

THEOLOGIZING IN THE PHILIPPINES

INSeCT REPORT

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Part 1: INTRODUCTORY NOTES

1. BASIC FACTS and GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Religiosity and spirituality play a very important role in the life of a Filipino and in the Filipino nation as a whole. Religion is not just a faith tradition with customs, rituals and practices, but an energy and an integrating element that makes the Filipino survive and thrive and work together to surmount social and political challenges¹.

At present, 81% of Filipinos belong to the Catholic religion. With a population of 88 million, that would be more than 60 million Catholics². Only two countries in Asia are predominantly Catholic (the other is East Timor with reputedly 96% of its population Catholic); the rest of Asia would have 1-3% Catholics among their population. The Philippines was colonized by Spain in the 16th century and evangelization into the Catholic faith was the consequence of this colonization³. Islam was in the Philippines (14th century) before the Spaniards came and some important cities and places already converted to Islam. However, long before the Moslems and Catholic Spain arrived, (precolonial) Filipinos practice indigenous religious traditions collectively called 'animism'⁴ which persisted (even as a form of resistance) all through colonial times and continue to influence the modern Filipinos' hearts and minds.⁵

¹ Filipinos are the top charity givers in Asia and Africa. This is the result of the latest MasterCard Survey on Ethical Spending conducted from September 13 to November 11, 2010, involving 10,502 consumers in 24 countries in Asia and Africa (*Inquirer Global Nation*, 19 Feb. 2011). Filipinos are also known worldwide for its People Power Revolution, a non-violent revolution that toppled a 20-year dictatorship and became the inspiration for other people's revolution that followed in different parts of the world.

² Data on this section (Basic Facts and General Historical Background) came from Encyclopedia Britannica (2007; 15th edition), pp.537-549; see also Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year (2008), p. 448, . Check also WikiPilipinas, Philippines Encyclopedia under 'Religions in the Philippines'. Note also that all major religious groups mentioned in this section would have their own websites for further information.

³ For background on Philippine Church history, see Pablo Fernandez, OP, *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)* (Metro Manila: National Bookstore Publishers, 1979) or William Henry Scott, *Barangay: 16th Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994).

⁴ For a general background on animism in the Philippines, see: F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage* (Quezon City: Punlad Research House, Inc., 2000).

⁵ See the following for a good exploration on the subject; Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon at Rebolusyon* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003); Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988);

Other religions and religious movements also exist in the Philippines, as follows (*from the 2000 Census*): 5 % Muslim, 2.8 % Evangelicals, 2.3 % Iglesia ni Kristo, 2 % Aglipayans, 4.5 % Other Christians, 0.6 % Unidentified, 0.1% none. There is also Buddhism in the Philippines (1%) largely from the Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Indian, Thai and Vietnamese communities residing in the Philippines. Makati City (at the center of the National Capital Region) has the country's only synagogue – the Beth Yaacov – where approximately 40 Jewish families worship (in the '50s, the Philippine government received Jews fleeing their own country).

The Philippines also have a number of Evangelical and Protestant Churches, to name a few: Baptist Bible Fellowship, Jesus is Lord Church, Victory Christian Fellowship, Bread of Life Ministries International, Cathedral of Praise, United Methodist Church, Union Church Manila, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, United Evangelical Church of the Philippines, etc.

The Philippines also have churches which are independent from Rome namely the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* or *Aglipayans* which arose from a Catholic nationalist movement at the turn of the century. There is also the Apostolic Catholic Church which formally separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1992. The Philippines also have the *Iglesia ni Kristo*, an indigenous religious organization founded in 1914. It has an estimated 3 million membership and is politically influential because it can deliver a block vote during national elections.

2. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This paper 'Theologizing in the Philippines' focuses on theologizing in the Philippine Catholic Church. The Philippines has been a Catholic country for the past 500 years. Limiting this paper to 50 years ('Theologizing since Vatican II') somehow puts an acceptable scope to this paper. At present however, the Catholic Church in the country (more than 60 million members) is divided into 88 dioceses; 2, 871 parishes; more than 30 religious and diocesan theological seminaries providing theological education to future priests and lay ministers; 6,111 diocesan priests; about 500 religious congregations for men (121) and women (357)⁶. And theologizing is definitely happening continuously in all these levels of church and church formation!

To further limit this paper, only two areas will be explored on the main topic - Theological Developments After Vatican II. One is Theologizing in the Local Churches, the other is Theologizing in the Academe (and Associations). To limit theologizing in the academe, only two indicators were chosen: a 10-year (2000-2009) thematic study of the theses and dissertations as well as the theological journals of six theological schools in the country. For local church theologizing, a sampler is given– pastoral statements at the national and regional

Nenita Pambid, *Anting-anting o Bakit Nagtatago sa Loob ng Bato si Bathala* (Quezon City: University of the Phils. Press, 2000).

⁶ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. *The 2010-2011 Catholic Directory of the Philippines* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2010).

level; a diocesan pastoral program; a pastoral center program and a Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) story.

After above thematic explorations, the last part would describe some characteristics of theologizing in Philippine setting and some challenges perceived.

Another limitation of this paper: it is important to note that theologizing is alive and well in other Christian denominations and local independent churches in the Philippines (some of which were mentioned earlier). There have also been several ecumenical theological projects among the churches. But this area cannot be included in this paper. The histories and movements of theologizing among Christian Protestant denominations and the local independent churches in the Philippines deserve a **complete** paper. They are very interesting and thought-provoking, as some originated from historical struggles of national independence from colonizers at the turn of the century. As can be seen from their publications, they are earnest in contextualizing theology and theological formation.⁷

Part 2: THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE VATICAN II

1. INTRODUCTION TO FILIPINO THEOLOGIZING

Theology's classic definition as 'faith seeking understanding', though a very short phrase, has a long cultural and historical development through the centuries. From a western understanding of 'faith' as assent to divinely-revealed truth to an active engagement with the world and 'seeking understanding' from a metaphysical and existential approaches to more historical ones, theology itself is facing redefinition. More importantly, the development of local churches in the whole world has produced **theologies**, dismantling the unitary concept of theology from a past western perspective.

Although following Western system of theologizing and theological formation for centuries since colonization, Filipino theologizing received an impetus from Vatican II and from the social and political ferment and changes happening in and outside the country. The term 'Filipino Theology' came out in the '70s. A foremost Filipino theologian, C. Arevalo, writing in the early '70s, called Filipino theologizing as the 'theology of the signs of the times' whose 'springboard for reflection is not the text of the Scriptures nor the data of Tradition but what is going on in the world'. Arevalo contends that Filipino Theology endeavors to make the Philippine Church 'bear the Gospel of Christ precisely as it encounters what-is-going-forward in

⁷ See for example the papers presented in *Doing Theology in Philippine Context* sponsored by the Asian Theological Seminary in February 2005, collected in John Suk, ed., *Doing Theology in the Philippines* (Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, Inc., 2005); see also Revelation Velunta, ed., *Anumang Hiram Kung Hindi Masikip ay Maluwang: Iba't Ibang Anyo ng Teolohiyang Pumipiglas (Borrowed Things Do Not Really Fit - They are Either Tight or Loose: Different Forms of a Theology that Struggles)* (Dasmariñas, Cavite: Union Theological Seminary, 2006).

our common journey as a people, going forward towards building a nation.”⁸.

In this decade after Vatican II, articles and publications such as ‘Elements of Filipino Theology’, ‘Doing Theology in the Philippine Context’, ‘Prenotes to the Contextualization of Theology’, ‘The Inculturation of Faith’, ‘Some Notes on Inculturation’, ‘Filipino Theology Today’, among others, came out. In a preliminary report in the mid-70s about contextual theologizing in the Philippines, Mercado mentioned five kinds of local theologizing: 1) liberation theology (referring to theologies focusing on social and political issues of justice and development; 2) theology of the Basic Christian Communities (theologies articulated by grassroots faith movement organized in the neighborhood); 3) ‘barrio’ theology (referring to the practice of popular piety as well as of animist elements in faith and daily life); 4) liturgical theology (liturgies were already being done in the local languages and attempting to incorporate cultural elements); 5) spiritual theology (referring to the theologies produced from the spiritual movements of the time, like the Charismatics, etc.)⁹

Almost 30 years later, in 2004, a book entitled ‘The Rise of Filipino Theology’¹⁰ featured more than 30 authors (foreign and local) theologizing on Philippine context with a sampling of their works. Those with the most number of published works include SVDs¹¹ Leonardo Mercado and Dionisio Miranda, Jesuits¹² Catalino Arevalo and Vitaliano Gorospe and lay theologian Jose de Mesa.

Just to give a sampling of the books they have produced, some titles: Jose de Mesa – *Kapag Namayani ang Kagandahang Loob ng Diyos*, *In Solidarity with Culture*, *Why Theology is Never Far from Home*, *Mabathalang Pag-aaral*, *Providence as God’s Concern for His People in Lowland Filipino Context*; Dionisio Miranda – *Buting Pinoy*, *Loob the Filipino Within*, *Pagkamakabuhay On the Side of Life*, *Pagkamakatao Reflections on the Theological Virtues in the Philippine Context*, *Kaloob ni Kristo*; Leonardo Mercado – *Elements of Filipino Theology*, *Leadership Among Filipino Religious Groups*, *Filipino Religious Psychology*, *Filipino Popular Devotions*; *Vitaliano. Gorospe* – *Christian Renewal of Filipino Values*, *the Filipino Search for Meaning – Moral Philosophy in Philippine Context*, *The Filipino Search for God – Philosophy of Religion in Philippine Context*.

In terms of methods, Pilario summarized the contextual theology methods used the past three decades into three: a ‘theology of bits and pieces’; ‘appreciative awareness’ and ‘theology

⁸ C, Arevalo, “On the Theology of the Signs of the Times”, *Philippine Priests’ Forum* Vol. 4 No. 4 (1972), pp. 14-26.

⁹ Leonardo Mercado, “Contextual Theology in the Philippines A Preliminary Report”, *Philippiniana Sacra* Vol. 14 (1979), pp. 36-58.

¹⁰ Dindo R. Tesoro and Joselito A. Jose, *The Rise of Filipino Theology* (Pasay City: Pauline Publishing House, 2004).

¹¹ Society of Divine Word religious congregation.

¹² Society of Jesus religious congregation.

of struggle'¹³.

A 'Theology of Bits and Pieces' refers to adhoc theologizing done by theologians on their feet, "a theology on-the-spot whose home is the heat of the day and the dust of the road; a theology in via, of a people on its way". This method does not produce academic theological work that is printed in theological journals but produces 'notes' or 'thoughts on' as theologians are asked to reflect on faith questions which need urgent responses because the faith communities they were serving were in the midst of difficult social and political circumstances.

The hermeneutics of 'Appreciative Awareness' starts theological reflection with an analysis of culture. It seeks to discover what is good in a particular culture especially from a postcolonial setting. Colonized by Spain for 350 years and by America for 50, Christian faith in the Philippines has been seen through a Western perspective. This method tries to deconstruct such western conceptions and reroot the faith/faith traditions in local (Filipino) settings so as to bring the Gospel to the heart and home of a people as it uses their own local language and their cultural values.

'Theology of Struggle' on the other hands starts with socio-political issues and uses Marxist (leftist) thought and analysis in reflecting on them. This method starts with experience of poverty and oppression, articulates the point of view of the poor and takes sides with them. Publications using this theological method was prevalent in the '70-'80s, especially during the oppressive regime of Marcos who ruled the country under Martial Law for almost two decades.

Filipino theologizing continues to evolve and develop. Let us explore briefly two areas of Filipino theologizing – in the local churches and in the academe.

2. THEOLOGIZING IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES

When one talks about theologizing, one easily thinks of theological schools and institutions. But that kind of thinking belongs to a past and limited conception of theology. As much as theology/theologizing itself is 'in crisis' or reshaping its own definition¹⁴, this report would like to give more importance to local church theologizing (or what this paper calls 'Communal Theologizing') happening in the country. In the Philippines, the local churches are the main theological/theologizing communities with regards the production of contextual theologies. It will also be seen in the second part of this section how theological schools and institutions are contributing to the trends set by local church theologizing.

Communal Theologizing happens when a local church or a faith community reflects together on their faith face-to-face with their daily life struggles. Dialogue frames Communal

¹³ Daniel Franklin Pilario, "The Craft of Contextual Theology: Towards a Conversation on Theological Method in the Philippine Context", *Hapag* 1, No. 1 (2004), pp. 5-39.

¹⁴ Joseph Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Macmillan and Gill, 1987), p. 1101.

Theologizing. Faith communities dialogue with the world they live in, with its harshness and complexities, with its beauty and mystery. Searching for meaning and wellbeing in this world, they dialogue with one another in the community as they share experiences, perspectives, wisdom. In their search, faith communities dialogue with the Spirit as prayer and discernment energize Communal Theologizing.

Communal Theologizing, in line with what Arevalo has said (in 'Theology of Bits and Pieces', p. 5), happens on the streets and in the fields, hardly polished but actively pulsing with questions and half-answers, as local realities break down ready-made theological theories from elsewhere.

The following pages give a sampling of communal/local church theologizing in the Philippines: pastoral statements at the national level – from the community of bishops, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and from a regional level through the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC); a pastoral program at the diocesan level through the visioning process of the Archdiocese of Jaro; a contextualized formation program from a pastoral center, *Bukal ng Tipan*; and a true-to-life story of a BEC in San Fernando Bukidnon. Note that this is a sampling and not an in-depth analysis of the statements and programs but enough to show a trend in theologizing in the Philippine context.

Pastoral assembly statements, pastoral programs and true-to-life stories at different levels of local church life were chosen because they are 'theologies'¹⁵. They express a people's faith in response to particular contexts and their attendant challenges. These are articulations that arise out of a church assembly, a *qahal*, a gathering in faith of those called by the Lord to follow him from a particular historical context. A local church gathers in faith to read the signs of the times and reflects on the challenges that beset their particular church community as they seek God in the events happening around them, in one another, in the Bible and in the teachings of the church. A pastoral gathering is therefore a theological movement. And what pastoral gatherings/ meetings/ programs produce are theologies at their concrete best, serving faith life and mission.

A. Pastoral Statements

a. National – Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines officially started in 1967 although it existed initially as Catholic Welfare Organization tasked to coordinate relief-efforts after the war (1945). As early as 1948, it already issued the "Statement of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of the Philippines on the Social Principles" stating the principles for solving the pressing social problems of the country. This was followed in 1949 by the "Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Catholic Hierarchy on Social Justice" expressing deep concern for the poor, critiquing the evils

¹⁵ Catalino Arevalo, SJ, "After Vatican II: Theological Reflection in the Church in the Philippines 1965-1987", *Landas* 2 (1988), pp. 11-24.

of existing capitalistic system as well as communism.¹⁶

Such prophetic and socially-oriented beginnings became characteristic of the pastoral statements of the CBCP for the next decades¹⁷. Although differences of opinion, as well political stance, divided them at times (to the point of individual or small groups of bishops issuing their own statements which could be opposing the published statement), it is also fair to say that this community of church leaders met socio-political challenges of the country head-on and proclaimed their stand clearly and with courage.

The example given here is the one issued by CBCP after the Snap Elections in 1986 which provided the impetus and contributed significantly to the political upheaval popularly known as 'People Power Revolution' that toppled a 20-year dictatorship. The pastoral statement started with saying that the will of God should be accomplished through this election, reminding the people that 'these elections can become one great offense to God and a national scandal, or they can be an event of conversion and national renewal'.

Excerpt of CBCP Pastoral Statement after the 1986 Snap Elections (see full statement attached)

It has been our sad experience that God's will has been flagrantly transgressed in the past through the violation of our electoral process. Registration anomalies and flying voters, vote-buying and selling, bribery, unwarranted pressures, serious lies, black propaganda, the fraudulent casting, canvassing and reporting of votes, snatching and switching of ballot boxes, physical violence and killings have often characterized our elections.

It is with grave concern and great sadness that we see signs of these happening again now in a concerted manner, and threatening to escalate to a level never experienced before. These practices are sins against the Lord. They violate in a serious manner the dignity of human beings with whom the Lord has united himself. They make their perpetrators unworthy of the Body of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27).

We should not passively surrender to the forces of evil and allow them to unilaterally determine the conduct and the results of these elections. Banding together, we can become a massive force that will assure relatively clean and honest elections, expressive of the people's genuine will.

This will must be expressed and respected. For the power to choose our leaders comes from God. From him all authority derives. In a democracy, he chooses to designate the bearers of this authority through the free and honest expression of the people's will. Hence, voting is a sacred right and duty. To exercise this right is to do God's will. To respect this right is to respect God himself.

In this theological statement, one can see a faith community at the national level – a community of leaders / bishops – taking up their prophetic role in a politically-volatile situation.

¹⁶ P. Giordano, SJ, *Awakening to Mission: the Philippine Church 1965-1981* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1988), 20.

¹⁷ Check these books for a critical review of the pastoral statements of the CBCP and the CBCP involvement in socio-political issues in the country in Giordano (footnote 16); J. Kroeger, MM, *The Philippine Church and Evangelization 1965-1984* (Ph.D. dissertation, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1985); and R.Hardy, OMI, *Philippine Bishops Speak: 1968-1983* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1984), p. 3 and following; see also Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *CBCP Statements 1984-1990* (Quezon City: Cardinal Bea Institute, 1990) .

Less than a month later, with the dictator supposedly winning the snap elections, the CBCP once again issued a statement (*see CBCP website*) that said this dictator has no moral authority to rule and called on the people to support a democratic popular movement that ousted the dictator in a peaceful 'revolution' known in modern history to have inspired other peaceful revolutions in the world. With the CBCP pastoral statements, we see theologizing at the service of the local church's prophetic mission.

b. Regional – Mindanao Sulu Pastoral Conference

The Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference is a body of bishops, priests, religious and laity who represent the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Mindanao-Sulu. They have been meeting every three years and their statements since 1971 show a progression towards deeper social and political involvement as church¹⁸.

The Mindanao Church has been known as the most progressive church in the Philippines because of its mission orientation as it faces very challenging contexts quite different from the rest of the country. Mindanao is the place where most of the 10% Moslem population of the country reside. It is also where armed secessionist groups - the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – have been waging war with government forces for the past three to four decades.

On the other hand, Mindanao is also known as the 'Land of Promise' because of the beauty and richness of its natural environment. Mindanao has also attracted a lot of in-migration especially when economic development started in the '70s. However, such development also deepened the social and environmental woes of Mindanao as big capitalists dominate economic activities. Mindanao is also culturally-diverse with about half (26 indigenous tribal communities) of the cultural minority groups in the country residing in its mountains and plains.

Below is the latest (2010) MSPC statement which witnesses to how the local church as a region lives and responds in faith in the midst of a multi-cultural, multi-religious, politically-, economically- and environmentally-challenged context.

Excerpt of MSPC XIV Statement (see full statement attached)

We have reflected on and rediscovered the importance of the Word of God in addressing issues and concerns affecting the Environment and Peace. Moved by the Goodness and the Creative Power of the Word of God, we have seen our successes and failures, our efforts and shortcomings. We have seen the immensity of our Mission as Local Churches in Mindanao. We are challenged to follow the path toward the New Evangelization which would transform our context.

We are all aware of the threats to Life and Peace. We know that the situations of unpeace are often land-based and geographically localized; they are related to maldistribution, usurpation, monopoly, misuse and abuse of resources. The

¹⁸ For a good critical background on the historical development of MSPC, see Warren Kinne, *The Splintered Staff: Structural Deadlock in the Mindanao Church* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990).

corruption of economic and political powers, the distortion of moral and spiritual violence, the materialistic culture of amassing wealth for vested interests have very high environmental and social costs.

We therefore condemn in unequivocal terms:

- All activities which threaten and devastate Creation: the destructive mining activities particularly open-pit mining, logging activities which denude our forests, toxic agricultural practices, destructive fishing and all activities contributory to climate change and global warming;
- Any and all forms of aggression against the lives, cultures, and livelihood of the Indigenous Communities as well as anomalous encroachment into their ancestral domains;

We are firmly resolved:

- To pursue the Formation of Christian Environmental Conscience, Intergenerational Justice and the Promotion of the Culture of Peace. We are firmly resolved to pursue the paths of the New Evangelization using solid catechesis for the care of the Earth and for the creation of Peaceful Environment;
- To conduct information and education campaigns to the faithful regarding the Alternative Mining Act (AMB) now filed in Congress and is known as National Management of Resources and Stewardship Bill, as alternative to the present destructive and immoral Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

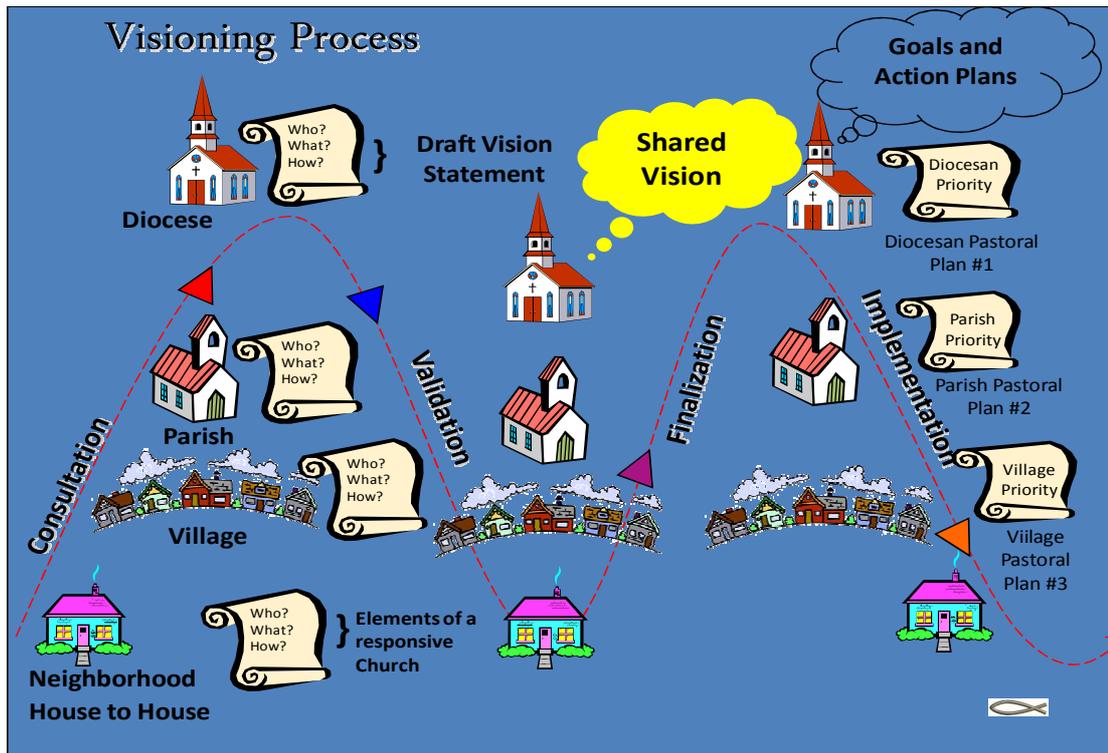
In this most recent theological statement of this regional church, one can see a faith community in the middle of the world, wanting to carry out its liberating role among peoples. This is a theology that accompanies peoples' journey towards Gods' reign of justice and peace and integrity of creation. By reading the signs of the times and responding to them, these faith communities' theologies are direction-setting and clear pointers on the way to wellbeing and wholeness envisioned by God for all of God's creation.

B. Diocesan Pastoral Programs

The Archdiocese of Jaro is one of the oldest dioceses in the country and also has one of the oldest seminaries (see page 14). It has 2 bishops, 180 priests, 95 parishes, about 2 million baptized. Even if it is one of the biggest local churches, it has been quite ahead in setting a pastoral direction in terms of articulating a vision even before the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines put the focus of the national church on being the Church of the Poor (1991). By 2006, the whole archdiocese gathered for a Synod to affirm and strengthen their journey as church. By 2008, they did an archdiocesan profiling to check the status of the parishes in the whole archdiocese. By 2009, the two bishops went to all the vicariates to dialogue face-to-face with the priests simultaneous with lay leaders' consultation.

By 2010, they have set the process of revisiting and rearticulating their 1990 diocesan vision statement. Below is their process:

Visioning Process of the Archdiocese of Jaro



In this visioning process, one can see a faith community at an archdiocesan level who want to listen to all from the grassroots at the neighborhood level to the villages to the parishes up to the diocesan level, then moves down again all the way to the neighborhood to validate what has been summed up at the diocesan level, then moves up again all the way to the diocese to finalize; and finally moves down again all the way to the neighborhood for action-planning and implementation. It is a communal planning process that shows a sincere desire to consult as wide a base as possible in decision-making. This consultation process is also a best example of a pilgrim church journeying together – bishop, lay, clergy, religious - reading the signs of the times, sensing the movement of the Spirit, trusting in each other’s wisdom to make a decision together as a local church.

Vision-setting, decision-making and action-planning in this communal process are contextualization on the move, rebirthing the church from the grassroots. The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), through its theological commission, has defined ‘inculturation’ as nothing more and nothing less than a local church realizing itself¹⁹. Theologizing through a communal pastoral planning such as this becomes an energy accompanying the sensing and discerning process of the local church as it rebirths and renews itself.

¹⁹ Gnanapiragasam, John and Felix Wilfred, *Being Church in Asia: Theological Advisory Commission Documents 1986-1992* Vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1994), p. 36.

C. National / Regional Formation Centers

A lot of regular, ongoing formation program for church leaders – clergy and lay alike – are facilitated by Pastoral, Biblical, Catechetical centers serving local churches at a diocesan, regional or even national level. These centers are also active theologizing communities as they design formation programs tailored to the needs and context of the local churches they are serving. Through these contextualized formation programs, these centers of formation articulate timely and responsive theologies.

Some of these centers include the: John Paul I Biblical Center in Vigan, Ilocos Sur (Northern Philippines) designing biblical programs for different groups of people. Founded in 1979, it also runs a yearly summer Word Alive Bible Institute which offers Bible courses and activities, as well as a trainors' training course for lay ministers of the Word working at diocesan levels. Another center worth mentioning is the Silsilah Center in Mindanao. Founded in 1984, Silsilah is a dialogue movement promoting deeper understanding and better relations between Muslim and Christians, together with peoples of other faiths and traditions. For more than 25 years, Silsilah has been running several social outreach and training / formation programs to advance dialogue and peace.

Let us look closer at Bukal ng Tipan²⁰, a pastoral center that serves different dioceses in the country with a vision of furthering a 'participatory church in the world through an experience of community and practical skills training'. Although most of its courses deal with BECs and the support systems that will sustain BECs, one of Bukal's skills and principles of working is to team up with a diocesan formation team to design localized, culturally-grounded formation programs after doing their own immersion process in diocesan social and church life.

Let us look at one particular program it has designed for a diocese and see the communal, contextual theology it has articulated. Bukal designed a program entitled 'Journeying Together through Leadership Transitions' in response to a request from one Manila diocese to design a program for their parish priests and parish pastoral councils to help them through the transition process as parish priests are reshuffled - transferred to another parish or receive new assignments. Usually, a lot of tension and conflict accompany such changes in leadership because of administrative/pastoral, as well as relationship issues, left by the former or brought in by the incoming priest.

This program has the following formation framework and content: the theological (the church as a pilgrim church, journeying towards God's reign) and the biblical (early Christian communities built up by Paul and sustained by the local leaders) dialoguing with the cultural (leadership as *panunuluyan*, a popular cultural practice of staying temporarily in a relatives' / trusted friends' houses). Interwoven into this formation framework and content are skills, tools and approaches for practical training on 1) ending a leadership term; 2) beginning a leadership term; 3) handling the neutral zone; 4) the parish pastoral council as caretakers of the parish

²⁰ See their website for more information on this pastoral center www.bukalngtipan.com.

vision; 5) sustaining the pastoral programs and plans of the parish through leadership transitions; among other things.

In this particular formation program, one can see a pastoral center working with church leaders/ministers to respond to a particular need arising from a particular pastoral context. The formation program the pastoral center has designed and local church leaders undergo articulate a relevant and responsive theology (in this particular case, a contextualized/ inculturated theology of a pilgrim leadership as 'panunuluyan') arising from their own context and culture and guiding their response to their specific pastoral need through the practical skills they are learning. Through the pastoral centers' designing of contextualized pastoral programs for local churches, theologizing becomes a bridge between tradition and present-day situation to keep the gospel and the teachings of the church relevant and responsive.

D. A Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC)

BECs in the Philippines started in the late '60s. Existing in many models and approaches, BECs have been seen as the very face of Philippine church's goal of being the Church of the Poor and also the very instrument for church and societal renewal and transformation envisioned by the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II).²¹ At present, building BECs is a pastoral thrust in almost all dioceses in the country.²² Here is one story²³ of a BEC of a very poor farming community in a remote valley of San Fernando, Bukidnon (Southern Philippines) who fought the big illegal logging companies. Their hard-won victory became an inspiration to the nation.

Excerpt from the Story of one BEC in San Fernando Bukidnon (see full story attached)

In our nipa huts late at night, and in our bamboo chapels on Sundays, we came together to listen to the Word and to listen to each others' words. We realized that to be true Christians, it was not enough to worship and to read the Bible. We have to care for others and care for the earth. We have to defend the forest – which is our home, the home of our neighbors – the native Dumagats and Subanons, the home of the birds, the animals, and wild plants.

The day came when we gathered on the road where the logging trucks pass. There were several hundreds of us – men, women, children, and old people. We barricaded with our bodies and the logging trucks could no longer pass. The priests and lay missionaries were with us; the Bishop came one night to pray with us. They listened to us when we shared with them our stories and our reflections on the Word of God and on the unfolding event. It was our turn to proclaim and witness the Gospel.

On the 13th day in the barricade while celebrating the Eucharist with our parish priest, a truckload of soldiers came carrying an order from the judge to disperse us. They beat us without mercy. A few weeks later we were ordered to appear in

²¹ PCP –II # 137.

²² For a good background on Philippine BECs, see: Gabino Mendoza, ed. *Church of the People: The Basic Christian Community Experience in the Philippines* (Manila: Bishops'-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, 1988) and Gabriel, Manuel, Josemarie Delgado, Estela Padilla and Amado Picardal, eds., *BECs in the Philippines: Dream or Reality* (Taytay, Rizal: Bukal ng Tipan, 2004).

²³ Gabriel, p. 150-155.

court before the corrupt judge. We filled the courtroom – men, women, children, old people. We were not afraid even if we were poor and powerless because we believed that God's Spirit was with us. We were charged with violating the law and causing the logging companies huge loss of profits.

Meanwhile, the newspapers, the TV and the radio began to report our story. Suddenly the conscience of many all over the country was awakened. They realized that our problem was also their problem. Many began to show their support. And there were even others in different parts of the country who followed our example. Our voice was beginning to be heard and finally, the President of the Philippines ordered a stop to the logging operations in San Fernando. When we heard the good news our tears of sorrow became tears of joy. Our suffering had not been in vain. We thanked God by celebrating the Eucharist and by having an instant fiesta. It was our Easter Sunday.

In this story, one can see a faith community at the grassroots level gathering all the courage and conviction they have in facing a very powerful 'enemy'. The depth of their commitment came from the depth of their bonding with one another and with creation as God's family and their understanding of what God is asking from them. This story / theological statement is a powerful action of faith and solidarity. Theologizing through story-telling contributes to the self-interpreting and self-defining moment of a local faith community.

3. THEOLOGIZING IN THE ACADEME and INSTITUTIONS

A. Background

When we talk of theologizing as a formal discipline, the institutions concerned are the theological schools. Traditional (Western) subjects like Christology, Ecclesiology, Moral Theology, Scriptures, Revelation, Canon Law, Missiology, Liturgy and Sacraments, Church History, etc. make up the curriculum of theological education; although subjects that respond to more modern contexts and needs such as Anthropology, Cultural Analysis, Intercultural Communication, Interreligious Dialogue, Migration Theology, Sexuality and Spirituality, Theologies of Liberation, etc. have been added the past decade or two. Theses and dissertations are required to graduate.

Expectedly, with majority of the population Catholic, the Philippines would have a lot of theological schools which give formation for future priests and lay ministers (*please find attached a list of theological schools run by the local dioceses as well as by the religious*). Moreover, the Catholic universities around the country (which are also some of the biggest universities in terms of enrollment) also have a Religious Education / Theology Department which grant undergraduate and graduate courses on Religious or Theological Education. Religion is still taught as a subject from elementary to college all over the country, in public and private schools, and thousands of religion teachers are needed. Some theological schools / seminaries are attached to big universities. This report features six (4 from Manila, 1 from Northern Luzon and 1 from the Visayas) theological schools that form future priests and lay people for ministry.

Theological schools and theological associations will be discussed to see how they too have contributed to contextual theologizing in the Philippines.

a. Theological Schools

Theological education in the Philippines started a few decades after the Spaniards arrived in the country. In 1583, the first bishop of Manila Most Reverend Domingo Salazar petitioned the Spanish king for the foundation of a college to serve as a seminary, where the sons of Spaniards as well as mestizos and natives who felt the call to the priesthood and the apostolate could receive proper training. In 1601, the Spanish Jesuits founded Colegio de Manila, later known as Colegio de San Ignacio, which later became the Loyola School of Theology. In 1605, the seminary college of what is now the University of Sto. Tomas was founded originally for the Dominicans. Some of the earliest diocesan seminaries: in 1767, the Seminary of San Carlos (Archdiocese of Manila); 1867, the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos (Archdiocese of Cebu); 1783, the Seminary of Nueva Caceres; 1821, the Seminary at Vigan (Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia); 1868, the Seminary at Jaro (Archdiocese of Jaro) in the Visayas²⁴.

Four of the above oldest theological schools in the country were studied for this report in terms of the theses and dissertations they have produced, as well as their theological journals. They are: the University of Sto. Tomas (UST), Loyola School of Theology (LST), Seminario Mayor de San Carlos (SMSC) and the Immaculate Conception School of Theology (ICST) in Vigan. Maryhill School of Theology (MST) was added as well as a relatively new but very interesting theological school, the Inter-Congregational Theological Center (ICTC)²⁵.

UST is one of the largest and oldest universities in the country. It was started by the third Spanish archbishop of Manila Miguel Buenavides, OP, in 1611 and entrusted to the Dominican Province of the Most Holy Rosary. It houses the Ecclesiastical Faculties of Sacred Theology, Philosophy and Canon Law which grant licentiates and doctorate degrees. The Loyola School of Theology, with origins from 1601, is affiliated with the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University. LST became an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology in 1999 and confers the academic and ecclesiastical degrees of Baccalaureat, Licentiate and Doctorate in Sacred Theology.

ICST like UST and LST were originally founded as seminaries which later became theological schools. Seminario de San Pablo, founded in 1822 by Dominican Bishop Francisco Alban, later became ICST. After the Dominicans came the Vincentians in 1872, then the Augustinians in 1876. The Society of the Divine Word served the longest from 1925-87. The ICST is affiliated with the Theology Faculty of UST and can therefore confer the ecclesiastical degree of Bachelor

²⁴ For historical notes, see Pablo Fernandez, OP, *History of the Church in the Philippines 1521-1898* (Manila: National Bookstore, 1979), especially pp. 44-52,

²⁵ For the University of Sto. Tomas, Loyola School of Theology and Maryhill School of Theology, please see: Tesoro Dindo Rei and Joselito Alviar Jose, *The Rise of Filipino Theology* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2004), pp. 42-63. See also Jaime Belita, CM, *From Logos to Diwa: A Synthesis of Theological Research in Catholic Graduate Schools in the Philippines 1965-1985* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1986), pp. 25-44; Belita describes the development of theological curricula in these schools. For the Immaculate Conception School of Theology and Seminario Mayor de San Carlos, their official websites were accessed.

in Sacred Theology. SMSC, which started as a seminary in 1867, has a Graduate School Program that offers degrees of Master of Arts in Theology and in Pastoral Ministry. All the above theological schools both have seminarians preparing for the priesthood and lay people as students, with lay enrollment increasing through the years.

MST, run by the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM), started in 1972 when five CICM professors teaching at the major seminary of Manila decided to set up their own theological school which intended to seriously follow Vatican II's directives for dialogue with the world. MST offers Master's Degrees with majors in Theological Studies, Religious Studies and Pastoral Ministry.

The ICTC started in 1986 after a meeting of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines where they talked about setting up an 'alternative theological school of formation'. It developed into a school clearly focused on Filipino theologizing. Believing that 'all learning is situated', an important part of its four-year theological studies is a two-month immersion every semester among poor communities and basic sectors of Philippine society to help the students locate and ground their theological as well as their spiritual formation. Oriented towards applied theology, the conceptual framework for the students' masteral theses is the pastoral cycle following the see-judge-act method. Every thesis is based on a specific local church community and 80% of the theses produced from 2000-2010 were written in Filipino.

b. Theological Societies

The *Damdaming Katoliko sa Teolohiya* or DAKATEO is an association of Catholic Theologians in the Philippines which promotes theologies for a just and inclusive Church and society. To achieve this, DAKATEO '(a) supports creative and scholarly theological research and its dissemination, (b) promotes theological reflection and discussion on current issues and questions in society, and (c) fosters fellowship among its members and solidarity with the oppressed and excluded'. Dakateo is specifically oriented to 'theological research and practice that dialogue with varied contexts, disciplines, social movements, and faith traditions from a liberative perspective'.

Starting in 2002 with a group of Philippine-based alumni of the theological faculty of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, it has now included theologians who have studied in different schools in the Philippines and abroad, with a membership of 30 local theologians, and continues to accept new members yearly.

Dakateo publications (which print the papers presented in their yearly conferences) include: *Fundamentalism and Pluralism in the Church* (published 2005, Dakateo conference 2002), *Theological Conversations in Post-colonial and Global Contexts* (published 2006, Dakateo conference 2005); *Interdisciplinarity in Theology* (published 2007, Dakateo conference 2006); *Marginalization, Exclusion and Suffering* (published 2008, Dakateo conference 2007) and *Politics and the Christian Tradition* (published 2010, Dakateo conference 2009). To be published

soon is a book on theological reflections on 'sexual violence against women', the topic of Dakateo's 2008 conference. This is the first conference where Dakateo dialogued with other institutions (the centers ministering to abused women and a group of social scientists who analyzed the stories and situations of abused women) in producing their theological reflections.

Last year's (2010) conference was on 'Reimagining Christianity for a Green World' and this year would be 'Theology and the Arts' focusing on visual and performance arts. With such conference topics, Dakateo engages local contexts and cultures in its theologizing efforts.

Two more theological associations are worth mentioning – the SAMAPA (*Samahan sa Mabathalang Pag-aaral*)²⁶ and the Circle of Feminist Theologians in the Philippines. SAMAPA is a group of professional theologians focused on lay and Filipino theologizing and wants to reach out to theology teachers at the college level. It has held conferences among college theology teachers based in Catholic universities with topics on *Mabathalang Pag-aaral sa Katawan* (Body) and *Mabathalang Pag-aaral sa Ganda* (Beauty).

The Circle of Feminist Theologians met for the first time this year (May 2011) and is bound to be another important theological community in the country. This does not mean however that feminist theologizing in the Philippines has just started. Already in 1963, Sisters' Formation Institute, which would later become Institute for the Formation of Religious Sisters, started giving formation to religious women. By 1990s, major schools of theology were already integrating feminist concerns and perspectives in the different disciplines of theology and later on courses such as Feminist Hermeneutics, Women in Phil Society and Religion, Feminist Theology, among others, were being offered²⁷. Foremost feminist theologians Virginia Fabella, Mary John Mananzan, Agnes Brazal and Judette Gallares have been active both in Asian and Philippine feminist theologizing and have produced several books on the subject²⁸.

²⁶ *Samahan sa Mabathalang Pag-aaral* simply means a 'community of those doing theology' in this case Filipino theology. SAMAPA promotes *Mabathalang Pag-aaral*, a Filipino way of doing theology. *Mabathalang Pag-aaral* uses the precolonial term for God – *Bathala* and 'pag-aaral' connotes a process – theology as a process and not just a finished product. *Pag-aaral* – process of learning – gives importance to a local way of learning which emphasizes sensing and intuiting. See the following for a good discussion on *mabathalang pag-aaral*: Jose de Mesa, *Mabathalang Pag-aaral*, *Chakana 2* (2004): 121-137; and Jose de Mesa, "Buhay, Aral, Karanasan at Turo: A Filipino Hermeneutics of Experience", *East Asia Pastoral Review* 32 (1995).

²⁷ Niceta Vargas OSA, "The Impact of Feminist Theologizing in Five Schools of Theology in the Philippines", a paper presented at the initial meeting of the Circle of Feminist Theologians of the Philippines, May 28, 2011, at the Villa Consuelo Retreat House, Novaliches Quezon City, Philippines.

²⁸ A sample of published works: Virginia Fabella, *Beyond Bonding, A Third World Women's Theological Journey* (Manila: EATWOT and IWS, 1993); V. Fabella and S.A.L.Park, eds., *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women* (1990); Mary John Mananzan, *Women, Religion and Spirituality in Asia* (Quezon City: Anvil Publ. and Institute of Women Studies, 2004); M.J.Mananzan, ed., *Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women Issues and Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2000) ; Agnes Brazal and Andrea Si, eds., *Body and Sexuality: Theologico-Pastoral Perspectives of Women in Asia* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007); A. Brazal et.al, eds., *Transformative Theological Ethics: East Asian Contexts* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2010); Judette Gallares, *Images of Courage: Spirituality of Women in the Gospels from an Asian and Third World*

B. Trends

To check the trends in theologizing in the academe and in the associations, theses, dissertations and the theological journals coming from the five theological schools and Dakateo will be looked into. In 1986, Belita²⁹ did already a 20-year study (1965-1985) of the theses and dissertations of UST, LST and MST and EAPI³⁰. This paper continued his study by doing a ten-year thematic study from 2000-2009, adding the schools ICST and SMSC, to have a sampling also from the two major theological schools in the north and central part of the country. To add to the theological trending, a thematic ten-year study (2000-2009) of the theological journals produced by the five theological schools and Dakateo was also done. Below are results:

a. Theses And Dissertations

Belita used Historical, Systematic and Practical to categorize the themes of the theses and dissertations. Although this paper followed the same categories, the author finds the categorizing (historical, systematic and practical) very limiting. Belita admitted that categorizing was difficult because no one thesis limits itself to one approach. But he looked into the subject or theme which is the focus of the study. For him, themes like heaven, hell or merit indicate “a speculative and therefore systematic thrust” whereas themes like liberation, praxis, social justice would “always project the practical” especially because they are taken in the context of church and ministry.³¹

BELITA (1986)		
Topics	1965-1975	1976-1985
Historical	10 11 %	16 9%
Systematic	48 51%	75 42%
Practical	36 38%	87 49%

One can see from the summary table that the Systematic decreased by 9% while the Practical increased by 11% on a 20-year study compared in two decades. He says the research on the first decade after Vatican II was still tending towards the ‘traditional’ way of doing theology: “using a rational or speculative reflection on a historical matter” with 51% of the researches falling under the Systematic category. By the second decade, this was reversed with the

Perspective (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1995); J. Gallares, *Images of Faith: Spirituality of Women in the Old Testament from a Third World Perspective* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992).

²⁹ Jaime Belita CM, *From Logos to Diwa: A Synthesis of Theological Research in Catholic Graduate Schools in the Philippines 1965-1985* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1986).

³⁰ East Asia Pastoral Institute, established in the 70’s, connected also to Loyola School of Theology. EAPI accepts students from all over Asia.

³¹ Belita, 113-114.

Practical averaging 49% as researches heed the call of Vatican II for contextualization and inculturation. For Belita, this radical shift in the themes and approaches of theological studies is itself a theological statement.³²

This theological trend discovered by Belita continued to the next decades. Following through Belita's categories, although three more schools were added, we see the Systematic decreasing markedly (from 42% to 37%) and the Practical dominating (63% of the total) the approaches and the themes of the theological theses and dissertations of some of the biggest theological schools in the country the last decade (2000-2009). Could such results be interpreted to mean there is less capacity to articulate the faith logically or systematically or comprehensively? Nevertheless, results do give a trend that the focus of theological education in the last decade, affirming the first two decades after Vatican II, is *praxis*.

FINAL LIST THEOLOGICAL THESES & DISSERTATIONS			
Padilla (Jan 2011)			
Schools' Theses & Dissertations 2000-2009	Historical	Systematic	Practical
Maryhill School of Theology	0	23 (45%)	28 (55%)
InterCongregational Theological Center	0	13 (40%)	19 (60%)
Immaculate Conception School of Theology	1 (2%)	40 (38%)	62 (60%)
University of Sto. Tomas School of Theology	1 (1%)	28 (36%)	49 (63%)
Loyola School of Theology	3 (6%)	13 (28%)	31 (66%)
Seminario Mayor de San Carlos	0	0	9 (100%)
Total	6 (3%)	117 (37%)	198 (63%)

As the world enters the third millennium, the (post)modern world challenges the church and its theological education to become more relevant and responsive to contemporary context and needs. We see theology here not just at the service of the academe but at the service of the world – one of the fundamental shifts in doing theology after Vatican II in Philippine setting.

b. Theological Journals

The trend towards contextualized theologizing is also reflected in the theological journals produced by the five theological schools (the theological journal of ICTC was not included) and Dakateo. Again on a 10-year study, the journal articles were categorized to see how much of these were theologizing from a Philippine context. To compare the differences, the study was divided into two: 2000-2004 and 2005-2009.

³² Belita, 115-116.

FINAL LIST THEOLOGICAL JOURNALS			
Padilla (Jan 2011)			
Journals	2000-2004	2005-2009	Total
<i>Philippiniana Sacra</i> (University of Sto. Tomas Pontifical Theological Faculty, Manila)			
Philippine Context	20 (38%)	24 (33%)	44 (35%)
Other Contexts	33 (62%)	48 (67%)	83 (65%)
	53	72	125 (100%)
<i>Maryhill School of Theology Journal</i> (Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Quezon City)			
Philippine Context	11 (34%)	14 (40%)	25 (37%)
Other Contexts	21 (66%)	21 (60)	42 (63%)
	32	35	67 (100%)
<i>ICST Journal</i> (Immaculate Conception School of Theology, Northern Philippines)			
Philippine Context	11 (30%)	13 (50%)	24 (38%)
Other Contexts	26 (70%)	13 (50%)	39 (62%)
	37	26	63 (100%)
<i>Dakateo Journal</i> (Theological Society of the Philippines)			
Philippine Context	5 (18%)	14 (67%)	19 (38%)
Other Contexts	23 (82%)	7 (33%)	30 (62%)
	28	21	49 (100%)
<i>Landas Journal</i> (Loyola Jesuit School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City)			
Philippine Context	30 (45%)	14 (40%)	44 (43%)
Other Contexts	37 (55%)	21 (60%)	58 (57%)
	67	35	102 (100%)
<i>Talad Journal</i> (Seminario Mayor de San Carlos, Cebu City, Visayas Central Islands)			
Philippine Context			37 (60%)
Other Contexts			24 (40%)
			61(100%)

Comparing the five-year summaries, we see an increase in articles reflecting from a Philippine context from the theological journals of MST, ICST, Dakateo and Talad, with Dakateo showing the highest increase (from 18% to 67%) followed by ICST (from 30% to 50%). Talad actually has the highest percentage with 60% of its articles reflecting on their Philippine/Cebu context although, it cannot be compared in two sets because Talad did not come out for three years.

We see however a 5% decrease from Philippiana Sacra and Landas on articles reflecting from a Philippine context. Overall, however, we can say that an average of 40% of the articles on the theological journals of the five schools and Dakateo were theological reflections on Philippine contexts.

In another table (*please find attached*), the topics of the articles were categorized into Biblical, Moral, Spiritual, Ministry, Liturgy, Western Theology, Theological Methods, etc. Some significant findings: Philippiniana Sacra has 31% of its articles on Western Theology; Landas and MST have the highest chunk of their articles on Biblical; and Dakateo, being a theological

association, would have almost a third (27%) of its articles on Theological Methods. Majority of the articles on a topical basis would be on Church and History.

Modern issues like Dialogue (interreligious, intercultural) and Fundamentalism/Pluralism, as well as issue-oriented topics like Ministry/Moral (e.g. clergy sexual abuse) received little attention in terms of articles written on them. Although not significantly different, of these three topics, however, Moral category was the highest.

Above comments are very limited because ONLY the themes were categorized. Nothing was done to analyze the articles in terms of the way they were written, the theological framework that guided the stance the articles have taken, nor the approach used in theologizing. However, simply categorizing the themes does provide a trend which also reflects the first one we mentioned – towards contextualization of theological reflection in the Philippines.

Part 3: CONCLUDING NOTES

1. SUMMARY

A. Filipino Theologizing: *Teolohiyang Bayan – Talastasang Tumatalab sa Buhay*

Although local church theologizing given above is a sampling and there was no attempt to be analytical, this report submits that pastoral statements, pastoral programs, faith stories show in a substantive way the theologies and the theological production of this generation of the Philippine church. They, together with theologizing in the academe and in the associations, also manifest clearly some characteristics of Filipino theologizing, articulated in above section title: ‘mula sa bayan at para sa bayan’ – discussing ‘bayan’ as the adjective attached to *Teolohiya* / Theology in part a) below and ‘tumatalab sa buhay’ – exploring the phrase that describes *Teolohiyang Bayan* in part b) below.

a. ‘mula sa bayan, para sa bayan’ – historical and communal

‘Bayan’ in Filipino means two things – place and people. When one says ‘bayan ng Las Pinas’, it can either mean the *town/place* of Las Pinas or the *people* of Las Pinas. In the above examples, we have seen a way of theologizing that is grounded and located in a particular place / local setting – ‘mula sa bayan’. From the theological journals, we see a great percentage (40%), and an increasing trend at that, reflecting theologically from local situations and challenges and can be seen more clearly in the pastoral statements, programs and stories from different local church communities. Filipino theologizing is ‘mula sa bayan’, rooted in and arising from the actual situations and problems of people living in particular social locations.

Filipino theologizing is also ‘mula sa bayan’, from the people. Communities, and not just individuals, are theologizing. We used to think of theologizing as done solely by ‘experts’, professional theologians. In the above examples of local church theologies, we see faith

communities exercising their charisms and bringing out their insights, putting their heads and hearts together discussing, praying, sensing. And after that, deciding collectively and proposing actions to transform their situation according to how they think God wants them to act. Communal theologizing is very Filipino as relationality is a fundamental part of its cultural ethos.³³ *Teolohiyang bayan* is a *bayan* (people/community from a particular place) actively engaging their faith with the specific and difficult challenges they are facing.

The word 'bayan' also has very strong political and nationalist overtones. 'Bayan' (*Inang Bayan, Puring Haring Bayan, Anak ng Bayan*) populate the language used by the revolutionary forces during the Philippine Revolution of 1898 (against Spain). 'Bayan' is the sum-total of a community's lives, struggles, aspirations, energies to collectively work for their wellbeing (*kaginhawahan at kasaganaan ng bayan*)³⁴. 'Bayan' is also the rootword for 'bayanihan' – a popular cultural practice which means cooperation or collective effort of neighbors/community to help each other achieve a common goal, for example, helping each other during harvest time, during times of celebration (wedding, etc.) or during natural calamities.

The examples shown earlier manifest that Filipino theologizing is not merely for speculative or intellectual purposes but 'para sa bayan' – for the good of the country/the place, for the good of the people. Reading through the pastoral statements, programs and stories in full, one can see that the local churches' transformative engagement and action proceeds from their collective faith reflection. The section on 'Theologizing in the Academe and in the Associations' also showed an increasing trend towards praxis (60% of theses and dissertations) as well as theologizing on different Philippine contexts (40% of theological journal articles).

Filipino theologizing is historical and communal; it is a *bayanihan*, a collective effort that binds common goals towards a local faith community's wellbeing. It is the witness of the whole church. *In Teolohiyang Bayan*, we see God and people acting together in real historical moments transforming peoples' histories closer to God's dream for the world.

b. 'talastasang tumatalab sa buhay' – practical and missional

To define theology as 'faith seeking understanding' is to acknowledge the contextual and the cultural in theologizing because 'understanding' is culturally- and contextually-influenced.

For the Filipino, to 'understand' could mean 'talastasang tumatalab'. The Filipino word 'talastas' means 'to know' or 'to understand'. 'Talastasan' therefore means an 'understanding'. But this Filipino understanding is not a product; to add the suffix '*an*' at the end of a verb shows

³³ Virgilio Enriquez, "Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology", *Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review* 42 (1978), pp.1-4; see also V. Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1994).

³⁴ MaryJane Rodriguez-Tatel, *Ang Dalumat ng Bayan sa Kamalayan at Kasaysayang Pilipino*, Bagong Kasaysayan: Mga Pag-aaral sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas Lathalain Bilang 15 (Lungsod Quezon:Palimbagan ng Lahi, 2005).

a 'space' or a 'process'. 'Talastasan' therefore means a process or a space for understanding. This is an interesting word to use for theologizing. Theology is not a finished product but a process, in *via*; theologizing is experiential and a continuing experience³⁵.

'Tumatalab' is the present tense of the verb 'talab' – to have an effect; to affect another. We say 'may talab ang gamot', the medicine 'has an effect' or the medicine is working. We say 'Tinalaban (tinablan) ako!' which means 'That got into me' or 'That caught me' or 'That affected me strongly'. 'Tumatalab' therefore is to feel something in the gut to the point that one is affected, changed and moved to do something.

'Talab' is related to 'ramdam'/'dama' (to feel/sense). *Ramdama/Dama* is a very important way of understanding for the Filipino. Something is true for the Filipino if s/he can *ramdam/damdam* it. This talks about the primacy of experience in learning/knowing/understanding something. To really know/understand something is to have experienced it (*may talab*).

Experience in Filipino is *karanasan*. The root word of *karanasan* is 'danas'. *Danas*, as experience, is to go through something thoroughly, body-mind-soul event. Another word for experience / *danas* is 'pinagdaanan' or what one has gone through or going through at the moment. The root word 'daan' means 'path', 'way', 'road'. What has been 'pinagdaanan' <experienced; gone through> provides a 'daan' <way, path> to follow. Learning is by doing; understanding is by experiencing. And experience provides wisdom.³⁶ . There is a popular phrase in Filipino that says "*Sana'y kapulutan ninyo ng aral ang aking karanasan*" – 'May you learn <lit., pick wisdom> from my experience'.

Teolohiyang tumatalab affirms the primary role of experience in theologizing. Because it arises from one's experiences (*karanasan, pinagdaanan*), *teolohiyang tumatalab* is theologizing that affects people in way that moves them (*may talab*). *Teolohiyang tumatalab* involves people, engages them in a wholistic way - not just intellectually, but emotionally, socially, spiritually.

This *talab* flows to *buhay*, which means life. *Teolohiyang tumatalab sa buhay* is a theology that makes sense to our lives. As can be seen from the theologizing happening at the local churches, faith communities take as mission their response to the challenges they are facing. Their theologizing / theological statements energize them and make them move and do something about their lives guided by the Spirit of Christ. *Teolohiyang tumatalab sa buhay* is about transforming our lives. It is a theology that is practical and effective; it is not an impotent theology.

³⁵ This is also the reason this report uses 'theologizing' most of the time instead of 'theology'.

³⁶ Jose de Mesa has written comprehensively on the Filipino way of theologizing, see: "Buhay, Karanasan, Aral at Turo: Filipino Hermeneutics of Experience", *East Asian Pastoral Review* Vol. 32: 3-4 (1995), pp. 251-276; see also "Mabathalang Pag-aaral: Filipino Theologizing", *Chakana* 2 (2004), pp. 121-137.

It was also seen how praxis has become the trend in contextual theologizing happening in the academe and in the associations, especially through their theses, dissertations, and journals. *Teolohiyang Tumatalab sa Buhay* is practical and missional, engaging the faith communities to be active agents in God's liberating action.

Teolohiyang Bayan (mula sa bayan / para sa bayan and tumalalab sa buhay) redefines theologizing as a spiritual energy / movement that accompanies a local church in its continuous process of rebirthing and renewing itself for more effective service to God's reign in the world.

2. CHALLENGES for Contextual Theologizing

A. Local Languages

In Filipino theological papers/presentations, the national language is rarely used. English still dominates. And English is still the language of the educated. Using the *bayan's* (local people's) languages (especially of the poor) and theologizing from their own experiences and stories, theologizing becomes, as this report has mentioned, a spiritual energy nourishing church life and mission.

Language as we say is not really just language. Language is culture. However, it is not just the articulation of a 'culture'. Language is also the vehicle for daily living. To use John Paul II's words, faith that does not become culture is a faith "not really received", "not thoroughly thought through", "not fully lived out". Maybe this is one of the reasons why the young are slowly disappearing from church life and mission: they do not speak the language of the Church or more truthfully, the Church cannot communicate in the language of the youth. This is a very important aspect to look into because the youth comprise 65% of the population of the country. They are not the church of the future. They are the church of the present. And if they are not active in church life and mission, one can hardly talk about a living church.

B. Local Theological Images

Even with increasing literature on contextual theologies, Filipinos lack popular theological images in the local languages. If theologizing is not done in local languages, then there will also be a derth of local theological images. There is a Filipino translation of theological terms (c.f. *Tagalog Theological Dictionary* from MST) but more than translations are needed. Local theological images that speak to the heart of people, that moves people, that are affective as well as effective, are very much needed. A simple example - 'church': the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) talked of church as 'Simbahan ng Maralita' (Church of the Poor). But it is very doubtful if the poor would like to use this term to describe themselves as 'church'. In a survey done in the poorest regions in the country, the respondents expressed that they do not like to be called 'poor'.

C. Theological Methods and Approaches

It would be good to further review and assess the different theological methods and approaches used for theologizing / contextual theologizing. It is interesting to note that other countries in Asia, although having only 1-3% of their population Christian, have managed to come up with theological methods / approaches / perspectives arising from the way they do theology in their own contexts / cultures – for example, the *Minjung* Theology of Korea or the *Dalit* Theology of India, not to mention those outside Asia: the more popular ‘Liberation Theology’ of Latin America or the *Mujerista* and other local feminist theologies existing in other parts of the world. In the Philippines, the ‘Theology of Struggle’ (still in English) made some ripples during the height of the Martial Law years (‘70s) but have not really caught fire even among the poor or those who are struggling themselves. The past few years saw ‘Mabathalang Pag-aaral’ used by SAMAPA and ICTC but it is too early to see its impact.

D. Theological Schools and Associations

There is a need to meet as seminary theological formation teams to review and renew theological formation at the national level. Although this is done on an individual or even small group level (sub/regional), there is a need to meet nationally for critique, renewal and direction-setting so that theologizing could better serve the Filipino church and nation as a whole. National meetings/ gatherings of seminaries have been held but they talk about seminary formation as a whole which would include spiritual, pastoral, human, and theological formation. There is a need to focus on theological formation or even to integrate it more fully with the human, pastoral, and spiritual areas so that formation does not become compartmentalized.

For theological associations: how could their work be more useful for local churches? Possibilities for networking can be explored.

E. Local Churches

It would be interesting to study systematically local churches’ pastoral statements and pastoral programs (as well as pastoral centers) to also see for themselves their theological development through the years as a local church/local faith community and what theologizing movement would facilitate their further growth as communities faithful to Jesus and responsive to the world.

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