



Editorial Introduction

SATMI AT 30: THEOLOGICAL TABLE-FEAST

St. Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute (SATMI) is celebrating its 30th year. In gratitude and thanksgiving, the SATMI family offers these varied narratives to the theological table-feast always cognizant of the fact that these are but humble attempts to explore our “ways of believing” as we passionately engage in “missionary dialogue with the world”.

Bro. Amila Pathum, CSsR speaks of the deaf and mute people as the silent gifts for and of the Church in his contribution, **“The Gift of Silence: Towards an Active Participation of the Deaf in Sri Lanka”**. Exploring the pastoral and missiological dimensions of being and working with Persons with Disability (PWD) especially the deaf and mute people, he encounters a God who is neither “omnipotent [and] self-sufficient” nor “a pitiable, suffering servant”. Following Nancy Eiesland in her experiential narration of a *Disabled God*, Pathum brings to the fore the silent and oftentimes, silenced witness of the deaf and mute people to a God who in His/Her disability is a *survivor God*. In this regard, the resurrected but *wounded* Jesus Christ becomes the proto-type for the subsequent re-imagining of Christian faith-witness to and

with the PWDs who are not mere objects of pity and receivers of compassionate generosity but genuine partners in service and mission.

In his mission-immersion as a volunteer in the Sarnelli House, Pattaya, Thailand, Bro. Eric Soliven-Sevencruz, CSsR spends time with orphans and children with HIV/AIDS. This experience becomes the theological backpack for his article, **“Good News from a Volunteer’s Backpack”**. As the world becomes more and more secular, volunteerism can be a space for Christians and non-Christians alike to develop a culture of encounter, solidarity and peace. All people of goodwill imbued with what Charles Taylor calls as “life-orienting moral goods” are then able to make a difference in this troubled and troubling world. Never abandoning the ground where he stands, Soliven-Sevencruz ends with a personal reflection on being a Redemptorist who is also called to be a missionary to and with a wounded world.

Alfonso P. Suico, Jr.’s **“Virtue Ethics in the Age of HIV”** tackles the stigma often associated with HIV/AIDS carriers and the call to re-imagine the Church’s response to the crisis. This is very significant as the number of people living with HIV/AIDS continues to increase dramatically especially in the country. Following the intuitions of Thomas Aquinas, Suico’s proposal involves the recovery of virtue ethics as a way to navigate the present moral landscape. He then advocates for the virtues of compassion, loyalty, justice, and care to be developed in addressing this pressing concern. Virtue ethics then can enrich Church moral praxis in view of human flourishing for the common good.

Fr. Ulysses S. Cabayao, S.J. problematizes the seeming mundane liturgical rubric of receiving communion in **“Ritual Indeterminacy in Receiving Communion”**. Approaching it as a performance with an anthropologist eye, he starts with a thick description of the ritual practice before unveiling his serious and surprising theological intuitions. Here, Cabayao negotiates the insights of Victor Turner and brings them to the doorsteps

of sacramentology. More specifically, the stage of transition the priest and the communicant undergo, i. e., *liminality*, in the indeterminacy of communion reception allows for the profound experience of *communitas*. Hence, a more dynamic and meaningful experience of the Eucharistic celebration ensues.

As a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM) whose charism involves living and serving in situations of cultural diversity, Sr. Michelle M. de Silva, smsm, offers **“Table Fellowship for the Breaking of the Bread: Archetype for Noviate Formation for Intercultural Life and Mission for the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary”**. The article underscores the necessity of evolving a re-newed vision of formation in the present globalized context that factors in interculturality as a radical gift to religious life. Inspired by the Lukan table fellowship, de Silva argues for a different mode of noviate formation that prophetically enacts *communion in diversity* exemplified in the “breaking of the bread” where barriers, cultural and otherwise, are crossed in the reconfiguring of SMSM’s life and mission.

“Considering Mercy in the Human Agency of *Sensus Fidelium*” by Roawie L. Quimba reflects on human agency in the context of *sensus fidelium*, “sense of the faithful” (sf) which both the laity and the hierarchy embody by virtue of baptism. In order to warrant the greater participation of Christians, Quimba warns of possible exclusionary tendencies and designs that might muffle the voices especially of the poor and marginalized. In this regard, he proposes mercy as a principle to broaden and deepen human agency in sf towards its more inclusive understanding and practice. Exploring the various dimensions of mercy – biblical, moral, systematic and pastoral – the paper opens the plausibility of shared authentic witness of sf.

Ronald B. Balase in his article, **“No Man’s Land: A Possible Frontier for Healing Encounters”** discourses on the struggle of South Africa to overcome its colonial and racial past towards becoming a *Rainbow Nation*, a country that respectfully

embraces differences whether in ethnicity, political orientation, culture, gender, religion and economic status. His proposal involves the reconfiguration of “No Man’s Land,” pieces of land situated in-between communities promoting the racial divide during the apartheid regime, into a place of encounter for healing and reconciliation. Put differently, “No Man’s Land” becomes a missionary frontier that nurtures spaces of common identity and shared memories in the spirit of *Ubuntu*, humans are created for togetherness.

Generally considered for its entertainment value, dance is many times regarded as mere addendum in Christian life. It has to move in the periphery of officialdom to find its validation and acceptance. In “*Perichoresis: Dancing with God*”, Allan Edward O. Pandaan explores the kinesthetic beauty of dance. His wager involves its configuration as an essential, not superfluous, dimension of Christian faith-praxis. More so, “God is not just a dancer [but] ... the dance itself” as God is engaged in the Triune divine dance of *perichoretic* relationality which involves mutual-indwelling without sacrificing one’s uniqueness and character. Divine movements are interwoven together not in a pattern of univocal sameness but primarily, in a relation of comm-*union*. Here, dance discovers its integrity and authenticity as a response to God’s call of joining the Trinitarian Great Dance of Life.

The article, “**Mindanao Armed Conflict: Religious or Otherwise?**” by Danilo Agustin Jr. challenges the commonly held narrative that the armed-conflict in Mindanao, Southern Philippines is religiously motivated. This essentializing perspective exposes a reductionist reading of the complex historical realities on the ground concealing in the process the socio-economic, cultural and political factors of the decades-long conflict. While recognizing that history-specific religion can at times be complicit to violence, Agustin destabilizes what seems obvious to absolutist ideologues, i. e., religion equals violence. Utilizing William Cavanaugh’s

constructivist view, he argues for a more nuanced representation of religion which includes a more critical appraisal of a simplistic and ahistorical interpretation of a such complex situation like that of Mindanao.

All these theological reflections are variegated enactments of a restless spirit wrestling with the various contours of SATMI's "ways of being" and "ways of believing" in our missionary embrace of the wounded world. In the process, what is put into words are the narrative performances of "repeating differently" the life and mission of St. Alphonsus Ma. de Ligouri, Doctor of the Church, patron of moral theologians and confessors, and missionary as we all strive to re-discover the on-going story of Jesus Christ in the here and now.

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