



## Editorial Introduction

2020: What a year for St. Alphonsus Theological Mission Institute (SATMI)! Just like the entire Philippine Church, we, at SATMI, were excited to celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> centenary of the coming of Christianity in our country. We then thought of coming up with an edition dedicated for this very important occasion. But then, Covid-19 came. Everything changed, including our initial plan.

*BUDYONG*, being the “apostolate of the pen” of the institute, strives to bear witness to the theological mandate of *fides quaerens intellectum*, with the firm thrust of doing contextual theology—a task that involves discerning the signs of the times and confronting the pressing realities of the church community today. This academic year’s issue is a tapestry of theological perspectives that touch on difficult but opportune issues that permeate the Church in global, national and local levels. How do we make sense of our faith in a world at crossroads? Drinking from the Church’s wells of rich heritage and living tradition, scriptural understanding and Christian missionary praxis, what theological questions and insights emerge as we grapple with realities such as the Covid-19 pandemic, displacement of Indigenous peoples, cultural asymmetry and multi-culturality, and the challenge of inclusively celebrating the faith in the midst of historical injustices and persecution?

In **From Triage to Treatment: Shifting Principle-Based Bioethics at a Time of Pandemic**, the medical doctor and moral theologian Fr. Alfonso Suico, CSsR assesses the bioethical issues underlying the clinical responses of medical front liners as manifest during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Guided by the Virtue Ethics framework of Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, Suico discusses both the general sufficiency and the corollary problems and challenges of a Principle-Based Bioethical approach to the pandemic. Suico advances his discourse by emphasizing how the principles of solidarity and justice, and preferential option for the poor as enshrined in the Catholic Social Teachings (CST) enriches the bioethical principles approach by way of safeguarding respect for human dignity and rights, and the pursuit of the common good.

In **Communitas in Liminal Spaces: Exploring Christian Spirituality from the Experience of the Displaced**, SATMI alumnus Fr. Elton Viagedor, OFM takes on the perennial issues of displacement and homelessness as experienced by the *lumads* of Mindanao who are constantly threatened by insurgency, militarization and natural and man-made calamities. Utilizing the socio-cultural insights of Victor Turner and Homi Bhaba on Liminality and Communitas, Viagedor describes the spaces of encounter and cultural solidarity unfolding out of the Lumads' shared experience of displacement. He reinterprets the sojourn narratives of the displaced Bakwits into a faith lived experience that radically challenges a Church of established structures with provisions of security. In contrast, Viagedor imagines a humble Church giving witness to a Christian spirituality that is animated by liminality and communitas, always in solidarity with the marginalized and the displaced.

The theological lecture **Listening Appreciatively to the Voice of Culture: Transcending Linguistic Domination in Theology** delivered by the renowned Filipino Theologian José M. de Mesa, Ph.D. during the 2020 Abdon Josol Lecture Series impresses a theological awakening on the power of language as a sphere of contestation: either as an instrument of subjugation and

suppression or a threshold towards rediscovery and appreciation of one's cultural identity. Yet beyond being revelatory of one's cultural characterization, de Mesa portrays language as a *locus theologicus* where God's unfathomable and unconditional love is concretely revealed and experienced. He illustrates that by articulating and internalizing God as purely *kagandahang-loób*, we not only enter into an inner sanctum of our Filipino culture and identity but are led to a sublime and heartfelt experience of the Holy whose perfect will and spotless character are intimately united.

Given the reality of multiculturalism in our world, Fr. Antonio M. Pernia, SVD, in **Encountering the Stranger: Multiculturalism and Spirituality at a Crossroad**, proposes that the Church is confronted with both a task and an opportunity. On the one hand, multiculturalism challenges the Church's missionary thrust to be relevant and credible in its task of evangelization. On the other hand, it ushers its members to recognize the "other face of God" in the "culturally other" with new eyes grounded on the spirituality of encounter. Framing the discourse using the threefold structure of See-Judge-Act and re-affirming biblical and pastoral underpinnings on encountering the "culturally other", Pernia concludes that God – who is greater than our thoughts and imaginations and who through the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, is "totally Other" – is best revealed and discovered in the face and reality of the "culturally other" in our midst.

In the article **Persecuted yet vibrant with Life: Some Insights from the Book of Revelation**, Sr. Miriam R. Alejandrino, OSB, endeavors to decode the symbolic language, images, numbers, and colors in the Book of Revelation to unearth its message of hope and the role of prayers in the life of the early Christians. The author of Revelation exhorts the early Christians to persevere in their faith despite the tribulations and persecution through prayers and constant praise to God. Quoting some important passages of the book, Alejandrino shows that it is through the prayers of the early Christians that their hope in the living God was concretely expressed, a hope that sustained them

through their sufferings. She believes that the early Christians' example can serve as a model and an inspiration for us who are facing the present Covid-19 pandemic in addition to the natural calamities that hit our country in the past months.

Lastly, Fr. Antonio Maria Rosales, OFM gives us his personal reflections and hopes as we celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the coming of Christianity in the country in his article **The inclusive celebration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Centenary in 2022: Its Meaning and Implications**. Rosales brings in the fact that when we speak of the Spanish colonial period, we usually emphasize and readily criticize the negative effects of the Spanish colonization passing over the good things that it has brought into our country and our people. He stresses that colonization was not unique to us as it has happened in world history from the start of civilization: with the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the countries of Europe, and the rest of the world. He emphasizes that the 5<sup>th</sup> centenary celebrates not only the birth of Christianity in our shores but also of the nation. As such, it has to be seen from a broader perspective including the influences and elements that have come before 1521 and also the developments, both good and bad, that subsequently happened making up the salient factors that contributed to the creation of who we are now as a people. Rosales, thus, hopes that the incoming celebration may become inclusive and holistic with the different sectors of Philippine society joining together to present a message of dialogue, mutual acceptance, and unity as one Filipino family.

The foregoing theological reflections of the members of the SATMI family – professors, students, and friends – reveal our dedicated effort to grapple with the meaning of human experiences and the message of God for us in and through those moments. They are part of our modest attempt to continue the legacy of our founder and patron, St. Alphonsus Ma. de Liguori and our humble contribution to the Church's mission to be an instrument of God's light and healing to a darkened and wounded world.

Fr. Edilberto B. Cepe, CSSR