



Editorial Introduction

In this new issue of *Budyong*, St. Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute (SATMI) presents various optics in the field of doing theology. At the heart of this craft of theologizing is the attempt of the authors to ground the faith that seeks an understanding of human experience where tensions, challenges, joys, hopes, and even dailiness form the basis for thoughtful and discursive reflection.

While there may not be a common theme that can pull together all the eight articles presented in this issue, this does not mean that authors have renegaded or deserted their seriousness, to be honest with what is real. Honesty with what is real is what Jon Sobrino always insists on doing theology. It is the clamor of reality for exploration of meaning and proposition of paths for pastoral, ethical, and missionary response. A theologian ought to have the awareness to probe into reality to understand the workings of faith in real-life experience.

In light of this, a genuine theological endeavor must presume two moments in its actualization: the moment of insertion into the human experience and the moment of articulating the action of God, either expressed blatantly or still hidden waiting to be discovered. The eight articles in this issue have faithfully pursued the movement from experience to faith seeking understanding.

In “Being Enriched by our Indigenous Wellspring,” Karl Gaspar, C.Ss.R., proposes the non-negotiable path of dialogue with the indigenous peoples and inculturation of the Christian faith within their tradition. Gaspar’s insistence on drinking from the rich wellsprings of the indigenous peoples’ tradition and culture consciously or unconsciously alludes to the insights of Gustavo Guitierrez’ famous work, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*. He boldly states that the colonization era and the ecclesiastical pastoral and missionary praxes that followed it overlooked or still frowned upon, if not supplanted, the rich wellsprings of indigenous belief systems because of their “inferiority” and their tendency toward “false religiosity.” Indeed, after five hundred years of Christianity in the country, the task of making this legacy good news to the indigenous peoples still stands today.

Mark Anthony Zarate, O.F.M., courageously and reflexively ventures into the less-traveled terrain of the spirituality of everyday life. His missionary experience during the period of his immersion provides him with blessed opportunities to see in the ordinariness of the lives of people not only a summon for the holy but also the very expression of it. The article “Quotidian Spirituality in the Dailiness of Valencia: A Tool for Missiological Re-Imagination,” engages the reader to transcend the manifestation of being in touch with the “holy” using traditional categories. Appropriating Karl Rahner’s insights on daily spirituality, Zarate draws out from the narratives of the people he encountered a practical holiness that can suffuse the typically embraced privatized spiritual means or psychological exercise of touching the presence of God in one’s life. This spirituality hinges on the foundational belief on the divine’s infusion of presence in the ordinary. In this light, Zarate calls for the increase in one’s sensibilities and awareness of the manifestations of these divine dynamism in the course of everyday narratives.

Harnessing the methods and insights of giant theologians, Edward Schillebeeckx and Raimon Pannikar, and the famous Filipino theologian, Dr. Jose de Mesa, Miguel Gaspe, C.Ss.R.,

creatively ventures into the theological exercise of inculturating the Jesus phenomenon within the particular worldview and religious tradition of the people of Sumba (Orang Sumba). In “Marapu as Christophany for Orang Sumba: An Experiment in Christological Inculturation,” Gaspe carefully navigates the maze that distances Christianity’s Jesus story from Sumba’s ancestral belief system centrally expressed in Marapu worship. He does this by weaving the Sumbanese perception of the Elderly Marapu mediating between the Divine and the humanity and *Yesus Marapu Ratu* (Jesus the Elder Marapu) interceding between God and the humankind. Gaspe’s experimental exploration proposes a further step to move forward. He does this by insisting on the need to develop a catechesis on the proposed indigenous Christological title.

The short article of Fr. Jonecito R. Saguban, T.O.R., “Grace in the Higaunon Traditonal Religion,” presents the anthropological wealth in the creation myth and ritual, *Pasabay*, to discourse on the theology of grace. Analyzing the proximity of the Higaunons’ creation story with the Genesis’, Saguban deduces two integral elements constitutive of God’s nature: a gracious Creator and the Other who imprints humanity with his blessing. The *Pasabay* ritual immortalizes the memory of the creative actions of the Divine. These flow unceasingly to the life of the Higaunons, providing them a warning and an impulse to continuously overcome flaws in the moral fiber of their existence or the human condition.

Froilem Bonn S. Barretto, C.Ss.R., shares the wealth of his reflections during his missionary immersion with the youth of Sri Lanka after taking a leave from academic life in SATMI. In spite of being a neophyte in confronting the challenges of a foreign culture and language, Barretto affirms his discovery of the joys of the dialectic of missionary engagement. This means that in proclaiming the Good News, two things happen: the missionary evangelizes the people, and the former is evangelized by the latter in return. This is particularly true in a situation of a vast chasm between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Barreto’s “Journeying with the Youth: Stories as Mission Frontiers,” shows how the journaled

stories of students of the Integral Educational Academy of Sri Lanka become a viable vehicle for a missionary's immersion into their living reality. Through those stories of joys and struggles of the young students, God manifests his active presence, breaking the walls that divide them and inspiring them in their commitment to quality education and training provided to them. Faithful to the dictum, "One cannot give what he or she does not have," Barretto stresses that for a missionary to be a genuine witness in the Church today, his or her very life ought to testify the message of love, mercy, and compassion among the people, particularly the youth.

Fr. Colm Meaney's article, "Adventures in Mission: Celebrating the Gift of Caring Presence," unfolds the broad and complex platform of missionary engagements and various manifestations of the wealth of God's ongoing actions in the lives of the people. With a very keen perception of seeing what lies under the ordinariness of life, Meaney's missionary insights do not follow the trail of systematic articulation of pastoral engagements; instead, he opts for the unconventional caring presence amidst the dailiness of life's joys, pains, victories, and downfalls. Armed with a special gift of extensive familiarity with literary, historical, and scriptural resources, he charts his fundamental belief in the primary task of missionaries to build community among the least and the last in society through caring and living simply with them.

Joseph Climaco, a lay professor from the Ateneo de Zamboanga University, pursues a unique approach in doing moral theology. In his article, "Towards a Holistic Morality of the Christian Home," Climaco attempts to contextualize moral theology by using the optic of the home as the central organizing principle in the moral discourse. He pursues his objective by understanding the meaning of home from various perspectives, i.e., biblical, philosophical, ecclesial, sociological, cultural, etc. His deductions of the meanings of the home lead him to seek a personalist morality, which Vatican II strives to bring into the heart of renewal in moral theology. Following the footsteps of Charles

Curran and his unmentioned mentor, Bernard Haring, Climaco sees in the home the centrality of relationality–responsibility dynamism as constituting the personalist approach to morality. The concepts of relationality and responsibility show not only the freedom of the moral subject in self-determination and charting the direction of one’s life but also in commitment to the normative of co-existence expressed in multiple relationships with self, others, and the Other. The home viewed from the Filipino experience is the dynamizing seat of relationality and responsibility.

Sr. Miriam Alejandrino, O.S.B., demonstrates how the biblical story and poetry in the Book of Judges 4 and 5 can be harnessed to provide paths in discerning a missionary posture vis-à-vis the current dispensation of suffering, injustice, and oppression in the land. In “Mercy in Violence,” Alejandrino, like a puppet player with skillful hands, uses the depth of her familiarity with biblical meanings and nuances to blend the drama of God’s merciful intervention in history, Church’s attempt to continue *missio Dei*, and the missionaries assumption of responsibility for the destiny of the humankind. Conscious of the complexity of the social issues and their calls for change, she issues a caveat that direct answers to the problems that will never be a good option to take. Instead, in the light of God’s merciful concern for humanity, the safest path for a missionary is raising questions that serve as frameworks for decision making.

All the eight articles presented in this issue genuinely mirror the serious commitment of professors, students, and supporters of SATMI to the craft of theologizing that is both contextual and practical. May this modest contribution of SATMI to the local Church continuously find more men and women who not only seek the new face of God in concrete life realities but also articulate it in theological discourses.

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