moses and explain to them all about himself. This stranger will open their minds and their hearts to the truth about himself. The Risen One who is a stranger will explain to them who he really is, not some Bible scholar, not a topnotch theologian, not even a bishop.

The stranger stays for the breaking of bread, a symbol of sharing. The bread is broken so that it is shared; this is a domestic ritual among the Jews. The head of the family takes the bread, gives a blessing to God, praises God and in the very act of praising God, the bread is no longer ordinary bread but becomes a symbol of God's presence, of God's love. The Risen Lord is recognized in the breaking of bread, in the sharing of the bread. The disciples realize, "It is the Lord." And then he disappears.

This is the beauty of the Emmaus experience, very ordinary and very quiet. A seemingly ignorant stranger slowly leads the disciples to knowledge and understanding. Their bitterness and frustration turn into burning hearts. "Were not our hearts burning within us?" But the moment of recognition only came when they saw an act of sharing. They saw the Lord whose life and death was all about sharing—sharing himself, sharing his life, sharing his blood. Theologians call it a pro-existent life. He lived *for others*. It was an intercessory life, a life on behalf of the other. There was no moment when Jesus lived for himself, even the few times when he had to rest. When he saw the big crowd following, he would abandon his rest and continue teaching for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

It is significant that after they see and recognize the Risen Lord, he disappears. But now, the disciples do not need to see with their eyes. They have already seen with their faith. The account ends in mission. The two disciples return to Jerusalem simply to tell the disciples there what had happened. They had seen the Lord. It is very ordinary but a new history has been written. The Risen Lord has written a new history for these disciples—from ignorance to understanding, from frustration to hearts burning, from going home to go-

ing to mission. A new history has begun simply from this encounter with the Risen Lord.

Mary Magdalene

Let us go to another example, one of our favorites: Mary Magdalene. She is an ordinary woman and, in our way of stereotyping people, she is a woman of ill repute. In John 20:1-18, we find a moving scene where Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb with a lot of devotion and love, with a lot of motherly, sisterly, womanly courage to visit the one who had shown her unconditional love. It was dangerous at that time because, even though Jesus had already been buried, the Jesus movement had to be stopped, and so the other disciples were still in danger. But Mary Magdalene, with all devotion, was able to surpass all fear and, for her, danger was nothing. She would go to the tomb with her oils to show once more her love for the one who had loved her. Nobody could love her, but here was one man who showed her what love meant. Where should she go to encounter the one who loved her? To the tomb, of course. There, she discovered that the tomb was empty.

Just like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Mary was an ordinary woman who wanted to show love and affection. She had a vision of angels. But she was so preoccupied and so frustrated at not finding the corpse of Jesus that she did not even recognize the angel. At times we are like Mary. If we are too preoccupied with so many things, we do not notice the angels before us. Mary's vision was blurred because she was looking for a corpse and she was weeping. The two angels were very good counselors, but Mary was not a good client. They had very good leading questions. "Woman, why are you weeping? Why?" In other words, "Where is that coming from? Why are you weeping?" She was being led to the root and she answered it well, "They had taken away my Lord and I do not know where they had laid him." She knew. The angels made her realize she was looking for a corpse, a dead person.

Then Jesus appeared. Just like the story of the two disciples in Emmaus, there is non-recognition. Mary was too pre-occupied with

her quest and her tears that she did not recognize Jesus. But Jesus, again like a good counselor, asks, "Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Here, Mary Magdalene makes a mistake. Instead of stopping and pondering, "Yes, what am I looking for? What am I looking for?" she would have come to the conclusion that she was looking for a corpse. Instead, she rushes to judgment, "Sir, if you had carried him away, tell me."

If Bernard Lonergan had been there, he probably would have said that Mary skipped a step in normal human consciousness. Instead of going from experience to understanding to judgment and then to action, she jumped from experience to judgment. Jesus was leading her to understanding. What are you looking for? If you are looking for the dead, you will be forever frustrated. I am leading you. Your search will be useless. Pause, Mary. Pause. What are you looking for? You are looking for the dead but there is no more dead.

Again, the Lord appears like an ordinary person. You will not see in him a glorious person right away. You are bound to discover that he looks like a gardener. How does the encounter happen? In a very simple way. The Risen Lord utters "Mary." She was called again by name, "Mary." I suppose, nobody uttered the word "Mary" the way Jesus uttered it—with such sweetness, with such tenderness. That is why Mary knew. "Nobody calls me this way, only my Master." That was enough. No more long explanations. Just the word, which was a name, claiming her, "Mary." She recognized the Lord. She recognized him when he brought her back to herself with the word "Mary."

Many times we forget our names. Many times we do not even call people by name. In this encounter, what Jesus said about the good shepherd and the sheep is fulfilled. He said, "I am the good shepherd. My sheep know my voice." They know the voice of the shepherd and so they will not follow other voices. That is why we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday within Easter. The good shepherd is the Risen Lord. Here, Mary as a good member of the flock recognizes the voice of her shepherd. A new history arises for the crying lady who was so anxious about finding a corpse. You now have a woman restored to herself, who now claims her being Mary. She stops

searching for a corpse because the real one, who is truly alive, is here.

Mary also turns into a missioner like the two disciples of Emmaus. The Risen Lord sends her, "Go to my brothers. Tell them that I will meet them. Tell them I am ascending to the Father and to your Father, to my God and your God. Tell them." She goes—no longer to weep among the tombs but to search for people who are alive. Look at her message. She does not say, "The Lord is risen." She says, "I have seen the Lord." The message comes from an experience, an encounter. It is easy to say, "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." It is much more difficult to say, "I have seen Christ crucified." Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when Jesus appeared at the garden as the Risen One? Can we say, "I have seen the Lord, I have seen the crucifixion"? Mary Magdalene can claim that, "I have seen. I have seen."

A new history. That is why the Fathers of the Church would call Mary Magdalene the apostle to the apostles. She was the one who brought the good news to the apostles. Some say the first apostle was a woman. Mary brought the good news of the resurrection to the apostles. She was the one who evangelized those who would be sent to the ends of the earth to be evangelizers. What a journey. From a wretched woman of ill repute, unloved, a cause of scandal, to a courageous and Spirit-ed apostle. A new history has been written from that simple encounter centered on one word, which is a name, "Mary."

Peter

The story occurred immediately after the miraculous catch of fish where the disciples stayed all night but caught nothing and the Risen Lord told them, "Cast your net into the deep." The miraculous catch happened and there was the recognition by the disciple that Jesus loved, "It is the Lord." They recognized the Lord and they returned to the beach where they had breakfast. Again, an ordinary event. Breakfast with fish and some bread, not a banquet at all. An ordinary meal in an ordinary place, the workplace of the fisherfolk. The place of encounter was the lake shore of their daily labor and

also of their daily sorrows and frustrations. There, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

The question was not simply, "Do you love me?" Indeed, that would have been bad enough. But other words were added and the additions made it worse, "Do you love me more than these?" There are many interpretations. The one I prefer is this, "Do you love me more than the love of these other disciples?" In other words, "Peter, is your love for me the greatest? If I opened the hearts of all of these disciples, will I find the greatest love for me in your heart?"

I think the context of this question is found in John 13 where Jesus told the disciples, "Where I am going you cannot go now." Jesus knew his disciples. He knew they could not follow him. But Peter asked, "Teacher, where are you going?" Jesus knew, "Peter, where I am going you cannot follow me now." Peter answered, "Why can I not follow you now?" *Hindi pa tinatawag, sumasagot na* [He was not being called but he was already answering]. And he added, "I will even lay down my life for you." It is in the same Gospel of John where Jesus says, "No greater love does a person have than to lay down one's life for one's friend." So by saying, "I will lay down my life for you," Peter was actually saying, "Master, I am your best friend. If you open our hearts you will find the greatest love in me." But Jesus said, "Peter, will you lay down your life for me? I know you, Peter. You will deny me. You will save your life and you will deny me." Of course, Jesus was right.

A few chapters later, they meet again. Now, the Risen Lord goes back to him, "Peter, do you really love me more than these?" A new Peter is emerging. In that first encounter, it was a Peter who was proud, a Peter who was so sure of himself. It was a Peter who was pretending to be the savior of the Savior. "I will lay down my life for you." This was the Peter before the resurrection. The events before the resurrection must have taught him a lesson in humility, a lesson in humiliation. Now, Peter could not even say, "Yes, Lord, I love you." He replied three times: "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." Peter could no longer rely on his own knowledge of himself. He had to rely on Jesus' knowledge of him. Here, Peter is a changed person.

As Jesus is risen, a new Peter is also rising. More humble, humiliated, but humbled as well. Three times Jesus tells him, "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep." A new mission is coming. A new history.

A new person with a new mission. You will now care for my sheep. But be clear Peter, they are *my* sheep. I am not giving you sheep of your own. They are mine. A new portrait is being painted. Jesus is now bolder in telling him to feed his sheep. Peter will work hard, spend every effort and remain poor. The sheep will never be his own. He will die for the sheep but he will not own anything and anyone. Out of pure service, no one will be yours. Finally, this encounter ends with the words that Peter has been waiting for a long time; it ends with the Risen Lord telling him, "Follow me."

ORDINARY PEOPLE

Tonight, we will be using ordinary fire, ordinary water, ordinary voices, ordinary flowers and ordinary children. The priests who will officiate are ordinary people. But we will be encountering heaven and eternity in those ordinary symbols, ordinary persons and ordinary lives. We are celebrating Easter vigil tonight and Easter Sunday tomorrow not in the best of times. However, our faith tells us that Jesus is truly risen. For those of you who have followed this retreat and have been following the liturgies, I hope you will be able to say, "I have seen the Lord. I have seen a bit of heaven. I have seen a bit of eternity in my ordinary time, in my ordinary life."

Now, let me alert you to the many Easter experiences in ordinary people's lives. With the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, Mary Magdalene and Peter to guide us, let me tell you a few stories of encounters with the Risen Lord that have created resurrection experiences and new histories.

I was once invited to preside at a graduation Mass. I thought it was a regular graduation of a regular school. It turned out to be the graduation ceremonies for a group of women who used to be prostitutes. They were being rehabilitated or helped to leave their old lives by a religious congregation. They underwent human, spiritual, and

even technological formation so they could acquire skills. When the sisters find that they are strong enough to be sent to the world, then they have a graduation ceremony. I was presider at the Mass and instead of a homily, the graduates were asked to share their stories to the guests. One woman went to Japan and was victimized. A teenaged girl was sold by her own father to a prostitution house. They were very depressing stories.

I will never forget the oldest woman in that group. She began by saying, "I started as a prostitute but when I started aging, I shifted careers. I became a recruiter of prostitutes. I became prosperous. I was able to set up prostitution houses." She sounded very aggressive and then she said, "I don't know why I had to meet that nun." It was as if she was angry. "Why did I have to meet that nun?"

It was an ordinary event, an ordinary meeting. She paused and started crying. For the longest time, she was crying and then she said, "This evening I'm leaving for General Santos City and I will start a house there. Not to recruit prostitutes, but to rehabilitate prostitutes. And I cannot believe that now I am a different person.I will still be running houses, but a different type of house. I cannot believe it. I cannot believe it." She ran around the room hugging the sisters, the sisters whom I know are ordinary women but through them, the Risen Lord appears. A new history has begun with this woman. A new hope. I think she is very good in recruiting women and I trust that in General Santos, she will be using her talent in recruiting many of the prostitutes to this new school and new life.

One of my most difficult cases as a counselor was when a friend's sister was raped. She had to undergo training in different places and was raped during one of the exposure trips. In one retreat, this friend came to me and said, "Father, I want to ask the Lord why he was not around to defend my sister. Why was he not there to help this girl who was so innocent, so helpless. Why?" How could I answer? I told him, "Just go and pray. Just go and pray."

I do not know why, but I gave him the text of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. I saw in him a person who was frustrated

with Jesus, someone who put all his hopes in Jesus and who now saw those hopes crushed by the evil done to his sister. The following day, he told me, "Father, the Lord spoke to me." I asked, "What did he tell you?" And my friend said that God answered his questions with other questions, "How could I have helped your sister? How could I have shielded her from all the attacks? Yes, I was there but I was as helpless as she was. One thing I tell you, your sister was not alone. I was there suffering with her and I could not help her. I could not."

I do not know whether what he said was theologically sound. But it was enough for him. A new history opened up for his whole family. He started telling his parents, brothers and sisters, "Be calm. I have seen the Lord. And our sister has seen the Lord. She probably does not realize it, but she has seen the Lord." Now, when I see that family, they exude peace. A new life has opened up, a new mission. My friend now has a special love for victims. He is a very hopeful minister to victims, not like those people who care for victims in a very angry, despairing and even violent way. This one has a new mission but he carries the mission with a lot of hope. "I have seen the Lord and my sister has actually seen the Lord."

Let me close on a personal note from my own life. I was made bishop a few months ago and I am still grappling with this new history. I am being invited to embrace this new person. When I look back at all these events, I am more and more convinced that maybe the resurrection appearance happened in a similar fashion.

I distinctly remember I was in Cebu on October 17, the Feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Cardinal Ricardo Vidal had invited me to talk to the Visayan bishops, who were having a pastoral assembly. My talk was at 10:30, and at 10 o'clock, we were having coffee. The cardinal's secretary approached him and said, "Your Eminence, you have a phone call." Cardinal Vidal excused himself and left us. When the cardinal returned, he said to me, "*Hoy* Chito, you also have a phone call." I asked who it was. "The one who talked with me wants to talk with you." I asked, "Who?" "The one who is in Manila." I took the phone and it was the secretary of the nuncio asking when I was returning to Manila. I said, "Tonight." He said, "There are some

theological questions that we have to discuss." I thought to myself that there was a packet of materials I was expecting for our meeting of the Theological Commission in Rome and so I said, "Thank goodness the materials arrived already. I will go there. The traffic might be bad tonight so I might go tomorrow morning instead." He said, "Maybe it is possible for you to come tonight." I said, "We'll see. I will go there." I left Cebu that afternoon and asked the taxi drivers around the airport if the traffic in Manila was bad. They said no and so I decided to go to the nunciature.

When I met the secretary, I even started the conversation, "Why are you always thinking of theological problems? Why are you always fabricating theological questions?" I told him, "I'm tired. I'm tired of studying. I'm tired of reading. I'm tired of writing. You don't run out of theological questions." Then he said, "There is a new theological problem. The Holy Father wants you to become bishop of Imus." I looked at him. He was talking and talking. Do not ask me what he was talking about because I was not absorbing anything. I was just listening and listening but not hearing. Then he stopped and said, "*Ah*, what do you have to say? What do you have to say?" I opened my mouth to say, "This cannot be," but when I opened my mouth, no words came out. I just started crying. I cried and cried. Then he gave me brandy and invited me to take dinner with them. After dinner, we went back to the receiving room and he asked again, "What do you have to say." I said, "I want to go home." And I went home.

I was so frustrated that evening. I was so frustrated with the Church. I was so frustrated with God. I could not understand what was happening. I went to my room and, while I was unpacking my things from Cebu, something fell. I picked it up and felt as if I were about to die.

When I was about to leave for the airport in Cebu, Bishop John Du of Dumaguete saw me and said, "Chito, you did not attend my installation in Dumaguete." I said, "You did not invite me." He told me he sent me an invitation but I told him that I did not receive it. He said, "I'll ask my secretary. But never mind. Even if you were not

able to attend I have one souvenir item left. It's good that I brought it along with me." He gave it to me but I did not want to accept it. It was a pectoral cross, the cross used by bishops. I asked him, "Why are you giving me this?" He said, "No particular reason. This was the only one left from the souvenirs."

From the airport to the nunciature, I had that pectoral cross in my bag. When it fell out of my bag, I thought, "My God! What is this!" I felt like throwing it away.

The following day, I was asked to return to the nunciature. The nuncio's secretary told me that the Vatican called at 1:30 in morning and wanted to know what had happened to me. When I opened my mouth to speak, I started crying again. He gave me brandy once again. Then, I was invited to lunch. After lunch he said to me, "If you want to say 'no,' you are free to do so. If there are serious reasons for saying 'no,' we will appreciate your saying so. But if there are no serious reasons, then it is on your conscience."

The resurrection experience happened. In some mysterious way, I heard my name called the way Mary heard her name called. I came back to my senses. I had been running around, looking for corpses, managing so many projects, but then the Risen One appeared and I did not recognize him. I thought he was just a gardener until he called my name. I told the secretary of the nuncio, "Only in faith and for love of the Church will I agree and for nothing more. Only because of faith and because of love. Only for that." Then he turned to me and asked, "Does that mean 'yes'?" I said, "Yes." Then he said, "A new history begins for you."

There are still moments when I feel that I have yet to fully accept my new history. When I visit the different barangays, some old people clutch my hand and say, "Bishop, this is the first time I have seen a bishop." "This is the first time I have held the hand of a bishop. Before I die, at least, I was able to hold the hand of a bishop." I shudder when they say these things to me.

Last night, there was a procession and I decided to just watch it from one of the houses along the parade route. I purposely did not

join the procession because, if people saw me, it would have been like making the way of the cross. True enough, people kept stopping me as I made my way back to the cathedral. They kissed my hands. "Bishop, please touch my rosary." "Bishop, please touch me. I have cancer." "Bishop, please touch my ear. I cannot hear well." "Bishop, smile at me." Bishop, do this. Bishop, do that.

A new history. I know it is not me. The Lord is trying to make me see that my new history may somehow help write new histories for others. It is quite painful. The resurrection really happens with the descent to the dead. But it is there.

I know my own experience of resurrection is nothing compared to what many of you have experienced. I am very happy on this first Easter Triduum of mine as a bishop. It is grace upon grace. It is the outpouring of the Spirit, which is much more than what my mind and my heart can contain. It is a new life, a new history. I just hope that on this journey—in the ordinariness of life, in the ordinariness of the breakfast table, in the ordinariness of Mary, Peter, the disciples on their way to Emmaus and all of us—only one thing matters: when the Risen Lord appears, may we all see him. May we all hear our names called by him in a way that nobody else can say. May we hear our names. May we stop and may a new history of mission be ours. May we all be bound together not just by the expression, "The Lord is risen," but also, "We have seen the Lord."

Heavenly Father, how can we even thank you? The Risen One, your Son who continues to form us into the sons and daughters that you deserve, appears to us. He accompanies us in our frustrations. He accompanies us when we are weeping, running around, looking for the dead. He accompanies us in our humiliations. He accompanies us in our work places. He accompanies us as the Risen Lord, inviting us to share in his new life so that a new history may be born for us, for our families, for our nation. We will never be able to fathom this mystery, but one thing is sure—what matters is for us to live the new histories and the new mission that the Risen One offers us. Open our hearts. Make us generous. Form in us the eagerness of Mary Magdalene. Form in us the humility of Peter. Form in us the burning

hearts of the disciples on their way to Emmaus. Then maybe, even outside the Easter season, we will proclaim in word and in deed, and in mission, "We have seen the Lord. It is the Lord!"