



Quotidian Spirituality in the Dailiness of Valencia: A Tool for Missiological Re-Imagination

ABSTRACT

What can missionaries learn from people in the peripheries? With this question in mind, the writer examines the stories of ordinary people in Valencia, Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur using Karl Rahner's elucidation on spirituality and its relation to everyday life. This optic leads to the realization that at the core of the everyday dynamics of people are values and mindsets borne out of concrete encounters with the Divine. Consequential to this conviction is the call to missiological reimagination. How can practical holiness embedded in their stories direct the course of our sharing in the mission of evangelization?

Keywords: Quotidian, dailiness, spirituality, re-imagination, Mysticism of everyday

INTRODUCTION

Practical holiness – that is, faith translated into practice, especially in the peripheries – is a noteworthy signpost to the reality that the growth of the church is not only centrifugal. The church does not only draw its strength and furtherance from the teachings of theologians, experts, and scholars situated in or coming from



the center. Without prejudice to the significance of the theological and academic elucidations about the faith, we cannot regard these as the singular source of growth for our ecclesial community as it would place the church in an elitist posture, standing on a grand narrative that is not accessible by all. On the other side, we must take into account the centripetal forces that come from the silent narratives of the people in the peripheries. The way they negotiate their lives in relation to their faith, amidst their differing contexts and situations, is truly a rich resource in understanding with more profundity our life and direction as an ecclesial community.

ORDINARY STORIES, PRACTICAL FAITH: MIRRORS OF HOLINESS *Narratives of Everyday: Reflections of the Divine*

I spent my immersion year in Valencia, a mountainous barangay 25 kilometers away from the center of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur. Initially, I aimed at searching for remarkable and unique parts of their cultural landscape that could be a fertile ground for inculturation. However, circumstances did not lead me to find that road. Instead, I was brought face to face with the stories of Anita, Cerila, Irene, CJ, Anggeng, Annette, and all the other persons whose lives are seemingly very ordinary yet substantially impregnated with God's presence.

Nanay Anita's commitment to self-giving in the face of unfulfilling circumstances, centenarian Lola Cerila's faith-life stories which immensely include her perception of the grace of God amidst the many hardships and challenges she went through, single-mother Irene's efforts to love her children and family despite a wounded history, CJ's profound introspection and search for values, *Subanen* Ate Anggeng's trustful surrender notwithstanding very challenging circumstances, and Ate Anette's mindfulness of a grace moment, are signs of God's fecund presence in their community. Their narratives are testaments of their commitment to concretize the values of their faith, even in the face of brokenness and uncertainties. Eventually, their life-commitment becomes the very concrete translations of the faces of the divine

in their community. Their lives, with all its strengths and flaws, are signposts of the presence of God in their midst. Through them, the community experiences a God who relates, loves, saves, and sustains amidst their struggles, pains, brokenness, divisions, and so on.

I strongly believe that their stories presuppose not only catechetical and doctrinal elucidations and convictions but, more importantly, are grounded on concrete experiences of encounters with the gratuitous presence of God. Their narratives are reminders “that the truth of faith is made good in the living of it or not at all.”¹ Amidst the polemics of every day – the invitation to do good and the tendency to do otherwise – their lives are indications of the silent efforts to weave with integrity the creedal and moral fabrics at the grassroots. They are mirrors of the values of charity, piety, compassion, sacrifice, generosity, forgiveness, prudence, benevolence, goodwill, hospitality, and many more. These values are revelatory of what God is actually like because the God whom we believe is a “God who relates, adapts, responds, and loves.”² These expressions are inspirational because they continue to bud despite their daily struggles, apprehensions, limitations, pains, and a constant longing for meaning and purpose. The daily undertakings of these persons are pregnant with modest yet sincere efforts to integrate one’s faith into the dynamics of every day. “Their lives may not always have been perfect, yet even amid their faults and failings they kept on moving forward and proved pleasing to the Lord.”³

These particular religious experiences are signposts to the presence of an existing spirituality among the people in Valencia, a spirituality that is fostered and lived out every day. We may call this as “every day or quotidian spirituality.”

¹Karl Gaspar, *Ordinary Lives Lived Extraordinarily* (Davao City: Aletheia, 2019), 10.

²Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 13.

³Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate, Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today’s World* (March 19, 2018), sec. 3.

FOUNDATIONS OF QUOTIDIAN SPIRITUALITY

The Significance of Quotidian Realities

We organize our perception of realities as profane or sacred, ordinary or extraordinary, banal or uncommon, trivial or relevant, and so on. Because of its frequency and nearness, it is inevitable that we become more familiar with the ordinary. However, what is familiar is not adequately known for the reason that it is familiar. Most of the time, our familiarity of reality so proximate to us curbs our understanding and comprehension of that reality. Thus, to qualify the features of quotidian or every day realities posits a level of difficulty. “Everyday life is the most self-evident, yet the most puzzling of ideas. . . [It] is synonymous with habitual, the ordinary, the mundane, yet it is also strangely elusive, that which resists our understanding and escapes our grasp.... the everyday ceases to be every day when it is subject to critical scrutiny.”⁴ Despite this elusiveness, we still need to ask, “What is the significance of quotidian realities?”

Looking up the word quotidian in a dictionary, one will find a wide range of negative definitions. “Everydayness is more or less exclusively associated with what is boring, habitual, mundane, uneventful, trivial, humdrum, repetitive, inauthentic, and unrewarding.”⁵ This seeming repudiation of everyday life is a remnant both of religious and philosophical ideas advanced many years ago. Thus, “religion cannot be fully absolved from the role it played and continued to play in the widespread repudiation of everyday life.”⁶ Teachings about *Fuga Mundi* (escape from the world), as well as dualism of matter and spirit are among the reasons we can name why this is so. Thus, “where religious observance is part of the fabric of daily life for given groups and individuals, faith is generally held to illuminate and transcend the daily round,

⁴Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 77.

⁵Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23.

⁶Victorino Cueto, CSsR, *Tactics of the Weak: Exploring Everyday Practice with Michel de Certeau* (PhD Diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2010-2011), 6.

rather than to draw inspiration from it.”⁷ Therefore, one has to go beyond the ordinary to find the sacred.

In addition, quotidian reality is a democratic concept. It is democratic because “it recognizes the paramount shared reality of the mundane, material embeddedness in the world.”⁸ Everyone, regardless of social status, cannot move out from the dynamics of the quotidian. “Everyday life, in other words, does not only describe the lives of ordinary people but recognizes that every life contains an element of the ordinary. We are all ultimately anchored in the mundane.”⁹

Moreover, every day has, for many centuries, become the stage of the unfolding of our narratives. It is the locus of encounter. To put it in another way, the mundane is a vast ocean of chronicles and experiences of civilization, reflection and introspection. Thus, aware of the values of the ordinary, we can construe that the mundane is indispensably the only setting for the unfolding of our human narratives. After all, “everyday life is, indisputably: the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor.”¹⁰ And so, an attentive perusal of the dynamics of every day is revelatory of the consciousness, values, and mindsets which guides the course of our human story. Thus, it is not wrong to say that dailiness is also the ground for a person’s transcendence and the particular place of the epiphanies of the divine.

Karl Rahner’s Notion of Spirituality

The Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner exerted efforts to make more evident the links between spirituality and everyday life. These efforts are consequential to his early theological studies

⁷Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, 24.

⁸Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, 79.

⁹Ibid., 79.

¹⁰Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, 77.

which made him discover that the idea and understanding of the “spiritual” is seemingly confined within a superstructure placed over the normal Christian life. “Thus, the ‘spiritual’ people lived in monasteries, convents, or similar institutions, and were considered “professionals” in Christianity.”¹¹ Painting the dynamics of monastic or conventual institutions, we can vividly imagine people praying, doing penance, striving for holiness and perfection, without being “bothered” by every day or worldly concerns. As a result, this confinement creates a boundary of the loci of where to live out one’s spiritual identity. Inevitably, it created an elitist consciousness of favoring the superstructure as infused with opportunities for divine encounters than the ordinary trajectory of every day because of its apparent banality.

Also, this division reflects the traditional divisions and stages of spiritual life which presupposes a stage by stage process of becoming holy and perfect, which connotes a continual increase in sanctifying grace. For Rahner, this approach is artificial and leads to two irreconcilable conclusions. Primarily, this approach “implies that there should be a continual increase of grace in the course of a long Christian life, i.e., the person should have become more ‘perfect’ or ‘holy.’ Experience tells us that this is not the case.”¹² On the contrary, what Rahner strongly implied is that “all personal experiences contain at least an implicit, yet primordial, experience of God.”¹³ This implication is congruent to his conviction that “there was never a time or a place in which God did not offer himself to all persons.”¹⁴ Thus, for Rahner, every human person is a *homo mysticus* or a mystical man.

The experience of God is existential to the human person. There is in every person “an implicit but true knowledge of God –

¹¹Declan Marmion, *A Spirituality of Everyday Faith*, 106.

¹²*Ibid.*, 64.

¹³Harvey D. Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 57.

¹⁴Harvey D. Egan, “Theology and Spirituality” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, eds. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 17.

perhaps not reflected upon and not verbalized; or better expressed, they have a genuine experience of God ultimately rooted in their spiritual existence, in their transcendental, in their personality, or whatever [we] want to call it.”¹⁵ This conviction provides enlightenment to what Rahner meant when he said that the “devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic,’ one who has experienced ‘something,’ or he will cease to be anything at all.”¹⁶ In other words, “all human experiences contain at least an implicit, yet primordial, experience of God which tend towards an amplification directed toward something which one can call mystical... To deny this experience with one’s entire being – not simply with words – is to deny one’s deepest self. It is damnation.”¹⁷

Secondarily, there is a “caution” on how to understand mysticism in the language of Rahner’s theological articulation. Usually, mysticism is often associated with “extraordinary phenomena” such as visions, raptures, and ecstasies. These are extraordinary experiences of Christian mystics as understood by the tradition of the Church. However, for Rahner, mysticism is “not a singular parapsychological phenomenon, but a genuine experience of God emerging from the heart of our human existence.”¹⁸ Rahner’s primary contention is that mystical experiences (in the sense of mystical illumination and unification) are simply a variation of that experience of the Spirit which is radically offered to every person and every Christian.

Moreover, he believes that spirituality is “not a private mysticism nor a psychological exercise but an existential and transcendental praxis discerning the triune God in daily life.”¹⁹ In other words, the course of everyday with all its ebb and flow is vitalized by a deeper consciousness of God not as an object but as a

¹⁵Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life*, 56.

¹⁶Karl Rahner, et.al., *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1986), 176.

¹⁷Egan, *Theology and Spirituality*, 19.

¹⁸Marmion, *A Spirituality of Everyday Faith*, 63.

¹⁹Thomas F. O’Meara, *God in the World: A Guide to Karl Rahner’s Theology* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 61.

person. However, Rahner's spirituality is not to be understood and demarcated within the levels of emotion. His spirituality and his theology "look at every aspect of the human personality and end not in emotion and introspection but in thinking and acting."²⁰ The acting person, therefore, is the place of the personal presence of God. What then are the manifestations of this mysticism in the dynamics of the human person? Before proceeding, we are reminded that Rahner intends to show that the experience of God is not so much given to us in addition to other experiences, but rather lies hidden within every human experience.

According to Rahner, one of its most recognizable forms is the immense longing of the human person or the insufficiency of all things attainable. This longing underscores the truth that nothing finite ultimately satisfies us, that we will not settle for anything less than the perfect life or what gives total fulfilment. Furthermore, this mysticism is manifested in man's experience of joy, in the many goods and lovely experiences that punctuate even the most banal of lives. These episodes are "foretaste and signposts to the promise of eternal light and everlasting life."²¹ Besides, this mysticism also grows out of dissatisfaction in one's life, in errors, guilt, in brokenness, and pain. These experiences open widely in a person his capacity for proper transcendence. These indicators of our finiteness teach us that "we must always proceed beyond these partial experiences, in the hope of an infinite fulfilment."²² This infinite fulfilment is further sought in a person's contrasting experiences of things that are not "ought to be." The real qualification of what "ought to be" presupposes an *a priori* comprehension of what "ought to be." In other words, these experiences are sharply in contrast with the horizon of God's presence. "Only against the ever-present, deeper, often overlooked experience of true life, eternal life, absolute truth, goodness, meaning, and love do most

²⁰O'Meara, *God in the World*, 63.

²¹Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life*, 61.

²²*Ibid.*, 62.

people poignantly experience suffering, evil, injustice, brutality, misery, and death as something that ought not to be.”²³

Furthermore, service to others is an indispensable character of this mysticism of everyday life because this mysticism engenders a communion of brothers and sisters. These services actualized in the banality of every day may be flimsy or narrow and could be hardly noticed at all. “But these trivialities – the biblical glass of water to someone thirsty, a kind word at someone’s sickbed, the refusal to take some small, mean advantage even of someone whose selfishness infuriated us, or a thousand other every day trifles – can be the unassuming accomplishment by which the actual attitude of unselfish brotherly and sisterly communion is consummated. And this communion is life’s proper deed.”²⁴

From these aforementioned elucidations, we have a fecund ground to define what quotidian spirituality is.

Christian Quotidian Spirituality: Mysticism of Everyday

Quotidian spirituality is the mysticism of every day. It is the confidence that “ordinary daily life is the stuff of authentic life and real Christianity.”²⁵ This spirituality believes that grace is experience and has its history in the person’s everyday existence. Thus, this spirituality hinges on its primary belief that the ordinary is infused with the presence of the divine. Therefore, this spirituality challenges the person to increase one’s sensibilities and awareness of the manifestations of these divine dynamics in the course of the everyday narratives. Consequently, this spirituality is nurtured and grown in the ordinariness of one’s context i.e., in one’s relationship with the other members of the family and society, in the service to one’s neighbors, in one’s search for meaning and purpose, and so on.

²³Rahner, *Mystic of Everyday Life*, 62.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 69.

²⁵Egan, *Theology and Spirituality*, 20.

Moreover, the whole discourse on this spirituality resonates with the Church's teaching on *sensus fidei* or the capacity of every person to know the truths of faith and morals. *Sensus fidei* affirms the human person as a religious being, that is, charismatically enabled to orient oneself towards a transcendent dimension or entity. Pope Paul VI believes that

*“from ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.”*²⁶

From this, we believe that religious praxis is a consequential direction of such perception. It is translated and embodied in the way one lives life. Moreover, it does not stop at the limits of oneself but is rather placed at the service of the community who will further enrich the gift of that sense of faith.

Therefore, quotidian spirituality is not isolated, elitist, and esoteric. It is communal, localized and domesticated. It is within the reach of the mothers, fathers, farmers, trade-persons, teachers, catechists, brothers and sisters in the peripheries. It is about the things that we do every day with all its pains, joys, and sorrows. It is a spirituality that transforms our everyday undertakings into opportunities of comprehending divine encounters.

Mystics of Every Day: Pope Francis' Saints-Next-Door

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, affirmed the mystics of every day in the silent, often unrecognized, presence of the saints-next-door: “in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard in order to support their families, in

²⁶Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate, Declaration of the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*, sec. 2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed July 14, 2019).

the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile.”²⁷ These humble witnesses should teach us how to nurture our own journey of holiness, our own quotidian spirituality. He reminds us that no matter who we are and what our state of life is, we are all called to holiness, to a loving relationship with the gratuitous presence of God in the dailiness of everyday. The pope then reminds us to grow beyond our tendency to think that holiness is “only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer.”²⁸ He re-affirms our identity and capacity as daily mystics and encourage us to manifest this mysticism “by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.”²⁹ This is affirmative of our daily dynamics’ capacity to nurture our *potentia oboedientialis*, our capacity to open ourselves to the presence of God embedded in our particularity.

In addition, the pope also recognizes the finitude of our response in the nurturance of this daily mysticism. There are times that we feel weak, unenthusiastic, paining, and so on. Yet, he encourages us to transcend beyond these limitations and “to raise our eyes on Christ and his Church, who is endowed with the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God’s love – gifts that are facilitative of our journey of holiness.”³⁰

QUOTIDIAN SPIRITUALITY AND ITS CHALLENGES TO MISSIOLOGICAL RE-IMAGINATION

The pervading challenge for us is to allow this conviction to guide the path of our missiological orientation and thus, enter into a missionary re-imagination. How can we concretely translate into missiological consciousness the fruits of our reflections? How can practical holiness embedded in their stories direct the course of our

²⁷Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate, Apostolic Exhortation on Holiness in Today’s World*, sec. 7 (Philippines: Paulines, 2018), 4.

²⁸Ibid., sec. 14.

²⁹Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, sec. 14.

³⁰Ibid., sec. 15.

sharing in the mission of evangelization? For me, this conviction creates five possibilities and contributions to mission, namely: its impact to our theology of mission; its capacity to influence our missiological posture; its potential to be an instrument of evangelization or in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God; its challenge to re-articulate that the peripheries are our teachers in mission; and lastly, its challenge to missionaries to become witnesses themselves.

Incorporating Quotidian Spirituality into our Theology of Mission

The way we participate in God's mission is shaped and influenced by our mission theology. By mission theology, I mean the theological orientation we carry with us in a community where we have immersed ourselves. Our theology or our vision of and about God significantly conditions the way we assess our role and carry ourselves in the faith-life dynamics of a community. For example, a conviction that God is a merciful God encourages us to relate with the people in the community with much mercy, understanding, and so on. Another case, a theological framework of mission as inculturation structures our missiological dynamics into searching for elements of a culture that is open for Christian appropriation. And so, how can quotidian spirituality shape our mission theology?

There are theological concepts that are indispensable in doing mission. A missionary would always carry an "idea" of eschatology, i.e., salvation and the idea of heaven to name a few. Concerning this particular area, the actualization of the good inherent to quotidian spirituality is the very ground of an eschatological reward. This is another facet to the prevailing contention that the reward of an ethically lived life is a reality out there, i.e., heaven or beatific vision, waiting for each one at the end of one's journey. It connotes that the whole of life will be accounted for and gauged if appropriate to relish the rewards of heaven. If otherwise, one will experience damnation.

In contrast, this spirituality teaches that whenever a person actualizes his/her life commitment/s in his/her undertakings, God is at the core and horizon of that decision. Karl Rahner himself suggests that a person who “responds morally to various situations in life is in truth responding to God although he/she may not actually think of or refer his/her life to God.”³¹ The actualization, therefore, is more than a moral choice. It is a decision of choosing God. Hence, the banality of every day is undoubtedly a locus for a divine encounter, thus, of a beatific vision.

Our acceptance of this consciousness will influence our response to the Great Criterion³² in Matthew 25, a passage descriptive of how life is ought to be lived: “Come, O blessed of my father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Our acts of sharing our food, giving water, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick – among the actualizations of quotidian spirituality – are no longer seen as deposits for a reward but expressions of our finding of God. Doing these acts is in itself a reward because it allows us to respond to the relationship offered perennially by God. Thus, heaven-which-is-out-there is, but a confirmation of the reward already lived and savored in the dailiness of every day.

Consequently, the missiological consequence of this theological conviction is to understand mission as finding the good in every human person. Whenever one finds that good, one finds the heaven, and then one discovers God. Eventually, we come to know a God who is with us, who accompanies us even in the

³¹Vincent MacNamara, *The Truth in Love: Reflections on Christian Morality* (Ireland: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1988), 37.

³²For Vincent MacNamara, there are two scriptural passages which greatly shaped and influenced Christian’s actions and motivations: (1) the Decalogue, and (2) Matthew 25. However, we choose to elaborate the latter as it is relevant and coherent to our discussion of quotidian spirituality. Cf. Vincent MacNamara, *The Truth in Love: Reflections on Christian Morality*, 36-37.

finitude of our being human. He is a God who is present even in our weakness and brokenness, in our pain and struggles. In other words, he is a God who sojourns with us in the daily grind of everyday.

This further implies that a missionary must carry with him/her a consciousness that a human person is inherently oriented at achieving something good. However, one must also take into consideration that reaching for goodness is always and will always be conditioned by the limits of a person's situation.³³ This is exemplified in people like Irene who feels lowly because her life does not qualify to a particular normative. Yet, a careful look at her life and the lives of the other personalities I encountered in Valencia would lead one to realize that they go beyond the limits of their situations and continue to love in ways they perceive to be an actualization of their response. This means that a response progresses as it also undergoes the process of becoming. Consequently, this further implies that we cannot demand from someone an actualization that is beyond their limits and capacities. Being mindful of this situation makes us view mission not only as an accompaniment but a charitable accompaniment.

This consciousness would lessen the tendencies to demarcate the community into insiders and outsiders, into holy and not, into qualified or otherwise. Furthermore, this creates a more optimistic view of animating the faith-life dynamics of a community.

Translating Quotidian Spirituality into a Missiological Posture

Choosing a positive outlook towards the daily narratives of the people is challenging if we take into account the thickets of brokenness, pains, divisions, uncertainties, and evils in the everyday. Most of the time, these limitations and challenges veil the person's view from seeing the divine presence and meaning in their lives. It is, therefore, a challenge on the part of a missionary to journey

³³Carlos Ronquillo, CSsR, "The Priest as Moral Educator and Moral Guide", in *Budyong*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Davao City: Saint Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute, 2017), 109-112.

with their sufferings and struggles, and to continuously discern with them the presence of the divine. Therefore, this spirituality reiterates a journey that is not solitary but communal, “for it has pleased God to make men and women holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond between them, but rather as a people who might acknowledge him in truth and serve him in holiness.”³⁴

On another level, this spirituality teaches us that the people in the area are also theologians and missionaries by their very identity and dignity. They are capable of comprehending and articulating who God is from the very realm of their daily experience. Moreover, they are also able to translate that understanding into concrete ways, thus, making known the faces of the divine. Therefore, our missiological orientation “must turn to their simple stories and respond to them, instead of advocating a grand narrative that utilizes a language of power and authority in preaching the Gospel.”³⁵

Hence, quotidian spirituality compels a missiological posture of solidarity, openness, humility, and accompaniment. It decentralizes us from our positions of power and authority and immerses us into the situation of the people, including their vulnerabilities. In the process, we become learners, and they are our teachers. This further implies that the starting point in doing mission is not doctrine and catechism, but stories and contexts.

Proclaiming the Kingdom of God through Ordinary Stories

These missiological postures become imperative because they are first embodied by Jesus who is our model and guide. Reading the gospel narratives, we see Jesus in and with the people. More noticeable is how Jesus used the stories of everyday as a literary device in proclaiming the dynamics of the Kingdom of God. He used parables reflective of the daily dynamics of the people i.e.,

³⁴Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, sec. 6.

³⁵Niel John G. Capidos, “Urban Faith Transits: Tactical Spaces in the Everyday Ordinary” in *Budyong*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Davao City: Saint Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute, 2017), 80.

parables of the lost sheep (Mt 18:10-14), the lamp (Mk 4:21-25), the seed and the sower (Lk 8:4-15), the friend at midnight (Lk 11: 5-13), the weeds among the wheat (Mt 13: 24-30), among others.

These are stories which are very proximate to human experiences, interwoven in the dailiness of every day. They are revelatory of the dynamics of the kingdom of God. It is a challenge therefore on the part of missionaries to ground one's mission contextually and use the stories of everyday into devices of sharing in the mission of evangelization. The activities and narratives of everyday including "the questions of [the] people, their sufferings, their struggles, their dreams, their trials, and their worries, all possess an interpretational value that we cannot ignore if we want to take the principle of the incarnation seriously. Their wondering helps us to wonder, their question, questions us."³⁶ Therefore, it is the task for missionaries to translate one's theological language into a language that is accessible, contextually-appropriate, and comprehensible by the people. In other words, the missionaries' message must have the capacity to touch and reflect the existential concerns and conditions of the people.

Learning from the Peripheries

Perusing all of these articulations from a distance, we realize the power of the peripheries in making our understanding of who we are and our sharing in the mission of evangelization more profound. Our articulations affirm the fact that indeed the periphery is a privileged hermeneutical place for us to understand our identity and vocation as missionaries. However, there remains a compelling question that needs to be answered to clarify our understanding of periphery. Where is the periphery? Reflections and studies teach us that the periphery is not only geographical. It is also existential. It is not only there, kilometers away from where we stand. It is also proximate to the very place where we can gaze our feet.

³⁶Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, sec. 44.

Nevertheless, wherever that periphery may be, it is where we ought to be. God “impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond. He takes us to where humanity is most wounded, where men and women, beneath the appearance of a shallow conformity, continue to seek answer to the question of life’s meaning.”³⁷ In this place, God wants to encounter us because he is “in the hearts of our brothers and sisters, in their wounded flesh, in their troubles, and in their profound desolation.”³⁸ God, unafraid of the fringes, himself became a fringe (cf. Phil 2:6–8, Jn 1:14). Therefore, the periphery is not only a place of learning but more importantly, a place of encountering the source and author of our missionary vocation—the Lord. Therefore, who we are as missionaries is deepened not in centers of power and authority, not in grandeur but in the ordinariness of everyday.

Becoming Witnesses Ourselves

Moreover, it is of fundamental significance that we as missionaries must primarily be witnesses and believers of this quotidian spirituality. This conviction presupposes that we, as missionaries have charted our encounters with the gratuitous presence of God in our lives and have exerted efforts to be transformed by these encounters. This is necessary because we cannot undertake a journey of accompaniment and discernment of the elements of this spirituality in the peripheries if these said elements are alien to us in the first place. It is our primary calling to “share also in Christ’s prophetic office, spreading abroad a living witness to him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity.”³⁹

³⁷Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, sec. 135.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., sec. 8.

(NOT A) CONCLUSION

The whole discourse of this missiological reflection reaffirms our role as participants in the *Missio Dei*. Quotidian spirituality reiterates that our human experience and the meanings and values we accord to it are hinged on the constant communication of the gratuitous presence of God in the ordinariness of everyday. Thus, quotidian spirituality is inconceivable apart from God's self-communication. It is, therefore, a challenge on our part to respond to this invitation of establishing a divine relationship. It is an allusion to a biblical image of remaining as branches on the vine.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit because without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5, NAB) This Johannine passage can be re-interpreted to mean that God is the one who organizes all of these experiences and possibilities of quotidian spirituality. He is the one who nurtures us with narratives that are revelatory of his abiding presence. I want to contend that even moving apart from the vine is not detachment from the vine, in the strictest sense. Quotidian spirituality would regard that as the trajectory to discover what ought to be. Consequently, when one realizes what ought to be, one learns what is more valuable, meaningful, and purposeful. Arrival then to points brings that person standing face to face with the Divine, for God is the beyond and the horizon of all of these goods.

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