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As a journal of theology and pastoral life, *Quaerens* is committed to the noble mission of deepening the modern-day Christian’s understanding and praxis of the faith, of fostering an atmosphere of dialogue with cultures and religions throughout the world in general and throughout Asia in particular, and of promoting a scholarly theological discourse that addresses the specific pastoral needs and questions of our time.

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## ***Aliis Quoque Modis* of the Sacrament of Penance**

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John Paul R. Tanquis, OAR

### **Abstract**

*The article attempts to understand and find possible ways of interpreting the Latin phrase *aliis quoque modis* of Canon 960 of 1983. The author situates the meaning of this phrase in the teaching of Jesus in Scriptures, evaluates the heart of the sacrament of penance as practiced in the present time, and eventually find pastoral options so that the sacrament of penance becomes accessible to many who are desirous to receive the sacrament but find themselves in difficult pastoral circumstances.*

### **Various Faces of Forgiveness**

To provide a meaningful encounter with a forging God, the Church seeks out to find various ways and means to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. While on the one hand, the Church still affirms the declaration of the Council of Trent that the penitent is forgiven his sins and reconciled with the Church through Sacrament of Penance with integral confession

and absolution,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, we hear people asking: “Is the Sacrament of Penance the only means of God in forgiving sins?” or “Are the power and mercy of God dependent only on the authority and judgment of the minister?”

The ordinary means of celebrating the Sacrament of Penance does not cater to the needs and circumstances of all penitents desiring to receive the Sacrament. The Council of Trent declares that sins can be expiated by many other means besides the Sacrament of Penance,<sup>2</sup> and likewise, the Church today teaches several forms as means of obtaining reconciliation and forgiveness of sins;<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas attests that there are variety of ways in remitting one’s sins provided that one has some degree of sorrow coupled with the will to detest his past sinful life and with the intention to amend one’s life. Before the term “absolution” was introduced in the eleventh century and became obligatory in the tenth century,<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine already mentioned different forms of penance in the Church that were necessary for the forgiveness of sins—and are more grounded in the Scriptures.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici*—Forntium Annotatione Et Indice Analytico Auctus. Pontificia Commissio codici Iuris Canonici Authentice Interpretando, (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1989), 83, Canon 960: *Individualis et integra confessio atque absolutio unicum constituunt modum ordinarium, quo fidelis peccati gravis sibi conscius cum Deo et Ecclesia reconciliatur; solummodo impossibilitas physica vel moralis ab huiusmodi confessione excusat, quo in casu aliis quoque modis reconciliatio haberi potest* – *Codex Iuris Canonici*, accessed February 14, 2015, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/latin/documents/cic\\_liberIV\\_lt.html#TITULUS\\_IV](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/latin/documents/cic_liberIV_lt.html#TITULUS_IV).

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Joseph, Denzinger, “Sources of Catholic Dogma 800-900,” *Catechetics Online*, Chapter V no. 899: For venial sins, by which we are not excluded from the grace of God and into which we fall more frequently, although they may rightly and profitably and without any presumption be declared in confession [can. 7], as the practice of pious persons indicates, may be passed over in silence without guilt and may be expiated by many other remedies, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://www.catecheticsonline.com/SourcesofDogma9.php>.

<sup>3</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: ECCCE Word & Life Publications, 1994), no.1434–1439.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Anciaux, *The Sacrament of Penance* (Tenbury Wells: Challoner Publications limited, 1962), 67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

The challenge of the past in reconciling the sinner to His Father continues to be a challenge to the Church today. This challenge calls for innovative and refreshing solutions. The modern influence “has reached a point where it turns off what is not immediately accessible.”<sup>6</sup> The current Church experiences both the decline in the number of priests and religious and the number of the faithful participating in the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>7</sup> The probable reason for the decline is the loss of the sense of sin,<sup>8</sup> the sense of God, indifference, and the conviction that God’s infinite mercy is so wide that forgiveness of sins is not limited to the Sacrament of Penance.

There are a good number of studies about the Sacrament of Penance, but rare, if not completely vague, are studies on the “other means” of Canon 960 in connection to the forgiveness of sins.<sup>9</sup> The new Code of 1983 states that the individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the sole ordinary means, and physical and moral impossibility alone excuses one from such confession, in which case reconciliation may be attained by other means also. This canon is new and has no precedence in the old Code of 1917. Moreover, the phrase *aliis quoque modis* is unverified in its meaning.

This study does not only examine the juridical implication of this phrase but also its biblical implications inasmuch as the Sacrament of Penance is instituted by Christ whose teachings are found in Scriptures where most commentaries on the Code have scarcely reference to the Gospel.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cardinal Donald Wuerl, *New Evangelization, passing on the Catholic Faith Today* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2013), 25.

<sup>7</sup> John Cornwell, “Confession: a sacrament in decline,” *UCANEWS.COM*, accessed July 18, 2014, <http://www.ucanews.com/news/confession-a-sacrament-in-decline/66703>.

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliation And Penance of John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy, and Faithful on Reconciliation And Penance In the Mission of the Church Today* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1984), no. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Brendan Daly, “Perfect Act of Contrition – An Overlooked Means of Reconciliation?” *The Canonist*, vol.2, no. 1 (2011):72-86.

<sup>10</sup> Ladilas Örsy, *Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 70.

The Sacrament of Penance is the sacrament of the New Evangelization with the continuous mission in sharing “a new and personal encounter with Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup> It is the role of the Church to bring out changes and new effective ways of experiencing divine forgiveness of sin and union with God in the most unusual situation, and the same time maintaining and preserving the identity of the Sacrament of Penance as the ordinary means of celebrating God’s forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>12</sup>

### Love and Forgiveness

All over the Old Testament the covenanted communion with God is considered the lifeline of the people. Whenever there are breaks in that union, only the initiative and the love of God can restore the person back to that covenanted relationship promised to Abraham, “I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you...” (Dt 30:19-20). Despite the many “breaks” in that relationship, the people of Israel understood that God continually forgave them because God’s love for His people is eternal.<sup>13</sup> The restoration of the covenanted relationship is God’s initiative; yet for the part of God’s people a change of heart is needed. Only God can initiate this change, “A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit.” (Ps 51:12) The new heart which the psalmist prayed refers to the act of love of Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection.<sup>14</sup> Even during the olden times, sincerity and the intention of not sinning again in confessing sins are necessary in order to obtain forgiveness. Thus, it is expected to be the product of love and of fear. It is in the Psalms that assurance of forgiveness is given to those who

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<sup>11</sup> Donal Wuerl, *New Evangelization, passing on the Catholic Faith today*. (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2013), 61.

<sup>12</sup> See Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s world (Liberia Editrice Vaticana: Paulines Publishing House, 2013), no. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Aridas, *Reconciliation, Celebrating God’s healing and forgiveness* (New York: Image Books, 1987), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



confessed them with sincerity. God's pardon is assured in the Psalms, "He cleanses from sin a soul when it makes confession, when it makes acknowledgment."<sup>15</sup>

One of the stories of forgiveness told by Jesus is the story of a penitent woman in the Gospel of Luke. The gospel talks of a woman who showed great love towards Jesus by washing his feet with tears and anointing them with oil. Jesus acknowledged the effectiveness of love to receive the forgiveness of one's sins.<sup>16</sup> Jesus said: "So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little. He said to her, your sins are forgiven." (Lk 7: 47-48,) Sincerity and great love are manifest in the heart of the woman. There is no doubt that Jesus forgave the sins of the woman for she was contrite and showed sincerity and real love.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, great love and contrition for one's misdeeds after her admission are clearly necessary for the grant of forgiveness.<sup>18</sup> In the final verses of the story, Simon, the host is rebuked and the woman is praised for the love she has shown to Jesus Christ. Jesus declares that just because she has loved Him, considering the gravity of her sinfulness, her sins, nevertheless have all been pardoned.<sup>19</sup>

The love demanded for Christians is taught and lived by Christ. It is a love which expresses the unifying vision of the whole of God's action. It is so symbolic and inclusive that it does not simply reduce love to private individual emotions.<sup>20</sup> It encompasses many injunctions in the spirit of selflessness and others-centeredness. It makes Jesus' policy of breaking boundaries a permanent part of the Christian task. Thus, Barton asserts that love is not simply an abstract reality that is present in the Bible

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<sup>15</sup> John Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), 17.

<sup>16</sup> Brendan Daly, "Perfect Act of Contrition – An Overlooked Means of Reconciliation?" *The Canonist* vol.2, no. 1 (2011):72.

<sup>17</sup> Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Oscar V. Cruz, *Reconciliation, From the Sacramental to Societal* (Manila: CBCP Communications Development Foundation, 2007), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

because Scriptures never speaks about these realities in abstract terms. Scriptures present concrete reality through telling stories of how God acts, and of how people act.<sup>21</sup>

Jesus makes clear the importance of love when He said: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (Lk 10: 27) The love of God is fundamental because conversion comes from one’s love of God.<sup>22</sup> Daly states that the love of God the Father is perfected by His Son in the person of Jesus Christ who principally accomplished the work of forgiveness. It is Jesus’ acts of love that reconciled the world to God and, in so doing, revealed his mercy. The ministry of Jesus should be seen as the fulfilment of this charge laid upon him by the Father. One of the activities that bear witness to the centrality of reconciliation in his ministry is the fact that He welcomed sinners and reconciled them with the Father (Lk 5:20, 27-32; 7:48). Jesus ate and drank with sinners, which the Gospels revealed that the action of Jesus was a great offense in his time.<sup>23</sup> The gesture of Jesus’ welcoming and extending the table-fellowship to the sinners is a demonstration of forgiveness and reconciliation. It was a saving act on the part of Jesus and of His Father.<sup>24</sup> The presence of sinners in the table-fellowship is the most meaningful expression of the message of the redeeming love of God.<sup>25</sup>

In the account of Mark, there is an apologetic concern to contrast obedience to the moral law with cultic performance.<sup>26</sup> In Matthew, however, there is a polemical thrust with stress on the double commandment which is the key to the interpretation of the whole law: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>22</sup> Brendan Daly, “Perfect Act of Contrition – An Overlooked Means of Reconciliation?” *The Canonist* Vol 2, No. 1 (2011), 72.

<sup>23</sup>David M. Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 34-35.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>25</sup>Joachim Jeremiah, *New Testament Theology, The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1971), Vol. 1: 116.

<sup>26</sup>Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville and NewYork: Abingdon Press, 1972), 61.

the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (Mt 22:37-40) The double commandment mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew implies Jesus’ desire for everyone to obey. In Luke, The Parable of the Good Samaritan concretizes and emphasizes the importance of the acts of love through neighborly love (Lk 10: 30-37). Matthew and Luke have used the traditional material about loving one’s enemies (Mt 5: 43-48; Lk 6:27-36). For Matthew, loving the enemy is the vital aspect of higher righteousness that is required for Christians.<sup>27</sup> For Luke, he speaks of following Jesus by showing compassion for others (Lk 6: 35). Compassionate love for others is the perfection of divine and human life.<sup>28</sup> Luke specifies the meaning of perfection: “Be merciful, just as your father is merciful (Lk 6: 36).”

The earliest New Testament formulation of Jesus’ teaching on loving enemies is probably to be found in Paul: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” (Rom 12:14) Indeed, the analysis of the parallel versions of the great Commandment of Love has shown that its setting was variously portrayed and was variously employed. At the same time, one could well expect that Jesus, like other rabbis of his time, would have been asked occasionally to summarize the law in some appropriate fashion. Though the text cannot with certainty ascribe the formulation of the Great Commandment to Jesus himself, there is no compelling reason for doubting that some such summary was formulated by Jesus. Nevertheless, this varied interpretations and adaptations in the tradition are both oral and written. Moreover, the emphasis upon loving one’s neighbor conforms to what the Church knows about Jesus’ teaching from such materials as Parable of the Good Samaritan, the command to love even the enemy, and various scattered sayings on forgiveness and refraining from passing judgment on others.<sup>29</sup>

The love command of Jesus also emphasizes its link within

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> John Navone, *Good News Studies 12* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984), 34.

<sup>29</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), 62.

the context of the eschatological proclamation about the coming Rule of God. Jesus' call to repentance in view of the imminence of God's sovereign power is manifested in his judgment as well as in his claim. The love command of Jesus is connected to the judgment message in Jesus' teachings (Mt 7:13-14, 24-27; 13:47-50; 24: 40-41). Furnish states that the demand for repentance also presupposes God's mercy, love and forgiveness. The penitent sinner, by his repentance, lays hold upon a salvation which is not simply reserved for him, but which in fact is constantly extended to him. Such is clearly elucidated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15: 11 ff.), the Shepherd who seeks out and finds a single lost sheep (Lk. 15: 3 ff.), and the woman who searches through the whole house until one lost coin is recovered (Lk 15: 8 ff.). Indeed, these parables stress God's initiative in forgiveness and love.<sup>30</sup>

The Gospel of John speaks of the eternal life and friendship in Christ. The life that begets that the knowledge of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," is a life of love that has an imperative: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (Jn 14: 15) The commandments are reducible to one: "This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you." (Jn 15: 12) The passion defines the meaning of love, of how Jesus loved us (Jn 15: 13). The gift of the Holy Spirit effects the mystical indwelling of Jesus and his Father that reaches out to embrace all.<sup>31</sup>

Looking on the three versions of love commandment, there are noticeable differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each version depicts the situation of the believers during their time:<sup>32</sup>

In Matthew:

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. (Mt 22:34-40.)

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>31</sup> Navone, *Good News Studies* 12, 34.

<sup>32</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *Love Commands in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 12.

In Mark:

Which is the first of all commandments? Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, is the Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Mk 12: 28-34)

In Luke:

Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He said in reply, "What is written in the law? How do you read it? He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. He replied to him, And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live. (Lk 10: 25-29, NAB)

In order to see how this story sounded to Jesus' audience, it is helpful to consider other versions of the love commandment from the time of Jesus. There are love commands in Palestinian Judaism and the Hellenistic Judaism orientations. The love commands during these traditions have developed out of inner Jewish concerns.<sup>33</sup> Under the Palestinian orientation, the love of neighbor command in Leviticus (Lev 19:18) is constantly used to support the Jewish community restrictions. The command to love one's fellow Jew appears in stories of the final instructions of the patriarchs, together with other commandments from the Decalogue which serve as an example or model to those who want to attain righteousness that the patriarch wants his children to exhibit.<sup>34</sup>

Noah began to lay upon his sons the ordinances and commandments and judgments that he knew, and he exhorted his sons to observe righteousness, to cover the shame of their flesh, to bless their creator, honor father and mother, love neighbor, and guard their souls from fornication, uncleanness and all iniquity.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Perkins, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Book of Jubilees 7:20-28. "The Three Pillars: The Noahite Covenant," *Nazarene Space*, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://nazarenespace.com/profiles/blogs/the-three-pillars-the-noahite-covenant>.

The passage shows the commandment and rule concerning the relationship between Jews and the Gentiles among whom they live. In here, the author shows concern for the reputation of the Jews. Thus, if they act with love of neighbor and justice toward all with whom they have dealings with, then the people will not reject them.<sup>36</sup>

In the double command in Hellenistic Judaism, the commandments in the two-fold love of God and neighbor or its double combination are expressed as worship and fear of God with love of brother.<sup>37</sup> This double combination can be found in the story of Esau and Jacob. The story portrays the relationships between brothers. The patriarch Isaac instructs his two sons:

And I command you, my sons, that you practice righteousness and uprightness on earth so that the Lord will bring upon you everything he said he would do to Abraham and his seed. Love one another, my sons, your brothers as one loves his own self. Concerning idols, I admonish you to reject and hate them. Do not love them, for they are full of deception for those who worship them and bow down to them. Remember, my sons, the Lord God of Abraham, your father, how I too worshipped Him and served Him in righteousness. Now I will make you swear a great oath... that you will fear and worship him.<sup>38</sup>

The texts above present the message that is link to the final judgment—an eschatological call to salvation.<sup>39</sup> Significantly, Jewish ethical teaching helps put flavor on the importance of the teaching about love of God and neighbor at the time of Jesus. Sometimes, people believe that Christianity invented love, mercy and compassion. But it remains evident and clear for the early Christians that the Synoptic versions of the double command is understood as an answer to how one can attain the salvation promised by Jesus. The Jews did not understand it as a legal maxim or as a demonstration of the philosophic wisdom of Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Perkins, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Book of Jubilees 36: 3-7. "The Book of Jubilees – Part Two," *The Delusion Resistance*, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://delusionresistance.org/wp00/?cat=29>.

<sup>39</sup> Perkins, *Love Commands in the New Testament*, 21.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, Luke uses this story to defend Jesus against the charge that he ate with tax collectors and sinners (Lk 15: 11-32). During that time, Jews associated Gentiles with sinner.<sup>41</sup> The person for whom the prodigal son worked would be a Gentile sinner because he kept swine. The story describes that being a sinner demands a social dimension. It is not simply a question of private or individual action. Looking at the Jews' mentality, when the prodigal son had gone off to one of the Gentile cities, it is easy to assume exactly the kind of trouble they might expect. However, Luke's Gentile reader does not necessarily share those associations, but he could see this parable as an image of the inclusiveness of God's mercy which extended even to them.<sup>42</sup>

In the account of Luke, like Matthew, there is a deep concern for obedience to the love command. Love must be manifested in every practical deed of charity and kindness. But Luke, unlike Matthew, who develops this point in opposition to the Pharisaic interpretations of the law, takes obedience to the love command as actualizing the Christian *koinon*.<sup>43</sup>

### **Contrition and Forgiveness**

In the account of Mark, repentance is needed for the forgiveness of sins. Mark begins with the preaching of the Baptist: "John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." (Mk 1: 4) It is John's mission to call people back to a radical obedience to God's will. It is John the Baptist's task to get them to acknowledge their sinfulness and return to a life in accord with God's laws. Although his ministry of conversion led to a degree of success, Witherup states that Mark clarifies John's ministry as simply preliminary to the greater call to conversion in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>44</sup>

The first specific action that occurs in Mark's Gospel is the baptism of Jesus. Mark's version of this story is brief and pointed:

It happened in those days that Jesus came from  
Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>43</sup> Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament*, 84.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald D. Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 22.

John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Mk 1:9-11)

The aforementioned account depicts the heart of baptism in the early church, namely, that baptism is automatically connected with forgiveness of sin.<sup>45</sup> For Mark, Jesus' sacred work can begin only after John is off the scene. John's message of conversion is expressed by the noun *metanoia* (repentance) and is tied to baptism with the Holy Spirit: "I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (Mk 1:8, NAB)." Jesus message is a call to radical change in life. "It is sharply tinged with apocalyptic and eschatological urgency."<sup>46</sup> Mark stresses that conversion will always identify the life of a disciple.

Looking again at the account of Mark, there are questions about John's baptism in connection with forgiveness of sins. It is a question whether John's baptism is a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3) or that baptism was a rite that mediated forgiveness, that is, that baptism is the channel through which God forgave sins and that John was the mediator of that forgiveness.<sup>47</sup> There is no clear answer to the question; however, what is certain is that repentance lay at the heart of John's message.

In Matthew's version of John's baptism (Mt 3: 1-6), he also emphasizes the message of John's repentance and confession of sin as the heart of his message, however, he did not specifically mention that it was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Bash states that Matthew refers to John's baptism as baptism for those who had repented. People were baptized because they had repented.<sup>48</sup> Bash thinks that Matthew probably omits the phrase because he emphasizes that it is through Jesus' death that sins are forgiven (Mt 1:21). Furthermore, Bash states that Matthew wants his readers to think that forgiveness does not come

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>46</sup> Ronald Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Collegville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



through baptism, rather forgiveness of sins is the poured out blood of Jesus that effects forgiveness.<sup>49</sup>

The term “contrition,” though it is not clearly defined literally in the Scriptures, encapsulates the idea of repentance which requires change-of-heart. This is the fundamental element of Jesus’ preaching of the Gospel: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” (Mk 1:14-15)<sup>50</sup> Thus, repentance is the essential aspect of faith, a key in order for one to enter the Kingdom of God.<sup>51</sup> In order to enter the Kingdom of God and to receive God’s love and forgiveness, a contrite heart and turning back to God are the key to receiving God’s love and forgiveness, as the prodigal son was received and welcomed by his father (Lk 15:11-32).<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, Bash says that repentance that requires change of heart is the center of Jesus’ preaching in the Gospel of Mark. Mcdonagh connects Jesus’ message of repentance to God’s love and forgiveness which are the essential aspect of faith and an access for one to enter the Kingdom of God. Witherup, in his turn, states that in the gospel of Mark, Jesus connects his urgent command to repent with an equally urgent call to believe in the Gospel.<sup>53</sup> Mark’s understanding of conversion is intimately connected with faith. The word “gospel” here does not mean a written Gospel as is found in the New Testament, but the “good news” of conversion and salvation which Jesus came to bring. For Mark, believing in this good news cannot be separated from faith in Jesus himself.<sup>54</sup> This leads to the central teaching of Mark’s Gospel about conversion. Christian conversion means to follow Jesus, that is, to become a disciple and to have faith in Jesus. The first act which Jesus performs after proclaiming his central message is to call his first disciples together (Mk 1: 16-20). Witherup believes that the Jesus’ action sets up the thematic thrust of the rest of the Gospel. It is basically a story of faith and discipleship.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>50</sup> Mairin Mcdonagh, “Celebration of forgiveness and healing,” *Doctrine and Life* 54, no. 6 (1996): 74.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

In the account of Luke, the evangelist shows more interest in the notion of conversion than Mark and Matthew combined.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the word of conversion frequently occurs in the Gospel of Luke compared to Mark and Matthew (*metanoia* five times, *metanoēō* nine times). There are found ten words of conversion in Lukan passages from the fourteen occurrences that are not common to Mark or Matthew.<sup>57</sup> It is evident in the account in Luke that he expands the understanding of conversion. He connects the message of conversion with other themes more explicitly. Luke connects it with forgiveness and reconciliation, salvation and the mercy of God, and joy. Witherup states that these themes are helpful in understanding the eschatological urgency of conversion found in the account of Mark and Matthew's understanding while at the same time increasing its personal dimension.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, Witherup states that John's ministry, that is, his preaching of turning people back to God, is confirmed by his father Zechariah's great canticle in response to John's birth. It explicitly refers to salvation and forgiveness of sin:<sup>59</sup>

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.... (Lk 1: 76-77)

This special link of conversion and forgiveness of sins in Luke is a clear reaffirmation of John's own preaching namely, "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3) and his challenge to the Jewish leaders to "produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance." (Lk 3: 8) The emphasis on forgiveness of sins does not simply stop in John's preaching of conversion. Luke amplifies the special interest of conversion through the parables and teachings of Jesus.<sup>60</sup> Jesus explains his mission with the metaphor of a doctor and patients: "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance (*eismetanoiam*) but sinners." (Lk 5:31b-32) Luke's addition of the phrase to *repentance* makes explicit

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 47

the connection between the call to conversion and the need for sinners to be healed of their sinfulness. The reconciliation and the forgiveness of the Father are precisely the kind of medicine prescribed to heal this afflicted state. Luke also reveals his interest in conversion as reconciliation and forgiveness in a series of parables, two of which are unique to this Gospel. In response to the Pharisees' and scribes' complaint that he is hanging around with sinners, Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep.<sup>61</sup>

What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep. I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over *one sinner who repents* than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of *repentance*. (Lk 15:4-7)

From the account of Luke, it is evident that joy accompanies those who are truly repentant. Repentance is touted as an action leading to great rejoicing. Such is the result of true conversion for Luke. It is the experience of being lost, then found, which leads to boundless joy.

The most remarkable parable of Luke's Gospel is the famous Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32). Witherup states that there is no other parable which portrays more poignantly that God operates a lost and found department, and yet none of the typical vocabulary of conversion, repentance or returning appears. Luke simply allows the power of the story itself to communicate its message.<sup>62</sup> From v.11-24, the parable points out the father's love toward his son. In place of the expected normal sequence of being lost and found, dead and alive, the father reverses it and says "This son of mine was dead, and has come back to life again; he was lost, and has been found." Conversion is not only being re-found when lost but actually coming to life again after death, a potent signal of the promise that Jesus came to bring.<sup>63</sup> The

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Parable of the Prodigal Son could be a story that somehow offends the sense of justice. However, Witherup remarks that rigorous sense of justice forgets God's merciful love.<sup>64</sup> He states that Luke wants to present how Jesus treats the sinners who decide to come back, to admit their failing--<sup>65</sup>"great rejoicing in heaven." (Lk 15:7)

The end of Luke's Gospel provides a clear invitation that conversion from sin is an essential part of the message to be proclaimed to the world. The risen Jesus gives his disciples final instructions immediately prior to his ascension:

Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that *repentance, for the forgiveness of sins*, would be preached to all these things. And behold I am sending the promise of my father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Lk 24:46-49)

The phrase "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" functions in both a backward looking and forward looking fashion. From a retrospective vantage point, it brings to fulfillment the ministry of John the Baptist who preached the same message. Prospectively, it looks to an essential part of the preaching of the apostles in Acts.

Luke has the same basic starting point as Mark and Matthew, situating the call to conversion in the ministries of both John the Baptist and Jesus; but quickly takes it to different direction. By explicitly connecting forgiveness of sin to conversion, Luke goes a long way to personalizing conversion, rather than the broad call to the conversion of a people or a nation as in the Old Testament. Luke emphasizes the call to conversion which individuals must heed. Sinners must turn away from sin and come back to God. As soon as these prodigal children return, they will be met by a forgiving Father who rejoices at their return and celebrates with great festivity. The mercy of God, whose love seems itself prodigal, will not only know no bounds, but will be exercised with infinite patience.<sup>66</sup> For Luke, conversion and repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation are all part of God's

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 55.

mercy. In other words, Luke's view of conversion as merciful reconciliation takes on a familiar appearance of conversion experienced in the Church's understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.<sup>67</sup>

The Church defined contrition as the heartfelt sorrow and aversion for sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more which is also necessary at all times for the attainment of the remission of sins.<sup>68</sup> The Rite of Penance avails itself of Paul VI's more scriptural way of saying this:<sup>69</sup> "We can only approach the Kingdom of Christ by *metanoia*. This is a profound change of the whole person by which one begins to consider, judge and arrange his life according to the holiness and love of God, made manifest in his Son in the last days and given to us in abundance."<sup>70</sup>

Finally, there are also other accounts like that of St. Paul which signifies contrition: "Let a man examine himself." (1Cor 11:28) St. Paul speaks here not about confession but about contrition. Thus, Francis de Villalba, a theologian asserts:

Therefore the Fathers understood the precept of Paul as being about contrition only. Otherwise, they would have advised the people accordingly. Moreover it is certain that a person is bound to examine himself but not bound to confess, even when a confessor is available. Therefore Paul is not speaking about confession. This is proved thus: If someone did not celebrate for a month or two, and yet was not conscious of mortal sin, and if he then wanted to celebrate, he would be bound to examine himself, and he would sin if he did not do so....<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>68</sup> Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 56.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini*, February 17, 1966 (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1973), 6-7.

<sup>71</sup> Societas Goerresiana, ed., *Concilium Tridentinum, Diariorum, Actorum, Epistularum Tractatum Nova Collectio, Actorum Pars Quarta Volumen Secundum*, Tomus, 66-67. In Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 67.

### Other Acts of Forgiveness

The most common scriptural text about the acts of forgiveness is the Lord's Prayer:

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one. If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions." (Mt 6:9-15)

The clause *as we forgive* presupposes the connection between one's treatment with one another and God's treatment to the ones who ask for forgiveness. However, the mutuality between God and man does not affirm an exact proportionality since God is more merciful and forgiving. Nevertheless forgiveness is necessary in receiving God's forgiveness.<sup>72</sup> The Lord's Prayer speaks of the two-way street, that if he or she forgives their debtors, their heavenly Father will also forgive them. But if they do not forgive those who trespass against them, neither will their Father forgive their trespasses. This scriptural text has a unique link with the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18: 23-35). In this parable, Matthew makes the readers understand how divine grace shapes human relations and, in particular, how people should forgive one another. This parable, though central to the idea of forgiveness in the New Testament, is only found in Matthew's Gospel.<sup>73</sup> An important element in the story is the fact that waiving debt and forgiving are related ideas in the New Testament. The point of the parable is that forgiveness is a gift to the undeserving, often an unimaginable generosity. The experience of such a gift is regenerative and transformative. Forgiveness leads to change, and change affects other relationships. In particular, a person who has experienced the gift of God's forgiveness strives to forgive others. The failure of the man whose debt of ten thousand talents that had been remitted was not that he failed to forgive but that he failed to

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<sup>72</sup> Benedict T. Viviano, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, eds., "The Gospel According To Matthew," *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1993), 645.

<sup>73</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 93.

want to forgive and that he failed to try to forgive.<sup>74</sup> These points of the parable are expressed strongly in v.33 and v.35. The two verses apparently say that those who receive mercy must also show mercy to others and those who are forgiven must forgive others as well. The implication is that if they do not do these things, they will forfeit God's mercy and forgiveness. Hence, there is a clear link between receiving God's forgiveness and seeking to forgive others—and a clear link between God's continuing forgiveness and forgiving others.<sup>75</sup>

Looking back to the Lord's Prayer, the word "as" (*hos* in Greek) in the phrase "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors (Mt 6:12)" has been sometimes interpreted wrongly. If it means a bestowal of divine grace that forgiveness is dependent on human beings, then it is clearly impossible because God's love and forgiveness are not and cannot be earned.<sup>76</sup> Another interpretation is that God will forgive people in the same way or in like manner that they forgive others as Kierkegaard would say.<sup>77</sup> This would be a prayer asking that when people forgive those who sin against them, in like manner God would continue to forgive the forgiver.<sup>78</sup> This explains that human forgiveness limits the extent of divine forgiveness and makes it no more than a correlation of human forgiveness, thus, it is a give and take basis.<sup>79</sup> A better interpretation of the phrase is that the word *hos* in this context means "since." It means that people have forgiven, and God may continue to forgive the forgivers, unlike the unjust steward who forfeited forgiveness through being unforgiving (Mt 18: 21-35).

Viewing Mark's text, one can see the same idea within the broader picture of the transformative power of God's forgiveness. According to Jesus in the passage, whenever people pray they are to forgive anyone towards whom they have been unforgiving so

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>76</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 95.

<sup>77</sup> See Mark 11: 25b where *hina* meaning 'so that' (indicating result) is used. "Hina," *Bible Study Tools*, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/hina.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

that God would forgive them their sins. Mark's broader picture of forgiveness reinforces the point of the word *hos*, namely, one forgiven since God has forgiven first.

### **Suffering and Forgiveness**

Jesus exemplifies what it means to forgive. How Jesus responds to lies, violence, hatred, wrongdoing and the other forms of human evil directed against him is noteworthy. In 1 Peter, it is said that Jesus bore humanity's sins on the cross (1Pt 2:24). In this context, the sins that are being referred to are the varieties of human wrong actions that were directed personally against Jesus. He suffered vicariously all forms of human sinfulness too. Consequently, by bearing humanity's sins, Jesus brought about healing of humanity's condition and left an example to follow.<sup>80</sup>

Moreover, Jesus modelled what it means to be abused and to be powerless and to voluntarily remain that way. On the cross Jesus prayed that the Father might forgive his executioners' sins (Lk 23: 34). His own personal forgiveness—given to unrepentant people as a gift that was not asked for, expected or even sought—is implicit in the words “Father, forgive them.” What is evident at this point in Luke's account is the humanity of Christ, and what Luke emphasizes is that Jesus, in the context of brutal and unjust suffering, modelled the ideal forgiveness without being vengeful, angry or defiant. He thereby set an example of what later could be called the Christian ideal of forgiveness.<sup>81</sup>

The approach of Jesus' non-retaliatory and non-vindictive forgiveness is in contrast to those who are unforgiving and who are seeking revenge. The difference between forgiving and unforgiving has to do with power. Being unforgiving may express a wish to exercise power—power over offender—in order to exact retribution and to redress the sense of powerlessness that the wronged person may feel. It is also a way to restore the imbalance in the power relation between wrongdoer and victim: the wrongdoer abused the victim, and so the victim, to get even, exacts revenge or retribution. Though the wrongdoer has been repaid in kind, both are now victims. In contrast, Jesus chose to remain powerless and to surrender to the evil against him. Paul

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<sup>80</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 92.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



takes up this theme, particularly in 2 Corinthians, and argues that voluntary powerless is the means by which divine power can be demonstrated and is the conduit of the power of God.<sup>82</sup>

### **Mercy and Forgiveness**

The Beatitudes is one of the most loved portions of the Gospel. It forms the beginning of what has come to be known as the “Sermon on the Mount” which is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 5-7). It is a series of proclamations without a narrative.<sup>83</sup> In the second half of Matthew’s beatitude, he emphasizes the need for mercy: “Blessed are the merciful, for they obtain mercy.” (Mt 5: 7) In here, one thing that is common to the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who hunger for righteousness is that their life is not self-sufficient but looks outward for help. They understand mercy for they know their own inadequacies, dependence, weaknesses and incompleteness. And, when they receive gracious and merciful bounty from the King, they in turn show mercy to others. Showing mercy to others includes both the forgiveness of the sinner and compassion for the suffering and the needy. Since they understand mercy and show mercy to others, the word from God is that they shall obtain mercy. Ultimately, this looks forward to the coming of the king and the Day of Judgment when the merciful will be welcomed.<sup>84</sup> They will receive mercy, not because they did enough good deeds, but because they understood how important mercy is in their own spiritual pilgrimage. In a parallel way, they learned to forgive others because they were constantly being forgiven; they learned to show mercy to others because they were shown mercy.<sup>85</sup>

Looking closely at the word “merciful,” this refers to the pardoning of one’s neighbour, to love of one’s neighbour, and even of one’s enemies.<sup>86</sup> Normally this word is used to mean showing compassion, forbearance, pity, sympathy, forgiveness, kindness,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> “The Beatitudes,” *Bible*, accessed September 18, 2014, <https://bible.org/seriespage/beatitudes-matthew-51-12>.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Benedict T. Viviano, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, eds., “The Gospel According To Matthew,” *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 640.

tender heartedness, or liberality or refraining from harming or punishing offenders or enemies.<sup>87</sup> These synonyms provide some insight into this word. They all express how a merciful person might act. However, none of them specifically pictures what biblical mercy is because the scriptural concept is virtually untranslatable into a single English word.<sup>88</sup> The Greek word used in Matthew 5:7, *eleemon* means essentially the same as its English counterpart, “merciful.” However, in all possibility Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and the idea behind his statement about mercy come from Old Testament—that is Aramaic Hebrew *kesed*.<sup>89</sup>

John W. Ritenbaugh, taking William Barclay’s Daily Study Bible commentary on Matthew regarding the word “mercy,” states that the term does not only mean to sympathize with a person in the popular sense of the term. It also does not mean simply to feel sorry for some in trouble. The term *kesed* means the ability to get right inside the other person’s skin until one can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings. Clearly this is much more than an emotional wave of pity. This demands a quite deliberate effort of the mind and of the will.<sup>90</sup> This is sympathy in the literal sense of the word. The word “sympathy” is derived from the two Greek words, *syn* which means *together with*, and *paschein* which means *to experience or to suffer*. Thus, sympathy means experiencing things together with the other person, literally going through what he is going through.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, looking at the “mercy” of Jesus, it is clear that this is not humanly derived. It is not because one can merit mercy by being merciful or forgiving of others, but because one cannot

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<sup>87</sup> John W. Ritenbaugh, “The Beatitudes: Blessed are the Merciful,” *Bibletools*, accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/437/Forgiveness.htm>.

<sup>88</sup> Ritenbaugh, “The Beatitudes: Blessed are the Merciful,” <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/437/Forgiveness.htm>.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible commentary*, accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.dannychesnut.com/Bible/Barclay/Gospel%20of%20Matthew%20Part%20I.htm>.

receive mercy and forgiveness of God unless one repents. And one cannot claim to have repented of their sins if they are unmerciful towards the sins of others.<sup>92</sup> The true merciful are those aware of their own sins to deal with others in sharp condemnation. They constrain themselves to deal humbly and kindly with those in need. Nothing moves them to forgive others like the amazing realization that God has forgiven men's trespasses. Mercy in God's children begins by experiencing His forgiveness.<sup>93</sup> Once more with Jesus, forgiveness is a gift, given out of love and given sometimes in unexpected ways. As with the man who wanted to inherit eternal life (Mt 19: 16-22), it is not a case of fulfilling laws and of assuming that by rights one is entitled to—and that God is duty-bound to give—what one expects. Forgiveness is not earned; neither is it deserved. It is a gift of the forgiver, given in response to the ideal that it is morally virtuous to forgive.<sup>94</sup> For if divine forgiveness is an unimaginably lavish gift to the undeserving, how can it be made contingent on the degree to which one person forgives another? Perhaps the contradiction can be solved this way: If people strive to forgive as best they can, responding fully to their own experience of God's forgiveness, then God will forgive those people with all the lavishness that God offers. If they take what God gives and resist its transformative power, then God will limit their experience of divine forgiveness. To forgive is to strive to practice a moral ideal namely, the sin is not to fail to attain the ideal but to fail to strive to practice that ideal.<sup>95</sup>

### **Eucharist and Forgiveness**

There is one other means for the forgiveness of sins outside Sacramental Confession that remains present today namely, the Holy Eucharist. Jesus instructed his disciples to partake of the Eucharist for the forgiveness their sins:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving I to his disciples said,

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible commentary*, <http://www.dannychesnut.com/Bible/Barclay/Gospel%20of%20Matthew%20Part%20I.htm>.

<sup>94</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 89.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 100.

*Take and eat; this is my body.* Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.* (Mt 26: 26-28)

Coffey affirms the doctrine of the Council of Trent on the Eucharist that it consists of the double gift of forgiveness of sins and communion with God. Hence, it is under two aspects: Eucharist as sacrament and sacrifice. Speaking of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, the Council teaches:<sup>96</sup>

Therefore the holy Synod teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory (for the forgiveness of sins), and that through this same sacrifice it comes to pass that, provided we draw near to God with a sincere heart and true faith, with fear and reverence, in contrition and repentance, “so let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help” (Heb 4:16). For by this sacrificial offering the Lord is indeed appeased, concedes the grace and gift of repentance, forgives great faults and even heinous sins.<sup>97</sup>

There are two points to be made from this quotation. The first is that when the Eucharist is considered as a sacrifice, its extensively universal aspects come to the fore. The offerer and beneficiary of the sacrifice are not just the individual priest or the individual member of the faithful with him, but the Eucharistic community which in turn represents the universal Church and, at least, as beneficiary, the whole human race. The second point is that Eucharist makes present the saving death of Christ in all its effectiveness. It overcomes the grave sins of those in the community who have been moved to contrition by its grace. It does this, however, only indirectly by moving them to the sorrow and love that comprise the necessary condition of divine forgiveness.<sup>98</sup>

The suffering Christ represents all that Christ accomplished and will accomplish, all that he was, is, and will be. In the Eucharist all this is made available to all. This consists in reconciliation with God which in turn exists in the double gift of

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<sup>96</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 58.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

forgiveness of sins and communion with God, each in and through the suffering Christ. St. Thomas expresses the matter thus: “This sacrament is universal, because the life it confers is not just life for this person, but in itself it is life for the whole world, and for this the death of Christ is sufficient, according to 1 John 2:2: ‘He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.’”<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, looking at the two sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, Coffey points out that these two ecclesial institutions possess *iure divino* status. The first of these, the sacrament of penance, is immediately and intrinsically related to a third sacrament, baptism, which is also *iure divino*. Coffey points out that there exists an order of which is itself *iure divino*. It follows that, baptism is necessary for the valid reception of the Eucharist, so also penance is also required *iure divino* for the Eucharist.<sup>100</sup> But Coffey clarifies the difference that in the case of baptism the order is absolute (exceptionless), but in the case of penance, it is not absolute (it admits of exception). It is for this reason that the Council already acknowledges exceptions in relation to the necessity of Penance in relation to Eucharist even though the Council cites 1 Cor. 11:28: “Those who eat and drink unworthily, without discerning the body of the Lord, eat and drink judgment upon themselves” which becomes the discipline of the contemporary Church formulated in canon 916 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law:

Anyone who is conscious of grave sin may not celebrate or receive the Body of the Lord without previously having been to sacramental confession, unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, which includes the resolve to go to confession as soon as possible.<sup>101</sup>

Most contemporary theologians accept without question the assertion of Trent that this is a stipulation of ecclesiastical custom and law but it is not *iure divino*. In relation to the necessity

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid 58.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> See Canon 916 of 1983 CIC.

of confession before Holy Communion, there is no text from Scriptures directly saying so.<sup>102</sup> The very fact that it does admit an exception shows that it is human, not a divine law. Hence, the Church believes that Eucharist as sacrifice (Mt 26:28) can justify the sinner indirectly. However, it will always be on the basis of his or her contrition in any case.<sup>103</sup>

### Divine Forgiveness of sins

Sin is an offense against God which disrupts human relationship or friendship with Him. In normal human relations, friendship presupposes equality between two persons. However, in the case of relationship between Divine and the human, God, being the creator is superior. This means that the difference between God and human beings could never be overlooked. Thus, forgiving of sins is proper only to God.<sup>104</sup> Divine forgiveness can be expressed in two aspects, namely, by personal or spiritual and by juridical or institutional.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 66.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>104</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 110.

<sup>105</sup> Lobo refers to these aspects of the Church when explaining the fact that in the Church there are two realities referring to its life and practice: First, is that *juridical* power to *bind and to loose* (Mt 16:17-19, 18:18) which involves laws promulgated to regulate Christian life in communities and meant for the good of the *institution*; second, there is also the *spiritual* order which enjoys the free movement of the Spirit for the good of the *person*. (cf. George V. Lobo, *Guide to Christian*, (Westminster; Christian Classics, Inc., 1982), 242 ff. There should be no opposition between the *spiritual* and the *juridical* elements in the Church. In fact, Pope Pius XII declared that it is “a calamitous error which invents an imaginary Church, a society nurtured and shaped by charity, with which it disparagingly contrasts another society, which it calls juridical.” (cf. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 63). “*Mystici Corporis Christi*,” accessed March 29, 2015, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_29061943\\_mystici-corporis-christi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html).

### Spiritual Means of Forgiving Sins

God reveals His mercy and divine forgiveness in the earthly ministry of Jesus as Scriptures say, “it is in Jesus Christ that the Father accomplished the work of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18ff; Col 1:20). Scriptures support that the life of Jesus should be seen as the fulfillment of this charge laid upon Him by the Father. Its activity bears witness to the centrality of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation that are made vivid in the account of Mark (Mk 1: 4). John’s message of conversion is expressed by the noun *metanoia* (repentance), that is, change of heart which is always connected with forgiveness of sins.<sup>106</sup>

Contrite heart is the important aspect of every believer of Jesus in order to receive the loving forgiveness of God. Basically, forgiveness is a gift from God that is gratuitously given to those who ask for it.<sup>107</sup> In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father in the story had already clearly forgiven the son before the son had decided to return home. When the son did return, the Father’s expression of forgiveness was immediate and unconditional, and did not depend to the son’s prepared apology: (v. 18) “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you...” Instead, the father (v. 22) put on the finest robe and ring on his finger and sandals. The parable implies that the Father longed to express his forgiveness to the son. The father watched in hope that the son would return so that he could express to the son his forgiveness. Thus, the son could not experience the father’s forgiveness until the son had returned home and received the father’s mercy. Neither could the son be reconciled to the father not until he had experienced that forgiveness.<sup>108</sup> The son’s repentance moved him to go back into his father’s house. This is already a proof of change of heart (*metanoia*). In other words, the father’s expression of forgiveness and the son’s contrite return to the father resulted to reconciliation.<sup>109</sup> This supports the acts of Jesus’ welcoming sinners and declaring the sins of other person as forgiven.

Another act of Jesus’ ministry of forgiveness is in the account of Matthew (Mt 9:2-8. Jesus forgave and healed the paralytic man. In Jewish tradition, sickness is associated with

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<sup>106</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 105.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 105-106.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 106.

sin.<sup>110</sup> Accordingly, it is the reason why Jesus said to the paralytic (v.2) “your sins are forgiven... (v.6) that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins... Rise, take up your stretcher, and go home.” This also supports the intrinsic link between bodily and spiritual healing—implicitly expressed in all the gospel accounts of Jesus’ healings.<sup>111</sup> Jesus’ way of forgiving sins is not directly given. In every occasion where Jesus speaks of His power and authority to forgive sins, He does it on the basis of the disposition and the intention of the recipient.<sup>112</sup> In the case of the paralytic man, it is the faith of the paralytic and his friends that Jesus healed and forgave the paralytic man. The same is true in narrative of the sinful woman where Jesus forgave her sins because of her great love for Jesus.

The activities of Jesus gave focus on personal conversion with forgiveness rather than the broad call to the conversion of a people or a nation as in the Old Testament. This forgiveness of God does not know boundaries. It is exercised with infinite patience.<sup>113</sup> The scriptural texts on the forgiving ministry of Jesus prove that forgiveness of God for the individual sinner refers to the personal conversion of each one. The result of this process is the “reconciliation” of an individual person with God. In other words, reconciliation happens in two-way relationship, namely, on the part of God and on the part of the sinner. On the part of God, who is rich in mercy and love, He freely gives and offers forgiveness, as part of His essence as God before the erring believer asks for it.<sup>114</sup> On the part of the person, it is his role to ask for God’s forgiveness and accept it with the Spirit’s prompting him—namely, with contrition, faith and great love from the Spirit. The believer receives forgiveness of God and eventually reconciliation with Him.

It is when forgiveness is sought that the relationship between the two parties is restored. And while forgiveness and salvation is an act of God, it consists essentially in the relationship

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<sup>110</sup> For the Jewish people thought of the human person the healing of the visible dimension of the person, the body, became a sign of the healing of the invisible dimension, the soul, and of the person as whole.

<sup>111</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 35.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament* 55.

<sup>114</sup> Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 105



of friendship between God and the human beings. This is why contrition is necessary in order to have sins forgiven. However, if one is not repentant, God will still forgive in the sense that He will not harbor any antipathy toward the sinners. But He cannot forgive in a full sense of the word unless one responds positively to his offer of forgiving grace.<sup>115</sup>

### **Juridical Form of Forgiving Sins**

Jesus' activity bears witness to the centrality of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation in his earthy ministry. Jesus knows that He will no longer be with His disciples, therefore, He entrusted to His apostles the power and authority to forgive sins, "Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn 20:21-23).

After having empowered his apostles to forgive and retain sins, Jesus sent them forth to all peoples to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Lk 24:47) The forgiveness of sins here refers to the preaching, that is, the proclamation of the Gospel preached by John the Baptist (Mk 1:4). The Church interpreted this text as reference to the institution of Jesus of the Sacrament of Penance. The power and authority to forgive sins handed over to the apostles is expressed in the form of the Sacrament of Penance. This has been shaped through time.

The practice of the celebration of Penance manifests the influence of the long history of the Sacrament. At the start of the seventh century, the practice of individual confession and absolution reflects the tradition of private penance that spread widely in Europe. Such practice suspended the common services of public penance and general absolution by Christians. Thus, the celebration of penance is a kind of mosaic fashioned out of the many historical ways Christians have sought and received

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<sup>115</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 86.

forgiveness and reconciliation offered by God.<sup>116</sup> The idea of Church's forgiveness and reconciliation is the depiction of the Church as the body or community of believers and Jesus as the Head. Consequently, since the Church is the community of believers, one ill believer affects the whole community. The individual member affects the community. Therefore, in order to receive God's forgiveness, the active part of every individual is required to be reconciled with the Church in order to be reconciled with God.<sup>117</sup>

Jesus, the Son of God, is the embodiment of divine mercy. He forgives. In founding the Church, He grants her the power to bind or to loose. She is to be a new community whose members are charged to forgive one another.<sup>118</sup> It is in divine forgiveness alone that Christians lay their hope.<sup>119</sup> Only God's forgiveness and grace can resolve the reconciliation between God and man with the mediation of Jesus and the participation of the community.

Though the Church is headed by Jesus who is divine, still the Church is composed of human persons who faithfully continue to discover and find ways of responding to the mission that Jesus entrusted to them. Thus, the complicated history of the Sacrament of Penance reflects the Church's response in shaping the celebration. The Church is a community composed of human persons. As a human institution, she is naturally governed by structures, laws and jurisdictions. Jesus knows this very well. It is for this reason that Jesus first begins by establishing His Church. Hence, Jesus entrusted the power and authority of forgiving sins to the Apostles, who now are represented by the Church hierarchy. As a community, it is regulated by laws which are much seen in the history of Penance. The Church passed through many changes of rules and disciplines in shaping the celebration

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<sup>116</sup> Nathan Mitchell, eds., Godfrey Diekman, Cora Marie Dubitsky and Colman Grabert, "Chapter II The Many ways to Reconciliation: An Historical Synopsis of Christian Penance," *The Rite of Penance: Commentaries, Background and Directions* (Washington D.C.: The Liturgical Press, 1978), 36.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> Thomas W. Buckley, *Seventy Times Seven: Sin, Judgment, and forgiveness in Matthew* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

of the Sacrament—specifically, declaring different canons which indicated discipline and the gravity of the celebration itself. It also assigned responsibilities within the Church. Lastly, as an institutional body, the Church practiced her authority and power to forgive sins in the Sacrament of Penance. This power is explicitly expressed in the words of the priest called “absolution” formula uttered by the priest which grants forgiveness.

The characteristics of the Church attest to the nature of the Church and the need for authority in the Church so that both good order and freedom thrive.<sup>120</sup> The source of power and authority in the Church is derived from God who is the source of power. Basically, the authority of the Church originated from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. For Christians, Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God. Thus, He is God-become-human for the salvation of the world. The Risen Christ is the proof of all authority in the Church.<sup>121</sup>

The powerful actions of Christ, specifically, His miracles presuppose “faith,” both for the one acting and the one acted upon. For example, in the account of Matthew, Jesus did not work mighty deeds in Nazareth because their faith was lacking (Mt 13:58, NAB). In one scenario, Jesus cured a boy possessed by a mute spirit only after faith was stirred up (Mk 9:14, NAB). In another incident, Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic man because of the faith of the man and his friends. Aside from faith, however, Jesus shows his powerful action of forgiveness to the sinful woman because of her great love.

Finally, the exercise of the authority of Jesus is an authority of service. Service is the very essence of what power is within the Church. Hence, it reveals the nature of Christ’s mission.<sup>122</sup> Such authority is of stark contrast with the mentality of the times:

Jesus summoned them and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles *lord it over them*, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, *whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant*; whoever wishes to be first

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<sup>120</sup> James Corriden, *Canon Law as Ministry: Freedom and Good Order for the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 106.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”(Mk 10:42)

It is noticeable that the language used is strong: “Lord it over them” and “make their authority felt.” This language vividly expresses the exercise of power by Roman imperial rulers, in comparison with “servant” and “slave” which emphasize service. The message is clear that authority in Christian community is to be exercised through service and not domination of others.<sup>123</sup> St. Peter followed this: “Do not lord it over those who are assigned to you, but be examples to the flock” (1 Pt 5:3).

Nevertheless, as history provides, the authentic notion of authority in the church as service has often been distorted since the church is also composed of weak and sinful people. For instance, sometime after the Peace of Constantine, bishops became officials of the Roman rule, honored but weighed down with duties having little to do with the preaching of the gospel. This new status altered the bishop’s relationship with their people. It blurred the true nature and scope of their authority. The Church was influenced by the mentality of the Roman Empire system which made the Church enter into the juridicized mode of administration, that is, the strong tendency to become rigid and legalistic. A consequence of this was that clerics obtain the power of jurisdiction which discouraged active lay involvement.<sup>124</sup> The authority and power of the Church was strongly felt in Council of Trent. This Council strongly maintained the judicial power of the priest’s absolution in the Sacrament of Penance. The priest judged the penitents’ disposition to receive God’s mercy and forgiveness.<sup>125</sup>

As history presents, the West would prefer that the personal and indicative form of absolution are more appropriate to a judicial process, where a judge speaks in his own name. However, the use of first person in criminal court is not customarily true, like, “I sentence you....” But the form is always: “The sentence of the Court is...”<sup>126</sup> But unlikely, for first ten centuries there is no trace

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<sup>123</sup> James Corriden, *Canon Law as Ministry: Freedom and Good Order for the Church*, 111.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> John Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), 93.

of an independent indicative form; all the forms that have survived are deprecativ. Beginning the eleventh century, in Roman rite, a transition from deprecativ to indicative form happened: “We, by the authority committed to us by God, unworthy as we are, absolve you from every bond of your offences.”<sup>127</sup>

Eventually, the Church expresses God’s forgiveness of sins to the sinners by exercising its authority and power in the Sacrament of Penance through the ministry of the priest. The priest is regarded as the representative of the Church who welcomes the erring Christian again to the community through absolution of sins in the name of Jesus, resulting to reconciliation with the Church and with God.

### **Sacrament of Penance and Other Means of Forgiveness**

In surveying the development of the Sacrament of Penance, one finds a balance between permanency and change. There has been permanency in the awareness of the Church that sins can be forgiven through the ministry of the Church. There have been changes in the signs through which forgiveness has been granted.<sup>128</sup> The development of Penance is likened to a human person who grows over a period of years; in spite of all change, he remains the same at the core of his being. He has a permanent identity; he has it from birth to death. Yet, he changes and develops physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Under many aspects, he does not remain the same. However, his identity is stronger than all of the changes; they cannot destroy it. The permanent core of his person holds together all the developments that take place over the years.<sup>129</sup> From that analogy of the Church as living body, because it is a community of living persons, she is subject to changes. Yet, in spite of all the changes the identity of the Church remains.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Magna Bibliotheca Patrum* (Köln, 1618), t vii, in Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 94.

<sup>128</sup> Ladislav Örsy, *The Evolving Church and The Sacrament of Penance* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1978), 54-55.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Different Forms of Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance**

The Church continues to evolve and discover new understanding of the true intention of Jesus opening to new vision, emphasis and practices. Right from the beginning, the Church had to find ways and means to signify forgiveness of sins. A complex patterns of rites and symbols were created in the Mediterranean and in the churches of Ireland. Both types of procedures were born from the one conviction that the Church has received a mandate from the Lord to grant pardon to sinners. This ascertains the permanency and change of the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>131</sup>

In every development, contrast between the demands of permanency and change arise. But such an impression is a superficial one. At the deepest level, every movement of life is the fruit of a balanced play between the forces of stability and the need for mobility. The contrast is already present in the Gospels of Matthew (Mt 5:18) and John (Jn 16:13). The first saying of Jesus refers to the permanency of God's gifts, to the demands of fidelity. The second speaks of progress in our understanding of the same gifts, of the need to move toward the whole truth.<sup>132</sup> In other words, fidelity and progress go together. The Sacrament of Penance becomes a lifeless monument of the Church to be guarded if she is only faithful to the letter of the law, but does not advance in the understanding of its spirit. If, however, the Church is intent simply on change and not attached to the core of the truth, she is likened to a ship without anchor, tossed about by the waves, turned around by every wind.<sup>133</sup>

Each generation of Christians explores God's revelation over and over again. Acknowledging the move of the Spirit and with the help of the Spirit, they understand more and more, they move gradually toward the fullness of truth. God's mighty deeds do not change in time, nor do his mysteries. The Church's comprehension of these truths evolves. The Church, therefore, is progressing toward the fullness of truth,<sup>134</sup> as found in the words of the Vatican II:

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The Tradition which comes from the apostles

<sup>131</sup> Örsy, *The Evolving Church and...*, 55.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 62.

develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, new ideas and discoveries shape the life of the Church. The development of the Sacrament of Penance is an ongoing movement of the Spirit working within the Church's structures. As this ongoing movement enlightens and transforms the Church, she grows in openness to the discovery and celebration of the full truth of love revealed in Jesus with the aid of the Spirit.<sup>136</sup> The movement of the Spirit is evident as history moved on. At the beginning, the Spirit revealed to the Church the importance of Penance and repentance. So public penance was practiced in the Church. Then the Spirit moved the Church to the personal dimension of the sacrament, and so personal confession was emphasized. At the same time, the Spirit moved the Church to the social character of the sacrament, and so ecclesial character is emphasized.<sup>137</sup>

As for the minister of the Sacrament of Penance, at the beginning, the bishop was ordinarily the minister of penance. And in the very early century, there is proof that the *sacerdotes secundi ordinis*, priests who were not in Episcopal orders, administered Penance at least in times of emergency. St. Clement of Rome advises the Corinthians: "Submit yourselves unto the presbyters," who, according to the more general opinion, were not bishops. And later, during the time of Reformation, the Church during the

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<sup>135</sup> See Vatican II, Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, no. 8.

<sup>136</sup> Chris Aridas, *Reconciliation; Celebrating God's healing Forgiveness* (New York: Image Books, 1987), 92-93.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

Council of Trent decreed that priests alone are the sole ministers of absolution.<sup>138</sup>

### Three Rites in Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance

In time, the Church identified and recognized three official rites in celebrating the Sacrament of Penance: First, the rite for reconciliation of individual penitents; second, the rite for reconciliation of several Penitents with individual confession and absolution; and the third, is the General absolution.<sup>139</sup>

The rite for reconciliation of individual penitents incorporates individual confession and is free of external pressure for haste, but it is weak in its communal dimension, the community being represented only by the priest. The rite for reconciliation of several penitents with individual confession and absolution has individual confession, and at the same time is a community celebration. It works well in certain special situations. But in the context of a large parish community, it is hardly satisfactory since the individual and communal dimension, prove extremely difficult to harmonize. The third rite, the general absolution, suffers from the defect that, lacking individual confession, it does not allow the priest to exercise the discretion required by the Gospel (Jn 20:23). Furthermore, a person whose grave sins have been forgiven in this rite is not finished with the process, but is obliged to return for individual confession within a reasonable time.<sup>140</sup>

The history of the sacrament consists of three successive

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<sup>138</sup> Heinrich Joseph, Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic* no. 920, accessed February, 2015 <http://www.catecheticsonline.com/SourcesofDogma9.php>.

<sup>139</sup> The Second Vatican Council decreed that “the rite and formulas of penance are to be revised in such way they may more clearly express the nature and effects of this Sacrament (Second Vatican Council, constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 72 AAS 56 (1964) 118. In this new rite, namely, Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents, Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents, and Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution has been composed in accordance with the Pastoral Norms on General Sacramental Absolution, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on June 16, 1972 (AAS 64, 1964, 510-514).

<sup>140</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 164-168.



stages: the era of penance, the era of confession, and the era of reconciliation. The first consisted of the early centuries when the accent was placed on the period of expiating penance preceding official reconciliation; the second was introduced by the Irish monks in which personal confession was emphasized; and the third was inaugurated through the reforms of the Vatican Council II in which social and ecclesial character were the emphasis. Noticeably, the particular significance of the name of the sacrament reflects each of these eras, “penance” in the first, “confession” in the second, and “reconciliation” in the third.<sup>141</sup> The development of the three rites reflects the Church continuous discovering of the truth of the Gospel. However, because of the limitation of grasping fully the mystery of Penance, the Church can only reach and discover the truth gradually. Hence, the point of arrival becomes also the point of departure to discover the truth of the Gospel.<sup>142</sup> Thus, every era emphasizes the truth of Penance which all speak of the intention of Jesus concerning the Sacrament of Penance.

The third rite of celebrating the Sacrament of Penance is also a point of departure for the “other means” of forgiveness and reconciliation mentioned in canon 960 in the 1983 Code. General absolution brings problem, but also advantages in shaping the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>143</sup>

The third rite is problematic since it is impossible for the minister to exercise the discretionary judgment enjoined on him in Jn 20:23.<sup>144</sup> Although this power is not to be seen as an arbitrary one to decide who shall or who shall not receive the Sacrament of Penance, yet the judgment is pastoral—respect for the sacrament and for the salvation of souls (*salus animarum*) of the penitent. It is basically a judgment of determining whether the penitent is properly disposed or not. This judgment is still exercised in the case of baptism: adults are not baptized until they prove themselves committed, nor are infants baptized unless there exists a credible guarantee that they will be raised as members of the Church. Since, the Sacrament of Penance is the “second plank” after baptism, the same judgment must also be exercised.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Örsy, *The Evolving Church and...*, 70.

<sup>143</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 164-168.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 145.

So, in third rite, this is not exercised at all, unless the penitents are properly disposed, conveyed by their “sign of repentance.” It is surprising that the Church requires a grave necessity to legitimize this procedure. Thus, one concludes that to absolve without the exercise of discretion is clearly an anomaly inherent in the rite itself, permissible only on account of a proportionately grave reason.<sup>145</sup>

However, the third rite also possesses undeniable advantages. First, it embodies a communal experience of reconciliation, more effectively than the other two rites. It is the wish of Vatican II that the social and ecclesial character of the Sacrament of Penance be made more evident. It also emphasizes the importance of repentance (contrition) as the paramount “element” of the sacrament. Thus, the postponement of confession brings home this fact that repentance is more important than confession. The postponement also supports the statement that “the most important act of the penitent is “contrition”<sup>146</sup>—over those of confession and satisfaction. Contrition alone is absolutely indispensable as the condition for the forgiveness of sins. Thus, without repentance (contrition), the other acts would be rendered meaningless.<sup>147</sup>

On the other hand, for disciplinary reasons Pope John Paul II, in his exhortation following the 1984 synod Reconciliation and Penance, made this very clear:

The first form—reconciliation of individual penitents—is the only normal and ordinary way of celebrating the sacrament, and it cannot and must not be allowed to fall into disuse or be neglected. The second form—reconciliation of a number of penitents with individual confession and absolution—even though in the preparatory acts it helps to give greater emphasis to the community aspects of the sacrament, is the same as the first form in the culminating sacramental act, namely, individual confession and individual absolution of sins. It can thus be regarded as equal to the first form as regards the normality of the rite. The third form, however—reconciliation of a number of penitents with general confession and absolution—is exceptional in

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<sup>145</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 164-168

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

character. It is therefore not left to free choice but is regulated by a special discipline.<sup>148</sup>

### Other Means of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The revision of the rite opens the way for observing the essential element of the Penance, not as the act of the penitent, but rather the act of God whereby he extends the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation through the ministry of the Church. Thus, it reveals the primacy of God's grace over all human acts, including those by which a penitent returns to God in reconciliation. This truth is most evident in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.<sup>149</sup>

The essential element that links with General Absolution and the Sacrament of Penance is also the same element that links between Penance and the "other means" mentioned in Canon 960. The "other means also" (*aliis quoque modis*) mentioned in the second sentence of the canon probably refers principally to perfect contrition, which includes at least the implicit "desire for the sacrament"<sup>150</sup> St. Thomas attests to this when he says that in so far as the Sacrament of Penance is concerned, God can forgive sin "without the instrumental action of the priest in absolution," as he forgave the woman taken in adultery and the woman who had been a sinner. Nevertheless, sins will not be remitted without some degree of sorrow.<sup>151</sup> However, *virtual* penitence will be sufficient.

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<sup>148</sup>Pope John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Reconciliation and Penance,"* 32.

<sup>149</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 168.

<sup>150</sup> This idea differs Catholic's belief from the Protestant who rejected the conception of the sacraments, the outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace, but are merely signs and testimonies of God's good will toward us, which making this sacrament as sign not of God's action but of our actions. "Errors of Protestants," *Sacraments*, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm>.

<sup>151</sup> Penance as a virtue is commonly defined as "a supernatural habit." A moral habit is supernatural since no ordinary natural sorrow would be sufficient for the forgiveness of sins. This virtue is accompanied by supernatural impulses for true repentance namely, acts of divine mercy, faith, holy fear, hope and, at least in some initial degree, love. And also be accompanied by the intention of emending one's life and with the intention of never committing the sin again, "for the forgiveness of sins, it is required that man's will should be changed and converted to God, with detestation of his sin, and purpose of amendment (*Summa Theologia*, III, qu. 86, art. 2), in Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 13.

This may be operative in a variety of ways, such as asking for pardon of sin, practicing the virtues that are contrary to the sins committed, or carrying out acts of other virtues with the intention of winning pardon of sin.<sup>152</sup> Thus, it can be posited that sins may be forgiven either extra-sacramentally or by means of the sacrament. In extra-sacramental forgiveness, the sin is remitted *ex opere operantis*,<sup>153</sup> i.e. by an act of contrition and charity. Some kind of sorrow is always required. It is also held that attrition is probably sufficient for the forgiveness of venial sins, in that these sins compared with mortal sins are less serious and do not require for their pardon the same degree of contrition such as is needed for the forgiveness of grave sin.<sup>154</sup>

However, unlike the other means identified as General Absolution in Canon 961 which brings forgiveness and reconciliation with both God and the Church, the other means outside the Sacrament of Penance brings God's forgiveness and reconciliation with God alone. This is to maintain the power that Jesus entrusted to the Church, that reconciliation with the Church can only be accomplished in an action in which the Church itself is officially involved. This will presume that the recipient is already forgiven and reconciled with God through contrition and the other means. Therefore, the reconciliation with God brought about through some other means outside the Sacrament of Penance, namely, personal act of contrition or direct confession of sins to God and to one another; one's partaking of the Body and Blood of the Eucharist; and good deeds of love, namely, of mercy and compassion and even sufferings—are incomplete,

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<sup>152</sup> *Summa Theologia*, III, qu. 87, art. 3, in Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 99.

<sup>153</sup> A term mainly applied to the good dispositions with which a sacrament is received, to distinguish it from the *ex opere operato*, which is the built-in efficacy of a sacrament properly conferred. But it may refer to any subjective factor that at least partially determines the amount of grace obtained by a person who performs some act of piety. Thus in the use of sacramentals or in the gaining of indulgences, the blessings received depend largely on the faith and love of God with which a sacramental is employed or an indulgenced prayer or good work is performed. "Ex Opere Operantis," *Catholic Culture*, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=33472>.

<sup>154</sup> Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 104.

inasmuch as they await completion in precisely the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>155</sup> Consequently, forgiveness or to forgive is personal or interpersonal which is properly used only for the person offended in regard to the person offending. In other words, it is for God, and no one else, to forgive the sinner. It would be inappropriate and presumptuous of the minister to use this term for what he himself does. The Church respects this fact by having him say “I absolve.”<sup>156</sup>

In relation to the ministry of the Church’s absolution and forgiveness, however, there is, of course, a sense in which the minister does forgive sin, that is, in as much as he acts on God’s behalf. This is exactly what he does in the sacrament, and it is the sense intended in John (Jn 20:23). But this is so only because the minister’s action is the sacrament of God’s action. And for the sake of clarity, the Church has wisely reserved the word “forgive” for God and assigned “absolve,” for the sacramental action of the priest.<sup>157</sup> This clearly suggests the importance of God’s forgiveness and reconciliation as the essential link between the other means of forgiveness and Sacrament of Penance.<sup>158</sup>

The “other means also” (*aliis quoque modis*) mentioned in the Canon 960 is the Church’s acknowledgement of practical solution to the pastoral problem of our times— such as the disproportion between the number of faithful and the number of priest in many countries. It has been established that bishop and priest can validly absolve in the Sacrament of Penance. However, as history provides that there are records and regulations which allow other Catholics aside from bishop and priest to hear confession. Between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries, there was a regulation and canons that deacons were allowed to hear confessions, and assigned penance and admit penitents to Communion in the case of necessity. Among the regulations of this kind is Canon 56 of the synodal constitution of St. Odo of Paris: “It is strictly forbidden for deacons in any way to hear confessions, except in the most extreme necessity; for they have not the power of the key...”<sup>159</sup> Another proof was during the time of St. Cyprian.

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<sup>155</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 164-168.

<sup>156</sup> Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 116.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Mansi, *Concilia*, XXII, in Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 120.

St. Cyprian advised confession to a presbyter in circumstances which preclude the bishop's presence: "If a presbyter cannot be found and death is imminent, confession should be made even to a deacon..."<sup>160</sup> Thus, the deacon, by virtue of ordination, acts as intermediary who could at least bring to penitent formal reconciliation in the external forum from a bishop or priest who could not come in person.<sup>161</sup>

St. Thomas even goes further when he writes that in case of necessity, the penitent should make his confession to any Christian who may be available, in the hope that, in the absence of a priest, the high priest, Jesus himself, will supply the defect. He adds that confession made to a layman is in some manner sacramental (*Sacramentalis est quodammodo*), though imperfectly so, since the priestly ministry is wanting,<sup>162</sup> by virtue of their common priesthood which is acquired during Baptism. The idea of St. Thomas is scripturally grounded, specifically, in the letter of James (James 5:16) which the council of Chalons (813) stated in canon 33. This practice has been accepted by the Church before and has been restricted because of the danger of some abuses. It is for this reason that the ministry of the power of jurisdiction is required for the full valid performance in giving absolution. Also, it is for the reason that the power of jurisdiction is not granted simply as result of the Sacrament of Holy Orders,<sup>163</sup> which means that a priest does not possess the exercise or use of the keys before he is authorized by his bishop or superior to administer Penance. As St. Bonaventure writes:

Jurisdiction is, as it were, the power that moves the key, namely the hand, and where that which moves the key is lacking, even if the key itself is present, it will never open; and if this jurisdiction is lost, the operation of the key ceases.... Therefore, even if its existence of the power of the key (*quantum ad esse*) results from ordination, it follows upon status and jurisdiction in regard to its existence.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Epistle, 18, in Palmer ed., *Sacraments and Forgiveness*, 44.

<sup>161</sup> Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 120.

<sup>162</sup> *Supplement to the Summa Theologia*, qu. 8, art. 2, in Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 121.

<sup>163</sup> Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 121.

<sup>164</sup> Galtier, *De Poenitentia*, 470. In Barton, *Penance and Absolution*, 122.

In the 1983 Synod of Bishops, it has been repeatedly said that certain change of the consciousness of sin has come about which has also changed the view of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>165</sup> The individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the sole ordinary means by which a faithful who is conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and with the Church. This sole ordinary means is “juridical.” Its validity is acquired when there is sufficient number of confessors and there is enough time on the part of the penitents to confess. However, the second part of the same Canon 960 leans towards the other means which excuses from the sole ordinary means of the Sacrament of Penance. This second part is “pastoral” which facilitates the reception of the sacrament by allowing the penitents to avail themselves of other means.<sup>166</sup>

Nonetheless, there is still struggle on how to effectively express the forgiveness of God and reconciliation with God outside the Sacrament of Penance. The struggle is seen between the Church’s doctrines and their pastoral application. Fundamentally, Christian doctrine is not proper subject matter for disciplinary legislation but in the world of dogma. However, there are theological statements in dogma which do not represent any article of faith, but are historically conditioned opinions of a theological school; thus, it does not demand a universal assent.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, the community then turns to the other means of ideas to justify a departure from the legal system, hence, *epieikea* or equity comes into practice when the law is unable to uphold the *salus animarum* for the community.<sup>168</sup> The very nature of every law is that in some cases, if greater value on the observance of formalities than on the heart of the Gospel, the Gospel prevails.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Pedro S. de Achútegui, ed., *Reconciliation: The 1983 Synod of Bishops* (Manila, 1984), 120.

<sup>166</sup> Pedro S. de Achútegui, ed., *Reconciliation: The 1983 Synod of Bishops*, 120.

<sup>167</sup> Ladislav Örsy, *Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 53-54.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

## **Contemporary Practice of the Sacrament of Penance**

Canon 960 in the Code of 1983 proves to be the product of the Church's continuous reformation and the Church's role to bring about changes and effective ways to experience divine forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God in the most unusual situation. From the definitive and authoritative teachings of Trent concerning Penance in which the Church applies an intense discipline in the Sacrament of Penance, the Church is successful in safeguarding the doctrines and its traditional practices, but fails to be effective and available to all the faithful. The Church acknowledges the limitations of the law and therefore starting to admit other means of forgiveness other than the Sacrament of Penance which implicitly acknowledged in the Code of 1917. In time, the Church open its doors to other ways of experiencing divine forgiveness and sins. She identified three rites of celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and admitted other means in obtaining forgiveness and reconciliation with God in canon 960 of CIC/83.

The Church identifies the celebration of reconciliation for individual penitents as the following: (a) Reception of the Penitent, (b) Reading of the Word of God (optional) (c) Confession of sins and acceptance of penance prayer of the penitent, (d) Absolution, and (e) Proclamation of praise of God and Dismissal.

In the case of the celebration of reconciliation for several penitents with individual confession and absolution, it consists of: (a) Assembly of the community, (b) Celebration of the Word of God, (c) Rite of Reconciliation, and (d) Proclamation of Praise.

The celebration of reconciliation for several penitents with general confession and absolution is celebrated with the same format as the rite for several penitents with individual confession and absolution. After the homily, or as part the homily, the priest explains to the faithful the dispositions necessary to receive the sacrament properly. Then, some sort of penance is imposed, and the individual is exhorted to add to the proposed penance a particular penance which is suited to the circumstance. Then, the priest, deacon, or other minister invites those who wish to receive absolution to indicate this by sort of sign. Following such gesture,



the penitents say a general formula for confession and concluding with the Lord's Prayer. Then, extending minister's hands over the penitents, the priest then offers absolution.<sup>170</sup>

Accordingly, in 1973, Pope Paul VI approved the new rite with its appointed emphasis on the relation of the sacrament to the community. Aside from the ordinary means of the Sacrament of Penance, the Pope also approved a rite for reconciliation of several penitents, and for extraordinary situations, a rite for reconciliation of several penitents with general confession and absolution. The Church holds that each of these is a valid way of celebrating Penance.<sup>171</sup>

The differences of the rites probed the uniqueness of each celebration but, at the same time, show their limits and disadvantages. For the first rite, its weakness lies in the communal dimension for the community represented only by the priest. For the second rite, it is ineffective in large parish or community. And for the third rite, it does lack individual confession, hence, it does not allow the priest to exercise the discretion required by the Gospel (Jn 20:23).<sup>172</sup> Despite the differences of the three rites, These rites reveal the primacy of God's grace over all human laws. The essential character of these three rites is also present to the other means or ways to obtain God's forgiveness and reconciliation. And from the differences of the three forms, the *aliis quoque modis* could be the probable answers that fill-in the gaps lacking in the three forms of celebrating the sacrament.

Though the Church recognizes and identifies three ways of celebrating the Sacrament of Penance, the Church maintains that: "individual and integral confession and absolution" are the sole ordinary means by which a member of the faithful who is conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and with the Church. Physical or moral impossibility excuses from such confession, in which case reconciliation may be obtained by other means"<sup>173</sup>

Therefore,

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<sup>170</sup>Aridas, *Reconciliation; Celebrating God's Healing Forgiveness*, 90.

<sup>171</sup> Chris Aridas, *Reconciliation; Celebrating God's Healing Forgiveness* (New York: Image Books, 1987), 67.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> See Canon 960 of CIC.

... all those of whom it is required by virtue of their ministry in the care of souls are obliged to ensure that the confessions of the faithful entrusted to them are heard when they reasonably ask, and that they are given the opportunity to approach individual confession, on days and at times set down for their convenience.<sup>174</sup>

All priests with faculties to administer the Sacrament of Penance are to be always disposed to wholeheartedly administer the sacrament whenever the faithful make a reasonable request.<sup>175</sup> An unwillingness to welcome the wounded sheep, and even to go out to them in order to bring them back into the fold, would be a sad sign or a lack of pastoral sensibility to those who, by priestly ordination, must reflect the image of the Good Shepherd.<sup>176</sup> In the light of and within the framework of the above norms, the absolution of a number of penitents at once without previous confession, as envisaged by Can. 961 of the Code of Canon Law, is to be correctly understood and administered. Such absolution is in fact exceptional in character and it cannot be imparted in a general manner unless danger of death is imminent and there is no time for the priest or priests to hear the confessions of the individual penitents. Moreover, a *grave necessity* exists, that is, when in light of the number of penitents a supply of confessors is not readily available to hear the confessions of individuals in an appropriate way within an appropriate time, so that the penitents would be deprived of sacramental grace or Holy Communion for a long time through no fault of their own; it is not considered sufficient necessity if confessors cannot be readily available only because of the great number of penitents, as can occur on the occasion of some great feast or pilgrimage.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> See Canon 986, § 1 of CIC.

<sup>175</sup> See Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 13; *Ordo Paenitentiae*, *editiotypica*, 1974, *Praenotanda*, no. 10, b.

<sup>176</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic letter in the form of *Motu Proprio Misericordia Dei on certain aspects of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance* (2002, Libreria Editrice Vaticana), no. 1, accessed March 6, 2015 [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_motu-proprio\\_20020502\\_misericordia-dei.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_20020502_misericordia-dei.html).

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 4.

### Pastoral Approach and the “Other Means”

The use of the Sacrament of Penance has declined significantly in many parts of the universal Church. There are many reasons that caused the decline of the Sacrament of Penance. And one of the serious issues mentioned is the lack of access to the sacrament.<sup>178</sup> Also mentioned are the complacency of the faithful and the loss the sense of sin, because of fear and hectic life-style.<sup>179</sup> However, the most acute problem the bishops of the Philippines experience today concerning the Sacrament of Penance, and for sure experienced in many other countries too, is the disproportion between the number of faithful and the number of priest leading to the physical and moral impossibilities mentioned in Canon 960 of CIC/83.<sup>180</sup> Bishop Mabutas confirms the seriousness of the problem which brings a pastoral anguish to the Church.<sup>181</sup>

Pope Francis noted well that documents do not arouse the same interest as in the past and that these are quickly forgotten. He emphasized the importance of the necessary effort to advance along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion and that “merely administration” can no longer be enough.<sup>182</sup> The Church, a living community, does not only preserve and keep the Gospel into Herself but also goes out to the world to proclaim it. The intention of the Pope Francis is clear when he quoted Paul VI:

The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself, ponder the mystery of her own being.... This vivid and lively self-awareness inevitably leads to a comparison between the ideal image of the Church as Christ envisaged her and loved her as his holy and spotless bride (cf. Eph 5:27), and the actual image which the Church presents to the world today.... This is the source of the Church’s heroic and impatient

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<sup>178</sup> Ladislav Örsy, “Reviving the Sacrament of Penance,” *Doctrine and Life*, vol. 54 (July-Dec. 2004): 60.

<sup>179</sup> James Martin, “Bless Me, Father,” *America; the national catholic review*, accessed May 26, 2015, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/615/article/bless-me-father>

<sup>180</sup> Antonio Ll. Mabutas, Pedro S. de Achútegui, ed., “Pastoral Approaches to Reconciliation”, *Reconciliation: The 1983 Synod of Bishops* (Manila, 1984), 101-104.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>182</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 25.

struggle for renewal: the struggle to correct those flaws introduced by her members which her own self-examination, mirroring her exemplar, Christ, points out to her and condemns.<sup>183</sup>

Thus, Pope Francis aims to foster a dynamic, open and missionary communion that allows the flock to venture out to new paths that are not always ecclesiastically organizational but rather the mentality of reaching out to everyone. Pope Francis' message to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the laity re-echoes the mind of Pope John Paul II, that is, finding ways of preaching the Gospel in manner that do not renounce what is essential and is open to a new situation.<sup>184</sup>

With this invitation, the other means of receiving God's forgiveness and reconciliation with God (*aliis quoque modis*) is a pastoral response to the pastoral goal of the New Evangelization. In here, the Church can actually "reach everyone without exception or exclusion and lessens the being obsessed with the disjointed transmission of multitude of doctrines."<sup>185</sup> In this way, the Church proclaims the heart of the Gospel keeping in mind the common good (*salus animarum*) which is also the heart of the Gospel.

Finding other ways of bringing the mercy and forgiveness of God makes alive the call of "repentance" for the forgiveness of sins in the gospel of Mark. This highlights the "mercy" of God which is the deeper meaning of love and justice,<sup>186</sup> for mercy is the greatest of the virtues since all the others revolve around it and, more than this, it makes up for their deficiencies.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964), 9, 10, 11: AAS 56 (1964), 611-612.

<sup>184</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 32.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>186</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1980), no. 5, accessed on March 6, 2015, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30111980\\_dives-in-misericordia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html).

<sup>187</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no.39.

### A Proposal: Final Words

It is already explained and established that contrition is the most important act of the penitent, that even perfect contrition is enough to obtain God's forgiveness. Following the traditional scholastic teachings, the sacrament symbol is composed of matter and form. It is always known that the proper matter of every sacrament is always required and without it the celebration of the sacrament is invalid. In the Sacrament of Penance the enumeration of sins is not absolutely required for the validity of the sacrament. The matter is the external sign of repentance, thus, it is the manifestation of contrition. And the form is the prayer of absolution pronounced by the priest.<sup>188</sup> Hence, contrition and absolution constitute the two means of forgiving sins, namely, spiritual means of forgiving sins and judicial form of forgiving sins. The other means to obtain God's forgiveness should have communal and individual dimension.

Every sacrament gives growth and nourishment both to the member and the whole body, the Church.<sup>189</sup> The celebration of the sacrament may follow the sequence (a) The community listens to the word of God, (b) Homily, (c) The participants are invited to step forward, (d) The penitent will recite the Act of contrition, (e) Moment of silence, (f) The priest will give the absolution over each one and greets him/her in the peace of Christ.

To add solemnity of the celebration, an appropriate song or music may be played to maintain the prayerful atmosphere. Then, the celebration may be concluded with prayer of thanksgiving or making a sign of peace with one another.

The presented model is advantageous in many ways. First, the model is adaptable, doable and simple. This model is suitable for use in the schools, even with younger children. Second, the model emphasizes both the personal and communal dimension of the sacrament. Third, reading of the Gospel and homily are very helpful in order for the faithful to dispose themselves properly in the celebration. Fourth, the moment of silence is also essential,

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<sup>188</sup> Ladislav Örsy, "Reviving the Sacrament of Penance," *Doctrine and Life*, 63.

<sup>189</sup> Ladislav Örsy, "Reviving the Sacrament of Penance," 54, 64.

because the sacramental symbol is personal. It gives personal touch. And the celebration gives the penitent the opportunity to be with God in private. Lastly, making the sign of peace is also important. The sign of peace leads the faithful to the Gospel (Jn 20: 21 -23) where Christ said “peace be with you.” In this way, the celebration also makes an emphasis on the celebration of reconciliation.

The Church continuously seeks its positive benefits, advantages and usefulness both from the theological and the pastoral perspectives. However, aside from general absolution which effect is both forgiveness and reconciliation with God and with the Church, the Church acknowledges the “other means also” of receiving God’s forgiveness and reconciliation outside the Sacrament of Penance as stated in the second part of the Canon 960. This anticipates the danger when the ordinary means is no longer effective and popular. Consequently, the phrase “other means also” mentioned in Canon 960 of CIC/83 Code needs to be re-examined and re-appreciated in its pastoral value as God’s ways of offering the gift forgiveness and reconciling love to the faithful for the common good and as means, too, of shaping people’s lives towards conversion.

# Preferential Option for the Poor and Aloysius Schwartz's Concept of Poverty

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Jessriel Marcha, OAR

## Abstract

*Aloysius Schwartz is the founder of Sister of Mary. This congregation has established schools that cater to the marginalized youth giving them a new lease on life, forming them to become professionals and contributors to the development of societies. This research dissects the concept of poverty of Fr. Aloysius Schwartz discovering its foundations with in the long tradition of the Catholic Church preferential option for the poor. Schwartz response to the socio-cultural situation of the present time is an imitation of Jesus Christ who became poor for the poor.*

## The Church's Tradition on the Preferential Option for the Poor

The preferential option for the poor is the central theme of liberation theology of which the Peruvian theologian Gustavo

Gutierrez is the pioneer.<sup>1</sup> Evangelical Eddy Muskus affirms that liberation theology emerged as a product of Catholic thinkers' reflection on the relationship of faith and poverty that gripped Latin America. The theological concepts of liberation theology are developed from the viewpoint of the poor. Understandably, the poor hold a privileged position in this theology.<sup>2</sup>

### Option for the Poor in Sacred Scriptures

Gerald West holds that the Bible is and has been one of the prime sources of liberation theology. He maintains that “for the poor, the bible is not merely a strategic tool for liberation; the bible is the source of God’s project which is a project of liberation.”<sup>3</sup> This logic is not new.

The Old Testament presents God as a God of the poor who rescues them from the oppression of the powerful. God is on the side of the poor not because they are better than the rich but because the poor have no one to turn to except God.<sup>4</sup> The New Testament, of which Jesus Christ is the central figure, affirms and continues the option for the poor presented in the Old Testament. However, it is erroneous to accuse the Bible of favouring the poor to the exclusion of the rich. God’s love is universal. God’s love is for both the rich and the poor. His inclusive love is an important concept in the preferential option for the poor and should not be lost sight of. God’s love for the poor is due to what the Scriptures imply that, again, they have no one to turn to except God.

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<sup>1</sup> Rohan Curnow, “Which Preferential Option for the Poor? A History of the Doctrine’s Bifurcation” in *Modern Theology* vol. 31 no. 1 (January 2015), 27 DOI: 10.1111/moth.12113. See also James Nickoloff ed., introduction to *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 3. See also Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, foreword to Gustavo Gutierrez, *Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983) v.

<sup>2</sup> Eddy Muskus, “Liberation Theology: Its Origins and Early Development” in *Foundations: A Journal of Evangelical Theology* no. 29 (Autumn 1992), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald West, “The Bible and the Poor: A New Way of Doing Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 161.

<sup>4</sup> Arnel Lagarejos. *The Church of the Poor: A New Perspective on the Church, the State, and the Poor*. (Pasig City, Philippines: Educational Resources Development Center, 1999), 63.



### God Defends the *Anawim* and the Oppressed

The famous exodus narrative reveals a God who is loving and who cares and liberates those who are oppressed. This is particularly seen in Yahweh's statement to Moses: "I have heard the cry of my people and I see how they are being oppressed" (Ex 8:9). Lagarejos considers the call of Moses to lead his countrymen out of Egypt as the primary event of that revelation.<sup>5</sup> Boff and Pixley maintain that the God of the bible is characterized by his preferential option for the oppressed: "The God of the exodus account is a God who heard the cries wrung from the slaves by the slave-drivers of Pharaoh and so came down to set them free and lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey."<sup>6</sup> Elsa Tamez considers the plagues of Egypt not as divine punishment for the obstinacy of Pharaoh but as a demonstration of divine power that is wielded in solidarity with the oppressed Israelites. She says: "God hears the cry of the exploited and liberates them."<sup>7</sup>

Yahweh's role in the liberation of the Israelites from the Egyptian clutches is the main feature of the exodus narrative. God's awareness of the suffering of his people, the call and sending of Moses, and the final freedom of the Israelites all point out to one theme: God favours the oppressed and God is on Israel's side rather than on Egypt's because the Israelites were oppressed.<sup>8</sup>

When the Israelites were finally liberated from Egypt, they were given laws by God as mediated through Moses. These laws have stipulations granting favour and protection for the poor among whom are the slaves, the widows, and the orphans. These pro-poor injunctions are not Israelite novelty. Countries in the

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<sup>5</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 42.

<sup>6</sup> Clodovis Boff and George Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 20.

<sup>7</sup> Elsa Tamez, "The Bible and the Five Hundred Years of Conquest," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible from the Third World*, ed. Rasiah Sugirtharajah, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised and expanded ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 20. See Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> John O'Brien, *Theology and the Option for the Poor*, vol. 22 in *Theology and Life Series* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 122. See Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 25.

Near East also have laws that favour and grant protection to the poor, the widow, and the orphan.<sup>9</sup> Within the Israelite laws, special concern is shown to the poor. For instance, God commands the Israelites: “If one of your kinsmen in any community is in need in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand to him in his need” (Deut 15:7). This is a manifestation of the option for the poor present in the social laws of the Israelites, enshrined in the pages of the Old Testament. This is a demonstration that God favours the poor. Daniel Harrington is explicit in his expression that God manifests preferential option for the poor. Commenting on the gospel of Matthew, Harrington writes: “The Beatitudes should be read against the Old Testament tradition of God’s special care for the poor,”<sup>10</sup>

You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry.... If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him (Ex 22:20-24).

Later on, many years after the exodus, prophets were sent by God in order to reveal his message to the Israelites. Boff and Pixley observe that when Israel was without kings and was living a simple life, no prophets had been known except the seer Balaam (Num 22-24). Boff and Pixley imply that the emergence of the prophets came with the rise of the monarchy and the ruling class which created a stark contrast between the rich and the poor. Poverty became more emphasized due to social injustices done by the ruling class.<sup>11</sup> The prophets condemned poverty as it is the result of the injustices done by the powerful.<sup>12</sup> The prophets reiterated the pro-poor laws of the covenant given to Israel after

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<sup>9</sup> F. Charles Fensham, “Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature,” in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21, no. 2 (Apr., 1962): 129-139. DOI: 10.1086/371679.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Harrington ed., *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 78.

<sup>11</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 44.

its liberation from Egypt. It is disobedience to the covenant that stimulated the oppression of the poor and the eventual denunciation and outcry of the prophets:<sup>13</sup>

The Lord rises to accuse, standing to try his people.  
The Lord enters into judgment with his people's elders  
and princes: It is you who have devoured the vineyard;  
the loot wrested from the poor is in your houses. What  
do you mean by crushing my people, and grinding  
down the poor when they look to you? Says the Lord,  
the God of hosts (Is 3:14-15).

Therefore, because you have trampled upon the  
weak and exacted of them levies of grain, though you  
have built houses of hewn stone, you shall not live in  
them! Though you have planted choice vineyards, you  
shall not drink their wine! Yes, I know how many are  
your crimes, how grievous your sins: oppressing the  
just, accepting bribes, repelling the needy at the gate!  
(Amos 5:11-12)

The poor are the *anawim* of the Hebrew Bible. The poor, or the *anawim* of the Old Testament includes the following: "the vulnerable, the marginalized, the socio-economically oppressed, and those of lowly status without earthly power."<sup>14</sup> Michael Battle qualifies that the *anawim* are those who are humble before God. They are totally dependent on God for their life.<sup>15</sup> The *anawim* encompasses the biblical meaning of poverty. It transcends mere economic destitution for it "involves traits like humility, simplicity, detachment, utter loyalty to God, piety, and service of others:"<sup>16</sup>

The *anaw* is the little man, the humble, the  
oppressed, the poor. But his sufferings have brought  
him close to God.... The *anawim* were the followers of  
Yahweh. In their hopes is a strong will-to-community.

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<sup>13</sup> O'Brien, *Theology and the Option for the Poor*, 123.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Roccasalvo, "The Anawim: Who are They?" In *Catholic News Agency* (December 5, 2012): <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/the-anawim-who-are-they-2386/>.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Battle, "Liberation" in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (West Sussex, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2011), 515.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Viviano, "The Anawim Spirituality of Vatican II," *Dominicana* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1966), 304.

Although they, better than anyone, understood the value and dignity of suffering, they never wallowed in it morbidly but looked to God for deliverance. They had learned to await in silence, but with an intense forward longing, for the messiah whom God would send. This silence springs from faith, from total commitment to God. The *anawim* were God's humble servants.<sup>17</sup>

John Paul II identifies two Hebrew words associated with the poor: the *ha sidim* and the *anawim*. The *hasidim* refers to those who are pious and faithful to God. They respond with faith and love to God's fatherly love. During the Maccabean era, the *hasidim* are those who revolted against Hellenistic power and remained faithful to God and the tradition of the Jewish religion despite the persecution and repression brought about by the pagan invaders. The *anawim*, on the other hand, are the poor and lowly ones. It indicates not just those who are oppressed, those who are miserable, and those who are persecuted for justice, but also "those who, with fidelity to the moral teaching of the Alliance with God, are marginalized by those who prefer to use violence, riches and power."<sup>18</sup>

Bruce Malchow, however, identifies different Hebrew words that refer to the poor. Among the prominent words are *ani*, *anawim*, *dal*, *ebyon*, and *ras*. They refer to those who are materially poor in the land of Israel. The words also apply to the people who do not have the means to protect themselves from the oppression of the powerful. Hence, injustice on the part of the latter is the cause of the poverty of the former.<sup>19</sup> The word that is mostly used in the Hebrew Bible is *ani*. It basically means "afflicted" or "bowed down." The word *anawim* is a linguistic variant of *ani*. Material poverty is what *anawim* refers to although at times, it includes poverty's spiritual component. The word *dal* connotes the sense of "being low" as in the word *ani*. The word *dal* refers to those who are poor because of injustice. The word

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<sup>17</sup> Viviano, "The Anawim Spirituality of Vatican II," 306.

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, General Audience (23 May 2001), at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_20010523.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010523.html).

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What is New and what is Old* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996) 12.

*ebyon* refers to those who, because of extreme poverty, are forced to beg. The word *ras* refers to those who are dispossessed and stripped of properties due to injustice.<sup>20</sup>

There are many other prophets who denounced poverty and the injustices during their time. In fact, exegetes hold that one of the major themes of the Law and the Prophets is the denunciation of injustice against the powerless and a call to help the poor.<sup>21</sup> The prophets point out one idea: God comes to the defense of the poor from the injustices of the powerful.

God indeed defends the poor. God does not exclude anyone from his love. God also loves the rich and the powerful. The nobleman Solomon, son of King David, was favoured and blessed by God, elevating the former to become the successor to David's throne. The Book of Esther, not historical in character but rather a fictional narrative,<sup>22</sup> also demonstrates that God does not despise the rich and the powerful outrightly. Esther, the Jewish queen of Persia who was raised to the throne after the deposition of Queen Vashti, became instrumental in saving the Jewish race from destruction. God heard the plea of Esther in helping the Jewish people (Esth 3:1-10:10).

God's love is universal. His love is inclusive of all people, rich and poor alike. The Old Testament does not fail in presenting this fact. But with regards the poor, the Old Testament is consistent in demonstrating that God defends and protects them. God's preference for the poor over the powerful is manifest. Thus, according to Marvin Krier Mich, "the Hebrew Scriptures contain a consistent and insistent message that God watches over the poor."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. and exp. ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004), 88.

<sup>22</sup> Irene Nowell, Toni Craven, and Demetrius Dumm, "Tobit, Judith, Esther," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown et al. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 38:52, p. 576.

<sup>23</sup> Marvin Krier Mich, *The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Social Teaching*, rev. ed. (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2012) 117.

### Jesus the Messiah for the *Anawim*

In the New Testament, Jesus is the central figure. He is the full manifestation of God who is love.<sup>24</sup> Francis expresses this as mercy, “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy.”<sup>25</sup> God is depicted in the Old Testament as one who cares and protects the poor. In the New Testament, the poor are also the peculiar object of Jesus’ preaching concerning the Kingdom of God.<sup>26</sup> The term “poor” in the Gospels is inclusive of those who are economically poor, sinners, social outcasts, public sinners, and the uneducated.<sup>27</sup> It is to them that the Kingdom of God is announced (Luke 4:17).

The *anawim* are poor, humble and loyal followers of Yahweh, and are waiting for the messiah. These elements are taken up and fulfilled in the New Testament with Mary’s Magnificat and Jesus’ beatitudes. Manifesting the humility of the *anawim* in the Old Testament, Mary does not boast anything but only those things which God has done to her. She also acknowledges that the poor are the favoured friends of God. “My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord,” says Mary in her Magnificat, “for he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness; all ages to come shall call me blessed.” She adds, “God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name” (Luke 1:46-49).<sup>28</sup>

For Benedict XVI, the *anawim* are the faithful who recognize themselves as poor by detaching themselves from the idolatry of riches and power, whose heart is humble, empty of pride and open to the saving grace of the divine. Moreover, for him, the Magnificat exemplifies humility in the midst of material poverty. Mary’s hymn reveals that God takes the part of the lowly and that God’s favourites are those who, like Mary, manifest

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<sup>24</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert Barr (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, *Misericordiae Vultus*, (11 April 2015) §1, at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html).

<sup>26</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity: The Gospel of Liberation* (London: Longman & Todd, 1976) 22-23.

<sup>28</sup> Viviano, “The Anawim Spirituality of Vatican II,” 306.

humility in the midst of their poverty.<sup>29</sup>

Examining the traits of the *anawim* against the person of Jesus Christ, one comes to a conclusion that Christ is also one of the *anawim*. Christ is the model of humility par excellence. However, being the messiah, the one sent by God, Christ is also the messiah of the *anawim*.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is distinct from the Father but is perfectly united with the Godhead.<sup>31</sup> Jesus is in union with God who, in the Old Testament, demonstrates option for the poor. Unity in the Godhead consequently means unity in the option for the poor. Following the logic, it can be said that Jesus also manifests option for the poor and it cannot be otherwise if Jesus is to maintain such unity. Like the prophets who preached God's favour towards the poor and the oppressed, Jesus also preached in favour of the poor. Bruce Malina considers wealth during Jesus' time as a means to acquire and maintain one's honor. Everyone has the right to acquire property but due to the greed of the wealthy, the poor are deprived of the things that should have been theirs and consequently, the honor due to them. Malina concludes that it is one of the reasons why Jesus preached in favour of the poor.<sup>32</sup> For Gustavo Gutierrez, Jesus' preferential option for the poor points to his being liberator: "he [Jesus] is proclaiming a kingdom of justice and liberation, to be established in favour of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized of history."<sup>33</sup> Krier Mich lists the evidences that point to Jesus' option for the poor, five of which are the following: (a) Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, (b) Jesus has a special concern for the rejected and outcasts of society, including lepers, prostitutes,

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<sup>29</sup> Benedict XVI, General Audience (15 February 2006) at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20060215.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060215.html).

<sup>30</sup> Viviano, "The Anawim Spirituality of Vatican II," 306.

<sup>31</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines: Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (1997), 1329. Henceforth, *CFC*.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Malina, "Wealth and Poverty in the New Testament and Its World," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 41, no. 4 (November 2016), 366. DOI: [10.1177/002096438704100403](https://doi.org/10.1177/002096438704100403).

<sup>33</sup> Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, 14.

tax collectors, and those disturbed in mind and spirit, (c) Jesus did not endorse the idea that prosperity was a sign of God's favour, but spoke out on the dangers of riches, (d) Jesus identified with the poor and neglected, and (e) those ostracized because of illness are offered healing and inclusion in the community.<sup>34</sup>

Jesus' option for the poor is manifested not only in his preaching but also in his way of life. It is notable that Jesus' company was not of the elite but was composed "predominantly of the disreputable; the *amme ha-ares*, the uneducated, the ignorant..."<sup>35</sup> The poor can identify and get along with Jesus because his "whole existence is a clear demonstration of what it was to be really poor."<sup>36</sup> As recorded in the Gospels, the Pharisees would criticize Jesus for allowing sinful women to touch him (Luke 7:36-50) and for dining with persons who are considered public sinners like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). In other words, Jesus is a poor man who was in solidarity with the poor.<sup>37</sup> Jesus also manifested preference for the poor. His actions witness to the love of God for all men through preferential love for the poor.<sup>38</sup>

After Jesus' death, attention to the poor did not pale. In the early Christian community, also known as the Jerusalem community, Jesus' followers maintained option for the poor after the example of their Lord. There was no needy among them because all who had properties would sell them and donate the proceeds (Acts 4:34). Their solicitude towards the poor was so remarkable that they had to appoint seven assistants who would aid in distributing food to Greek-speaking widows (Acts 6:1-7).

John O'Brien does not believe that early Christianity was poor: "the standard picture of early Christianity as poor, egalitarian, and marginalized... is probably more romantic than true."<sup>39</sup> He cites Paul as proof. He maintains that Paul's preaching

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<sup>34</sup> Krier Mich lists twelve proofs that Jesus indeed manifested option for the poor during his lifetime. See Mich, *The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Social Teaching*, 117-118.

<sup>35</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 112-113.

<sup>36</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 53.

<sup>37</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Nickoloff, ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 105.

<sup>39</sup> O'Brien, *Theology and the Option for the Poor*, 130.



was an attempt “to bring Jesus Christ to a sophisticated urban culture.”<sup>40</sup> Clodovis Boff and George Pixley defend Paul saying: “Paul’s concentration on God’s action in Jesus Christ meant that in his letters, and most likely in his ministry as well, he showed a certain blindness to poverty as a social fact. For him, true poverty was anthropological, inherent in the human condition.”<sup>41</sup> Paul bares in his letter to the Galatians that he is exerting every effort to attend to the poor (Gal 2:10). In fact, Paul had a collection done for the poor in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29). Paul, being an educated man, took up manual labor, making leather tents, for a living. He did this in imitation of Jesus because for him, “following Jesus meant accepting the priorities of the God of Jesus who chooses those who are nothing in the eyes of the world.”<sup>42</sup>

There has been a unified teaching on the preferential option for the poor in the Sacred Scriptures. God manifests preferential option for the poor. Jesus, in union with the Godhead, also manifests preferential option for the poor during his lifetime. After Jesus’ departure, the same concern for the poor was maintained by the apostles and the rest of his followers. This implies a moral imperative: just as God has chosen to take the side of the poor, so too should the Christians do—they should be on the side of the poor “on account of God’s merciful disposition to manifest his love for them.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Option for the Poor in Sacred Tradition**

Catholicism places much importance to Sacred Tradition. The Church teaches that its social doctrine “finds its essential foundation in biblical revelation and in the tradition of the Church.”<sup>44</sup> Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures form “one sacred deposit of the word of God.”<sup>45</sup> There is unity between the two. One cannot and must not contain contradicting teachings

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Church, the Bible, and the Poor*, 54.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>43</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 63.

<sup>44</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004) 74.

<sup>45</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 10.

from the other, otherwise they will not entirely be “one sacred deposit of the word of God.”<sup>46</sup>

The Church teaches that the preferential option for the poor has always been in the tradition of the Church.<sup>47</sup> Part and parcel of the early Christian community are the poor. If “Christian congregations provided a unique opportunity” for all people, then the same should be expected towards the poor.<sup>48</sup> This would imply that there should have been a consciousness of helping the poor present in the early years of the Church.

### **Didache: Mercy and Sympathy for the Poor**

One of the earliest writings of the Church is the Didache, purportedly the teaching of the twelve apostles. It is a “pastoral manual” written earlier than the canonical gospels for the Jewish Christians.<sup>49</sup> The actual date of composition, however, remains uncertain.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the author of the writing shows a basic element of concern for the poor:

There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways. Now this is the way of life: first, “you shall love God, who made you”; second, “your neighbour as yourself”; and “whatever you do not wish to happen to you, do not do to another.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 182.

<sup>48</sup> J.G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1976) 96, quoted in William Walsh and John Langan, “Patristic Social Consciousness—The Church and the Poor” in *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, ed. John Haughey (Broadway, New York: Paulist Press, 1977) 113.

<sup>49</sup> Aaron Milavec, preface to *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (Mahwah, New Jersey: The Newman Press, 2003) vii.

<sup>50</sup> Walsh and Langan, “Patristic Social Consciousness—The Church and the Poor,” 147. See Michael Holmes ed., introduction to “The Didache or the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 246.

<sup>51</sup> *The Didache*, 1, 1, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. and rev. Michael Holmes (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993) 251.

The Didache implies that if a Christian wants to follow the way of life, he is to help freely those who are in need: “give to everyone who asks you, and do not demand it back for the Father wants something from his own gifts to be given to everyone.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the Didache enlists having no mercy for the poor and being lawless judges of the poor as among the ways of death and should be avoided by the Christians.<sup>53</sup> The community around which the Didache was written believes that they are obliged to care for the poor for the simple reason that God also cares for the poor. Central to this belief is sympathy with God who cares for the poor. It is a “sympathy that moved into action in anticipation of God’s action.”<sup>54</sup> It commands Christians to give the first fruits to the poor.<sup>55</sup> It also denounces greed and all its perpetrators because they have no mercy for the poor and they do not work for the oppressed.<sup>56</sup> Inasmuch as it re-echoes the message of Scriptures concerning the poor, it also re-echoes God’s option for the poor.

### **Shepherd of Hermas: The Rich to Serve the Poor; the Poor to Intercede for the Rich**

In the Shepherd of Hermas, one of the major concerns tackled is about the behaviour of the rich and their relationship to the poor within the Church.<sup>57</sup> The author of the writing insists that God permitted some to enjoy wealth for one purpose: to minister to the poor who do not enjoy the same affluence as the rich do. It is therefore implied that the material possessions of the rich do not actually belong to them. Their material riches belongs to God who will that they be shared with the poor:

So, instead of fields buy souls that are in distress,  
as anyone is able, and visit widows and orphans, and  
do not neglect them; and spend your wealth and all  
your possessions, which you received from God, on

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<sup>52</sup> *The Didache*, 1, 5, ed. Holmes, 251-253.

<sup>53</sup> *The Didache*, 5, 2, ed. Holmes, 257.

<sup>54</sup> Milavec, *The Didache*, 473.

<sup>55</sup> “But if you have no prophet, give them to the poor. If you make breads, take the firstfruit and give in accordance with the commandment.” *The Didache*, 13, 4-5, ed. Holmes, 267.

<sup>56</sup> *The Didache*, 5, 1, ed. Holmes, 257.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Holmes ed., introduction to “The Shepherd of Hermas” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 328.

fields and houses of this kind. For this is why the Master made you rich, so that you might perform these ministries for him. It is much better to purchase fields and possessions and houses of this kind, which you will find in your own city when you go home to it.<sup>58</sup>

The Shepherd enjoins the rich to exercise solidarity with the poor. It maintains that wealthy Christians are duty-bound to share their wealth with the poor.<sup>59</sup> It also teaches that the rich can gain salvation through the poor and that they complement each other in enriching one another. The Shepherd illustrates the wealthy men as rich materially but poor spiritually, while the poor are illustrated as poor materially but rich spiritually “because the poor man is rich in intercession and confession, and his intercession has great power with God.”<sup>60</sup> The rich and the poor complement each other: while the rich man enriches the poor materially by his act of almsgiving, the poor man, on the other hand, enriches the rich spiritually by his prayer of intercession to God in behalf of the rich. So, both the rich and the poor become “partners in the righteous work” and they “will not be abandoned by God, but will be enrolled in the books of the living.”<sup>61</sup> Implied in the Shepherd of Hermas is bilateral beneficiary: while the poor benefit from the generosity of the rich, the latter also benefit from his act of generosity because the poor, in turn, pray to God for him.

### **Epistle to Diognetus: God’s Love the Reason for Loving the Poor**

The Epistle to Diognetus concerns itself with answering specific inquiries levelled against Christians. It aims to explain the nature and significance of the Christian faith.<sup>62</sup> The anonymous author of the writing invites his pagan readers to ponder on what attitude people should have toward one another. The author notes that God is a God of love and that God has shown this love to

<sup>58</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 50, 8-9, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. and rev. Michael Holmes (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 421.

<sup>59</sup> William Jardine, *Shepherd of Hermas: The Gentle Apocalypse* (Redwood City, California: Proteus Publishing, 1992) 140.

<sup>60</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 51, 5, ed. Holmes, 423.

<sup>61</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 51, 9, ed. Holmes, 423.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Holmes ed., Introduction to “The Epistle to Diognetus” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 528.

human beings extraordinarily by making man in his own image and likeness and by sending Christ in order to save man. An awareness of this benevolence on the part of God should bring man extraordinary joy. The author then steers the discussion to its pastoral implication: man, grateful for God's benevolence, shows his gratitude by imitating God, that is, by loving his fellow men.<sup>63</sup> Manifesting love to those who are less fortunate enables one to walk the path of the imitation of God.<sup>64</sup> Like the Shepherd, the Epistle to Diognetus also implies bilateral beneficiary: giving assistance to the poor benefits both the poor and the rich. The poor benefits materially while the rich benefit spiritually:

By loving him you will be an imitator of his goodness.... For happiness is not a matter of lording it over one's neighbours, or desiring to have more than weaker men, or possessing wealth and using force against one's inferiors. No one is able to imitate God in these matters; on the contrary these things are alien to his greatness. But whoever takes upon himself his neighbour's burden, whoever wishes to benefit another who is worse off in something in which he himself is better off, whoever provides to those in need things that he has received from God, and thus becomes a god to those who receive them, this one is an imitator of God.<sup>65</sup>

The Epistle to Diognetus underscores the idea that a person's love for his fellow man especially the poor comes as the necessary consequence of the same person's love for God. In other words, it is the love for God that takes precedence over love for the poor. Hence, the author is stressing simply to his pagan adversaries that it is the love of God that propels Christians to love their fellow men.

### **Cyprian of Carthage: Generosity to the Poor—A Sign of Repentance**

Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, was able to witness for himself the persecution ordered by Emperor Decius. Before

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<sup>63</sup> Walsh and Langan, "Patristic Social Consciousness—The Church and the Poor," 116. See Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 72.

<sup>64</sup> Clayton Jefford ed., *The Epistle to Diognetus (With the Fragment of Quadratus): Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013), 245.

<sup>65</sup> *The Epistle to Diognetus*, 10, 4-7, ed. Holmes, 549.

Decius came to power, the Church was in peace due to the emperors who were sympathetic to the Christian religion. The recognition of Christianity in the empire was so eminent that the pagans complained that their gods were being neglected. When Decius assumed the imperial throne in September of 249, he blamed the Christians for the evil things that happened in the empire. And in order to restore peace in Rome, Decius ordered that the Roman gods that were neglected due to Christianity's rise be worshipped by all his subjects. Decius was so bent on implementing his order to the point of killing those who resist and disobey him. This brought about the Decian persecution.<sup>66</sup>

The persecution was so deadly that many Christians apostatized. The faith of many Christians wavered. Cyprian tried to discern why Christians easily abandoned the faith in the face of persecution when fleeing could have been a better option. After an honest investigation, he found out that many of the apostates were wealthy Christians. He asserts further that God allowed the persecution to rock the Church because both the bishops and laity had become greedy and were too preoccupied on seeking material wealth to the point of neglecting the poor:

The Master wanted to make trial of His household; and because the long years of peace had undermined our practice of the way of life which God had given us, our languid faith—I had almost said our *sleeping* faith—was not quickened by the heavenly visitation.... Each one was intent on adding to his inheritance.... Gone was the devotion of bishops to the service of God, gone was the clergy's faithful integrity, gone the generous compassion for the needy.... Too many bishops... left their sees, abandoned their people, and toured the market in other territories on the lookout for profitable deals.<sup>67</sup>

This shows Cyprian's concern for the poor. He exhorts

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<sup>66</sup> C. Bernard Ruffin, *The Days of the Martyrs* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1985) 122-125.

<sup>67</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lapsed*, 5-6, in *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, The Unity of the Catholic Church*, trans. Maurice Bévenot, vol. 25 in *Ancient Christian Writers: Works of the Fathers in Translation*, Johannes Quasten and Joseph Plumpe, eds. (New York, USA: The Newman Press, 1957), 16-17.

the faithful to give their goods away in a generous donation to the poor. He reminds his congregation not to be afraid of being generous to the point of being reduced to poverty because by “that which is spent for Christ and which facilitates the work of heaven can never be used up.”<sup>68</sup> He also imparts to his Christian faithful that those who are generous to the poor are taken cared of by God himself. He tells them: “Do you think that as a Christian, as a servant of God, as one given to good works, and so dear to God, that you will ever be in need?” and “For thanks for our almsgiving and good deeds are given by the poor to God and are measured and rewarded by him.”<sup>69</sup> These words of Cyprian imply bilateral beneficiary.

The content of Cyprian’s writings manifests his preferential option for the poor. He had shown concern towards the poor and he exhorted the Christian faithful to do the same. He had been vocal against avarice and the love of material wealth. That is why it was a scandal for him to know that many wealthy Christians preferred to renounce Christ rather than their wealth during the wake of the Decian persecution. In reparation for the sins of the apostates, Cyprian urged them to express their total repentance by generous almsgiving to the poor.<sup>70</sup>

### **John Chrysostom: Helping the Poor is Helping Christ Himself**

The Eastern Church Father John Chrysostom took upon himself the task of defending the poor because he believed that they were the privileged members of the body of Christ. Continuing the tradition of the Shepherd of Hermas, John Chrysostom believes that the many among the wealthy, on account of their being greedy and covetous, were at a spiritual disadvantage. “Such men,” John Chrysostom says, “live in desert places, even though they dwell

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<sup>68</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *On Works and Alms*, 9 in Oliver Davies, ed., *Born to New Life: Cyprian of Carthage*, trans. Tim Witherow (New York, USA: New City Press, 1992), 73.

<sup>69</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *On Works and Alms*, 9-12, ed. Davies, 73-76.

<sup>70</sup> Walsh and Langan, “Patristic Social Consciousness—The Church and the Poor,” 124.

in the midst of our cities.”<sup>71</sup> For him, amassing great wealth is detrimental because it undermines the virtue of compassion which is essential to Christian life.<sup>72</sup> This is the reason why John Chrysostom calls for a sharing of the wealthy man’s goods. For him, giving help to the poor man is giving help to Christ himself, manifesting the saint’s firm belief on Christ’s identification with the poor. “Do you wish to possess pearls and never to lay aside this wealth?” John Chrysostom asks, “Then strip off your adornment and put it into Christ’s hands through the hands of the poor.”<sup>73</sup> This is why according to him, the rich should invite Christ into their homes. And he means that the rich should invite the poor into their homes.<sup>74</sup> In fact, John Chrysostom made it a duty for the rich to practice almsgiving. Re-echoing the Shepherd of Hermas, John Chrysostom teaches that God has permitted the rich to enjoy the bounty of material riches in order for them to exercise charity to those who are in need. Moreover, John Chrysostom teaches that the wealthy man is only a steward of his riches. As a steward, the rich is supposed to distribute them to the poor:

This is why God has allowed you to have more: not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, fancy food, expensive clothes, and all the other kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need.... He is directed to distribute it to his fellow servants who are in want. So if he spends more on himself than his need requires, he will pay the harshest penalty hereafter.<sup>75</sup>

John Chrysostom strongly insists that the wealth of the rich do not actually belong to them but to the poor. Hence, not

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<sup>71</sup> John Chrysostom, *On Matthew: Homily 28.5*, translation on *A Library of the Fathers of the Catholic Church*, ed. J.B. Morris (Oxford: Parker, 1844-50), 15.422-423, quoted in Walsh and Langan, “Patristic Social Consciousness—The Church and the Poor,” 116. See Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 125.

<sup>72</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 79-80.

<sup>73</sup> John Chrysostom, *The Twelfth Instruction*, 46, in *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, trans. Paul Harkins, vol. 31 in *Ancient Christian Writers: Works of the Fathers in Translation*, Johannes Quasten and Walter Burghardt, eds. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1963) 187.

<sup>74</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 81.

<sup>75</sup> John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catharine Roth (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 50.



sharing to the poor is equivalent to thievery against the poor and the rich shall be liable for this. He argues that the poor is precious in God's eyes while the rich is like a robber "if he does not share his wealth with those who have none";<sup>76</sup>

If you cannot remember everything, instead of everything, I beg you, remember this without fail, that not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth but theirs... by nourishing Christ in poverty here and laying up great profit hereafter, we will be able to attain the good things which are to come....<sup>77</sup>

By emphasizing Christ's self-identification with the poor, John Chrysostom has underlined the need to help the poor. He teaches that helping the poor is helping not the poor but Christ himself. With this, John Chrysostom manifests his preferential option for the poor. As regards wealth, John Chrysostom underscores the Church's teaching on social justice, namely, that the poor have the right to all the material goods of the earth and that the rich are merely stewards of their material possessions. And since they are only stewards of their material possessions, they are to share their wealth to those who are in need of it.

### **Ambrose of Milan: Greed Kills the Poor**

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, manifests his preferential option for the poor by defending their rights against the rich and the powerful. He teaches that all persons—both the rich and the poor—have the right to share of the riches of the earth. Hence, there is no point for the rich to deprive the poor of the goods of the earth.

God has ordered all things to be produced so that there should be food in common for all and that the earth should be the common possession of all. Nature, therefore, has produced a common right for all, but greed has made it a right for a few;<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995) 88.

<sup>77</sup> John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Roth, 55.

<sup>78</sup> Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy* 1, 132, quoted in Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 82.

How far, O rich, do you extend your mad greed?  
 Shall you alone dwell upon the earth? Why do you cast  
 out the companion whom nature has given you and  
 claim for yourself nature's possession? The earth was  
 established in common for all, rich and poor. Why do  
 you alone, O rich, demand special treatment?<sup>79</sup>

Ambrose's sympathy rests on the poor as the rest of the Fathers do. His treatise entitled *Naboth* shows it. Naboth was killed by orders of Queen Jezebel because of King Ahab's greed for Naboth's little piece of land. Ambrose does not address this treatise to the rich per se but to the avaricious. He uses this Old Testament story as his jumping board in teaching that greed can also kill the poor. His concern for the poor was so boundless that he even summoned his clergy to correct injustices done against the poor during his time. Ambrose exhorts the clergy: "One should be diligent in seeking out the poor who would otherwise remain hidden: those who are sick, in prison, or who are simply too ashamed to beg."<sup>80</sup>

Ambrose teaches that all persons have the right to the goods of the earth. And like John Chrysostom, Ambrose asserts that the rich are merely stewards of the goods of the earth. In other words, the properties of the wealthy are not exclusively owned by them. And alms given to the poor are actually the rightful properties of the poor: "You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his."<sup>81</sup> In this way, Ambrose reiterates the teachings of the Fathers before him concerning the universal destination of goods which says that God created the whole earth for the whole human race and not just for a select few.

### **Augustine of Hippo: Equality between the Rich and the Poor**

Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, acknowledges the

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<sup>79</sup> Ambrose, *Naboth* 1, 2, in Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose* (New Fetter Lane, London: Routledge, 1997), 118.

<sup>80</sup> Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy*, 2, 70, quoted in Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 83.

<sup>81</sup> Ambrose, *De Nabuthe*, PL 14, col. 747, quoted in Jose Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 16.

existence of a social problem during his time brought about by the increasing number of poor persons compared to the few number of rich people. Augustine considers the affluence of the few as the cancer of the society during his time.<sup>82</sup> This is reflected in his sermons. He continues the tradition of John Chrysostom and the Sacred Scriptures. Augustine upholds Christ's identification with the poor and the importance of giving alms to the poor. John Burnaby states:

For he goes on in the same sermon to mark that the merit of almsgiving is derived from God's own presence *in pauperibus sui*. "He wills not that we do good to Him, because He has done good to us. He has need of nothing, and therefore is our true Master.... Yet that our works might have direction even to Him, He deigned to be hungry in his poor."<sup>83</sup>

Because of the fundamental belief in Christ's presence in the poor, Augustine pleads to give to the poor. He even claims to becoming "a beggar for the beggars" by collecting money from his congregation in behalf of the poor.<sup>84</sup> Like John Chrysostom, Augustine also teaches that it is an obligation for the Christians to perform works of mercy towards the poor.<sup>85</sup>

However, Augustine is quite unique in upholding that the poor and the rich are equal. He emphasizes that everyone is equal before God because everything comes from God. He establishes the equality of both the rich and the poor at their birth and at their death. He states that the rich are equal with the poor at birth inasmuch as the rich man had nothing with him when he was born. The rich and the poor are equal at death because there is nothing that the rich man can take with him upon his death. Because of this equality, Augustine addresses himself to the rich:

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<sup>82</sup> Raymond Canning, trans., *The Rule of Saint Augustine: With Introduction and Commentary* (Lillie Road, London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1984), 54.

<sup>83</sup> John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007) 134.

<sup>84</sup> Augustine, *Sermon 66, 5*, in John Rotelle, ed., *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1991) 213.

<sup>85</sup> See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-love in St. Augustine* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006) 46.

“You brought nothing, you will take nothing away from here, why preen yourself against the poor?”<sup>86</sup>

This equality between the rich and the poor is evident in Augustine’s Rule. Preventing the cancer of the social problem from creeping into the monastery and eventually infecting the monks, he provides those coming from the affluent families a gentle warning:

On the other hand, those who seemed important in the world should not look down upon their brothers who have come into this holy brotherhood from the condition of poverty. They should try to glory in the fellowship of their less privileged brothers rather than in the rank of their own wealthy parents.<sup>87</sup>

However, he would not allow the poor to become conceited. And so he also gives them a precaution:

And let them not hold their heads high because they associate with people whom they would not dare to approach in the world, but rather let them lift up their hearts and not seek after what is vain and earthly. Otherwise, monasteries would become profitable to the rich and not to the poor, if there the rich become humble and the poor are puffed up.<sup>88</sup>

Augustine had envisioned that his monasteries should be beneficial to both the rich and the poor. He manifested bilateral beneficiary. He wanted all the monks, regardless of their social status prior to their entrance to the monastery, to partake from all the properties of the monastery. He also wanted them to benefit from the spiritual riches of the monastery. That is why he wanted them, rich and poor alike, to practice poverty and be humble.

The Fathers did not prohibit Christians from possessing material wealth. What the Fathers denounced is the avarice and selfishness with regards the use of the material goods. The material goods should therefore be used to meet the basic needs of everyone especially the poor. The ancient writings manifest the

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<sup>86</sup> Augustine, Sermon 61, 9, ed. Rotelle, 146.

<sup>87</sup> Augustine, *Rule* 1, 7, in Order of Augustinian Recollects, *The Rule, Constitutions, Additional Code* (Salamanca, Spain: Editorial AVGVSTINVS, 2012) 29. Henceforth, OAR.

<sup>88</sup> Augustine, *Rule* 1, 6, in OAR, 29.

belief of Christ's identification with the poor, hence, this gives the early Christians the impetus to be generous towards the poor.<sup>89</sup>

### **Option for the Poor in Church Teachings**

The theme on "The Preferential Option for the Poor" is not a novelty of John Paul II nor of the Second Vatican Council, as if there has never been any consciousness of this kind towards the poor before the turn of the twentieth century. The scriptures show that the Old Testament and the New Testament manifest preferential option for the poor. St. Paul, for one, was instructed by the other apostles never to forget the poor (Gal 2:10). This apostolic injunction was carried out not only by St. Paul but also by the Fathers of the Church. There has been a kind of transmission from the apostles down to the Fathers.

Long before the convocation of Vatican II, the theme on the preferential option for the poor has found advocates in the likes of Leo XIII, and Pius XI who wrote *Rerum Novarum*, and *Quadragesimo Anno* respectively. A very brief glance of the two social writings brings to the fore the two pontiffs' concern for the poor.

### **Leo XIII and Pius XI: A Protest Against Exploitation of Laborers and Social Injustice**

Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* is a considered a major step towards putting the Church on the side of the poor. It is the pope's protest against the exploitation of the laborers. With the promulgation of this document, the pontiff successfully reverberated the idea to the whole world that he is on the defense of the poor. Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* calls on everyone to observe social justice. The document advocates a just distribution of wealth for sake of the common good. In this way, the poor can have a share of wealth that seems to be concentrated on the hands of the rich who do not constitute the majority.

Vatican II demonstrates that the teachings found in Sacred Scriptures and in Sacred Tradition reach the present times through transmission.<sup>90</sup> It also reiterates that "the task of authentically

<sup>89</sup> Walsh and Langan, "Patristic Social Consciousness—The Church and the Poor," 146.

<sup>90</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 7.

interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church” so that in effect, “sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church... are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others.”<sup>91</sup> Being the authentic interpreter of Scriptures and Tradition, “the one sacred deposit of the word of God,” the Church must never depart from the teachings contained in the sacred deposit.<sup>92</sup> In other words, preferential option for the poor which is seen in Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Tradition must also be present in the teachings of the Church. It is remarkable that sporadic themes concerning the council fathers’ concern for the poor are evident in various conciliar documents.

### **Christ the Joy and Hope of the Poor**

*Gaudium et spes* expresses the Church’s desire to share with the situation and plight of the poor: “The joys and the hopes and the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the disciples of Christ....”<sup>93</sup>

*Lumen Gentium* reveals that the basis of the Church’s commitment to serve the poor has Christological foundation:

Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, “though He was by nature God... emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave,” and “being rich, became poor” for our sakes. Thus, the Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father “to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart to seek and to save what was lost.” Similarly, the Church

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, *Gaudium et spes*, (7 December 1965) par. 1, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, ed. Norman Tanner (Michigan: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1990), 1069.

encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ.<sup>94</sup>

It is noteworthy that despite this limitation on the part of Vatican II, the historic ecumenical council has nevertheless strengthened the local Church magisterium. It has become the “watershed of renewal” in third-world countries like those in Latin America and the Philippines.<sup>95</sup>

### **CELAM: Missionary Disciple for Integral Liberation**

The importance of the local church and of the episcopal conference is brought to the fore by Vatican II.<sup>96</sup> One of the episcopal conferences that took this into consideration and eventually contextualized this is the episcopal conference of Latin American bishops known as CELAM or *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano*. CELAM has had various plenary sessions, fifth of which was held in Aparecida. Its concluding document came to be known as the Aparecida Document.

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<sup>94</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, (21 November 1964) par. 8, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, ed. Norman Tanner (Michigan: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1990), 854. There are other Vatican II documents that appropriate the themes of poverty and the poor: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, *Gaudium et spes*, 63-86, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*, 12, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis*, 9, Decree on the Lay Apostolate *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 8, Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae caritatis*, 13, Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam totius*, 8, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus dominus*, 13. See Ferdinand Dagmang, “From Vatican II to PCP II to BEC Too: Progressive Localization of a New State of Mind to a New State of Affairs” in *Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal*, ed. Shaji George Kochuthara (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2015) 313.

<sup>95</sup> Reynaldo Raluto, “The Constant Struggle to become a Church of the Poor: Fifty Years after Vatican II,” *Tambara* 29, no. 1 (2012), 46.

<sup>96</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 26. See also Eugene Schlesinger, “Sæcula Sæculorum: Missionary Ecclesiology and the Church-World Relationship,” *Open Theology* 2, no. 1 (2016), 539.

Aparecida emphasizes that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. It also stresses that Christians need to be true disciples of Christ by becoming missionaries. In other words, it is a call for missionary discipleship. Christ's disciples and missionaries are then called to manifest option for the poor in deference to the poor Christ who has identified himself as the way, the truth, and the life.<sup>97</sup> Grounded on Christ, Aparecida calls for a preferential option for the poor with the aim of integral liberation. It aptly expresses the thought: "The Church's rich social magisterium tells us that we cannot conceive of an offer of life in Christ without dynamism toward integral liberation, humanization, reconciliation, and involvement in society."<sup>98</sup>

Aparecida enshrines preferential option for the poor in such a way that the Latin American bishops have renewed their commitment for the preferential option for the poor. They have also manifested the need to have priests who are sensitive to the needs of the poorest.<sup>99</sup> It gives a reminder that the Church should stand out as an advocate of justice and of the poor against the background of social and economic inequality. Referring to Benedict XVI, the document says: "The Holy Father has reminded us that the Church is called to be advocate of justice and of the poor in the face of intolerable social and economic inequalities which cry to heaven."<sup>100</sup> Central to its teaching is the preferential option for the poor. However, it would not allow the rich to be left behind. It also manifests concern for the affluent.

The preferential option for the poor demands that we devote special attention to those Catholic professional people who are responsible for the finances of nations, those who promote employment, and politicians who must create conditions for the

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<sup>97</sup> David Power, *Mission, Ministry, Order: Reading the Tradition in the Present Context* (Maiden Lane, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2008), 19.

<sup>98</sup> Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (henceforth, CELAM), *V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean: Concluding Document* (Aparecida, 2007) par. 359, accessed 17 February 2017, <http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf>. Henceforth, *Aparecida Document*.

<sup>99</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 199.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.



economic development of countries, so as to give them ethical guidelines consistent with their faith.<sup>101</sup>

The Catholic bishops of South America have appropriated and contextualized the Church's concern for the poor. The Universal Church's concern for the poor is on the macro level. CELAM, a local episcopal conference, has brought this down to the micro level according to the context and needs of their locality.

### **PCP II: Church of the Poor**

Like CELAM in Latin America, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) took into consideration Vatican II's assertion concerning the importance of the local church. The Philippines is marked by poverty and the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) has addressed the situation with great seriousness.<sup>102</sup>

One of the salient points of PCP II is its emphasis on the preferential option for the poor. In its vision for the Philippine Church to become a "Church of the Poor," it has decided to show special love of preference for the poor by vindicating the rights of the poor and not discriminating them and by giving them special time and attention.<sup>103</sup> Considering that majority of the council members were from the society's higher-ups, preferential option for the poor was an unlikely topic to be discussed and approved. In fact, Teodoro Bacani recalls that the topic developed only during the second-half of the council which lasted for a month.<sup>104</sup> Considering the fact that the majority of the Filipinos are poor, PCP II considers option for the poor as the "greatest urgency"

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<sup>101</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 395.

<sup>102</sup> The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (henceforth, PCP II) was held in Manila from January 20, 1991 to February 17 of the same year.

<sup>103</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (henceforth, CBCP), *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 1992) par. 125-136. Henceforth, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*.

<sup>104</sup> Teodoro Bacani, Jr., "'Church of the Poor': The Church in the Philippines' Reception of Vatican II," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 42, no. 1-2 (2005): <http://www.eapi.org.ph/resources/eapt/east-asian-pastoral-review-2005/volume-42-2005-number-1-2/church-of-the-poor-the-church-in-the-philippines-reception-of-vatican-ii/>.

in the country.<sup>105</sup> Noticeable in the document is the expression Church of the Poor. Such expression has become the core message of PCP II.<sup>106</sup> At the opening of the council, Leonardo Legaspi has already given the hint concerning the thrust of PCP II—to become a Church of the Poor. And again, this thrust to become a Church of the Poor resounds in the document itself. PCP II outlines the implications of its desire to become a Church of the Poor. Becoming a Church of the Poor implies preferential option for the poor: “The Church of the Poor is one whose members and leaders have a special love for the poor.”<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, preferential option for the poor is love for the poor but is not an exclusive love; it does not exclude those who are non-poor. PCP II affirms the age-old teaching concerning the universality of God’s love which is reminiscent of the words of Aparecida: “It is neither exclusive nor excluding.”<sup>108</sup> Speaking of the Philippine context, the Catechism for Filipino Catholics underlines preferential option for the poor as embraced by the Philippine Church:

Such a Christian option surely pertains directly to our specific situation wherein for many Filipinos poverty, exploitation and injustice have become their “way of life.” As Christian Filipinos, we are challenged by this preference for the poor to respond to this situation in a sincere “commitment to justice.”<sup>109</sup>

This section will dwell on how the teaching on the preferential option for the poor is manifested by the Church both in its theological and moral-pastoral aspects.

### **Theological and Moral-Pastoral Foundations**

As presented in an earlier section, God manifests preferential option for the poor by protecting and favouring them. As early as the Old Testament times, thousands of years prior to the genesis of Christianity, God has already revealed his option for

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<sup>105</sup> CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 312.

<sup>106</sup> Raluto, “The Constant Struggle to become a Church of the Poor,” 37.

<sup>107</sup> CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 126.

<sup>108</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 392.

<sup>109</sup> CFC, 1189.

the poor. The Exodus event of the Israelites demonstrates God's option for the poor and the oppressed. The social laws of the Israelites enshrine God's preferential option for the poor. Later on, the prophets would speak in the name of God against the injustices and abuses done that were detrimental to the poor of the land. It was God's way of expressing his love for the poor. In other words, God is the first one to opt for the poor. "In the Old Testament, Yahweh is the God of justice, the just Judge, the *Go'el* of the poor."<sup>110</sup> God manifests predilection for the poor and the reason is one that is not strictly of the moral order:

The God of the Bible is an ethical God, a just God. The poor, for their part, are those who have injustice done to them, through being abandoned or even oppressed.... But God loves them: their cause is God's cause. Their battered faces, in which the image of God can no longer be recognized, reveal an objective situation that is deeply offensive to God. And God then takes on their defence. So we are not dealing with a question of moral choice in the first place, but with the divine plan being objectively frustrated.<sup>111</sup>

### **Christ-Centered Preference for the Poor:**

#### **Theological Foundation**

At first glance, option for the poor appears to be centered on the poor. But in reality, the poor are not the centerpiece of this line of thought; it is Christ. The deep-seated foundation of the preferential option for the poor is faith in Christ.<sup>112</sup> Benedict XVI makes it clear: the "preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty."<sup>113</sup> This Christological faith shows that option for the poor is embedded in the mystery of God who is the first to manifest preferential option for the poor. This means

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<sup>110</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 111.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>113</sup> Benedict XVI, Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (13 May 2007), at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20070513\\_conference-aparecida.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070513_conference-aparecida.html).

that option for the poor has the option for Christ as its basis. This shall be expounded later on in this section.

It is important to note that God came to the world as a poor person. “You are well acquainted with the favour shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ: how for your sake he made himself poor through rich by his poverty” (2 Cor 8:9). Christ, by virtue of his unity with the Godhead, continues the Old Testament legacy of God’s love through preferential option for the poor. At the very threshold of his life, Christ’s deliberate choice to embrace a life of poverty ratifies God’s option for the poor presented in the Old Testament. When the Word was made flesh, he appeared as a poor person and redeemed the world as a poor person. Christ’s self-emptying in the incarnation is the basis of Christ’s poverty. “Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God, something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil 2:6-7). The mystery of incarnation is therefore a “mystery of poverty, the immeasurable impoverishment.”<sup>114</sup> In a word, poverty plays an important part in the mystery of Christ. Vatican II recognizes this and declares: “Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression, so the church is called to follow the same path. Indeed, the church recognizes in the poor and suffering the likeness of her poor and suffering Founder.”<sup>115</sup>

Christ indeed continues the Old Testament legacy of God’s love through preferential option for the poor by virtue of his unity with the Godhead. However, Christ’s preference for the poor is not done by compulsion as if he embraced poverty just for the sake of maintaining unity with God. That would imply that Christ was not entirely free. It was rather a deliberate choice and he proves it during his three-year preaching ministry by his declaration of self-identification with the poor: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40). Christ teaches that he is present in the poor. Because of this, the poor become the visible presence of the invisible Christ,

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<sup>114</sup> Jose Arumi Rovira, “Evangelical Poverty: Poor in order to be Available and to Share in Hope,” *Evangelical Poverty* 7, no. 2 (2015): 26.

<sup>115</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, 8.

making them the sacrament of Christ. The Church teaches the same. Referring to seminarians, the Church says: "Let them be taught to seek Christ in the faithful meditation of the word of God.... Let them seek him too in the person of the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor."<sup>116</sup> The poor, in a sense, possess "the manifestation and communication of his [Christ's] mystery, the setting for his revelation and dwelling."<sup>117</sup> It may also be said, then, that the poor are an *alter Christus* or another Christ. The poor, in a sense, represent Christ in the world; in other words, they make Christ present in the world. The basis however, of Christ's self-identification with the poor is not the one recorded in Matt 25:40. It is rather in Christ's incarnation, the very first instance when he took upon himself a life of poverty, that he identified himself with the poor.<sup>118</sup> Because of this, preferential option for the poor serves as a response on the part of the Body of Christ—the Church.<sup>119</sup>

Since the Church is Christocentric, then the preferential option for the poor is also Christocentric. Christ cannot be obliterated from the Church's option for the poor, doing so reduces the Church to become an ordinary pro-poor social organization, the largest social organization at that. If Christ has manifested preferential option for the poor, then the Church, the Body of Christ, is to also manifest the same. In other words, the Church's option for the poor is based from its option for Christ who identified himself with the poor.<sup>120</sup> The first option therefore is for Christ. The option for the poor comes second. In respect

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<sup>116</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius*, (28 October 1965) par. 8, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, ed. Norman Tanner (Michigan: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1990), 952. Henceforth, *Optatam totius*.

<sup>117</sup> Boff and Pixley clarify the Christ-poor relationship: "So there is a coincidence between Christ and the poor, not just in moral, but in a mystical sense, and so on the deepest level of reality. This does not mean that there is an abstract ontological identity (the poor *is* Christ), but that there is an actual identification (the poor *in* Christ)." Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 113.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>119</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: Word & Life Publications, 1994) 789. Henceforth, *CCC*.

<sup>120</sup> CFC, 1187.

to Christ who chose to be poor and has manifested preferential option for the poor, the Church's preferential option for the poor is a response in imitation of Christ and in faithfulness to God who shows preferential option for the poor himself. It is a response to Christ's invitation: "Come, follow me." In respect to Christ who has identified himself with the poor, the Church's preferential option for the poor is a response of charity to the poor in whom Christ is present. It is a response to Christ's words: "I thirst." They are not two distinct responses; they are two aspects of one and the same response with faith at the core. Faith in Christ who embraced poverty leads one to see the same Christ in the poor with whom he has identified himself. In a sense, the former may be analogical to the love of God while the former may be analogical to the love of neighbour. They are not two distinct loves but one, for one cannot love God without loving his neighbour.<sup>121</sup> Love of God is expressed and manifested to the love for one's neighbour. The same is true with faith. Without faith in Christ's words, the Church cannot authentically manifest preferential option for the poor. This is affirmed by the Aparecida document.

Our faith proclaims that Jesus Christ is "the human face of God and the divine face of man." Hence, "the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty." This option arises out of our faith in Jesus Christ, God made man, who has become our brother (cf. Heb 2:11-12).<sup>122</sup>

Gustavo Gutierrez says the same: "To be a Christian is to walk, moved by the Spirit, in the footsteps of Jesus. Traditionally known as *la sequela* Christi, this kind of discipleship is the root and the ultimate meaning of the preferential option for the poor."<sup>123</sup>

The Church manifests preferential option for the poor simply because Christ, its head, has manifested the same by becoming poor and identifying himself with the poor and in

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<sup>121</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter on Christian Love *Deus Caritas Est*, (25 December 2005), §15 (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2006) 24.

<sup>122</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 392.

<sup>123</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ," *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2009) 319.

the poor. Indeed, the Church's love for the poor is inspired "by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus and by his attention to the poor."<sup>124</sup> Christ loves the poor and the Church in turn, on account of its love for Christ, loves also the poor. This love, however, is not exclusively reserved for the poor. On the contrary, it is inclusive of everyone, rich and poor alike. The words of Aparecida express it: "It is neither exclusive nor excluding."<sup>125</sup>

Lest preferential option for the poor be interpreted wrongly so as to mean that love for the poor is exclusively for the poor, the word "preferential" shall be treated here. Admittedly, there are theologians who believe that the presence of the word "preferential" is deplorable. One of them is Jose Maria Vigil who writes in quite a radical tone that option for the poor is option for justice and option for justice is not preferential but exclusive.<sup>126</sup>

There are various formulations defining "preferential option for the poor." John Paul II defines preferential option for the poor in his encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* as "the option or special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity."<sup>127</sup> For Luigi Bettazzi, it is a decision to direct actions and solutions to problems of poverty "with the eyes of the poor."<sup>128</sup> Miguel Cinches describes it as the "concern for the least of our brethren even in their very material needs like food, clothing, and shelter."<sup>129</sup> They all pertain to one and the same idea: love for the poor expressed by placing them at the forefront of the Church's priorities. Perhaps the meaning according to Gustavo Gutierrez, the father

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<sup>124</sup> Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 184.

<sup>125</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 392.

<sup>126</sup> See Jose Maria Vigil, "Option for the Poor is an Option for Justice; It is not Preferential," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 42, no. 4 (2005) 321-335. It is a translation from the Spanish "La opción por los pobres es opción por la justicia, y no es preferencial—Para un reencuadramiento teológico-sistemático de la opción por los pobres," *Theologica Xavieriana* 149 (2004) 151-166.

<sup>127</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Twentieth Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio Sollicitudo rei socialis*, (30 December 1987), §42 (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of St. Paul, 1996) 84.

<sup>128</sup> Bettazzi, "The Work of Peace and the Option for the Poor," 261-262.

<sup>129</sup> Cinches, "Church's Social Apostolate," 107.

of liberation theology, merits attention.<sup>130</sup> As for “preference,” he says: “Preference implies the universality of God’s love, which excludes no one. It is only within the framework of this universality that we can understand the preference, that is, “what comes first.”<sup>131</sup>

The word “preferential,” as used by Gutierrez, means placing the poor at the priority. It does not deny the non-poor of the love of God after all, God loves everyone with an unconditional love. “God’s preference for the poor,” Nickoloff writes, “signifies the priority the ‘nobodies’ of history receive within the scope of God’s care for all creation.”<sup>132</sup> God loves all men equally. It does not exclude those who are not poor. But in his love for everyone, love for the poor comes first. Gutierrez explains this by distinguishing two dimensions of God’s love—the universal and the particular.

God’s love has two dimensions, the universal and the particular; and while there is a tension between the two, there is no contradiction. God’s love excludes no one. Nevertheless, God demonstrates a special predilection toward those who have been excluded from the banquet of life. The word *preference* recalls the other dimension of the gratuitous love of God—the universality.<sup>133</sup>

The word “preferential” signifies that option for the poor cannot be treated as one that is exclusively for the poor. Christ has shown a love that is inclusive.<sup>134</sup> The poor are not the only ones that benefit his salvific act but also the non-poor. Indeed, the whole world has benefitted from Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. Be it poor or not, everyone is welcome in God’s love. God and the Church are on the side of the poor but not tied

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<sup>130</sup> Nickoloff ed., introduction to *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 3. See Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, foreword to *Power of the Poor in History*, v.

<sup>131</sup> Nickoloff ed., *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 145.

<sup>132</sup> Nickoloff ed., introduction to *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 13.

<sup>133</sup> Daniel Hartnett, “Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez,” *America* 188 no. 3 (February 3, 2003): 14.

<sup>134</sup> Andrew Linzey, “For God so loved the world,” *Between the Species* 6, no. 1 (1990): 13.



exclusively to them. In other words, it is a “love of predilection and not an exclusive love.”<sup>135</sup> The preferential option for the poor is for the Church an expression of love for the poor. This love for the poor arises from the love for Christ, no less, the first to show preferential option for the poor.

### **Justice for the Poor—A commitment to Christ: Moral-Pastoral Foundation**

The importance of faith is underlined in the previous section. It has been pointed out that the preferential option for the poor arises from Christological faith. This faith cannot remain sterile. This faith cannot remain without concrete action, otherwise such faith will be dead (Jas 2:17). Hence, this faith needs to be realized in actual practice because “to believe in God is to emerge from oneself and to commit one’s life to God and to all men and women in concrete practice.”<sup>136</sup>

The very reason why the Church practices preferential option for the poor is because Christ manifests the same. The Church’s option for the poor is based on its option for Christ. Option for Christ means option for justice because he is on the side of justice. Jesus says: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt 5:6; RSV) and “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matt 6:33; RSV). Righteousness here refers to God’s justice.<sup>137</sup> Since Christ is clearly on the side of justice, the Church too should be an advocate of justice. Thus for the follower of Christ, justice is “what is food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty.”<sup>138</sup>

John Paul II once remarked that preferential option for the poor is “the option or special form of primacy in the exercise of

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<sup>135</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 132.

<sup>136</sup> Victorio Araya, *God of the Poor: The Mystery of God in Latin American Liberation Theology*, trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987) 80.

<sup>137</sup> Harrington ed., *The Gospel of Matthew*, 79.

<sup>138</sup> Igino Giordani, *The Social Message of Jesus*, trans. Alba Zizzamia (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1943) 136.

Christian charity.”<sup>139</sup> Broderick Pabillo comments that commonly understood, charity is voluntary, hence, it is not binding nor is there a sense of urgency in it. Pabillo asserts however that in the Church’s social teaching, charity cannot be separated from justice which implies something that is binding.<sup>140</sup> Justice is giving to others what is his due.<sup>141</sup> Working on this definition of justice, Pabillo quotes Gregory the Great concerning the relationship between charity and justice: “When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.”<sup>142</sup>

The Church has never shrunk in protecting the poor and safeguarding justice. John Paul II writes that the imitation of Jesus Christ includes the upholding of justice and the exercise of love to the least, the poor, and the suffering.<sup>143</sup> Benedict XVI emphasizes that the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.”<sup>144</sup> The Aparecida Document gives a reminder that the Church should stand out as an advocate of justice and of the poor against the background of social and economic inequality: “The Holy Father has reminded us that the Church is called to be advocate of justice and of the poor in the face of intolerable social and economic inequalities which cry to heaven.”<sup>145</sup> The Church’s commitment to Christ means commitment to justice because Christ is the Just Man par excellence (Acts 3:14).<sup>146</sup> This is what “preferential option for the poor” is all about.

The word “preferential” has been treated in the previous section and it means placing the poor at the priority. The Church’s

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<sup>139</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §42.

<sup>140</sup> Broderick Pabillo, “The Church of the Marginalized leads to a Marginalized Church: Are We still Ready to Reaffirm the Preferential Option for the Poor?” *MST Review* 11, no. 1 (2009): 20-21.

<sup>141</sup> CCC, 1807.

<sup>142</sup> Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, 3, 21: PL 77, 87, quoted in Pabillo, “The Church of the Marginalized leads to a Marginalized Church,” 21.

<sup>143</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifidelis Laici*, (30 December 1988), §16 (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of St. Paul, 1989) 41.

<sup>144</sup> *Deus caritas est*, §28.

<sup>145</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 395.

<sup>146</sup> Giordani, *The Social Message of Jesus*, 139.

option for the poor arises from its option for Christ. Since Christ has manifested preferential option for the poor and has in fact, explicitly identified himself with and in the poor, then the Church must necessarily do the same because everything that has something to do with the poor has something to do with Christ.<sup>147</sup>

The word “option” as used by Gutierrez means deciding freely to side with the oppressed and the powerless. It is not a matter of choice which one can either take or leave. Being followers of Christ, preferential option for the poor means opting for the poor. Nickoloff explains:

To opt for the poor (*optar por los pobres* in Spanish) means to make a free decision to side the oppressed and powerless in their fight for justice and to stand against all persons and structures that oppose their liberation. Perhaps, the, English-speaking Christians might best think of the option as a decision to make a commitment.<sup>148</sup>

There seems to be a confusion here. Option does not spell out commitment nor are they synonymous. When one is given options, it is presumed that he has the freedom to choose. Commitment implies dedication or pledge to a cause. Option connotes choices which one can take or leave. In order to clarify this seeming confusion, Gutierrez explains that unlike the English word which denotes choice, in Spanish, the word “evokes the sense of commitment.” And since it evokes commitment, option for the poor, therefore, “is not optional, but is incumbent upon every Christian. It is not something that a Christian can either take or leave.”<sup>149</sup>

In some ways, option is perhaps the weakest word in the sentence. In English, the word merely connotes a choice between two things. In Spanish, however, it evokes the sense of commitment. The option for the poor is not optional, but is incumbent upon every

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<sup>147</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 393.

<sup>148</sup> Nickoloff ed., introduction to *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 13. Cf. Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 133.

<sup>149</sup> Hartnett, “Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez,” 14. See Ilsup Ahn, *Religious Ethics and Migration: Doing Justice to Undocumented Workers* (New York, USA: Taylor & Francis, 2014) 123-124.

Christian. It is not something that a Christian can either take or leave. As understood by Medellín, the option for the poor is twofold: it involves standing in solidarity with the poor, but it also entails a stance against inhumane poverty.<sup>150</sup>

This commitment is a commitment in favour of Christ, the Just Man; the man who opted for justice. Commitment in favour of justice means opting for the poor—those to whom injustice is done.<sup>151</sup> Poverty is caused by injustice because there is an unjust distribution of wealth and resources, thus creating the rich and the poor.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, commitment in favour of justice means denouncing injustice. Benedict XVI calls for it: “Lay Catholics must be aware of their responsibilities in public life; they must be present in the formation of the necessary consensus and in opposition to injustice.”<sup>153</sup> Jose Maria Vigil is quite radical but admits in a negative fashion God’s commitment for justice: “God is against injustice and takes the side of those treated unjustly, that is, the victims of injustice.”<sup>154</sup> The bishops of the United States of America emphasize that it is every Christian’s obligation to provide justice for all especially the poor.<sup>155</sup> Denunciation of

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<sup>150</sup> Hartnett, “Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez,” 14.

<sup>151</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 124.

<sup>152</sup> Danie Brand, Stephan De Beer, Isolde De Villiers, and Van Marle. “Poverty as Injustice,” *Law, Democracy & Development* 17 (2013): 275. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988) 14.

<sup>153</sup> Benedict XVI, Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>154</sup> Vigil, “Option for the Poor is an Option for Justice; It is not Preferential,” 321-335. It is a translation from the Spanish “Dios está contra la injusticia y se pone del lado de los ‘injusticiados’ (las víctimas de la injusticia).” Jose Maria Vigil “La opción por los pobres es opción por la justicia, y no es preferencial—Para un reencuadramiento teológico-sistémico de la opción por los pobres” quoted in *Theologica Xavieriana* 149 (2004): 151-166.

<sup>155</sup> United States Catholic Bishops (henceforth, USCB), *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, par. 86: [http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic\\_justice\\_for\\_all.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf).

injustice implies a struggle for justice. However, this struggle should not be understood as an opposition to eliminate a foe. John Paul II makes it clear that this struggle should always be for a positive good. Writing about unions, John Paul II exhorts:

However, this struggle should be seen as a normal endeavour “for” the just good: in the present case, for the good which corresponds to the needs and merits of working people associated by profession; but it is not a struggle “against” others. Even if in controversial questions the struggle takes on a character of opposition towards others, this is because it aims at the good of social justice, not for the sake of “struggle” or in order to eliminate the opponent.<sup>156</sup>

Preferential option for the poor is a call for conversion on the part of the Church especially those who are in the hierarchy. The history of the Church attests that at times, the hierarchy was identified with prestige and power. The poor Church that the poor Christ established was once immersed in wealth and was once identified with the wealthy. The Papal States were once symbols of the Church’s affluence.<sup>157</sup> Hence, the preferential option for the poor calls for a hierarchy that lives out the poverty of Christ by adopting a poor lifestyle and by doing things according to the perspective of the poor. Puebla makes it clear that service to the poor “calls for constant conversion and purification among all Christians.”<sup>158</sup> It calls for a conversion for the Church to be identified better with the poor. Francis makes a similar call: “This I ask you: be shepherds, with the ‘odour of the sheep,’ make it

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<sup>156</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work *Laborem exercens*, (14 September 1981), §20 (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of St. Paul, 1989), 73-74.

<sup>157</sup> See Pedro Salgado, *Social Encyclicals: Commentary and Critique* (Quezon City, Philippines: R. P. Garcia Publishing Co., Inc., 1992) 3-6. See also Thomas Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825* (Philadelphia, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 254.

<sup>158</sup> CELAM, *III General Conference of Latin American Bishops: Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America (Conclusions)* (Washington D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops: Committee for the Church in Latin America, 1979), par. 1140. Henceforth, *Puebla Final Document*.

real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men.”<sup>159</sup> It calls for an integration of the poverty of Christ in the lives of the clergy.

They need to be converted to the poor Christ and his poor; become poor, setting aside their anti-evangelical trappings and titles; commune with the poor in humble listening and lively presence among them; have the courage to speak out and suffer on their behalf; serve them in the humble spirit of those who do no more than their duty; and finally, love them with a fatherly and brotherly love.<sup>160</sup>

As has been pointed out earlier, God’s love for all men is not exclusive but inclusive. God loves all of humanity, whether rich or poor, with an infinite love. He does not exclude anyone from his love. But the preferential option for the poor, as the name suggests, seems to cater only to the poor to the exclusion of the rich. Placing this side by side Jesus’ woe to the rich makes the rich to be seemingly the antagonists and are therefore out of the picture.<sup>161</sup> Apparently the rich are, but in the final analysis, the rich are not: they themselves benefit from the preferential option for the poor. The idea of the rich benefitting from the preferential option for the poor has been in the writings of the Church Fathers. Following their tradition, the Church preserves the same idea—bilateral beneficiary—meaning to say, the poor are not the only ones that benefit from the preferential option for the poor but also the rich. For instance, the Aparecida document shows special concern for the affluent:

The preferential option for the poor demands that we devote special attention to those Catholic professional people who are responsible for the finances of nations, those who promote employment, and politicians who must create conditions for the economic development of countries, so as to give them ethical guidelines consistent with their faith.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Francis, Homily on Holy Thursday (28 March 2013) at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130328\\_messa-crismale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html).

<sup>160</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 233.

<sup>161</sup> Luke 6:24 states: “But woe to you rich, for your consolation is now.”

<sup>162</sup> CELAM, *Aparecida Document*, 395.

This is not an isolated case. Puebla also shows this concern for the non-poor, those who are “collaborating in the construction of society,” saying:

This dialogue calls for initiatives that will permit encounter and close relationship with all those who are collaborating in the construction of society, so that they may discover their complementarity and convergence. To this end, priority must be placed on working with those who have decision-making power.<sup>163</sup>

As stated earlier, the poor are those who are victims of injustice. Conversely, the non-poor are those who perpetrate injustice by being attached to their wealth and power. They spontaneously “claim priority and protagonism for themselves.”<sup>164</sup> Again, Jesus’ words mark a problem for the non-poor: “But woe to you rich, for your consolation is now” (Luke 6:24). The purpose, however, of the woes in Luke is to elicit reform.<sup>165</sup> This is where the necessity of conversion comes in: the non-poor need to be converted. By elimination, it is only the poor that can evangelize and convert them. The poor can “evangelize the rich whose hearts are attached to wealth, thus converting and freeing them from this bondage and their own egotism.”<sup>166</sup> In these terms, the non-poor benefit from the preferential option for the poor. They get to be evangelized and converted to Christ by the poor so that the rich themselves, through their option for Christ, may freely take upon the preferential option for the poor. The Church cannot condemn the rich simply because they are rich. The only instance where the Church can be against the rich is when the latter persist in injustice toward the poor. In this case, the Church’s condemnation is not directed to the persons of the rich per se. The condemnation is rather directed against their unjust practices. The Catechism remarks: “Liberation in the spirit of the Gospel is incompatible with hatred of one’s enemy as a person, but not with hatred of the evil that he does as an enemy.”<sup>167</sup> By acting as such, the Church is

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<sup>163</sup> CELAM, *Puebla Final Document*, 1228.

<sup>164</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 134.

<sup>165</sup> Robert Karris, “The Gospel according to Luke,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown et al. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 43:90, p. 695.

<sup>166</sup> CELAM, *Puebla Final Document*, 1156.

<sup>167</sup> CCC, 1933.

actually doing the rich a favour. The Church manifests its love for the rich by showing concern for the latter's persons and for their salvation. Preferential option for the poor therefore is "indirectly an option for the rich."<sup>168</sup>

John Paul II teaches that the Church's social doctrine, of which preferential option for the poor is part, "is aimed at defending and promoting the dignity of the human person."<sup>169</sup> The dignity of every person relies on the fact that he is created in the image and likeness of God, is endowed with rational soul, and is redeemed by the salvific act of Christ on the cross.<sup>170</sup> And since this is true to all persons regardless of race, color, or religion, then all persons enjoy equal dignity in the society. All are children of God. However, poverty is evident in society; there is a perceptible margin between the poor and the non-poor. It is characterized by an "unequal growth that does not recognize the equal right of all people to take their seat at the table of the common banquet."<sup>171</sup> Because of this scenario, the Church reaffirms the principle of solidarity: each one should see in the other "another self."<sup>172</sup> As "another self," then this calls for service towards the other especially the poor. The Church makes this demand in order to inculcate the idea that each one is responsible for the other.

The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the

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<sup>168</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 135.

<sup>169</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Jesus Christ alive in his Church the Source of Hope for Europe *Ecclesia in Europa*, (28 June 2003), §98, at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20030628\\_ecclesia-in-europa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html).

<sup>170</sup> CCC, 1934.

<sup>171</sup> Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 449.

<sup>172</sup> CCC, 1931.



good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.<sup>173</sup>

Solidarity will take shape in the society only when each person is recognized as an equal, owing to the equal dignity of all men as children of God. Because all men have equal dignity, then all men should have equal rights to the goods of the earth. Thus, the Church also reaffirms the principle of universal destination of goods and declares that “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone.”<sup>174</sup> But since sinful inequalities that are in “open contradiction of the Gospel” exist, then the Church makes this reminder in favour of the disadvantaged: “the poor, the marginalized... should be the focus of particular concern.”<sup>175</sup> One of the forms of solidarity as outlined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church is the solidarity between the rich and the poor. The rich, owing to their greater share in the goods of the earth, should share them with those who are in need. This is the principle of subsidiarity and it teaches that “all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help—therefore of support, promotion, development—with respect to lower-order societies.”<sup>176</sup> It encourages the exercise of works of mercy of which almsgiving to the poor is part. Almsgiving is one of the “chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.”<sup>177</sup> By doing this, the non-poor, or those who do works of mercy, please God. And this goes back to the earlier conclusion that the rich actually benefit from the preferential option for the poor.

In a gist, “preferential option for the poor” means “to choose to give the poor practical priority and to shape one’s practice by looking at the world through the eyes of the outcasts.”<sup>178</sup> It is a renewed expression of love for the poor. It is not an exclusive love for the poor. It is a love that is inclusive of everyone: both

<sup>173</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, §39.

<sup>174</sup> Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 171.

<sup>175</sup> CCC, 1938. See Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 182.

<sup>176</sup> Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 186.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 2447.

<sup>178</sup> Nickoloff ed., introduction to *Gustavo Gutierrez: Essential Writings*, 13.

the rich and poor benefit from it. It is not a novelty of Vatican II nor of the Latin American theologians. Preferential option for the poor has been in place even before the genesis of Christianity. Simply said, it is love of the poor that is “both ancient and always new.”<sup>179</sup>

The theme on the preferential option for the poor, having foundations in Scriptures and Tradition, has taken root in modern Church teachings especially in the churches of the third world like CELAM and CBCP. Moreover, Vatican II documents sporadically contain statements which manifest the Church’s concern for the poor.

Aside from the preferential option for the poor, the concept of the Church of the poor has come to the fore. A church of the poor is a church “in which the poor are privileged, a church which the poor occupy the first rank.”<sup>180</sup> The preferential option for the poor and the church of the poor are two concepts that both express concern for the poor. Both concepts manifest God’s love for the poor and Jesus’ identification with the poor.<sup>181</sup> There is, however, a minor difference between the two concepts.

The preferential option for the poor is contextualized and actualized in the concept of the Church of the Poor. The latter is the necessary consequence of the former. Lagarejos opines that the concept of the Church of the Poor is greater than the concept of the preferential option on the ground that the preferential option for the poor is merely an option—a choice which one may take or leave. “While option could connote that the poor are outside the essence of the Church,” Lagarejos writes, “Church of the poor indicates that the poor are in the bosom of the Church.”<sup>182</sup> However, Gustavo Gutierrez’s clarification concerning the presence of the word “option” totally negates Lagarejos’ claim. The word “option” actually points to commitment. It is good to recall Gutierrez’s words:

In some ways, option is perhaps the weakest word in the sentence. In English, the word merely connotes a choice between two things. In Spanish, however,

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<sup>179</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor*, 117.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>181</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 132.

<sup>182</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 133.

it evokes the sense of commitment. The option for the poor is not optional, but is incumbent upon every Christian. It is not something that a Christian can either take or leave.<sup>183</sup>

Vatican II, considered the greatest event in the last four centuries of the Roman Catholic Church, was convoked by John XXIII on January 25, 1959.<sup>184</sup> Vatican II was a call for pastoral renewal. The pontiff envisioned an inclusive Church that would identify with the poor. This intention is clear in the radio message of John XXIII: "Confronted with the undeveloped countries, the Church presents itself as it is and wishes to be, as the Church of all, and particularly as the Church of the Poor."<sup>185</sup> It was the desire of the pontiff to bring the Church closer to the poor who were alienated by the Church's triumphalist tendencies and its inordinate attachment to wealth. This is what the group called "The Church of the Poor," an informal working group prior to Vatican II, found out.<sup>186</sup>

Despite the efforts of the group as inspired by John XXIII, no explicit provisions concerning the Church of the Poor came out of the documents of Vatican II.<sup>187</sup> There were, nonetheless, references concerning poverty as an essential component of Christian life.<sup>188</sup> However, the Council's concern for the poor has found its way to local magisterial teachings. Moreover, John XXIII's "Church of the poor," although not explicitly developed in Vatican II, has been adopted and appropriated by local episcopal conferences of the third world especially that of the Philippines.

PCP II had indeed manifested its desire for the Philippine Church to become a "Church of the Poor." It has declared

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<sup>183</sup> Hartnett, "Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutierrez," 14.

<sup>184</sup> Raluto, "The Constant Struggle to become a Church of the Poor," 38.

<sup>185</sup> John XXIII, Radio message of John XXIII one month before the opening of Vatican II (11 September 1962) at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/messages/pont\\_messages/1962/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_mes\\_19620911\\_ecumenical-council.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/es/messages/pont_messages/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_mes_19620911_ecumenical-council.html).

<sup>186</sup> Raluto, "The Constant Struggle to become a Church of the Poor," 41.

<sup>187</sup> Dagmang, "From Vatican II to PCP II to BEC Too," 313.

<sup>188</sup> For examples, see Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 115.

its willingness to “follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression.”<sup>189</sup> The intention is noble. But somehow, Philippine bishop Broderick Pabillo puts a question mark on the actualization of such a noble intent. Pabillo puts forward a terminology which is quite synonymous to the Church of the Poor: Church of the Marginalized. The latter terminology refers to a Church “which is in solidarity and is identified with the marginalized.” As though playing with words, Pabillo asserts that the consequence of being a Church of the Marginalized is becoming a marginalized Church. Pabillo goes on to say that the Philippine Church already has the good intention but is afraid to carry it out because of the necessary consequence of becoming a marginalized Church. But Pabillo insists that becoming a marginalized Church is the necessary consequence of embracing a Church of the Poor, of the Marginalized. “We cannot be Church of the Poor and hold on to our prestige, our elitist status.” Pabillo writes. He adds, “We cannot be Church of the Poor and hold on to our rich benefactors who are the beneficiaries of the present system that widens the gap between the haves and the have-nots.”<sup>190</sup>

There has been a concerted effort on the part of the Church to become a Church of the Poor. There has been an effort on the part of the Church to contextualize its preferential option for the poor and realize it in the Church of the Poor. The Church has expressed its desire to be on the side of the poor. With this in mind, the words of John XXIII are gradually becoming a reality: “The Church presents itself as it is and wishes to be, as the Church of all, and particularly as the Church of the Poor.”<sup>191</sup> This is corroborated by Francis’ words in his audience with the journalists: “How I would like a Church that is poor and for the poor.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 135.

<sup>190</sup> Pabillo, “The Church of the Marginalized leads to a Marginalized Church,” 16-25.

<sup>191</sup> John XXIII, Radio message before the opening of Vatican II.

<sup>192</sup> Francis, Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media (16 May 2013), at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130316\\_rappresentanti-media.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130316_rappresentanti-media.html).

## The Church in the Service of the Poor

Love for the poor has always been a characteristic of the Church ever since its birth. The Church always stands by the side of the poor, protecting them from the aggressiveness and abuses of the rich and the powerful. As early as the ancient Church, the bishops were seen as “*procurator et dispensator pauperum*” or advocate and provider for the poor.<sup>193</sup> Augustine of Hippo claims to becoming “a beggar for the beggars” by collecting money from his congregation in behalf of the poor.<sup>194</sup>

The medieval Church was also active in protecting the poor. Being a precept of Christian charity, the Church has been responsible for caring and protecting the poor. Protection of the poor was a matter that concerns the ecclesiastical government and the ecclesiastical law. The Church had laws, lawgivers, law courts and lawyers that cater to the legal needs of the poor. The abbots of monasteries were also not exempt from caring the poor. Abigail Firey writes that the abbot “emerged as a figure analogous to the bishop in his power, authority, and capacity to dispense alms and hospitality.”<sup>195</sup> History proved the Church’s active involvement in the care for the poor.

This same active involvement that the medieval Church manifested then continues to the present time by the same Church. The Church’s care and protection for the poor has not faded. A number of magisterial teachings serve as a reminder of the Church’s undying love for the poor.

Its [the Church’s] desire is that the poor should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and should better their condition in life; and for this it strives.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 163.

<sup>194</sup> Augustine, *Sermon* 66, 5, ed. Rotelle, 213.

<sup>195</sup> Abigail Firey, “For I was Hungry and You Fed Me: Social Justice and Economic Thought in the Latin Patristic and Medieval Christian Traditions” in *Ancient and Medieval Economic Ideas and Concepts of Social Justice*, Todd Lowry and Barry Gordon, eds. (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 1998) 348.

<sup>196</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter on the Condition of the Working Classes *Rerum Novarum*, (15 May 1891), §28, at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html).

The Church continually combats all forms of poverty, because as Mother she is concerned that each and every person be able to live fully in dignity as a child of God.<sup>197</sup>

The Church's love for the poor... is a part of her constant tradition. This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor.<sup>198</sup>

We begin with the scandal of poverty. Half the world's population, some three billion people, live on two dollars or less a day. Of these 1.2 billion people, 20 per cent of the world's population, live in extreme poverty on less than one dollar a day. This poverty occurs in a world of plenty, in a global economy capable of satisfying all the demands of its richest consumers but seemingly and scandalously unable to meet the needs of vast numbers of the poorest, whose needs ought to be at the heart of public policy. That is why poverty is the proper starting point for all discussions about aid, debt cancellation and trade.<sup>199</sup>

As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental 'option for the poor'—to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenceless, to impact on the poor.... As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.<sup>200</sup>

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference has also opted for the poor and has underlined the need to become a Church of the poor. During the 1970 meeting in Manila, the bishops collectively declared that:

It is our resolve, first of all, to be more truly "the Church of the Poor." If we are to place ourselves at the side of the multitudes in our continent, we must in our way of life share something of their poverty. The

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<sup>197</sup> John Paul II, Message for Lent (1998), at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/len/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_09091997\\_lent-1998.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/len/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_09091997_lent-1998.html).

<sup>198</sup> CCC, 2444.

<sup>199</sup> Catholic Bishops of England, Scotland, and Wales (2003), quoted in <http://www.catholic-social-teaching.org.uk/themes/human-dignity/resources/encyclical-statements-poverty-2/>.

<sup>200</sup> USCB, *Economic Justice for All*, 16.

Church cannot set up islands of affluence in a sea of want and misery.<sup>201</sup>

The host country, the Philippines, also expressed its manifest resolution in its desire to become a Church of the poor. Such expression has become the core message of the historic PCP II.<sup>202</sup> Given the vast number of Filipinos living in poverty, the Philippine Church aims that these poor people be at home in the Church.<sup>203</sup>

History proves that starting from the yesteryears until the present, there has been a special commitment on the part of the Church to care and protect the poor. This has been the relationship between the Church and the poor. This has been in place because the Church sees Christ in the poor and service to the poor means service to Christ himself.

Love for the poor has always characterized the Church because Christ has identified himself with the poor. Being the sacraments of Christ, services done to the poor are services done to Christ himself. The innumerable exhortations of the Church Fathers and other saints of the Church prove that the Church's commitment towards the poor is undying and cannot be compromised. They tell of the poor's privileged place in the heart of the Church. These exhortations are complemented by various charitable institutions that cater to the needs of the poor.

Francis speaks of the need to encounter the poor. He says, "If we step outside ourselves we find poverty."<sup>204</sup> It is the call of the pontiff for all Christians to exert more effort in seeking out

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<sup>201</sup> Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, "Message of the Conference of Asian Bishops in Manila, Philippines on 29 November 1970," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' Documents from 1970 to 1991*, Gaudencio Rosales and Catalino Arevalo, eds. (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1992) 5.

<sup>202</sup> Raluto, "The Constant Struggle to become a Church of the Poor," 37.

<sup>203</sup> CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 136.

<sup>204</sup> Francis, Address on the Vigil of Pentecost (18 May 2013), at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130518\\_veglia-pentecoste.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco_20130518_veglia-pentecoste.html).

“those on the fringes of society who need help the most.”<sup>205</sup> The Church has been voicing this out even before the papacy of Francis and there were many who have acceded to this call. One might probably think of Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity that served the needs of the poor—children and old alike. The dedication and love of the members of her congregation manifest the group’s preferential option for the poor.

Yet one might also think of Aloysius Schwartz and his Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ which are religious congregations dedicated to the care for the poor. The former is a female congregation whose primary task is the care for the poor and the education of children.<sup>206</sup> The latter is the male counterpart of the former. The Brothers of Christ take care of elderly men.<sup>207</sup> Marked by a preferential option for the poor, Aloysius Schwartz took the pains of travelling beyond the borders and convenience of the United States of America in order to exercise his ministry for the poor. Moreover, out of the same love for the poor, the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ preserve and continue the legacy of their founder, Aloysius Schwartz, in his love and dedication towards the poorest of the poor.

### **Aloysius Schwartz Concept of Poverty**

#### **Aloysius Schwartz: Christ-like Service for the Poor**

A native of Washington, D.C., Aloysius Schwartz was born on September 18, 1930. He has always wanted to be a poor priest serving other poor people. He entered the seminary with

<sup>205</sup> Philip Pulella, “Church must Help the Poorest, not Dissect Theology, Pope says” in Reuters (May 18, 2013): accessed March 10, 2017, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-pope-personal-idUKBRE94H0CS20130518>.

<sup>206</sup> Zdzislaw Josef Kijas, “Presentation of Fr. Zdzislaw Josef Kijas, OFM Conv, Relator of the Cause” in Samson Silloriquiez, *Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Aloisii Schwartz Sacerdotis Diocesani, Fundatoris Congregationum Sororum Mariae et Fratrum Christi (1930-1992): Positio Super Vita, Virtutibus et Fama Sanctitatis* (Roma: Tipografia NOVA RES s.r.l., 2012) xii. Henceforth, *Positio*.

<sup>207</sup> Arcilla, *Giving of One’s Poverty*, 48.



this purpose. He left two seminaries after realizing that those two seminaries could not help him in his dream of becoming poor priest for the poor. Finally, he settled in the *Société des Auxiliaires des Missions* or Society of the Auxiliaries of the Missions in Belgium. After being caught up in a controversy within the Society, he was separated from the group before his priestly ordination. He was incardinated in the South Korean diocese of Busan shortly after his ordination, serving its local bishop.

Aloysius Schwartz arrived in South Korea four years after the end of the Korean War. The country was still suffering from the adverse effects of the war. He saw for himself the extreme poverty that the locals had to contend with. Aloysius Schwartz, moved by the misery of the Korean people and inspired by the Virgin of the Poor in Banneux, Belgium, decided to live in solidarity with them. He established the religious congregations Sisters of Mary and Brothers of Christ whose main apostolate is to serve the poorest of the poor.

During his ministry to the poor, he has surmounted great difficulties to help the poor and abandoned children. He had to battle resistance from vagrants, government officials, and even some Church officials. In fact, there are some bishops, Filipino and Korean, who opposed his being beatified and canonized. Among the forty-five Filipino bishops who were consulted, three opposed the prospect of him being raised to the altars.<sup>208</sup>

When South Korea was beginning to progress, Aloysius Schwartz decided to expand in the Philippines. Responding to the invitation of Filipino bishops, Aloysius Schwartz opened charity works in Manila and Cebu similar to those that he opened in South Korea.

Aloysius Schwartz was afflicted with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and died in the Philippines on March 16, 1992. His burial site is found in the Sisters of Mary Boystown Complex in Silang, Cavite. The legacy he left is Christ-like service of the poor being continued by the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ.

Aloysius Schwartz tries to avoid giving deep theological reflections in his writings. His works, however, manifest

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<sup>208</sup> John Nery, "Priest who Fought Poverty, Bishops, now 'Venerable'" in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (16 March 2015).

theological concepts and theological explanations. During his ministry, he was surrounded by non-theologians. In fact, even the members of the Sisters of Mary do not go for further studies because Schwartz, their founder, finds it unnecessary for the congregation's apostolate.<sup>209</sup> It must be the reason why he tries to present theological concepts using a language that can be understood by non-theologians. Behind his writings is a subtle call for action. He wants to spur his readers on to action. And the only way for it to happen is to make sure that his readers understand him. Thus, he makes it a point to make his writings comprehensible even to people who are not adept at theology.

Schwartz's discussion on poverty comes chiefly from his experience and ministry to the poor in South Korea and the Philippines.

### **Christ the Eternal Poorman: Aloysius Schwartz's Christology**

Aloysius Schwartz's Christology is a Christology from below.<sup>210</sup> His is not a treatise on the nature and person of Christ but a reflection on Christ from the viewpoint of poverty.

Schwartz emphasizes that Christ deliberately chose a life of poverty. Christ's complete and perfect freedom is shown in his self-determination.<sup>211</sup> It is with this free will that Christ embraced poverty. Schwartz maintains that everything that happened to Christ's life from his birth up to his death transpired because he deliberately chose them to be so. He lived a life of poverty because he chose it to be so. The Gospels attest to Jesus' poverty. For instance, during his birth, Jesus was born in a stable which is a shed for animals. Moreover, during his public ministry, Jesus said that he did not have a place where to lean his head (Matt 8:20). These are mere external expressions of an inner reality. In other

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<sup>209</sup> Aloysius Schwartz, *Memorandum on the Mariahwe*, Aloysius Schwartz's Letter to Most Rev. John A. Choi (3 December 1969), in Vatican, Archivio della Propaganda Fide, Rubrica sotto 1960, 1963/70. Public Copy, Vol. VI, pp. 1445-1449, in Silloriquéz, "Summarium Documentorum," in *Positio*, 381.

<sup>210</sup> See Jean Galot, *Who is Christ? A Theology of the Incarnation* (Rome, Italy: Gregorian University Press, 1980) 35.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

words, there is something behind those external manifestations of Christ's poverty. Christ's external expressions of his poverty have their foundation in a deeper and interior significance.<sup>212</sup> Behind the external manifestations of Christ's poverty lies a basic and fundamental poverty brought about by his self-giving, and total self-donation out of obedience and love to the Father. Jesus' obedience to the Father is not a limitation of his freedom. On the contrary, it is an exercise of his full freedom. Christ's obedience is a "free expression of his unconditional love for the Father."<sup>213</sup> Christ's unconditional love for the Father has stirred him to have an unconditional love for man. Ultimately, behind the external expressions of Christ's poverty is his love for the Father. The ultimate reason therefore of Christ's incarnation is his obedience and love for the Father. His total self-donation to the Father made him endure physical pain, and the lack of goods for the sake of mankind. Out of obedience to the Father, Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, took a human flesh and became Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man.<sup>214</sup> In relation to God, man is nothing. Before God the almighty, man is poor and by assuming human flesh, Jesus also assumed man's poverty. By assuming human flesh, Jesus renounced everything that he enjoyed as divine. As divine, Christ is eternal; but as a man, Christ is mortal and in fact, suffered human death. As divine, Christ is never limited to anything; but as man, he is limited to space and time. The list can be extended but the bottom line is this: as divine, Christ was full of riches; but as man, he was poor. The incarnation indeed is a mystery. It is a "mystery of poverty."<sup>215</sup> Because of the manifold things that Christ renounced, Christ can be considered the poor man *par excellence*.

Being the poor man *par excellence*, Christ is the best model of poverty. He practiced poverty both in fact and in spirit. "Christ himself not only was poor," Schwartz says, "but what is

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<sup>212</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World *Vita consecrata*, (25 March 1996), §21 (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of St. Paul, 1996), 33.

<sup>213</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 28.

<sup>214</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 27-28.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

equally important he appeared poor as well.”<sup>216</sup> In Christ, both poverty in spirit and material poverty, which are synonymous to poverty in fact, are harmoniously united. The poverty which Christ embraced at his incarnation is externally manifested during his lifetime. The poverty which came after his renunciation of heavenly comforts as divine is complemented by his renunciation of material riches and comfort as man. This can be seen in Christ’s choice to be born in a stable which is “usually dirty, foul-smelling, and unfit for human habitation” when being divine, he could have chosen to be born in a comfortable situation.<sup>217</sup> Christ also chose to belong to a poor family when being divine, he could have chosen to belong to an influential Jewish family. The evidence of the poverty of Mary and Joseph is attested to by the Presentation narrative. When Jesus was presented in the Temple in accordance with the Mosaic Law, Joseph and Mary offered a pair of turtledoves which is considered as the offering of those who cannot afford a lamb (Lev 12:8). Mary’s offering was permissible under the Law because she belonged to the poorer class.<sup>218</sup> “In a pastoral country, such as Palestine,” Schwartz comments, “a small lamb could not have been prohibitively expensive unless one was very poor.”<sup>219</sup> Moreover, Christ’s address to his would-be followers shows that Christ lived a poor life during his three-year preaching ministry: “the foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Lk 9:58). Even Christ’s death manifests Christ’s poverty. After being betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver, Christ’s death was one of a poor criminal. After his death, he was even laid to rest in a borrowed tomb (Matt 27:59-60). So, Christ is the best model of poverty. Christ was, is, and will always be the poor man *par excellence* for he is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). For this, Schwartz calls him the Eternal Poorman.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Aloysius Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times* (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1970) 72.

<sup>217</sup> Aloysius Schwartz, *To Live is Christ: The Sisters of Mary Book of Spirituality* (Rockville, Maryland: Government Institutes, Inc., 1991) 46.

<sup>218</sup> Roland Faley, “Leviticus,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown et al. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 4:27, p. 69.

<sup>219</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 22.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

Christ's free choice to embrace a life of poverty has a consequence. Because he is the poorman par excellence, the Son of God who chose to become the Son of Man, Christ is the lone person fit to become the mediator between God and man, with whom Christ made his dwelling (Jn 1:14). Christ alone is fit to become humanity's representative before God. Schwartz uses the text in the letter to the Hebrews: "Therefore he had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God on their behalf, to expiate the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). Schwartz underlines Christ's being made "like his brothers" in the Epistle. Since majority of "his brothers" are poor, Christ too embraced poverty if he were to be realistically the mediator between man and God.

Schwartz uses the logic that because the majority of humanity is poor, Christ also had to embrace poverty in order to adequately represent humanity. Schwartz establishes that all throughout history, the collective population of poor people in the world is always greater than the collective population of the wealthy people.<sup>221</sup> In other words, the poor people always constitute the majority. Schwartz then argues that if Christ were to represent humanity, if Christ were to fulfil his role as mediator of mankind, the natural and realistic choice is for him to associate with the majority, that is, the poor people of the world. "Since the overwhelming majority of the human race, at the time of Christ, today, and during the period in between, are and were of the poor, it is but natural that Christ should identify himself with this class in order to fulfil his role as mediator of humanity."<sup>222</sup>

But it should be noted that if that is the sole reason why Christ embraced a life of poverty, it fails to capture the totality of Christ's mediatorship. It implies that Christ had no other choice but to side with the poor. It does not deny Christ's free will, but it seems that Christ is presented with only two options the other one being the expected outcome. In this case Christ is not entirely free; his freedom is defective. A defective freedom on the part of Christ will adversely affect the mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>223</sup> It

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<sup>221</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 37-38.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>223</sup> "The mystery of the Incarnation thus explicitly demands Christ's human freedom." Galot, *Who is Christ?*, 388.

would mean that Christ was not entirely free in assuming human nature. It will negate Christ's free and total self-donation out of love and obedience to the Father. Consequently, Jesus' words "No one takes it [Jesus' life] away from me, but I lay it down on my own" (John 10:18) become insensible.

Christ's coming on earth on account of the world's majority, that is, with the poor, implies further that Christ is not really the universal mediator of mankind. The majority does not spell out the totality; there is still the minority. If that is the case, then the non-poor minority becomes negligible and will be unaccounted for. Consequently, Christ will fail to become the universal mediator of mankind. Furthermore, it fails to account for the Johannine declaration: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son" (John 3:16).

There must be something more in Christ's decision to choose poverty than just mere representation of humanity's majority. Rañada comments that Schwartz is aware of this and therefore proceeds to the next phase of the argument.<sup>224</sup> In Schwartz's second argument, he emphasizes that Christ "suffered and was tried" in order that he might "help those who are tried" (Heb 2:18). In other words, Schwartz establishes that Christ knows the meaning of human pain and suffering because he himself has experienced it. Because Christ knows the meaning of human suffering, he can effectively mediate man before God.

Christ knows the meaning of pain, poverty, and deprivation not theoretically or speculatively but by personal experience. He drank to the dregs the cup of human suffering of every man. No man, no matter how deep his pain or how crushing his humiliation, can look up at Christ and say, "You do not know what it is." He does know what it is because he has experienced it himself.<sup>225</sup>

Christ, by deliberately choosing to live a life of poverty, has become an effective mediator between God and man. He is the perfect representative of man before God because his being a poor man has enabled him to represent mankind majority of which is composed of poor people. Furthermore, his being a poor man

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<sup>224</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 207.

<sup>225</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 39.

has enabled him also to experience and know human suffering—the suffering of both the poor and those who are not. On this account, Christ deliberately chose to embrace poverty.<sup>226</sup> Poverty in this sense allows Christ to become the representative, or better still, the universal mediator of mankind.

The second argument has reference to the scriptural revelation that God is love (1 Jn 4:18). Schwartz uses the analogy of a mother in order to expound on this matter. He observes that while a devoted mother loves all her children with equal affection, she nevertheless, shows special tenderness to the weakest and neediest among all her children. Using the same imagery, Schwartz concurs that God also shows special tenderness to the poor of the world. He does not mean to say that God does not care for those who are rich. The rich, enjoying the power of wealth, tend to be more independent compared to the poor who are powerless and are therefore dependent on the mercy of God. Just as a weak child is entirely dependent upon his parents, so too are the poor, they too are dependent on God for their survival. This manifests the humility, simplicity, authenticity, and receptiveness of the poor to God's grace. Because of this, Schwartz concludes that God shows preference for the poor.<sup>227</sup>

As presented earlier, Schwartz makes an attempt to present his theological reflections in a manner that is understandable even to those who are not adept at theology. While it has its positive effect, it also has negative effect. Misunderstanding some doctrinal principles is possible especially for those who do not have any background in theology. Schwartz uses reasons in the natural order to present Christ's coming to earth which can inadvertently affect the mystery of the Incarnation. The natural reasons fail to capture the supernatural reasons—divine love and the divine initiative—which surround the Incarnation.<sup>228</sup>

Taking the arguments at face value, there is a subtle danger of confusing that Christ's incarnation is based only on natural instead of supernatural motivation of love as revealed in Jn 3:16. Chronologically, Christ's act of embracing human poverty cannot

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<sup>226</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 210.

<sup>227</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 42-43. See also Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 212-213.

<sup>228</sup> Galot, *Who is Christ?*, 394.

precede his incarnation. Christ's act of embracing poverty may come after his conception and birth as evidenced by his preference of becoming a member of a poor family. Or it may also be that Christ's act of embracing human poverty came simultaneously with the incarnation. But whatever the case may be, Christ's act of embracing poverty cannot precede his incarnation because prior to his incarnation, he was at the side of the Father. The arguments of the natural order stated earlier may potentially jeopardize the supernatural motive of Christ's incarnation.<sup>229</sup> Since the premises of the arguments seem to revolve around natural motivations, the supernatural motivation of the incarnation might be sidelined. Now Schwartz believes that Christ's incarnation and passion are interconnected. He says: "The mystery of the crib and the cross are in essence one and the same."<sup>230</sup> Following the schema above regarding the incarnation, the supernatural motive of love will also fade in Christ's passion and death. Careful reading should therefore be employed in order to safeguard the theological realities upheld by Schwartz and in order to avoid making a heretic out of Schwartz.

### **The Faces of Poverty**

Having established that Christ has willed and has lived a life of poverty during his lifetime, Schwartz continues with his teaching on poverty. His concept of poverty is based on his Christology because for him to imitate Christ means "to imitate the whole Christ" which consequently means "to be poor as Jesus was poor."<sup>231</sup> Schwartz's concept of poverty works on the idea that it is Christ who should be imitated because he is the model of poverty *par excellence*. Under this section, Schwartz's understanding of Christian poverty and service of the poor is discussed.

### **Poverty as Imitation of Christ**

Because Christ is the best model of poverty, Schwartz emphasizes upon the Sisters of Mary that their deliberate choice to live a poor life is an imitation of Christ. Schwartz writes for the

<sup>229</sup> See Sabino Vengo, Jr., *On the Eucharist* (Makati City, Philippines: St Pauls Philippines, 2015), 6.

<sup>230</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 41.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 56. See also Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 45.



Sisters of Mary: "By the vow of poverty I promise to be poor as Jesus was poor."<sup>232</sup> On another occasion, Schwartz notes: "The virtue of poverty springs primarily from a desire to imitate Christ and to model one's life after that of his Lord and Master."<sup>233</sup> In the mind of Schwartz, imitation of Christ means the imitation of his poverty. Schwartz believes that the life of poverty has been sanctified by God because Christ himself freely chose to live a life of poverty:

Because Christ, the Son of God, freely took upon himself a life of poverty, that state has been permanently sanctified and imbued with a sacramental element. Also, because of Christ's predilection for and his identification with the poor and the disinherited of the earth, these have been given a spiritual quality and anointed for all time with a unique sacred character.<sup>234</sup>

Poverty is an inner attitude of the followers of Christ. From this inner attitude, it comes out and manifests itself through external expressions.<sup>235</sup> If a follower of Christ were to follow Christ's poverty, then, it inevitably means following the example of the Eternal Poorman. Just as Christ freely embraced poverty, so, too, should the follower of Christ embrace poverty freely. The follower of Christ is to embrace poverty without compulsion just as Christ did. Since there is an element of voluntariness in Christ's embrace of poverty, there should also be an element of voluntariness in a person's embrace of poverty. Christ embraced poverty out of love and obedience to the Father. The follower of Christ should do the same; he should embrace poverty out of love and obedience to Christ who invites everyone to follow him saying: "Come, follow me" (Matt 4:19). Obedience to Christ is obedience to the Father. Christ meant this when he said, "He who rejects me, rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16). Jesus' obedience to the Father is not a limitation of his freedom. On the contrary, it is an exercise of his full freedom. Christ's obedience is a "free expression of his unconditional love for the Father."<sup>236</sup> Christ's unconditional love for the Father is the basis

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<sup>232</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 45.

<sup>233</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 55.

<sup>234</sup> Schwartz, introduction to *The Starved and the Silent*, 10.

<sup>235</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 48.

<sup>236</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 28.

and foundation of his unconditional love for mankind. Hence, poverty as an imitation of Christ means embracing poverty out of an unconditional love for God so that the person may be able to love his fellows unconditionally. In other words, he is to love his brothers and sisters because he loves God. Love for God ranks first and the love for one's brothers and sisters comes as the necessary consequence of the love for God. John Paul II declares that the "organic unity of the commandment of love" is the "inseparable link between love of God and love of neighbour."<sup>237</sup> After all, this is what Christ teaches: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it; You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments the whole law is based, and the prophets as well (Matt 22:37-40)."

Schwartz, for his part, practiced poverty "as Christ would live it in the twentieth century."<sup>238</sup> He says that imitating Christ means imitating "the whole Christ, who is not only a poor man but also the humble servant of Yahweh and the completely self-giving man-for-others as well."<sup>239</sup> With such words, Schwartz himself underlines Christ's availability for others. The Eternal Poorman is available for others. Christ's availability to others is rooted from his attitude of availability to the Father.<sup>240</sup> Just as Christ's love for the Father is the basis of his love for man, so Christ's attitude of self-giving to the Father is the very basis of his self-giving to man. Therefore, a concomitant consequence of a person's following of Christ's poverty is availability to others which is concretely shown by way of service. Rovira expounds:

The practical attitude of service and the external poverty will be nothing but consequences of this internal attitude of availability.... It is a matter of being poor in the sense of giving ourselves with no reservations... to make ourselves all things to all people.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> *Vita Consecrata*, §5.

<sup>238</sup> Socrates Villegas, interview by Samson Silloriquuez (February 12, 2004) in Silloriquuez, "Summarium Testium," in *Positio*, 219.

<sup>239</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 56.

<sup>240</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 54.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

In this sense, poverty which yields to availability to others is shown by service. Just as the poor Christ served others, so, too, should the followers of the poor Christ serve others. Schwartz affirms this saying, “one cannot imitate the poor Christ without, at the same time, being consumed with a desire to give himself to others....”<sup>242</sup>

An underlying element worthy of mention is detachment or freedom. If one is not attached to anything, then he can be available for others and can effectively serve others. “The essence of Christian poverty,” Schwartz writes, “consists mainly in a basic, far-reaching, all-embracing independence from material things.”<sup>243</sup> Schwartz underlines the relationship between poverty and freedom. He agrees that a person can be attached to something no matter how small the thing is. For him the essence of Christian poverty is freedom and detachment from material possessions in order for one to discover a deeper kind of freedom—spiritual freedom.<sup>244</sup> Just as Christ exercised his freedom in choosing to live a life of poverty, so, too, should a Christian exercise his freedom and choose a life of poverty. He is to exercise his freedom in favour of poverty not because he wants to be in a miserable condition but because of his love for God and in imitation of Christ, the Eternal Poorman.

For Schwartz, Christian poverty is rooted in the poverty of Christ. No matter how noble the intention is, embracing poverty comes “not from the desire to be identified with the poor of the world or to serve humanity but from a desire to be united with God and to serve him alone.”<sup>245</sup> Christ embraced poverty out of love and obedience to the Father. Hence, Christ is the Eternal Poorman. He is the model of a poor life. Being a model, man ought to imitate Christ. Imitating Christ consists in imitating the whole Christ who is poor. The imitation of the poor Christ leads to love and service to others especially to the poor with whom Christ identifies himself.

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<sup>242</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 57.

<sup>243</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 183-184.

<sup>244</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 68.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

### **Christ's Self-identification with the Poor and the Sacrament of the Poor**

Behind the external manifestations of Christ's poverty lies a basic and fundamental poverty and that is Christ's self-giving, his total self-donation out of obedience and love to the Father. Christ's unconditional love for the Father has stirred him to have an unconditional love for man. Ultimately, behind the external expressions of Christ's poverty is his love for the Father. Because of Christ's love for the Father, Christ embraced the poor humanity and the life of poverty. Christ's deliberate choice to embrace poverty on his incarnation is ratified during his three-year preaching ministry by his declaration of self-identification with the poor: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40). Christ teaches that he is present in the "least" of his brothers—a reference to the poor.

Schwartz highlights that Christ did an identification with the poor and not just mere association. Christ's identification with the poor was beyond superficiality. Schwartz teaches that Christ's presence abides in the Eucharist, the scriptures, the poor, and one's fellow human beings.<sup>246</sup>

Schwartz writes that Christ's self-identification with the poor is implied in Matthew's Gospel. Christ says, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40). This deliberate act on the part of Christ to become one with the poor has a consequence. Because of this, the poor are given a new dignity and a new name. Schwartz expounds further:

So, now in these last days before the second and final coming of Christ, the poor have been given a new dignity and a new name—and "his name shall be called Emmanuel which is to say God-with-us."<sup>247</sup>

Before pronouncing these words, the poor were simply poor—people down on their luck, people to be avoided, and even despised. After pronouncing these solemn and sacred words, a change and transformation took place. The poor were now imbued not only with a new dignity, value, and glory, but the poor—in a

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<sup>246</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 16.

<sup>247</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 157.

sense—became Christ Himself. They became living tabernacles in which dwells a divine presence. Christ not only gives the poor priority, He identifies with the poor and becomes one with them.<sup>248</sup>

Because of Christ's identification with the poor, it may well be concluded that in a sense, every poor person is another Christ or *alter Cristus*. Every poor person stands as another poor Christ in the world. Every poor person represents Christ in the world, i.e., every person makes Christ present in the world. Because of Christ's self-identification with the poor, the poor have become the visible presence of the invisible Christ, making them the sacrament of Christ. A sacrament is a sensible sign, instituted by Christ to give grace.<sup>249</sup> The word *sacramentum* "emphasizes the visible hidden reality of salvation."<sup>250</sup> It is important to note that "the 'sacrament' has value only because of the 'thing' [*res*], that is, that which it signifies, namely, Jesus Christ."<sup>251</sup>

Schwartz indeed is very convinced of Christ's presence in the poor. The injustice and violence done to the poor and the powerless are done to Christ.<sup>252</sup> However, he laments that not all Christians are as convinced as he is. It takes faith to see Christ in the Eucharist. It also takes the same faith to see Christ in the poor. He does not discount the Christians' faith in the divine presence in the Eucharist. But he observes that faith in the divine presence in the Eucharist comes much easier but faith in the divine presence in the poor comes much harder.<sup>253</sup>

As to the reason why such a reality exists, Schwartz points to the prevalence of selectivity among men in general and among Christians in particular. Such an attitude is primarily due to "an enormous psychological and emotional obstacle on top of the physical barrier" that man needs to overcome.<sup>254</sup> Man

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<sup>248</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 26.

<sup>249</sup> CFC, 1519.

<sup>250</sup> CCC, 774.

<sup>251</sup> Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 95, 251, quoted in Morrill, "Christ's Sacramental Presence in the Eucharist," 15.

<sup>252</sup> Morrill, "Christ's Sacramental Presence in the Eucharist," 15.

<sup>253</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 29-30.

<sup>254</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 32.

normally prefers those that are pleasing to him. The dichotomy between the clean Jesus of the Eucharist and the unhygienic Jesus in the poor is common among many people. Schwartz claims that faith in the divine presence in the Eucharist comes much easier than the divine presence in the poor because the former is neither offensive nor threatening to man. The Eucharist does not offend man while the poor does through the foul smell, and unlikely behavior. Moreover, the Eucharist seems to be subject to man's control while the poor are not. In the words of Schwartz: "They go against our will. They rob us of our possessions. They are ungrateful. They devour our time, and take away our leisure."<sup>255</sup>

Schwartz offers a solution to this problem of selectivity by recognizing the relationship between the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacrament of the poor. "In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ appears as Lord from whom we beg for food and drink.... In the sacrament of the poor... Christ now appears as one who makes the plea and entreaty, who begs for our mercy and love."<sup>256</sup> He reiterates the role that faith plays in every human being. He cites the examples of the Magi who believed in a seemingly ordinary infant in a manger and of the centurion during the crucifixion who professed his belief in the divinity of the crucified Christ despite all the wounds and bruises that Christ has endured in the cross. There is one thing common to them—humility as shown by their self-abasement. Both the Magi and the centurion seem to be on the upper hand and Christ seems lowly to them, yet they still believed. The Magi came from far-away land and bowed before a Jewish infant boy. The centurion, the law enforcer of the Roman government, knelt before the hanging body of Jesus who was convicted as a criminal. Owing to the fact that Schwartz lived and ministered to the poor, such statements are an implicit call to serve the poor, or more accurately, to serve Christ in the poor. The aforementioned statements have moral implications. Schwartz tries to convey the idea that man has a serious moral responsibility of serving the poor. As Christ deserves nothing but the best in terms of services, so the poor also deserve nothing but the best.

Christ's presence in the poor is one of the recurring themes

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<sup>255</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 31.

<sup>256</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 32.

in Schwartz's writings. This is not without purpose. He seems to imply that there is a need to emphasize this on all believers. If they are really intent on searching for God, then they should realize "that he is not to be found in the clouds of heaven, but rather in the hovels of the poor."<sup>257</sup>

Schwartz, firm in his conviction that Christ is present in the poor as Christ himself taught in the Matthean gospel, speaks of the "sacrament of the poor."<sup>258</sup> He does not intend to propose an addition to the seven ritual sacraments. He makes it clear that the "sacrament of the poor" should not be confused with the seven ritual sacraments of the Church and should be distinguished as such. That is the reason why in Schwartz's writings, he makes a distinction between the two by writing the sacrament of poverty with a small "s" and inside quotation marks while any reference to the supernatural sacraments is written with a capital "S."<sup>259</sup>

Schwartz points to the twenty-fifth chapter of the Matthean Gospel account as the "institution" of the "sacrament of the poor."<sup>260</sup> Before delving deeper into this, it is important to note that he draws a parallelism from the Last Supper narrative where the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist took place. Schwartz maintains that before Christ uttered the consecratory words, the bread and wine were different and apart from Christ. But after pronouncing the consecratory words, transubstantiation<sup>261</sup> happened and the bread and wine became a new reality; they became the body and blood of Christ.<sup>262</sup>

Schwartz maintains that Christ's words in Matthew, "Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40) are as solemn as the words of consecration in Luke: "Then he took the bread,

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<sup>257</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 84.

<sup>258</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 27.

<sup>259</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 29. The researcher also adopts the same manner of distinction between the two in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>260</sup> Specifically on Matt 25:31-46.

<sup>261</sup> It is "a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood." See CCC, 1376, 1413.

<sup>262</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 26.

said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which will be given for you’” (Lk 22:19). After Christ pronounced the latter, the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ. In the same manner, after Christ pronounced the former, a “transubstantiation” took place; Christ has become present in the poor:

Before pronouncing these words, the poor were simply poor—people down on their luck, people to be avoided, and even despised. After pronouncing these solemn and sacred words, a change and transformation took place. The poor were now imbued not only with a new dignity, value, and glory, but the poor—in a sense—became Christ Himself. They became living tabernacles in which dwells a divine presence. Christ not only gives the poor priority, He identifies with the poor and becomes one with them.<sup>263</sup>

A precaution has to be emphasized, though. Schwartz underlines that Christ’s presence in the poor is not to be understood in the same manner as Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.<sup>264</sup> In the Eucharist, the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ are present. In other words, it is a presence of Christ that is substantial, real, and whole.<sup>265</sup> Christ’s presence in the poor, on the other hand, is an outer-directed sign. It is “a divine cry for pity and help... a presence-for-others, a presence which cries out for response.”<sup>266</sup> Schwartz holds that the Sacrament of the Eucharist complements the “sacrament of the poor.” In his words:

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Son of God gives himself to us in the form of bread, and we approach the table of the communion as spiritual beggars with outstretched hand and hungry heart. In the “sacrament of poverty” the roles are mysteriously reversed. Christ is now the beggar, and he humbly approaches us and pleads for bread.<sup>267</sup>

The Eucharist is a manifestation of Christ’s gift of self to humanity which elicits a response. The response of man

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<sup>263</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 26.

<sup>264</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 158.

<sup>265</sup> CCC, 1374.

<sup>266</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 88.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.



is to become a “man for others.” Man’s love for Christ in the Eucharist is to be reflected in love for his fellow man by service and witnessing. In other words, there is a cycle of two loves; the love of Christ given to man and the response of man which is love for Christ shown by charity to others.<sup>268</sup> With this, Christ’s words make sense: “Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.... Whatever you did not do to these least brothers of mine, you did not do it for me” (Matt 25:40ff). Referring to a Pauline pericope, Sabino Vengco warns:

A person who participates in the Eucharist focused solely on oneself and with the back turned on the needs of others, does not celebrate the Lord’s Supper, but eats and drinks a judgment on himself or herself (cf. 1 Cor 11:26-33). Our *koinonia* or communion... is spelled out in our *diakonia* or service to one another and in our *martyria* or Christian witnessing.<sup>269</sup>

Schwartz shows that the poor play an important function in the world. Just as Christ is the sole mediator between man and God, (1 Tim 2:5) the poor, being identified with Christ, share in the mediatorship of Christ between man and God. “Through them,” Schwartz points out, “men are permitted to sacrifice themselves to God and God in turn gives himself to men.”<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, Schwartz insists that forgiveness of sins can be obtained by helping the poor. “Just as the Sacrament of Confession purifies the heart, cleanses the soul, and makes us attractive in the sight of God,” Schwartz continues, “so too does almsgiving, charity towards the poor, and service of the needy.”<sup>271</sup>

A sacrament is a sensible sign instituted by Christ to give grace. In the “sacrament of the poor,” the poor serve as the sensible sign. The institution of Christ is contained in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew’s gospel account. The sacrament of poverty gives grace, that is, it allows men to sacrifice themselves to God. It also obtains for man the forgiveness of sins.

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<sup>268</sup> Vengco, *On the Eucharist*, 28.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 86.

<sup>271</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 27.

### Preferential Option for the Poor

Christ's self-identification with the poor also manifests the divine predilection for the poor. Schwartz illustrates this using the Lucan beatitude "Blessed are you who are poor" (Luke 6:20) as his primary evidence, explicitly found in the words of Scriptures. Schwartz asserts that during Christ's lifetime, the latter not only chose to be poor, to live poor, and to die poor, but he also went to the poor. This deliberate choice on the part of Christ to go to the poor means that the poor have been chosen by God to enjoy his special favour.<sup>272</sup>

Schwartz observes that among the four social groupings among the Jews during Jesus' time, Christ preferred to identify himself with the common people who were poor.<sup>273</sup> Christ showed predilection for them although he did not ostracize the rich. His predilection for the poor was devoid of any exclusivism.<sup>274</sup> "Whoever comes to me," Christ says, "I shall not turn away" (Jn 6:37). Many bible narratives point to this. The fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John were the first ones he called as his followers (Mk 1:16-20). He raised to life the dead son of the poor widow of Naim (Lk 7:11-17). He lauded the temple offering of the poor widow instead of the offerings of the rich (Mk 12:41-44). Because of this, Schwartz is wont in calling the poor as the new chosen people and God's elite. In his words: "In these last days, then, before the second and final coming of Christ, it is no longer the Jews nor the poor Jews, but the poor, period, who have become the chosen people, the new Israel, and the elite of God."<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, Schwartz demonstrates that the poor are among God's priority over the rich. It is not because God disdains the rich but because they, Schwartz claims, "are better able to fend for themselves and in a sense do not have the right to make the same demands upon God as do the poor."<sup>276</sup> He argues by contrasting the numerous privileges that the rich can afford while the poor cannot:

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<sup>272</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 27.

<sup>273</sup> Schwartz lists four Jewish social groupings during Jesus' time: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the common people of the land. See Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 170-171.

<sup>274</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 32.

<sup>275</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 28.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

The money of the rich man provides him with many things including the necessary leisure to think about God and the eternal truths. It also permits him to travel to places of pilgrimage, to study at great universities, and to buy books to read about God if he is so inclined. Moreover, as honey attracts bees, so too, does the wealth and power of the rich man attract religious teachers, chaplains, priests, and sisters in abundance. They will care for his soul with great devotion in the name of building up an elite for the Church of God.<sup>277</sup>

With this reality in mind, Schwartz compares the poor to a small child who is dependent on his parents for nourishment. Schwartz says: "God does not hesitate to give them priority and privilege among the people of God."<sup>278</sup> Schwartz's love for the poor, borne out of love for God, served as the axis of his priestly ministry until his death. He not only helped them but he also listened to their cry by responding to their needs.<sup>279</sup> Although he is a diocesan priest and not a religious, he responded to the call of Paul VI addressed to the religious: "Dear religious... you must give your full attention to the needs of men, their problems and their searching; you must give witness in their midst, through prayer and action, to the Good News of love, justice and peace."<sup>280</sup>

Schwartz's preferential option for the poor is expressed using a mother for his analogy. He likens God to a devoted mother who loves all her children with equal affection. This devoted mother, in spite of her equal love for all her children, shows special tenderness, nevertheless, to the weakest and neediest among all her children. As a devoted mother shows special tenderness to the weakest and neediest of her children, so, too, does God show special tenderness to the poor. With this imagery, Schwartz

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Silloriquuez, "Informatio super Virtutibus et Fama Sanctitatis," in *Positio*, 59.

<sup>280</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council *Evangelica Testificatio*, §52, at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19710629\\_evangelica-testificatio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html).

concludes that God shows preference for the poor.<sup>281</sup>

Schwartz's preferential option for the poor has propelled him to care for the poor. This eventually gave birth to the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ whose members help him in his care for the poor. Daniel Lee, a Korean convert, testifies Schwartz's love and service to the poor:

For one example, in early 1970's, he could not be indifferent to the abuses of human rights of more than one thousand orphans who were under the gangster directors in Pusan. In the midst of danger, physical violence and indifference of the church, he saved these children and protected them. He sheltered them and provided them education at the Boystown in Pusan. They are now grownups and healthy members of the society.<sup>282</sup>

One of the many youngsters that Schwartz helped was Yong-Woon Park, also a Korean. He narrates how he was found by Schwartz along the streets of Korea, shivering from hunger and crying because of despair:

I remember it was around February of 1975. Around that time I had lost my family and was a child of the streets living in the cold, suffering from starvation as well as the cruelty of wicked adults. Father found me on the streets and held out his warm hand and held me and kissed me on my cheeks and said, "Why are you freezing yourself in the cold? Won't you become my son?"<sup>283</sup>

Schwartz's philanthropic work was given recognition with the Ramon Magsaysay Award. Filipino bishop Socrates Villegas testifies that Schwartz received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for the sake of the poor. In the final analysis, Schwartz's reception of the award was not focused on him; it was focused on the poor. He remarks: "He [Schwartz] said, "I am enjoying it not for myself but for the work that I do, because I know that in receiving this

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<sup>281</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 42-43. See also Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 212-213.

<sup>282</sup> Daniel Lee, interview by Sillorriquez (January 31, 2004) in Sillorriquez, "Summarium Testium," in *Positio*, 258.

<sup>283</sup> Yong-Woon Park, "Testimony of Yong-Woon Park" in Sillorriquez, "Summarium Testium," in *Positio*, 284.

award, the work that I do for the poor will be highlighted and I hope many more will be inspired to serve the poor people.”<sup>284</sup>

It is evident that Schwartz possessed preferential option for the poor. He loved the poor because he saw in them the poor Christ. Vatican II is clear about it and so is Schwartz. “Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path. Indeed, the Church recognizes in the poor and suffering the likeness of her poor and suffering Founder.”<sup>285</sup>

### **Material Poverty and Poverty in Spirit**

In the narrative on the Beatitudes, Matthew writes: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” while Luke writes: “Blessed are you who are poor” (Mat 5:3; Lk 6:20). Regardless of the evangelist, the beatitude on the poor appears as the first in the list of beatitudes. The first beatitude may be interpreted in two ways: the literal interpretation and the spiritual interpretation.<sup>286</sup>

The literal interpretation of the first beatitude leans more on the Lucan beatitude. It infers that blessedness is inherent to material poverty and economic destitution. “A literal interpretation of the beatitudes,” Lagarejos writes, “implies that those whose material condition is humble are the ones who would show the road that leads to the Kingdom of God.”<sup>287</sup> Therefore, in order to achieve blessedness, a Christian has to be materially poor and has to be dispossessed in his lifestyle. Gustavo Gutierrez is against this interpretation, warning that it will lead to the “canonization of a social class.”<sup>288</sup> The literal interpretation of the first beatitude will ostracize the non-poor. It will create an impression of exclusivism—that God is exclusively for the poor alone. If this is the case, then the Church would be reduced to a mere social institution. Clodovis Boff and George Pixley are against the literal interpretation of the first beatitude, clarifying

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<sup>284</sup> Villegas, interview by Silloriquéz (February 12, 2004) in Silloriquéz, “Summarius Testium,” in *Positio*, 219.

<sup>285</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, 8.

<sup>286</sup> Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 48-49.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>288</sup> Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 297-298.

that the beatitude does not point to a class option.<sup>289</sup> Albert Gelin is of the same opinion. He points out: “No sociological state is canonized by the Gospel.”<sup>290</sup>

The spiritual interpretation of the first beatitude, on the other hand, leans more on the Matthean beatitude. It infers a voluntary acceptance of poverty. “By adding this epithet *in spirit*, Matthew limits the beatitude to only those who have learned to be humble under the discipline of the cross.”<sup>291</sup> In other words, the poor are blessed because of the humility that comes with poverty. Blessedness is not attached on the condition of being poor *per se* but on the humility which follows poverty. Jacques Dupont does not buy the idea of the spiritual interpretation of the first beatitude. He believes that it should be interpreted the literal way. He points out that the other beatitudes like the weeping, the mourning, and being hungry have to be understood in the material sense and not in the spiritual sense. He adds that the first beatitude can be best understood in the context of the other beatitudes. And since the other beatitudes have to be interpreted literally, the first beatitude, too, should be interpreted literally.<sup>292</sup>

Benedict XVI prefers neither of the two interpretations. He chooses to hit the balance, after all, *virtus in medio stat*, that is, virtue lies in the middle.<sup>293</sup> For him, favouring one and excluding the other does not make up a holistic and correct interpretation of the beatitude on poverty. Benedict XVI believes rather that material poverty and poverty in spirit are interconnected:

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<sup>289</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 126-130.

<sup>290</sup> Albert Gelin, *The Poor of Yahweh*, trans. Kathryn Sullivan (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1974) 145.

<sup>291</sup> A. Pery, “Pauvre,” *Vocabulaire Biblique*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Neuchatel and Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1956), 222, quoted in Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 49.

<sup>292</sup> Jacques Dupont, “The Poor and Poverty in the Gospels and Acts,” in *Gospel Poverty*, 25-52, quoted in Lagarejos, *The Church of the Poor*, 49.

<sup>293</sup> Will King, *What is Virtue?* (Our Sunday Visitor, November 29, 2012): accessed 8 February 2017, <https://www.osv.com/RSS/365DaysToMercy/TabId/2752/ArtMID/21013/ArticleID/10360/What-is-Virtue.aspx>.

Purely material poverty does not bring salvation, though of course those who are disadvantaged in this world may count on God's goodness in a particular way. But the heart of those who have nothing can be hardened, poisoned, evil—interiorly full of greed for material things, forgetful of God, covetous of external possessions. On the other hand, the poverty spoken of here is not a purely spiritual attitude either. Admittedly, not everyone is called to the radicalism with which so many true Christians have lived and continue to live their poverty as a model for us.<sup>294</sup>

Schwartz provides his own interpretation of the first beatitude according to Matthew and Luke. For him, the Matthean poverty in spirit means inward detachment from all created things including one's own will which leads to complete dependence on God while the Lucan material poverty means living a life of everyday, down-to-earth, concrete, material poverty.<sup>295</sup> Like Benedict XVI, Schwartz espouses the idea of the interconnectedness of both spiritual and literal interpretations saying that the spiritual and the literal interpretations, or poverty in spirit and material poverty respectively, are opposite sides of the same coin. For instance, Schwartz says: "Poverty of spirit and material poverty; the two go together like body and soul."<sup>296</sup>

A gauge by which Schwartz judges the authenticity of a certain individual's claim to poverty is by looking at the person's poverty of spirit and material poverty. Schwartz strongly maintains that one cannot be divorced from the other. If one of the two is wanting, then it would be tantamount to hypocrisy. Schwartz works on the Thomistic principle *agere sequitur esse*<sup>297</sup> meaning,

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<sup>294</sup> Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Adrian Walker (New York, USA: Doubleday, 2007) 76-77.

<sup>295</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 65. See Benedict Viviano, "The Gospel according to Matthew," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown et al. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 42:24, p. 640.

<sup>296</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 198.

<sup>297</sup> That is, doing follows being. "It is an important metaphysical and moral principle in which one's moral duties, possibilities, etc. are grounded in one's being." James Bretzke, *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary: Latin Expressions Commonly Found in Theological Writings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013) 13.

one's claim to be poor in spirit is verified by the actual practice of material poverty. Schwartz uses this criterion in his critique of the religious and the clergy who claim to be poor but do not manifest material poverty externally. He cites an example concerning a group of religious sisters whose plush convent, designed by a Swiss architect, is located in Pusan which was then a slum area. He writes that the convent of the sisters who have professed the vow of poverty is ironically mistaken by some as a resort hotel.<sup>298</sup> Aware of this inconsistency between the evangelical vow of poverty which the religious profess and the actual practice of material poverty, he writes: "Oh Poverty of Spirit, what crimes are committed in thy name!"<sup>299</sup>

Schwartz finds in Christ the harmony of both material poverty and poverty in spirit. Schwartz asserts that Christ could not be accused of hypocrisy because his poverty in spirit is consistently manifested in his material poverty. Christ is poor both in fact and in spirit. Schwartz then suggests that the followers of Christ, the model of poverty *par excellence*, must do the same. Just as in Christ there is a harmony between poverty in spirit and material poverty, the same must be true for Christians. There must also be a harmony of poverty in spirit and material poverty among the followers of Christ.

A Christian must manifest poverty in spirit by being detached from all created things including his own will. However, this is not enough. This inward detachment must be verified by the actual practice of material poverty. A Christian's poverty must not only be interior but should also be exterior as well. Just as Christ's material poverty has been open and visible during his lifetime, so, too, should a Christian's poverty be open and visible like Christ. "It is not enough for a disciple of Christ merely to be poor," Schwartz says, "what is equally important he must appear poor as well."<sup>300</sup> Schwartz emphasizes that poverty in fact and poverty in spirit go together; one cannot be divorced from the other.

This is where Schwartz voices out his critique of the poverty practiced by some members of religious institutes and

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<sup>298</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 62.

<sup>299</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty, Sign of Our Times*, 65.

<sup>300</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty, Sign of Our Times*, 72.



members of the hierarchy. While it is true that he does not contest their poverty in spirit, he insists, nevertheless, that their practice of actual poverty does not witness and does not reflect the poverty of Christ:

Many clerics and religious today live lives of genuine austerity and simplicity. Unfortunately, however, they effectively conceal the fact behind a façade of wealth and power. They protest that they are poor as church mice, and very often they are. Still, they do not appear so to the man in the street; and, in this measure at least, their poverty no longer resembles that of Christ.<sup>301</sup>

In view of this, he gives fifty practical suggestions for the Church of the poor divided into five categories: for the laymen, for the priests in the U.S., for the priests in the missions, for the religious, and for the bishops.

Schwartz indeed explicitly states that material poverty and poverty in spirit are interconnected. However, there is a strong internal evidence that points to Schwartz's leaning on the literal interpretation of the first beatitude. And that is his understanding of the Lucan beatitude which is an explicitly literal interpretation. He attaches blessedness as inherent to material poverty:

St. Luke writes: "Blessed are you poor." Not poor in spirit, but poor, and he means just that. According to St. Luke, those who live lives of everyday, down-to-earth, material poverty have a right to consider themselves blessed and happy. Their happiness is based on hope—hope in a new heaven and a new earth in which the present order of things will pass away and be replaced by something as yet unheard of.<sup>302</sup>

Faith, not only in the Person of Christ, but in his words and teachings as well, should induce one slowly but surely to believe in the necessity of some form of material poverty, absolute or modified, in order to lead a full Christian life.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>302</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 65. Cf. Karris, "The Gospel according to Luke," 43:87, p. 694-695.

<sup>303</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 197.

Judging from the very construction of the statements themselves, one may deduce that the rich cannot be blessed simply because they are rich. One may stretch this presupposition and conclude that they cannot be happy because of their quality of life. In other words, one may rightly ask the question: is being rich a hindrance to the attainment of a holy and blessed life? The answer is negative. Holiness of life can be attained even by the rich. In fact, there are saints that come from noble families. One of them is King St. Louis IX of France who lived and died as a nobleman.<sup>304</sup> Another is St. Casimir who, like St. Louis IX of France, also lived and died as a nobleman.<sup>305</sup> Schwartz says of the rich: "He [Christ] loved them with the same infinite love as the poor, but at the same time, he condemned their attachment to material wealth."<sup>306</sup> But Schwartz does not elaborate more on this. He does not make any statements in support of this. Affirmations concerning the poor abound in Schwartz's writings. They can be found almost everywhere. But affirmations concerning the rich are scarcely found.

Generally speaking, leaning towards the literal interpretation of the first beatitude will imply that those who are materially poor are assured of blessedness as long as they remain in that same condition. While it is true that there are many canonized saints who excelled in living a life of poverty, generally, holiness of life cannot be attributed to material poverty. If such is the case, then all who live in squalor are potential candidates for beatification and canonization. If such were the case, then the work of the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ, namely, the evangelization of the youth and the aged who belong to the poorest of the poor, would be superfluous. The poor would not need evangelization in the first place. Blessedness of life cannot be attributed as inherent to material poverty. The poor are rather blessed because "their poverty has been historically the privileged place of the gracious intervention of God's saving

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<sup>304</sup> Antony Netikat, *Saints for Everyday: A Brief Biography of Saints for Every Day of the Year* (Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 2011), 309-310.

<sup>305</sup> "March 4: Casimir," in *The Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite*, trans. International Commission on English in the Liturgy (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1975), 1399.

<sup>306</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 32.

grace.”<sup>307</sup> The person’s awareness of his dependence on God and of the necessity of his redemption is what brings him closer to a life of blessedness.<sup>308</sup> Therefore, material poverty *per se* is not an assurance to a blessed life.

Furthermore, leaning towards the literal interpretation of the first beatitude also implies that material properties are obstacles to the attainment of a blessed life. Taking this second implication to the extreme means that nobody would qualify for a blessed life because even the poor have something which they can call their own no matter how small or invaluable it would be. If such is the case, then the members of the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ themselves would not attain a blessed life; the properties attached to the congregation, even if they are for the service of the poor, would hinder them from achieving a blessed life.

The Church has always upheld a person’s right to own private property. Pius XI has affirmed Leo XIII’s stance on every person’s right to own private property.<sup>309</sup> Vatican II also corroborated the ideas of his predecessors Leo XIII and Pius XI.<sup>310</sup> Furthermore, two commandments of the Decalogue demand that every person should respect another person’s goods by prohibiting stealing and desiring his neighbour’s goods. The prohibitions stated by the two commandments imply that God himself recognizes man’s right to his own property. Private properties have social functions and those who possess them have social obligations. They should, aside from serving their legitimate owners, be of help to another. Vatican II teaches that in case of extreme necessity, the poor can take from the goods of a wealthy man and the action of the poor man is justifiable. What he took from the rich man is considered as something that is rightfully his.<sup>311</sup> Material properties are neither morally good nor evil in themselves. The manner and intention with which the person uses

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<sup>307</sup> CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 123.

<sup>308</sup> Karl Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in Light of Vatican II* vol. II of Special Moral Theology, newly rev. ed. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 713.

<sup>309</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical Letter on Social Reconstruction *Quadragesimo anno*, (15 May 1931), §44 (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of St. Paul, 1993) 16.

<sup>310</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, 71.

<sup>311</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, 69.

them determines their goodness or evilness. Material properties gain more value if used in the service of the kingdom of God and of one's fellowmen.<sup>312</sup> One's goods should help those who are in need. In other words, private properties have the capacity to be of help to another if the possessor uses them for charity. By doing so, the possessor gains virtue. In this sense, material properties cannot be obstacles to the attainment of a blessed life. On the contrary, they even help a person grow in virtue.

Yet Schwartz does not mean to ostracize the rich nor condemn them simply because of their economic status. Doing so will be absurd and hypocritical because Schwartz himself has had a number of rich benefactors sponsoring his charity works. He therefore makes a clarification by saying that Christ indeed loves them but that Christ condemns their attachment to material wealth. In this sense, Schwartz seems to convey the idea that the rich can consider themselves blessed as long as their attitude towards their material possessions is one that manifests detachment. If such is the case, then Schwartz's interpretation of the Lucan beatitude needs further clarification.

Schwartz teaches that both the Lucan and the Matthean beatitudes on poverty are on opposite sides of the same coin. If one of the two is wanting, then it would be tantamount to hypocrisy. His arguments for the interconnectedness of both material poverty and poverty in spirit are strong. However, his insistence on the practice of material poverty is not negligible either. This seeming internal conflict in the writings of Schwartz will only find clarification if Schwartz's addressee is identified.

Schwartz's discussion on material poverty and poverty in spirit is found in his first book *The Starved and the Silent*. His second book *Poverty: Sign of Our Times* contains a more in-depth discussion of the same. He does not explicitly point out to whom the books are intended. In his books, the addressee is provided for by the generic terms "the reader" and "the disciple of Christ." It has been pointed out in an earlier chapter that he tries to avoid giving deep theological reflections. He must have envisaged that "the reader" includes those who have either little or no background in theology. However, a closer look of his two books indicates the high probability that "the disciple of Christ" refers to those who

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<sup>312</sup> Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 714.

are closely identified with Christ—the members of the hierarchy and the members of religious congregations. In other words, it is highly probable that the two books are addressed more to the clergy and to the religious than to the laity. The books' sporadic critiques against the clerics' and the religious' witness to poverty add more weight to the theory. Moreover, Schwartz dedicates a chapter in his second book, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, for his "Suggestions for the Church of the Poor." In that chapter, he enumerates "practical suggestions on how the ideals of Christian poverty and service of the poor may be translated into action."<sup>313</sup> It has five parts of ten suggestions each: for the layman, for the priests in the United States, for the priests in foreign service on the missions, for the religious, and for the bishops. One can readily see that only one-fifth of the chapter is for the laity while the bulk, namely the four-fifths of the chapter, is for the clergy and the religious.

From this vantage point, one can say that Schwartz's demands of living a life of poverty is intended for all Christians but especially for the clergy and the religious. His strong insistence on material poverty is directed to all the baptized but especially for the clergy and the religious. His is a critique of their practice of poverty. He makes this bold stance because they are in the forefront of the Church, having been configured to Christ by virtue of their consecration.<sup>314</sup> Schwartz criticizes them because for him, many of the clergy and the religious do not practice real poverty. Almost all religious congregations and orders were born poor and for the poor. But these gradually evolved and have climbed up the economic ladder, placing themselves among the rich.<sup>315</sup> In other words, Schwartz calls for every Christian especially the clergy and the religious to practice evangelical poverty—the poverty that Christ and his followers lived.

Real poverty, for Schwartz, is one that is like Christ: "real, everyday, poor man poverty."<sup>316</sup> In other words, it is uncomfortable.

<sup>313</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 141.

<sup>314</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day *Pastores dabo vobis*, (15 March 1992), §27 (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2004), 71-72.

<sup>315</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 3.

<sup>316</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 58.

By the same token, the followers of Christ especially the clerics and the religious should also experience discomfort if they want to practice real Christian poverty. "Real poverty hurts. It causes pain and requires sacrifice," Schwartz warns.<sup>317</sup> He elaborates further: "At times it is noisy, robs one of privacy, and smells. At other times, it humiliates, irritates, and makes one insecure."<sup>318</sup> Schwartz suggests that the poverty of Jesus Christ is authentic and real, not apparent. He says: "...not episcopal poverty, clerical poverty, or religious poverty, which is often antiseptic, germ-free, and really not too [un]comfortable: but poor-man poverty, such as Christ lived and which will be accepted as such by the man in the street without explanation or apology."<sup>319</sup>

Christ's poverty is not just mere wishful thinking but is real, open, and visible. He manifested not only the Matthean poverty in spirit but also the Lucan material poverty. Christ exteriorized his poverty by appearing really poor.

Schwartz is aware that there are persons whose health may be compromised if pushed to the limits. But still, he does not exempt them from practicing Christian poverty. He says that these people can still practice Christian poverty by manifesting what he calls the "will-to-be-poor." It implies a "constant dissatisfaction with the status quo and a concomitant movement towards a life of greater simplicity and renunciation."<sup>320</sup> It is also marked by sacrifice, struggle, and self-inflicted discomfort.

For Schwartz, pain and discomfort similar to the experience of any poor person are integral to the practice of Christian poverty. In Schwartz's language, it is the cross. The followers of Christ must necessarily experience the same. The followers of Christ must love the cross and take up the same cross daily (Matt 16:24).

### **Evangelical Poverty**

Poverty is a human reality and right at the onset, distinction has to be made between human negative poverty and human positive poverty. Human negative poverty refers

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<sup>317</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 51.

<sup>318</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 58.

<sup>319</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 65.

<sup>320</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 60.

generally to economic poverty. Included also in this aspect are those situations where poverty causes the suffering for the one who is poor. Aside from economic poverty, José Arumí Rovira lists a variety of sufferings as among the human negative poverty, some of which are those who are addicted to drugs, unemployed, and those who are persecuted. The person who suffers this kind of poverty does not like this but has to endure it. If he finds a way out, he would have chosen to leave such kind of poverty. In a sense, it is an imposed kind of poverty. This kind of poverty is not a value in itself. On the other hand, poverty is said to be positive when it is the manifestation of man's love for his neighbor. A man is said to be poor in a positive way when he knows that he has something to share with others. He is said to be poor in a positive way when he is not attached to anything. He is poor in a positive way when he understands that it is more important to be than to have. The person might be materially poor but there is no compulsion in this kind of poverty. Despite the material poverty, the person has a positive outlook in life and is able to share his time, talent, and even the little treasure that he has with others. This kind of poverty is, at a human level, a human virtue. Rovira explains that this kind of poverty crosses the threshold of evangelical poverty.<sup>321</sup>

Evangelical poverty, strictly speaking, is a vow which members of institutes of consecrated life profess, signifying their consecration to God and their incorporation into the religious institute.<sup>322</sup> Professing the evangelical counsel of poverty together with chastity and obedience is an act of special consecration to God which is deeply rooted in the baptismal consecration.<sup>323</sup> The Church teaches that the very foundation of the religious' consecration is their baptismal consecration. Since baptismal consecration is common to all baptized Christians, all Christians therefore have the capacity and the prerogative to be

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<sup>321</sup> Rovira, "Evangelical Poverty," 19-24.

<sup>322</sup> CIC, c. 654.

<sup>323</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on the Sensitive Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae Caritatis*, (28 October 1965) par. 5, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, ed. Norman Tanner (Michigan: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1990), 941. See also Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, §44.

simple, chaste, and obedient. By virtue of the vow of poverty, the religious voluntarily renounces his private property “so as to follow Christ more closely, serve others more freely, and witness more clearly to the absolute value of God’s final kingdom.”<sup>324</sup> The Church might have elevated the profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the dignity of a canonical state, giving it legal sanction and recognizing it as a state of consecration to God, but all Christians are also called to practice simplicity, chastity, and obedience. The evangelical counsels are a radical way of following the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ. It means that the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are extreme forms of following of Christ. By publicly professing the vows, the religious expresses his desire to follow Christ more closely. Although not canonically obligatory as compared to the religious, all Christians by implication can practice evangelical poverty, that is, to live a simple and detached lifestyle in order to be available for others. The same is true with the vows of chastity and obedience. The religious profess the vows of chastity and obedience but assuredly, all Christians are also called to live a chaste and obedient life. John Paul II teaches that “for all Christians without exception, the radicalism of the Gospel represents a fundamental, undeniable, demand flowing from the call of Christ to follow and imitate him by virtue of the intimate communion of life with him brought about by the Spirit.”<sup>325</sup> The mere fact that there are some Christians, i.e. the religious, who profess the evangelical counsels, does not exempt all the rest of the faithful from practicing the very same Christian ideals which the religious profess. Every baptized Christian is called to follow Christ. Christ’s invitation to be perfect “just as the heavenly Father is perfect” is addressed to all Christians and not just to a chosen few. Hence, evangelical poverty is an “ideal of all Christians.”<sup>326</sup> As for the priests, the Church says that they “are invited to embrace voluntary poverty by which they are more manifestly conformed to Christ and become eager in the sacred

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<sup>324</sup> Gerald O’Collins and Edward Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 188.

<sup>325</sup> *Pastores dabo vobis*, §27.

<sup>326</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 147.



ministry.”<sup>327</sup> It is therefore possible for all Christians, even those who do not belong to institutes of consecrated life, to practice evangelical poverty. Schwartz, for his part, practiced evangelical poverty even though, as a diocesan priest, he did not profess the vow of poverty.<sup>328</sup>

Evangelical poverty, the kind of poverty that Christ and his followers propounded, is spiritual and material at the same time.<sup>329</sup> Neither spiritual nor material poverty is equivalent to evangelical poverty. Both are integral parts of evangelical poverty. Spiritual poverty, which pertains to an interior attitude, is concretized by material poverty.

The Church calls for all the priests and the religious to live a simple lifestyle. The Church makes a demand for clerics “to foster simplicity of life” and “to refrain from all things that have a semblance of vanity.”<sup>330</sup> They are also given the mandate “to refrain completely from all those things which are unbecoming to their state.”<sup>331</sup> The religious, on the other hand, are bound to the practice of poverty by virtue of their vow of poverty. While all Christians are encouraged to live a simple lifestyle, it is to the clergy and to the religious that the demand of living a life of simplicity and poverty is addressed by the Church.

It is in this regard that Schwartz asserts the harmony and interconnectedness of both material poverty and poverty in spirit. It is in this regard that Schwartz’s strong insistence on the practice of material poverty finds greater clarity. Schwartz calls all Christians especially the clergy and the religious to practice evangelical poverty. Since material poverty and poverty in spirit are integral parts of evangelical poverty, Schwartz, therefore, calls for a practice of material poverty and poverty in spirit. He seems to be giving more emphasis on the former than on the latter. This

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<sup>327</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum ordinis*, (7 December 1965) par. 17, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, ed. Norman Tanner (Michigan: Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1990), 1064-1065.

<sup>328</sup> Silloriquéz, “*Informatio super Virtutibus et Fama Sanctitatis*,” in *Positio*, 62.

<sup>329</sup> Boff and Pixley, *The Bible, the Church, and the Poor*, 147.

<sup>330</sup> CIC, c. 282 §1.

<sup>331</sup> CIC, 285 §1.

is because for him, spiritual poverty is widely and easily accepted by everyone, but not material poverty:

There is no problem with spiritual poverty. Everyone is agreed—and always has been, I guess—that this is a good thing. But as soon as you begin writing about material poverty, it is a different story. People will feel directly and personally threatened by your words. Subsequently, a type of defense mechanism will be called into play which is capable of dispensing a million and one rationalizations to justify any position one wishes to take on the subject.<sup>332</sup>

It is perplexing how people will read, retain, and repeat what St. Matthew has to say about poverty and yet never give St. Luke so much as a glance. The two writers, however, complement each other and, when taken together, present the revelation of Christ on the subject in its full scope.<sup>333</sup>

A peculiar feature of Schwartz's concept of poverty is his elevation of material poverty as a virtue.<sup>334</sup> Understood as it is, making material poverty a virtue yields to the implications discussed earlier. The implications are: (a) those who are materially poor are assured of blessedness as long as they remain in the same condition, and, (b) material properties are obstacles to the attainment of a blessed life.

The Church does not hold material poverty *per se* as a virtue. The Church does not tell all Christians to practice material poverty. Material poverty seen against the luxury of the rich is a scandal and is contrary to the plan of God.<sup>335</sup> The Church does not denounce the rich for being rich. If the Church denounces the rich, the denunciation is mainly due to the irresponsible use of wealth, not of their being rich. While material poverty is an integral part of evangelical poverty, the latter does not mean living in misery which is not a human value. Evangelical poverty

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<sup>332</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 1.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>334</sup> “In this sense, it can be said that poverty—the twofold virtue of material poverty and service of the poor—is a sign of the times today and in a special way the will of God for our generation.” Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 7.

<sup>335</sup> CELAM, *Puebla Final Document*, 28.

consists of human positive poverty and not the negative one. It entails a positive outlook despite being poor materially.

Witnessing to Christ through poverty is what Schwartz advocates. Witnessing entails change and transformation towards poverty. He turns to the Church and questions its fidelity to Christ and its origins on the basis of poverty. He criticizes the clerics and the religious in South Korea who do not practice poverty. As much as Christ practiced poverty during his time, his followers should also do the same. John XXIII wanted the Church to be the Church of the poor. The Pontiff wanted the Church to be very welcoming to the poor. The Pontiff wanted the Church to be poor and for the poor. But Schwartz does not seem to see this among many of the clerics and religious. For Schwartz, to follow Christ is to follow the poor Christ. Schwartz believes that inasmuch as the head of the Church is Poor, so too should the body of Christ be poor. His call for witnessing, change, and transformation means a call for the Church to become a Church of the Poor. In this regard, Schwartz's concept of poverty has bearing in his ecclesiology.

### **Church of the Poor: Aloysius Schwartz's Ecclesiology**

Schwartz's discussion on ecclesiology has the Church of the poor as its central theme. He suggests that the Church that Christ established on earth must reflect no other than Christ himself and must therefore be marked by poverty, humility, and service.<sup>336</sup>

Aloysius Schwartz's ecclesiology may be summarized as follows: if the Church were to be faithful to Christ, then the Church must follow the example of Jesus Christ. The Church is the sacrament of Christ. It is the visible continuation of Christ in the world and of the Church of the apostolic times.<sup>337</sup> As a continuation of Christ, Schwartz argues that it should also manifest faithfulness to Christ, the Eternal Poorman. "To be faithful to her mission," Schwartz says, "the Church must mirror her Founder in all things."<sup>338</sup> Just as Christ is poor, so the Church should also be poor.

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<sup>336</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 46. See Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 195.

<sup>337</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books, 1974) 72-73.

<sup>338</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 45.

Schwartz picks up the idea of John XXIII about the Church of the Poor.<sup>339</sup> However, he perceives that the terminology seems to connote quantity as the main criterion for becoming a Church of the Poor. For Schwartz, quantity does not matter in the Church of the Poor. It is rather the quality that marks it. He has no qualms with the expression “Church of the Poor.” In fact, the expression abounds in his writings. But he clarifies it nevertheless by using the expression “Church of poverty” in order to emphasize that quality—that is, Christ’s poverty—is the main standard that makes up the Church of the Poor and not quantity.<sup>340</sup>

Schwartz maintains that the Church must not only be poor. It should also go to the poor in imitation of Christ who identified himself with the poor of Palestine. In other words, the Church must manifest a preferential option for the poor and should serve the poor.<sup>341</sup> For instance, he says: “As Christ, her Master, the Church must go first and foremost not to the politicians, the intellectuals, the people of means and power—the elite—but to the most poverty-stricken, the most helpless, the most needy. To such as these she must distribute the riches of Christ’s truth and love.”<sup>342</sup>

Although it is primarily for the poor, the Church nevertheless is open to everyone including those who are well off. Schwartz does not ostracize the rich for he knows that their material riches can be of help in alleviating the sufferings of the poor. For this reason, Schwartz says that “Christ’s community... is a Church of the poor open to everyone—including the rich and the middle class.” They can indeed be part of the Church of the poor, but Schwartz clarifies that it would not be on their terms. The focus of the Church of the poor are Christ and the poor, hence the rich can become part of this Church but on Christ’s and the poor’s terms.<sup>343</sup>

In the judging part, of the see-judge-act schema of Schwartz, he inquires whether the Church has been faithful to Christ in relation to its Founder’s poverty. The early Christian

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<sup>339</sup> John XXIII, Radio message before the opening of Vatican II.

<sup>340</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 197.

<sup>341</sup> See CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 129.

<sup>342</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 65.

<sup>343</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 27.

community was poor and therefore faithful to Christ's poverty. However, Schwartz reflects that at present, this does not seem to be so. The early Church was a Church of the poor; but in the modern times, it has ceased to be so. The Church has grown rich and has become identified with the rich. This richness of the Church is what is keeping the poor at bay:

The Church of the New Testament is clearly seen, then, as the Church-of-the-poor-open-to-everyone—including-the-rich-and-the-middle-class. It has taken the Church just twenty centuries to come full circle so that today we have a Church of the middle class and the wealthy which is—more or less—accessible to the poor.<sup>344</sup>

It is nice to dream of a Church according to the Gospels—a Church of poverty, humility, and service. It is even more consoling to dream that the masses of the poor, with joyful and illumined expressions, will march in procession to enter such a Church. Unfortunately, the second part of the dream is pure illusion.<sup>345</sup>

Schwartz takes these reflections mainly from his experience in South Korea. Poverty indeed has gripped the country's south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in the 1950's. Yet, Schwartz ironically says that poverty is the necessary thing that the Church in Korea should strive for. Schwartz does not consider the Church in South Korea as a Church of the poor. Writing in 1964, Schwartz says:

The members of the Church in Korea are drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of the poverty-stricken and destitute. This fact is undeniable. Yet, in all honesty, the Church in Korea cannot be called "the Church of the poor." It takes more—much more—than just a hungry flock to merit that title of glory.<sup>346</sup>

He declares that for that particular Church which is teeming with poor masses, the one essential thing is poverty. But he does not refer to the poverty of the members but to the poverty as lived and preached by Christ.<sup>347</sup> For him, this kind of poverty

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<sup>344</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 33.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>346</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 61.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

is not readily visible in poverty-stricken South Korean Church of the 1950's. Paradoxically, Schwartz sees the Church in South Korea as one of the most powerful and most affluent institutions in the land. The Church in the country does not seem to reflect the poverty prevalent in the peninsula. The Church has been identified with the rich. It "projects a general image of wealth, power, and prestige—as opposed to poverty, humility, and service."<sup>348</sup> For instance, he narrates that a huge and high-class parish church was established in the midst of one of the worst slum areas of the country—Pusan. He describes it as a structure which towers over the shack settlements of the locals and that it would have been proper if it were located in Western urban places. He also recalls with irk that a group of religious sisters whose plush convent, designed by a Swiss architect, is located in the same slum area. Furthermore, he writes that the convent of the sisters who have professed the vow of poverty is ironically mistaken by some as a resort hotel. Schwartz also shares that a local cleric approached him to solicit an amount for the purpose of building a new church with the purpose of attracting the rich to come to the church:

A Korean priest came to see me recently to solicit help for his new church. "Is your present building too small?" I naively asked. "No, but it's too poor and too simple," he replied. "My idea is to tear it down and build something big, attractive, [and] impressive. Then many *nophum sarami* ("high-class people") will come into the Church. If our buildings are too poor and simple, we can never hope to attract the wealthy and the intellectuals."<sup>349</sup>

Schwartz uses these examples and many others as proofs that the Church in post-war South Korea was far from becoming a Church of the poor. He writes his observation:

Viewed from without, the Church, in its leaders, its rectories, its churches, its convents, and its general *modus operandi*, does not reflect the poverty and humility of Christ. On the contrary, there is a bit of triumphalism in her make-up, and her face seems set more in the direction of Tabor than of Bethlehem and Calvary.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>349</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 63.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 62.

Having met some Buddhist monks in the same country, Schwartz writes in a farce: "As regards poverty, at least, it would seem the disciples of Christ in Korea have something to learn from the disciples of Buddha."<sup>351</sup> Because of this, Schwartz calls for renewal. And for him, renewal means rediscovering the poverty of the Church's Founder, Jesus Christ, who preached and lived a life of simplicity, humility, and service. Poverty, therefore, plays an important role in the process of renewal. Conversion also captures Schwartz's call. The Church, according to Schwartz, needs to be converted back to Christ.<sup>352</sup>

Vatican II announced a new Pentecost for the Church and called for renewal, reform, and change. The renewal which is to take place in the Church must center on poverty and service of the poor otherwise it will be irrelevant and unauthentic. Unless the people of God quickly become aware of this, the "New Pentecost" will simply remain a catch phrase, and words like "aggiornamento" will remain empty slogans.<sup>353</sup>

Schwartz implicitly conveys the idea that the Church lacks prophetic witnessing because it does not reflect the poverty of Christ. Prophetic witnessing means "proposing a different way of living, relating with others, and doing things. It is a way that points to the primacy of the love of God and of the poor whom Jesus consistently takes side with."<sup>354</sup> This Schwartz fails to see in the local Church of South Korea. As he points out, the Church is identified with the rich. Schwartz underlines the necessity of prophetic witnessing. But for witnessing to be prophetic, it has to go through a process of renunciation in order to achieve transformation.<sup>355</sup> He hints this saying that by repelling the devil's temptation to material riches, "Christ teaches that his kingdom is not a kingdom of money and prosperity, but of poverty and renunciation."<sup>356</sup> Liliane Sweko, a religious, expresses the same thought:

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>352</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 201.

<sup>353</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 4.

<sup>354</sup> Samuel Canilang, "Wake up the World!" *Religious Life as Prophetic Presence in the Church and in the World* (Quezon City, Philippines: Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia, 2015) 56.

<sup>355</sup> Canilang, "Wake up the World!" 56.

<sup>356</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 174.

As prophets, we... must learn today to renounce our own securities, our own compromises with the powerful and rich, if we are to be credible.... The temptation is then great to live a wealthy lifestyle or be party to the oppression and exploitation of people via the businesses we support. Prophetic by our vows, we must renounce in all its forms, an ownership which disfigures the image of God in human beings.<sup>357</sup>

Schwartz calls for prophetic witnessing of the poverty of Christ in the Church saying: “Vatican II announced a new Pentecost for the Church and called for renewal, reform, and change. The renewal which is to take place in the Church must center on poverty and service of the poor otherwise it will be irrelevant and unauthentic.”<sup>358</sup>

In order for prophetic witnessing to be visible in the Church, Schwartz suggests that the Church personnel—those who are easily identified with the Church and with Christ—should live lives of poverty themselves, that is, the kind of poverty that Christ has lived himself. For Schwartz, living a life of evangelical poverty is the most effective way to become a witness of Christ before the people of God:

The leaders of the Church in Korea must identify themselves with the poor of the land just as Christ unequivocally identified himself with the poor of Palestine. The bishops, priests, and sisters must live lives of poverty—not episcopal poverty, clerical poverty, or religious poverty, which is often antiseptic, germ-free, and really not too comfortable: but poor-man poverty, such as Christ lived and which will be accepted as such by the man in the street without explanation or apology.<sup>359</sup>

Schwartz adds that not only the Church personnel should exemplify poverty but also the structures of the religious and the clergy. Church holdings and buildings should also convey

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<sup>357</sup> Liliane Sweko, “Called to Illuminate with Prophetic Light the World of Darkness” in *Vidimus Dominum – The Portal for Religious Life* (Rome, May 8, 2010), at [www.vidimusdominum.org](http://www.vidimusdominum.org), quoted in Canilang, “Wake up the World!” 57.

<sup>358</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 4.

<sup>359</sup> Schwartz, *The Starved and the Silent*, 65.



the impression of being houses of the poor by being simple and austere. In other words, the poor should be able to identify themselves with the church structures instead of being alienated by them. This is in harmony with the Church's reminder to the clergy:

Priests, moreover, are invited to embrace voluntary poverty.... Led by the Spirit of the Lord, who anointed the Savior and sent him to preach good news to the poor, priests as well as bishops, should avoid anything that could put off poor people, and more than other disciples of Christ should banish every appearance of ostentation from their affairs. They must appoint their dwellings in such a way that they never appear closed to anyone, and that no one however lowly is hesitant to enter them.<sup>360</sup>

Taken on a much larger background, Schwartz's rhetoric against the South Korean Church becomes a synecdoche; he also means to touch the conscience of the whole Church in general. By criticizing the Church in South Korea, he also expresses his lament over the reality that many of the Church personnel prefer to be in a comfortable place than in the real mission place which is marked by hardship and poverty. By criticizing the clerics and the religious in South Korea who exuded an aura of being wealthy and powerful in the war-torn country, he also criticizes the clerics and the religious throughout the world who prefer to share in the table of the rich than to be in solidarity with the poor and share with the scraps that fall from the rich men's tables. Such an attitude, according to Schwartz, is fatal for the Church. He opines that the best way for the Church to keep its vitality is to remain faithful to Christ—by being poor:

In his life, Fr. Al did not waver in pointing out and reminding the Church that it has not always been faithful to its Lord. He has correctly observed that through the ages, the Church has often grown slack and has moved away from its original identity as Church of the Poor Christ. That is why, he says, the Church has lost much of its élan. The remedy for this is for the Church to go back to its origins, to retrace its steps.... In short, it must learn and try to become poor again.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, §17.

<sup>361</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 338.

Schwartz attacks the materialism and triumphalism that the Church, in post-war South Korea, enjoys. For him, the Church should be poor since the people it serves are poor and the very first Church was poor. Materialism is an unlikely characteristic for a poor Church founded by the poor Christ. A Church that claims to be poor but which is full of material riches is a contradiction. He wants the Church to act in favor of retracing its way back to the practice of poverty. Again, in view of this, he gives a lengthy practical suggestions for the Church of the poor.

### **Christ-like Service of the Poor**

Christ did not only live a life of poverty; he also served the poor. Just as Christ did, so must those who wish to follow Christ render service to the poor. The kind of service that Schwartz has in mind is no ordinary service. He means serving the poor as Christ would “which is to say, with the mind, heart, and spirit of Christ.”<sup>362</sup>

Although the preposition “to” grammatically sounds more proper than the preposition “of” in “Christ-like service of the poor,” and there are certain instances where Schwartz uses “Christ-like service to the poor”; however, this usage is very infrequent. The predominance of the usage of the possessive preposition “of” is more manifest in his writings than the preposition “to” which gives the impression that the poor are objects of service. By using the preposition “of,” Schwartz conveys the idea that the poor are not simply objects of man’s services but are *alter Christus*. Christ-like service rightfully belongs to them.

Schwartz draws his reflection on Christ-like service of the poor from the parable of the Good Samaritan. From the parable, Schwartz proposes that the primary characteristics of Christ-like service of the poor are self-sacrifice, humility, and spirituality. Schwartz proposes the Good Samaritan as a model of Christ-like service of the poor.

### ***Self-sacrifice***

Schwartz holds that Christ-like service of the poor is marked by self-sacrifice. Why does he say so? It is because Christ

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<sup>362</sup> See Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 73.

himself served in this manner. In order to drive home the point, Schwartz draws inspiration for this teaching from the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan, Schwartz opines, deliberately endured emotional and psychological suffering in his act of helping the wounded Jew. Schwartz expounds:

The Samaritan sees a stranger lying by the side of the road who is naked, bleeding, unconscious, and half dead. The stranger is also a Jew—a sworn enemy of the Samaritans.... But the Samaritan goes against his natural inclination.... He sacrifices emotionally and psychologically, and although he feels no attraction, he goes to this stranger—this Jew and enemy—and he serves him and helps him as if it were his own flesh and blood.<sup>363</sup>

On top of the emotional and psychological suffering that the Samaritan endured, he also sacrificed his time and treasure in favour of the Jew. He mounted the wounded Jew on his own beast, paid the financial charges incurred by the Jew, and promised the innkeeper to pay for the extra charges on his way back. Christ's injunction to "do likewise" is, for Schwartz, an invitation for all Christ's followers to do the same in their service to the poor.<sup>364</sup>

Another parable which Schwartz utilizes is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. He uses the parable of the rich man, whom he refers to as Dives, and Lazarus but with a twist. Before Christ's coming to earth, he is compared to Dives while mankind is compared to Lazarus. When Christ saw the suffering mankind, he deliberately left his Father's house and went to the aid of mankind. Christ helped by restoring mankind, the Lazarus, to health and by taking the suffering upon himself. Christ, in a sense, sacrificed the riches of heaven in order to help mankind.<sup>365</sup> That is how Christ helped and served mankind. Man must therefore follow the kind of service that Christ exemplified. He gives the following reminder:

He [Christ] did not serve the poor in a gentlemanly passion, in a very pleasant, comfortable manner without

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<sup>363</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 74.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Aloysius Schwartz, "Sacrificial Service" (6 February 1986) in *Christlike Service of the Poor: Sermons* vol. 2, p. 7-8. Henceforth, *Sermons*.

inflicting pain on his own body, without bruising his own flesh, without shedding his own blood. Christ's service of the poor is based on sacrifice.... If we wish to be servants of the poor... we must realize that we cannot be the gentlemen servants of the poor. We also have to be suffering servants of the poor.<sup>366</sup>

Schwartz believes that service and sacrifice are "intimately related in the mind, teaching and life of Christ."<sup>367</sup> In other words, Christ-like service means the cross. He explains: "To serve the poor in the name of Christ is not a game, it is not play acting, nor is it a child's play. It means constant pain, discomfort, humiliation, suffering, and sacrifice. In a word, it means the cross."<sup>368</sup>

Schwartz maintains that if one's service is to be fruitful, it must be based on sacrifice and self-denial. He exhorts that sacrifice must become a habit for Christ's followers who must seek every opportunity to sacrifice no matter how little it may be.<sup>369</sup> Moreover, he implicitly conveys the idea of solidarity with the poor, saying that those who serve must become one with the persons he serves.<sup>370</sup> "People want to serve without any suffering, pain, difficulty or discomfort," Schwartz observes. He adds, "This is not Christ-like service. This type of service is not of value."<sup>371</sup>

### *Humility*

Aside from sacrificial service, Schwartz insists that Christ-like service of the poor is humble. The reason is the same: in imitation of Christ who served the poor in humility. In order to carry out a Christ-like service, the follower of Christ must do so

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<sup>366</sup> Schwartz, "Sacrificial Service," in *Sermons*, 3-5.

<sup>367</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 73.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>369</sup> Schwartz, "Vow of Service: Three Qualities of Christ-like Service of the Poor" (26 June 1991) in *Sermons*, 221.

<sup>370</sup> See Francis, Homily on Holy Thursday, March 28, 2013, at The Holy See, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130328\\_messa-crismale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html). Accessed 1 February 2017.

<sup>371</sup> Schwartz, "Humble Service" (7 February 1986) in *Sermons*, 21-22.

in humility. Schwartz outlines three reasons in favor of humble service. First, Christ-like service must be humble because Christ himself despises worldly praise. In the same token, the follower of Christ should “renounce the praise, glory, recognition, and thanks of men.”<sup>372</sup> Second, Christ-like service must be humble because there is nothing to be proud of. Everything is to be attributed to the grace of God. Writing to the members of the Sisters of Mary, he explains:

We come here and serve but this impulse to serve does not come from us. This is a grace of God. God has called you here. God gives you the physical life and the strength to serve. He puts in your heart the will to serve. He gives you the spiritual energy to serve. And so, our service is God’s service and we should take no credit for this.<sup>373</sup>

And third, Christ-like service must be humble because in the story of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan is depicted as serving the Jewish victim without pomp and in a hidden manner. “The parable of the Good Samaritan ends with the Samaritan fading from the scene in silence,” Schwartz says. He adds: “There is no mention of praise, glory, recognition, or a reward of any type whatsoever.”<sup>374</sup> This is in line with the biblical teaching: “But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret” (Matt 6:3-4).<sup>375</sup> Again, for Schwartz, Christ’s exhortation to “do likewise” is an invitation for all Christ’s followers to do the same in their service to the poor.

***Spirituality.*** Another characteristic of Christ-like service of the poor is its being spiritual. Schwartz says that it is “neither materialistic, worldly, nor physical.”<sup>376</sup> It means giving prime

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<sup>372</sup> Schwartz, “Humble Service,” 23.

<sup>373</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 76.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>375</sup> Apparently, this contradicts another biblical teaching: “Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket.... Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Matt 5:15-16). This is an antinomy and this is presented in a subsequent section.

<sup>376</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 77.

importance to the soul over the body, to what is eternal over the temporal. It means leading the poor to eternal life and Schwartz considers this the most important aspect of Christ-like service. It points to a very important eschatological reality. It is for him the greatest charity and the greatest form of love.<sup>377</sup> Schwartz explains:

We are always looking after the sick and the needy with the aspect of eternity; otherwise, we are foolish.... So, the focus is on tomorrow, which is eternity, and we want to be happy not just for this day but forever. We want the children and the sick to be happy forever. So, we do not serve in a manner, which is foolish and stupid with the aspect and the outlook of the rich farmer. We always have the vision of Jesus, which is supernatural, spiritual, and eternal.<sup>378</sup>

Schwartz emphasizes that the object and ultimate goal of Christ-like service is to save a soul. And in Schwartz's language, saving a soul means leading an individual to eternal life. Leading the poor to eternal life is achieved by showing them the way to God "by preaching, teaching, and showing them examples by words, and by constant instructions."<sup>379</sup> Schwartz does not mean to say that by the spiritual dimension of Christ-like service, the material and bodily needs of the poor are to be neglected.<sup>380</sup> Whereas, man is not a pure spirit, therefore, material and physical needs must be attended to, the spiritual, i.e., the more essential part, however, must not be overlooked.

### **Antinomies in the Practice of Poverty**

Aloysius Schwartz recognizes that in the practice of poverty, there are three antinomies that surface (a) Imitating Christ's poverty and lifting the poor from their misery, (b) Being poor and being economical, (c) Matt 6:3-4 versus Matt 5:15-16. The antinomies elucidate further Schwartz's mind concerning the practice of poverty.

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<sup>377</sup> Schwartz, "Vow of Service: Three Qualities of Christ-like Service of the Poor" (26 June 1991) in *Sermons*, 225.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

***Imitating Christ's Poverty versus Lifting the Poor from Misery***

When God created man, man was given the injunction to subdue the earth and master. This is an allusion to progress. However, in the New Testament, Christ's invitation was to live a life of poverty. How can man live a poor life yet aim for progress?

Schwartz solves this conflict by suggesting a double spiritual vision. He proposes that a Christian's view of reality should be both eschatological and incarnational. The inner-directed outlook is eschatological while the outer-directed outlook is incarnational.<sup>381</sup>

When a Christian looks at himself, the outlook should be eschatological. He should always anticipate the end times especially the second coming of Christ. He is to consider himself a pilgrim on earth, hence his attitude towards his possessions should be one that is devoid of any attachment. One should "possess things in this world as possessing them not."<sup>382</sup>

When it pertains to his neighbour, on the other hand, a Christian's outlook should be incarnational, not eschatological. Man should consider Christ present in his neighbour. He is to help his needy neighbour by doing everything he can in order to alleviate his neighbour's suffering. Nothing necessary is to be deprived from his suffering brother. He should give the best services on account of Christ who is present in his needy brother. "However," Schwartz warns, "the Christian's attitude should never become so incarnational that he frees the poor man from his bonds of economic servitude only to deliver him over to the equally degrading slavery of avarice and materialism."<sup>383</sup>

***Being Poor versus Being Economical***

Schwartz observes, especially among clerics and religious, that in terms of personal apparel, there is a preference to more expensive garb over the cheaper ones. The common reason being cited is that choosing the former is more economical and is therefore at par with the vow of poverty. The reason is logical

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<sup>381</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 61-62.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

because quality is generally compromised in the cheaper goods and is in need therefore of more frequent replacements than the more expensive ones.

Schwartz, however, does not buy the idea. He does not dispute the soundness of the argument but insists on the inexpensive apparel nonetheless. He prefers something simple yet practical and economical. He argues that if one is truly poor, he should appear poor especially to those who are poor. Nothing should conceal and compromise the poverty which one claims.<sup>384</sup>

Schwartz eases the tension by insisting that with the will-to-be-poor, one should not just be poor; he should also appear poor. Just as Christ appeared poor, so, too, should the Christian appear poor. Poverty of spirit should be complemented by material poverty. Both should serve as a sign and witness to other people. Hence, from this vein, it can be deduced that Schwartz's preference goes to cheaper personal apparel and not to the economical yet more expensive ones. He applies this not only to the choice of clothing but also to the construction of infrastructure, facilities, and all the other things inside a building. Upon erecting a new structure, Schwartz suggests that it should neither be rich nor imposing. It should appear simple and should serve as a sign and witness to poverty. Everything else inside the structure should also be a sign and witness to poverty. Schwartz makes the following remark:

Don't try to defend the luxurious food on your table in the name of economy by stating that what is spent on nutrition is saved on doctor's bills. If you write to the Department of Agriculture in Washington they will show you how a perfectly balanced and nutritious—although not the most tasty—diet can be provided for less than a dollar a day.<sup>385</sup>

Schwartz warns that this means going against the current. Deliberately choosing to live a poor life while everyone else prefers a rich life is not easy. Such a life can become a reproach to others. Furthermore, he also sees an “implicit, subtle temptation to pride” and a temptation “to become a bitter, self-righteous, finger-wagging reformer” awaiting anyone who embarks on this way of

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<sup>384</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 73.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 148. See appendix.



life. Hence, Schwartz suggests that authentic poor life patterned after Christ's poverty be safeguarded by meekness, humility, and a healthy sense of humor.<sup>386</sup>

***Matt 6:3-4 versus Matt 5:15-16***

Schwartz maintains that one of the principal qualities of a Christ-like service of the poor is humility.<sup>387</sup> He exhorts that one should help the poor silently and should not seek praises and rewards. "In order to serve the poor in Christ-like manner, in the name of Christ," Schwartz continues, "we have to courageously renounce the praise, glory, recognition and thanks of men."<sup>388</sup> He derives this from the words of Christ: "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret" (Matt 6:3-4).

Apparently, this contradicts a biblical passage from the same evangelist: "Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket.... Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Matt 5:15-16). While the former biblical passage precludes glory and prestige, the latter seems to encourage announcing one's good works.

Schwartz clarifies the seemingly contradicting biblical passages by saying that praise and glory from fellow men is permissible only if it is for the glory of God and not for one's own glorification. One should appropriate the praises he receives not to himself but to God who does the good deed through the person. By saying so, he implies that one should practice humility. One should not receive praise and recognition for himself. If he should receive praise and recognition for his good works, then it should be directed to God because ultimately, it is God who does the good work through the person. Should one appropriate the glory for himself after doing a charitable work, Schwartz qualifies such as deceit.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Schwartz, *Poverty: Sign of Our Times*, 79.

<sup>387</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 66.

<sup>388</sup> Schwartz, "Humble Service" (7 February 1986) in *Sermons*, 22.

<sup>389</sup> Schwartz, "Humble Service," 38.

### **Aloysius Schwartz as Embodiment of the Church of the Poor**

Vatican II has influenced Schwartz. He was impressed by the phrase “Church of the Poor.” Schwartz found it very relevant for him especially that he was in a country that suffered from extreme poverty. Coupled with his ministry and experience in South Korea, the phrase has become the “defining element of his ecclesiology and, consequently, has informed and guided his ministry.”<sup>390</sup>

Together with this call of renewal on the part of John XXIII for the Church to become a Church of the Poor, Schwartz also calls for the same call. He reiterates the pontiff’s call for change and renewal. John XXIII announced his call for renewal in Rome, a place of prominence frequented by tourists. Schwartz announced his call for renewal in South Korea, a place of poverty filled with poor people in the 1950’s.

Inasmuch as the head of the Church is poor, so too should the body of Christ be poor. Schwartz’s call for witnessing, change, and transformation means a call for the Church to become a Church of the Poor. For Schwartz, it is more proper for the Church to become so because Christ, the head of the Church, was poor, and because the first Christian community was poor. Schwartz’s call means that the leaders of the Church should be identified with the poor just as Christ identified himself with the poor.

Rañada highlights Schwartz’s points on becoming a Church of the Poor. Should the Church become a Church of the poor, it implies: (a) that the local bishops, priests, and sisters must live lives of poverty, meaning “poor-man poverty, such as Christ lived and which will be accepted as such by the man in the street without explanation or apology;” (b) that the non-local priests and sisters whose health and survival could be jeopardized by the aforementioned radical option at least be possessed of a “will-to-be-poor,” meaning that they try or work in the direction of living exactly as do the poor of the land; (c) that Church buildings and personnel convey nothing but the idea of voluntary poverty and service to the poor, meaning no pomp and prestige but rather utmost simplicity and austerity; and, (d) that the Church must go

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<sup>390</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 195.

first and foremost to the poor, not to the elite—the intellectual, the politicians, the rich and powerful—but to the most poverty stricken, most helpless, and most needy, to distribute to them the riches of Christ’s truth and love.<sup>391</sup>

These have parallel statements in the Acts and Decrees of the PCP II whose ecclesiology is the “Church of the Poor.” According to the PCP II, the Church of the Poor means: (a) a Church that is willing to follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression in order to carry out the work of salvation; does not seek earthly glory but proclaims, and this by her own example, humility and self-denial, (b) a Church that embraces and practices the evangelical spirit of poverty, combining detachment from possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the sole sources of salvation, (c) a Church where the poor feel at home in her and participate actively, as equal to others, in her life and mission, and; (d) a Church where the pastors and other Church leaders give preferential attention and time to those who are poor, and generously share from their own resources in order to alleviate their poverty and make them recognize the love of the Lord for them despite their poverty.<sup>392</sup>

It was in the year 1991 when PCP II was convoked. By that time, Schwartz’s works in the Philippines have started to flourish. By the time the PCP II was convoked, Schwartz was already in a heavy battle against ALS. Understandably, no mention of PCP II is ever made in his writings. It does not necessarily follow however that Schwartz did not completely have any idea concerning PCP II nor of its ecclesiology which is the “Church of the Poor.” In fact, before the Philippine Church adopted the idea of “Church of the Poor,” Schwartz had already been basing his work on it.<sup>393</sup>

As seen earlier, Christ-like service of the poor according to Schwartz, possesses the following primary characteristics: self-sacrifice, humility, and spirituality. Schwartz reflects further on the parable of the Good Samaritan and proposes the secondary characteristics of Christ-like service of the poor. Aside from

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<sup>391</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 192-193.

<sup>392</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 181-182. The PCP II outlines ten characteristics of the Church of the Poor. See CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of PCP II*, 125-136.

<sup>393</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 184.

its three primary characteristics, Christ-like service of the poor is kind, friendly, direct, personal, free, modern, complete, and universal.<sup>394</sup> He wants the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ to manifest these secondary attributes aside from the three primary ones. He explains that the Good Samaritan could have left the Jewish victim to be taken care of by another. But the Samaritan did not; he attended personally to the Jew. The Good Samaritan lifted the Jew onto his beast, and attended the Jew's wounds. There was also a follow-up. The Samaritan promised the innkeeper to pay whatever expenses the latter incurred in caring for the victim.<sup>395</sup> In other words, Schwartz wants the Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of Christ to give a quality service to the poor.

These secondary characteristics of Christ-like service of the poor are visible in Schwartz and in his works. Schwartz treats the poor as VIP's, after all, Christ has identified himself with them. The poor make Christ present in the world. Hence the poor deserve the best of all services. In Schwartz's letter to Sr. Gertrude, he bares his idea of giving quality service to the poor through a hospital that he was constructing in Seoul:

The hospital construction in Seoul is rapidly nearing completion. We are busy now getting all sorts of equipment out of customs, shipped to Seoul, and installed. We are planning a dedication ceremony on June 29. It will be very difficult finding good medical personnel to staff the hospital. We pay excellent wages, but most good Korean doctors are not enthusiastic about working in a hospital for the poor.<sup>396</sup>

Aloysius Schwartz was indeed impressed with John XXIII's call for the Church to become a Church of the poor. However, this theme proposed by the pontiff did not make it through the major Vatican documents. Neither was it opposed by the Council Fathers. There are many, nonetheless, that picked this theme up and one of them was Aloysius Schwartz who was then working in faraway South Korea. He lived as a poor man

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<sup>394</sup> Schwartz, *To Live is Christ*, 136.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>396</sup> Schwartz, Letter to Sr. Gertrude (11 May 1982) in FACFI, *Dans la Joie du Seigneur*, 14.

in imitation of Christ, the Eternal Poorman. Just as Christ is the mediator between God and man, Schwartz also served as mediator between the rich and the poor. His writings and works of charity serve as avenues for the wealthy to help the poor. He served the poor in imitation of the same Christ, the Eternal Poorman. And he challenged the Church to become a Church of the poor which is truly the Church of the Eternal Poorman. It is for this reason that Rañada renders Schwartz the title “Prophet of the Church of the poor.”<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Rañada, *A Heart for the Poor*, 218.



## Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, O.S.A. (1508-1568): His Enduring Legacy to the Philippines<sup>1</sup>

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Emmanuel Romanillos, HELL

### Abstract

*One of Fray Andrés de Urdaneta's laurels in the Age of Conquistadores was for having discovered the "tornaviaje" route which the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade followed for almost three hundred years until 1815. His young years as soldier and sailor aided him in his future military adventures navigational skills. But his foremost contribution was his job as the navigator-cosmographer of the Miguel López de Legazpi's 1565 expedition and as superior of the first Augustinian community in Cebu. He was zealous for the conversion of the natives and for the future works of the members of his Order in the Philippines. Most of all, in the last days of his life, Fray Andrés de Urdaneta rendered valuable service as adviser to the royal viceroy in Mexico City in matters anent to the evangelization of the Philippines, but he spent most of his time in contemplation at San Agustín friary and at the library of the Augustinian community.*

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<sup>1</sup>A lecture read before religious priests, brothers, sisters, formands, employees of the Augustinian Family at San Agustín Center of Studies, Fisheries Street, Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, on 9 February 2008 on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of the Birth of Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, O.S.A.

In the modern town of Villagranca de Ordizia of the Basque province of Guipúzcoa in Spain, there is a town square named Plaza Filipinas where a bronze statue was erected on 20 September 1904. It was a fitting tribute to the town's famous son, a fine statue paid for by the grateful citizens of Ordizia. The Castilian Spanish inscription proclaims:

*A Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, Cosmógrafo sin par. Introdutor de la Civilización Cristiana y Española en Filipinas, 1508-1568.* [To Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, Unequalled as a cosmographer, who introduced Christianity and the civilization of Spain to the Philippines, 1508-1568.]<sup>2</sup>

A house—not the original edifice—at Caserío Oyangueren, two kilometers out of the town of Ordizia, bears a similar plaque that commemorates in both Spanish and Basque the birthplace of its native son.

Urdaneta lived in the age of seafarers, warriors, cosmographers, conquistadores, and missionaries. Mairin Mitchell, Urdaneta's English biographer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, best describes him as,

a distinguished captain in the fights against the Portuguese in the Indies of the East and against natives in the New World, diplomatist in the Moluccas, holder of the important office of Visitor in Mexico, Admiral of fleet intended for an expedition to Peru, a cosmographer of the highest rank, and finally an adventurer in the life of religion, a pilgrim in search of God, appointed as prior of the first religious to settle in the Philippines, whence he discovered the *vuelta* [*tornaviaje*], the true return route to Mexico, Urdaneta was indeed a man of destiny.<sup>3</sup>

### The young years

Andrés de Urdaneta was born to the illustrious family of Juan Ochoa de Urdaneta and Gracia de Cerain in what was formerly known as Villafranca de Oria. The year of his birth is 1508, although early biographers like Fray Gaspar de San Agustín

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<sup>2</sup>Mairin Mitchell, *Friar Andrés de Urdaneta, O.S.A.* (London 1964), 6.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.



had claimed it was 1498.<sup>4</sup> However, to elucidate us on his true age, in a letter dated 28 May 1560 to the King of Spain, Fray Andrés writes: "... and given the fact that I have advanced in years past the age of 52."<sup>5</sup>

Don Juan Ochoa was mayor of Ordizia and his wife belonged to a family in the ironworks business. The wife was related to the family of Miguel López de Legazpi, a native of Zumárraga. Andrés studied Latin and philosophy with the intention of taking up the ecclesiastical career as the parents had wished he would.

Orphaned later, Andrés decided to pursue a military career. He fought under the imperial banner of Emperor Charles V in the wars in Germany and Italy. "Although he was the first in assaults and the last in rest," it was said. But he did not waste time in vicious and licentious activities as soldiers were wont to do in their adventurous youthful years. He went on to be promoted as captain. But not for long, he directed his path to adventures at sea. Earlier he had studied mathematics, astrology and cosmography in his Italian years, and had come out consummate and eminent in the fields. As a young man of 17, he had gained fame as a writer as well, fluent in Spanish and Basque. His writing was "of a high standard and he was writing with fluidity." Gifted with an exceptional memory, Andrés was equipped further with a keen sense of perception and observation that made his diaries and memoirs to the Spanish monarch good reading and very much endowed with remarkably incredible detail.

### **Urdaneta as navigator and cosmographer**

It was the Age of Discovery and race for the Spice Islands. The extensive land trade routes had been forbidden and perilous because of Turkish control or high Venetian tariffs. The frenzied race for Spices went on. "Spices, gold, ivory, porcelain, sandalwood, silks, cashmeres, jade, pearls, rubies" from the East continued to attract adventurers and merchants. Portuguese and

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<sup>4</sup> Gaspar de San Agustín, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas (1565-1615)* (Madrid: 1974), 209.

<sup>5</sup> José Ramón de Miguel Bosch, *Andres de Urdaneta and the Return Voyage*, in <http://www.andresurdaneta.org/antbuspre.asp?nombre=1808&cod=1808&sesion=1347>.

Spanish navigators all laid claim on the Moluccas Islands. The spices were “for flavouring and for preserving food, for use with mulled wine, in the blending of perfumes, and for medicaments.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the merchant who engaged in the trade of cloves, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and pepper would definitely bring more wealth to his coffers.

Magellan’s tragedy at Mactan and Juan Sebastián Elcano’s circumnavigation of the globe were followed by the Spanish maritime expedition led by García Jofre de Loaisa. His seven ships with 450 men lifted anchor at La Coruña in northwestern Spain in July 1525 sailed to the Moluccas. Elcano was the second-in-command who had as page the 17-year-old Andrés de Urdaneta. In January 1526, the ship *Sancti Spiritus* of Elcano and Urdaneta was buffeted by strong glacial hurricane near the Strait of Magellan. The battered galleon was doomed. Both Loaisa and his successor Elcano perished in mid-year of 1526.

On 7 October 1526, the last ship *Santa María de la Victoria* reached Mindanao. The natives of Mindanao were friendly, observed Urdaneta. The men had their chests painted [tattooed], wore long hair, donned garments of cotton and silk and had teeth pierced with gold. Their houses were built along rivers and creeks. Later, the natives turned mistrustful of the foreigners and attempted to steal their boat. Thus, Urdaneta sadly writes in his journal: “The Indians of these islands are among the most treacherous that can be found.” In the end, the Spaniards were able to obtain rice, fruits, coconuts and *tuba*.

### **From the Moluccas to Portugal**

On 15 October 1526, they headed south-east for the Moluccas. The skirmishes with natives and Portuguese gradually decimated the survivors of Loaisa’s expedition. In April 1528 Carlos V sold the rights to the Moluccas to Portugal. Left to fend for themselves, the last Spaniards stayed in Tidore for nine more years. Urdaneta and five other Spaniards were finally taken in February 1535 by a Portuguese ship to Lisbon where they docked in June 1536. The Portuguese officials at once confiscated all the papers in Urdaneta’s possession, which included scripts,

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<sup>6</sup> M. Mitchell, *Friar Andrés de Urdaneta O.S.A.*, 9.

memoranda, navigational course of both Loaisa's and Saavedra's expeditions, "without warrant or anything of the like."<sup>7</sup>

Urdaneta was advised by the Spanish ambassador to leave Lisbon. Thus, on 26 February 1537, he escaped to Spain. In the Portuguese capital, he abandoned the little girl he had sired in the Moluccas. By returning to Spain, Urdaneta thus circumnavigated the world. He submitted not long after an account of Loaisa's expedition to Emperor Charles V in Valladolid. This report was totally made from memory of his journeys, "reflecting his capacity of observation, his interest and vast knowledge of the islands and their development." For his loyal services to Spain during eleven years, Urdaneta received the measly amount of sixty gold ducats. He then decided to seek his fortune elsewhere.

### **From Spain to Mexico again**

In 1539, Urdaneta traveled to Hispaniola to meet with the well-off Don Pedro de Alvarado who had planned to seek new sources of wealth in the Far East after failing in his financial ventures in Guatemala. Together with Urdaneta, Alvarado's expedition set sail in 1540 but his crew had to stop at Jalisco to quell an Indian uprising. Urdaneta was designated as captain, leading to war about 150 foot soldiers as well as some cavalymen with harquebuses. When Alvarado died in 1541, the expedition was disassembled.

Urdaneta refused to head another expedition which stemmed from the failed Alvarado enterprise, and it was Ruy López de Villalobos who accepted the command of the fleet and travelled to the Philippines. The Ordizia native then accepted the administrative position of *Corregidor* and Visitor in Mexico until he decided to embrace religious life. Biographers believe that Urdaneta was influenced by fellow Guipuzcoans who had entered the monasteries in Mexico and had drawn him to the monastic way of life.

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<sup>7</sup> José Ramón de Miguel Bosch, *Andres de Urdaneta and the Return Voyage*, in <http://www.andresurdaneta.org/antbuspre.asp?nombre=1808&cod=1808&sesion=1347>.

### Urdaneta as friar in Mexico

The first Augustinian friars arrived in Mexico in 1533. All seven of them, who had imbibed reform ideals and were nurtured by the doctrine, example and counsel of the Augustinian provincial Father Thomas of Villanova, were to form the new Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus in Mexico. When he was prior provincial of Andalusia in 1527-1529, Saint Thomas had instilled in all his subordinates the basic ideals that were to form the foundation of the Recollection: namely, contemplation, excellence of divine worship, reading of the Sacred Scriptures, fraternal charity, discipline and zeal for the salvation of souls.<sup>8</sup> The saintly Augustinian superior likewise favored the practice of walking barefoot, *descalzos*. Saint Thomas as provincial of Castile sent two more expeditions to the New World in 1535 and 1536.

Recollect general chronicler Andrés de San Nicolás confirmed that the Mexican missionaries wore “habits made of so coarse and thick a cloth that they appeared more like sackcloth or hair shirt than clothes, their habits being narrow; the sleeves, cowl, cloak and sandals were in the form and shape that we the discalced are wearing today in Spain.” However, other chroniclers of the period insisted that the Mexican Augustinians never wore shoes but went about discalced. These writers further revealed that the Augustinians in Mexico extended the hours of mental prayer and practiced discipline thrice a week. The missionaries were convinced that they were sons of Saint Thomas of Villanova and veritable heirs of his legacy of reforms. Indeed, they acknowledged him as their patron and chief inspiration of their evangelization effort in the vineyard of the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

When Urdaneta started his year of novitiate in 1552, the reform movement was widespread and strong in Mexico. In the prime of his life, he professed his monastic vows in 1553 at the friary of the Order of Saint Augustine in the capital. At age 45, he

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<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> E. L. A. Romanillos, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines*, 22; M. Mitchell, *Friar Andrés de Urdaneta O.S.A.*, 92. The reforms were stopped by Augustinian Visitor Father Antonio Aguilar in 1574.

withdrew from the world, renouncing all adventures and mundane pleasures in order to embrace monastic life. After four years of theological formation under Father Alonso de la Vera Cruz and other professors and formators, Urdaneta was ordained as priest. He was shortly after appointed Master of Novices in the convent of San Agustín in Mexico City.

### **The Legazpi expedition 1564-1565**

In 1559, Philip II wrote a letter to the Viceroy of Mexico Luis de Velasco to dispatch ships to the *Islas del Poniente*, Isles of the West, including the Philippines, and bring them within the realm of Spain and “to send holy guides to unfurl and wave the banners of Christ in the most distant parts of those islands.” The monarch also ordered Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, the viceroy’s close friend and a “good cosmographer” who was well-acquainted with the navigation there, to go with the fleet as guide. The Augustinian superiors urged the friar to accept the position with his confreres. The *Audiencia* further ordered to set up Christian settlements wherever the captain-general decided. Wherever a fort was erected, there a church and a house for the religious were to be built too. The captain-general of the fleet was instructed:

In all your dealings with the natives of those regions you shall take special care that some of the religious are present, both in order that you may be helped by their good counsel and that they natives may appreciate the high regard in which you hold the friars, for, when they see this, they too will hold the religious in high esteem... what His Majesty desires most is the increase of our Holy Catholic Faith and the salvation of the souls of these infidels.<sup>10</sup>

Miguel López de Legazpi, a widower and an administrator of long residence in Mexico, was to lead the expedition of two galleons, two pinnaces and a frigate. The navigational adviser Urdaneta was likewise designated prior of the pioneering community of five missionary confreres, namely, Martín de Rada, Diego de Herrera, Andrés de Aguirre, Pedro de Gamboa and Lorenzo de Ximénez, who died on the eve of the fleet’s departure.

On 21 November 1564, the crew and friars sang the *Salve Regina* as they lifted anchor at Puerto La Navidad. The threefold

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<sup>10</sup> M. Mitchell, *Friar Andrés de Urdaneta O.S.A.*, 104.

mission was: conversion of infidels, conquest of the Philippines and discovery of a return route to New Spain. Both crew and missionaries were tasked to “predicar, pacificar y poblar”—to preach the Gospel, to bring peace, and to colonize.

### Urdaneta in Bohol

On 3 February, the fleet reached Samar where a soldier was sent ashore to take possession of the island for Spain. Then the Spanish fleet proceeded to Leyte and Camiguin. In April the ships headed for Butuan but contrary winds drove them to Bohol. There the local chieftain Sikatuna held a blood compact with Legazpi on board the flagship *San Pedro*.<sup>11</sup>

Because of the initial language stumbling block, the attempt to “bring the brilliant light of faith” to the people of Bohol was probably on a very limited scale, if ever there were any at all. At that time the captain general and his counselors had not yet firmed up their decision to set up a permanent colony in the Philippines. Nor have they decided to establish a fixed base of operations with ample supplies for the huge expedition. They awaited vital information from the reconnaissance trips of his explorers from adjacent islands. The food shortage in Bohol apparently discouraged the idea of a permanent settlement there. Therefore, any serious attempt to evangelize the inhabitants could not have been made, if the missionaries were not even sure of staying there permanently. There was no minister to maintain the growth and development of Christianity in the island. The Augustinian friars feared for the natives’ possible apostasy, *i.e.*, their repudiation of Christianity and subsequent return to the old pagan ways of their ancestors during their prolonged absence.

On 15 April 1565, the captain general took official possession of Bohol in the name of King Philip II with Urdaneta acting as official witness.

### Urdaneta in Cebu

The Spaniards then proceeded to Cebu which Legazpi had heard to have abundant food provisions—deer, fowls, fish,

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<sup>11</sup> Gaspar de San Agustín, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas*, 161-163.

rice, sweet potatoes, coconuts, fruits and fresh water supply—and gold. The natives of Cebu further traded with Chinese merchants. The captain general then issued full pardon for the massacre of Magellan's men forty-four years ago. The Cebu chieftain Tupas failed to come to the flagship as he had earlier promised repeatedly. So Urdaneta—in his capacity as protector of the Indians—and an officer were sent by Legazpi to see Tupas. The hostile reaction by the natives prompted the flagship to open fire at the settlement. The shanties were burned to the ground and the native were put to flight.

In an unburned hut, Juan Zamus or Camus, a soldier from Vizcaya, Spain, found a statue of the Holy Child, of Flemish workmanship. The little cross on the Santo Niño's hand was missing. It was believed to be the gift of Magellan to the wife of Humabon in 1521. Urdaneta received the statue from the soldier who had found many flowers put before the image. There was rejoicing among the soldiers and missionaries and Urdaneta himself was said to have shed tears of joy. The place where the image was found was the site of the first Augustinian friary which was named *Santísimo Nombre de Jesús* [Most Holy Name of Jesus]. The 28<sup>th</sup> April—the day it was found—was celebrated in a very solemn manner by the devotees and Augustinian friars and a *cofradía* [confraternity] was erected by Urdaneta who adopted the rule of the friary of Saint Augustine in Mexico City.

Urdaneta further suggested to Legazpi to build a new settlement in Cebu. A permanent settlement could only be done if there were enough supplies. Reinforcements should come from New Spain. A return route to Mexico should be discovered. The *Audiencia* had issued the following instructions in November 1564: "Next to faith in the help of the Lord, it is confidently felt that Fray Andrés de Urdaneta will be chief agent in discovering the return route to New Spain, because of his experience, his knowledge of weather in these regions and his other qualifications."<sup>12</sup>

A decision had been earlier firmed up to send the flagship *San Pedro* back to Mexico. Urdaneta had issued orders to load food and water on board the *capitana San Pedro*. Oil, vinegar, *garbanzos* [chickpeas], wine, rice and bread were loaded for the

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<sup>12</sup> M. Mitchell, *Friar Andrés de Urdaneta O.S.A.*, 197.

long return journey to New Spain. The Augustinian prior personally chose Felipe de Salcedo, Legazpi's grandson, as captain. Father Andrés de Aguirre was assigned to accompany Urdaneta.

### **The historic return voyage to Mexico**

Urdaneta's niche in maritime history is secured when he successfully returned to Mexico in 1565. It was to be the longest maritime journey ever taken then—7,644 miles navigating on unknown routes. A voyage of such importance was to be undertaken under the command of an eighteen-year-old youth, Felipe de Salcedo, and under the technical direction of a 57-year-old friar, Urdaneta. The flagship *San Pedro* lifted anchor on 1 June 1565. On 8 October the famished and exhausted crew docked at Acapulco. Then and now, it has been acknowledged as one of the most important maritime routes of the modern world. Urdaneta's odyssey shattered the myth of the impossibility of the return voyage. His excellent planning and expert navigational knowledge and experience succeeded in the first crossing of the Pacific Ocean, with hardly any remarkable setbacks.

The galleon trade from Manila to Acapulco followed Urdaneta's chart for almost three hundred years, until 1815 when the last galleon left Manila. The following year, Urdaneta sailed to Spain and reported to the monarch in Castile.

The Council of the Indies permitted the old friar and cosmographer to retrace his steps to San Agustín monastery in Mexico City where his restless heart and soul rested in the bosom of his Father in Heaven on 3 June 1568. He was sixty years old and in his sixteenth year of religion.

### **By way of conclusion**

An Urdaneta biographer compares the figure of Saint Augustine of Hippo and that of his spiritual son Father Andrés in this manner:

Despite the marked differences in their temperaments, the lives of Urdaneta and of the great Founder of the Order which he joined are not devoid of certain similarities. Both, from leading full-blooded lives in hot climates, had embraced religion, both had



a child out of wedlock, neither of them married, and both took vows of celibacy. Although Urdaneta, with his reserve and restraint, reveals almost nothing of his interior life in his Diaries, and the Confessions of St. Augustine could never, one feels, have given expression by a man so lacking the emotional temperament of the Bishop of Hippo, one great essential Urdaneta shares with him, utter faith in the Providence of God, a faith which [...] is manifested throughout his narratives of his voyages and of his life in the Moluccas.<sup>13</sup>

His confreres and chroniclers Grijalva and Gaspar de San Agustín declared that Urdaneta was known for his preaching and founding of churches.<sup>14</sup> Or, as Father Grijalva says in his own words: "As a soldier, as a navigator, as a preacher and as a founder of churches, Urdaneta had not his equal."<sup>15</sup> The Recollect historian Rodrigo Móríz Aganduru, known too as Rodrigo de San Miguel, sees him as "man of supreme virtue." According to Mairin Mitchell, Urdaneta was especially zealous for the conversion of the natives and also for the future work of the members of his Order. Even to the last of his days in Mexico City, Urdaneta continued to render valuable service as adviser to the Viceroy concerning the evangelization enterprise in the Philippines, but "most of his time was spent in contemplation in the friary of San Agustín and in the library of the community."

In 1904, Father Justo Fernández declared at the ceremony of the unveiling of Urdaneta's bronze statue in his hometown: "The conquest of the Philippines is hardly mentioned in history precisely because it is the most humane in the record of colonisation, and Urdaneta is the least known of the conquistadores, though he deserves to be the best known if history gives account of the highest virtues, in that he did not cause the shedding of a single drop of blood."<sup>16</sup> He was the superior of those pioneering Augustinian missionaries who defended the rights of the natives of the Philippines, and, as his confrere Father Jerónimo Román said: "The Spaniards could neither have made nor have maintained their conquests, but for the part played by the friars who checked the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>14</sup> Gaspar de San Agustín, *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas*, 213.

<sup>15</sup> M. Mitchell, *Friar Andrés de Urdaneta O.S.A.*, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 128.

rapacity of some of the soldiers by reminding them that ‘they were not sent to rob or kill, but to win souls and to trade honourably’.”

Of Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, we can say then that both “in his life in the world and in the friary, his spiritual intensity is manifest. Every undertaking in his career at sea, in military operations, and in high administrative capacities is, in his own frequent phrase, carried out with ‘the help of God’.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 153.



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