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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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Contents

**Renewing Parishes in the New Evangelization
through Parish Renewal Experience** 5

Fray Mark R. Saludes, OAR

***Kalooban: A Locus* for New Evangelization
in the Philippines** 49

John Rey L. Ybañez

Can Benin Matrimony Be Considered Catholic? 69

Edobore Monday Benjamin, OAR 69

**The Church's Moral Evaluation
of Medical-Cannabis** 113

Tomokatsu N. Yamaguchi, OAR 113

Renewing Parishes in the New Evangelization through Parish Renewal Experience

Fray Mark R. Saludes, OAR

Abstract

The New Evangelization demands collaboration from the Christifidelis, the laity. After Vatican II the laity found a new way of living their Christian life and participating in the apostolates of the Church through the ecclesial movements. This article explores the Parish Renewal Experience or the PREX Movement—an innovative way of how the laity can respond to the demands of the New Evangelization for Church renewal. This movement begins as a small scale renewal through parish communities. From within the parish, the movement applies its strategic evangelization through formation programs for its parishioners.

Preliminary Notes

The theme New Evangelization has been flourishing in the life of the Church since the later part of twentieth century. The signs of times, as discerned by the Church, indicate a worsening crisis of faith. Thus, the New Evangelization has been the Church's way of addressing the problem of faith. Since Vatican

If the thrust of the New Evangelization continues up to present Pope Francis. This New Evangelization advances to greater urgency as this crisis of faith worsens.¹ The Church's call for New Evangelization continues with the invitation of the 13th Synod of Bishops of proclaiming Christ with "new ardor, new methods, and new expressions."²

The current re-echoing of the New Evangelization's missionary mandate in the Philippine church is the CBCP's Pastoral Exhortation "Live Christ, Share Christ."³ The bishops invited Filipino Catholics to look forward with gratitude and joy to the celebration of 500 years of the coming of the Christian faith. But above all, the invitation calls for renewal of the nine priorities of the local church in order to ensure a fruitful evangelization. The year 2017 posed a challenge of renewing the base of the communion of communities—the parishes.⁴ The year of the parish envisions a parochial community renewed "as the center and fountain of missionary discipleship and zeal for renewed evangelization, a genuine center for missionary outreach."⁵ Briefly, the Philippine church is mandated for a deeper discernment not only the structures of governance but, more so, the quality of faith life in the parish, the fellowship, the belongingness, and participation experienced by its members. The parish, as agent of evangelization, should be a faith community truly immersed in the lives of its people.⁶

In the present time, in parishes in the Philippines,

¹ Bernard Haring, *Evangelization Today*, (England: St. Paul Publication, 1990), 20.

² Vatican: the Holy See. "Message to the People of God, concluding the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops," 26 October 2012, no. 45.

³ Jose S. Palma, DD., "Live Christ, Share Christ Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of the New Evangelization," *CBCP Monitor* Vol. 16, Num. 5 (July 16-29, 2012): B1.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Atty. Aurora A. Santiago, "Duc in Altum," *CBCP Monitor* Vol. 20, Num. 29 (November 21- December 4, 2016): A7.

⁶ Archbishop Socrates V. Villegas, DD, "Missionary Church, Witness Forming BECs as Agents of Communion, Participation and Mission of Mercy Pastoral Exhortation of the CBCP to Open the Year 2017 as the Year of Parishes, Communion of Communities" *CBCP Monitor* Vol. 20, Num. 28 (November 7-20, 2016): B1.

one of the ecclesial movements that made a huge leap to be able to respond to the current Church's Missionary mandate for a New Evangelization is the Parish Renewal Experience (PREX) Movement. Essentially, this movement participates in the actualization of this New Evangelization by evangelizing from within, beginning from the primary unit of the Church's community—the parishioners. Through PREX formation, the baptized is evangelized then commissioned to evangelize others with credibility.

The 13th Synod of Bishops invites the faithful to examine deeply the pastoral situation within the Church. This examination includes the evaluation of the programs in the parish communities intended as new methods and means for transmitting the Good News more effectively to people always with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁷ This article, therefore, explores the relevance of the Parish Renewal Experience to the actualization of the New Evangelization's mission of renewal. Specifically, this paper discusses this movement's role to the evangelization *ad intra* of the parish communities, which is the core mission of parish renewal.

The New Evangelization: Parish Renewal and PREX Movement—Dynamic Relationship

The Notion of Evangelization and Its Three Settings

The Church understanding of evangelization evolves through time. This evolution of perspectives in relation to evangelization is strongly influenced by the “signs of times.”⁸ Evangelization as a concept changes in accordance with the situation and the needs of the Church.⁹ However, the Church's perception of evangelization may change, but its very substance remains irrevocable.

⁷ Jose S. Palma, DD., “Live Christ, Share Christ Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of the New Evangelization,” B1.

⁸ Bernard Haring, *Evangelization Today*, (England: St. Paul Publication, 1990), 20.

⁹ Jesus Alvarez Gomez, *A New Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, trans. by Peter Schreurs, MSC., (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1996), 12.

The substance that gives meaning to evangelization is the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, evangelization is always Christocentric; Christ is the core message of the Good News. There will be no evangelization if it is not directed to Christ.¹⁰ In the beginning of the ministry of Jesus he called men to repentance, “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.” (Mk 1:15) The term *Evangelium*, derived from Greek εὐαγγέλιον, is a compound word which of εὖ (“good”) and ἀγγέλλω (“I bring a message” or a “messenger”). It refers to a person. The Gospel is not simply words or good news scribed in the Scriptures. The Gospel is a person, the person of Christ. He is the only way to the Father—the humanity’s true salvation.

The centrality of evangelization is Jesus Christ. Thus, the verb to evangelize means to give Christ to others; to make Him known even to the farthest coasts so that all may be saved.¹¹ To evangelize is an indispensable character imbedded in the very nature of the Church. It is a “vocation proper to the Church”¹² since she is “born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and His twelve Apostles.”¹³ The Church as possessor of the Good News should not keep it for herself.¹⁴ She is not the “master or absolute owner of the Gospel” but she is tasked by Christ to be its minister.¹⁵ The Scripture says, “God wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1Tim 2:3-4) With this in mind, the Church has to be missionary, steadfast and faithful to the dictum of Jesus, to share the Gospel to every creature proclaiming

¹⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical on the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 2013), no. 22(Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1996), 34. (Henceforth to be referred as *RM*).

¹¹ *RM*, 44.

¹² Paul VI. Apostolic Exhortation on the Evangelization in the Men of Our Time *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 14 (Philippines: St. Paul Publication, 1993) 15. (Henceforth to be referred as *EN*).

¹³ *EN*, 15.

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Definitive edition. Manila Philippines: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and Word of Life Publication, 1997.857. (Henceforth to be referred as *CCC*).

¹⁵ *EN*, 15.

it to all with care and attention.¹⁶ The Church as the “Universal Sacrament of Salvation” has the duty to proclaim the truth of the Gospel so that all may be saved.¹⁷

“Evangelization in general is the everyday work of the Church.”¹⁸ More than two thousand years that the Church was faithful to the command of Christ, her evangelizing activity has been developing into different forms. As human existential setting changes, which profoundly affects a “person’s perception of self and the world and consequently of God,”¹⁹ evangelization in the same manner widens its horizon. Evangelization nowadays adjusts to the “new situation of mankind”²⁰ in order to respond to the following three principal settings:²¹

Evangelization *Ad Gentes*

The evangelizing task of the Church never ceases unless she reaches her ultimate goal; “to preach the Gospel to all men” so that all “may be restored in Christ” and through “Him men might form one family and one people of God.”²² Hence, the Church has the duty to make Christ known in all parts of the world because each person, regardless of one’s religion or lack of religion, has

¹⁶CCC, 851.

¹⁷ Vatican II Council, *Ad gentes Divinitus, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity*, no. 61, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1995), 813. (Henceforth to be referred as *AGD*).

¹⁸ Nikola Eterovic, Preface to the Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2012, www.vatican.va/.../rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.pdf, (Accessed 12 December 2014).

¹⁹ Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2012, www.vatican.va/.../rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.pdf, (Accessed 12 December 2014), no. 6. (Henceforth to be referred as *IL*).

²⁰*AGD* 1.

²¹ Francis I, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 14 (Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2013), 19. (Henceforth to be referred as *EG*.)

²²*AGD*, 1.

the absolute right to know Jesus and his Gospel and be saved by His love.

Evangelization *ad gentes* gets inspiration from the vocation of St. Paul who was sent by Christ to be missionary to the Gentiles. The mission of Paul aimed to introduce Christ as “the mystery hidden for ages in God” (Eph 3:9) to the Gentiles who were unknowing of who Jesus was. Furthermore, the Gentiles, after knowing Him, experienced the love of Christ and allowed Him, through faith, to dwell in their hearts (Eph 3:17) resulting to have the fullness of life and salvation in God.

Almost two centuries in the life of the Church were dedicated to evangelization *ad gentes*. This area of evangelization is committed to preach the Gospel to those who do not know Christ. Specifically, this is evangelization *ad gentes* in the proper sense of the term. In the contemporary time, many still have no knowledge of Christ. The world now is inhabited by billions of people and it continues to increase as time moves on. These people are diversified into groups gathered through commonality of race, culture, religious traditions, or any form of social relationships. Some have the knowledge of God through their respective religions and some have no religion at all. On the one hand, the Church, being commissioned by Christ to offer salvation to all men has the duty “to implant herself among all these groups” just like Christ through His incarnation became one among men who is characterized by a particular “social and cultural circumstance.”²³

Evangelization *ad gentes* does not only focus on introducing Christ to the non-Christians. Rather, *ad gentes* prioritizes as well the importance of *plantatio ecclesiae* (planting churches) or establishment of churches.²⁴ On this matter, John Paul II emphasizes that evangelization *ad gentes* is also “directed to peoples or groups in whom the Church has not yet taken root and whose culture has not yet been influenced by the Gospel” because the “presence of the Church is either absent or insufficient.”²⁵ Moreover, upon having planted the Church, evangelization

²³ *AGD*, 10.

²⁴ Fr. Edgar Javier, SVD, class notes on *Missiology* (Quezon City Philippines: Recoletos Formation Center, distributed 7 July 2012).

²⁵ *RM*, 34.

ad gentes extends its labor as the new church grows towards maturity.²⁶

Ordinary Pastoral Ministry of the Church

The second principal setting of the evangelizing activity of the Church is the “ordinary pastoral setting.”²⁷ When the Church exercises her primary duties of governing, sanctifying, and teaching to an established church, she is fulfilling her duty to evangelize in the ordinary way. Such instances are the priest giving his homily in the pulpit, the parish holding catechetical classes, or particular churches conducting seminars or workshops to the lay. It is the day to day exercise of the evangelizing responsibility of the Church. Hence, through these she continues proclaiming the Gospel, she consistently nourishes her flock with the sacraments, and constantly inspires the faithful with the Word of God. To evangelize is the normal undertaking of the fundamental task of the Church.²⁸

Pope Francis quotes Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI that the area of ordinary pastoral ministry finds life through the aid of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit “inflames the hearts of the faithful who regularly take part in community worship and gather on the Lord’s Day to be nourished by His Word and by the bread of eternal life.”²⁹ However, this area is not limited to the active faithful. This likewise caters to “those faithful with deep and sincere faith” who practice it in unusual ways but disregard participation in the public worship. To be precise, Ordinary Pastoral Ministry is to assist the people of God of their spiritual growth that they may be able to live fully in God’s love.³⁰ Cardinal Tagle, on other hand, agrees with this claim. He states that Ordinary Pastoral Ministry works on continuing growth in faith in the Church’s life.³¹ John Paul II sums up the purpose of this Ordinary Pastoral Ministry

²⁶ *AGD*, 19.

²⁷ *AGD*, 15.

²⁸ *AGD.*, 35.

²⁹ *EG*, 14.

³⁰ *EG*, 14.

³¹ Luis Antonio Card. Tagle, “The Word Exposed - Catechism (The New Evangelization),” YouTube video, 2:47, posted by “The Jesuit Communications,” April 6, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-8AiUPX9Vw>, (Accessed 5 October 2014.)

into two namely: “for the pastoral care of the faithful” and the “evangelization of the non-practicing.”³²

Re-Evangelization

The Church is facing nowadays the sad reality of dechristianization.³³ Dr. Scott Hann opines that the second largest religion nowadays next to Christianity is the dechristianized. Many Christian nations in Europe and in the Americas no longer practice the Catholic religion and have lost their Christian faith.³⁴ John Paul II was saddened by the worsening situation of faith life of those used to be fully Christian nations. He writes, “Nowadays even these Christian territories had become mission territories.”³⁵ Many theologians describe this as the decomposition of faith. These nations lost their sense of faith, sense of the Church, and worst the sense of God—an exclusion of God from people’s lives.³⁶ There is an obvious separation of the faith with the everyday life among these dechristianized. They distance themselves from the Church and perceive her as an obsolete institution and therefore irrelevant.

In response to this growing crisis of faith, the Church has to re-proclaim the Word to these previously Christian nations. The Church’s effort of evangelization is now being redirected to these Christian nations which are greatly influenced by modern existential situations.³⁷ Here lies the last and the newest principal setting of evangelization. This may be called as re-evangelization because of the fact that they already received the initial proclamation.³⁸ This new dimension of evangelization focuses on re-evangelizing the dechristianized who have become indifferent

³² *RM*, 31.

³³ *EN*, 48.

³⁴ Scott Hann, “What is New Evangelization,” YouTube video, 6:27, posted by “St. Paul Center,” September 5, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_oJF7qhqWM, (Accessed 8 November 2014).

³⁵ *RM*, 32.

³⁶ Benedict XVI, Address to the pontifical Council for promoting New Evangelization (May 2011), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pontifical_council_for_promoting_the_new_evangelization(Accessed 12 November 2015).

³⁷ *RM*, 38.

³⁸ *EN*, 20.

to God and to the Church. It may be understood as “a pastoral outreach to those who no longer practice the Christian faith.”³⁹ This aims to revive their drooping spirit, reawaken the faith, and to call them back to the Church.

Comprehension of the aforementioned concept of evangelization and its three principal settings is necessary in understanding the parameters of the New Evangelization. The notion of the New Evangelization and its scope are, in fact, within these three principal settings. The following discussion on the New Evangelization is grounded within these preliminaries.

The XIII Synod of Bishops and the New Evangelization

The General Assembly of the XIII Synod of Bishops, held on October 7 to 8, 2012, focused on the theme “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.”⁴⁰ In the convoking of this synod “Pope Benedict XVI wished to remind Christian communities of the primary task facing the Church in the new millennium.”⁴¹ Reflecting on the experience of his predecessors, Benedict XVI continued to give “emphasis on the Church’s evangelizing mission and stressed on its new character.”⁴² Moreover, he invited all Christians to revisit their gift of faith. Hence, he stressed on the importance of the virtue of faith in the realization of the New Evangelization. As preparation for the Synod, the Holy Father made a request of rekindling this gift of faith because it is the door that will guide the Church in her journey to the New Evangelization.⁴³

Faith and the New Evangelization

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI declared year 2012 to 2013 as the year of faith. This was in view of the preparation of the XIII Synod of Bishops at the same time putting the entire Church

³⁹ Jose S. Palma, DD., “Live Christ, Share Christ Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of the New Evangelization,” *CBCP Monitor* Vol. 16, Num. 5 (July 16-29, 2012): B1.

⁴⁰ *IL*, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Nikola Eterovic, Preface to the Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith Instrumentum Laboris*.

in the spirit of the New Evangelization. It is through faith that the Church is able to discern the signs of the times and it is through this same faith that the Church should respond to it. The Church works on the recovery of the light of faith because only this light is capable of “illuminating every aspect of human existence.”⁴⁴

External manifestations of the alarming signs of the times imply a crisis from within. The worsening dechristianization, for instance, is not due to the changing cultural situation alone but also on each person who behold this supernatural gift of faith. This is an indication of the crisis of faith from within, a crisis in every Christian whose faith tends to weaken or to die. Crisis in faith is never an old story in the life of the Church. Even during the time of Christ there were moments in the life of his disciples that depicted a crisis of faith. Such for instance, in the Gospel Jesus reprimanded his apostles for their lack of faith. Jesus replied towards the apostles’ inquiry regarding their failure to cast out demons that it was due to their “lack of faith” (Mat 17:20). In another instance, Christ once again called his disciples as “men of little faith” (Mat 8:26, 6:30, Luk 12:28). Thus, New Evangelization, on the one hand, strives to restore the faith of those who lost it. New Evangelization is directed to these people so that they can rediscover the beauty of their Christian faith.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the New Evangelization is also directed towards those who have the vocation as evangelizers. This missionary mandate intends to renew their faith through an encounter with Christ so that they would evangelize with credibility. The New Evangelization looks forward to an increase of their faith and to “appreciate this gift of God” because “faith is important in accomplishing great works.”⁴⁶

Faith, for Pope Francis, plays a significant role in the actualization of the evangelizing function of the Church. Francis teaches that it is a gift that one cannot keep to oneself, but it is to

⁴⁴ Francis I, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* of the Supreme Pontiff Francis to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on Faith, § 4, (Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2013), 5.

⁴⁵ Nikola Eterovic, Preface to the Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith Instrumentum Laboris*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

be shared. “The strength of faith, personal and communal, can be measured by the ability to communicate it to others, to spread and live it in charity, to witness to it before those we meet and those who share the path of life with us.”⁴⁷ He further stresses that faith and evangelization go hand in hand. It is by possessing faith that the Church is able to evangelize. He adds that in faith it is Jesus she receives, thus in sharing this light of faith through evangelization it is Christ she gives.⁴⁸

The Concept Development of the New Evangelization

The invitation of rediscovery of faith by Pope Benedict XVI was a follow up of the early summons made by his predecessors. This invitation as well was a reaffirmation of the necessity of evangelization specified by Vatican II. In fact, this was the framework of the XIII Synod of Bishops’ discourse on the New Evangelization.⁴⁹ In order to understand this notion of the New Evangelization of the XIII Synod and to discover its distinction from the previous ideas, it is important to study its point of reference. The Synod’s preparatory document *Instrumentum Laboris* stipulates the origin of its concept of the New Evangelization.

The Perspective of Vatican II. The XIII Synod’s idea of renewing the Church’s evangelizing function suggests a recalling of Vatican II’s new sense of evangelization.⁵⁰ This idea of renewal is the itinerary of the teachings of this momentous Council. *Instrumentum Laboris* summarizes the contribution of Vatican II on developing a deeper understanding of the New Evangelization as follows:

In Christ, the Light of the nations, all humanity regains its

⁴⁷Pope Francis, “*Message of the Pope for the World Mission Day 2013*”, Vatican, 19 May 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/missions/documents/papa-francesco_20130519_giornata-missionaria2013.html, (Accessed 12 November 2014).

⁴⁸ *EG*, 160.

⁴⁹ *IL*, 6.

⁵⁰ Richard M. Rymarz, B. Sc., “Principles of the New Evangelization Analysis and Direction,” (Ph.D diss., Australian Catholic University, 2010), 28.

original and true identity, which sin has obscured, and the Church, whose countenance reflects this Light, has the task of continuing and making present and real, everywhere in today's world, the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ. From this perspective, evangelization is one of the main demands made by the Council which called for renewal and zeal in this mission. Bishops and priests as ordained ministers, have the strict duty to evangelize. However, this fundamental mission of the Church is also the duty of all baptized Christians. The Decree *Ad Gentes* clearly points out that evangelization is the prime content of the Church's mission and shows how evangelization builds up the composition of particular Churches, and generally speaking, all Christian communities. Seen in this way, evangelization is not simply one activity among many, but, in the dynamic of the Church, evangelization is the energy which permits the Church to realize her goal, namely, to respond to the universal call to holiness.⁵¹

According to Pope Paul VI. After Vatican II, the call to renew the Church continued. Pope Paul VI once again reminded the Church of her evangelizing commitment in the modern world through the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. This was Pope Paul VI's way of telling the Church that evangelization needs "to be proposed again with greater force and urgency"⁵² due to the vast and profound changes of the present day society.⁵³ The exhortation was indeed a gift to the Church in order to enrich and deepen herself in the comprehension and appreciation of evangelization. Moreover, it was an affirmation that the vocation to spread the Gospel is the duty of every Christian, not only of the ordained and the religious but also of every lay faithful.

In the beginning of this exhortation Paul VI underscored the centrality of evangelization. The task of evangelization is centered in Christ who called the apostles and commissioned the Church to continue their mission.

Pope Paul VI attempted to re-define the meaning of evangelization, placing it in the present context. He stressed on the importance of evangelization not as the Church's contribution but a

⁵¹ *IL*, 11.

⁵² *IL*, 12.

⁵³ *EN*, 5.

vocation incumbent to her.⁵⁴ Rymarz comments that this document presents a link between Christ, the Church, and evangelization. It is Christ who transforms the Church into evangelized and in turn become an evangelizing community.⁵⁵ Chapter II of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* reveals the definition of evangelization as perceived by the Church in the contemporary context. It says that “for the Church evangelizing means bringing the good news into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”⁵⁶ And since culture plays an important role in the life of people, evangelization should take delicate considerations on it. Nowadays, contemporary culture is driven by priorities that are contradictory to the Gospel.⁵⁷ Evangelization of culture therefore would mean a reorientation of human persons’ priorities that should be grounded and directed towards Christ. Thus, its priorities should be guided by the Gospel values.

Pope Paul VI further insists that still the first and the best means to evangelize is through witnessing. Witnessing characterizes real evangelizers.⁵⁸ It is the most effective way of drawing others to the Christian faith. A witness embodies in his daily life the teachings, the life, and the promises of Christ. A witness practices what he teaches or he walks what he talks. Thus, he easily draws others to the faith with efficacy. In the remaining chapters of the exhortation, Paul VI suggests other various methodologies on evangelization and to what situations these methods are applicable.⁵⁹ Finally Paul VI reminds the workers of evangelization to cling to the Holy Spirit because it is only by the Spirit that one is able to evangelize with credibility.⁶⁰

According to John Paul II. The works of John Paul II on the New Evangelization is historically and substantially a continuation of the aforementioned teachings. In fact, John Paul II

⁵⁴ *EN*, 14.

⁵⁵ Richard M. Rymarz, B. Sc., “Principles of the New Evangelization Analysis and Direction,” 38.

⁵⁶ *EN*, 18.

⁵⁷ Richard M. Rymarz, B. Sc., “Principles of the New Evangelization Analysis and Direction,” 39.

⁵⁸ *EN*, 21.

⁵⁹ *EN*, 40.

⁶⁰ *EN*, 75.

acknowledges that the foundation of the New Evangelization can be found in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.⁶¹ According to John Paul II, the New Evangelization is the Church's way of calling all the faithful to deepen their faith in God, to live the Gospel message, and to proclaim the Good News.⁶² As the crisis of faith continues, which was initially recognized by Vatican II and Paul VI, the necessity of re-proposing the Gospel is intensified.

John Paul II deserves the credit of being the person who coined the term New Evangelization. In 1979, a year after his election as Pope, he visited his hometown in Poland. He witnessed the fidelity to faith of his fellow Polish in spite of the oppression of Marxism. In his address, he declared that the evangelization of the second millennium, the "new evangelization," was born in the cross of Nowa Huta.⁶³ Another declaration John Paul II made regarding New Evangelization was during his 1983 speech to the Latin American Bishops wherein he emphasized that the evangelizing task of the Church needs to be renewed: "new in its ardor, methods and expressions."⁶⁴

In the teachings of John Paul II on the New Evangelization, he placed a renewed emphasis on the role of the laity as participants to the evangelical mission of the Church.⁶⁵ This led to the elaboration of the laity's function in evangelization in John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Christifidelis Laici*. He explained that the laity, being the People of God and as communion of persons in the mystical body united to the Head, has the obligation to proclaim God's Kingdom.⁶⁶

The document that best expressed the mind of John Paul

⁶¹ Richard M. Rymarz, B. Sc., "Principles of the New Evangelization Analysis and Direction," 39.

⁶² John Paul II. Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), no. 33 (Philippines: St. Paul Publication, 1989), 93. (Henceforth to be referred as *CFL*).

⁶³ John Paul II, "Address to the People of Nowa Huta," 16 July 1979, *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition, (11 December 2000), 11.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, , *Discourse to the XIX Assembly of CELAM*, 9 March 1983, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition 16/780 (18 April, 1983), no. 9.

⁶⁵ *CFL*, 25.

⁶⁶ *CFL*, 23.

II is his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. Here lies as well, the uniqueness of his view on the New Evangelization. He clarifies that the real crisis in faith is not an effect of the emerging social circumstances or existential conditions but in every individual Christian—the clergy and the laity, who has the vocation to proclaim the Gospel, but loses the sense of mission. The crisis in faith is characterized by the failure to adhere to their vocation and the vanishing zeal for evangelization.⁶⁷

The Next Phase of Evangelization: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith

The aforementioned sections gave historical and doctrinal foundations of the New Evangelization. It revealed an ascending pattern in the development of the evangelization. Obviously, there has been no essential or substantial change in the concept of evangelization from the teachings of Vatican II up to the views of John Paul II. These are the same concepts of evangelization that XIII Synod of Bishops reiterates. This Synod shares with them the following ideas: that evangelization is the fundamental mission of the Church and its nature is rooted in the Holy Trinity and she begins by evangelizing herself,⁶⁸ that faith is the center of evangelization coupled with conversion through personal encounter in Christ,⁶⁹ that evangelization is the vocation of every Christian by virtue of their baptism,⁷⁰ and that evangelization aims to transform culture through integration of the Christian faith.⁷¹ However, the distinction is in the manner the Church updates and adapts her evangelizing character to the call of the times. The Synod sees a wider scope for the Church’s evangelizing activity due to the “development of human culture and increased knowledge in many fields.”⁷² There is still worsening “trend of secularization”⁷³ that grabs men away from the Church. But the Church is still firm in giving a positive response by accepting these as challenges. Thus,

⁶⁷ *RM*, 8.

⁶⁸ *IL*, 4.

⁶⁹ *IL*, 2.

⁷⁰ *IL*, 118.

⁷¹ *IL*, 6.

⁷² *IL*, 6.

⁷³ *IL*, 6.

she looks at the world as a “fertile ground” and a “privileged place for the New Evangelization.”⁷⁴ As a response to the invitation of John Paul II of renewing the Church’s evangelizing task, the Synod designed a plan for “revivifying the Church’s pastoral activity.”⁷⁵

The New Evangelization that is re-proposed by the XIII Synod of Bishops marks a new phase of the evangelization advocacy of the Church that started during Vatican II. The Synod remained faithful to the doctrinal principles of the new evangelization but made more innovations in order to adapt to the contemporary age. The Church, being sensitive to the world’s social and cultural changes, continues to intensify the urgency of the New Evangelization. The Church believes that this New Evangelization is a lifelong process and it demands sustainability, continuity, and consistency. The recent re-proposal of New Evangelization in 2012, which stresses on the transmission of faith, was simply another period of this long process. John Paul II states that the nineties was the advent of the New Evangelization. Hence, since advent, in the liturgical calendar, is just part of the whole year there are still more seasons to come to complete the cycle. Therefore, the year 2012, during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, reflects another season of the New Evangelization.

The New Evangelization in the Philippine Church

The situation of the Church in Asia, particularly in the Philippines, is far beyond the state of the Western Church. If in the West there has been rapid “dechristianization”⁷⁶ or a decay of faith due to changing existential situations, the Church in the Philippines is marked by vibrancy and growth. However, despite the remarkable signs of ecclesial vitality there is still an alarming problem of immaturity of faith that often leads the Filipino faithful to folk Catholicism, religiosity, and even fanaticism. Bacani writes that the Filipinos are sacramentalized but not yet fully evangelized.⁷⁷ Paul VI teaches that “there is an intense need to deepen, consolidate, nourish and make ever more mature the

⁷⁴ *IL*, 49.

⁷⁵ *IL*, 130.

⁷⁶ *EN*, 52.

⁷⁷ Bishop Teodoro Bacani Jr., DD, *Faith and the New Evangelization*, (Manila: Gift of God Publication, 2013), 87.

faith of those who are already called the faithful or believers, in order that they may be so still more.”⁷⁸

The situation of the Church in the Philippines is a new parameter of the *Missio ad Gentes* according to John Paul II.⁷⁹ The Filipinos received almost five hundred years ago the initial proclamation but still are believed to be in the stage of infancy. Thus, evangelization that is constant and sound is necessary that the faith of the Filipinos will be groomed to its full maturity.

The PCP II’s Renewed Integral Evangelization

Only a year after *Redemptoris Missio*, the church in the Philippines gave its immediate response to the call of the New Evangelization through convening the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in the year 1991.⁸⁰ This Council identified the situation of the church in the country and recognized the evangelization appropriate to the condition of the Philippine Church.

The council addressed the problem of the Filipinos’ immaturity in faith. It drew means to respond to the needs of the Philippine church and approaches to sustain its vitality. The Council, likewise, recognized the need for church renewal in the Philippines that lead to the PCP II’s appropriate concept of the New Evangelization in the Philippine Church that is “Renewed Integral Evangelization.”⁸¹ This idea aims to achieve completion of the process of evangelization in the Philippine church. This will be possible if renewal of the significant aspects in the life of the local church is accomplished—“a renewed catechesis,”⁸² “a renewed social apostolate,”⁸³ “a renewed worship,”⁸⁴ etc. PCP II, in its idea of a renewed evangelization, patterns John Paul II’s notion of the New Evangelization. It writes that a renewed evangelization is characterized by “the clarity of its goals, and by the newness of its fervor, methods and expressions.”⁸⁵

⁷⁸ *EN*, 54.

⁷⁹ *RM*, 40.

⁸⁰ *PCP II*, xv.

⁸¹ *PCP II*, 154.

⁸² *PCP II*, 156.

⁸³ *PCP II*, 165.

⁸⁴ *PCP II*, 167.

⁸⁵ *PCP II*, 186.

As for the goal, a renewed evangelization aims first of all “the formation of Catholics in a properly integrated spirituality.”⁸⁶ However, this goal can be achieved through a new methodology. New methods of a renewed evangelization “are called new not in the sense that they were not previously used before but in the sense that they are given renewed emphasis”⁸⁷ such as emphasis on witnessing⁸⁸ and participative approach.⁸⁹

Renewed evangelization is also characterized with newness in its fervor; a missionary fervor that is similar to the “fervor of the saints and the enthusiasm of the first disciples.”⁹⁰ This fervor is attainable through a deepened spirituality nurtured by prayer.⁹¹ Finally, a renewed evangelization also demands new expressions of transmitting the Good News. This new expression means the “use of symbols and languages understood by the people, expressions and words which touch their minds, hearts and souls.”⁹² This includes the use of the vernacular and looking into the culture of the people “to discover which cultural expressions and symbols resonate effectively in their hearts.”⁹³

The Role of Renewal in the New Evangelization

Renewal plays an important role in the life-long process of the New Evangelization. In fact, since Vatican II, it has been constantly repeated among speeches of the Popes, exhortations, apostolic letters, and even Church conferences. The transformation of the Church through the Gospel requires an act of renewing herself in all aspects. Looking closely at the New Evangelization, one may say that renewal is permanently linked to its process. In the beginning, during the process, and at the end of the Church’s transformation, is renewal.

The Concept of Renewal According to Vatican II

To renew the Church was the sole purpose of John XXIII

⁸⁶ *PCP II*, 187.

⁸⁷ *PCP II*, 193.

⁸⁸ *PCP II*, 194.

⁸⁹ *PCP II*, 195.

⁹⁰ *PCP II*, 199.

⁹¹ *PCP II*, 199.

⁹² *PCP II*, 201.

⁹³ *PCP II*, 201.

for summoning the most remarkable event in the contemporary Church, the Second Vatican Council. John XXIII was convinced that this idea of convening the Council was an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christopher Butler writes that John XXIII believed that this Council was a “new Pentecost, a second effusion of the Holy Spirit who bears witness to Christ and His gospel.”⁹⁴

Butler points out that the Church, being in the world, is in a constant change. While remaining faithful to its font or source, who is Christ, the Church continues to adapt to the demands of time. This is the same idea that John XXIII, through Vatican II, proposed a need for renewal or *aggiornamento*,⁹⁵ which is the “bringing up-to-date of the Church.” The Vatican II’s idea of renewal was exposed in the document *Perfectae Caritatis* (Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life).⁹⁶ In the Latin *aggiornamento* is translated as *accommodata renovatio* (accommodated renewal). Butler explains that this expresses the real notion of renewal that Vatican II insisted. “It embraces simultaneously both a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration of its institutional structures and also the fitting of these structures to the changed conditions of the age.”⁹⁷ Thus, renewal does not mean a radical change but simply a “return to the source.” However, change is embedded in the act of *accommodata* which is called as adaptation.⁹⁸

The Council speaks of renewal in relation to religious life as “a return to the original inspiration of Christian institutional structures.”⁹⁹ This means to go back to Christ, the author of their vocation. The Council, as part of renewing the religious life, invited religious men and women to go back to their charismatic founder or foundress who was filled by the Holy Spirit and was inspired to cooperate in building up the Church. Butler concludes

⁹⁴ Bishop Christopher Butler, *In the Light of the Council*, (Michigan: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1968), 12.

⁹⁵ This is an Italian word that is best translated into English as renewal.

⁹⁶ Vatican II Council, *Perfectae Caritatis Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life*, no. 47, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1995), 612.

⁹⁷ Vatican II Council, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 612.

⁹⁸ Bishop Christopher Butler, *In the Light of the Council*, 18.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

that since Christ is the source of the Spirit, renewal then would mean to go back to Christ.¹⁰⁰ Thus, to renew the Church means to reencounter the source who is Jesus Christ who gives the Church the Holy Spirit in rebuilding herself.

Renewal: The Foundation, Means, and Goal of the New Evangelization

Paul VI writes that “the Church is an evangelizer but she begins by being evangelized herself.”¹⁰¹ This reflects an outward schema of the evangelizing course. New Evangelization as a process begins with evangelization *ad intra* moving towards evangelization *ad extra*.¹⁰² Therefore, the Church should start renewing herself that she may be able to lead others to renewal.

Pope Francis comments that evangelization is an act of obedience to the missionary mandate of Jesus. It is a commitment of the Church to the duty handed over to her by Jesus Christ. Crisis of faith *ad intra* (from within) manifests a weakening of the Church’s commitment to evangelize. It happens when the Church distances herself from the source who is Jesus Christ. Later on the Church begins to be affected by the trend of the secularized world and starts losing her sense of mission.¹⁰³ This mirrors a crisis of faith *ad extra* when the Church loses her enthusiasm to reach out to others.

The goal of the New Evangelization is the renewal of the world—a reorientation of the social and cultural development to the values of the Gospel.¹⁰⁴ But the possibility of success and credibility to perform this task starts with a renewal from within. It is fundamental to the Church who has the vocation to evangelize to renew her missionary commitment.¹⁰⁵ This renewal implies going back to the source who is Jesus Christ. The Church renews herself

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰¹ *EN*, 15.

¹⁰² *RM*, 34.

¹⁰³ *RM*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 64*, in *Vatican II Documents*, ed. A. Flannery, 903-1001, (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1995), 942.

¹⁰⁵ *AGD*, 10.

by experiencing conversion through an encounter with Christ.¹⁰⁶ This would result to a transformed Church with a revived zeal and a renewed fervor to evangelize. However, in order to make the Church up-to-date and to adapt to the present existential situation, she needs renewal of her means to evangelize; new methods and expressions.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, renewal is indispensable from the every aspect of the New Evangelization. It begins with renewal and ends still with renewal. Renewal is the foundation, the means, and the goal of the Church's evangelizing activity.

Renewal as Transformation from Within

In determining the role of renewal to evangelization, it is fitting to reflect first on the idea of Bishop Rolando Tirona who made a meaningful connection between renewal and "refoundation." His idea, actually, of "refoundation" and renewal was addressed to the consecrated persons but the researcher sees a universality of his message.¹⁰⁸ His idea is also appropriate to all Christians who are heirs to the three-fold function of Christ by virtue of their baptism. Just like the consecrated persons, they are commissioned to continue the mission of Christ.

Tirona explains that as followers of Christ and as workers of evangelization, it is necessary for Christians to constantly renew and "refund" themselves. By "refounding" he means going back to the basics and sources of their strength which is their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. On the other hand, "refoundation" should be coupled with renewal which Tirona describes as a sincere examination of themselves and utilization of all methods, aids and formation program to uplift themselves and to keep their hearts burning for the service of God.¹⁰⁹

Tirona further discusses that the rapid change in the world is a challenge for the People of God to an inner transformation. This transformation is incomplete without "refoundation and renewal."

¹⁰⁶ *EG*, 264.

¹⁰⁷ *PCP II*, 167.

¹⁰⁸ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Church Renewal, The Challenge to Catholicism in the New Millennium*, (Philippines: CBCP Publication, 2001), 180.

¹⁰⁹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Church Renewal, The Challenge to Catholicism in the New Millennium*, 180.

A transformation from within is for him a “transformation of no return.” In order to illustrate this, he shares the metaphor of a caterpillar. He narrates that “a caterpillar that has been transformed into a cocoon, it will not and will never go back to its old self for it has found new life within.”¹¹⁰ Similarly Christians, being the Church who are renewed from within, continue to find new ways of expressions and new ways of giving life and sharing Christ with others.

Tirona goes on saying that “refoundation” and renewal imply a return to the roots. The Church who was instituted by Christ should take the challenge of rooting herself again to Christ. Thus, the People of God, who are the Church and have the vocation to evangelize, need to have new ways, means, and expressions to contextualize their Christian life and become effective evangelizers in the contemporary world.¹¹¹

The Renewal from the Particular to the Universal Church

Renewal does not happen abruptly. It is often gradual and a long term process. It usually starts within the small scale until it renews the complete whole. The Church, on the other hand, in her vision of renewal begins from her individual parts until she completely renews her entire self.

The Church, being universal, is a “concrete communion of particular churches.”¹¹² Unity of the particular churches builds up the one Universal Church. This is easy to grasp if one looks at the Church as an institution or an organization. The Church, in this view, is one because the particular churches are bound with one institutional link, as for example the college of bishops under the authority of the bishop of Rome. However, looking at it in the eyes of theology, it connotes a deep ecclesiological meaning. *Ad Gentes* mentions that the particularity of the Church is her self-realization in various cultures, societies, and communities.¹¹³ The unity of these particular churches “in the call of God, the grace

¹¹⁰ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *Church Renewal, The Challenge to Catholicism in the New Millennium*, 181.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *AGD*, 19.

¹¹³ *AGD*, 19.

of the Spirit, the preaching of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist, the fellowship of love and the apostolic ministry makes up the universality of the one Church.”¹¹⁴ The particular churches which acknowledge communion with the Church are the “living cells” of the Church.

The entire Body, the Church, who seeks to renew herself should start with her “individual cells”—the particular churches. Hence, it is proper to say that this renewal should be a movement from below or a movement from within. The particular church is the presence or the “concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific territory.”¹¹⁵ This often points to a diocesan Church. Renewal, for a diocesan church, is strengthening its fidelity to communion with the Universal Church. Consequently, this is done through renewing the diocese’s commitment to perform the Church’s apostolic ministry in its jurisdiction. John Paul II mentions that “communion and mission” are profoundly interconnected.”¹¹⁶ The diocese that is faithful to its communion with the Universal Church should renew its missionary commitment. The mission, which prioritizes evangelization, should be performed through the diocesan pastoral ministry. Thus, in renewal, the diocese should be “bold and creative in the task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization.”¹¹⁷

The Renewal of the Individual Christian to the Entire People of God

The Church, being universal, who begins its renewal from her particular churches, the People of God, in the same way, should start renewal in the individual Christians. On the other hand, if the particular churches are the “cells” of the Universal Church, the baptized Christian is also a vital component of the People of God. However, being a member of the People of God is not only a privilege but also a responsibility.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law identifies three categories

¹¹⁴ *LG*, 23.

¹¹⁵ *EG*, 30.

¹¹⁶ *CFL*, 32.

¹¹⁷ *EG*, 33.

of the People of God or the Christ's Faithful, namely: the clergy, the laity, and the religious who are drawn from both groups.¹¹⁸

The laity constitutes the majority of the People of God. What distinguishes them from the clergy is that they are not ordained as Church sacred ministers.¹¹⁹ However, these groups share equal dignity¹²⁰ which is deep-seated in their membership to the Body the Church with Christ as the head.¹²¹ The laity's incorporation and belongingness to the Church through baptism connotes rights and duties. By baptism Christians become children of God and sharers of Christ's three-fold mission.¹²² The Church, the People of God who is an heir to Christ's mission has an innate vocation to evangelize. Therefore, the laity who comprise a larger part of the People of God are likewise commissioned by Christ to be evangelizers. The laity who are immersed in the world basically evangelize through their vocation to holiness. By living their respective lives according to the Spirit and the Gospel while being involved in the temporal affairs and earthly activities they fulfill this vocation to evangelize.¹²³

The New Evangelization calls for a co-responsibility of the lay faithful in the Church's mission.¹²⁴ The Church invites the laity for an active participation on this noble task. Through the New Evangelization, the Church reminds the lay faithful that they are agents of evangelization. The first and the most effective means of evangelization is witnessing to an authentic Christian life. Benedict XVI strongly emphasizes that "evangelizing is not merely a way of speaking, but a form of living."¹²⁵

The laity is the front-liner of the Church in the secular world. The evangelization of the secular society and in the work

¹¹⁸ *Code of Canon Law*, c. 207, in *Code of Canon Law in English Translation* (Philippines: Paulines, 2001), 49. (Henceforth to be referred to as *CCL*).

¹¹⁹ *CCL*, 207.

¹²⁰ *CCL*, 208.

¹²¹ *CCL*, c. 312 § 1 no. 2.

¹²² *CFL*, 14.

¹²³ *CFL*, 17.

¹²⁴ *CFL*, 32.

¹²⁵ Benedict XVI, "Address on the Jubilee of Catechists and Religion Teachers," 10 December 2000, Vatican City, *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition, (11 December 2000), 11.

places is proper exclusively to the laity.¹²⁶ “It is the Catholic laity who rub elbows with their Christian and non-Christian counterparts and who, in that context, are to find suitable means and opportunities to inject a Gospelizing or Evangelizing moment into those interactions.”¹²⁷

The apostolate of the laity does not only mean performing various church ministries that are applicable to them. The world that they are in is their vast field of apostolate. “The complex world of education, politics, society, and economics, as well as the world of culture, of sciences and arts, of international life, and of the mass media” are the laity’s area of apostolate.¹²⁸ The Church needs the laity to fulfill this mission of communicating Christ to these vast areas.

An experience of renewal is necessary so that laity can be effective agents of evangelization. The New Evangelization demands an active participation of the laity with their renewed commitment, greater fervor, enthusiasm and zeal to fulfill their mission. The renewal of Christians is initiated with conversion to Christ. Conversion springs from a renewed encounter with Christ, the source of their vocation. It is the Christians’ way of re-rooting themselves to the source and re-orienting themselves to God. This renewed encounter should be continuously sustained through prayer, which should be a constant dialogue with Christ. Reconciliation with Christ implies reconciliation with the Church. Christians who are renewed through conversion should also imbibe a renewed sense of belongingness to the Church. The Christians’ new relationship with Christ brought about by conversion would inspire them to a renewal of their baptismal promises. Being fully conscious of the membership to the Church through baptism, Christians should develop a “renewed missionary impulse.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ *CFL*, 15.

¹²⁷ Bishop Robert F. Vasa, “Evangelization: The Essential Mission of the Church,” *Catholic Culture .Org*, (Published September 8, 2012), <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=10425#the>, (Accessed 2 February, 2015).

¹²⁸ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, no. 434, (Manila: Paulines, 2009), 149. (Henceforth to be referred as *PCPII*).

¹²⁹ *EG*, 262.

This will be their “spiritual force”¹³⁰ to fulfill their vocation to evangelize and be witnesses of Christ to the world.

The Parish and the New Evangelization

The Universal Church is a “concrete communion of particular churches.”¹³¹ Thus, it follows that the concrete communion of individual parishes builds up the particular or the diocesan church. “The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory.”¹³² It is the Universal Church’s most “immediate and visible expression” in a particular locality. John Paul II appropriately describes a parish as a “Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.”¹³³ The parish is where the Church and the faithful meet. It is the Church’s easiest access to individual Christian faithful. Therefore, the parish is a fertile ground and a privilege place for the New Evangelization.

The New Evangelization, to the parish, is aimed at “fostering an integrated Christian spirituality among the faithful and building a truly local church in communion with the Apostolic See.”¹³⁴ Cardinal Dolan speaks of a parish as the “front-liner” of this New Evangelization.¹³⁵ In the parish there live the subject and the agent of the New Evangelization. It means to say that in the parish the Church can find those Christians to be evangelized and Christians that would evangelize. In short, the parish community is a target of evangelization and at the same time the source of evangelizers. “Evangelization must remain rooted in the parish.”¹³⁶ The parish is where a faithful who has all the potentials of becoming an evangelizer comes into contact with the Church, receives formation of discipleship, and nourishes by

¹³⁰ *EG*, 272.

¹³¹ Bishop Christopher Butler, *In the Light of the Council*, 12.

¹³² *EG*, 28.

¹³³ *CFL*, 25.

¹³⁴ *PCP II*, Art. 1, #2.

¹³⁵ Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Foreword to *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish*, Michael White and Tom Corcoran, (USA: Ave Maria Press, 2013), xiii.

¹³⁶ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Disciples Called to Witness*, www.usccb.org/.../upload/Disciples-Called-to-Witness-5-30-12.pdf. (Accessed 12 December 2014).

the Word and the Sacrament.¹³⁷ The New Evangelization, firstly, calls for making the parish active in its duty of forming the faith of its parishioners.¹³⁸ The parish is encouraged to a commitment of sustaining and continuing the initial evangelization to its Christian faithful.

Secondly, the New Evangelization is addressed to those baptized Catholics who do not live the demands of their Christian life and have left their parishes. They are the nominal Catholics who disregard the importance of the parish and treat it as an “outdated institution.”¹³⁹ This is impossible to accomplish if this duty of inviting Catholics back home is done by the parish priest alone. This task is also difficult to achieve if the parish priest would rely on the traditional approaches. The priest, therefore, needs collaborators to help him in this mission. The priest should work in communion and in participation of his lay parishioners to bring their parish nearer to those who had fallen away.¹⁴⁰

The New Evangelization, thirdly, challenges the parishes to transform their church into a “community of evangelizers.” The parishes should advance from being a “sacramentalizing” parish into an evangelizing parish.¹⁴¹ It is a tough challenge for the parish priests to study their parishioners, identify their gifts, and form them to the works of evangelization. The immediate persons the parish priest could tap are his passive and the active parishioners.

There are many Catholics who go to the Church for the sake of compliance of their Sunday obligation. These Catholics are “passive Christians” who simply hear Mass, receive sacraments, listen to sermons, and resign to God’s will.¹⁴² They can only be seen in the parish usually on Sundays; they are there during

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ *IL*, 105.

¹³⁹ *EG*, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Sally L. Mews, *Inviting Catholics Home*, (Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2002), 32.

¹⁴¹ Thomas P. Sweetser, SJ and Patricia M. Forster, OSF, *Transforming the Parish: Models for the Future*, (Wisconsin: Sheed and Ward, 1998), 21.

¹⁴² Tom Forrest, C.Ss.R., “Evangelization: The Task of Every Christian,” *International Review of Mission*, 75, no. 198 (February 1986), 147-151.

the Mass and immediately leave once it is over. They are called passive Christians not only because they do not render service to the Church, but also they lack deepening of their faith and living out their Christian life. The parish, therefore, is challenged through the New Evangelization of forming the faith and cultivating the sense of discipleship among these people.¹⁴³

On the other hand, the parish, all the more, could rely on its active parishioners. These faithful, fortunately, have already the desire, enthusiasm, and the zeal to participate to the works of the parish. However, in order to equip them to the work of evangelization, there is still that strong need for an essential formation. In order that the parish could utilize these people on evangelization, they should undergo the necessary training and spiritual formation. In regard to both passive and active Catholics, the parish should work on the faith formation and integration in cultivating their sense of service to the Church.¹⁴⁴

In order to comply with the demands of the New Evangelization, the parishes are encouraged to undergo pastoral discernment and innovations of pastoral approaches in the parishes to transform their community into an evangelizing parish. In the parish pastoral plan of programs and activities the need for evangelization should be the foremost priority.¹⁴⁵ Since the traditional method is no longer applicable, the parish should explore on “new methods” that foster collaboration between the parish priest and the parishioners.

The Need for Parish Renewal in the New Evangelization

The call for a New Evangelization is also a call for renewal in the Church that should begin in the parish level.¹⁴⁶ PCP II identifies a renewed Church as “a community of disciples missioned by the Lord to labor in a particular situation.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, a renewed parish implies a mission-oriented community of

¹⁴³ *RM*, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Tom Forrest, C.Ss.R., “Evangelization: The Task of Every Christian,” *International Review of Mission*, 75, no. 198, 147.

¹⁴⁵ *EG*, 33.

¹⁴⁶ Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ *PCP II*, 156.

parishioners and their parish priest. The present situation of many parishes in the world manifests that there is a need of greater effort for renewal.¹⁴⁸

In conformity to the demands of the New Evangelization, parishes need to undergo renewal. Renewal should be understood not as a change of ecclesial structure and systems in the parish setting. The parish structure is to remain in its customary setting as a Eucharistic Community with the parish priest as the head whose decisions remain absolute. Rather, parish renewal is a reorientation of the parish's vision towards mission while remaining as a customary place of gathering for the faithful who seeks growth in holiness.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, parish renewal is to energize the community with collaborative approach on responding to the need of the Church for evangelization while the parish continues to live faithfully as an ecclesial communion.

Donal Harrington opines that parish renewal is “essentially about sharing in a new way in the responsibility for the future of their parishes.”¹⁵⁰ It is an agenda by which “priests and parishioners, in a spirit of listening, enter into a shared responsibility” for rebuilding their parishes.¹⁵¹ This new way is a result of a renewed encounter with Christ wherein these men and women enter into a new relationship with Him. Harrington agrees with Pope Francis that this new relationship is characterized by self-giving, service, and reconciliation with other.¹⁵² Thus, parish renewal would mean “bringing the parish nearer to people.”¹⁵³

On the part of the parishioners, renewal means a development of a new sense of belongingness to the Church through the parish community. A renewed sense of belongingness is usually brought about by conversion to Christ and reconciliation with the Church.¹⁵⁴ This renewal would lead to a renewed sense of responsibility characterized by readiness to serve the Church

¹⁴⁸ *CFL*, 26.

¹⁴⁹ *PCP II*, 598.

¹⁵⁰ Donal Harrington, *Parish Renewal: Volume I: Reflecting on the Experience*, (USA: Columba Press, 1997), 5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵² *EG*, 88.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵⁴ Donal Harrington, *Parish Renewal: Volume I: Reflecting on the Experience*, 13.

and active participation in her apostolic works. The renewal of the parishioners reflects a movement of going back and moving forward. By going back, the parishioners are led back to Christ and reconciled with the Church, and by moving forward the parishioner is inspired to an active participation to the mission of the Church.¹⁵⁵

The call of the New Evangelization of renewing and reviewing parishes is also an invitation to formulate new methodologies of participating in the mission of the Church.¹⁵⁶ Through renewal, the parishes are tasked to a constant openness to adapt to the changing community situations where the parish is situated.¹⁵⁷ Thus, in the Philippine Church the parishes are encouraged to formulate new methods or approaches of Church renewal.¹⁵⁸ PCP II advised new methods that are “participative”¹⁵⁹ such as the “team approach.”¹⁶⁰ Parishes nowadays place greater attentions on ecclesial movements and small communities with their efforts to renew the Church. These are perceived as agents of renewal capable of bringing the church closer to people with their respective charismatic gifts.¹⁶¹

The Renewal through Small Faith Communities

In the New Evangelization, parishes are to be made as “environments of living communion and participation.”¹⁶² John Paul II defines a parish as a community of small communities just like the Universal Church as communion of particular churches.¹⁶³ In the parishes many small communities and organizations exist which render service to the church in accordance with their charismatic gifts. The parish has to hold the responsibility in forming these individual groups and band them together to achieve

¹⁵⁵ Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish*, 15.

¹⁵⁶ *PCP II*, 193.

¹⁵⁷ *EG*, 28.

¹⁵⁸ *PCP II*, 194.

¹⁵⁹ *PCP II*, 195.

¹⁶⁰ *PCP II*, 198.

¹⁶¹ *PCP II*, 198.

¹⁶² *EG*, 28.

¹⁶³ *CFL*, 29.

its vision of a complete renewal.¹⁶⁴ The New Evangelization further suggests that the parishes should take advantage of the presence of small communities and transform them into agents of renewal. The basic pattern for parish renewal is to begin from the grassroots. Thus, in renewing the entire parish community the parish should begin with its various small communities.¹⁶⁵

Small faith communities perform renewal by the utilization of their respective charismatic gifts.¹⁶⁶ Many are drawn into joining these communities to live out their Christian life in a new way apart from the traditional ones that they often experience in their parish. Small faith communities are new expressions of being a church.¹⁶⁷ These small communities are gatherings of the faithful who meet regularly either in the parish or some other places. “When they meet they tell their stories, share their experiences of God working in their lives, challenge each other to live out their call to put the Gospel into action, and participate in common rituals.”¹⁶⁸ Most of these communities share in the common goal of renewing the Church or their parishes. However, they wish first to renew themselves through the intensification of their Christian life in a small scale, usually exclusive among their members. The parish priest is challenged, therefore, to unify the individual groups and reorient them into a single goal which is parish renewal. He must be able to inspire these groups “to transcend their own tendency to be exclusively centered on their own concerns and members.”¹⁶⁹ He is tasked to animate and facilitate these groups to work as one in rebuilding their parish.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ Frank DeSiano, CSP and Kenneth Boyack, CSP, *Creating the Evangelizing Parish*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 23.

¹⁶⁵ Donal Harrington, *Parish Renewal: Volume I: Reflecting on the Experience*, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas P. Sweetser, SJ and Patricia M. Forster, OSF, *Transforming the Parish: Models for the Future*, 127.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁶⁹ Frank DeSiano, CSP and Kenneth Boyack, CSP, *Creating the Evangelizing Parish*, 112.

¹⁷⁰ *PCP II*, 198.

The Parish Renewal Experience (PREX) Movement

Ecclesial movements and small faith communities are functional centers of spiritual formation and at the same time agents of renewal.¹⁷¹ The Parish Renewal Experience Movement is one of these promising individual groups that are focused on renewing the parishes. The Parish Renewal Experience is a movement rooted in the spirit of Vatican II with its vision of *aggiornamento* or renewal.¹⁷² The Church document that links the PREX movement to Vatican II is Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Through reflection on this document, Fr. Charles Gallagher had drawn the inspiration of conceptualizing a movement that would respond to the need of the Church to be evangelized so as to evangelize with credibility which he named as the Parish Renewal Experience.¹⁷³ From the US, the movement reached the Philippines in 1980. The quick spread of the movement in the Philippine Church was due to Jaime Cardinal Sin's invitation to Fr. Gallagher to conduct a training workshop for the Filipino priests on facilitating the movement.¹⁷⁴

The "Ecclesiality" of Parish Renewal Experience

Just like many group endeavors of the lay faithful, the PREX is perceived as an ecclesial movement. However, for the PREX movement to validate its authenticity as a new ecclesial movement, it has to comply with the requirements laid down by the Universal Church.

"Ecclesiality" is the essential attribute that all the movements, whether of clergy or of the laity, share in common.¹⁷⁵ Movements under the guidance and in full communion with Catholic Church are called ecclesial movements. "Ecclesiality,"

¹⁷¹ *PCP II*, 610.

¹⁷² Mylo C. Vergara, D.D., *A Companion to the Original PREX Manual*, (Philippines: St. Paul's Publication, 2001), 2..

¹⁷³ Msgr. Fidelis Ruben Limcaco, *PREX: An Evangelizing Instrument for Parish Renewal According to the Philippine Setting*, (Philippines: Syneraide Research and Publication, 2005), 7.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifideles Laici*, (30 December 1988), no. 30, (Philippines: St. Paul Publication, 1989), 90. (Henceforth to be referred as *CFL.*)

in the first place, does not only mean that a particular movement is a community that sprouts within the Catholic Church. Rather “Ecclesiality” speaks about unity. It manifests the communion of the new ecclesial movements to the Universal Church. Moreover, it speaks about the movements’ recognition of their identity as part of the Body, the Church, which Christ they look up as the head. A more specific importance of “ecclesiality” is presented by Ghirlanda. He says that a movement is often composed of variety of vocations diversified by age or even cultural backgrounds. The specification “ecclesial” expresses the fact that their intention is that of presenting communion between various vocations within the Body, the Church herself. The author explains that the movement, in order to preserve its “ecclesiality,” should preserve its unity with the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁶ Thus, these movements are subjected to the judgment, to the supervision, to the spiritual guidance of the ecclesial authorities, such as the parish priests and the bishops who work in name of the Pope.¹⁷⁷ The Popes, in order to ensure this ecclesiality of the movements, draw required guidelines or specific criteria. Pope Paul VI drafted his guidelines from the Vatican II document *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, and John Paul II enumerated the criteria of “ecclesiality” in the document *Christifidelis Laici*.¹⁷⁸ Hanna, however, summarizes these criteria of “ecclesiality” in the following manner:

- The criterion of schools of holiness which promote a unity between faith and life.
- An inescapable responsibility to confess the Catholic faith and to clearly show the fidelity to the Church’s magisterium in matters of faith and doctrine.
- Witness of communion, steadfast and convinced with the

¹⁷⁶ Tony Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, (New York: Alba House, 2006), 5.

¹⁷⁷ Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ., “Charism and the Juridical Status of the Ecclesial Movements,” *Laity Today: Movements in the Church*, 2, no. 2 (1999): 132.

¹⁷⁸ H. Richard McCord, “New Ecclesial Movements as Agents of a New Evangelization,” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/new-evangelization/upload/ecclesial-movements-mccord.pdf>, (Accessed 28 October 2014), 2 2

Pope, who is the center of unity between the Universal Church and the Bishops.¹⁷⁹

- Compliance with and participation in the apostolic aims of the Church.
- The movement should have “a committed presence in the society.
- The movement should possess “a renewed commitment to making Christ present in our world through solidarity, service, and charity.¹⁸⁰

The PREX Movement as a New Ecclesial Movement

Looking intently at the very nature and origin of the PREX movement, one would surely be convinced that the PREX movement is undoubtedly a new ecclesial movement. The PREX movement performs an evangelizing mission which preparation is made through a preliminary formation. This preparation intends formation on spirituality, sanctity, and personal renewal.¹⁸¹ The movement itself is a school of holiness wherein parishes serve as their formation structure. It is also a place of educating the faith. Moreover, the movement, likewise, provides houses of spirituality for those who desire further formation and commit themselves fully to the work of the movement.¹⁸² These are the ways the PREX movement complies with the first criteria of “ecclesiality.”

PREX formation inspires its members to revisit their Catholic faith. This, once again, makes them intensify their love for the faith. Greater love for the faith means more faithful Catholics ready to take responsibility and service for the Church.¹⁸³ In this aspect, the movement fulfills the second requirement of “ecclesiality.”

New Ecclesial Movement, as that of PREX, is a witness to communion. As a witness to communion essentially the

¹⁷⁹ Tony Hanna, *New Ecclesial Movements*, 11.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸¹ Msgr. Fidelis Ruben Limcaco, *PREX: An Evangelizing Instrument for Parish Renewal According to the Philippine Setting*, 139.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 108.

movement should reflect the communion of the Church.¹⁸⁴ The PREX movement in its own way mirrors this communion. It is a manifestation of the Church in a small scale.¹⁸⁵ The Institutional Church is under its supreme authority, the Pope, to whom the faithful is subjected.¹⁸⁶ The PREX movement in the parish is under the authority of the parish priest, while the movement in the diocesan level is under its local ordinary. Moreover, the movement in the national level, just like the PREX movement in the country, is likewise subjected to the authority of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines or the CBCP. Representing the CBCP's authority is the Council for the Laity. This subjection to the competent authority shows PREX's desire for collaboration.

The Universal Church is also a communion of vocations. The PREX movement mirrors this communion through its members who embrace particular vocations and states of life. Every faithful, whether single or married, religious or cleric is welcome to be part of the movement.¹⁸⁷ In these dimension, the PREX movement bears out the third requirement for "ecclesiality."

Empowerment of the laity and evangelization are the services that PREX movement offers to the Church. This is the movement's way of expressing its strong missionary thrust for the whole world and its way of cooperating with the works of the Church.¹⁸⁸ The movement, likewise, is inclusive and ensures to guard itself from closing in on oneself or one's circle. In this aspect, the PREX movement realizes the fourth requirement for "ecclesiality."

The PREX movement has been existing in the Church for about thirty years now. Moreover, it has been a big help in bringing vibrancy to the life of the parish as well as sometimes

¹⁸⁴ Lucas Card. Moreina Neves, "The Movement in the Life of the Local Churches," *Laity Today: The Ecclesial Movements in the Pastoral Concern of the Bishops* 4, no. 2 (2000), 107.

¹⁸⁵ Mylo C. Vergara, D.D., *A Companion to the Original PREX Manual*, 5.

¹⁸⁶ Fr. Mark Renacia, OAR, class notes on *Ecclesiology* (Quezon City Philippines: Recoletos Formation Center, distributed 7 February 2014), 9.

¹⁸⁷ Msgr. Fidelis Ruben Limcaco, *PREX: An Evangelizing Instrument for Parish Renewal According to the Philippine Setting*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

of help to the society. The movement, with its program, extends its work to the opening of the consciousness of its delegate to the sad reality of the world today, such as poverty and injustices.¹⁸⁹ The movement teaches its members to live according to the spirit of the Gospel that requires servanthood, moral uprightness, sensitivity to fellow men, solidarity, and defense of human rights and dignity of persons.¹⁹⁰ With this, the movement accomplishes the fifth requirement of “ecclesiality.”

Finally, the last criterion of “ecclesiality” is the very purpose of the evangelizing task of the PREX movement—to make Christ present in the world. The movement labors to develop a renewed commitment among its members in order to respond through solidarity, service, and charity to the needs of the Church.¹⁹¹

It terms of newness, which means something that was never made before, the PREX could claim its unique existence. However, according to PCP II, newness of a movement in the Church depends on its emphasis. Thus, the PREX as a new movement focuses on the new emphasis on renewing the Church; namely reconciliation, encounter, experience, and belongingness to the parish church as preliminaries for evangelization.¹⁹²

The Parish Renewal Experience (PREX) Movement: Responding to the Call of the New Evangelization

The PREX movement is a sharer of the goal of the New Evangelization that is Church renewal. The PREX Movement is people-focused which endeavors to reconcile parishioners to the Church, thus making them actively involved in the task of renewing the Church through their parish communities.¹⁹³ New Evangelization, on the other hand, also entrusts the task of renewing the Church to the individual Christians. Renewing every individual Christian would result to the transformation of the entire

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 102.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁹² Mylo Vergara, DD., *A Companion to the Original PREX Manual*, 73.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 3.

People of God—the Church.¹⁹⁴ Both the New Evangelization and the PREX movement perceive renewal as being evangelized so as to evangelize others with credibility. Thus, to be renewed means to rekindle the faith, to develop each Christian’s sense of mission, and be transformed as evangelizers.¹⁹⁵ The parish is where New Evangelization and the PREX movement meet. Both the New Evangelization and the PREX movement view the parish as its forefront in the renewal and evangelical tasks of the Church. It is in the parish that renewal and self-evangelization of the Church begin. Finally, it is also in the parish that the PREX Movement humbles itself to be utilized as instrument of renewal and as agent of the New Evangelization.¹⁹⁶

The PREX Movement: An Agent of Renewal

The PREX movement provides a privilege path for personal and spiritual renewal. The movement offers, in a unique way, an encounter with the Lord as an avenue for this renewal. This renewal is characterized by reconciliation with God through the Church and in particular, it is reconciliation with Christ through the parish. To be renewed for the PREX movement is to become Christ’s witnesses capable of sharing with others their new relationship with Christ and His Church. Through the PREX formation the members are made witnesses by first “establishing self-identity”¹⁹⁷ The members are inspired to look back and study how they carried themselves as Catholics. They are encouraged to review themselves, to recognize who they are as part of the Church, and in turn be determined to transform themselves in order to become good Catholics. In short, this stage of renewal for PREX movement is an aid for the member to a deeper appreciation of his dignity as part of the Body, the Church. The renewal process continues with making the participant understand God’s plan for the Church. This part of the formation should be able “to drive very clearly and specifically God’s plan of unity of

¹⁹⁴ *CCL*, 49.

¹⁹⁵ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *Church Renewal, The Challenge to Catholicism in the New Millennium*, 181.

¹⁹⁶ Msgr. Fidelis Ruben Limcaco, *PREX: An Evangelizing Instrument for Parish Renewal According to the Philippine Setting*, 9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

all Catholics.”¹⁹⁸ Moreover, it should bring to the consciousness of the members that they, “being God’s chosen people, are called upon to be united with one another by keeping a living relationship with each other, because only through this, Jesus can be alive in them to lead them in their journey to God’s Kingdom.”¹⁹⁹ After this, the renewal continues with developing the members’ commitment to cooperate and live out this plan of God for the Church.²⁰⁰ The good thing about PREX renewal process is that it is directed towards the Sacrament. The members’ reconciliation with God and His Church is enriched by the sacrament of Penance and the members’ commissioning as witnesses is strengthened by the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The PREX Movement: Agent of the New Evangelization

In fulfilling the task of evangelization, the PREX movement places into the parish context the Universal Church’s vision of evangelizing first herself so as to evangelize others. The PREX Movement is considered in the Philippine Church as a strategic new methodology of evangelization which start in a “small group, next those around them and then all the faithful in the parish.”²⁰¹

Evangelizing through Renewal. The PREX movement, being people-focused, evangelizes its members through a process of renewal and formation. This movement holds that renewal itself is a form of evangelizing individual parishioners. This evangelization is accomplished through the process of renewal that takes four vital steps:

- Encounter with the self and with God,
- Conversion to Christ,
- Reconciliation with Christ and His Church and
- Commitment to evangelization through witnessing.

Team Evangelization. The PREX movement is one of

¹⁹⁸ Msgr. Fidelis Ruben Limcaco, *PREX: An Evangelizing Instrument for Parish Renewal According to the Philippine Setting*, 137.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

the forms of participation in the life of the Church. It is a group-form of participation wherein the lay faithful work together in the principle of collaboration in the Church's life and mission. The PREX movement manifests a concrete "communion of the Church and of unity of the Church of Christ."²⁰² John Paul II explains that communion in the ecclesial movements should be authenticated by its commitment to mission. He says that "communion leads to mission, and mission itself is communion."²⁰³ The PREX movement values communion and pledges to participate in the apostolate of the Church. In communion, this movement performs evangelization as a team. The Philippine church through PCP II acknowledges this movement's effort to foster team evangelization. Through its formation the PREX Movement trains its members into a "team approach of evangelizing."²⁰⁴

Evangelizing through Common Witnessing. The most effective means of evangelization is witnessing. Paul VI comments that "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."²⁰⁵ The PREX movement endeavors itself to form its members to become witnesses; witnesses who live their Christian life according to the Gospel and give "testimony to their experience of God's grace."²⁰⁶ The beauty of PREX movement in witnessing is that they live it in common. As the PREX's members work on team evangelizing, they as well express common witnessing. It is communal testimony of living the Christian faith, a concrete visible sign of a Church in communion and in mission.

Some Testimonies from San Sebastian Parish Manila: Final Word

Renewal matters in the implementation of the New Evangelization. The New Evangelization addresses the crisis of faith resulting from the loss of the sense of mission and the

²⁰² *CFL*, 29.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *PCP II*, 198.

²⁰⁵ *EN*, 41.

²⁰⁶ *PCP II*, 194.

worsening indifference to the Church. Thus, renewal through the New Evangelization means the Church going back to Christ, her source of fervor. Moreover, it is the Church moving forward as she makes herself up-to-date and relevant to the life of the people.

The New Evangelization is a movement of the Universal Church of renewing herself. This phenomenon is being contextualized in the territorial presence of the Church—the parishes. Moreover, the task of renewal is bound to the very life of the parish. Renewal in the parish happens when it is transformed into an evangelizing community that reaches out to the faithful beyond its walls. The Parish Renewal Experience Movement is a means for parishes in responding to the Church’s missionary mandate for a New Evangelization. The PREX movement places itself in the service of the New Evangelization through the renewal of parishioners and their parish communities.

The dynamics of the New Evangelization and the PREX movement illustrates the close link between the two. The PREX movement responds to the summon of the New Evangelization by placing itself parallel to the aims of the New Evangelization—Church renewal and evangelization. This dynamics begins from the grass roots—the renewal and evangelization of every individual Christians. The New Evangelization goes back to the parishes which are homes for these individual Christians. Thus, these parishes are the forefront of the New Evangelization. On the other hand the PREX movement, being people focused, targets the renewal of every individual parishioner. These parishioners, being the individual cells of the parish and of the Church, collectively, will lead to the parish renewal and possibly to the renewal of the entire Church.

The PREX movement is a privileged path for parishioners to experience renewal in their parishes. This movement provides the parishioners an encounter with the Lord, reconcile them to Him and His Church, and eventually renew their commitment as witnesses of Christ and as evangelizers for the Church. The PREX movement, which commissions its members to evangelize, accomplishes this task by team evangelization and common witnessing.

This dynamics of the New Evangelization and parish

renewal is embodied in the pastoral life of San Sebastian Parish, Manila. The PREX Movement accompanied this parish on its way to renewing itself into a vibrant evangelizing faith community. The movement contributes to the revitalization of the life of the parish as a center of renewal, Christian values formation and evangelization of the lay faithful. Since September 2009, this movement has already conducted twenty-four classes of PREX weekend formation seminar and a total of 512 renewed parishioners.²⁰⁷ This PREX formation which is specially designed to empower the parishioners through the process of renewal has produced renewed parishioners now active in their respective ministries and other parish apostolates.²⁰⁸ Thus, its parishioners are convinced that this movement has made a significant contribution on the transformation of the San Sebastian Parish into a vibrant parochial community.

The PREX movement holds that renewal always begins with an encounter with the Lord of the individual parishioner. Christ gives meaning to one's experience of renewal. Renewal implies a return to the roots, in case of man, it is coming back to his source that is Christ—the Way, Truth and Life.²⁰⁹ Second step to renewal after encounter is conversion. This is characterized by a change of heart, a change of life, and a detachment from the old ways to embrace a new life that Christ offers.²¹⁰ Testimonies of conversion to Christ are abundant from those who experienced renewal through PREX movement in San Sebastian.

The PREX movement makes the greatest impact on its individual members. It leaves a mark that is life-changing and faith renewing in its every individual graduate. One respondent shared that the beauty of PREX movement is that he came to the movement as an individual and he walked out with a community.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ This is from the compiled records and chronicle of the Parish Renewal Experience Movement of the San Sebastian Parish Documentation Committee as of January of 2016.

²⁰⁸ Aurora Guilaran (Lead Couple of San Sebastian PREX Movement) Interview by the researcher, February 22, 2015.

²⁰⁹ Karl Rahner, SJ., *Theology of Renewal*, (New York: Sheed and Ward Ltd., 1964), 23.

²¹⁰ Donal Harrington, *Parish Renewal: Volume I: Reflecting on the Experience*, 13.

²¹¹ Elmar L. Mahar (Member of San Sebastian PREX Movement Class no. 19) Interview by the researcher, March 7, 2015.

It is a personal transformation from being self-centered into a church and community-oriented. Moreover, a converted individual pledges to a change of behavior, of attitudes, and priorities. This individual looks forward to a new life perfected by Christian values. This is evident in this line from a PREX graduate's journal: *simula ngayon magbabagong buhay na ako, magiging mabuting asawa na ako, magiging mabait na anak na ako, at magiging mabuting Katoliko na ako.*²¹²

The PREX movement creates a new mindset among its members in the way they view the parish of San Sebastian. This movement has become the parish's way of inviting its parishioners back to the church. It is also the parish's expression of hospitality to its parishioners. The members of the PREX movement who are at the same time parishioners developed a new sense of belonging to the church through their experience of a welcoming and nourishing community in the PREX program.²¹³ Another member who has been in the parish since she was a child shared that her experience in the PREX movement reshaped the way she perceived their parish community. She has been serving the parish for many years, but it is only through the PREX movement that she developed that feeling of being at home and appreciated. She wrote in her journal, *sa Baste para lang akong nasa bahay, marami akong kapatid at marami akong magulang, kami'y nagtutulungan kapag may gawain at nagdadamayan kung may pasanin.*²¹⁴ She added that in San Sebastian she experienced a community where she is free to share her struggles, her discouragements, disappointments and her faith experiences. She pledged in her journal that for as long as God would have her remain in Quiapo she will continue to be faithful to San Sebastian Parish.²¹⁵

²¹² This is shared by Ruperta T. Marcelo (Member of San Sebastian PREX Movement Class no. 12) from her PREX Journal. In English this is translated as "From now on I will amend my life, I will be a better wife, I will be a good daughter, or I will be a good Catholic."

²¹³ Francisco Ungria Jr., *Parish Renewal Experience*, (Philippines: St. Paul's Publication, 2003), 11.

²¹⁴ This is written by Anna Paubsanon in his PREX Journal which is translated as "In San Sebastian I feel like I am just at home, I have my brothers and sisters, I have lots of parents, if there are activities we work together, if there are problems we help each other."

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

The completion of an experience of renewal is witnessing. Renewal reaches its fullness when the renewed persons are able to integrate to their everyday life the commandments of Christ and share with others their relationship of God. This witnessing should be lived out wherever life brings the renewed individuals. Testimonies of several PREX members concretized their life of witnessing to Christ. They shared that they continued to live a renewed life even outside their parish community and obeyed what the PREX movement commissioned them—being witnesses to Christ wherever circumstances would take them. Many of them were surprised with the reactions of the people whom they met as they went on with their lives. The people noticed the change, as if Christ exuded from them. Through the renewal the PREX members experienced living a new life according to God’s criteria and to view what life offers with the eyes of faith. One member wrote in her journal that as she continues being Christ’s witness, she should persevere in her personal relationship with Him.²¹⁶

Paul VI exclaims that to be a witness is to be a missionary.²¹⁷ The PREX members must always have the enthusiasm of bringing their renewal experience with the people they are to meet. Their desire to bring others to renewal authenticates their being witnesses of Christ. This is what Pope Francis speaks about—evangelization that takes the form of sharing a person’s “new relationship with Christ”²¹⁸ with others, a sharing of the love one received from Christ with others. Some members wrote in their journals that as they went home after the PREX seminar they eagerly shared with their families what they had heard. One was proud of bringing her own husband and some children to the movement and even persuading some of her friends and relatives.²¹⁹ Many of the PREX members continued offering their gifts and service to the

²¹⁶ Maria Carmen Bermido (Member of San Sebastian PREX Movement Class no. 1) Interview by the researcher, February 21, 2015.

²¹⁷ *EN*, 41.

²¹⁸ Francis I, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 87 (Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2013), 67. (Henceforth to be referred as *EG*).

²¹⁹ Marjorie de Asis (Member of San Sebastian PREX Movement, Class no. 4) Interview by the researcher, March 1, 2015.

parish, and other PREX members who were not involved in the parish before PREX movement engaged themselves also in the service to the parish through various ministries and organizations. Some members dedicated themselves to the apostolate of the PREX movement. These are indications of renewed missionary commitment that the parish should be able to form and sustain.

Kalooban: A Locus **for New Evangelization** **in the Philippines**

John Rey L. Ybañez

Abstract

The Filipino kalooban has been a focus of many studies and researches among Filipino theologians the recent century. Rightly so because, it is God's temple in the heart and consciousness of a Filipino soul. The article delves into the Filipino kalooban as a place of personal encounter with the Divine, as the object of new evangelization in view of conversion, and where change of heart or metanoia is to authentically take place.

Kalooban: Plurality of Implications

In order to shed light on the contribution of *kalooban* in doing Filipino Theology and its relevance to the realization of the New Evangelization in the Philippine church, it is necessary to establish its definition. In the human existential aspect, the term *kalooban* is a complex and a dynamic reality. Due to various implications, it is difficult to establish the meaning into one specific field of understanding. *Loob* comes from the person itself, his being a *tao* (person). This concept has equivalent terms

in other Filipino dialects and also in the western parlance. In a philosophical sense, *loob* is said to be the essence of the self. Likewise, the study on the different sciences takes also the self or the *sarili* (another term for self) as its departure in deepening the concept of *loob*. The anthropological study of *loob* asserts that *loob* has two moral dimensions, namely the *katauhan* or personality and *pagkatao* as its ethicizing activity to which also it is composed of *malay* (awareness), *dama* (feeling), *isip* (reason), *bait* (moral sense), *ugali* and *loob* (will). The metalinguistic study of *loob* likewise takes the actions and words as the manifestations of *loob*. On the psychological aspect, *loob* is said to be the seat of emotions to which *hiya* (shame) comes from. Also, the historical view of Lletto imparts the big role of the unity of *kalooban* of each *katipuneros* in realizing their goal.

Loob is the most authentic self of the lowland Filipino, that is, what a person in the innermost reality. Moreover, *loob*, the inner self, is the core of one's personhood and where the true worth of person lies. It is the organizing center of human reality. Furthermore, it is the very zone of creaturehood which is the substratum of ideas, feelings, and behaviour.¹

Loob, according to de Mesa, is not the entirety of the person in oneself, rather it is the way a person relates with others. The term *loob* is what the Filipinos use whenever they see themselves in relation to others. Just take for example the terms, *kagandahang-loob* (good will), *kaloob* (gift), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *sama ng loob* and (ill-feeling). In this way, *loob* now becomes a sort of a measurement not only on oneself but more so on how well one relates with others. It is said that in lowland Philippines, a person is said to be of "*magandang-loob*" (goodwill) because he has this good relationship with others. So much so that this relationship tends to look out for the well-being of others, especially those in need. These people having this attitude or character are described as "*mga taong may mabuting kalooban*" (people of goodwill).² Otherwise, those

¹ Jose de Mesa and Lode Wostyn, *Doing Christology: The Re-appropriation of a tradition*, (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1989), 122.

² Jose de Mesa, "In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting," *Maryhill Studies 4* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1991), 56.

people who have a bad attitude are labelled as “*masamang loob*” (ill-willed). Naturally, this *loob*, according to de Mesa, manifests through external behaviour, so that this behaviour originates also in the *loob* of the person.³ Relationships provide an insight into the *kalooban* of a person and as a consequence, the *kalooban* of a person also provides an insight into relationships. Before a person knows his *kalooban* it is first of all known through his relations, for *loob* or the *kalooban* of a person is essentially a relational and a social notion before it is a private concept.⁴ De Mesa repeatedly contends that *kalooban* is a relational concept.⁵

Therefore, a person cannot gain a deeper insight into the *kalooban* of the other if it is not shown in his or her relationship with others. One cannot define or explain thoroughly what *kalooban* is apart from the interaction being made. De Mesa goes on to say that “it is a quality of being which has its roots in the very heart of a person and which is given expression in the totality of one’s life of interrelationship.”⁶ *Kalooban* is a term which stands for all that is good in a person, a trait highly valued by the Filipinos.

In the light of faith, one can consider *loob* as man’s essential relatedness with God. In the Christian perspective, this *loob* is made “in the image and likeness” of God. *Loob* is constituted by being related to God. Having said this, *loob* now becomes an essential part of a person’s relationship with God and his fellowman. It is the reason why the commandments of God, if summarized, can be the love of God and the love of neighbor.⁷ This shows that *loob* is essentially related both to God and man. This relationship between God and man agrees with each other for God’s interest is not opposed to man’s happiness, but this does not also mean that God has nothing to do with humanity. If the lowland Filipinos’ manifestation of having a good relationship with others through the expression of its “*magandang-loob*,” God is all the more interested in man’s well-being as He is his

³ Ibid., 58.

⁴ Jose M. de Mesa and Lode L. Wostyn, *Doing Christology: The re-appropriation of a tradition*, 38.

⁵ Jose M. de Mesa, *Kapag Namayani ang Kagandahang Loob ng Diyos* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990), 40.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jose de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting*, 56.

creator. Thus, a person's *loob* cannot be truly related with God if it separates its relationship with his fellowman.⁸

***Kalooban* in Filipino Theology**

Strictly speaking in the Filipino parlance there is no such terminology as “theology.” This is a loan-word from the West and Filipinos have settle with the transliteration of the term—*teolohiya*.⁹ The positive aspect on this transliteration is that it allows Filipinos to discover the essence of theology. According to de Mesa, Filipinos can appreciate more theology if their encounter with it will be personal (*sa tunay na buhay*).¹⁰ Moreover, the Filipinos’ encounter with theology can be developed if done in their *kalooban*.

Filipino theology “is a theology done ... in an attempt to understand the Word of God in the context of the Philippine socio-cultural experience... it is an understanding of the Christian faith according to their own insights, categories of thought expressed in ways meaningful to them.”¹¹

Kalooban: The Point of Departure in Doing Filipino Theology

Doing Theology is not difficult for the Filipino theologians but the problem that requires attention is on the manner of theologizing.¹² Problems arise because Filipino theologians naturally use the most common form of doing theology which comes from the West. As Schreiter says, “the way the West does

⁸ Jose de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting*, 61.

⁹ Rodrigo D. Tano, *Theology in the Philippine Setting: A Case Study in the Contextualization of Theology*, 12.

¹⁰ Jose de Mesa, “Buhay, Karanasan, Aral at Turo: A Filipino Hermeneutics of Experience,” *East Asia Pastoral Review* 32, 1995.

¹¹ V. Maynigo, “Evangelization and Philippine Culture in the Light of the Second Vatican Council” (Ph.D. diss., Pontifical University of Sto. Tomas, 1978), 133.

¹² One concrete example of this according to Beltran is on how they would translate the theological terms which is metaphysical in nature into Pilipino language. See Benigno P. Beltran, SVD, *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An inquiry into the Filipino understanding of Jesus the Christ* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987), 39.

theology is a sure knowledge or *scientia*.”¹³ According to Scheiter this model being held up as the theological pattern for the rest of the world arose because of the particular events that happened in the Western culture. There are two main important events that could capture this change in the West. First, was the discovery of the Roman law that gave rise to towns and cities. The second one, was a consequence of that discovery for it paved the way for the development of the universities. After those events, there was a sudden change and shift on the way how theology was conducted. There was a strong emphasis on the intellectual side of the faith to the point of preoccupying itself with the problems on how to explain the abstract or what is commonly called as the “metaphysical world.”¹⁴

Introducing theology via abstract ideas is not effective for Filipinos. As Dr. Quito asserts, “the way Filipinos think is so personal and more so emotional.”¹⁵ The suggestion of de Mesa, that Filipinos can appreciate more theology when their encounter with it is personal or based on their experiences, could make *kalooban* or *loob* as a point of departure in making the study of theology as an authentic Filipino theology—*pagsasaloob ng diwa at aral sa teolohiya sa ating kultura at panahon* (interiorizing the theological meaning and learning in our culture and time). In this definition perhaps the true meaning of theology for Filipinos can be brought out, for this definition actually plays an important role towards the development of the person.¹⁶

The primary concern in doing Filipino theology is its fundamental assumption that the lived-experience of the people is to be considered as the point of departure in theologizing. This way of theologizing is only to be realized when *kalooban* as a relational concept is to be considered in the first place. For *kalooban*, as a way of doing Filipino theology, will give rise to the relevance of the religious experiences of the Filipinos as a one big

¹³ Robert Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 87-91.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Dr. Emerita S. Quito, *Lectures on Comparative Philosophy*, (Manila: De la Salle University Press, 1979), 58.

¹⁶ Jose de Mesa, “A Hermeneutics of Appreciation: Approach and Methodology,” *MST Review* Vol 4 (2000): 1-113.

community. In the words of Beltran, “the religious experience of the community is the indispensable source of theology.”¹⁷

Basing on the concept of Maynigo’s definition of Filipino theology, *kalooban* now becomes not only as the entirety of the person or *buod ng pagkatao*. Rather, *kalooban* now is *ang pagtatakda ng pagkatao at pakikipak-kapwa-tao sa teolohiya* or what would be labelled as “theological anthropology.” The contribution of *kalooban* in doing Filipino theology is to provide Filipinos the motivation to learn more about their inner-self, their *kalooban*, in relation to the deepening of their faith, their knowledge about God, and in their relationship with other people. Thus, *kalooban* in doing Filipino theology becomes as *ang pakikipag-ugnayan at pakikipagpalagayan-ng-loob ng sarili sa Diyos at sa kapwa* (relating with and laying down of oneself to God and neighbor).

Kalooban: Its Contribution to Filipino Theology

The Church thrives on the multifaceted ways she explains the faith to the people of different cultures, beliefs and living environments. This faith is said to be the expression of the people’s inner self or *kalooban*. The foremost expression of *kalooban* of the Filipinos can be clearly seen in their faith. For them, faith is their personal response as “disciples of Christ” accepting him “as Lord and Saviour.”¹⁸ This personal experience of the Filipinos, likewise, is instrumental in their faith, in the way they do theology, and in the the application of *kalooban* is to theology. According to Filipinos, the use of *kalooban* expresses an understanding of oneself as created in the image of the Creator, God.¹⁹

“Who do people say that I am?” Jesus asked his disciples on their way to the villages of Caesaria Philippi. The disciples replied, “Some, John the Baptizer, others, Elijah, still others, one of the prophets.” And then he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” (Mk. 8:27-29). This question of Jesus to the apostles is not only addressed to the apostles, but also to all followers of

¹⁷ Benigno P. Beltran, SVD, *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An inquiry into the Filipino understanding of Jesus the Christ*, (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987), 28.

¹⁸ Catechism for Filipino Catholics, 114.

¹⁹National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines, 20.

Christ, to those who believe in him. This question resonates in the hearts of men through the ages.

The historical Jesus²⁰ can be known through his Jewish background, but a universal concept of him being “the Christ”²¹ can be subjected to a far more elaborated studies. As Beltran puts it, “Jesus of Nazareth had Jewish features but the universal Christ has a thousand faces.”²² Nowadays, the question of who Christ is has reached into its height: “In our time, the question of Jesus Christ has come to be raised with new sharpness at the level of both piety and theology.”²³ The assertion of Beltran can be a point of departure wherein a deeper understanding of who Christ is can be drawn. In knowing Christ through his incarnation, the Church’s role comes in, specifically the local church;

“The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble dialogue with the living traditions of the cultures, the religions- in brief, with the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own.”²⁴

The local church’s acknowledgement that indeed Christ is known differently in a certain culture has given rise to the different studies made by the different theologians, most especially in the Philippines.²⁵ The study with regard to who Christ is has been

²⁰ For a more elaborated discussion on this topic, See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

²¹ This word is deeply rooted in the concept of the Messiah as God’s Anointed. See Benigno P. Beltran, SVD, 61.

²² *Ibid.*, 1.

²³ International Theological questions (ITC), *Select Questions on Christology*, 11-12.

²⁴ Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference, *His Gospel to Our Peoples: Final Statement of the First Plenary Assembly* (Manila: Cardinal Bea Institute, 1976), Vol. II, 332.

²⁵ To mention a few, cf. Benigno P. Beltran, SVD, *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An inquiry into the Filipino understanding of Jesus the Christ*, (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987); Douglas J Elwood and Patricia L. Magdamo, *Christ in Philippine Context*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987); Ruben J. Villote, “*Who is Christ to the Filipino?*” *My Xth hour* (Antipolo, Rizal: SynerAide Consultancies,

subjected to many approaches. The two common approaches are “Christology from below,” which has become the focal point in its approach to Christ, especially after Vatican II or others would view it to the extreme as a liberation theology, and the other approach is the “Christology from above.”²⁶ This Christology from below likewise fits the way on how Filipinos theologize for it is through their lived-experience with Christ that they are able to draw their own Christology.

In general, the Filipino Christ is a Spanish Christ in the Philippines. The most striking about the Christ of the Filipinos is his semblance with that of the traditional Spanish Christ, and also with the Latin American Christ. This was affirmed by Don Miguel de Unamuno, who has been called as “the greatest of Spain’s mystic heretics.” He said that “the Spanish Christ was born in Tangiers,” (North Africa). In this assertion of Unamuno he meant that the Christ of popular Spanish tradition is a product of folk Christianity that is a blend of North African animism with

1987); Leonardo N. Mercado, *Christ in the Philippines*, (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1982); Pedro C. Sevilla, *People’s Faith is People’s Power: A Filipino Christological Catechism*, (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1986).

²⁶ Christology from below emphasizes the humanity of Christ, this is also called as the “ascending Christology or low Christology; Christology from above emphasizes Christ divinity, this is sometimes called as “descending Christology”. There are also other approaches in doing Christology; a) Biblical or kerygmatic b.) Dogmatic or defined doctrines c.) Historical or the critical approach d.) Existential approach, which focuses on the contemporary experience of Jesus in word and sacraments e.) Christological approach through titles f.) Christology in antireligious perspective, a Christology that is based on dialogue with other religions on Christ. Notes on Christology from Fr. Dionisio Selma, OAR. A more elaborated discussion on this matter Cf. James Kroeger, *Knowing Christ Jesus: A Christological Sourcebook*, (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1989).

There are a quite number of books and articles developing the approach on “Christology from Below.” Daniel A. Helminiak, *The Same Jesus. A Contemporary Christology*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986); Jon Sobirino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, (New York: Orbis, 1978); Gerald O’Collins, “*Jesus in Current Theology*,” *The Way* 16 (1976).

Christian ideas and practices.²⁷

In the Philippines, Christ appears almost exclusively in two dramatic roles: as the Santo Niño (Holy Child) or as the *Santo Cristo* and the *Santo Entierro* (Christ Inferred).²⁸ The Filipino's view of Christ only focuses on his nativity and his death; after that, the glorious Resurrection seems to be irrelevant to them. According to Elwood, for the Filipinos only the birth and the death are significant, but "Jesus Nazareno as an historical individual is virtually unknown or else disregarded."²⁹

The "Christology from below" has been the trend in the Philippines in approaching Christology.³⁰ This approach shows how the Filipinos' lived-experience, which is predominantly their way of theologizing, reveals about how they relate their experiences to Christ showing their *kalooban*.

The CFC gives five cultural values wherein *kalooban* manifests the Filipinos' strong relationship with Christ. First, the Filipinos are able to relate to Jesus as being the Son of God and the Son of Man by associating their self-identity with their high esteem relationship among members of the family.³¹ Second, the cultural value of being a meal-oriented people and fondness for celebrations allows them to appreciate Jesus Christ as the Eucharist and Communion. Filipinos feel naturally "at home" in breaking bread together with Jesus.³² Third, the Filipinos' readiness to love and to suffer, strongly manifested in their cultural value of *kundiman*-oriented, facilitates their connection to Jesus Christ the Suffering Servant. This attitude among Filipinos, to accept suffering as simply a part of their daily living, manifests "a deep, positive spiritual value of Filipinos' *kalooban*."³³ Fourth, the Filipinos as being *bayani*-oriented can be traced to stories of

²⁷ Don Miguel de Unamuno, Essay, "El Cristo Espanol," in *Mi Religion y Otros Ensayos*, quoted in John Mackay, *The Other Spanish Christ*, 102.

²⁸ Douglas J. Elwood and Patricia I. Magdamo, *Christ in Philippine Context*, 5.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See footnote no. 13 as it would narrate some of the works being made by the Filipino theologians.

³¹ CFC, 34-35.

³² CFC, 37-38.

³³ Ibid., 39-40.

self-denying heroes make them appreciate the image of Christ the King.³⁴ Lastly, the Filipinos being a spirit-oriented people attracts them to Jesus Christ as miracle-worker.³⁵ Thus, these cultural elements that embody the local milieu serve as vehicle towards doing Filipino theology and also for bringing Christ closer to the Filipinos. CFC also affirms that only “by discovering and proclaiming Jesus Christ in the personal and national Filipino culture that the Filipino Catholics invites Christ to purify, heal, and enrich their life.”³⁶

Kalooban and the New Evangelization of the Filipinos

The New Evangelization is not concerned primarily with the knowledge of the doctrines of the Church much less in the handing over of the correct celebration of the rituals which are cherished in the Catholic religion. Rather, the New Evangelization is about the human person’s renewed encounter with Christ. This is the emphasis of the abovementioned documents—so that a person may reach conversion and in turn shares one’s experience with others by becoming an evangelizer. The most concrete way for one to be an evangelizer is by becoming a witness.

The experience of Thomas when Jesus let him touch his hands was clearly a scene of a renewed experience in Jesus. Although it was a special kind of renewal for it was truly a personal encounter with the Lord, nonetheless it directly points out that indeed there is a need to have this renewed encounter with Christ. The apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis I, *Evangelii Gaudium*, clearly states the importance of this renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ.³⁷ This encounter allows a person to have an “enriching friendship with Jesus that liberates the narrowness of oneself and self-absorption.”³⁸ Likewise, this friendship that

³⁴ Ibid., 41-42.

³⁵ Ibid., 43-44.

³⁶ Ibid., 56.

³⁷ Francis I, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 14 (Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2013), 19..

³⁸ Ibid.

develops in that encounter allows a person in becoming fully human, and this only happens when “we let God bring us beyond ourselves.”³⁹

Faith is knowing personally Jesus, for there is a difference between knowing Jesus and knowing about Jesus. In Pilipino, the former is “*kilala ko si Jesus at kinikilala ko siya*,” while the latter “*may nalalaman ako tungkol kay Jesus*.”⁴⁰ Today, the most effective form of evangelization are those testimonies of people who experienced this renewed encounter with Christ. Persons who have a personal encounter with Jesus are “the best witnesses for they speak about him not as someone whom they came to know through study but as one whom they came to know as a friend.”⁴¹ Nonetheless, it is not an assurance that those persons who may not have made the profession of Christian faith and have not been baptized cannot encounter Christ personally. In fact, the Church teaches that even a person who has not made a profession of Christian faith and has not been baptized may still be saved if he lives uprightly following the dictates of his conscience. A person who acts uprightly, following the light and grace given to him by God can also live in the grace of Christ.⁴² A person may know many things about Jesus by studying about him. However, true transformation can only take place through a personal encounter with him. Jesus wants all to know him personally, even wanting to be the *kaibigan* (friend) and not just only a *kakilala* (colleague). For among friends conversions is about the the heard and the *kalooban*.

Kalooban: As the Place for Personal Encounter, Interior Conversion and Metanoia

Being Jesus’ friend is a simple task and yet is most difficult to maintain. For a person to develop a continuous personal encounter one has to dedicate a special time for prayer. This realization comes when a person’s *kalooban* is deeply connected to that of Jesus. This connection can be well established when

³⁹ Ibid, 8.

⁴⁰ Bishop Teodoro Bacani Jr., DD, *Faith and the New Evangelization*, (Manila: Gift of God Publication, 2013), 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 73.

⁴² *GS*, 22.

one is inclined to relate his or her experiences to the experiences of Jesus. That is why if a person is deeply connected to the self, one can develop also a deep relationship with Jesus. For it is also through one's personal encounter can the new evangelization be realized. There will be no true evangelization if it does not come from one's personal encounter through one's *kalooban*.

Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to proclaim the Gospel, calling all people to conversion and faith (Mk 1:14-15). Conversion or *metanoia* is a call for all to be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Romans 12:1-2). It is a transformation that allows individuals to see God's kingdom present in their midst through the person of Jesus (Mark 1:10-12). Similarly, the Synod Fathers also mention that the personal encounter with Christ leads the evangelized to a conversion experience.⁴³ This is both the proof of an authentic encounter with Christ, as well as the goal of all evangelization. When Jesus started the proclamation of the Good News of salvation he said, "This is the time of fulfilment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1:14-15). This illustrates that the demand of Jesus to those who believe in him starts with repentance. *Metanoia*, is a call for everyone to be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Romans 12:1-2). It is a transformation that allows a person to see the full implications of God's kingdom concretized by the coming of Jesus (Mark 1:10-12). Thus, "the first response that was expected to those who heard the preaching of the Good News was repentance."⁴⁴

Evangelization is associated with the invitation from God to change; and conversion involves the response in faith. According to the General Directory for Catechesis, faith and conversion are related with each other: "Faith involves a change of life, a '*metanoia*'⁴⁵ that is a profound transformation of mind and heart; it causes the believer to live that conversion."⁴⁶ Moreover, "Faith and conversion arise from the 'heart,' that is, they arise from the

⁴³ Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2012, www.vatican.va/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.pdf, (Accessed 12 December 2014), 4.

⁴⁴ Bishop Teodoro Bacani, *Faith and Evangelization*, 103.

⁴⁵ Cf. *EN*, 10; *AG* 13; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1430-1431.

⁴⁶ *EN*, 23.

depth of the human person and involve all that he is.”⁴⁷ It should be noted that this conversion is none other than a turning to God and to Christ, for the convert does not anymore live according to his or her liking but lives the life of Christ.

The goals of conversion are a deeper understanding of life’s mystery centered in faith and a greater commitment to love God and neighbour. Conversion also sets the foundation for Christian discipleship. It involves the deepening and realization on the meaning of Jesus’ command to Love God and one another. Moreover, conversion helps one in discovering the special gifts that God gave and it is also an invitation to see more deeply how God’s call to discipleship applies to the self and to the community. “A person who has been truly converted will also seek the conversion of one’s surroundings, starting with the family, and then his Church and the society.”⁴⁸ This conversion is the fruit of an encounter with God and Christ and it can only happen through the help of the first agent of evangelization, the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the Holy Spirit allows the person to experience this renewed missionary impulse.

A converted person changes heart, changes attitude, and most especially change *kalooban*. As a result of this change a person now is more inclined to do good than to commit sin and offend the Lord. A person by discovering one’s interconnectedness with God through one’s *kalooban* will now search for that good, a good that comes from within. By searching for that goodness a person also will now change one’s actions. This actions is likewise considered to be the external manifestation of a firm decision to follow God. For by being converted to the Lord, a person detaches oneself from the creatures and in the process attachesd himself to one’s *kalooban* where God’s will rules his innermost being.

Renewed Missionary Impulse

Today, many people still do not yet know Christ. The majority of the population in the world, of more than four billion, have not even heard of the name of Christ.⁴⁹ Although many may have heard about Christ, but they are not interested in him and in following him. This mission in bringing Christ to others is

⁴⁷ *GDC*, 56.

⁴⁸ Bishop Teodoro Bacani, *Faith and Evangelization*, 105.

⁴⁹ Bishop Teodoro Bacani, *Faith and Evangelization*, 27.

the pastoral situation in which the whole Church is to address: “in overcoming the separation of the Gospel from life and reconstructing... the unity of life which finds its inspiration in the Gospel and, in the same Gospel, the strength to realize it fully.”⁵⁰ The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines calls this as the “dichotomy between faith and ordinary life.”⁵¹ This renewal of missionary impulse is realized when a person who has already encountered Christ and is converted now shares Christ with others. This sharing of Christ with others becomes more effective when seen and experienced first-hand by the people or when the one evangelizing is a witness to what he or she preaches.

The church is in need badly of evangelizers, evangelizers who do not parrot words but concretize the message for the people. Evangelizers have to change perspective in order to develop and arouse their enthusiasm in realizing the mission of Christ. This realization comes from the abundance of one’s *kalooban*. A lot of the problems pertaining to the realization of the new evangelization does not come from the process or its content than the enthusiasm of the evangelizer in proclaiming the Good News of the Lord. The locus where enthusiasm grows is none other than the *kalooban* of the person. This is nurtured through the constant dialogue with the Lord by opening one’s *loob* to the *kalooban* of the Lord.

Personal Witnessing

The Gospel writers used different words in order to illustrate the task of evangelizers. In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus commands his disciples, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15); in the Gospel according to Matthew, the Lord tells them, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19); in the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus says, “... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Among the three mentioned, the challenge narrated in Acts is a challenge to become a witness. Evangelizers are called by Jesus to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8).

The fullness of being a Catholic does not lie on the in-

⁵⁰ Cf. *CL*, 30.

⁵¹ Cf. Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, *Renewed Integral Evangelization*.

depth knowledge of every doctrine and teaching that the Church imparts to all her members; rather, it is on being a living example to what the person believes in. People are touched by the personal witnessing done by Catholics; personal witnessing is very crucial towards the fruitful realization of the New Evangelization. A Catholic who lives according to his faith can draw people to the faith and ultimately to Christ. But a Catholic who does not live according to the faith and contradicts what he or she believes in becomes a “stumbling block” for others in encountering Christ.⁵²

The importance of being a witness is clearly stated by Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”⁵³ It is by becoming a witness that a person attracts others towards the Good News of salvation. The Good News, which is no other than Jesus Christ, can be shared with others “not always by going out to them but by drawing them, by attracting them.”⁵⁴ Bishop Bacani warns that all these witnessing should not lead a person to focus on oneself but rather on Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24;2:2).⁵⁵ According to the document formulated by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, “the first and most potent means of renewed evangelization is not the teaching of doctrine, but by witnessing to others of the working of God’s grace in our lives.”⁵⁶

There is no better way for an evangelizer to communicate than by becoming himself a true witness, a personal witness of the Lord. For Filipinos, they become living personal witnesses of the Lord through the sincerity to be closer to God. This virtue springs from their *kalooban* by which their longing for that personal relationship with Jesus is cultivated. This is the reason why the Filipinos can speak of Jesus with conviction because they know Jesus through their experiences and not from the books. By becoming a personal witness, the *kalooban* of the Filipinos is also nourished and their faith grows. Faith is a matter of personal

⁵² Cf. Bishop Teodoro Bacani, *Faith and New Evangelization*, 22.

⁵³ *EN*, 41.

⁵⁴ Bishop Teodoro Bacani, 97.

⁵⁵ Bishop Teodoro Bacani, 75.

⁵⁶ *PCP II*, 194.

relationships as it relates oneself in a special way to Jesus. Through this faith, the *kalooban* of a person is transformed.

New Evangelization in the Philippines: PCP II

The local Church of the Philippines, through the Second Plenary Council (PCP II), has a ‘plan of action’ to realize this call towards New Evangelization.⁵⁷ The Council specifically formulated a specific document tackling the importance of evangelization. And this can be found in the third part of the “Acts and Decrees of PCP II: Renewed Integral Evangelization.” This document makes a distinction between the term: ‘evangelization’ and “New Evangelization.” The former “in its precise sense is the *missio ad gentes* directed to those who do not know Christ.”⁵⁸ The clause “who do not know Christ” though is not to be understood in the strictest sense, but rather as an allusion to that statement of PCP II which says “For most of our people today, the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety... the vast majority of our people, greatly lack knowledge of and formation in the faith.”⁵⁹ The New Evangelization is about “... a pastoral outreach to those who no longer practice the Christian faith.”⁶⁰ Filipinos need the education towards the maturity of their faith not the re-introduction of the faith which is the strictest point of this New Evangelization. This statement supports the common observation that many Filipino Catholics still observes the practices of faith without understanding what they are practicing.⁶¹

This specific document issued by PCP II, “Renewed Integral Evangelization,” emphasizes the need of Filipinos to grow in their faith. In this aspect, they need evangelization, “Filipinos

⁵⁷ Cf. CBCP Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of New Evangelization, *Live Christ, Share Christ*, 3.

⁵⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, 12.

⁵⁹ *PCP II*, 13

⁶⁰ *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, 12.

⁶¹ Cf. Bishop Teodoro Bacani, *Faith and New Evangelization*,

were sacramentalized but not evangelized.”⁶² The faith of the Filipinos maybe “vibrant, but it has yet to reach its maturity.”⁶³

The Philippine concept of the New Evangelization through PCP II can be said to be taking the same direction as it envisions the Church in the Philippines as a community of disciples by means of renewed integral evangelization. PCP II states: “This renewed evangelization is characterized... by the newness of its fervor, methods, and expressions.”⁶⁴ According to PCP II, conversion is its beginning.⁶⁵ Consequently, this conversion is only to be achieved through the Holy Spirit’s guidance which leads one to that personal encounter with Christ. In Filipino parlance, it is in one’s *kalooban*.

The discussion on New Evangelization pertains to the specific target to know and to meet Christ again. This knowing and meeting Christ, as PCP II points out, can only reach its fullness when Filipinos are educated in their faith through catechism. The goal of this New Evangelization may be attained by the model *ang pagbabalik-loob* o *pagbabagong-buhay* (repentance or newness of life).⁶⁶ The New Evangelization is a call for a transformation of mind and heart in light that God’s reign has arrived in Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14-15). The more the Filipinos search for their self, their *kalooban*, the nearer they are to the truth, who is Christ, the main message of the New Evangelization. To speak then of *pagbabalik-loob* is not just a *pagtalikod sa masamang landas* (to turn away from sinful ways) and *pag-uwi muli sa pagkaligaw* (to return from being way-ward) but a *muling pag-uugat sa naunang kabutihan* (a re-rooting once again in innate goodness). This is about refounding oneself in the *kalooban sa Diyos*.

Pagbabalik-loob: The New Evangelization Challenge in the Philippines

The New Evangelization that the Second Plenary Council

⁶² Bishop Teodoro Bacani, *Faith and New Evangelization*, 89.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁴ *PCP II*, 186-201.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁶⁶ Jose de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in theological Re-rooting*, (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1987), 212.

of the Philippines wants to point out is a plan of action that starts from the self. That is why in the specific document formulated by the Council, they allotted a very long part in expounding the topic which talks about renewed integral evangelization. This particular topic suggests the foremost message of the documents on the New Evangelization ranging from the “old” and the “new” ones, which is about that personal encounter. *Ito ay para muling bumalik ang tao sa kanyang kalooban upang makiki-ugnay muli sa kanyang Panginoon.* This is to be done, as the Council asserts, through catechism as its starting point. The relationship highlighted in PCP II in order to attain the renewed integral evangelization has conversion as its goal, the Holy Spirit as its main “mover,” and Jesus as the model. This triad-relationship emphasized by PCP II, if translated in the Filipino parlance, reveals the peculiarity of ones *loob*. This relationship is not completed if it does not coincide with a person’s *kabutihang-loob*. This *kabutihang-loob* is both a person’s expression of *utang-na-loob* (debt of gratitude) to God. It is the way how Filipinos express their relationship towards God and towards others.

Through *kalooban*, Filipinos are able to connect themselves to God. It is through their *kalooban* that they are able to listen and to dialogue with God. Thus, through their *kalooban* Filipinos are recognized as relational beings. This relationship does not only encompass their relationship with their fellows but more so with God. The New Evangelization is commanded by God to his Church and is a responsibility of the entire Body of Christ— every individual Christians whether the clergy or the laity.⁶⁷ It is human beings’ *kalooban* that they are able to discern God’s call for a New Evangelization; thus it is also through their *kalooban* that they will be able to respond to this call.

The Necessity of Forming the *Kalooban* of Filipinos as New Evangelizers

Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation emphasizes that the Church is an evangelizer, but it begins by being evangelized herself.⁶⁸ Hence, every Christian who has the vocation to evangelize

⁶⁷ *EG.*, 59.

⁶⁸ *EG.*, 15.

should be first evangelized. Here lies the importance of formation in preparing Christians for their evangelizing mission. This formation should focus on the person's *kalooban* which is the seat of one's conscience, values, and relationship. This formation may take place wherever a person sees oneself situated. It could be in one's own home, work place, community, and most importantly in the Church where a person nourishes one's faith.

In the Philippine context of evangelization, what is needed is the maturity of faith. This element can be developed integrally when in the first instance conscience is formed. Christian discipleship demands a properly formed conscience. And how can this be done? It is by assimilating the proclamation of the Word through which the words and deeds of Christ may touch a person's *loob*. By doing so, one puts on the mind of Christ; one resonates with Christ's heart and in the process accomplishes the Father's will with Jesus as guide.⁶⁹ As a result of the formation, a person may develop his or her own spirituality. This spirituality is "marked by the enduring and intimate commitment to Jesus, a love for him that does not count the cost."⁷⁰ This spirituality is nourished when one listens and heeds God's word, discerns and follows the Spirit in the Scriptures.⁷¹ The spiritual element of an evangelizer is needed because spirituality enables a person to live radically what he or she preaches. In doing this, the person becomes a witness to the radical demand of the Gospel be it in their own homes or in the community that they are situated.

The giving of a systematic and advanced instruction pertaining to the faith is done in the schools and in the parishes by way of catechism.⁷² In the Philippines, a more urgent problem pertains to the education of the faith of the people through catechism because catechesis ensures that the personal encounter with Christ takes place. Catechesis, as education, deepens the encounter with Christ; and catechesis, as teaching, makes the encounter with Christ meaningful and intelligible. In order to do this, a uniform syllabus of biblical catechesis needs to be adapted

⁶⁹ Eugene Salgado Elivera and Joselito Alviar Jose, *Morality of the Heart*, (Pasay: Pauline Publishing House, 2013), 173.

⁷⁰ *PCP II*, 278.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁷² *PCP II*, Title III Formation, art. 11.

to Filipino culture and it has to address the need of the people. Catechesis has to be well-thought of because it “must be taught in relation to Christ, and with the purpose of leading the catechized into intimacy with Christ.”⁷³

⁷³ *PCP II*, Title III Formation, 157.

Can Benin Matrimony Be Considered Catholic?

Edobore Monday Benjamin, OAR

Abstract

Bini matrimony is one special and important social and religious institution within the tribal culture. It has a rite beginning from preparation for marriage up to marriage proper itself. The role of parents in the whole process of matrimony is an offshoot of their traditional roles embedded within the culture. In the case of matrimony where the individual consent of contracting parties is primordial, can Bini Matrimony be considered Catholic? The author traces in this article areas of difficulties and possible resolution where tribal matrimony can be considered catholic. It likewise offers pastoral caution especially in respecting the Benin culture.

The Bini People, Matrimony and Family

Marriage is a universal institution which is recognized and respected all over the world. As a social institution, marriage is founded on, and governed by the social and religious norms of the society. Consequently, the sanctity of marriage is a well-accepted principle in the Bini society.

For the Bini people, marriage is not done in a vacuum. It is a community affair and, as such, done in common. This community originates from somewhere and it is made up of its own belief system and worldview. In order to grasp the full meaning of marriage among the Bini people, one needs first of all to understand the worldview of the people. To also discuss marriage in Bini culture, one will definitely require a definition of who the Bini people are, especially in view of discussions on marriage. The origin of the Bini people is still a point of contention among historians and, to this end there are many contrasting views

The worship of the Bini people is so unique that it is reported that in each house there is ancestral shrine. They never forget their dead ones—be it in music, dance, ritual, sacrifice, in fact, in all aspect of their lives, there is always a connection between the living and the dead.

Hence, this section discusses the Bini people, their worldview, and culture. There will be an examination of the elements that constitute the entire marriage of the Binis, like the preparation before marriage, courtship and betrothal period, and the marriage proper.

The Bini People, Family and Matrimony

Historically, the origin of the Bini people has been a subject of argument that has occupied the mind of many scholars and researchers of Benin history. There are many versions of the origin of the Benin kingdom, but four versions seem to stand out, they are: the Hamitic¹ theory, the tradition of migration, the tradition of original settlers, and the snail shell theory (oral tradition).

The first version of the origin of Binis is the Hamitic theory. Charles G. Seligman proposed this theory in his book, *The Races of Africa*. It describes that African initiative and contribution to human and world civilization are the handiwork of the Hamites who are believed to be the Caucasian race. This theory offers an

¹ In the 19th century, as an application of scientific racism, Europeans classified the “Hamitic race” as a sub-group of the Caucasian race, alongside the Semitic race, grouping the non-Semitic populations native to North Africa, the Horn of Africa and South Arabia, including the Ancient Egyptians.

explanation for the conquest of Benin by some foreign invaders who imposed their idea of state formation. These invaders are claimed in colonial historiography to have migrated in waves from the North and overran the original settlers to establish new states and societies.² A study of the dynasty will help to deflate the Hamitic theory as far as pre-colonial Benin history is concerned. The point that needs to be made here is that the Ogiso³ dynasty was a product of autonomous Benin people and not the Hamites as purported by the Hamitic theory. The dynasty that has flourished centuries before Benin had her first contact with the entire white race. Furthermore, the Ogiso dynasty was not just a dynasty, but it was all about state formation and civilization by the Benin. Against this background, it is of the view that the history of pre-colonial Benin has debunked the Hamitic theory.

Second version is the tradition of migration theory proposed by a Benin local historian Chief J. U. Egharevba.⁴ According to this theory, many years ago, the Bini migrated from Egypt. In the course of their journey southward, after a short stay in Sudan, the Bini people settled at Ile-Ife⁵ and finally moved to their present location. Tradition says that they met some people in the land before their arrival. These people are said to have come originally from Nupe and Sudan in waves.⁶

This claim has caused a lot of arguments. Egharevba's trace of the origin of Benin to Egypt cannot stand the "acid test"

² Charles G. Seligman, *The Races of Africa* (London: Oxford Universities press, 1930), 5-10.

³ The Ogisos (meaning rulers of the sky) because of their direct lineage to the youngest son of Osanobua (God), from the sky, were, of course, accorded divine qualities by the Bini. The Ogisos naturally tried to strengthen such divinity in a variety of ways, including not allowing themselves to be seen eating in public and so suggesting that they can live without food. They are but god-kings with celestial mystique attached to them. See, Naiwu Osahon, *The Secrets of the Ages* (Lagos: Heritage Books).

⁴ J. U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* (Ibadan, Ibadan University press, 1960), 1.

⁵ Ile Ife, also known as Ife, is an ancient Yoruba city in the southwestern part of Nigeria. Ile Ife date back as early as 500 B.C. when it was founded and is the oldest Yoruba city. It is presently part of Osun State and has an estimated population of 501,000 people.

⁶ Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, 1.

of historical scrutiny and analysis. For one thing Egharevba's argument gives credence to the Hamitic hypothesis which claims that everything of significance that took place in Africa south of the Sahara was brought about by the Hamites. This ascribes Africa pre-colonial achievement to the handiwork of white-skinned invaders who were supposedly of the Caucasian stock. This, however, means that Benin civilization must have come from Egypt. For another thing, the people of Benin do not have any theory of tradition of migration from Egypt.⁷

Benin has been in existence for a long time before the establishments of the Ile-Ife by Oduduwa. This implies that the founder of Benin, whom Egharevba claims migrated from Egypt, could not have sojourned in Ile-Ife on their way to Benin. Moreover, the Egyptian culture is significantly absent from the Benin culture, in terms of the social and political structures. For example, the Egyptian writing culture known as Hieroglyphics writing, was purely absent from Benin. It is important to stress that Egharevba's claims that the Benins migrated from Egypt may contain an element of validity. Indeed, there were people who moved into the forest region from the northern fringes of West Africa as a result of the desertification of the Sahara. It is possible that some of these people may have found their ways into the Benin territory. The weakness of Egharevba's theory or argument lies in his insistence that the Benins came from Egypt.

The third theory on the origin of Benin kingdom is the tradition of original settlers. This is an attempt by the Benin people to claim ownership of the territory which they inhabit because they maintained that they have been there from the very beginning of the world. They are called "the children of the soil." In most cases, they trace their location to an area in Benin called "Ivbiotor". Some other areas in Benin where there are the original inhabitants are upper Sakpoba areas and one of such is known as "Igodomigodo" close to Ugbekun. Also, linguistic evidence suggests that the Binis have occupied the area for thousands of years.⁸

⁷ See H. L. Roth, *Great Benin*; P. A. Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*; Charles Orr, *The Making of Northern Nigeria*. London, 1911; Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria*. London, 1942 (first published in 1929).

⁸ R. G. Armstrong, *The Study of West African Languages* (Ibadan, 1964), 12-13.

The fourth and final account about the historical background of Benin is anchored on Benin myth (oral tradition). This is known as “the snail shell theory.” According to Benin mythology, the Benin kingdom was founded by the youngest son of “Osanobua” (the high God) with his elder brothers who included the King of Ife, and other Yoruba⁹ kingdom, and the first kings of the Europeans. They were sent to live in the world. Each was allowed to take something with him. While the others chose wealth, material and magical skills or implements, the youngest son, who eventually had to leave the heavens with his elder brothers, have nothing left for him. He decided to leave with a snail shell in his hand. On reaching the earth, they found out it was covered with water and they hovered from place to place. But with the instruction of a mythical bird, the youngest son was told to upturn the snail shell in his hand, and when he did, sand fell out from it and spread out to form land. So the youngest son of (Osanobua) the most high God became the owner of the land in the world and also became the first king of Benin. His elder brothers had to come and barter their possessions in return for a place to settle. Hence, though he was the youngest, he became the wealthiest and the most powerful. It is believed that the first semi-mythical ruler of pre-colonial Benin during the first dynasty was known as the Ogiso dynasty (meaning king or ruler from the sky). He was the youngest son of the most high God (Osanobua). Although not much is known of them, some have been mentioned in Benin folktales and fables. Tradition has it that the first Ogiso was Igodo from whom the kingdom first derived its name “Igodo at Ugbekun,” and the last was Owodu. A local historian of Benin, Christopher Ugowe, supports this mythology. He opines, “ a glance at the atlas or map of the world shows that Benin is located close to the centre of the earth near that point where the zero latitude, known geographically as the Equator, intersects with the zero longitude, known as the Greenwich Meridian.”¹⁰

⁹ The Yoruba are one of the largest African ethnic groups south of the Sahara Desert. They are, in fact, not a single group, but rather a collection of diverse people bound together by a common language, history, and culture. Within Nigeria, the Yoruba dominate the western part of the country.

¹⁰ C. O. O. Ugowe, 1997, *Benin in World History* (Lagos: Kosayaz Nigeria Limited, 1997), 1-3.

No matter how the arguments surrounding the origin of the Bini people might sound, one thing is for sure that the first sets of Benin rulers were the Ogisos. These kings, along with their palace chiefs gave directives to the length and breadth of the kingdom and exhibited virtues of valour, wisdom and good governance ever recorded in human history.

Religion

If culture is the way of life of a particular group of people, then, for the Bini people, culture is closely associated with their religion. Religion plays a considerable part in the lives and thoughts of the Bini people. Relationship with their gods has always played an important role in their way of life and worldview. Religion is a way in which they respond to their spiritual world of which they are sharply aware. The fact that Bini religious thoughts and practices are similar to that of ancient civilizations of 5th to 3rd centuries B.C or older time is most likely a mere coincidence. The Edo language according to linguist¹¹ belongs to the KWA¹² group of the Niger-Congo family. The greatest influence on Edo religious thought and practices could be traced to the Portuguese, Spanish Roman Catholic Missionaries and European traders who were very active in Benin Religion. Religious concept spread like wild fire. One does not have to be conquered or occupied for neighboring communities to copy religious practices of one another. One does not also need a wave of migration.¹³

Moreover, according to W. Thomas, there is no house one goes to that does not have its household shrine and household worship, both of the so-called Ebo and of the ancestors. They also have a communal worship in each villages of a supreme God

¹¹ R.W. Wescott, *A Bini Grammar, Part I, Phonology* (East Lansing, MI: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1962), 182.

¹² Kwa languages, a branch of the Niger-Congo language family consisting of 45 languages spoken by approximately 20 million people in the southern areas of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin and in the extreme southwestern corner of Nigeria. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kwa-languages>.

¹³ H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin, its Customs, Art and Horrors* (Halifax: F. Kings and Son, Ltd, 1903), 15.

called Osa or Osalobula.¹⁴ This supreme God is considered to be the creator of the world, and a myth is told in which Osa of the house has an evil counterpart, Osa of the bush. Subordinate to Osa are number of Ebos, which are lesser gods, such as Ake, Ochwaie, and others. There are many practices, ceremonies and festivals which are essential to the African religion which according to Mbiti expresses their beliefs in practical terms.¹⁵ Among the Bini people praying, making sacrifices and offerings, performing ceremonies and rituals, observing various customs, and so on are various ways of expressing their belief in their gods.

Rituals and Sacrifices

Ritual is considered to be the heart of African worship; there are overwhelmingly many of them. Among the Bini people there are rituals for almost everything. For example, there are rituals to mark harvest time, the start of the rainy season, the birth of a child, service to a god and victory over enemies. A concrete example is the worship of the god Egwaibo. The first act in preparation for the worship was for the priest to make a circuit of all shrines and ask for blessing. On the following day, the minor shrines were cleansed by the women and the Egwaibo was cleaned and decorated by the men, women being warned to keep out of the way when the rubbish was being carried off. This ritual ends when the Egwaibo was exposed, and men and women danced; offerings of kola were made, and the images were painted. To worship many of these gods, sacrifices are also required.¹⁶ According to Roth “great men make annual sacrifices, which are performed in great state, and prove very expensive; not only because of their killing multitudes of cows, sheep, and all sorts of cattle, but because, besides that, they give a solemn feast, making their friends very merry for several days successively and besides making them presents.”¹⁷ Another worth noting is the sacrifice in honor of Osa. In this sacrifice, a goat is offered

¹⁴ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people of Nigeria* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1910), 24.

¹⁵ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), 58.

¹⁶ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people of Nigeria*, 30.

¹⁷ Ling Roth, *Great Benin, its Customs, Art and Horrors*, 52.

as a victim, the throat is cut completely through, and the blood smeared on the back of the priest. Then the head is cut clean off, blood from it is rubbed on the shrine, and the head itself is laid on the shrine. Blood was next poured from the bowl upon the shrine. Finally, the priest stands in front of the shrine with the knife and makes three strokes vertically, calling each time "Osalobwa." The people also offer great yearly sacrifices to the sea, to dispose it favorably towards them, and their most solemn oaths are those made upon the sea and upon their king.¹⁸

At first glance one might consider these rituals and sacrifices to be fetish, but Mbiti would rightly point out that, One may add that an ontological balance must be maintained between God and man, the spirits and man, departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people experience misfortunes and sufferings, or fear that these will strike them. The making of sacrifice and offerings on the other hand, is also a psychological device to restore this ontological balance. It is also an act and occasion of making and renewing contract between God and man, the spirits and man, i.e. the spiritual and the physical worlds. When these acts are directed towards the living-dead, they are a symbol of fellowship, recognition that the departed are still members of their human families, and tokens of respect and remembrance for the living-dead.¹⁹

In other words, according to Mbiti, it is unfair to consider these practices and beliefs of the Africans as simply magic or fetish. Although holding to the fact of much involvement in magic, witchcraft and sorcery features in traditional life of African peoples. But their religion, as Mbiti claimed, is not constructed around magic. It is bigger than that. As he puts it, "Africans believe that there is a force or power or energy in the universe which can be tapped by those who know how to do so, and then used for good or evil towards other people. But this is only a part of their belief. It is wrong, therefore, to identify African religion with magic."²⁰ Similarly, it is also wrong to consider it to be fetish

¹⁸ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people of Nigeria*, 27.

¹⁹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 59.

²⁰ John Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion* (London:

because the early Portuguese merchants used the word fetish to describe the charms worn by Africans on the west coast of Africa. Therefore, it would be completely out of place to identify charms as African religion, for charm cannot be a religion, neither can religion be considered charm.²¹

Ceremonies and Festivals

Africans are always passionate about ceremonies and festivals. For them everything that relates to life and existence, even death must be celebrated. Most of these ceremonies and festivals are always celebrated in style. There are many occasions that call for celebration, from childbirth to death or burial a ceremony is performed. Bini people see these ceremonies and festivals as a unique way or occasion for gathering together as a community to share and interact with one another. Therefore, each celebration is not an individual affair but a community celebration. For example, the Igue festival takes the pre-eminence among festivals celebrated among the Bini people. It is of the most colorful and paramount importance to the people of Benin. It is celebrated every December by every reigning Oba (king) and his subjects to mark the end of the Benins year and as a thanksgiving to the outgoing one. This festival is usually celebrated around the month of September in the ancient times. During this period, the anniversary of the deaths of the different Obas who have ruled the Bini kingdom is celebrated, and for seven days propitiations are made to the spirits of the departed Obas.²² This is done to invoke their blessing on the reigning monarch and their families and subjects. The Igue festival, which is a period in which the Bini people offer thanks to the gods for sparing their lives and to ask for blessings, is also used for offering sacrifices to some deities in the palace. During Igue, the Binis turn out in their best attire and the whole city is practically caught in a craze for felicitations. Men and women dance and sing in pious glorification of the gods that protected them throughout the outgoing year.²³

There is also a ceremony for an event such as the birth and

Heinemann Educational books Ltd, 1975), 17.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ademola Iyi-Eweka, *Igue Festival*. <http://www.edofolks.com/html/pub13.htm>

²³ Ibid.

naming of a child. They gather together to celebrate the creation of a new life and an addition of a new member into the clan or tribe. It is basically understood as the result of a blessing from God and the ancestors.²⁴ This is an occasion of joy, because they believe that this is a way in which an ancestor seeks to return back to the people. For a newborn child is often thought to be the reincarnation of some ancestor who seeks to this life, or at least part of his spiritual influence return.²⁵ The naming of a child in African culture is as much as important as the actual conception. Nearly all African names have meaning. According to Mbiti, “the naming of children is therefore an important occasion which is often marked by ceremonies in many societies.”²⁶ The Bini people give names according to situation or experience faced by the family. Some these names may correspond with the occasion of a new season, road, war or any significant event of that period in which the child was born. As said earlier, due to belief of the return of an ancestor in the birth of a child, conception of a child therefore acquires a religious significance in Bini culture. “The physical aspects of the birth and the ceremonies that might accompany pregnancy, birth and childhood, are regarded with religious feeling and experience—that another religious being has been born into profoundly religious community and religious world.”²⁷

Benin Marriage

Marriage has a special significance in Bini society. Among the Bini people, marriage is regarded as one of the most important social customs which gives an individual respect and status, thereby putting pressure on many single people to marry. Furthermore, marriage is also viewed as a way of making one big family out of two families, hence it is the duty of the bride and bridegroom to make the marriage work, since marital problems affect both families and strain the otherwise cordial relationship between them. It is surprising that there is no real word in the Bini language that captures the concept marriage. The closest

²⁴ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 118.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

²⁷ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 120.

word use for marriage is “Oronmwēn,” to get a wife. As Ademola Iyi-Eweka puts it, “all we have are descriptive phrases about marriage—“*Okhia ye omo ye oronmwēn*,”—He wants to give the daughter away in marriage; *Okhia rie Okhuo*,—He wants to marry a woman; *Okhia romwēn odo*,—She wants to marry a husband. But sometimes an Edo man/person would say, *Ma khia du ugie oronmwēn*, —We want to perform the festival of marriage.”²⁸

Marriage is never seen as an individual affair, it is always communal and its aim is always procreation. The Bini people recognize marriage as achieving its primary purpose only in the production of offspring. It is unfortunate that it is the woman who is blamed for childlessness. As a result, the wife is scorned, rejected, and unloved by some members of the family. It is presumed that when the partners in a marriage die childless, there will be nobody to remember them. Their line of genealogy disappears. Therefore any marriage without an offspring, in the physical sense, in Bini society has failed both society and the couples.²⁹

The marriage system amongst the Edo (Benin people) is not too different from those obtained among the Igbo, and the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, although certain glaring variations can be observed in the system. According to W. Thomas, among the Bini people are two forms of marriage: in the first form the woman becomes the property of the husband, when he dies she is possessed by his heirs, and her children succeed him. This form, he says, is found in the southern part of the area. While the second form, found in the northern part, the woman is at liberty to leave the husband at any time if the bride price is repaid, and even this is not essential if she has borne him a child. The first is called *amoiye* and the second *isomi* marriage.³⁰

Preparation for marriage

Just like in other parts of Africa, for the Bini people

²⁸ Ademola Iyi-Eweka, “In Defence of Edo Womanhood”. <http://www.raceandhistory.com/historicalviews/edoculture.htm>

²⁹ Love Obiani Arugu, “Social indicators and effects of marriage divorce in African societies” *The Business & Management Review* 4, no. 4 (2014): 374-383.

³⁰ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people of Nigeria*, 47.

marriage is considered as a sacred institution. It is an institution that comes with mutual responsibility for the parties involved, including the community as a whole. As such adequate preparation is required. Failure to prepare before entering into marriage means failure to the family and to the community. On this note, the Bini people take time to prepare their children for marriage. Generally, in Benin culture between the ages of fifteen to eighteen a girl is considered ready for marriage. At that age, they must have been taught all that is necessary for marriage and family life. As early as childhood, the child is introduced into series of rituals and initiations, which will later form the foundation of his or her family life. These series of rituals and initiations as Mbiti puts it, “are like the birth of the young people into the state of maturity and responsibility.”³¹ At birth the initiation begins, sacrifices are made to the family ancestors and spirit to protect and guide the child to maturity. Furthermore, during the naming ceremony an amulet is placed on the child neck, which he wears throughout his life. Around the age of adolescence, between seven to eight year, Bradbury reports, “The male child begins to accompany his father regularly to the farm and gradually learn male skills. Girls on the other hand, go with their mothers and elder sisters to the farm, to fetch wood and water and to the market.”³² Both male and female by so doing gradually learn skills required of them for a family life. In other words, at that age boys and girls are taught their responsibility as male and female preparing them for marriage and family life. During this period also the male are taught how to be responsible and make decisions as head of a family. Mbiti, however, argues that the female are more informed for they spend longer time with their mother and elder sister than the male with their fathers.³³

Courtship and Betrothal Period

Courtship usually begins when a boy finds a girl interesting and wishes to know her in the hope of marrying her.

³¹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 134.

³² R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria* (London: International African Institute, 1957), 40.

³³ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 135.

For the Bini people such interest usually begins along the road to the river when the girl goes to fetch water. It can also take place at the fireside of the village gathering under the moonlight. But with modernization, people can almost meet anywhere. In a situation where marriage is arranged without the notice or consent of the individual by his or her parent courtship is hardly seen. In such occasion betrothal takes place when the child is born. When a baby girl is born, suitors begin to approach her parents for her hand, sending to them a log of wood and yams. This is known as performing *Ivu-omo* (asking for the child). This then is followed with series of negotiations between both families.

While the negotiation goes on, there is also investigation on the part of both families to find out if the family they wish to marry into have history of any kind of diseases, scandals, childlessness or crime. If there are none the negotiation continues. When the father of the girl, with the approval of his own father or elder brother, has chosen a suitable man, he informs him of the date of the formal betrothal. On the agreed date, the suitor prepares gifts of ajar of palmwine, two trays of sliced coconut with two kolanuts each, and two shillings. On presentation to the father of the bride, the gifts are taken to the altar of the girl's patrilineal ancestors to notify them of the betrothal. The suitor is made to kneel before the girl's father, who says "We give the child to you. Thereafter, the suitor begins to give to his prospective parents-in-law such services which include, yearly presentation of yams to the parents, helping in farm duties and providing the mother-in-law with firewood."³⁴

W. Thomas speaks of the second form of marriage, that is, when the girl is already an adult. According to Thomas, there is no available suitor who will pay the bride price for her. A man who wishes to have her hand in marriage goes directly to her and asks if she has a husband. If her response is no, then goes to her father and ask for her hand. The following day the man goes again, now with a friend, if the father of the girls accepts the suitor, he then brings beads worth seventy shillings. At this time he has the freedom the take her as his wife.³⁵

³⁴ R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples*, 48.

³⁵ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people of Nigeria*, 48.

Marriage Proper

When the girl has passed puberty, the father arranges for her body marks to be made and informs the suitor that the time for him to claim her is approaching. When a date is fixed for the marriage, the groom prepares more gifts of wine, kolanuts and coconuts as further offerings to the ancestors of the girl on notification for the intending marriage rites to be performed and asks for the ancestors' blessings. It is at this stage that the groom or his father makes the marriage payment of twelve pounds to the girl's father, and with gifts for the mother and the people at home serving as witnesses to the marriage. The marriage contract is finally sealed by the payment of two shillings which is called *anyi-imiom*—the wine of receiving the child. The payment of the bride price is undoubtedly the most significant feature of marriage, without which the father can reclaim his daughter and her children at any time.³⁶

The next stage is the circumcision of the girl. This is usually done immediately after the bride price is paid. The husband is responsible for the expenses of the circumcision. After the circumcision she joins her husband and the next stage of the marriage ceremony starts.³⁷

This stage is the *irhioharie* ceremony—taking the bride to her husband. The bride is expected to go to her husband at night accompanied by four people from her father's family and three from her mother's. Her departure according to cultural practices is characterized by sadness, even if feigned. On arrival, the bride is expected to feign shyness. She is placed in her husband's lap by one of those who accompanied her. The women in the groom's house bring a bowl of water in which money or cowries have been placed and wash the bride's hands. This simple rite symbolizes her acceptance into the household, and the money expresses the hope that the marriage will be a fruitful one.³⁸

The next morning after her arrival, a goat is killed and the blood collected. The couple would stand and hold hands at the entrance of the house, with each of their foot on the doorstep.

³⁶ R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples*, 49.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people*, 47-68.

They would dip their big toes into the blood of the goat as prayers are offered. On the seventh day, the bride would visit her husband's ancestral shrine with kolanuts and wine. She would be made to confess any relationship she had had with any man before her betrothal. If such a thing had happened, the husband would claim damages from those concerned. She would then pray to her husband's ancestral spirits to receive her into the family and make her fruitful. The new wife would live with her mother-in-law who would teach her house duties as required from wives. She would never eat in the public with her husband until she has her own kitchen. This represents the last stage of the marriage process.³⁹

Benin Family and Roles of Parents

Family means everything to the Bini people. Bini concept of the family is much more complex to that of the European. For the European as summarized by Elliot and Gray, the family structure includes any of the following:

- A nuclear family, a two-generation family consisting of a father and mother and their children or a single, possibly widowed, parent and his/her children.
- A stem family, a three-generation family consisting of a father and mother, married children, their spouses and their children.
- A lineal family, the families of several married siblings who are linked to their common family of orientation, that is, to the family of their parents. Such a family dissolves with the death of the parents and may become a laterally extended family, where links are maintained, or split into individual nuclear families. They do not necessarily live together.
- An extended or jointly family, three or more generations live together with both vertical and lateral extensions, with a single line of authority, either patrilineal or matrilineal.

³⁹ Northcote W. Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Edo-Speaking people*, 47-68.

- A compound family, when two families combine after divorce.⁴⁰

It is clear from the aforementioned that these structures are not in harmony with the Bini family system. In classical Bini society, family household occupies a large compound; where one finds three or more generations from a particular genealogy and other families of different genealogies living together as one individual family. It is, according to Mbiti's report, that the joint households together are like one large family. The number of family members may range from ten persons to even a hundred where several wives belonging to one husband maybe involved.⁴¹ It is important to know that polygamy is allowed in Bini culture. Incidentally, the institution of polygamy in traditional Africa was certainly not merely a means of satisfying male lust. On the contrary, it has a number of well-defined social functions and advantages, and it certainly helped to stabilize the institution of marriage and to integrate the family with society.⁴² It is the practice in some societies, to send children to live for some months or years, with relatives, and these children are counted as members of the families where they happen to live. It is clear therefore that Bini traditional family is based on a household which numbers people of three or more generations from the same genealogy and other families of different genealogies live together as one.⁴³

Mbiti adds two more essential members of the Bini family. First, the departed relatives are known as the living dead. They are listed as part of the family because, though they are dead, but they are thought to be still involved with the affairs of the family to which they once belonged in the physical world. The best way to remember them is through the giving of offerings of food and libation because they are considered to be still part of the family. Second are the unborn. These are the buds of hope and

⁴⁰ Elliott, S. & Gray, A. (2000). *Family Structures, A Report For The New Zealand Immigration Service*. Retrieved from Department of Labour New Zealand website:<http://www.dol.govt.nz/research/migration/pdfs/FamilyStructures.pdf>

⁴¹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 106.

⁴² Benezeri Kitembo, Laurenti Magesa and Alylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Book, 1977), 63.

⁴³ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 107.

expectation, and each family makes sure that its own existence is not extinguished.⁴⁴ Parents are filled with joy and expectation knowing that they are expecting a child. They likewise prepare their children for marriage so as to bear children for the continuation of their family name. Failure to do this means an end to the family name. It is to be noted however, that modernization has eroded family system away in Bini cities. Nevertheless, the typical family structure still exists in the rural areas of Bini, that is in the villages, where one can have direct empirical knowledge of its social significance.

Traditional Bini Family

In Bini culture, the family remains the basic social unit of the society. Bini family by nature is patriarchal. This means that the household head is always the man or his male relative in his absence. The traditional family structure places the father as sole breadwinner and mother as caretaker of the children at home. At a tender age the process of this patriarchal approach begins, socialization process strictly differentiates the girl from the boy child. Males are socialized to view themselves as breadwinners and head of households whereas females are taught to be obedient and submissive to family and cultural dictates. In the case of married women these expectations often become problematic in the absence of the husband.⁴⁵ Mies opines that patriarchy is a cornerstone, the bedrock and foundation of most societies. Patriarchy supports and justifies relations of subordination of women in their interactions with men. The legal and social control of women is very strong. Patriarchy influences the definition of what constitutes a family, household headship, and the benefits flowing from that. As a general rule, patriarchy is the dominant structure of family organization. Through it men wield power and control women and the fruits of their labour. Access to and control of resources at a family as well as societal level is also regulated by patriarchy.⁴⁶ This is the type of system that exists among the Bini people.

⁴⁴ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 107.

⁴⁵ Benezeri Kitembo, Laurenti Magesa and Alylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*, 102.

⁴⁶ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale* (London: Zed Books, 1988), 1-235.

At first look, the traditional Bini family might be considered as an extended family, because it is made of three or more generations of family sharing the same residence. But it is more than that. It is unique, in the sense that it encompasses both the patrilineal or matrilineal line of authority. In other words, the Bini traditional household has no single line of authority, that is, the line of authority in a typical Bini traditional family system can be patrilineal or matrilineal. Although the extended family is considered the ideal system of family in traditional Bini society, Bradbury however gives three forms of Bini family: The first is like the usual western family, where the husband and wife with their children occupy a house or a room in the house of the man's brother, usually the elder brother. The second form is larger than the first. This form is considered to be a joint family, where an elderly man with his wives and unmarried children, together with one or more unmarried sons with one or more unmarried sons with their wives and children, and, in some cases, younger married brothers. This is common among most Bini people; most married men prefer to move out of their father's house before or soon after their father's death. Third, is the ideal form already discussed earlier, it encompasses several houses, usually neighboring houses, made up of a man and his married brothers and sons with their wives and children and possibly, the sons and unmarried daughters of the deceased elder brother with his wives and children.⁴⁷

The Bini family is made up of a quasi-political unit. This means that the members are under the immediate control for certain purposes, by the eldest male who can apply sanctions against them. Traditional Bini family is also hierarchical in nature. The head of the nuclear family of compound family may be under the authority of the joint family who in turn may be under the head of the extended family. The head of each forms of family is responsible for discipline and sanctions against those under his authority, though he would not attempt to beat his adult sons or brothers. According to Bradbury, the main support to such authority, however, lies in the relation between the living and

⁴⁷ R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria* (London: International African Institute, 1957), 28.

deceased patrilineal ancestors of the family head. The situation is complicated by the rule of primogeniture.⁴⁸

The climax of Bini family affairs is the birth of an offspring and the giving away of a member during marriage. Children are of great essence to the traditional Bini family. Children bring vitality into the family life. In Bini culture, children are thought of as the servant of their father, wives of their husband. Procreation is important to both men and women. A woman cannot be considered a mother without a child of her own. To be childless is the greatest tragedy that can befall a woman. For a Bini man, producing children, especially male children, is important to continue the family lineage; otherwise, the family would become extinct. It is a sign of ancestral favour to have many children. The ancestor's name is perpetuated. The father of the family is sure to live on and to get a most decent burial—his passport to the paradise of ancestors. No Bini man would like his family name to become extinct. This is why Bini people give names to their children that represent their heritage. These names signify a man's desire to continue his family name through procreation.⁴⁹

When a male child is not born in the family, it concerns family members because of the important role male child plays in Bini society. The Bini people have great love for children and this can explain in some cases the existence of polygamy in Bini land. They have family units which together form the extended family system as mentioned earlier. In order to beget a child for the family, a father could even ask his daughter to procreate for the family. In the sense even when not duly married the daughter can have intercourse with a man in order to put to an end the disgrace of the family of not having a child. However, the views of Christianity would admonish a father asking a daughter to procreate for the family in Bini land. Nevertheless, this is part of the Bini cultural tradition. This represents another tension between the Bini conception of marriage and the Christian conception of marriage.

⁴⁸ R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples*, 29.

⁴⁹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 142.

Polygamy in Bini Marriage

Polygamy as a system of marriage is well sanctioned by Bini tradition. Among the Bini people, polygamy is almost universally preferential or voluntary, in the sense that it is rarely, if ever, legally mandated.⁵⁰ In other words, the traditional ideal system of marriage is polygamy. Nevertheless, there are still monogamists, who marry out of necessity rather than choice. Since the chief aim of Bini marriage is procreation, it follows that the more wives a man has the more would be his children; and the more children he has, the longer he would likely be remembered long after his death. Such a man would have many descendants through whom the power of immortality would be manifested in that family. Accordingly, children were the glory of marriage and the more children there were, the greater the glory.⁵¹

Hillman argues, that polygamy is also motivated by desire to secure alliance with good families. In this case, marriage from the Bini context is viewed as involving families and communities rather than individuals.⁵² Moreover, the chronological age gap between men and ladies at the time of marriage has been noted as a factor which encourages polygamy. Scholars have argued that in many parts of Africa, men normally get married late in life, thus creating a pool of marriageable women.⁵³ Traditionally polygamy also has its economic benefit. Marrying more than one wife and producing several children ensured division of labour. Wives and their children worked in the fields which would enhance productivity. Young men engaged themselves in looking after cattle while the father's duty was to oversee the work force. It should be noted, however, that the economic perspective of polygamy is increasingly losing ground in Bini land. In addition, another factor which encourages polygamy among Bini men, is prestige. Wealthy men get married to young looking girls in order to show off social status.

⁵⁰ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 119.

⁵¹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 142.

⁵² Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Churches*.

(New York: Mary Knoll, 1975), 92

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Traditional Role of Parents in Bini Marriage

Marriage among the Bini people is strictly governed by tradition and customs. Decisions or consent regarding whom to marry among the Bini people begins immediately after a child is born. At this time suitors may start to approach her parents for her hand in marriage. They come with items like log of wood and bundle of yam, as gifts for the child. Furthermore, ideally a man should obtain a first wife for each of his sons and it is common for men to have girls betrothed to themselves with the object of securing them for sons who are still minors.⁵⁴ When a man wishes to marry he must first of all approach the parents of the girl, it is the responsibility of the parents to give their consent and not the girl. The duty of the girl is simply acceptance of whosoever the parents agreed upon to be her husband. There is absence of consent on the part of the girl, but, rather, a submission of will or consent to the decision of the parents. The parent's consent is rooted in the cultural traditions of the Bini people. There seems to be wisdom behind such position. It has been noticed that in the past, the significant differences in attitude on the part of men and women to the marriage relationship were rendered less disruptive by the parents' careful choice of marriage partners. For, in fact, today young people do not choose as carefully; they lack experience and they act hastily, cohabiting before negotiations are completed or even begun.⁵⁵

This culture places emphasis on the domineering roles of parents and elders in selecting spouses for their children. Hence, when the father of the girl, with the approval of his own father or senior brother, has chosen a suitable man, he informs him of a date of the formal betrothal.⁵⁶ This excludes the girl. It is totally the duty of the parents. This strong influence and domineering attitude of parents within the context of strong cultural norms based on the interpretation of traditional code fuels the belief that children are the property of their parents. In other words, negotiation regarding marriage among the Binis is strictly the

⁵⁴ R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples of South-Western*, 48.

⁵⁵ Benezeri Kitembo, Laurenti Magesa and Alylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*, 33.

⁵⁶ R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and The Edo-Speaking Peoples*, 48.

duty of parents; and even when the children themselves make a choice on a partner, their parents must give their consents to it.⁵⁷ It is also the duty of parents to make proper investigation on the family that they are about to marry into. The parents try to find all things about the girl or boy, and then report it at the family council. If the council is satisfied, the parents of the boy and his elder brother go to the family of the girl and declare their intention. The bride-price⁵⁸ is undoubtedly an important feature in the marriage of the Bini people. If the bride-price is not paid or has never been paid, then the father can claim back his daughter at any time. The marriage contract is only sealed when the groom's father pays the bride-price to the people in the house.

There are different reasons as to why the consent of the parents is required in the marriage of the Bini people and not the consent of the child. First, there is the social and communitarian character of Bini marriage. Whereby, marriage is understood not just between two individuals but rather between families and communities in general. Marriage creates a bond that brings families and communities so closely together. That is why certain conditions, such as rift between the two communities, can nullify a marriage. Enmity between the family, notwithstanding any amount of cordiality and love between the two individual, can not only nullify a marriage but also make it impossible in the first place. Hence, the value of marriage is communal, and the couple's consent has validity only in this communitarian social context.⁵⁹ It is a common belief among the Bini people that the community is the custodian of the individual; therefore he must go where the community goes. The community guarantees individual responsibility within the communal ownership and relationship. The prosperity of a single person does not make a town rich. But the prosperity of the town makes persons rich. It

⁵⁷ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 136.

⁵⁸ Bride-price, sometimes referred to as bride-wealth, is a form of marriage payment in which the bride's group receives a payment of goods, money, or livestock to compensate for the loss of a woman's labor and the children she bears. Cf. Bride-Price - Family, Women, and Payment - JRank Articles <http://family.jrank.org/pages/181/Bride-Price.html#ixzz4W6YNQtzC>

⁵⁹ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 119.

is in this sense that the Bini people view marriage. The family has always had an important say—frequently too important a say—in the acceptance of a marriage partner precisely because marriage involves the welcoming of a new member into the clan. Family pressure could certainly inspire such reverential fear in a person that he or she necessarily consents to the marriage. Also since it is the parents who are head of the family, it is wise therefore that they be the ones to make the consent. Furthermore, there is another way in which family involvement has had an important effect on personal freedom in Bini marriage. If a marital crises arise—like a serious quarrel between the spouses that threatens the marriage with collapse—the families would intervene in an effort to save the marriage. The father or mother of the husband, and then perhaps the elders of the clan, would speak with him and the wife’s relatives, and it may end in an inter clan session.⁶⁰

Second, parents’ consent is required in order to address the issue of childlessness. Owing to the emphasis that the Bini people place on life, it will be very difficult if it is noticed or rumored that anybody in the family to be married is sexually inadequate. The man or the woman is most unlikely to be accepted for marriage. If after marriage the couple bears no child, it brings disgrace to their parents. There is always a natural desire to have children who will bear one’s name. Having children is a way of perpetuating the family name. Without children the goal of life is defeated. It remains unfulfilled. The Bini people believe that the fulfillment of human existence takes place here and now. This fulfillment does not mean the accumulation of wealth and all that it brings. A person is not considered to have accomplished the goal of human life simply by accumulating wealth. The Bini culture places more value on children more than material wealth. Hence, it is the duty of the parents to ensure that the family name continues by placing their child in the hands of a worthy family. That is, a family that possess the capacity for producing children. Age and experience make the parents act in this sense. This cannot be entrusted to the children who still act more with emotion rather than reason.⁶¹

Third, parents’ consent is needed to preserve the respect children must have for their parents. These respect children have

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, 120.

for their parents brought about the acceptance of their decisions. Conton asserts that, Africans generally have deep and ingrained respect for old age, and even when one find nothing to admire in an old man, an African will not easily forget that the grey hairs have earned him right to courtesy and politeness.⁶² Though it is natural for Bini people to respect an elder, this respect, in some cases, can be relative to what we can find and admire in an elder. For example, the experience and wisdom of the elder in the community. It is true that respect for elders starts within one's immediate family. For the Bini people parents have dignity and respect. The respect given to the parents has its practical effect in the maintenance of custom and tradition. The young are always looking forward to being parents and they are often told that if a child respects his or her parents, he or she would be respected by his or her children when he or becomes a parent. In addition, it is believed in Bini culture in general that parents and elders are the custodian of communal wisdom and, therefore, they are conceded the leadership in the affairs of the people. One of the reasons for this is the nearness of the elders and parents to the ancestors. Legitimate power lay in the office sanctioned by ancestral norms.

Roman Catholic Teaching and Traditional Bini Marriage

The summit of God's creation is man and woman together: "Male and female he created them and He named them"(Gen 5:2). God established marriage for the man and woman to be together. He blessed them giving them the mandate to go and multiply, that is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins his wife and the two become one. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ would quote the same passage from Genesis as an evidence for the indissolubility of marriage. Jesus made manifest the irrevocable unity of marriage. His word "what God has joined together no man should separate," reveals God's original plan for husband and wife. When Paul was confronted with the question on whether it is more spiritual to be single than to marry, Paul made it clear that to be single is not for everyone. To combat sexual immorality,

⁶² Conton William, *The African* (London: Signet, 1966), 21.

Paul insisted that it was better for each man to have his wife, and for each woman her own husband.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council had high esteem for marriage and family life, and spoke of the lofty calling of spouses and parents. The Council esteemed conjugal love as a sign to others of Christ's own love for the church. Today, it is not uncommon for church leaders to insist that the entire church benefits from the love within committed marriages. The council fathers taught that intimate partnership of married life and love have been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and are rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent.⁶³ Moving from the idea of marriage as a contract to covenant, the 1983 Code of Canon Law bearing itself in Vatican II, maintained that there can be no marriage if there is no freedom of consent from the spouses.

The concept of freedom of consent has a different connotation in the marriage of the Bini people. Parents believe that they have the authority to decide whom their sons or daughters are to marry. Some parents go to the extent of denying their children right of inheritance of their properties if they fail to marry a man or woman of their choice. In some cases, some young people may agree to the arrangement just to get access to the family inheritance. They would go through all the rites of marriage, make marriage promises just out of compulsion and not with love. Although most unions thus entered last a long time, there too are many that simply fail and sometimes within so short a span of time.

Reverential Fear

Reverential fear consists in the fear of offending or saddening one's parents or provoking their indignation. This kind of fear can violate the freedom of consent. In Bini culture where there is a high value for familial relationship and communal life, reverential fear is apt to impact matrimonial consent negatively. When Bini people marry they bring their own cultural expectation and values into the union. Even though they are Catholics and are obliged to follow Catholic laws in marriage. There is also the

⁶³ GS, 48.

Bini culture, which is not in consonant with these laws, and in particular case, the essential role of consent.

In the catholic matrimony, freedom of consent is a primary ingredient of marriage. Without freedom of consent there can be no Catholic marriage. The most fundamental right every human being has is the natural right to any form of life he or she chooses. This choice or right must be deliberate and free. The Second Vatican Council expresses the vital connection between freedom and the human condition, “it is, however, only in freedom that man can turn himself towards what is good. The people of our time prize freedom very highly and strive early for it. In this they are right.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, “Man’s dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint.”⁶⁵ Any factor, whether external or internal which substantially impedes internal freedom invalidates the juridical act of marriage. Matrimonial consent is considered to be a juridical act. Thus, it ought to be a freely willed act on the part of the spouses.

Canon 1103, speaks of force and fear as a factor that can invalidate a marriage: “A marriage is invalid when entered into by reason of force or grave fear imposed from outside, even if not purposely, from which the person has no escape other than by choosing marriage.”⁶⁶ According to Siegle, force and fear are correlative terms. Force is a physical impulse from an external agent which cannot be overcome, for example, when blows or threats are unjustly used. Fear is trepidation of mind in the face of an impending evil.⁶⁷ Fear in itself does not, however, constitute a factor that invalidates marriage, except when established that consent was elicited by reason of grave fear imposed from without which the person can escape only by choosing marriage. This means that the victim has no other means from the oppressive situation. This canon is not applicable, when there are other means to escape the force or get rid of the fear, like the taking up residence elsewhere.

⁶⁴ *GS*, 17.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶⁶ *CIC/83*, 1103.

⁶⁷ Bernard Siegle, *Marriage according to the New Code of Canon Law* (Alba House, N.Y.: Society of St. Paul, 1986), 20.

There are two kinds of fear, the grave fear and common fear. A grave fear is that fear which overpowers the mind and will of a person because of the real grave injury or loss that is threatened. A loss of life or any parts of the body, fortune, future freedom, reputation or job, can constitute an absolute grave fear; but internal fear created by one's imagination, does not count as absolute fear. Relatively grave fear is that fear that can overcome the resistance of an individual who is not strong and steadfast. It is under this category that reverential fear falls.⁶⁸

Reverential fear is a deprivation of human freedom which is a requisite for a valid marital consent. It is a dread of the indignation of authority figure which will result from lack of obedience. Consequently, the individual does, or does not do, something on account of the fear of offending a person to whom reverence must be given.

In Bini marriage, a child, for example, might accept the decision of his parents to marry someone of their own choosing on account of the fear of being ejected from parental home, or fear of not having a share in family inheritance. Vatican II warns parents especially with regard to the freedom to choose partners: "It is the duty of parents and teachers to guide young people with prudent advice in the establishment of a family; their interest should make young people listen to them eagerly; and they should beware of exercising any undue influence, directly or indirectly, to force them into marriage or compel them in their choice of partner."⁶⁹

In Bini culture, the traditional role of parents plays its parts in the matrimonial consent of their children. Every Bini person is a product of his or her culture, and his or her mind is consistently conditioned by cultural influences. The system of parental consent is so deeply rooted in Bini culture that even up to today many marriages are the result of the system. Parents believe that they own their children. In turn, children must fear and obey their decisions. The source of this fear is the filial respect and gratitude children owe to their parents, which in turn create trepidation of mind in the process of making choice, particularly the choice of marriage and marriage partners. Although it is good

⁶⁸ W. Doheny, *Canonical Procedure in Matrimonial Cases*, Vol. 1, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1948), 911.

⁶⁹ GS, 52.

to note that there are many of these marriages that last a long time, there are still many that fail within a short period of time. There is a dilemma here. On the one hand, the Catholic Church rightly upholds the inviolability of personal freedom in the choice of state of life. On the other hand, the Church respects and accepts what is good and valuable in every culture.⁷⁰

Viladrich notes that reverential fear in reality is a peculiar factual modality of ordinary fear. In other words, this type of fear is not an autonomous cause of invalidity with respect to force or fear. According to Viladrich, the legislator does not expressly include reverential fear in the text of canon 1103 and makes the same requirements of it. However, it falls under this canon because due to experience it enjoys general acceptance and detailed descriptions in doctrine and jurisprudence.⁷¹ For a case to be judged as reverential fear, it is not sufficient to have a superior, in this case—the parents, who has expressed grave anger at the risk of the party going against his will. It is essential that the child, as the inferior, feels afflicted and disturbed and that he is afraid of angering his parents. Only in such situation is the feared evil the causal agent of reverential fear. Furthermore, “reverential fear is not based simply on a hierarchical relationship, considered formally and abstractly—a superior and an inferior; it requires that the link between superiority and reverential fear be effectively felt and experienced by the two persons involved.”⁷² This would result, for example, when there is a danger of a child losing the love and affection of his parents if he did not obey them on their choice of partner to marry. That will be a grave evil for the child who would feel the loss of parental ties which is much more than loss of material goods. Furthermore, the fear must be grave and extrinsic and at least subjectively escapable only by giving

⁷⁰ Jose Marattil, “Reverential Fear as A Ground of Marriage Nullity with Special Reference to the Indian Culture ” *Concilium* 43, no. 2 (2009): 431-486.

⁷¹ Pedro Juan Viladrich, “Matrimonial Consent” in *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, vol. III, no. 2, ed. Ángel Marzoa, Jorge Miras and Rafael Rodríguez Ocaña (Montreal: Wilson and Lafleur, 2004), 1427.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1429.

consent to marriage.⁷³

Judging by the situation in Bini culture, it will be difficult to find proofs with regards to reverential fear. This is due to the fact that no child wants to say anything bad against his or her parents or family. Therefore, the Church made it clear that in judging such cases, the judicial assessment must take into account the testimonies of witnesses and the cultural background of the parties. The customs, habits, nationality, age, economics, social, status and education of parties should also be taken into consideration. Fear out of respect of not offending one's parents or not disappointing them is something common in all cultures; but parents, in the long run, must inform their children that they are free to refuse or make their own decision on choice of partner since a valid matrimonial consent must be a free act of the will.

Consent: The Bini Marriage and Canonical Freedom

When spouses make their consent by simply complying to their parents' decision, the act of the will is consenting to something other than marriage as understood by the Catholic Church. Consequently, the union to which the spouses consented to does not possess the characteristics which the Church teaches regarding marriage. The cultural expectations of the spouses are not the Catholic cultural expectations. The Bini culture is rather divergent from what the Code presumes when spouses consent to marry. It is clear that the Church recognizes the importance of parents in the upbringing of their children and giving them advise in choosing a marriage partner. Vatican speaks well of this: "It is the duty of parents and teachers to guide young people with prudent advice in the establishment of a family; their interest should make young people listen to them eagerly."⁷⁴ But quickly adds, "They should beware of exercising any undue influence, directly or indirectly, to force them into marriage or compel them in their choice of partner."⁷⁵

⁷³ Can. 1103: A marriage is Invalid which was entered into by reason of force or grave fear imposed from outside, even if not purposely, from which the person has no escape other than by choosing marriage.

⁷⁴ *GS*, 52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

Care must be taken in considering the natural reality of marriage. The canon's description of marriage is an authoritative one, since Christ has raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. Hence, the canon provides a standard from which all marriages are to be measured, be it Bini marriage or anywhere that a Catholic marriage is celebrated, whether the spouses are baptized or not. Canonists have traditionally distinguished two moments at which to properly interpret the meaning of matrimony: *matrimonium in fieri* (marriage in the act of being constituted) and *matrimonium in facto esse* (marriage in the act of being lived out). *Matrimonium in fieri* is considered as the act of consent that directly and immediately gives rise to *matrimonium in facto esse*. Any defect in *Matrimonium in fieri* renders *matrimonium in facto esse* void. But it is different the other way around. *Matrimonium in facto esse* once approved by the legitimate consent of the parties remains come what may.⁷⁶

The 1917 Code of canon speaks of *matrimonium in fieri* as the “marriage contract” and *matrimonium in facto esse* as the “bond.” However, with the arrival of Vatican II Council, which was subsequently enshrined in the 1983 code of canon law, *matrimonium in fieri* is described as the “matrimonial covenant” and *matrimonium in facto esse* as the partnership of the whole life long. According to canon 1055, this partnership of a whole life long is ordered to both good of the spouses and procreation and education of children.⁷⁷ In *matrimonium in fieri* the will of establishing a partnership is concretized in the act of wanting to marry, that is the giving up of oneself in order to be received either as a wife or husband. Such a will is not capable of being multiplied. *Matrimonium in facto esse*, on the other hand, is the bond—the legitimate, perpetual and exclusive union of the man

⁷⁶ Juan Ignacio Bañares, “Marriage” in *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, vol. III, no. 2, ed. Ángel Marzoa, Jorge Miras and Rafael Rodríguez Ocaña (Montreal: Wilson and Lafleur, 2004), 1058-1060.

⁷⁷ Can. 1055 §1: The marriage covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

and woman arising from consent, ordered to the procreation and education of offspring. In *matrimonium in facto esse*, consent is a basic ingredient. On this note, St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes in marriage three basic elements that should not be confused: First, cause of marriage which is said to be the marriage covenant; Second, the *essence* of marriage, which is the bond; Third, the ends which is the procreation and education of children, the control of the sexual instinct and mutual assistance.⁷⁸

Lastly, consent is said to be the most decisive element of the marriage covenant and the one that causes its efficacy. In this regard, in order to protect the person's rights which affect the total self-giving of oneself and whole body, consent cannot be supplied by any human power—not even by the parents of the person entering marriage. This means that Church law will not recognize the validity of a marriage if there are some defects that render it void according to natural law, like the fault in the naturally sufficient consent. This means that a marriage in which the parents were the ones that consented to marriage instead of the spouses will be considered void by the Church since there is fault in the naturally sufficient consent or there is lack of consent from the spouses.

Sacredness of Marriage

One quality that the Bini people cherish so much is the sacredness of marriage. Before the advent of Christianity, the Bini people believed in the sacredness of marriage and strictly adhered to the laws and prohibitions guiding and guarding marriage life. Furthermore, among the Bini people, marriage is seen as one of the crucial rites of passage and is related to birth, puberty and death rites. It is the duty of every Bini man to marry at some point and beget children. As Mbiti would say, it is considered to be abnormal for an African person to grow into old age without marrying.⁷⁹ Marriage thus transforms the status of every Bini man entering this institution for the first time; and marriage is one of

⁷⁸ Juan Ignacio Bañares, "Marriage" in *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, vol. III, no. 2, ed. Ángel Marzoa, Jorge Miras and Rafael Rodríguez Ocaña (Montreal: Wilson and Lafleur, 2004), 1058-1060.

⁷⁹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 133.

the necessary criteria in the definition of total social personhood among Bini people. In addition, marriage among the Bini people is found to be very important and a sacred institution because it confers tremendous respect upon the people who enter into it. Marriage is a requirement of the society, an obligation which every Bini man and woman must fulfill, a drama of life in which every man and woman must partake in. Considering it as a sacred institution, Mbiti remarks:

Therefore, marriage is looked upon as a sacred duty which every normal person must perform. Failure to do so means, in effect, stopping the flow of life through the individual and hence the diminishing of mankind upon the earth.... Therefore anybody who, under normal condition, refuses to get married is committing a major offence in the eyes of the society and people will be against him. In all African societies, everything possible is done to prepare people for marriage and to make them think in terms of marriage.⁸⁰

It is a religious obligation by means of which the Bini people contribute the seeds of life towards man's struggle against the loss of original immortality. In some societies it is believed that the living-dead, that is, the ancestors are reincarnated or re-born in part, so that aspect of their personalities or physical characteristics are re-born in their descendants.⁸¹ A person who therefore has no offspring in effect extinguishes the fire of life, and becomes forever dead since his line of physical continuation is blocked if he does not get married and bear children. Therefore, this sacred understanding and obligation in Bini people's mind must not be abused. It is therefore a religious obligation to marry. In line with this religiosity of marriage, several ceremonies and rituals are performed before a marriage can receive the blessings of the ancestors.

In like manner, in the Catholic Church marriage is also considered to be sacred because God has ordained it. It is a sacred institution, blessed and established by God, as noted in the book of Genesis. Earlier examination also noted that Bini marriage is sacred, which means that Bini marriage shares a sacred mystery with Catholic marriage. Catholic marriage is sacred because it

⁸⁰ John Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion*, 98.

⁸¹ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 133-134.

exhibits a religious character. Further, it also carries the image of mystery. It cannot be fully grasped by the human mind. The value of marriage goes beyond the desires of any group, individual, or even race. The Sacred Scriptures affirms that Christian marriage is sacred. “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Matt 19:5). It is a mystery because we cannot fully understand how two people would become one flesh. Canon law states that marriage has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.⁸² Sacrament is seen as the accomplishment of God’s eternal plan in regard to the salvation of mankind. Sacraments confer graces. As a sacrament it endows spouses with graces and elevates them to participate in a sacred order of realities and values which is that of God’s intimate life itself.

Procreation and Education of Children

Among the Bini people, children are accorded a priceless worth since procreation is perceived to be the essence of marriage. Hence childlessness is viewed as a calamity and a curse. A major characteristic of the Bini people is the deep and universal conviction that children are a blessing. The desire to beget children has always been the main motive inspiring the Bini people to marry. It would be inadequate to interpret this as placing the procreational or biological aspect of marriage above the aspect of personal fulfillment. A good analysis is that personal fulfillment for the Bini person is achieved principally in having offspring—through which one expresses and perpetuates oneself. Children have always been regarded as a prolongation of self and therefore, in some ways, a fulfillment of immortality. As Mbiti puts, “A person who, therefore, has no descendants in effect quenches the fire of life, and becomes forever dead since his line of physical continuation is blocked if he does not get married and bear children.”⁸³

Bini people do not only give birth to children, they also make sure that their children are brought up with good values. In Bini culture, education of children is a collective responsibility of the whole community. Since parents have given life to their

⁸² *CIC/83*, 1055 §1.

⁸³ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 133

child, therefore they have the prior right to educate the child for membership in the society. In Bini culture, parents have the right to delegate their responsibilities where education of their children is concerned. This has assisted children to face the complexities and has helped them to fit into the extended family and clan. The Bini family support system is so strong that it assures the children of their parents' care.

Marriage covenant in the Catholic Church is directed to the procreation and upbringing of children. According to Canon 1055, the procreation and upbringing of children are conjunctive realities.⁸⁴ This means that the right of parents to have children is conditioned by their obligation to educate them. This is similar in Bini culture. This idea of wanting to transmit life and respect for life was deeply praised by the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* of John Paul II as follows: "In African culture and tradition, the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental. Open to this sense of family of love and respect for life, the African loves children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God."⁸⁵ For a Bini man, procreation is in a sense the absolute way of insuring that a person is not cut off from personal immortality. Biologically, both husband and wife are reproduced in their children, thus, perpetuating the chain of humanity.⁸⁶ The Catholic Church understands the gift of procreation as cooperation in God's work of creation not only by means of physical procreation but the human formation of the children as well. Although, the Church emphasizes that the validity of marriage does not depend solely on procreation as there are cases in which the spouses are either sterile or aged. Nevertheless, there must always be openness to procreation by all who choose to marry.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Can. 1055§1 The marriage covenant, by which a man and woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to dignity of a sacrament.

⁸⁵ *Ecclesia in Africa* (EIA), 43. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html

⁸⁶ John Mbiti, *African religions and Philosophy*, p. 130.

⁸⁷ Thomas P. Doyle, "Marriage," in *The Code of Canon Law, A Text and Commentary* ed. James Coriden, Thomas Green, and Donald Heintschel (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 2001), 741.

Matrimony: Between a Man and a Woman

Bini people hold that marriage is between a male and a female. This does not mean that a man cannot have more than one wife. What it means is that same sex union is unheard of, infact—an abomination. They insist that same-sex relationships should not be recognized as marriage on the grounds that same-gender sexual activity is contrary to God’s will, is unnatural, impure, and subverts God’s creative intent for human sexuality—the divine institution of marriage. In Bini culture same-sex union is virtually unknown and Bini people are rigidly heterosexual. They insist that it should not even be called marriage in the first place. Marriage is the right word for two opposite sexes. Same-sex partnership for the Bini people is not just morally wrong, it is also largely barbaric. Marriage is a sacred contract between a man and a woman that cannot be redefined and it is the cornerstone of family life. Same-sex marriage is also inconsistent with Bini values of procreation and the belief in the continuity of family clan.⁸⁸

As indicated earlier, the Catholic Church takes a very high view of marriage and human sexuality. Marriage is a conduit through which God’s grace flows to the couple and their children. Catholic Church understands marriage between a baptized man and woman to be a sacrament, a visible sign of the grace that God gives them to help them live their lives here and now so as to be able to join him in eternity. Marriage is meant for a male and female and not for same-sex.

Sexuality has two aspects: the procreative (bringing forth children) and the unitive (strengthening the union of the couple). Artificially separating the unitive from procreative brings discord to a marriage, distorts the relationship between husband and wife, and ends up harming their unity as spouses. Pope John Paul II explains this with what he calls the “language of the body.”⁸⁹ He observes that in sexual act, man and woman implicitly give themselves totally to one another. That is what their bodies are saying, both symbolically and literally. Sexual expression, by its

⁸⁸ Femi Ajayi, *Legalizing Same Sex Marriage In Nigeria Is Against African Deities* (Wednesday, December 28, 2011) <http://nigeriaworld.com/columnist/ajayi/122811.html>.

⁸⁹ John Paul II, *Theology of the body* (Cheyenne: Resurrection Publications, 2003), 9.

very nature, implies total gift of self to the other. The language of the body says, "I give myself to you completely, without reservation or condition."⁹⁰ Deliberately frustrating the procreative aspect of sexual act creates a condition that makes self-giving only partial and reduces the spouse, in some degree, to a pleasure object used for selfish purposes.

The procreative, life-giving aspect of marital love, necessarily implies that sex will be between a man and a woman. Sex between two men or two women is never life-giving, for it is biologically incapable of producing children or enhancing the health and well-being of the participants. Thus, marital love must be exclusive, unconditional, permanent, and open to life. The absence of any of these qualities constitutes an abuse of human sexuality. It also affects the society.

Provisions in the Code of Canon Law to Ratify Bini Marriage

For the validity of a Catholic marriage, consent must be freely given and mutual consent must be a freely willed act on the part of each spouse. No human power or whatsoever can supply this consent (canon 1057§1), not even the parents of the spouses.⁹¹ Bini marriages seemed not to follow this rule. Parents make the choice of a marriage partner. In most instances, the spouses acquiesce to the choice made for them by their parents. Children concur to the choice of their parents out of respect or reverence that they owe to them. Some of these marriages, although defective in consent, do really last for a long time. In such instances, are there ways or provisions in the Code Canon Law to make these invalid Bini marriages due to defective consent valid?

⁹⁰ Mary Shivanadian, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the light of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 82.

⁹¹ Can. 1057§1: A marriage is brought into being by the lawfully manifested consent of persons who are legally capable. This consent cannot be supplied by any human power.

Convalidation of Marriage

Convalidation of marriage involves a legal act or canonical procedure by which a marriage that was invalidly contracted because of a defect of consent, a diriment impediment, or a defect of the required form is made valid.⁹² According to Örsy, the purpose of these canons is to “provide a legal mechanism for transforming an existing union, created and sustained with marital affection but having no juridical status, into a canonically valid marriage.”⁹³ Historically, the idea of convalidation and the renewal of consent started around the thirteenth century. At the beginning the renewal of consent meant probably the outward manifestation of consent on the model of the Roman consensual contracts, not the highly philosophical concept of eliciting a new act of the will. Pope Innocent III was the first to introduce retroactive convalidation (*sanatio in radice*) in order to confer legitimacy on children born illegitimate. For this purpose, he validated (*sanavit*) the marriage of the parents.⁹⁴ Consequently, there are two types of convalidation: simple convalidation and retroactive convalidation.

Simple convalidation refers to the ordinary means of revalidating a marriage. It can be done through the manifestation of consent and it, thus, produces the effects of a valid marriage from the moment of the convalidation. Simple convalidation is, in other words, renewal of consent. This renewal of consent must be a new act of the will ratifying the marriage invalidly contracted before.

Retroactive convalidation refers to the revalidation granted by the competent Church’s authority. There are four procedures involved in a retroactive convalidation: first, the dispensation of

⁹² In some canon law books the word “convalidation” is rendered as “validation” and *sanatio in radice* as “retroactive validation.” Örsy hoped that one day these expressions will become standard among English speaking canonists. See, Ladislav Örsy, *Marriage in Canon Law Texts and Comments, Reflections and questions*, 240.

⁹³ Ladislav Örsy, *Marriage in Canon Law Texts and Comments, Reflections and questions*, 240.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

renewing the consent; second, dispensation of the impediment,⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Canon 1083 §1: A man cannot validly enter marriage before the completion of his sixteenth year of age, nor a woman before the completion of her fourteenth year. §2 The Episcopal Conference may establish a higher age for the lawful celebration of marriage. Canon 1084 §1 Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have sexual intercourse, whether on the part of the man or on that of the woman, whether absolute or relative, by its very nature invalidates marriage. §2 If the impediment of impotence is doubtful, whether the doubt be one of law or one of fact, the marriage is not to be prevented nor, while the doubt persists, is it to be declared null. §3 Without prejudice to the provisions of Canon 1098, sterility neither forbids nor invalidates a marriage. Canon 1085 §1 A person bound by the bond of a previous marriage, even if not consummated, invalidly attempts marriage. §2 Even though the previous marriage is invalid or for any reason dissolved, it is not thereby lawful to contract another marriage before the nullity or the dissolution of the previous one has been established lawfully and with certainty. Canon 1086 §1 A marriage is invalid when one of the two persons was baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it and has not by a formal act defected from it, and the other was not baptized. §2 This impediment is not to be dispensed unless the conditions mentioned in Canon. 1125 and 1126 have been fulfilled. §3 If at the time the marriage was contracted one party was commonly understood to be baptized, or if his or her baptism was doubtful, the validity of the marriage is to be presumed in accordance with Canon 1060, until it is established with certainty that one party was baptized and the other was not. Canon 1087 Those who are in sacred orders invalidly attempt marriage. Canon 1088 Those who are bound by a public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute invalidly attempt marriage. Canon 1089 No marriage can exist between a man and a woman who has been abducted, or at least detained, with a view to contracting a marriage with her, unless the woman, after she has been separated from her abductor and established in a safe and free place, chooses marriage of her own accord. Canon 1090 §1 One who, with a view to entering marriage with a particular person, has killed that person's spouse, or his or her own spouse, invalidly attempts this marriage. §2 They also invalidly attempt marriage with each other who, by mutual physical or moral action, brought about the death of either's spouse. Canon 1091 §1 Marriage is invalid between those related by consanguinity in all degrees of the direct line, whether ascending or descending, legitimate or natural. §2 In the collateral line, it is invalid up to the fourth degree inclusive. §3 The impediment of consanguinity is not multiplied. §4 A marriage is never to be permitted if a doubt exists as to whether the parties are related by consanguinity in any degree of

that is, if there is any; third, dispensation from canonical form,⁹⁶ if it was not observed; fourth, retroaction as regards the canonical effects.⁹⁷ The effect of retroactive convalidation, is to render a marriage valid from the moment the original, naturally sufficient consent was exchanged. Simple and retroactive convalidations are both matter of merely ecclesiastical law. Hence, they directly bind only Catholics but are indirectly binding to non-Catholics, whether baptized or not. In connection with Bini marriage, the paper focuses on simple convalidation. Since the problem discussed here involves a defective consent, the emphasis will be on those canons related to it.

Simple Convalidation

In simple convalidation, an invalid union may be convalidated by renewal of consent either privately or according to canonical form. Simple convalidation takes place when consent is invalid for the following reasons: (a) the presence of undispensed impediment, (b) defective consent, or (c) lack of canonical form. The second would be the priority of this section. Noted earlier is the defective consent in Bini marriage, defective in the sense that

the direct line, or in the second degree of the collateral line. Canon 1092 Affinity in any degree of the direct line invalidates marriage. Canon 1093 The impediment of public propriety arises when a couple live together after an invalid marriage, or from a notorious or public concubinage. It invalidates marriage in the first degree of the direct line between the man and those related by consanguinity to the woman, and vice versa. Canon 1094 Those who are legally related by reason of adoption cannot validly marry each other if their relationship is in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line.

⁹⁶ The requisite conditions for a valid marriage in which one or both parties are Catholic. For the marriage of a Catholic to be valid, there must be present: 1. A bishop or a parish priest in his parish or another priest duly delegated, and 2. Two witnesses. A dispensation from the canonical form can be obtained for mixed marriages.

⁹⁷ Retroaction has three effects: (a) The invalid consent is made valid from the very moment it was exchanged, (b) The impediment which made the consent invalid is automatically dispensed, (Canon 1163), (c) The canonical effects of a valid union are applied retroactively to the beginning of the union. The principal canonical effects are the sacramentality of the union (provided both parties were baptized at the time of consent) and the legitimization of any child born of the union.

it was not the choice of the spouses but of their parents. Hence, with simple convalidation such marriage that was invalid due to defective consent can be made valid by simple convalidation:

Can. 1159

- §1 A marriage invalid because of a defect of consent is validated if the party who did not consent, now does consent, provided the consent given by the other party persists.
- §2 If the defect of the consent cannot be proven, it is sufficient that the party who did not consent, gives consent privately and in secret.
- §3 If the defect of consent can be proven, it is necessary that consent be given in the canonical form.

This canon proves that Bini marriage due to “defect of consent”—that is, the absence or lack of consent—can be ratified. This may also include both the nonexistence and the insufficiency of consent. This canon in relation to Bini marriage does not speak of renewal of consent, but of its giving. Convalidation here is not by renewal, since the spouses never gave their consent in the first place. To validate the marriage, the couple must give their consent. The canon, in fact, insists that the party who did not consent should do so, provided that the consent of the other perseveres. If however, the defect of consent is from both parties, both must give their mutual consent. Likewise, for convalidation to take place the circumstances that brought about the defect of consent should have ceased—that is to say, the spouses must have agreed with their parents that it was their choice to marry and not simply following what they (parents) dictate.

The giving of consent must be a new act of the will.⁹⁸ This means that if neither of the spouses consented to the initial marriage, both must now make a new act of the will, wanting to be married which must be freely and explicitly expressed. If this does not take place, there is no convalidation and the marriage remains invalid. The initial consent may be naturally sufficient, resulting to the spouses enduring commitment to each other,

⁹⁸ Can. 1157: The renewal of consent must be a new act of will consenting to a marriage which the renewing party knows or thinks was invalid from the beginning.

but juridically speaking it was ineffective.⁹⁹ The couple at least should be aware that it was not their wish to marry one another and that, the marriage was never agreed upon but was due to their parents will from the beginning that rendered the marriage invalid. However, it is not important to be certain that the marriage was invalid, what matters is the awareness of its invalidity.

If the consent was public, the canonical form must be used for its validation. Considering the fact that most Bini marriages are done in public, in full view of the community and invited guests, the canon would recommend that the renewal of consent be also done in the same way. If the defect of consent can be legally proven, a new expression of consent must be given. In a strict sense this involves a new celebration of marriage. This will be true of Bini marriages entered into with force or fear from parents. If on the other hand, it cannot be proven, the party or parties who did not consent must now give consent privately or secretly. This may be accomplished by a direct, verbal expression which manifest a free and conscious intention to enter a marriage. Örsy summarizes the procedure in the following way:

If neither of the spouses consented:
Both must consent

If one did not consent:
He or she must consent.

If the defect of consent was public:
The canonical form must be used for validation.

If the defect was occult:
The consent must be given privately and secretly.¹⁰⁰

In other words, there are provisions in Canon to save most marriages in Bini culture, even when there exist a defect of consent. This will only be possible if the spouses make a conscious act of giving. The new consent has to bring together all of the requirements of a true conjugal intent, that is to say, with

⁹⁹ Thomas P. Doyle, "Marriage," in *The Code of Canon Law, A Text and Commentary*, 824.

¹⁰⁰ Ladislav Örsy, *Marriage in Canon Law Texts and Comments, Reflections and questions*, 251.

the will to establish a common conjugal life between the spouses without excluding any of the essential element.¹⁰¹

Pastoral Implications: Final Word

The culture of the Bini people should not be seen in bad light. Missionaries that brought the Gospel to the people have done much harm in considering the culture to be fetish and with other degrading names. The Church must be in a position to administer Christ's Word to Bini people in their own culture. The aim must be to strengthen them and build them up. The Church must work with the Bini community, not in opposition to it. The pastoral problem experienced by Bini Christians is due to the fact that the Church in Bini society has not fully accepted the traditions of Bini people. If there can be a way to reconcile the culture and traditions of Bini people with the Catholic teachings, then the problems experienced by Bini Christians would be reduced and in this case—Matrimony. It also good to bear in mind what Pope Francis said,

God makes Himself felt in the heart of each person. He also respects the culture of all peoples. Each nation picks up that vision of God and translates it in accordance with the culture, and elaborate, purifies and gives it a system. Some cultures are primitive in their explanations, but God is open to all people.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ The couple must be capable of being married—that is, they must be a woman and a man who are free of any impediment that would prevent marriage. The couple must give their consent to be married—that is, by an act of their will they irrevocably give and accept one another in order to establish marriage ([Canon 1057](#)). They must follow the canonical form for marriage—that is, they must be married according to the laws of the Church so that the Church and the wider community will be certain about the validity of their marriage.

¹⁰² Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Abraham Skorka, *On Heaven and Earth* (New York: Image Publishing Group, 2010), 19.

Many Bini Catholics are unaware of the existence of many Catholic teachings in relation to marriage. Some are universally unaware of those provisions of The Code of Canon Law which are related to marital consent and convalidation. Pastors therefore, must educate their flock on matters related to these provisions. Bini Catholics should be informed especially those who have been married for a long time but still have doubts due to defective consent. Ultimately, if marriages are to be stabilized and indissoluble unions entered into from the beginning are made valid according to the church's teachings, the Catholic Church must effectively contribute to building a stable society. It would be useless if young people were taught about exercising freedom of choice in marriage, and then to side with parental generation over bridewealth when it comes to marriage itself. It is the duty of the Church to educate parents and community, to be reasonable and help them do everything in their power to encourage stable marriages for their children.¹⁰³

Children must feel the support of the Church that they have a say in their marriage and choice of marriage partners. The Catholic Church community must take over many of the traditional functions of old village society, and must help the family become an active and creative element in its midst. In addition, the Church must create its own structures for marriage preparation and marriage counseling, and it must be actively involved in all the stages by which marriages are arranged and finalized in Bini culture, by so doing the freedom of consent can be checked and respected.¹⁰⁴

The Church would do well to advise young people not to forsake their parents. While it is just that children should have freedom of choice inherent in their marriage, this should not become a reason for them to loosen their family ties. They should not forget their heritage but consider it a blessing to be able to share in the common fortunes of their families. With love and generosity, they should be ready to give aid to their parents, and

¹⁰³ Benezere Kisembo, Laurenti Magesa and Alyward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

if necessity requires, even to other relations, according to what they have.¹⁰⁵ The Church should encourage dialogue especially between children and their parents. Children must be able to voice out their grievance against their parents with regard to their choice of marriage partners. But measures must be taken that it will be a genuine dialogue.

¹⁰⁵ Paul VI, *Africae Terrarum*, no. 34.

The Church's Moral Evaluation of Medical-*Cannabis*

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Abstract

The article tries to lay down the principles from which the use of Cannabis may be morally allowable in the field of medicine. It mentions principles from which could be drawn the possible arguments for cannabis use for palliative purposes. It also highlights some church documents that have positive outlook on the medical use of Cannabis. Likewise, it articulates the stand of many states that prohibit the use of cannabis even for medical purposes identifying the legal hurdles and the dangers that come along with its possible legalization.

Salus Animarum-- **Fundamental Mission of the Church:** **An Introduction**

“The single most important community for Christians is the Church.”¹ The purpose of the Church is the imitation of Christ by doing what is good and by fighting against evil. It is the place of ensuring salvation of God’s people. When the Church deals with matters of faith and morals, she has the authoritative voice of

¹ Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, vol. 1 (Manila: Logos Publication, 2012), 61.

Christ which is exercised by the Pope and bishops—the successors of Peter and the Apostles who form the Magisterium. Moreover, the Christian community acknowledges that the Catholic Church develops a certain point of view on matters of faith and morals, and that the faithful has the duty to abide to her teachings. The Holy Spirit guides the members of the Church to be led and abide to the truth.²

According to the Church's teaching, the most basic principle of the Christian moral life is the awareness that every person bears the dignity of being made in the image and likeness of God. God has given man an immortal soul and through the gifts of intelligence and reason, he is able to understand the order of things established in His creation. God has also given men a free will to seek and love what is true, good, and beautiful. Sadly, because of the fall, men suffer the impact of the Original Sin which darkens their minds, weakens their wills, and inclines them to sin. Baptism delivers men from Original Sin but not from its effects—especially the inclination to sin, concupiscence. Within man, then, is both the powerful surge toward the good because he is made in the image of God, and the darker impulses toward evil because of the effects of Original Sin.³ Therefore, the Church, as a teaching authority, should consistently form the conscience of the faithful under her care.

The purpose of Christ's dying and rising is to offer humanity a new life in the Spirit, whose saving grace delivers men from sin and heals sin's damage within them. Thus, an individual speaks of the value, dignity, and goal of human life, even with its imperfections and struggles. Human life, as a profound unity of physical and spiritual dimensions, is sacred. It is distinct from all other forms of life, since in this alone is imprinted the very image of its Creator or the *imago Dei*.⁴

For 2000 years, the Church's mission and the very reason of being could be summed up into two words instantiating that

² Rev. Leonard F. Badia, Ph.D. and Ronald A. Sarno, M.Div., *Morality: How to Live it Today* (New York: Alba House, Society of St. Paul, 1979), 68.

³ Beliefs and Teachings, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/morality/> (Accessed 12 February 2017).

⁴ Beliefs and Teachings, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/morality/> (Accessed 12 February 2017).

same beautiful simplicity: “*Salus Animarum*,” or the salvation of souls. This is mandatory and innate to the very life of the Church. The healing of the sick, raising the dead, delivering men from demonic possession, and all that He taught in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5-7) were means to achieve that principal end: the salvation of souls.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law specifies that the salvation of souls must be the supreme law in the Church.⁵ It is nothing less than the sole reason for the Incarnation, the Suffering, Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. Christ as Savior and Redeemer, cannot be understood apart from this most fundamental and utterly simple concept: He came to save souls. Christ continues to be heard in and through the Church today. The Church, the pillar and bulwark of truth, has received this solemn command of Christ from the apostles to announce the saving truth. The Church has the right, always and everywhere, to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order, and to make judgments on any human affairs to the extent that they are required by the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls.⁶

Morality encompasses the entirety of human life: behavior, practices and even to the simplest of human acts. In all fields of human endeavor, the Church should give a careful eye to keep her people in the right moral track. In the realm of medicine, morality is an important thing to take into strict consideration. In view of these, the Church developed the governing principles of medical ethics and bioethics. Germaine Grisez states that biomedical science should be used well and responsibly. However, this also can be misused or even abused. In order to avoid such misuse or abuse, individuals must recognize the reality of moral truths that protect the sanctity and dignity of human life that is founded in the gospel of life preached by Christ.⁷ There are objective principles for ethics in medicine, including bioethics. Those principles are

⁵ Code of Canon Law, c. 1752, in Code of Canon Law in English Translation (Philippines: Paulines, 2001), 310.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Definitive edition. Manila Philippines: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and Word of Life Publication, 1997. 2032. (Henceforth to be referred as CCC).

⁷ Germaine Grisez, “Bioethics and Christian Anthropology,” *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* (Spring, 2001) 33- 34.

applied to possible human acts that entail moral norms in order to ascertain what is right and wrong, good and bad, whether individual or communal. Absolutely, everyone, including health care professionals and those they serve, scientific investigators and government officials should conform to these moral truths and should not deviate from them. There are only two possibilities: either people act uprightly and pursue what truly fulfills human beings or they violate moral truths and so injure both themselves and others.⁸ However, it remains that it is by living in conformity with the moral norms, especially the ones ordered by the Church, that human beings can ensure the salvation of their souls.

It is under this light that this paper endeavors to show the moral implications of the utilization of cannabis in therapeutic medicine. The morality of using cannabis has been a topic for intensified debates. Thus, there is no single mindset towards it. Some people find it favorable, others are not, and many others remain undecided. It is, therefore, necessary to dig deep into this moral issue, to make the faithful aware of the right thing to do, especially, nowadays that many nations started to legalize the production, distribution, and the intake of cannabis.

This paper will attempt to answer the following questions: How does the Catholic Church evaluate morally the use of cannabis in medicine? To develop this query the article will be divided into three more sub-themes: (a) The Church on the Moral Issues of Medicinal Addictive Drugs, (b) The Morality of Medical-*Cannabis* According to the Documents of the Church, and (c) The Moral Guidelines and Principles on the Morality of Medical-*Cannabis*.

The Church on the Moral Issues of Medicinal Addictive Drugs

Medicine has been the human expertise that is often disturbed by serious moral dilemmas. It is often bothered by questions such as, “Is this the right thing to do? Will this save the life of the patient? Will this be beneficial to the person? Will this medical procedure endanger the patient’s life? Will this be against his or her human dignity?” A moral dilemma arises when a delicate surgical procedure is to be applied and also

⁸ Ibid. 35.

when dangerous drugs are to be given to the infirmed patient. The aforementioned questions probably are the ones that would surface in the discussion of cannabis, an addictive herb, applied as therapeutic medicine. This moral issue has been in the mind of the Church, but remains unclear with various grey areas that need reflection and theological probing. Alongside with cannabis, the Church's morality deals with many other therapeutic and addictive drugs. Such for instance, heroine that is presently marketed as a quick cure for tuberculosis, morphine as pain reliever, and opium as anesthetic.

Addictive Substances for Therapeutic Purposes

In the medical field, drugs are those substances used for treating, alleviating, or preventing diseases in man. These substances are, therefore, intended to suppress or mitigate disease. In this sense, the term "drug" is synonymous to "medicine." If doctors and nurses have a guiding principle to relieve pain and to alleviate or treat the consequences of a physical or mental disturbance, then it is licit to use drugs, such as analgesics, anesthetics, and sleeping pills to cure insomnia and psychotropic drugs for therapeutic purposes. However, it is undeniable that no matter how beneficial a drug is, there will always be possible side effects; and one of this is addiction where, in the long run, the patient becomes drug dependent.⁹ Aside from cannabis, there are other substances or herbal medicines which are dangerously addictive drugs that have been secretly and illegally prescribed by several medical institution for therapeutic reasons.¹⁰

⁹ Michael A. Monge, M.D., "Drugs," in *Ethical Practices In Health And Disease* (Manila, Philippines: Sinag-Tala Publishers, INC., 1994), 85.

¹⁰ Pontifical Council For Health Pastoral Care Church: *Drugs And Drug Addiction Pastoral Handbook* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 2002).; Paul VI, Letter Of The Holy Father Paul VI, Signed By The Secretary Of State, To The International Federation Of Catholic Medical Associations ,(Tuesday 31 January 1978) ; John Paul II, Letter Of His Holiness John Paul II To The Executive Director Of The United Nations International Drug Control Programme On The Occasion Of The International Day Against Drug Abuse And Illicit Trafficking,(26 June 1996); John Paul II, Address Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II To A Colloquium On Chemical Dependency, (11 October 1997;)

The Danger of Medicinal Addictive Substances

The main idea that urged the Church to evaluate the intake of *cannabis* as morally evil is the threat it imposes to life. Undeniably, cannabis inflicts danger to the human body. Medicinal addictive substances can be dangerous when it is used recreationally or outside the prescription purposes. It is understood that the medicinal addictive substances pertain to the prescription drugs. Thus, prescriptions of these addictive yet therapeutic drugs should be controlled and be given with so much precaution. Today, drug prescription is a serious problem with teens and young adults. It often leads them to drug abuse while the prescriptive medication aspect becomes an alternative. Others would pay doctors in order to issue them prescriptions that give them access to therapeutic but addictive drugs. Meanwhile, according to research conducted by Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, there are as many as one in five teens say that they have taken a prescription drug without having a prescription. This behavior cuts across geographic, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries.¹¹

Many teens think prescription drugs are safe because they were prescribed by a doctor. But taking them for nonmedical use to get high or “self-medicate” can be just as dangerous and addictive as taking illegal street drugs. There are very serious health risks in taking prescription drugs. This is why they are taken only under the care of a doctor. And even then, they have to be closely monitored to avoid addiction or other complications. Many pills look the same. It is extremely dangerous to take any pill that is uncertain, unknown or not prescribed for the patient. People can also have different reactions to drugs due to the differences in each person’s body chemistry. A drug that is okay for one person could be very risky or even fatal for someone else. Prescription drugs are only safe for the individuals who actually have the prescriptions for them and not to anybody.¹²

¹¹ Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, “Preventing Teen Abuse of Prescription Drugs Fact Sheet,” [drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org), accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Fact-Sheet-Preventing-Teen-Abuse-of-Prescription-Drugs.pdf>.

¹² Foundation for a Drug Free World, “Prescription Drug Abuse: A Serious Problem,” [drug free world.org](http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/prescription-drugs.html), <http://www.drugfreeworld.org/drugfacts/prescription-drugs.html>. (Accessed February 16, 2017)

Exploitation and Addiction on *Cannabis*

Exploitation of cannabis has been the root problem of contemporary society. The easy access of this drug and its cheapness led many to depend on marijuana for recreational addiction. Since trade of this addictive substance is illegal for many nations, the transaction of purchasing marijuana has been done in secret. Secret trading can occur in public places, in offices, in work places, in homes and even on-line. Cannabis use, like so many other therapeutic drugs, can easily be morally justified only if people stick to its primary purpose, that is, for cure and prevention. However, that is not always the case. The abusive recreational use of and exploitation of cannabis lead many to problematic addiction. There are two forms of addiction dependents could suffer from and thus needing extreme rehabilitation:

(a) Psychological Dependence—this is usually observed when the person becomes obsessed with the drug, allowing it to become the biggest priority in his life. This kind of dependence makes the person crave for the substance that he can no longer live without it. Psychological dependence is what makes people crave for the drug and what makes him difficult to refrain from patronizing it. Some do not recognize their dependence on cannabis, while others may be too embarrassed to seek professional help. Psychological dependence affects the mind. Psychological dependence can also refer to the emotional state of craving for a drug for its positive effect or for escaping or to avoiding some unpleasant experience. The criterion for substance abuse centers on its consequences in the different areas of life namely: family, society or job.

(b) Biological dependence is said to be more serious compared to psychological dependence. This takes place when the body recognizes the cannabis or other drugs as a necessity. Biological dependence is seriously harmful to the body that solutions are difficult to apply because withdrawing from the substance means harm; and continuing with the substance, in the same manner, is dangerous. People addicted for many long years reach the point of no return (impossibility of healing) since their body is biologically dependent on the substance. The body is already in frequent need of a certain amount of the substance to continue with its functions.¹³

¹³ Dr. Sanjay Gupta, "Full CNN Documentary Weed

Dependence includes the term drug tolerance, which generally means, increased amount of drugs needed to achieve intoxication, or a diminished drug effect with continued use of the same amount of a drug. In the same point, withdrawal symptoms is another new term to replace the understanding of drug tolerance. Withdrawal is a definable illness that occurs with cessation or decrease in drug use after the body has adjusted to the presence of a drug to such a degree that it cannot function without the drug. Not all drugs are associated with an identifiable withdrawal syndrome. Withdrawal syndrome is also called as abstinence syndrome. In medicine, syndrome is a number of symptoms that occur together and characterize a specific illness or disease. For any drug associated with withdrawal symptoms, the severity of those symptoms may change with characteristics of the users and their history of use of that drug.¹⁴

Since biological dependence includes withdrawal syndrome, it further explains that drug withdrawal also makes a person likely to continue or resume the use of drug after a period of abstinence. Furthermore, with increased quantity and habitual frequency of drug use, the person becomes susceptible to experiencing various negative physical, social, or legal consequences. The brain or body changes resulting from repeated drug use becomes critically permanent, which is one reason why drug addiction may be such an intractable problem for many people.¹⁵ This discussion shows that using a drug for a long time alters the pattern of use for that drug such as *cannabis*. It is identified as long-term use.

The Morality of Medical-*Cannabis* According to the Documents of the Church

Every human act involves moral implications. Thus, the Church is responsible to safeguard the morality of any given

(Parts 1-3),” *Youtube*, January 29, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRLYV0_6zY8.

¹⁴Stephen A. Maisto, Mark Galizio, and Gerard J. Connors, *Drug and Drug Abuse* (Belmont, California, USA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011), 17-18.

¹⁵ Stephen A. Maisto, Mark Galizio, and Gerard J. Connors, *Drug and Drug Abuse* (Belmont, California, USA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011), 17-18.

act. The intake of cannabis should be within the moral sphere so as to classify it as morally permissible. To avoid exploiting, irresponsible and non-Christian way of the use of cannabis, the people should be morally guided. The Church, in her authority, teaches her faithful about the moral dimension of the use of cannabis.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Responsible Monitoring and Strict Medical Assistance

With regard to the use of medical-cannabis, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

The use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense. Clandestine production of and trafficking in drugs are scandalous practices. They constitute direct cooperation in evil, since they encourage people to practice gravely contrary to moral law.¹⁶

Thus, for pastoral charity, especially for a grave reason, the prescription and intake of medical-cannabis is morally permissible. However, responsible monitoring and strict medical assistance are required from the one who gives prescription. The Catholic Church indicates in its teachings that drug use that alters your sense of reality is against the will of God. But, in certain medical cases, if the marijuana or drug can help the person medically and is “strictly therapeutic,” then the Church does not recognize that as abusing drugs and bringing harm to the body. The Catholic Church recognizes that medical marijuana, used solely to relieve the patient from chronic pain and is permitted for the patient to use by a doctor, is not against Catholic teachings and does not fall under the same teachings as drug abuse.

The Church does not condemn medical marijuana, or even marijuana in general. It would presumably fall under CCC 2290 and the general position of the Roman Catholic Church on “moderationism.” But while it is still largely illegal, use for anything other than therapeutic grounds could be construed as

¹⁶ CCC, 2291.

fairly direct cooperation with grave evils. Even if someone uses marijuana in moderation, there is both the issue on respect for societal laws and the connection to illegal trafficking which the Catechism specifically identifies as being a moral problem.¹⁷

CBCP: Compassionate Use of *Cannabis*

Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines issued a statement entitled *Pastoral Guidelines for Compassionate Use of Cannabis*. The Bishops, through this document, made a clear statement on the permissibility of the palliative¹⁸ and medical uses of cannabis. It highlights ethical principles as enunciated in the magisterial documents of the Church. The bishops reiterate that substance abuse and drug dependence are wrong; and any measure that makes abused or habituating substances within easy reach of potential abusers and dependents is morally wrong. The Catechism for Filipino Catholics further explains:

Perhaps the most widespread abuse in our country against physical well-being are the common ‘vices’ of alcohol and drug abuse, and to a less intensive degree, smoking. Medical studies have proven the serious injury in terms of physical harm and addiction, and psychological and social difficulties and dependence, which these vices can cause. The quality of life—and sometimes life itself—of both the users and their family and close friends suffers greatly. More culpable still are drug dealers and pushers who, for the sake of money, care nothing about drawing others, especially innocent youth, into addictive dependency that ruins their very lives.¹⁹

With this, the Magisterium of the Church affirms as

¹⁷ CCC, 2291.

¹⁸ Andrew Davison, *Care for the Dying: A Practical and Pastoral Guide*, 1. Davison definition of Palliative Care quoted from World Health Organization (WHO), is an approach that improves quality of life of patients and their families facing problems associated with life threatening illness, through prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

¹⁹ *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*. Special subsidized edition for Filipino Catechists Manila Philippines: Conference of the Philippines and Word of Life Publication, 1997. 1036. (Henceforth to be referred as CFC).

moral evil substance abuse and the promotion and facilitation of addiction. Sharing in the culpability of pushers and peddlers, are law enforcers who, by unconscionably corrupt practices, allow seized substances to be re-introduced surreptitiously into the stream of this immoral commerce. Government, no doubt must be vigilant, and measures that facilitate access to abused substances cannot be countenanced.

The bishops, moreover, suggest that the family must do its part and so must the community. The unity of these institutions could foster a rightful formation of the young adult. The nurturing that allows youngsters to grow from their immaturity into the responsibilities of adulthood will not happen without the loving environment that allows our youth to hope. The local and particular churches, no doubt, have a tremendous part in keeping alive in the hearts of the young the spark of hope that can be so easily imperiled by adversity.

The use of *cannabis* for therapeutic circumstance should be studied well before prescription. Society has been appraised of various medical situations other than terminal illness where it seems that palliative care and relief involving the use of narcotics including *cannabis* may be indicated. The obligation to treat subsists, even when it may not be possible to cure. The Church appeals, therefore, to the prudent and Spirit-filled discernment of our health care workers, particularly physicians, to apply the principle of proportionality and to determine carefully whether there is due proportion between the risks involved in the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances and the benefits anticipated. In this regard, it is useful to be guided by yet another principle enunciated by the Charter for Catholic Health Care Workers:

It is lawful to interrupt the application of such means when the results disappoint the hopes placed in them because there is no longer due proportion between the investment of instruments and personnel and the foreseeable results, or because the techniques used subject the patient to suffering and discomfort great than the benefits to be had.²⁰

Finally, there must be no doubt as to a fundamental principle: When the use of *cannabis* or any other narcotic or

²⁰ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers St. Paul Editions 1992.

psychotropic substance is not medically indicated and where there are other forms of intervention and treatment possible that do not pose the same risks as does the use of these substances, it is morally irresponsible to make use of *cannabis* and other narcotic or psychotropic substances, and it is gravely wrong to make use of them for recreational or leisure purposes.²¹

**Pontifical Council on Health and Pastoral Care:
State to Protect Citizen and Promote Common Good**

The most recent scientific works have clarified the impact of cannabis and its active compound, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), on the cellular membrane and its mechanical receptors. This works to explain the essential effects of hashish on the neurons: disorders of the sensorial, visual, auditory, spatial, and temporal perceptions. Considering all the facts, it is irresponsible to consider *cannabis* in a trivial way and to think of it as being “a soft drug” or medicine, that is, one without remarkable effects on the organism.²² The Pontifical Council teaches that the use of cannabis is “incompatible with Christian morality” because it is an intoxicant that dims reason and is potentially damaging to the integrity of one’s body and soul. This will tell that the legalization even of soft drugs is not an answer, because no one has the right to harm himself through the use of drugs. Whether drugs are illegally purchased or distributed by the state, they are always harmful to man and the gift of life. The Church opposes the legalization of drugs. This includes so-called soft drugs, which it sees as fomenting the same type of dependence mentality and the loss of personal dignity that hard drugs produce. The manual points out that the state has a duty to protect citizens and promote the common good. Legalizing drugs would be a serious blow to potential users, damaging their health and stunting their lives. From a medical point of view, the division between soft and hard drugs is hard to draw. In many cases, what is more important is the quantity of substances consumed, how they have been taken

²¹ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, Pastoral Guidelines on Compassionate use of Cannabis. <http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/?p=61950> (Accessed 5 January 2017).

²² Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care Church: Drugs and Drug Addiction Pastoral Handbook Libreria Editrice Vaticana - 00120 Citta del Vaticano, 2002. 107.

and whether they have been mixed. Moreover, new drugs are constantly arriving on the scene, along with new side effects and questions about their potency.

The Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers also points out that drug abuse has significant non-physical effects. The psychological and behavioral consequences of soft drugs lead to substantial problems, even if their physiological effects are not as serious as those of hard drugs.²³

Pontifical Council for the Family: “From Despair to Hope...”

The roots of addiction and substance abuse cannot be addressed by law-enforcement and penology alone. There are community and social causes, and these have to be attended to. In a document of the Pontifical Council for the Family, “From Despair to Hope: Family and Drug Addiction,” people are led to a salutary insight. This document explains that:

The endless adolescence, characteristic of the drug user, is frequently manifested in a fear of the future or in the refusal of new responsibilities. The behavior of these young people often reveals the manifestation of a painful helplessness due to a lack of trust and expectation with regard to social structures to which they no longer feel they belong. Who can be blamed if many young people have no desire to grow up and become adults? Have these young people been given sufficient reason to hope in tomorrow, to invest in the present so as to gain in the future, to be stable, feeling solidly grounded in a past which they feel belongs to them? Nonetheless, hidden behind shocking attitudes often deviant and unacceptable, one can perceive a spark of idealism and hope in these people.²⁴

The government, in its vigilance, should formulate measures that facilitate access to abused substances. But the family must do its part and so must the community. The nurturing that allows youngsters to grow from their immaturity into the responsibilities of adulthood will not happen without the loving

²³ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers St. Paul Editions 1992.

²⁴ Pontifical Council for the Family, “From Despair to Hope: Family and Drug Addiction St. Paul Editions 1992. 65.

environment that allows the youth to hope. The local and particular churches, no doubt, have a tremendous part in keeping alive in the hearts of the young the spark of hope that can be so easily imperiled by adversity.

***Evangelium Vitae* of John Paul II: Palliative and Compassionate Care**

St. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* teaches:

Medical science, thanks to the committed efforts of researchers and practitioners, continues in its efforts to discover ever more effective remedies: treatments which were once inconceivable but which now offer much promise for the future are today being developed for the unborn, the suffering and those in an acute or terminal stage of sickness. Various agencies and organizations are mobilizing their efforts to bring the benefits of the most advanced medicine to countries most afflicted by poverty and endemic diseases. In a similar way national and international associations of physicians are being organized to bring quick relief to peoples affected by natural disasters, epidemics or wars. Even if a just international distribution of medical resources is still far from being a reality, how can we not recognize in the steps taken so far the sign of a growing solidarity among peoples, a praiseworthy human and moral sensitivity and a greater respect for life?²⁵

With this statement, medical-cannabis is under the field of medical-science wherein its advancement readily suggests that *cannabis* is a form of advanced medicine that people can use. Likewise, the highest teaching authority of the Church allows for the palliative and compassionate use of narcotics particularly in the case of the terminally ill. In *Evangelium Vitae*, St. John Paul II taught:

Among the questions which arise in this context is that of the licitness of using various types of painkillers and sedatives for relieving the patient's pain when this involves the risk of shortening life. Pius XII affirmed

²⁵ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, (25 March 1995), §26 (Boston: Saint Paul Books and Media, 1995), 48. (Henceforth to be referred as *EV*)

that it is licit to relieve pain by narcotics even when the result is decreased consciousness and a shortening of life, if no other means exist, and if, in the given circumstances, this does not prevent the carrying out of other religious and moral duties.²⁶

At the stage of terminal illness when proportionate and effective treatment is no longer possible, palliative care is more appropriate and needed. The aim of such care can include alleviating many kinds of physical, psychological and mental suffering. Such care, said John Paul II, may involve a team of specialists with medical, psychological and religious qualifications who work together to support the patient in facing death.

The Moral Guidelines and Principles on Medical Cannabis

The production and distribution of cannabis or marijuana are illegal in so many nations including the Philippines. With respect to that law, it follows that whoever is caught exploiting and using cannabis, especially, for recreational purpose is committing a serious crime and he is liable to the law. However, particular considerations are being observed. There are exemptions to this particular law especially when saving a life is involved.

In the same manner, there are moral laws implemented by the Catholic Church, although there is already a definite stand, which observe exemptions or considerations out of prudence and charity. In view of the law of equity, there are concrete cases on the application of cannabis that requires not so rigid an application of the given norm. However, this considers the true welfare of the person that a given moral law takes the form of mercy and pastoral charity.²⁷

True, indeed, that the use of cannabis for recreational purpose is morally evil. However, the intake of cannabis can be morally permissible when applied to medical and therapeutic reasons, particularly, for the purpose of the preservation of the human life. In its application in the medical field, several moral guidelines and principles should be observed so as to remain in

²⁶ *EV*, 65.

²⁷ Coriden, James A., *An Introduction to Canon Law, Revised Edition*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 205.

the moral track. But, still this does not mean its evilness is totally eradicated rather the act that is to be performed is of lesser evil.

Non-maleficence and Beneficence Principles and Cannabis Use

The first basic ethical principle that is applicable to cannabis use for medical treatment is the ethical virtue of Non-maleficence. The concept of non-maleficence or not inflicting harm has been associated with the saying *primum non nocere*, which means “above or first of all, do no harm.” This statement has a wide currency in discussions of the responsibilities of health-care professionals. It is often proclaimed as the fundamental principle in the Hippocratic tradition in medical ethics. The Hippocratic Oath expresses this duty of non-maleficence together with a duty of beneficence: “I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgement, but I will never use it to injure or wrong them.”²⁸ Those who focus on possible side effects of cannabis may argue non-maleficence. For through non-maleficence principle one ought not to inflict evil or harm on patients.²⁹

In view of cannabis use, the principle of non-maleficence safeguards the morality of the act on the part of the medical practitioner or the doctor. The practitioner must have first responsibly and thoroughly studied the situation of his patient before prescribing the use of *cannabis*. The concrete circumstance should be serious enough and intake of cannabis is of extreme necessity. In order that his act remains morally upright, he must bear in mind a good intention on prescribing *cannabis*, i.e., that he intends no harm, that he has no other choice but the use of *cannabis* treatment to heal his failing patient.

The second ethical principle that can be applied to medical cannabis is the principle of beneficence. It is the virtue that can be described as “to do all the good you can.” Those who see the unrelieved suffering of a patient and who intervene by compromising a given law denying the patient’s access to therapeutic *cannabis* are often driven to do so by a strong value of

²⁸ Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, “The Principle of Nonmaleficence,” in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 120.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 122.

beneficence. There are three constituted elements of the principle of beneficence: (a) One ought to prevent evil or harm, (b) One ought to remove evil or harm, and (c) One ought to do or promote good.³⁰

Morality requires not only for health care professionals to treat persons autonomously and refrain from harming them but also to contribute to the welfare of their patients. These beneficial actions fall under the principle of beneficence.

Normally, those patients who are prescribed of the medical *cannabis* are those who are seriously ill and have no other option to address their sufferings but the medical *cannabis*. This concrete situation makes cannabis use morally permissible. Through the assistance of the medical expert and while the patient is taking medical cannabis, the constituted elements should be strictly applied, i.e., that by taking cannabis, it prevents more harm or other complications; it removes the harm the patient has been suffering with, and it promotes good health than inflict more harm to the body. In the principle of beneficence, the doctor carries the grave responsibility to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm. Doctors have the obligation to offer the best possible solutions for the patient to whatever diagnosis they may have made. In certain cases, medical *cannabis* might very well be the best solution and in these cases a doctor should always be proactive for his or her patient. They traditionally make their recommendations based on evidence and scientific standards. The medical *cannabis* science, however, is still evolving which makes it a challenge for a physician to know if indeed it is the best option or even a viable one.

The Principle of Paternalism and Cannabis Use

The third ethical principle that can be applied to *cannabis* for medical treatment is the principle of paternalism. Those who highly value paternalism find it the basis for opposing the medical use of cannabis. Paternalism means protecting those with less knowledge or ability from themselves, such as a parent protects a child. Those who study mind-altering drugs and their

³⁰ Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, "The Principle of Beneficence," in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 123.

side effects, or those who know the limits on adolescent ability to make good judgements sometimes conclude that the practitioner or policy maker has the critical expertise and believe that they should protect patients and young people themselves, in the case by creating as many barriers to cannabis as possible.

Doctors are often faced with an inherent tension between their desire to respect and foster patient autonomy and their responsibility to act in the patient's best interest (which some might call paternalism). "Paternalism" comes from the Latin *pater*, meaning to act like a father, or to treat another person like a child. It can be justified if it provides great benefit or prevents major problems while disrespecting autonomy only slightly. Physician should accept paternalism as a benefit for the patient only in certain situations, when the patient is at risk of a significant, preventable harm; the paternalistic action will probably prevent the harm; the projected benefits to the patient of the paternalistic action outweigh the risks to the patient; and the least autonomy-restricting alternative that will secure the benefits and reduce the risks is adopted.³¹ Patients prefer to rely on physicians for information about their condition and others preferred to leave final treatment decisions up to the doctor.

The Principle of Double-Effect and Medical-Cannabis Use

The principle that is the most applicable to the justification of the morality of medical-cannabis use is the principle of double effect. This principle of double-effect stresses that every human action has two distinct effects (a) an intended good effect and (b) a foreseen unintended evil effect. In the case of medical marijuana, the intended good effects are the various therapeutic effects. While the foreseen but unintended evil effects are the following, (a) negative health effects (lung damage, etc.), (b) gate way to the use of harder drugs, and (c) increase of recreational use of marijuana that could possibly leads to addiction.

Since all human actions have some unintended evil effects,

³¹ Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, "The Principle of Beneficence," in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 154.

Clark contends that people must follow the ethical principle of double effect when determining whether an action is morally accepted. The intake of medical-cannabis, undoubtedly, can cause damaging effects to the body but if its usage is responsibly assisted this can bring more good than evil. The use, then, of cannabis can be morally accepted. This can be morally permissible when the actions meet all four conditions required by this principle: (a) The primary goal of the action must not be morally evil, (b) The unintended evil effect must not be the means of producing a good effect, (c) The evil effect should not be intended, but is to be tolerated, and (d) There must be a proportionate reason for doing the action.³²

According to Clark, the principle of double effect applies to the case of whether it is ethical for the government to restrict physicians from prescribing marijuana to patients.³³ The first condition is met because the primary goal of the action itself is not morally evil. Rather it is to help treat certain conditions such as pain, nausea, etc. that cannot be treated as effectively by other means. The second condition is fulfilled because the good effect of relieving pain is not by means of the evil effect—the harm that comes from smoking marijuana is not what produces the good effects, it just accompanies it. The third condition is, likewise, complied, as the evil effect, that is harm from smoking marijuana, is not intended but tolerated. The people do not like the negative effects but it can be tolerated by them for the good that is produced. Finally, the last condition is also achieved since the good effects outweigh the bad and there is no better option. Although marijuana smoke is toxic and causes lung damage, these effects are outweighed by its medical value and there is no better equivalent in terms of effective and cost but less harmful alternatives for marijuana. Physicians believe that prescribing marijuana will relieve pain better than approved medications.³⁴ However, still it remains that “it is lawful to interrupt the

³² Peter A. Clark, “The Ethics of Medical Marijuana Government Restrictions and Medical Necessity,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 21, no. 1 (June/July 2000): 40-60.

³³ Peter A. Clark, “The Ethics of Medical Marijuana Government Restrictions and Medical Necessity,” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 21, no. 1 (June/July 2000): 40-60.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

application of such means when the results disappoint the hopes placed in them because there is no longer due proportion between the investment of instruments and personnel and the foreseeable results, or because the techniques used subject the patient to suffering and discomfort great than the benefits to be had.”³⁵

There must be no doubt as to a fundamental principle: When the use of *cannabis* or any other narcotic or psychotropic substance is not medically indicated and where there are other forms of intervention and treatment possible that do not pose the same risks as does the use of these substances, it is morally irresponsible to make use of *cannabis* and other narcotic or psychotropic substances, and it is gravely wrong to make use of them for recreational or leisure purposes.³⁶

The Principle of Proportionality and Medical-Cannabis Use

This principle of proportionality is also an appropriate guideline for health care workers who encounter dilemma whether to allow a patient to take cannabis or not. This principle stresses that the health care worker who cannot effect a cure must never cease to treat. He is bound to apply all proportionate remedies. But there is no obligation to apply disproportionate ones.

In relation to the conditions of a patient, those remedies must be considered ordinary where there is due proportion between the means used and the end intended. Where this proportion does not exist, the remedies are to be considered extraordinary. In order to verify and to establish whether there is due proportion in a particular case, the means should be well evaluated by comparing the type of therapy, the degree of difficulty and risk involved, the necessary expenses, and the possibility of application, with the result that can be expected, taking into account the conditions of the patient and his physical and moral powers.³⁷

³⁵ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers St. Paul Editions 1992. 65.

³⁶ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, Pastoral Guidelines on Compassionate use of Cannabis. <http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/?p=61950> (Accessed 5 January 2017).

³⁷ Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers St. Paul Editions 1992. 64.

People have been acquainted of various medical situations other than terminal illness where it seems that palliative care and relief involving the use of narcotics, including cannabis, may be indicated. The obligation to treat subsists even when it may not be possible to cure. The prudent and spirit-filled discernment of health care workers, particularly physicians, has a need to apply the principle of proportionality and to determine carefully whether there is due proportion between the risks involved in the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances and the benefits anticipated.

Principle of “Respect for Persons” and Medical-Cannabis Use

In health care and bioethics, the most important principle is respect for persons. Human person ought to be respected always. Etymologically, the meaning of respect means to look attentively and intensely; it means reverence, esteem and recognition of the person. Respect for persons recognizes people as autonomous agents and requires that their choices be observed. It means that a person is a free individual agent. For persons who are not fully autonomous, the principle of respect for persons requires that they are protected from risks and adverse consequences of research, even sometimes excluded from research.³⁸

In most research cases involving human subjects, especially the use of medical-cannabis, the principle of respect for persons demands that subjects enter into the research voluntarily and with adequate information. Provided by enough information, doctors and patients involving the medical-cannabis research have right to make decisions whether he or she may refuse or not in participation of the research. The respect for persons would not deprive the health care professionals and patient's opportunity to volunteer themselves in research. However, treating persons as means is absolutely wrong. It is a wrong motivation for a doctor to treat his patients as a means to earn money for a better living. In this principle, the elements of information, comprehension and voluntariness are necessary.

If the patient is incapable of deciding for himself due

³⁸ Lawrence O. Gostin, *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Human Subject Research: Population-Based Research and Ethics* (Georgetown: Georgetown University Law Center, 1991) 191.

to different circumstances and health reasons provoked, proxy consent is applied, wherein other persons or relatives can decide for the patient's consent.

Principle of “Benevolence” and Medical-Cannabis Use

Benevolence means providing assistance to someone without looking for payback. It is an expression of charity not an obligation. Benevolence literally means willing the good. It corresponds to the principle of beneficence. One might expect that people with a benevolent character more likely to act in ways that produce good consequences, that is, those willing the good might be more likely to do the good. But it is critical that this correspondence is not necessarily perfect. One might will the good and end up unprofessional so that the consequences are not actually not good. One might be a person who does good but ends up doing more harm than good. Such person would be benevolent, but not beneficent. In an alternate situation also, one might not have a benevolent character, which is not willing good outcomes, yet for many reasons, it end up acting in ways that produce good consequences. This could happen if one is lacking in benevolence miscalculates or if he or she is selfishly promoting his or her interests, yet clever enough to know that the best strategy is to look good for others.³⁹

Thus, by applying the principle of benevolence in medical *cannabis* use, a rational and self-promoting physician who really cares not at all about a person's welfare may, out of self-interest, do something for patient especially if he or she knows others are watching or if he or she desires a good evaluation.

Rule of Applicability and Medical-Cannabis Use

The rule of applicability states that a certain law, rule, norms or a moral theory should be applicable in the sense that it specifies relevant information about actions and other items of evaluation that human beings can typically obtain and use to arrive at moral verdicts on the basis of principles. It has certain standards appropriately related to: the society's belief on morality,

³⁹ Robert M. Veatch, *The Basics of Bioethics* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 181.

the considered moral beliefs and the non-moral beliefs and assumptions⁴⁰

In applying this rule in prescribing medical cannabis, the same standards and practices which generally determine the correctness of physician's actions are applicable in the context of certifying patients in debilitating conditions. Physicians are to use their own sound judgement to diagnose debilitating conditions and recommend cannabis when appropriate.

Right for Person's Autonomy and Self-Determination and Medical-Cannabis Use

The term autonomy comes from two Greek words, *auto* (self) and *nomous* (law), and it literally means self-governing, or self-determining. Self-determination is therefore an attribute of a person who possesses a right to exercise freedom of choice and action in the pursuit of individual goals, whether at present or in the future. When applied to patients, it is a right by which a patient can freely decide by himself as a mature person matters pertaining to his health and other consequent acts to promote his well-being. This right cannot be prejudiced by the health professionals who may even act in favor or for the interest of the patients as when a patient does not want to be treated. The patient is the most important person in health care and his decisions must be respected as they relate to the exercise of his freedom and is essential part of his personhood. Medical professionals and other allied health professionals have genuine but limited autonomy over those entrusted to their care as given them by the profession they practice. Patients may have questions about the operation or medicine recommended by his doctor, but they still have the freedom to ask for second and even third opinion from other experts.⁴¹

In the pursuit of autonomy, the patient and physician's primary focus is to protect the patient's independent process of self-definition. Regardless of the identity that a terminally ill patient seeks to adopt or keep, autonomy requires an individual to be free

⁴⁰ Mark Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013) 13.

⁴¹ Jerry Reb. Manlangit, OP, MHA, PhD, *Fundamental Concepts Principles and Issues In Bioethics* (Manila: University of Sto. Tomas, 2010) 194.

from constraints including death, pain and suffering, and indignity at the end of life. As autonomous persons, patients have the right to make decisions regarding their bodies and to seek any and all medical treatment to alleviate pain and suffering and preserve life. This right entitles a patient to non-interference from people who might attempt to infringe upon these rights and freedom of choice. Ultimately, a patient should be free to make medical decisions concerning treatment and medication that directly impact his or her own body. In making decisions concerning a patient's health and well-being, patients should be given the right to access medical *cannabis* for therapeutic purposes. By refusing to allow medical cannabis as an alternative pain treatment, the government has infringed upon a patient's fundamental right of autonomy.

Principle of Universalism and Medical Cannabis Use

A widely accepted condition for moral action-guide is universalism. The formal principle that a moral standard applies universally, that is, to everyone in relevantly similar circumstances. Proponents of this condition reason as follows: What is right for one person must be right for all persons in relevantly similar circumstances. The benefit of all is greater good than benefit of a few. In universalism, the good of the mankind must be taken to account.⁴²

In applying this to medical-*cannabis* use, the government gives a policy to a certain prohibition of cannabis. Society already knows that cannabis is considered illegal. But given the benefit of medical-cannabis to a single individual comprises to propose another universal policy for the welfare of everybody. Few countries have legalized cannabis but it is universally applicable policy to determine its goodness and efficacy.

The Medical Use of Herbal *Cannabis* Medicine and Its Moral Future: Final Words

The medical use of herbal *cannabis* medicine falls on the topic about the legalization of drugs. Arguably, the herbal *cannabis* medicine is most efficacious and least toxic way. It is safe and effective medicine. However, today, drugs must undergo

⁴² Mark Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013) 13.

rigorous, expensive and time-consuming tests to win approval by the appropriate regulatory agency for marketing as medicine. The purpose of the testing is to protect the consumer by establishing both safety and efficacy. The future of medicinal *cannabis* use seems promising. There is an obvious need for future research to clarify more the science of cannabis. It needs to develop monitoring methods for the study of the outcomes of the medical legalization of cannabis. There are no clear guidelines for the monitoring of cannabis use in humans. This situation casts a haze on the future of cannabis use with its consumption increasing as a consequence of legalization and decriminalization strategies, together with improved marketing by supplier of illicit drugs.⁴³

Cannabis research is now driven by economic prospects for both the pharmaceutical industry and separate *cannabis* manufacturers. There are conflicts of opinions about *cannabis* that are growing against and among these industries. Mixed approaches exist in the *cannabis* industry, where small pharmaceutical research and development corporations have emerged with serious or perhaps sham intent, because of perceived financial rewards. That said, some politicians and regulatory agencies have developed a jaded approach to some small *cannabis* business operations, such as independent dispensaries and *cannabis*-growing companies. Capitalistic tendencies are going to continue to govern the actions of pharmaceutical companies and the smaller cannabis industry players. It seems most likely that pharmaceutical model will ultimately dominate the *cannabis* business as the treatment properties of *cannabis*. The future dictates a need for further monitoring and regulatory interventions, and there will be a need for modification of current political legislation at the national level of government in the future. Meanwhile, there is hope for the safe and responsible use of cannabis.⁴⁴

An important next step for society is widespread preparation for the many potential outcomes of widespread *cannabis* among health care staff and consumers. This involves

⁴³ Leo E. Hollister, "Marijuana (Cannabis) as Medicine," *Journal of Cannabis Therapeutics*, vol.1 no. 1 (2001), 5.

⁴⁴ Sandeep Chawla and Suzanne Kunnen, *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: Bulletin On Narcotics A Review of the World Cannabis Situation*, Vol. LVIII Nos. 1 and 2 (New York: United Nations Publication, 2008), 5.

an absolute need for good education about cannabis among health care staff and consumers. This education should be especially focused on youngsters to avoid early *cannabis* use. It is of some concern that may not be ready for cannabis legalization and victims of this inevitable situation are likely to be youngsters. What is the solution? While a key factor in the optimum development of the responsible use of *cannabis* is public education, education of health care workers and effective controls of access to *cannabis* among youngsters are urgently required.

Several outcomes of cannabis use will occur with positive or negative effects on society, health, economics, and politics. Widespread use of cannabis will develop from further legalization strategies, but this early enthusiasm for cannabis use could be dampened by several issues. It stressed the issue that major problems loom as consequence of cannabis use by adolescents and teenagers who form a high-risk group for the development of mental, physical, and social disabilities in later life.

There will be more major research and development of cannabinoids, other than just THC or CBD. That said CBD is emerging as an important dietary supplement that may have its wings clipped by the government's drug agencies. The future of cannabis use seems bright, but clouds and potholes exist on its pathway to more general use.

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