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JOURNEYING IN FAITH

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Divine Word Missionaries acknowledge
the Wurundgeri people of the Kulin nation
as the traditional custodians of the land
on which our residence and offices are located,
and where we live, work and pray.

We acknowledge the Australian and
Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.
We pay our respects to Ancestors and Elders,
past, present and emerging.

We commit ourselves to actively work
alongside Indigenous peoples
for reconciliation and justice.

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DORISH MARU COLLEGE COMMUNITY 2023

Linh, Cuong, Luong, Andy, Albano, Jacob, Peter, Elmer, Christopher, Rass
Yon, Mengjie, Gusty, Jakub, Khoa, Krisna



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From the Editorial Team



Welcome to the winter edition of *Journeying in Faith 2024*, our established journal dedicated to the exploration and discourse of theology. In these pages, we aim to create a vibrant and inclusive platform where students can delve into the rich tapestry of religious thought, engage in critical analysis, and share their unique perspectives.

The study of theology is a journey—a quest to understand the divine, the sacred texts, and the profound questions that have intrigued humanity for centuries. This journey is not just an academic pursuit; it is a deeply personal and transformative experience that shapes our worldview, ethics, and sense of purpose.

In this winter edition, we explore a diverse array of topics, each article reflecting the passion and scholarly rigor of our contributors. From the ancient wisdom of the scriptures to contemporary

theological debates, our writers challenge us to think deeply and reflect on the relevance of theology in our modern world.

One of the core missions of the Dorish Maru Community of religious missionary formation of the Divine Word Missionaries is to foster an environment of open dialogue and mutual respect. In a world often divided by differing beliefs and ideologies, we believe that constructive conversation is essential. Through respectful engagement with different perspectives, we can deepen our understanding and build bridges across divides.

One of the reasons why Dorish Maru, as the house of formation of the Divine Word Missionaries, has been successful over the years is its collaborative partnerships and relationships at an international level and beyond.

Let me highlight just three that are particularly relevant at this time:

Dorish Maru as a House of International and Intercultural Missionary Formation

Our community embraces diversity, fostering an environment where students from various backgrounds can learn from one another, enrich their perspectives, and grow in their understanding of the global Church.

Dorish Maru as a Place of Hospitality and Welcome

We pride ourselves on being a welcoming community, extending our hospitality to all who visit us. This openness is a cornerstone of our mission and a testament to our commitment to living out the Gospel values.

Dorish Maru as a House of Formation with Openness and Dialogue

Our formation process emphasises open dialogue, encouraging students to engage with different viewpoints and develop a nuanced understanding of their faith. This approach prepares them to be effective missionaries in a diverse and interconnected world.

These examples illustrate how we strive to reach beyond our traditional boundaries and foster new and sustained missional partnerships for a Synodal Church.

As a Province, we have embarked upon the synodal journey process, which has helped us think through what we do well, what we could do differently, and what we could do better in the months and years to come as a religious missionary order for a mission-centred Church.

On behalf of all the formators at Dorish Maru, we thank you for your continued support and encouragement of the work that we do in preparing future Divine Word Missionaries for world mission. We could not do what we do without you.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers, invite us to visit your parishes, and encourage prospective candidates in your local parishes—especially those considering a religious missionary vocation—to come and see.

As you navigate through the articles, we invite you to ponder the questions raised, engage with the arguments presented, and contribute your own voice to this ongoing conversation. Whether you are a seasoned theologian or a curious novice, there is something here for everyone.

Theological inquiry demands courage—the courage to question, to doubt, and to seek truth even when it challenges our preconceived notions. It requires humility, acknowledging that our understanding is always limited and that there is always more to learn. And it necessitates a commitment to the pursuit of wisdom, recognising that the journey itself is as important as the destination.

We are immensely proud of the work our contributors have done, and we are excited to share their insights with you. We hope that this journal will inspire you to embark on your own theological journey, to ask bold questions, and to seek deeper understanding.

Thank you for joining us on this adventure. Together, let us explore the boundless horizons of theology and discover the profound truths that await.

In the Word, *Albano Da Costa SVD*
Academic Dean, Dorish Maru College

Life is a Journey

Andy Fani SVD



Every human being is destined to be a traveler in life. He or she never stops at one point, but travels through the universe with his steps and imagination to the limit of infinity. However, every journey of thousands of kilometres always starts with a first step, a step to begin a journey. Since life is a journey, my job is to travel and keep going, until I reach my destination.

It is still fresh in my memory that on 16th May 2023, when it was still early in the morning, with raindrops falling, I set my foot for the first time in Australia. The winter wind was blowing hard, scattering water droplets everywhere along the journey from the airport. There was a sense of gratitude and happiness since I was able to arrive in Australia, specifically in the Dorish Maru community. However, that sense of emotion and happiness turned into questions, would I be able to start a new chapter of my life here well?

Would I be able to make a contribution to the atmosphere in the Dorish Maru Community? Those questions have been slowly answering since then, this moment, and into the future.

I tried to view the challenging and happiness of academic life in Melbourne. I enjoy how to walk in a new place, how to taste the fatigue of the journey and how to savour each step so that it does not feel like a burden. Although, I aware that the destination is still far away. All of this kept me going, and going. One of the important philosophical` thinking that I live by is how to savour the downturns, while continuing to look for the wisdom in them so that they don't pass me by.

In the middle of the hectic intellectual endeavours at Monash College, there something was missing which is community life. It is not enough if only the academic` aspect to be priority. The community's` life should also be considerate. The balance between cognitive and motoric elements must be pertained in order to gain a full of life. Therefore, since I arrived at the Dorish Maru community, I made an effort to be involved in community's` program. All the activities that I participated in made a special impression on me. There were many things to enjoy and be grateful for.

First of all that I always remember to thank God since I have been being together with the seminarians and their formators. I

participated in an action and vocation mass in one of the parishes, when I first arrived. At that time, the seminarians were in charge of the choir and I also took part in the choir, while accompanying the choir by playing the piano for one or two songs. This first experience that made me realised that my presence is not only as a student, but also as an SVD missionary, who in certain contexts must proclaim Jesus - the Word to others.

It is true that in the Christian faith, the most original word is Jesus Christ, whom the prologue of John's Gospel calls the Word. Jesus Christ himself is the *Euangelion*, the Good News. Therefore, the Good News must be shared with others so that others can experience their own journey of faith in Jesus.

Mother Teresa once asked a Hindu if he knew and believed in Jesus. The Hindu replied: "I don't know Jesus. But I know Mother Teresa. If Jesus is good like Mother Teresa, then I believe in Him".

Mother Theresa's experience indicated that others will come to know God through the person, through the story and life witness of a missionary and every believer.

The presence of a missionary and all believers are actually the Good News, a living Gospel. Because the living gospel is not written with ink on sheets of paper. It is written by the Spirit in the heart of a missionary and every believer. Each person in a concrete historical context is a word from God, which with others is woven into a discourse, and with Jesus - the Word becomes the actual Good News.

As a final note, I believe that my new adventure in Melbourne and in the Dorish Maru community is a unique journey that I have just begun, which will be full of unforgettable experiences, strengthening challenges, and the search for the true meaning of life, whether in the struggle of the academic life or in life as an SVD member. But I am sure, with Jesus-the Living Word, all the experiences of my life's journey will become a beautiful work of art.

*O Lord, if this path or journey is Your will
Let the light of Your eyes illuminate the alleys of my life.*

The Theology of Eucharist

Agustinus (Gusty) Siga SVD



Introduction

The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. The Eucharist is believed to be the source of Christian life since there is the presence (and sacrifice) of Jesus Christ in the form of his body and blood. Through the Eucharist, one partakes of the body and blood of Jesus Christ and participate in his self-sacrifice. This essay will focus on the historical background of eucharist as sacrament from the early church till Vatican II and also the movement of theological understanding and practice of this sacrament today. I will begin by explaining the history of the eucharist from the early church until the modern

era. I will then explore how the Theology and celebration of this sacrament has been renewed since Vatican II.

History of Sacrament of Eucharist before Vatican II

The words and deeds of Jesus at the Last Supper, which he is supposed to have shared with his disciples the night before he died, have long been considered the historical source of the Christian Eucharist. These accounts are found in various versions in Matthew 26:20–29, Mark 14:17–25, Luke 22:14–20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.¹ The earliest references to the eucharist in the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.² Since the Lord's Supper marked both Jesus' death and his victory over death, it became clear to those who believed in Jesus from an early age that his crucifixion was a sacrificial death, a giving of himself to God. It shows how Jesus received God's grace and then used an act of appreciation to communicate it in both voice and deed. He dedicated himself to allowing his own life and being, as well as his death, to be the place where God's work manifests in the

¹ Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 1.

² Tony Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2001), 17.

world because of the hope and reverence that come from this thanksgiving action.³

The synoptic gospel narratives of Jesus' last supper allude to the blood of Christ being "poured out" for others. The Lord's supper was the Christian continuation of that supper. A reference to a "new covenant" sealed in blood is made in both the gospels and Paul's writings, and Matthew describes its being shed "for the forgiveness of sins" as in a sin offering. The Lord's Supper's shared meal allowed it to be compared to the Jewish communal offering, and the tight link between the feast of Passover and the Last Supper offered parallels between Jesus' crucifixion and the paschal lamb sacrifice.⁴ The conception of this sacramental action as kind of sacrifice continuing or participating in the sacrifice of Christ became predominant in Christian Theology.⁵

The Eucharist, though may involve rituals of blessing and praise, is described in the New Testament as a formal liturgy that is distinct from everyday meals. The gift that is connected to the acts of Jesus during his last meal is what distinguishes the Eucharist from all other liturgies. The Eucharist establishes the community of the faithful, reveals the significance of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, and ensures (sacramental) communion with

him in the interim between his death and our ultimate, complete union.⁶

During the first three centuries, Christian worship changed from being a fellowship meal to a ceremonial meal that included presents of bread and wine, a prayer of appreciation over these gifts, breaking of the bread, and sharing of the bread and wine among all those in attendance.⁷ Eucharistic worship was both an expression and a source of Christian unity in the early fathers' era. Those who prayed together were unified in their worship of God and acceptance of Jesus as their Lord. Their ceremonial activity represented their unity with Christ in his passion and resurrection, and their gathering under the bishop's guidance indicated their solidarity with each other and with the entire church. As Lawler states that the mysteries are called thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), because they keep memory (*anamnesis*) of the blessings, show forth the central actions of divine providence and move us to give thanks in everything.⁸

There was an emergence of particular roles for instance the presbyter was to preside over the eucharistic assembly. Because of the using of particular language, there was no feeling of lay involvement at that time. There was a concern on the concept of symbolism in the early Christian church. A symbol is a

³ David N. Power, "A Prophetic Eucharist in a Prophetic Church" in *Eucharist toward the Third Millennium*, ed. Martin F. Connel (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997), 34. 27-50

⁴ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred. A historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 1981), 217.

⁵ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 217.

⁶ Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Order of St. Benedict, 1992), 144.

⁷ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 219.

⁸ Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 133.

tangible indicator that reveals a larger spiritual reality. For the fathers of the church, the eucharistic liturgy both expressed and made the mysteries of salvation present to those who intentionally engaged into the experience of liturgical worship. The liturgy was rich with sacramental symbols that disclosed the mysteries they represented, allowing people to come into contact with the divine reality of Christ's redeeming death and risen presence in bread and wine.⁹

In the Middle Ages, instead of being a liturgy of communion and thanksgiving, the Eucharistic celebration changed to a liturgy of sacrifice and supplication only. It was performed primarily in silence rather than aloud, said in Latin instead of a living language, and offered by a single priest rather than by a bishop and priest. Laity involvement in the eucharist has only shifted to passive inspiration and devotion.¹⁰ Consecrated bread and wine appear to have a significant and nearly exclusive meaning. Gradually, rather than prayer of thanksgiving and receipt of communion, the consecration and elevation came to be seen as the high points of the liturgy, at least for the laity.¹¹ Most people don't ever receive communion apart from once or twice a year and by the Fourth Lateran council legislate at least the catholic must receive communion once a year.¹²

⁹ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 230.

¹⁰ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 235.

¹¹ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 238.

¹² Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy. The Major Stages* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 130.

One of the church's great theologians, Aquinas, observed that the eucharist was distinct from the other sacraments in that it was a holy object, the consecrated bread and wine, rather than a sacred activity. He believed that although it was appropriate to revere the sacrament, God did not offer the eucharist to the church in order to make bread and wine an object of worship, but rather to provide Christians with a means of spiritual satiety. As a result, the blessing of unity with Christ felt while receiving communion was the actuality of the sacrament. As a result, Aquinas stated that, "The unity of the mystical body is the reality of this sacrament," and in another word, "The activity of love, which is kindled in (the reception of) the sacrament, is the reality of this sacrament, and not just the power to love."¹³

The Reformers engaged in discussions on the eucharist. Perhaps the topic of Christ's presence in the Eucharist most illustrates their theological, spiritual, and liturgical concerns. It also highlights the challenge of presenting this in a way that is understandable when the significance of the response in faith is stressed. Luther and Zwingli engaged in a contentious discussion on the existence of the body and blood, with Luther seeing Zwingli's position as just symbolic. Calvin's attempt to arbitrate between them is implausible, but it is a reality that his presentation of the situation appears to be the most nuanced and well-rounded.¹⁴

¹³ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 242.

¹⁴ David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing

In modern Catholicism, the Eucharist was a sacrament not just in the narrow Catholic sense, but also in a larger religious sense. It was a holy item, rendered holy by the words of consecration, with the capacity to reveal an experientially real presence to anyone who looked at it with faith-filled eyes. However, both of these sacraments, as well as the receipt of communion, which required strong internalisation of the feeling of divine presence, were distinctively contemporary in that they gave birth to individualised rather than communal perceptions of the holy. People may have adored the Blessed Sacrament collectively, but they each felt Christ's presence alone. People may have adored the Blessed Sacrament collectively, but they each felt Christ's presence alone. People may attend mass together, but the spiritual advantage they received was solely dependent on their own personal dispositions.¹⁵

How the Theology and Celebration of the Sacrament has been Renewed since Vatican II

Vatican II represents a significant period of healing for both theology and Eucharistic practice. What some have referred to as a "Copernican Revolution" in theology—a change in sacramental theology as well as ecclesiology—is one of the features that have distinctively shaped

modern Roman Catholicism. This revolution was sparked by and led to the Second Vatican Council. A renewed focus on Christ as the "primordial," or basic and fundamental, "Sacrament" of God and the church as the "sacrament" of Christ has been at the heart of this shift. Amidst the resurgence of the concept that regards Christ as the "primordial Sacrament" of God and the church as the "sacrament of Christ," individuals are compelled to consider the question of how one might become the manifestation of Christ. How can the Christian become the body of Christ?¹⁶ This heightened focus on sacramental theology and ecclesiology within Roman Catholicism resulted in an even greater emphasis on ritual action, gesture, and symbol as liturgical self-expression and self-actualisation of the church's sacramental character and identity.

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the church's eucharistic practice has undergone a number of changes. Initially, the Latin mass was translated into only a few modern languages; later, the entire mass was translated; and lastly, the liturgy was restructured and simplified. Because of this, the Roman mass of today is a more biblical and eucharistic style of worship that places greater emphasis on scripture readings and communion rather than the consecration (because it is still essentially a single rite with permitted variants, all of which have been sanctioned by Rome). It

Company, 1999), 225.

¹⁵ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 257.

¹⁶ Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*, 336-337.

permits the readings and other liturgical acts to be carried out by laypeople as well. It can be celebrated by one priest or concelebrated by two or more priests.¹⁷

The priest's experience and function in the mass have also changed as a result of these recent adjustments. The altar has been relocated away from the back wall so that the priest may now face the crowd and perform public worship. Previously, the priest would offer the mass fairly discreetly, up at the altar with his back to them. Prior until today, the priest's primary responsibility as a minister of the Blessed Sacrament was to serve as a preacher. However, he is now expected to provide frequent homilies that explain the scriptural readings. He used to prepare for mass rather quickly because low masses didn't change much from day to day. Now, however, he has to choose from a range of alternate prayers and readings, and on the weekends, he frequently assists in planning a liturgy that is anticipated to have some ceremonial variation every week.

Laypeople are becoming more frequently participating in the planning and celebration of the weekly eucharist in many parishes. Liturgy teams prepare for the service by deciding on optional prayers and readings, writing prayers that speak to the social consciousness and personal needs of the parishioners, selecting suitable music, creating floral and symbolic arrangements for the interior of the church, and organising the work of a

wide range of people who work both in the background and in plain sight. Richer churches often hire music directors and liturgy directors on a full- or part-time basis to handle all of this organising and arranging. As a result, a large number of people actively participate in the liturgy. Therefore, the eucharistic worship that Catholics experience now differs greatly from what it did prior to the council in many respects, and this is true for both clergy and laypeople.¹⁸

The theology behind the eucharist is also renewed. The eucharist as the sacrament of Christ, always start with Christ; since the death and resurrection of Christ is the basic shape of what that body looks like which is the church. And in so far as the church is a sacrament of Christ it must indeed embrace the cross and the resurrection in its own world. The eucharist makes the church. The eucharist reveals to us what the church like. Church is the body of Christ so what is the church call to be like in so far as it takes its shape from the eucharist. We must consider that the eucharist draws us into the paschal mystery of Christ. That mystery begins on the cross, broken and pour out. The church is eucharistic in its very. Therefore, in eucharist we are broken, like Christ our life is broken and pour out. Through eucharist the church is called to be broken and give its life for the life of the world. We are also called to take part in the Jesus' resurrection since the life of the church is also to be a community of the risen Christ,

¹⁷ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 260.

¹⁸ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 261.

a community that draws us into reality that is breaking into the world, the kingdom reality, the reality that now we are seeing the transformation of this world into divine communion but we are not there yet because this is a pilgrim journey.

Bernier states: "Eucharistic liturgy should be a magnet to draw people out of their private hiding places, to help them break down the barriers of egotism and petty self-interest, to overcome the artificial and often destructive divisions of social and economic class, race, and even of age".¹⁹ This eucharist therefore like Rahner said should scare us because each time we celebrate eucharist, the cross that sense of surrendering the self-ego, agenda, desires, the things that so important, and become part of the body of Christ whose very life is to give himself for the life of the world to nourish the world. This building of community, this creating and celebrating of community by way of the shared eucharist is not meant merely for the local area. It has deep and abiding reference to the world at large, especially those great portions of the world which suffer the basic hungers of food, justice, and truth. The needs of the poor, the starving, the enslaved are the object of every true eucharistic community. As Bausch states: "We can still live and bid others live because we are drawn into a covenant with God and all of humanity in the eucharist, where giving one's life for others ultimately results in saving one's

¹⁹ **Paul Bernier**, *Living the Eucharist: Celebrating its Rhythms in Our Lives* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 2005), 27.

own. This provides us with hope for the future of the world."²⁰

According to Second Vatican Council, our renewed Eucharist was meant to bring about the renewal of Christian life. As the embodiment and summary of the riches of our faith, eucharist has the power to take our everyday lives, transform them, and divinise them by bringing them into contact with the saving action of Christ.²¹ Pedro Arrupe once said: "Eucharist is an unfinished meal". When we leave the eucharist we are nourished as the body of Christ but we must now be the body of Christ for the world and feed and nourish the world through our life of sacrifice and service. When we leave eucharist we are not actually concluding a ritual act, we are invited to live eucharistic life of sacrifice and service to others in continuing Christ's mission.

Conclusion

In summary, the historical background of the sacrament eucharist shows us the development and the dynamic movement of the eucharist from the early church until today. Many concepts from history have been renewed since Vatican II, as the church's view on sacrament become more Christ-centred that the eucharist is the way to live Christ's mission. We, the church, the people are the body of Christ to become witness of Christ's life and blessings to our brothers and sisters.

²⁰ **William J. Bausch**, *A New Look at the Sacraments* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1983), 151-152.

²¹ **Paul Bernier**, *Living the Eucharist*, 27.

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Christ For Us Today

Krisna Papalesa SVD



The teacher is a figure that has been identified to the people who have a desire to save others by teaching and action. In today's world teachers often link to the education field such as a job as a teacher in a school. In this context and regarding the question that is offered by Bonhoeffer which is "Who is Christ for us today?" and considering one of the themes in what students have studied this semester, which is Jesus' ministry in Word and Deed, Jesus is seen as a teacher for the people in today's life. He is the only teacher who can teach the truth of life and at the same time show people how to be better human beings. This reflection will express Jesus is a teacher through his preaching about love and peace.

Jesus is a teacher of love.

Luke 10:25-37 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbour as yourself." The main point of this passage is about giving love to God with all your life, and it is in the same sense as your neighbour. To love God means to live with God in all capacity as a human being. To love God also means that people effort to bring the spirit of love to God in every single thing in their life. Preaching of Jesus about love in this context shows Jesus as a teacher of love. Jesus proclaims the essential of being among people which is to love God and love people around you. loving your neighbour might be defined as an action to accept who your neighbour is. It can be accepting their nationality, their uniqueness, and their physical appearance. Jesus advises the people about love since Jesus realises love is vital in society and He notices without love people cannot welcome the kingdom of God. As a teacher, Jesus has a mission to declare the kingdom of God since declaring the kingdom of God means the proclamation of the forgiveness of sin.¹ Daniel J. Harrington agrees that preaching the kingdom of God is a main theme of Jesus' ministry among the people.²

¹ **Thomas P. Rausch**, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 87.

² **Daniel J. Harrington**, *Jesus A Historical Portrait*

Thomas P. Rausch states that about the mission of Jesus, the declaration of the forgiveness of sins is a sign of salvation that is almost near.³ He adds that forgiveness in this context means realising the debts, freedom from the past life and recovering of relationships. In Jesus's teaching, this means reconciliation with God and the community.⁴ Daniel J. Harrington adds that God's kingdom is a present entity and Jesus is the kingdom itself.⁵ This perspective brings people to the understanding of Jesus as the central figure of his preaching. Frank J. Matera argues that by preaching about the rule of God Jesus shows his messianic identity. Frank J. Matera argues that the Messiah is the Saviour God who transferred the divine dimension in flesh to save people and bring salvation to them.⁶ Jesus through his teaching and his presence among people is seen as a teacher of love who does not only speak about himself but talks for the sake of others which is salvation. Jesus as a teacher of love is essential to be known by people since he not only speaks but also takes action. It can be seen by offering his life on the cross and he comes again from the resurrection that is aimed at saving the life of people and guiding people to be better human beings.

(Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2007), 21.

³ **Thomas P. Rausch**, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 87.

⁴ **Thomas P. Rausch**, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 87.

⁵ **Daniel J. Harrington**, *Jesus A Historical Portrait*, 26.

⁶ **Frank J. Matera**, *New Testament Christology (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999)*, 245.

Jesus is a teacher of peace.

Living in society has been challenging since the fact that people are different. Conflict, misinterpretation of things, and many issues in society make life difficult and full of horror. To prevent those matters, need a common understanding of peace in society. In this context, the idea of peace from the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God will be useful. Jesus's mission in the world as mentioned before is preparing the kingdom of God. In his preaching of the kingdom of God, there are some elements of peace such as respecting people's dignity, freedom from oppression, and service to people.⁷ Albert Nolan argues that the preaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God shows united love and an attitude of serving in the community.⁸ He adds that the preaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God reveals God as a God of compassion, for it is human compassion which "releases God's power in the world, the only power that can bring about the miracle of the kingdom."⁹ It reveals that human beings have the power to have mercy on others as long as people are willing to do it. A human being has the power to create peace since Jesus has given them the authority to do it. It is obvious in the gospel of John 14:27, that Jesus says "Peace I leave with you; the peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be

⁷ **Thomas P. Rausch**, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 91.

⁸ **Thomas P. Rausch**, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 91.

⁹ **Thomas P. Rausch**, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, 91.

troubled, and do not let them be afraid (John 14:27)". Through this passage is clear that Jesus wanted a peace, so he pours a blessing of peace to the people. In addition, Jesus also shows how to get peace through action. In the gospel of Matthew 27: 29 Jesus was insulted by the soldiers. Instead of insulting them or fighting with them, he was calm quiet, and relying on God's will. The way Jesus faces the matter shows people how to get peace in the world. Both the gospels prove that Jesus is the source of peace and that asking

for peace from him is a way to have peace and to create peace.

In conclusion, Jesus is the teacher in the world today since he uniquely teaches love and peace. The teaching of love is shown by understanding of his preaching of the kingdom of God and at the same time it is also a source to obtain a better understanding of peace in the world. The teaching of love can be revealed in the gospel of Luke 10:25-37 and the teaching of peace can be found in the gospel of John 14: 27.

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The Babylonian Exile

Krisna Papalesa SVD



The Babylonian exile has been essential to the faith of people and the development of scripture. The Babylonian exile has been inseparable from the political aspect, formation of the Bible, Psalm 137 and Jeremiah 29:1-14. This essay will be concerned with the meaning of the Babylonian Exile based on a political point of view, continue digging into the contribution of the Babylonian exile to the formation of the Bible, and portray the experience in the Exile through Psalm 137 and Jeremiah 29:1-14.

The Babylonian Exile through a political point of view

The Babylonian Exile started when Babylonians invaded Jerusalem in the sixth

century.¹ In the early sixth century BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II the leader of Babylonians invaded Judah for the first time and laid siege to Jerusalem in 597 BCE.² Lain Provan, V. Philip and Tremper Longman argue that the relinquishment of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 597 BCE and the exile of the kings and their followers including workers, administrations, and some citizens commonly known as “the exile” (586-539 BC).³ The Babylonian Exile also means the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the destruction of much of its infrastructure.⁴ Politically, the main reason for Babylonian Exile happened as Nebuchadnezzar was eager to control Judah.⁵ Judah in pre-587 has a strong foundation as a national theology. The national Theology consists of three important things that are firstly, the Jerusalem temple which is believed as the place for YHWH’s presence and protection. Secondly, accepting the King of Judah is always the descendant of David and thirdly, the land as promised to Abraham.⁶ John Hill argues that the three national theology of Judah is known as

¹ **Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, A Biblical History of Israel (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 381.**

² **John Hill, Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 11.**

³ **Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, A Biblical History of Israel, 379.**

⁴ **John Hill, Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm, 4.**

⁵ **Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, A Biblical History of Israel, 381.**

⁶ **John Hill, Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm, 10.**

divinely ordained.⁷ John Hill adds that the invasion by the Babylonians, the destruction of buildings including the temple and the deportations of some of Judah's inhabitants all need to be understood against the background of the national theology.⁸ In addition, Nebuchadnezzar politically conquered Judah by carrying King Jehoiakim off to Babylon in chains and put a new king which is Jehoiakim's uncle Mattaniah, who was given the new name Zedekiah.⁹ King Jehoiakim surrendered to the Babylonians, together with his family, his servants, court officials, and "the elite of the land". They were deported to Babylon, along with soldiers and skilled workers.¹⁰ In the process of applying his idea, Zedekiah changes his mind. Lain Provan, V. Philip and Tremper Longman state that Zedekiah broke his covenant to Nebuchadnezzar as he knew that Babylonian rule in Hatti land was weak, and he believed that Egypt was strong enough to oppose the Babylonian army and to help the rebellious states.¹¹ Unfortunately, the Egyptian army could not handle the power of the Babylonian siege. The result is Judah fell in 587 or 586 after two years, will all supply of food exhausted.¹² The chaotic events in Judah were not finished because

⁷ John Hill, *Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm*, 10

⁸ John Hill, *Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm*, 10.

⁹ Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 381.

¹⁰ John Hill, *Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm*, 11.

¹¹ Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 382.

¹² Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 382.

Nebuchadnezzar continued to destroy the city, executed and exiled many of Judah's leading citizens to Babylon and demolished prominent buildings such as temples and palaces.¹³ Moreover, the most devastating moment for the people of Judah was when they lost the temple of their God.¹⁴ The destruction of the temple many to be killed and some were deported to Babylonian portrayed the miserable situation of the People of Judah. Babylonian exile seems an image of suffering and the end of life. Ralph Klein defines Babylonian exile as links to death, deportation, destruction, slavery, loss of God's presence and devastation because of political issues.¹⁵

The significance of the Babylonian Exile for the formation of the Biblical text

People from the Babylonian Exile who returned to Jerusalem in 538 BCE made a big contribution to the formation of the Bible text. ¹⁶ Donald Harman states that one of the prominent phenomena is the religious elite have a homogenised perspective on Yahwists, they have a *monotheism* of belief in God and are strong in preserving their religious source and faith.¹⁷ The religious elite brought the

¹³ Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 382.

¹⁴ Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 383.

¹⁵ Lain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 385.

¹⁶ Donald Harman Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 64.

¹⁷ Donald Harman Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 64.

Hebrew religious text that had been collected edited and expanded during the Babylonian exile.¹⁸ Four major books were brought from the Babylonian Exile. First, the Genesis Kings that the great editor-writer had invented. This was the Judaism's Magna Carta, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence and Constitution.¹⁹ Second, the people bring the priestly text that focus on the Babylonian exiles that is known Psalm today.²⁰ In Psalm is quite old, still following the basic pattern of scriptural invention, expressing early ideology and some of words portray recent situation which relate to the experience of the Babylonian Exile.²¹ Third, bringing the Major Prophets who were part of the kitbag of the returning exile such as the first part of Isaiah (chapter 1-39); the book of Jeremiah that has a explanation of the situation in Babylonian exile, the experience Judeans who lived in Egypt and the people who encounter with life crisis such as famine, suffering and pestilence.²² The fourth, the work of minor prophets like Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Joel, Obadiah and Micah.²³ E. Janssen interprets that during the exilic period the religious community took a responsibility to edit some texts and

it was believed including the Deuteronomistic history, the book of lamentation and a variety of prophetic passage.²⁴ In widely expression, Susan Haber comments that the influence of the Babylonian exile at the end contribute to the development of the Hebrew Bible and also on the New Testament's understanding of the mission of Jesus.²⁵

The Babylonian Exile is portrayed in Psalm 137 and Jeremiah 29:1-14.

Psalm 137 includes the genre of communal laments. It portrays the experience of the group of people in exile who are full of misery, suffering, and loss of hope since the destruction of Jerusalem. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and there we wept when we remember Zion. On The willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" (Psalm 137: 1-3)". The pain is bigger because God's presence in the temple was destroyed. "How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy (Psalm 137:4-6)". Sanders

¹⁸ **Donald Harman Akenson**, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 64.

¹⁹ **Donald Harman Akenson**, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 65.

²⁰ **Donald Harman Akenson**, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 65.

²¹ **Donald Harman Akenson**, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 65.

²² **Donald Harman Akenson**, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 65.

²³ **Donald Harman Akenson**, *Surpassing Wonder The Invention of The Bible and The Talmuds*, 65.

²⁴ **Bob Becking**, "Ezra's Re-enactment of the Exile." *In: Leading Captivity Captive: "the Exile" As History and Ideology*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series*, 278, (1998): 46.

²⁵ **Susan Haber**, *Common Judaism, Common Synagogue? Purity, Holiness, and Sacred Space at the Turn of the Common Era*, ed. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 64.

argues that the synagogue was a major locus of Jewish life and worship in the first century. It was the place where Jews assembled on the Sabbath to hear the recitation of Torah and the exposition of its law.²⁶ Whereas in Jeremiah, the people are portrayed as getting a message from God to be saved from the fake prophet and will be returned to their land. “Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream (Jeremiah 29: 8)”. Leslie C. Allen comments that previous passage relates to the condition in deportation that have a lot of falsehood message from the fake prophet.²⁷ “I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile (Jeremiah 29: 14)”. Leslie C. Allen states that Jeremiah sent a letter from Jerusalem to the elders of the community in exile, the priests, and prophets and all the people of Nebuchadnezzar had deported from

Jerusalem to Babylon.²⁸ “These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:1)”. In addition, John Hill interprets that the event of the Babylonian exile is fulfilling a prophecy of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11;29:10) that the subjugation of Judah would last seventy years, during which time the land lies desolate, and keeps sabbath (Jeremiah 29:10).²⁹

In conclusion, understanding the Babylonian exile has been always connected to the political aspect of Babylonian, psalm 137 and Jeremiah 29:1-14. These three aspects bring an image of the experience before exile, during exile, and after exile. The influence of experience in exile brought a new influence on the formation of the Bible and the monotheistic belief in God. In Psalm 137 and Jeremiah 29:1-14 is seen that God is present before the exile, giving time to reflect God’s role in life during the exile and come back to God forever after the exile.

²⁶ **Susan Haber**, *Common Judaism, Common Synagogue? Purity, Holiness, and Sacred Space at the Turn of the Common Era*, 63.

²⁷ **Leslie C. Allen**, *Jeremiah : A Commentary*, (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 322.

²⁸ **Leslie C. Allen**, *Jeremiah : A Commentary*, 319.

²⁹ **John Hill**, *Constructing Exile The Emergence of A Biblical Paradigm*, 12.

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From Thailand to Australia

Bhumbodin Hiranrattanajinda SVD



Hello, Everyone. First of all, let me introduce myself to you. My name is Bhumbodin Hiranrattanajinda but I am known as Christopher Boss, Chris, or Boss. I am from Chiang Rai, a place which is surrounded by mountains and coffee shops. It is located in the northern part of Thailand.

I arrived in Australia on the last October. I was warmly welcomed by the Dorish Maru College (DMC), After finishing one year Novitiate Training Program in the Philippines. I professed my first profession on the last July Yes, I am a brand new SVD.

I am so blessed that I belong to this community even though I am still adjusting myself with the community, Australian culture, and English class. Now,

I am studying English for theological and academic preparation at English Language School for Pastoral Ministry (ELSPM). I will study English until next July and then I will continue to study Theology at Yarra Theological Union (YTU).

Personally, it is quite difficult for me learn a language in terms of academic purposes. It is totally different from English that I use in daily life. However, I am thankful for DMC community who has supported and encouraged me spiritually and academically.

Finally, I hope that I will be able to master and improve my English skills sufficiently before studying Theology at YTU.

Tiwi Islands: Top of the Ancient Land

Cuong Quoc Dang SVD



Every encounter is a blessing from God. Every person I meet, every interaction I have, and every experience I undergo is an opportunity for me to learn and grow. My journey to the Tiwi Islands marked my initial encounter with the First Nation People in Australia. It was a blessing for me to have pastoral experience in the Tiwi Islands, where I learned how to be a missionary in a new land and found motivation for my missionary vocational journey.

The Society of the Divine Word (SVD) has always held culture as a central value in missionary work. Culture encompasses the shared beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and art forms that shape a particular society. Gaining cultural understanding is vital for missionaries to preach the Gospel to those whom they encounter. Four months was not a long time for me to accomplish great things

among the Tiwi People, but I focused on getting to know people and learn their culture. Before I landed on the Tiwi Islands, I accidentally read a profound quote by Max Warren:

“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on people's dreams. More seriously still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.”

This quote reminded me of the importance of humility, respect and open-mindedness when encountering a new land like the Tiwi Islands. Located on the top of the country, the Tiwi Islands is a culturally distinct region from the mainland, often described as a world of its own. Being on the top of the country does not mean domination or authority, but it speaks of the richness of the Tiwi culture. Therefore, I sought to learn about Tiwi cultural practices and ways of life, drawing insights not only from my day-to-day encounters but also from the wisdom imparted by others. One aspect of Tiwi culture, that particularly resonates with me, is the pivotal role of dance in both everyday life and ceremonies. Dance is at

the very heart of the Tiwi people. A Tiwi is a dancer from child to adult and from men to women. Moreover, the Tiwi people integrate their cultural dance into the life of the church. One of my most moving moments was witnessing their last dance for a deceased person at the end of a funeral Mass. It was a touching moment that showcased their love, sincerity, and unity for the departed. It was a sacred moment that words can hardly describe.

In a Holy Mass in the primary school, sister Anne Gardiner OLSH who has spent for seventy years in the Bathurst Island to dedicate her life with the Tiwi people reminded Tiwi students and teachers that “There will be no future without a past.” This sister Anne’s statement highlights the inextricable connection between past experiences and future possibilities. Our past experiences shape who we become. The things we have accomplished, the mistakes we have made, the lessons we have learned, and the beliefs we have developed provide the basis for our future growth. Our history makes us who we are today and guides us towards who we will be tomorrow. This quote is a strong statement for the Tiwi people to reserve their culture and pass on generation to generation. Sister Anne had reason to give such a powerful statement about the link between the past and future because Tiwi culture has been threatened by different realities.

While ceremonies play an important role in forming the identity of the Tiwi people and cultural practices, few

ceremonies are gradually drifting into oblivion. There are three major ceremonies in the Tiwi culture, including Mirringilija Ceremony, Pukumani Ceremony and Kurlama Ceremony. The Mirringilija Ceremony, also known as the Girl Ceremony, marks a girl's entrance into adulthood. The maternal grandmother has the responsibility of imparting necessary lessons to the girl before she enters this new phase of life. The Pukumani Ceremony is a traditional Tiwi ritual performed after the death of a community member. Kurlama Ceremony is held for Tiwi male adults lasted for three nights and two full days. The characteristic feature of the ritual is that no one is allowed to leave the place during the ceremony. The purpose of this ceremony is for people to express grief regarding tragedies that have happened and to take rituals to guarantee abundant food and wellbeing in the year ahead. While the Pukumani Ceremony remains an active part of Tiwi culture, the Mirringilija Ceremony and Kurlama Ceremony are no longer observed.

The fading of Tiwi traditions, particularly the sacred ceremonies of Mirringilija and Kurlama, fills me with a sense of profound loss. These rituals were not merely cultural performances; they were the very fabric of Tiwi identity, imbued with deep spiritual and moral significance. They served as vital threads connecting past, present, and future generations, transmitting ancestral wisdom and fostering a deep connection to

the land. As they are no longer being practiced, Tiwi people lost their values and identity. Once it is lost, it will be difficult to bring it alive again. The potential for revival exists, but it is a daunting task. This is not simply a matter of preserving cultural heritage. It is about safeguarding the very essence of who the Tiwi are, their connection to the land and their ancestors.

One of the most difficult experiences I had while living in the Tiwi Islands was the failure of the referendum. There was much hope among many Tiwi people to dream about a future of inclusion and unity. While the referendum was about to be voted, one of the parishioners said to me that “Brother, I will vote by My Heart.” I understood what “My Heart” meant from the parishioner. It was “My Heart” of hope and witnessing the truth. Unfortunately, “My Heart” was rejected by many other hearts that led to the failure of the referendum. The night news of the referendum's failure spread across the land, I laid awake, burdened by sadness and frustration. It was difficult to bear the weight of these emotions, fuelled by the referendum's outcome. Seeking solace, I turned to social media, where I poured my feelings into words of frustration and shared my sympathy with the First Nation People. One of the paragraphs I posted on Facebook follows:

Australia is known as one of the most democratic countries in the world. Women and children are always given special care and protection. Despite being a

multicultural country, Australian law prohibits racial discrimination. The failure of today's referendum on the recognition of Aboriginal Australians in the constitution is incomprehensible to a democratic, civilised, and progressive country. The non-recognition of Aboriginal Australians in the constitution is a disrespect to their thousand-year history and culture.

My difficulties are not only emotional but also stem from the thought of facing people tomorrow whose hopes were crushed by the rejection from many Australians. Finding words to say to those whom I encountered the following day, many of whom I knew personally, proved impossible. It was a struggle to see our brothers and sisters whose human rights remained unrecognised. What I could offer them was to embody the role of Jesus, journeying with them like he did with the two Emmaus disciples, listening to their frustration and despair. When words lose their meaning, the presence of a companion can offer solace and understanding to those who are struggling with exclusion and non-recognition.

The main reason for the failed referendum was the rejection of many hearts which was on the opposite side of “My Heart” mentioned above. They were not ready for the union of a country.

Furthermore, I would like to reflect on the role of the Catholic Church towards the referendum. Undoubtedly, supporting the First Nation People is an essential mission of the Catholic Church in Australia today. Bishops, priests, religious men and women and lay people are dedicating their lives to be and journey with the First Nation People. The main purpose of the referendum was the call for a Voice to the Parliament, but the Church was not able to give “a concrete Voice” in general to support our First Nation brothers and sisters. “A concrete Voice” shows a clear perspective of the Church to the Voice campaign towards a matter of injustice that the First Nation People are facing.

Moreover, “a concrete Voice” was what many Catholics in Australia wanted to hear from their leaders. A Bishop, whom I had the opportunity to discuss about the referendum explained to me why he publicly voted “Yes” for the referendum. Firstly, he supported the First Nation People due to his heart. Secondly, some of his people wanted to listen to his point of view as the shepherd of the Diocese. In other words, people were waiting for the Church’s perspective before they made their final decision. While the word “division” could remain as an obstacle for the Church to display her point of view, witnessing the truth and justice is more important than fear. Publicly supporting the First Nation People regarding the Voice campaign was primary to the essence of the Church and served as its fidelity to the Gospel. If even the Church, called to be like

Jesus who always stood up for the poor and marginalised and lowly, could not give “a concrete Voice” during the referendum, it was hard to expect much from non-Catholics either. The Church lost the Golden Opportunity to support her First Nation People. The fall of the referendum means we need to wait for another time. No one knows when the next Golden Opportunity will come, or it might be a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

My experience with the Tiwi people helps me to realise that mission as advocacy is a central approach to support the Tiwi people. They really need the Church to be with them and help them in different ways. One example of mission as advocacy is the current fundraising campaign to restore the historic church. The restoration of the historic church is a deeply cherished aspiration for many Tiwi people, as it is a sacred and historic site that holds deep religious significance for many Tiwi Catholics. This task cannot be easily accomplished by the local community alone, but it requires the support from the church and other individuals. I also took part in providing my assistance in various ways for certain fundraising events, such Tiwi AFL Final Game and wheel games. Thanks to the hard work of many people, the fundraising campaign has been successful in garnering support from both local people and outsiders.

The presence of the Church through the SVD confreres and other religious sisters serves as an important role in helping the

Tiwi Catholics to maintain their sense of community life through providing sacramental ministry. Tiwi people remain a people of faith. Many people come to the church in the funeral Mass to pray and bid farewell to the departed person and comfort one another. Moreover, serving the community as a priest means being available to people who come to seek for help and support. Individuals may approach priest at any time for prayer, anointing, Mass and so on. It may be hard to respond to an urgent need, but it is important to be pastorally generous in giving sacraments out to those who are in need. This really motivates and encourages me to pursue my priesthood vocation to be God's instrument in providing sacraments to those in need.

When crossing a river, it is essential to always follow its current rather than going

against it. Going against the flow can create pressure, increasing the risk of drowning and losing your way. This reality of life teaches me to respect the Tiwi people and their culture, and to practice patience when entering a new place and culture. It is important to avoid imposing my dreams upon them but empower and support them to pursue their own aspirations. Tiwi Islands is isolated from the mainland, the land remains as a missionary field for the Church to be the witness to the Gospel. My experiences with the Tiwi people taught me that the first and foremost task of a missionary is to be with the people whom I serve. Then, people will care for and love you in return. Being loved and cared by people is the great motivation for a missionary to keep on missionary vocation among difficulties and challenges.

Faith Development Theory and Spiritual Direction

Firminus Wiryono SVD



Introduction

This essay will explore in general on the understanding of the faith development theory according to John Westerhoff and its application for the practice of spiritual direction. The main subject discussed through this essay is “How the understanding of the individual’s level of spiritual development is crucial to the practice of spiritual direction”. To discuss this topic, there are two key understanding as the outline; *first of all*, elaborating on the understanding of different stages of faith development according to Westerhoff in the perspective of writer’s own spiritual development and the unique encounter

with directees or people in pastoral ministry. *Secondly*, grounded on the understanding of the faith development stages and experiences, the writer will then draw few insights gained from the understanding of spiritual development to be applied for the purpose of effective and fruitful spiritual direction practice.

Westerhoff ‘s Spiritual/Faith Development Theory

According to Westerhoff, there are four important stages in growth process of faith development; *Experienced Faith, Affiliative Faith, Searching Faith, and Owned Faith*.¹ On the journey of life, as a person matures through different stages of human development, it is also understood that the person’s faith also develops accordingly. Westerhoff uses the analogy of a tree trunk. As it develops throughout the year, the new rings also come to emerge.² It is the same thing happens with faith; as it develops through different stages in life, each stages builds upon the previous stage to continue to grow and expand.

¹ **John H.** Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 3rd ed. (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2012), 112.

² **Westerhoff**, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 112.

Experienced Faith (Preschool and Early Childhood)

The journey of faith development starts at the very young age when a child able to understand faith through senses. At this early stage, the development is more based on experience and imitation action. In other words, it is not based on cognitive understanding of faith. The door into faith growth at this early stage is through the participation and involvement in rituals or worships activities. Participation brings about experience. Therefore, at this stage, faith is introduced through experience.

Through this lens, I can also understand the pattern of my own faith development. The seed of Catholic faith was planted in me by my parents through participating in mass. My parents are very involved in the parish (Church) where I grew up. I still remember when I was four years old, my parents and I always go together to Church on Sundays, talking to the priest, listen to the choir in which my mother also leads the choir. This experience remains in my mind and enables me to know at that early age about faith and its expression. It is true that experience is foundational to faith. A person first learn Christ not as a theological affirmation, but as an affective experience.³

Affiliative Faith (Childhood and Early Adolescent)

At this stage, the sense of belongingness into a community, bigger than family, plays an important part in faith development.

³ Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith?, 115.

This stage of growth brings on the next level of shared experience with other people. It gives birth to the connection with the community in which the members share the same belief, follow the same rituals, feel connected and belong. At this stage, the sense of belonging is strong as it is seen by this kind of statement "*this is our church and this is what we believe*". During this period of time, a person involves in the community with the strong sense of identity.⁴

In my own personal faith development, growing up in a Catholic Island, living in a Catholic Village, it comes easily to me that we all in the village share the same faith, believe the same God, and belong to the same religion. I also experience the sense of belonging to the Catholic Community by involving in many Church activities such as being altar server, lector and joining the parish choir. This fosters the sense of belonging to the community.

Searching Faith (Late Adolescent and Young Adulthood)

This is a very critical phase of faith development where faith is being questioned, whether it is still making sense or not, whether *what we believe* within the community is *what I believe* and relevant with what I think is true. This stage is a process of questioning the truth of one's faith. It is the action of doubt and/or critical judgment.⁵ In other words,

⁴ Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith?, 117.

⁵ Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith?, 119.

it is a process of “deconstruction within.” It is a struggle to make sense of one’s belief in order to reconstruct a more personal faith. I understand this stage as a “transition” from *communal faith* into *personal faith*. It is a struggle that needs to happen to give birth to a new version of understanding and living out faith.

It is a critical stage where faith finds understanding and meaning. It is the necessary struggle that helps maturing the faith. This is the stage where someone really trying to form a more personal believe, *from we believe to I believe*. To understand this from the perspective of the five stages of the soul, this can be identified as the third stage of the soul; the struggle.⁶ This struggle is the process the structure the meaning of faith for one’s life. This is the development of meaning-construction. It is also called self-aware level in which one is aware of his own faith growth and transition.⁷

In my encounter with parents in pastoral ministry setting, I’m often confronted by this question, in fact, it’s very common question: “*What happened to our children; when they are younger, they are very active in the Church (being altar boys and girls, very involved and willing to take part in the masses and other church activities), however, when they reach teenager’s age, it seems like they have never been to the church, they are not interested anymore in going to Church or getting*

involved in mass. They even ask this question, *why do we need to go to Church every Sunday?*

I don’t have any adequate answer for this issue. However, at this stage, there’s a need for a significant person/mentor who could provide any kind of support, someone who can journey with them, accompany them and to understand them, answer their questions without being judgmental. They need to be encouraged to remain within the faith community during their intellectual struggle, experimentation and first endeavours at commitment.⁸ Hopefully, they will experience the conversion. Conversion in this sense is a radical turning point from “faith given” (through nurture) to “faith owned”.⁹

Owned Faith (Early Adulthood)

After going through the stage of searching faith and all the struggles involved, it can lead to a new form of understanding faith. There is a transformation from “the crowd faith” into personal faith. It’s called owned faith because the faith growth takes a new form and understanding; *from the crowd faith* (this is what we believe) in the context of belonging to one community, *into personal faith* (this is what I believe). It is a matured, strong and personal faith. It is no longer the faith of the parents or the community (the crowd), but it is a personal faith and becomes an owned

⁶ Harry R. Moody and David Carrol, *The Five Stages of the Soul* (London: Rider, 1998), 177.

⁷ Elizabeth Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns, Adult Development in Spiritual Direction* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1944), 99.

⁸ Westerhoff, Will *Our Children Have Faith?*, 120.

⁹ Westerhoff, Will *Our Children Have Faith?*, 57.

faith. This movement can be called conversion; the movement from experienced and affiliative faith through searching faith to owned faith.

In my own reflection, the transition at the previous stage, searching faith, can be understood as the transition from belief to faith. There's a possibility of faith after the struggle. Belief requires no investment by the person. But, to become the faith, first of all it must be doubted.¹⁰ Only through the doubt, the person can grow into personal faith. God's intention for every person is to reach owned faith (our full potential). It is a long pilgrimage in which we need to be provided with an environment and experiences that encourage us to act in ways that helps our own expansion of faith.¹¹

Application For Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction can be understood as a process, carried out in a one-to-one interpersonal context, of establishing and maintaining a *growth orientation* (that is, direction) in one's faith life.¹² The focus of the spiritual direction is the growth of one's faith. The term direction does not mean the activity of one person upon another (directing him or her) but more as the aim of the process that is *self-orientation toward growth in the life of*

faith.¹³ This process is being carried out through a constant dialectical relationship with each other, the director and the directee; listening to and articulating God's call in one's life. Based on this explanation, the following points will discuss how the knowledge and understanding of the individual's stage of spiritual development is crucial to the practice of spiritual direction.

3.1 Spiritual Direction Focuses on Faith Growth

The focus of the spiritual direction is on one's faith growth. Faith is not a separate dimension of life. Faith is an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one's hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions.¹⁴ Faith is not a belief. Faith is deeper, richer and more personal. Faith is a quality of human living.¹⁵ In spiritual direction context, the focus of the accompaniment is to bring together the human side and the divine aspect of someone in a divine - human relationship. It is to work on how the faith grows in our human capacities to receive grace (because faith is God's grace) and to co-create with God in life.

The growth in faith is nourished through the trusting relationship with God who is in every human being. Faith growth should be measured in the capacity to trust God. Therefore, to be able to journey with someone in faith growth, spiritual

¹⁰ Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns*, 104.

¹¹ Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 121.

¹² Sandra Schneiders, 'The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction' in *Spiritual Direction, Contemporary Readings*, ed. Kevin G. Culligan (USA: Living Flame Press, 1983), 45.

¹³ Schneiders, *The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, 45.

¹⁴ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith, The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (North Blackburn, Victoria: Collins Dove, 1981), 14.

¹⁵ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 11.

director should understand well the stages of faith development and its dynamic. In other words, a spiritual director should have the knowledge of how the faith is developed through different stages in life. This is very helpful to identify and to invite the directee to explore more and go deeper based on the age and the stages of faith development.

3.2 Two Principles in Spiritual Direction

In the practice of spiritual direction, there are two basic significant principle that needs to be considered for spiritual director; *uniqueness of a person and the development*.¹⁶

3.2.1 The Uniqueness of the Person

The first principle is uniqueness of each person. Each person is unique. God's work in each person is unique. Each spiritual direction relationship is unique. The faith development of a person is unique; depending on all the circumstances involves such as experience and environment. I encounter people who are unique in their own way. Seminarians that I work with are so unique. Their view about faith is also different. The stage of faith development of each one of them is also different. Therefore, from this encounter, the understanding about how the faith growth and how the environment and experience influence the faith growth is significant to appreciate the uniqueness of the person and to work out on how to

accompany or assist a person's expansion of faith based on the his/her uniqueness.

In the context of the uniqueness holiness of the person, Daniel Helminiak treats the relationship of holiness to spiritual development in a philosophical analysis based on Bernard Lonergan's transcendental precepts. He explains that holiness is human authenticity before God, and as an intensive quality, it does not follow a stage progression. Holiness will be manifested differently at the various stages. The intensity of a person's authenticity at any stage is the measure of holiness, and not the stage itself.¹⁷

3.2.2 The Development of the Person

The second principle is the development of the person. We need to keep in mind that the faith growth develops a long side with the human development. The implication for spiritual direction is that we need to approach faith growth of a person in line with human development in a wider framework of God and God's activity. The basic role of spiritual direction is to stand for the transcendent God and to facilitate the seeker's experience of this God in ways which he or she is most capable of apprehending.¹⁸ This means that each stage of human development touches on different stages of faith. Persons' relationship with God (faith) develops in the frame of different stages of faith or spiritual development. Therefore, the understanding of the spiritual

¹⁶ Kevin G. Culligan, 'The Practice of Spiritual Direction (Introduction)' in *Spiritual Direction, Contemporary Readings*, ed. Kevin G. Culligan (USA: Living Flame Press, 1983), 98.

¹⁷ Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns*, 174.

¹⁸ Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns*, 127.

development is very unique, depending on person's human development stages.

In this regard, however, the focus is not the stages, but the person's development. Even if we understand the different stage of human development or faith development, person are not reducible to stages. Of course, the concept of human or faith development may be useful to understand why a person sees something in a certain way.¹⁹ However, Person is a person. The stage is the only framework or instrument to understand the person. The focus is always a person. The understanding and the experiences of going through different stages is helpful to assist a person on his/her faith development and journey.

3.3 Spiritual Direction is a "Process"

Spiritual direction is a process that focus on the directee to bring out the greatness within him or her. Every person has a capacity to be a saint, but it needs a development.²⁰ The process here is focused on the development; however, the development happens in the long-term process. In this process, the spiritual director's role is as the instrument of the process. In the process, there could involve many things. For example, as a process, spiritual director should able to identify and confirm for example the old view of faith, the confusion of the present experience, or the possibility of a new self

to emerge. Definitely, it does not happen overnight.

In the process of faith development, it could be also the open invitation for the directee to interpret and reinterpret about experience of God. It is a way of going deeper into ones' relationship with God. It is a process of assisting and accompanying the person in the darkness or confusion which may attend to the loss of her/his former way of relating to God. In my experience, I have encountered a person who have a strange and different view on God. When I invite him to reinterpret his own image of God and the theological concept that underpinned the image, it is very challenging. I have come to the realization that it takes time for someone to reinterpret the faith or to deconstruct the "false" image of God that has been rooted for long time. It takes lots of process of reflection, learning and unlearning. However, the focus of this process is to appropriately "foster developmental change" in the person or directee. It is also the invitation to participate in the transition and change for the long term.

3.4 Spiritual Direction is a Long-Term "Relationship"

Spiritual direction is by nature a long-term relationship. This means that the director will be guiding the directee through various stages of growth. Each stage of growth has its own particular problems, challenges and task. In other words, the language, advice and direction that is suitable to one stage may not be the

¹⁹ Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns*, 128.

²⁰ Michael de Stoop, *Spiritual Direction, Who is it for and What are the Benefits?* (Sydney: Catholic Communications Sydney, 2000), 35.

same or has the same impact for others.²¹ Therefore, a spiritual director must understand the stages of spiritual development of the directee. It's extremely important to understand the dynamic of someone's spiritual development based on the life stage. However, when it happens in a long-term relationship, spiritual director is able to understand the history of the faith growth from one stage to another stage and therefore able to accompany directee to move forward. It is like a doctor who knows the long-detailed history of someone's health, and able to treat the person better based on the history of his/her health in a long term.

3.5 Faith Growth and Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction proposes to help people relate personally to God, to let God relate personally to them, and to enable them to live the consequences of that relationship.²² Spiritual direction is a helping relationship. However, the help offered is in the form of companionship on the journey. The spiritual director is not an expert, who before the journey advises what roads to take and answers all the travellers question. In fact, a spiritual director, a companion on a journey, help the traveller read the maps, avoid the dead ends, and watch out for potholes.²³

It is quite clear that the spiritual director needs to know how to read the map before accompany the directee. A spiritual director should have the knowledge of reading the map through understanding the faith or spiritual development. As everyone goes through the same process in spiritual development (the pattern is more likely the same), a spiritual director is able to put all the experiences into perspective and understand where the directee is heading to. However, it is also considered that the experience and the circumstances can bring different dynamic to someone's spiritual development. What is important is that a spiritual director is able to understand the bigger picture of faith or spiritual development to be able to provide good and effective companionship.

Conclusion

When I reflect on John Westerhoff 's four stages of Faith Development, it reminds me of the words from St. Paul; *when I was a child, I talk like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I become a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I'm fully known* (I Cor 13:11-12). Faith development is a journey towards trust and deeper relationship with God. It is a journey to know and encounter God fully as we are fully known by God. it is a journey started from the childhood; develops from one stage to

²¹ **Rose Page**, 'Direction in the Various Stages of Spiritual Development' in *Spiritual Direction, Contemporary Readings*, ed. Kevin G. Culligan (USA: Living Flame Press, 1983), 145.

²² **William A. Barry** and **William J. Connolly**, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Harper Collin Publisher, 1997), 136.

²³ **Barry**, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 137.

another, to reach the spiritual maturity, in the light of the relationship with God.

The requirements for effective ministry in the area of spiritual direction are determined by the final end of the process itself, namely, the spiritual maturity of the directee. Spiritual maturity can be explained as a fully integrated life with God characterised by freedom, fidelity and fruitfulness. To help others grow toward such maturity requires a certain amount of knowledge, experience and psychological-

spiritual skill.²⁴ In this case, the aspects of knowledge on the faith development is in fact very crucial to understand the common pattern or the same road that everyone goes through in spiritual development. This knowledge helps spiritual director to respond and facilitate the journey of a person competently, confidently, and effectively.

²⁴ **Schneiders, The** Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction', 52.

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On This Rock I Will Build My Church

Khanh Nguyen SVD



When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. (Matthew 16:13-20)

Jesus explained and entrusted the tasks and positions to his Apostles in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Mt 16:13-20), especially to Peter who was referred as the “rock” by Christ upon which God’s church was built. It seemed that they were the main rocks used to build God’s kingdom in the world. Thus, Jesus Christ is being preached, increased, and existed for two thousand years based on these rocks.

The rock and the images of rock play a vital role in central Australia; thus, I am in fact being reminded of my OTP experiences in Central Australia at Alice

Springs, a rocky area with spacious mountains and hills. I could learn a lot for my life from this natural environment and God’s creation.

In the first year of OTP, I lived in the DMC, an SVD formation house of the Australian province. By being there, I had opportunities to reside, study, and experience a multicultural environment. I had the privilege to learn about different cultures from members, who were my formators, directors, and SVD seminarians, came from different parts of countries such as Vietnam, China, Philippines,

Indonesia, and other nations. They are multinational who want to be guided, trained, and to become small rocks of the universal Church. I could gain the practical experiences of missionary life from them who in fact respected and taught me many valuable things.

Furthermore, I had the opportunity to learn and improve my English language effectively. As a result, English is an important instrument to assist me to deeply connect, communicate, and understand other people, cultures, religions, and especially getting an academic standard in Australian environment. So, I could understand the fundamental of English language, which in a way aided me in the second part of the OTP and furthermore in my future studies.

In the second year, I lived in Alice Springs where I have had the different mission experiences in two parishes named as Santa Teresa and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. During the time in these parishes, I have had opportunities to discover new mission environments, "mission in rocky areas". Fortunately, I lived in these areas for my religious experiences. Here, I imagined and discovered, how rocky materials used to build the forms such as houses, roads, and especially churches.

Firstly, for those who do not know where Alice Springs is, it is the third-largest town in the North Territory, Australia. Moreover, it is in the centre of Australia's continent, a dry and largely untainted area with numerous bushes,

hills, and rivers without water. It is a spacious desert. Besides, the weather is changing every day, as a result, sometimes hot during the day and cold during the night.

There are now approximately thirty thousand people with ten thousand indigenous people who have been living here for many years and centuries. Therefore, the area of Alice Springs had been inhabited for very many years. There are many private areas here, but rock formations are one of the popular destinations for tourists and locals. Rocks are everywhere and have been used in many places and for different purposes. On the other hand, the Indigenous people built their instruments with rocks. The first nation people have also made useful things from rocks such as instruments, furniture, or presents like crosses, and pictures of the Catholic Church. The rocks have become an important and necessary material for Indigenous People.

Rocks as the essential resources and centre of attraction in Alice Springs, Jesus Christ set his Church by commanding his Apostles to become the main rocks for his Church. He respected and loved them unconditionally before requiring them to be loyal workers. As a result, feeling the salvation and compassion of Jesus, there have been many SVDs who came as missionaries in Alice Springs as the main rocks for God's Church. They are SVD seminarians, priests, and missionary staff. They have been figuring out their lives to become beneficial rocks for their Master.

They have been trying to become loyal disciples who have given their lives for their Master's name and Church. They are humble and faithful rocks that are always ready to be cut, created, and made to be different for adapted places in only one Church.

They have not been perfect rocks, but they have tried to be better and more useful for God's purposes, even being hurt and losing themselves. They were one of the most loyal servants who could give up everything, carry their crosses, and follow their master unconditionally. So, they have given up their family, and especially their weaknesses for the best life that is not only for themselves but for the glory of God through serving in the Church.

Indeed, I have learned effectively from those who are SVD devout missionaries. I have seen and felt the happiness and challenges of SVD priests here. I have learned from them how we can flexibly survive, develop, and live our vocation. In fact, those missionaries have already left their countries to come to a new region with many new and strange cultures, religious and other difficulties, and challenges.

In fact, I have had opportunities to go to celebrate sacraments with SVD

missionaries in different mission places where they must spend hours driving some hundred kilometres to missionary houses to celebrate Masses, to guide in praying, and to accompany the underprivileged people. Additionally, one of the most interesting missions that I have learned constructively is working with Indigenous People. SVD members have clearly showed their methods to live with and work for Indigenous People who have simple lives with the trust in God, especially in Virgin Mary. They hence have treated friendly, respectfully, and charitably to those who have lived around their lives and mission. Therefore, they are always ready to become a small rock of a huge building of God, the Church.

Lord, Jesus Christ, you have used us as your beneficial material for your Church. You have respected and invited us to attend to your plan, even though we are not worthy of your salvation, compassion, and accompaniment. Please, our beloved God, give us your strength and help, so that we, with our whole minds, hearts, and souls, try to be firm in your faith and love at this rocky area.

Amen.

Christian Spirituality

Khoa Duong SVD



According to Alister Mc Grath, Spirituality involves the search for an authentic and fulfilling religious life, including the bringing together of the particular ideas of that religion and the whole experience of living on and within that religion.¹ In light of this definition, this essay will explore Christian spirituality in particular. Desert spirituality, Benedictine spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, and liturgical spirituality are evidence for the claim that Christian spirituality is a Christian life that deals with methods of searching for God. Besides that, this essay will propose a common point between these spiritualities and a point of intersection between these spiritualities and indigenous spirituality.

¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 2.

First of all, Christian spirituality is the Christian life that deals with methods of searching for God. In particular, Alister Mc Grath explains that Christian spirituality is the life of the Christian that refers to the methods by which Christians understand and express the Christian life in order to build and maintain a relationship with Christ.² This is found in a number of traditions that have been developed in the church such as Desert Spirituality, Benedictine Spirituality, Ignatius Spirituality and Liturgical Spirituality.

The first spirituality is Desert Spirituality. It sprang from the Egypt desert fathers and mothers in the 4th century. They sought God through contemplation and monastic life. Desert mothers and fathers chose an austere life

² McGrath, 3.

in the desert and separation from the mundane world to find freedom from thought or anxiety.

The second one is Benedictine spirituality. Although Benedictine spirituality and desert spirituality are monastic lives, they are different. While desert spirituality focuses on aspects of an austere life, Benedictine spirituality emphasises a balanced lifestyle. Benedict's concept of balance can be understood as "all parts integrating to come together into a whole"³. In other words, it is how people live their lives to the fullest. Three key elements in Benedict's balanced lifestyle that lead to a fulfilling life are the work of seeking God, the work of earthly life, and the work of hospitality and service.⁴

The third is Ignatian spirituality. It comes from Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order. Ignatian spirituality focuses on finding God in all things through spiritual practice. This spiritual activity is a thirty-day retreat that helps people find God's voice in their lives through all things. By listening to the guidance of the holy spirit, people can realise their choices in life according to God's will.⁵

The fourth form of spirituality is Liturgy spirituality. "According to the Constitution on Liturgy, the celebration of liturgical

worship is the fountainhead of spirituality"⁶. It emphasises the search for God in participating in liturgical rituals and celebrations. There are several main components of liturgical spirituality such as the words of God, the Sacraments, the psalms, the awareness of being Church and the harmony of mind and voice.⁷

Although the spiritualities mentioned above demonstrate differences in the way they seek God, they all share an indispensable foundation in their spiritual practice. That is the Word of God. It is fundamental and an element for contemplation and self-transformation. Christians can not practice Christian Spirituality without looking at God's Word. "The lives of the desert fathers were saturated by scripture. They encountered scripture during weekend liturgies."⁸ During their daily work, they chanted and recited psalms.⁹ Benedictine spirituality sees the practice of *Lectio Divina* as important to the Benedictine life. The entire practice is to meditate on God's Word in the Bible.¹⁰ "For the Benedictine, the heart has to be open to be shaped by the Word, to listen to the Word, to be touched by the Word, to be formed by the word"¹¹. Ignatius built a meditation pattern for the spiritual exercises based on

³ Michael Casey and Carmel Posa, eds., *A Not so Unexciting Life: Essays on Benedictine History and Spirituality in Honor of Michael Casey, OCSO*, Cistercian Studies Series, number two hundred sixty-nine (Collegeville, Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, Liturgical Press, 2017), 7.

⁴ Casey and Posa, 8-9.

⁵ George W. Traub, ed., *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 12-19.

⁶ Anscar J. Chupungco, *What, Then, Is Liturgy? Musings and Memoir* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2010), 235.

⁷ Chupungco, 233-241.

⁸ William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Univ. Pr, 2004), 269.

⁹ Harmless, 270.

¹⁰ Casey and Posa, 15-19.

¹¹ Casey and Posa, 14-15.

the structure of the content of the Bible, especially the Gospel. The first week of meditation focuses on the theme of creativity. The second week reflects on the hidden life and missionary work of Jesus. The third week focuses on the passion and death of Jesus. The final week is the event of resurrection.¹² For liturgical spirituality, the two of five important components are the word of God and the psalms.

There is a similar spirit of connection to nature and the environment between Desert spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, Benedictine spirituality and Indigenous spirituality. Indigenous spirituality emphasises the connection to the land where the creator-ancestors are present and live with them. It is considered as a sacred text for indigenous people. Therefore, they live a responsible life on their land.¹³ Similarly, Ignatian spirituality considers finding God in all things, including the creatures. Nature is a gift from God. Therefore, everyone is called to respect and protect nature. During the first

week of the spiritual practice, participants meditate on creation. Desert spirituality practices a simple, even ascetic life and seeks God through the desolate and harsh lands of the desert. It shows a strong connection to the land where spirituality is practised. Likewise, the Benedictine rule emphasizes commitment and stability in one place while nurturing its environment. Benedictines are to "treat all things" as vessels of the altar.

In conclusion, Christian spirituality is the entire Christian life related to the methods or ways of seeking the presence of God. This can be found in Desert spirituality, Benedictine spirituality, Ignatian spirituality and liturgical spirituality. Although there are differences in practice, these spiritualities all have one thing in common, which is to take God's words as the foundation. Besides, there is an intersection between Desert spirituality, Benedictine spirituality, Ignatian spirituality and Indigenous spirituality in terms of connection with nature.

¹² Traub, 14.

¹³ Garry Worete Deverell, *Gondwana Theology: A Trawloolway Man Reflects on Christian Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 10-14.

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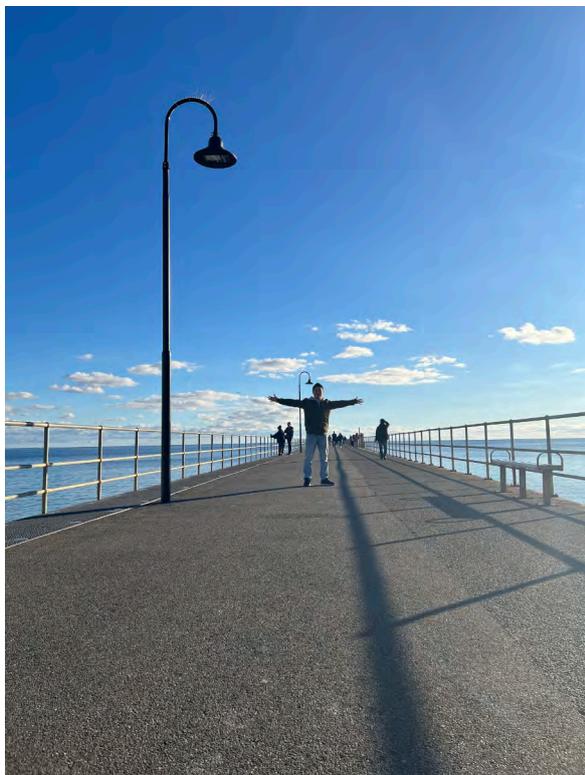
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Beginning With Jesus

Khoa Duong SVD



Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor in Germany, asked who Christ is to us today. It is a question that invites each person to reflect on the question of who Christ is for them. To answer this question, there are two images of Jesus Christ in my mind. Jesus Christ is the teacher I admire most, and my friend today.

There are periods in history when many scholars tried to find who Jesus really is. Through those efforts, scholars have many different portraits of Jesus. Regarding the historical Jesus, some scholars think of Jesus as a great teacher, and some think of Him as a politician or a prophet.¹ Personally, Jesus is the teacher I admire

¹ N. T. Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* 1st North American ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1993), 1-15.

most of all time. He was really a human. He was a Jew who lived in rural Galilee in the first century.² His teachings and deeds are recorded in the New Testament. Any of Jesus' words and deeds make me admire him greatly. Firstly, I really admire his message about the kingdom of God. Accordingly, Jose Pagola said Jesus proposed the Kingdom of God to people as a place without violence, without injustice and a place worth living in.³ It is a new family for those who accept it, a family without dominion, without classes and with only God as Father of all.⁴ In other words, it is a place where everyone can find love. Personally, Jesus suggested the best solution to humanity's moral problem back then, which continues to apply. Although a small group in society opposed His message, it is an undeniable fact that He succeeded in attracting almost every one of His time. "They are convinced by his message"⁵. Even more than 2000 years after his messages and teachings were preached, they still exist and impact the lives of people today. Moreover, I admire Jesus as my great teacher because of His actions. His preaching was coupled with action. He sided with the lower classes of

² Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

³ Jose A. Pagola, *Jesus: An Historical Approximation* (Convivium Press, 2020), 104-111.

⁴ Pagola, 279.

⁵ Pagola, 261.

society and condemned the injustices of the ruling class, especially the Roman Empire and the local temple aristocracy at that time. This action and the message of the Kingdom of God led to His death on the cross.⁶ From that point, Jesus in my mind is a revered Master who represents the voice of the poor and oppressed in today's world. Through these things, I have modelled my actions on how to make a more worthwhile living world on this earth from Him.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the first Christians experienced Jesus' identity in different images. The Gospel of Matthew describes Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. Luke's Gospel sees Jesus as Messiah and Lord but emphasises Him as Saviour. Jesus in the Gospel of John is the Word of God.⁷ In my personal view, I consider Jesus as a friend. Jesus Christ is my friend who died and rose from the dead for me. Jesus stated "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends" (John 15: 13-14). He died on the cross just to save me from sin and death. Saint Paul talked about the death of Jesus for our sins in the letter to Romans 3:23-25 as a sacrifice of atonement. Some early Christians considered Jesus Christ's salvation as a ransom.⁸ Jesus Christ does not stop at salvation; He continues to present and guide me as a friend. Before He died, Jesus promised to his disciples that: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He fulfilled His

⁶ Pagola, 367-368.

⁷ Pagola, 422-429.

⁸ Roukema, 320.

promise through His risen from death. The sign of the empty tomb and the appearance of Himself are evidence. Rausch said "It was a real event, an act of God" and "the risen Jesus was disclosed to those who followed and loved him, who had opened their hearts to him"⁹. In faith in Jesus Christ and as a follower of Him, I believe that He is now present with me as He was with His disciples. Just as Jesus guided the apostles in every event on the path of preaching the good news, the Lord also guided me through the difficult events that came my way in my life journey. Finally, my friend Jesus made a promise about resurrection after the death of this earthly life. He stated, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live" (John 11:25). Jesus Christ invites me to walk with Him in belief and hope in this life for everlasting life.

In conclusion, Jesus is a teacher that I admire the most and also a friend. As a great teacher, He has shown me how to create a worthwhile living world on this earth by His message of the kingdom of God and by His own actions during his time on earth. As a friend, He really died, rose again and is present with me throughout my life today. In addition, He promised me eternal life after I die. He is really a friend who walks with me in this life and will lead me into life beyond.

⁹ Thomas P. Rausch, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, A Michael Glazier Book (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2003), 123.

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Mission with Students as An Executive Board Student Member

Peter Luong Tran SVD



The motto of the SVDs, "God's mission is our mission," underscores the idea that every individual, particularly Christians, is called to fulfil specific missions at different times and in various roles. Throughout my life, I have been summoned to undertake diverse missions during different phases. These missions have included volunteering with the less fortunate in remote areas, serving in mental health hospitals, engaging in catechetics, and most notably, my involvement as a member of the student executive board of the Catholic student group during my university years in Vietnam.

To know what and how my mission was during this time, it is necessary to know about the Hoa Khanh Catholic Students group: The Hoa Khanh Catholic Students

group was established in 1993 by a small group of Catholic students in Da Nang City with the purpose of improving the Christian faith in the university environment. Day by day, the group has become more prominent and taken a more critical role in the local church. Nowadays, through 30 years, around 1900 people have joined the group. This group is still run by members who still study at universities within the city it's often around 150 students.

Throughout the year, the group organises various activities to strengthen its bonds and impact. Our weekly gatherings on Saturday nights, lasting for about one and a half hours, aimed to create a relaxed and joyful atmosphere after a week of academic and professional

commitments. These gatherings typically commenced with prayer, followed by games, dances, and presentations by priests, sisters, lecturers, laypersons, or alumni who shared their insights on the knowledge and experiences. The group tried to organise gatherings with specific content varied to ensure a balance between relaxation and spiritual enrichment.

In our local parish, the group assumed the responsibility of serving and singing during Sunday masses and assisting attendees with parking their vehicles. The Sunday afternoon gatherings at the parish for the masses were typically well-attended, representing a diverse mix of local residents, migrant workers, and students from various backgrounds. Additionally, the group contributed to decorating the parish for Christmas, significantly contributing to a community where the busy city life often hindered church attendance. Within the group, we organised special activities such as welcoming new students, bidding farewell to graduating members, selling flowers for charitable purposes, visiting patients in hospitals and care homes, camping trips, and sports days, all aimed at fostering connections within our group and with the broader community.

The Hoa Khanh Catholic students' group has been a source of inspiration and has produced numerous religious vocations and active people in the church and society. Many former members have gone on to take vows and be ordained

every year. It is also numerous couples who get married from the group and become excellent laities in the churches. Personally, my journey towards a religious vocation within the SVD congregation was deeply influenced by the individuals I encountered within the group. I was introduced to the SVD Society during one of our meetings when I met an SVD priest who had returned from Ghana, sharing his missionary experiences in Africa. Additionally, some group members belong to the SVD's aspirant community; they were very close and friendly with me and informed me about the congregation to help me understand them. It helped me to have an image of the foreign missionary.

At the time, my mission revolved around my role as a member of the executive board. I was elected as one of the five executive board members of the Catholic student group while I was a university student in Vietnam. What was my mission role as an executive board member? I and four others had to organise those activities. We had meetings at least once a week to prepare some activities for Saturday nights when most group members joyed. Of course, the plan for the whole year has been built and improved through many executive board generations in the group. We often follow the previous program but change some things to suit reality. Following the previous executive board group's form, we successfully separated each executive member's apparent role. The student rep often has a general responsibility, and other members

and I take positions on one for liturgy and choir, one for sports and camping, one for treasure, and one for organised dancing, singing and gaming. Each board member had specific responsibilities. For me, I was in charge of liturgy and choir. However, in the group, we always collaborated closely to ensure the group's continued growth and success.

As the minister of liturgy and choir, my duties included coordinating with choir members for Wednesday evening practices in preparation for Sunday masses. I had to reach out to some students or sisters who could conduct for the choir. It was true that keeping the excellent choir number was impossible without frequently sending messages or calling the choir's members every week. It means that I had sacrificed a lot of time to keep in touch, announce for choir members and find new members. I also asked some students to serve and read in the masses. Furthermore, I had to contact some priests to help our group retreat and confession during the Advent and Lenten season. It took time to organise and connect with many people to run those activities.

Through my role within the group, I had the opportunity to enhance my interpersonal skills and overcome challenges. I was born and grew up in a rural village with a profound village tradition. Therefore, I was pretty limited in about the world outside and was a shining person. In 2014, I went to a city far from my village, 500 km away, to study at a university. I joined the Catholic student

group, which involves students from most parts of the country who come to study in the city. Entering the group was the first time I encountered a new cultural experience that included religion tones, local verbals, and different thinking. However, the new environment encouraged me to be friends with people in the group. This experience allowed me to grow more confident in interacting with strangers and navigating cultural diversity.

Moreover, my time on the executive board honed my teamwork abilities despite the initial difficulties in reconciling diverse opinions. It was hard to accept those thoughts when working in a group with many different or opposite ideas. For instance, when we discussed the price for the group soccer champion, I wanted to increase the cost to encourage players to be more interested in playing. Still, other people think that it has to spend a more considerable amount, which affects the group's expected amount and makes players play in a state of too much winning and losing, making it easy to make injuries between players. Therefore, through discussions in the executive student board, I learned how to accept other's ideas in different contexts.

While serving on the executive board, I encountered numerous challenges and moments of doubt. Organising exciting activities for everyone who attended the meetings every week was difficult. To have an enjoyable activity, it is necessary to spend time preparing for it. I was overwhelmed when standing in an

executive student board member position for the first two months. I did not have enough time to complete assessments at my university, which also drained my brain to organise activities. Therefore, I wanted to give up my responsibility in the group early. However, I discerned that my role in the group encouraged me to keep going. It is true that, in a secular world, it has become a trend in the youth, such as sexuality without marriage or not going to church. Our group has tried to serve as a beacon of faith within the secular city environment by contributing to many meaningful activities both in the church and society. We were active in the church and had some activities outside, such as visiting the house aged care and cooking food for visiting people in hospitals and

disabled centres. This awareness of my mission fuelled my dedication and allowed me to find fulfilment in my role.

In conclusion, I realised that everyone has a unique mission in life. While my primary mission during my university years was focused on academic pursuits, my secondary mission was to contribute my time and organisational skills to enrich the activities of the Catholic student group. This endeavour was far from meaningless as it facilitated personal growth, improved my social skills, and deepened my faith. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of this group and proud of my time as an executive board member, as it provided both cherished memories from my student years and a meaningful mission to undertake.

The Exodus and Emmaus Journeys

Peter Luong Tran SVD



Introduction

The Bible is always rich in profound themes that take a timeless role in guiding spiritual growth. Two significant biblical journey themes which are the Exodus and the Emmaus Journey have been particularly important in shaping the foundation of Christian spirituality throughout times. They are presented as complete maps to guide and show travellers a good way to reach their destination. The essay will examine the selected biblical themes of the Exodus and Emmaus narratives. Then, it analyses how they are meaningful to the people who live in the narrator's time, as well as how they parallel contemporary Christians' spirituality. Furthermore, it also explores

how the journeys of Exodus and Emmaus are expressed amidst the life of Vietnamese Christians.

The Biblical journeys

The Journey of Exodus

Exodus was the journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land under the guidance of Moses who represents God among them. So, this journey was not lonely but they travelled together as a community under the guidance of the supreme God.¹ The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt holds paramount significance within the Old Testament narrative (Ex 12:37-15:21). It is not as simple as an event of dependence but is a background story for God's believers. The Exodus becomes a defining time that shows the faithfulness of God's covenant with the Patriarchs and fulfils the promises to redeem humanity. Hence, this Exodus historical journey forms the foundation themes of faith, obedience, and dependence on God for believers throughout all times.

The Exodus journey included both physical and spiritual events, that imparted profound training lessons through forty years of wandering in the desert. The Exodus journey promised a new land of freedom, but it was full of

¹ Carol J. Dempsey, 'The Bible Today, The Exodus Motif of Liberation: Its Grace and Controversy' 47, no. 2 (April 2009), 81.

difficulties and temptations. These events seem to tell us that "God calls us out of the limitations of our finite nature, our created lights, into his incomprehensible darkness."² On the Exodus journey, many times, the Israelites failed to listen and follow the guidance of God through Moses. However, it was also an opportunity for people to realise their weak nature as human beings and they needed to have God's grace and guidance on their travel. From that, the Exodus is a narrative of the faith Israelites placed in God's promises, despite the challenges they faced, but at the end of the journey, they reached the promised land which they had always been waiting for.

The Exodus was a long journey which lasted forty years. So, hunger and thirst were not lacking during the journey. This created a theme of dependence on God that emerges in the Exodus narrative. In the barren wilderness, the Israelites learned to rely on God's provision for their sustenance and guidance. The manna from heaven, the water from the stone, and the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night became tangible expressions of God's continual presence and care. From these supplies, there are lessons of faith and obedience under the guidance of the leaders of God that showed the believers their behavioural dependence on God who nourishes them in their lives. It invites the believer's deep reflection on the nature of their relationship with the divine.

² **Thomas Joseph** White, *Exodus*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 1.

In the Christian thought tradition, the Exodus becomes a point for prophecy about the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The liberation of Israelites from Egypt foreshadowed of liberation of humanity out of the bondage of sin through the death of Christ. In this theological explanation, the Exodus becomes an introduction to the ultimate Exodus of God's people which is the deliverance from the slavery of sin and death. Therefore, as people enter into the Exodus narrative it transforms into their own narrative of deliverance. So, it becomes clear that the interaction with the God of the Israelites mirrors their encounter with the divine, making individual experiences a reflection of that larger narrative.³

The Emmaus Journey

The Scriptural background of the Emmaus encounter is well-known in the Gospel of Luke (24:13- 35). The narrative unfolds shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Two disciples on the journey to Emmaus find themselves disappointed and disheartened by the events surrounding the death of Jesus, their famous teacher. On the road back to their town, they encounter a travelling stranger who challenged their previous behaviour after Jesus' death. Their encounter with Jesus on this road becomes a powerful story for the human experience journey "from without to within, from confusion to understanding, from death to life, from

³ **Maureena Fritz**, *The Exodus Experience: A Journey in Prayer* (Winona, Minn: Saint Mary's Press, 1989), 7.

hopelessness to hope, from blindness to recognition, from absence to presence, from leaving Jerusalem to back to Jerusalem, from separation to community"⁴ by the transformative power of divine intervention.

The two disciples, initially blinded by sorrow and unable to recognise Jesus, experience a profound moment of revelation. However, Jesus was walking along with them, listening and discussing salvation from the Scripture while being very unassuming, gentle and patient with them.⁵ On the other side, the two disciples were hospitable and welcomed the traveller on the way as a companion, sharing their experience and listening, even though he was a stranger on the road.⁶ The behaviour of the two disciples allows them to open their minds so they can have a dialogue with others. Through that, their eyes are opened to the presence of the resurrected Christ, challenging their preconceived notions and sparking a paradigm shift in their understanding of divine intervention. The Emmaus journey becomes a metaphor for the spiritual journey of every believer, navigating the borders of individuals to welcome others including Jesus, listen and walk together to improve the faith journey of each other.

⁴ **Denis McBride**, *Emmaus: The Gracious Visit of God According to Luke* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1991), 125.

⁵ **Peter Ignatius SJ**, 'Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection: Biblical Insights for a Synodal Church' 86, no. 5 (May 2022), 392.

⁶ **McBride**, *Emmaus*, 147.

How this finds expression in the lives of Christians today

In the Exodus story, the Israelites began the pilgrimage physically and spiritually under God's guidance from Egypt to the Promised Land and from bondage to freedom. It was a long journey in the wilderness where there was a lack of life's supplies. Entering deeper into the wilderness, there were more difficulties with its reality. Hunger and thirst made them doubt and lose their trust in God.⁷ These circumstances of hardship create two opposing behaviours of trust or blame, disappointment or the feeling of dependence on God. Both opposite behaviours existed in the Exodus pilgrimage people and it also appears in the faith journey of Christians. It is a lesson for Christians when they encounter the "wilderness time" of life to explore the mystery of God's presence and self-disclosure during the hard times.

Living in the secular world and a time of confusion and division both in the Church and in the world, Christians today have to face various attacks and deceptive challenges against their faith.⁸ The wilderness journey of the Israelites, marked by challenges, and uncertainties parallels with the contemporary Christian pilgrimage. Believers navigate through the complexities of life, encountering trials and tribulations on their path to spiritual maturity. The Exodus journey is such a

⁷ **Fritz**, *The Exodus Experience*, 88.

⁸ **Ralph Martin**, *A Church in Crisis: Pathways Forward* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2020), 15.

map for Christians to trust in God's guidance during their own complex experiences, and help them recognise that God provides His grace as sustenance and direction whatever the circumstances.

The Exodus journey was a crowd of people moving that included every level in the society whoever they were including elders, adults, children, males and females. It parallels the pilgrimage of Christian spirituality which is not an individualistic trip but a communal journey.⁹ In the pilgrim to salvation, Christians cannot travel by him or herself but walk together under the light of God through the guidance of God's people as the people in the Exodus walked under the cloud by day and fire at night.

Similarly, the Road to Emmaus recounts the transformative encounter of two disciples with the resurrected Jesus who was such a travel companion. This encounter transformed the disciples from, grief, fear, and disappointment to happiness, bravery, and hope.¹⁰ These narratives lay the groundwork for understanding Christian spirituality by emphasising the dynamic interplay between God's liberation, revelation, and God's abiding presence in the daily trials and each special event in the lives of believers.

Reflecting on the Emmaus journey, it can be a good model of ministry for Christian spirituality nowadays. The

⁹ **Lawrence Cunningham** and Keith J. Egan, *Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 52.

¹⁰ **McBride**, 154.

Stranger travelled and joined with the others on the road by listening to their sharing and asking them questions to know their thought and suffering.¹¹ That model overcomes the way that people just talk and display methods without listening to understand. It is what happened to many leaders of both the Churches and the world, that they lack listening to the voices of others.

On the other hand, the two disciples were in a mood of openness and hospitality to the stranger before they realised their beloved teacher.¹² It reminds Christians to open their mind to welcome others into their borders of selfishness, jealousy, ambition and individualism that close the door to others. As for the two disciples, hospitality gave them an opportunity for Jesus to be revealed when he broke bread. So, Christians will meet Jesus revealed in their welcome acts for others, special for the poor, the strangers, and the vulnerable people.

How welcome is expressed in the lives of Vietnamese Christians

In the light of the two Biblical journey themes above, we can see the parallels between the spirituality of Vietnamese within the Exodus and Emmaus journeys. With the nearly 500-year-long history of Christianity in Vietnam, the Church is growing in numbers and faith. There are

¹¹ **Monica Brown**, *Embodying the God We Proclaim: Ministering as Jesus Did*, 2nd ed (Thornleigh, Australia, San Jose, CA.: Emmaus Productions; Resource Publications, Inc., 1997), 180.

¹² **McBride**, *Emmaus*, 144.

about 7 million Catholic people (7,6%) in the country, and many Christians live in foreign nations. However, looking back at the history, there are various sorrowful events which happened in Vietnam. One of the most important and worth mentioning is the persecution throughout many institutional policies. There were at least 300,000 Vietnamese faithful and missionaries executed under 20 Vietnamese rulers that are reported in history.¹³ Moreover, when the communist party ruled the country, various Christians were killed or left for refuge in other nations. It is evident that the journey of faith of the Vietnamese has parallels with the Exodus pilgrimage in the wilderness, as they have had to face many challenges to stand up for their faith.

Such as the Israelites in the wilderness, Vietnamese Christians have also blamed God, for disloyalty in the face of persecution, imprisonment from political rulers. They struggled with their faith and doubted about whether the God of Western people existed or not because in following God they always confronted challenges, even facing the death sentence. However, God still accompanies and guides the Church. The blood of the martyrs was not shed in vain. The fruit of the training experienced in the time of persecution is 117 Vietnamese martyrs and a strong Church which contributes many

missionaries to the universal Church in the present time.

Jesus joined with the two disciples as a companion walking and sharing on the Emmaus journey which helped them find relief from their hardships and sadness. For many Vietnamese refugees, especially refugees after the Vietnam War in 1975, faith in God is the only thing they could rely on. Because, in the country, they had to face repression from the new government in Vietnam, but if they left their country, they had to face the plundering of pirates, the uncertainty of storms on the sea and uncertainty about the life ahead.¹⁴ So, in fear and disappointment, God is the one that the refugees put their trust in, the one with whom they can share their story because they believe God is companionship with them on their migrant journey.

Conclusion

Exodus was the journey of the Israelites that profoundly contributed to the meaning of liberation of people from slavery both physical and spiritual and it also was the long process of training to purify people making them into the new nation. On the other hand, Emmaus the short journey that includes the companionship of Jesus as a stranger, provides an important lesson for Christians to help them realise God in their daily life. Both journeys show the presence and guidance of God in every situation. The biblical narrative of Exodus and the

¹³ **Michael Nguyen**, 'Verbum SVD: Museums Keepers and Mediators of Cultural Memory', *When the Core of Christianity Contradicts the Core of the Vietnamese Traditional Religion. Three Centuries of Persecution in Vietnam*, 61, no. 2,3 (2020), 344.

¹⁴ **Lesleyanne Hawthorne**, ed., *Refugee: The Vietnamese Experience* (Melbourne; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), xiii.

Emmaus journey form the foundation of Christian spirituality. They are maps that include the guide, the starting and ending points, the challenges, and methods to reach the ending points. For those who are on the pilgrimage of life, they can find themselves and their direction on these maps. However, how people can realise

their journey spiritual relative to the maps of the Exodus and Emmaus journeys? This is the problem with people who live in the secular world today because people want to have a journey that is wrapped by various security of materials, comfort and fame, but do not want to travel on a journey full of challenges.

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An Exploration of Spiritual Art in Australian Aboriginal Religions

Shouzheng Wang SVD



Introduction

Although indigenous people live in relatively primitive environments throughout Australia, their cultural and artistic development is quite advanced. Art is a vital part of the life of indigenous peoples, and they interact with their ancestors via their artistic aspirations. The period of dreams has not yet come to an end, and it continues to impact many parts of indigenous descendants' life in the form of dreams. Traditionally, aboriginal peoples have used painting, singing, and dancing to connect them to the Earth, connecting their history with the present, connecting the supernatural with reality, and allowing them to convey tales from their ancestors to their future generations. Through this essay, I will briefly present the histories of Aboriginal spiritual art. The function of art in Aboriginal religion

will then be discussed. Next, I will discuss the customary motifs and symbols found in Aboriginal art. Further, I will also go into detail about Australia's Catholic history and how it affected Aboriginal spiritual art. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on my own experiences of how the two spiritual traditions coexist in their lifestyle.

History of Aboriginal Spiritual Art

The Dreaming, also known as *Jukurrpa*, is a complex system of myths and beliefs that explains the world's origins, nature, and occupants, which has historically had an effect on Aboriginal spiritual art.¹ Aboriginal Australians' cultural values and sacred tales are the source of spiritual art, which it reflects the connection between people and the environment while also conveying the natural and spiritual world.² In Aboriginal communities, spiritual art is closely related to cultural inheritance and religious rituals.³ These artistic works are often created and passed down by elders in the community, who create spiritual art

¹ Fred R. Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art, Objects/Histories* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 17.

² Sylvie Poirier, *A World of Relationships: Itineraries, Dreams, and Events in the Australian Western Desert*, *Anthropological Horizons*, 28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 53.

³ Max Charlesworth, *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2005), 159.

works through handicrafts such as painting, carving, and weaving.⁴ In the beginning, Aboriginal people used natural pigments to create various patterns and symbols on rocks, bark, sand, and bodies.⁵ Therefore, these paintings are not only decorative, but also important media for conveying their myths, legends, rituals, and laws.

Role of Painting in Aboriginal Religion

Firstly, painting conveys both history and culture in Aboriginal religion. Aboriginal painting is a traditional art form, with patterns and symbols representing different meanings and stories. These stories and traditions have been passed down from generation to generation in indigenous communities, becoming the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples.⁶ Consequently, Aboriginal people can record their history and culture and pass it on to future generations through painting.

Secondly, Aboriginal religions express their principles and values through spiritual painting. In addition to their strong belief in interdependence, Indigenous people honour the relationships between nature, gods, and humanity in their paintings.⁷ The symbols

and designs of paintings are a reflection of their understanding of and respect for these relationships. As a result, Aboriginal people have adapted these values deeply into their daily lives, making them an important part of their cultural heritage.

Finally, painting is seen as a method of healing and prayer in Aboriginal traditions. Aboriginal people believe that by painting, they may speak with nature and God, as well as obtain blessings and favour.⁸ Thus, painting has evolved into a sacred instrument that aids people in obtaining spiritual harmony and peace when they have ceremonies.

Aside from painting being an art form, Australian Aboriginal religions value painting as a means of expressing native culture, beliefs, and values.

Traditional Patterns and Symbols used in Aboriginal Painting

There are lots of signs in aboriginal paintings which have some different meanings based on the aboriginal religion, background, and culture. The form and content of Australian Aboriginal paintings contrast by location and tribe, although they frequently include similar features such as dots, animals, and people.⁹

Dots:

The most fundamental component of indigenous art is the dot, which may take

Oxford University Press, 2006), 578.

⁸ Juergensmeyer, *The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions*, 582.

⁹ Finley, *Aboriginal Art of Australia*, 16.

⁴ Charlesworth, *Aboriginal Religions in Australia*, 160.

⁵ Carol Finley, *Aboriginal Art of Australia: Exploring Cultural Traditions, Art Around the World* (Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1999), 15.

⁶ Poirier, *A World of Relationships*, 54.

⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions*, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford:

on a variety of forms and stand in for objects like stars, water drops, and seeds.¹⁰ There are several interpretations for differences in dot size, colour, and arrangement. Large dots, for instance, might be used to symbolise significant places or events, whereas little dots can be used to represent auxiliary data or background. Moreover, dots can be used to hide information that white people do not understand from indigenous people.¹¹

Animals:

Animals are one of the most distinctive patterns in indigenous painting, representing the close connection and respect between indigenous people and nature.¹² Animals are not only important sources of food and companions in the lives of indigenous people, but also symbols of their ancestors and totems. For instance, kangaroos representing speed and strength, crows representing wisdom and creativity, and crocodiles representing danger and protection.¹³

People:

U-shaped is one of the most commonly used symbols in indigenous painting, which represents indigenous people's understanding and expression of themselves and society.¹⁴ The human body

has different forms and postures in indigenous paintings, such as front or side, standing or sitting, holding tools or weapons.¹⁵

Overall, Aboriginal painting is a valuable part of Australian Aboriginal culture, as it is a form of expression of their spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions.

History of Catholicism and its impact on Aboriginal Spiritual Art

Aboriginal spiritual painting in Australia has also developed and changed over time and under external influence, especially with the arrival of colonisers. The history of Australian Catholicism can be traced back to 1788, when the first batch of British colonisers arrived, including some Catholics.¹⁶ With the arrival of more immigrants and missionaries, Catholicism gradually grew and became the second largest religious group in Australia.¹⁷ During the process of missionary work, Catholic missionaries encountered many challenges, as the Aboriginal peoples of Australia had traditional beliefs that were completely different from Western culture.¹⁸ Because the traditional belief system of Aboriginal

¹⁰ Myers, *Painting Culture*, 57.

¹¹ Robyn Ferrell, *Sacred Exchanges: Images in Global Context, Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 31.

¹² Finley, *Aboriginal Art of Australia*, 25.

¹³ Wroth, "Australian Aboriginal Art Symbols and their Meanings."

¹⁴ Finley, *Aboriginal Art of Australia*, 28.

¹⁵ Wroth, "Australian Aboriginal Art Symbols and their Meanings."

¹⁶ Regina Ganter, Australian National University Press, and Aboriginal History Inc., *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls: European Missionary Agendas in Australia*, Aboriginal History Monographs (Acton, A.C.T.: ANU Press, 2018), 2.

¹⁷ Susan Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History: The Challenge of Aboriginal Art* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 79.

¹⁸ Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History*, 80.

people includes spiritual painting and totem symbols, which are the ways they connect with nature. However, there were significant differences between these traditional beliefs and Catholic beliefs, so missionaries had to find a way to integrate these belief systems in order to better spread Catholic faith.¹⁹ The influence of Catholicism on the spiritual painting of Aboriginal Australians is a complex and controversial topic.

Introduction of new religious symbols and meanings.

Firstly, Aboriginal people received new Christian symbols, stories, and meanings through Catholicism.²⁰ Aboriginal painters were inspired by these new religious ideas and imagery, which gave them abundant material for their paintings. For example, Aboriginal artists have included Christian religious motifs like crosses and biblical stories into their works.²¹ To spread and share their understanding of Catholicism and the impact of Christian faith, some Aboriginal painters started creating religious themed paintings. Hence, these religious themed creations have become new breakthroughs in indigenous painting and have influenced the breadth of themes in later indigenous painting.

¹⁹ **Finley**, *Aboriginal Art of Australia*, 42.

²⁰ **Ganter, Australian** National University Press, and Aboriginal History Inc., *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 3.

²¹ **Charlesworth**, *Aboriginal Religions in Australia*, 161.

Adoption of new materials and artistic techniques.

Secondly, Aboriginal painters were exposed to new creative mediums including canvas, colours, and brushes by Catholic missionaries.²² Additionally, they contributed European artistic methods like chiaroscuro and linear perspective. These gave indigenous artists the freedom to experiment with styles other than their customary ones. They developed more vibrant, realistic, and three-dimensional works of art.²³ Therefore, the addition of these fresh tools and materials greatly improved Aboriginal Australian art.

To sum up, the influence of Catholicism on the spiritual painting of Aboriginal Australians is multifaceted. It not only changes the expression forms and elements of indigenous art, but also brings new religious connotations and creative techniques to indigenous art.

Reflection on the Experiences of the Two Spiritual Traditions

Combining their traditional beliefs and culture with the Christian faith, some Aboriginal Australians have created spiritual paintings that reflect their unique and meaningful expressions of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.²⁴ I was fortunate to come to Australia to do an overseas training program (OTP), and I was assigned to Alice Spring and Santa Terresa

²² **Ganter, Australian** National University Press, and Aboriginal History Inc., *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 4.

²³ **Charlesworth**, *Aboriginal Religions in Australia*, 166.

²⁴ **Ganter, Australian** National University Press, and Aboriginal History Inc., *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls*, 12.

for my pastoral work for a year. There is a Catholic spirituality centre in Santa Teresa where Aboriginal women paint the crosses and different shapes in traditional way. I went there to help Aboriginal women for cleaning, driving them back and forth to the centre once a week. So, I have had some chances to talk with Aboriginal women about their painting on different shapes. At that time, I learned a lot about their culture, beliefs, and art, and also I felt their passion and creativity. The Catholic Aboriginal women expressed their faith and love for Jesus in their unique ways, especially by using their own totems, colours, symbols, and patterns to place Jesus in their own culture and environment, showcasing their connection with God, nature, and community.²⁵ In the process of painting, Aboriginal women also expressed their own feelings of love, trust, gratitude, and prayer towards Jesus. Each work reflects their personality and cultural characteristics, as well as their understanding and respect for the Christian faith. I would like to try to draw my own cross, but unfortunately, there was the rule only women could do the drawing in the community. Through these experiences, I not only appreciated the artistic talents of the Catholic Aboriginal people, but also gained a deeper understanding of their lifestyles and values. I think it was a very meaningful and unforgettable experience, which allowed me to see the exchange and meaning between different cultures, and also gave

me a deeper and broader understanding of painting on the crosses in their own spirituality.

Conclusion

To conclude, Australian Aboriginal spiritual painting is an art form that expresses Aboriginal culture, beliefs, and ways of life. It reflects Indigenous persons' reverence and gratitude for nature and Gods, as well as their care and responsibility for communities and families. Through this essay, I have briefly presented the histories of Aboriginal spiritual art. I have then introduced traditional motifs and symbols used in Aboriginal art, which show a form of expression of their spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions. Next, I have described the history of Catholicism in Australia and its impact on Aboriginal spiritual art. Further, I have explored the similarities and differences between the two Spiritual Traditions. Finally, I have reflected on how the two spiritual traditions can coexist and complement each other. It is important that the Catholic Church and Aboriginal people coexist and complement one another in building a multicultural and religious Australia, despite differences in cultures, beliefs, and spiritual paintings. Therefore, people should cherish and respect this phenomenon of mutual communication and integration.

²⁵ Lowish, *Rethinking Australia's Art History*, 82.

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Reflection from the Gospel

Shouzheng Wang SVD



Jesus the Cause of Division (Luke 12:49-53)

“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptised, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Reflection:

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the challenges and tensions that may arise

when a person chooses to follow the path of faith and discipleship.

After listening to this gospel, it may seem a bit contradictory or conflicting, because it appears to go against the image of Jesus as the prince of Peace. However, it reflects a deeper and more complex message, which is the consequences of practicing faith.

In the gospel, Jesus gives an example about the concept of internal family division, which may be one of the most challenging aspects in our life. Following Jesus can sometimes lead to family conflicts. Every time I read this gospel, it makes me to rethink the Chinese Catholic church, especially those who are from underground churches. In the Catholic families, some of them have joined the Patriotic church and some others joined underground churches, resulting in tension and disharmony, and even lack of communication between relatives. The “patriotic” churches like the “baptism” mentioned by Jesus in the gospel because they are restricted by the government's authority and control over religious practice. Meanwhile, the “fire” that Jesus speaks of can be seen in the strong and passionate faith of people who are from the underground church. Their beliefs are like fire, both purified and divided, because they refuse to compromise their beliefs and often face social isolation and government persecution.

So, this gospel reminds us that the journey of Christians is not always that easy. It requires sacrifice, which can sometimes lead to difficult choices and tense relationships. We pray that even in

the face of opposition and persecution, we have to persist in our faith, especially in strengthening our vocation to become a Divine Word Missionary in the world.

Journey of Discovery on Palm Island

Thuc Truong SVD



Life is a journey, and leaving has helped me understand myself better. The OTP overseas training program aims to observe and understand local cultures, providing a chance to immerse myself in a service-oriented setting, improve my language skills, and deeply grasp the culture I serve.

After 4 months on Palm Island, I've learned many interesting things. First, I spent a lot of time observing their culture, lifestyle, and thoughts. This is my first time living, experiencing, and serving in a foreign place with a different culture and language. Learning begins with observation, and there are many new things to explore, motivating me to understand history and culture. It's not

easy when faced with numerous historical stories or the wounds of the people here.

Palm Island, about 80 km from Townsville, is not only beautiful but also holds a long history. With around 4000 residents from over 40 different tribes, the initial days felt familiar, partly due to a climate similar to Vietnam, easing my adaptation. The friendly people often greeted me, but language limitations posed a challenge. Nonetheless, I tried to integrate into the new environment.

A significant part of my week is spent working full-time at St. Michael school, where I support the dedicated teaching staff. This job allows me to interact with students and learn about their lifestyles, thoughts, and culture, which has been very valuable. I also learn English with a teacher in school, providing an opportunity to improve my English. My duties involved picking up and dropping off students and assisting the teacher, fostering a closer understanding of the students, especially those with autism or hyperactivity.

Beyond school and parish responsibilities, my time on Palm Island involved personal explorations and connections. Engaging with residents, joining fishing expeditions, and bonding with indigenous people transformed me. These interactions expanded my understanding of their culture and built deeper relationships. Exploring the

island's cultural centre and library delved into the history of the Aboriginal people, enhancing my appreciation for their rich cultural heritage.

In moments of respite, gardening, and fishing brought personal joy and contributed to the community by providing food. Reflecting on the past 4 months, I'm aware of profound changes within me. The amalgamation of culture, people, and experiences left an indelible mark, a daily reminder of the resilience and unyielding spirit of the Aboriginal people in the face of historical adversity.

This program acted as a catalyst, deepening my commitment to my religious vocation and fuelling a stronger determination to serve the community,

especially those in need. Looking ahead, I anticipate the coming months with eagerness, recognising that the journey is far from over. There's much to learn, and countless lives await understanding and compassion.

As I continue this remarkable journey, I express profound gratitude for experiences enriching my personal and spiritual growth. Each day on Palm Island presents new opportunities to learn, connect, and contribute. With an open heart and steadfast commitment, I eagerly anticipate the unfolding of the next phase of my pastoral internship, embracing the chance to further serve and understand this incredible community.

My Initial Experience in Australia

Zouchuan Yang SVD



Time flies by like a fleeting moment, I have been studying in Australia for eight months. recap on these eight months, I have gained many different experiences in terms of faith, culture, and life. I have gained a lot from them, and at the same time I have gained a lot. Many challenges. Next, I would like to describe my feelings in two broad aspects.

The first aspect is the experience of faith. I still remember that when I attended the English Mass for the first time, I couldn't understand it at all and couldn't respond. I even had some doubts about whether it was meaningful to participate in the Mass. However, after a while, I was able to respond when I hold the order. The same thing that made me feel overwhelmed and confident was the monthly mission mass. When the mass

was about to end, everyone had to make an introduction to introduce own. I was very nervous at first time. Gradually, I get comfortable, I have the same feeling during the social time after mass. At first, I was worried about chatting with others because I didn't understand them at all and didn't know how to respond. Gradually I started to gain confidence, even though sometimes I still I don't understand, everyone is enjoying the chatting process and practicing my English at the same time. Australia is a multicultural society, everyone uses their home culture to express their faith. They all have different customs and habits. Through different ways of expressing their faith, I try to communicate with them and gain different faith experiences.

The second aspect is in life. Different environment, different learning, different community life. Everyday dinner time is not only about eating but also about sharing the day's work and study, also have some interesting things. But when I was in China, the customs were completely different. People rarely talked at the dinner table unless it was some big party. Now I am try to find some topics to share my study and life. There are always language challenges, but I try to adapt, the environment of my life help me express and understand. Many things in my life are first experiences, such as the first time to

join in different forms of social dinners, the first time to Use English completely in class and the first time to go to Sydney. These different experiences are bringing me challenges, give me surprise, as well as help me grow up.

The experiences I shared are only a small part. Recap on my life, I feel happy about my growth and remind me there are still many challenges to face. These different experiences help me open up and become more mature.

150th SVD Anniversary Prayer

Holy Triune God, source of life and communion, We thank you for inspiring Saint Arnold Janssen to found the Society of the Divine Word. We extend our gratitude to those who preceded us, and to all collaborators in mission.

United to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, we are his missionary disciples who proclaim the Good News of life and joy, alongside works of friendship and compassion for a wounded world.

With your Holy Spirit, renew us, Lord, strengthen our journey as pilgrims of hope, and in the face of new challenges, may we generate responses with creativity, fidelity and synodality.

Holy Mary, Mother of the Divine Word, guide our mission with signs that build communion and promote participation. May the Light of your Son, which overcomes darkness, illuminate our hearts, and all of humanity, and creation.

Amen



WITNESSING
TO THE
LIGHT
FROM
EVERYWHERE
FOR
EVERYONE

DIVINE WORD
MISSIONARIES

CELEBRATING

150t

SVD
1875-2025



witnessing
to the

LIGHT

from everywhere
for every one



THE DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO THE
SVD ANNUAL

MISSION DAY 2024



UNIVERSITY
OF DIVINITY



Yarra
Theological
Union



Dorinda Maru College
SVD AUSTRALIA
Formation House

WITNESSING TO THE LIGHT

FROM EVERYWHERE FOR EVERYONE

Saturday, 12th October 2024

TIMES

3:00 PM - MISSION DAY SEMINAR
6:00 PM - MISSION DAY EUCHARIST
7:00 PM - MULTI-CULTURAL MEAL

WHERE?

YARRA THEOLOGICAL UNION
98 ALBION ROAD,
BOX HILL, VIC. 3128

MORE DETAILS TO COME



DORISH MARU COLLEGE COMMUNITY 2023

Albano, Yon, Peter, Linh, Luong, Elmer, Christopher, Rass
Cuong, Jakub, Krisna, Khoa, Mengjie, Jacob, Gusty



The Divine Word Missionaries in Australia

100 Albion Road, Box Hill, VIC 3128