

Cross-Cultural Ministry: The Case of the Filipino Priests in Canada

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From the moment of his birth the customs into which [an individual] is born shape his experience and behavior. By the time he can talk, he is the little creature of his culture.

– Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* [1934], ch. I

1. Introduction: Filipino Catholic Migration

This study on the Filipino priests working in Canada is about the interaction between Canadian culture and Philippine culture in the context of ministry.¹ The study tries to answer four questions. First, what are the challenges of Canadian culture on Filipino priests who practice their ministry in this North American country? Second, how do the Filipino priests react to those challenges? Third, what are the contributions of the Filipino priests to Canada? Fourth, if more Filipino priests will be needed to serve the Canadian church and other developed countries, what programs are to be made in order to better equip them?

Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (nos. 18-24) teaches that the concept of evangelization has to be taken in the broad sense of doing what Christ did. Mission today therefore will include the

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areas of dialogue with culture, with issues of justice and poverty, and with non-Christian religions. How do the Filipino missionaries cope with these kinds of dialogues?

As vocations are drying up in Europe and in North America, help from elsewhere, especially developing countries, may be a part of the answer. The lessons from this study may help policy makers and future priests who will be working in cross-cultural ministry.

Given the wide scope of the topic, we limit the study only to the Filipino priests working in the archdiocese of Toronto, Ontario, which is the biggest city of Canada and also where the bulk of its population is found. We only study those in the active ministry; meaning, we exclude those priests who have retired. The data is limited to the period when this study was done, namely, from June to October 2007, the five months when we were in Canada. Hence the study is like a snapshot which freezes an action in a particular time.

We gathered the data from different sources. First, we gathered data from questionnaires. Of the 30 priests in Toronto in 2007, seven were pastors, 13 served as associate pastors, three were chaplains working in hospitals and educational institutions, while the rest were in residence or visitors. Of the questionnaires sent to the thirty priests in Toronto, only ten came back, representing one third of the subjects. Furthermore, we went deeper by interviewing selected respondents. In order to protect their identity, we gave aliases to the interviewees. Then we also based our study on personal observations and from published studies. Let us situate first the study in the historical context of Canadian migration in general.

Historical Background of Canadian Migration

The Canadian Immigration Act of 1910 was pro-European. This bias was changed in 1967 when Canada selectively opened its doors to all countries as based on a point system of qualification. The reason for the change was financial because the birthrate was going down, that is, to generate "enough people into the workforce to pay the older generation's pensions at a time when the Canadian birth rate (mostly thanks to the pill) was falling like a stone" (Dyer 2001:49). Under Pierre Trudeau as prime minister, the changes were put under the Immigration Act of 1976 which fostered the

policy of multiculturalism. At present "Canada takes in about twice as many people, in proportion to its population, as does the United States and four times as many as the United Kingdom" (:46).

The Euro-Canadian settlers cannot claim to be the original people of Canada because ahead of them were the North American Indians. The peopling of Canada came through different waves. The first-comers were the ancestors of the Amerindians who crossed the Bering Strait some 15,500 years ago, the same group that probably reached Tierra del Fuego in South America. The next wave were the Athapaskan people who crossed from Siberia to Alaska. Then came the Inuits who came around 800 CE. These three groups are lumped today as the First People or First Nation. Then came the Europeans: first the French between 1608 and 1759 and the English-speaking colonists from the British Isles from 1780 onwards. The French and Anglo-Saxon colonizers eventually out-numbered the original Amerindian people. Later came the Germans, the Italians, the Portuguese, the Polish and other Europeans and later by people from the rest of the whole world.

Canada's ethnic profile "matches the global distribution of the human population [and consequently] Canada, more than anywhere else, is truly becoming the world in one country" (:46). The opening the doors improved the economics of Canada as well as its other aspects. "Toronto has one-twelfth of Canada's population but one-quarter of the country's immigrants" (Vincent 2001:55). Melting pot is the metaphor that describes American migration, meaning that one has first to assimilate American culture before asserting one's original nationality. But the Canadian counterpart is the mosaic, where every tile remains temporarily distinct. That is why the Canadian government sponsors and encourages summer ethnic festivals to accentuate the countries of origin. But the overall goal is that in the second and third generation of the immigrants, their descendants become truly Canadians. Hence the policy of multiculturalism is meant to assist the transition phase.

While original Catholic population was in Montreal and Quebec, the Protestants were in the English-speaking side. That is why the white Protestants, especially the Anglicans, settled in Toronto and where the Catholics were the minority. Toronto as a diocese was erected in 1841 with Irish and Scottish Catholics as the base. This population increased gradually. Likewise the original

clergy were mostly Irish. One can see the Irish and English names of the first eight bishops/archbishops of Toronto. The first break of the tradition was the appointment of the ninth archbishop and later cardinal of Toronto, Aloysius Matthew Ambrozic, who came as a teen-age refugee from Slovenia. He retired in 2006 and was replaced by Archbishop Thomas Collins.

With the coming of new immigrants also came the priests to take care of them. For example, the droves of Italian immigrants necessitated of Italian priests who were not enough. The Scalabrini missionaries from Italy could not cope with the demand. The lack of Italian priests explains why some Italians, who are predominantly Catholic, became Protestants because of the lack of Italian clergy.

According to the Catholic directory of the Toronto archdiocese, in 1998 it had 1,420,395 Catholics or around one-fourth of a total population of 4,147,680. The figures of 2007 show that Toronto had 5,066,825 inhabitants, of which 1,693,690 were Catholics or more than one-third of the total population. In 2007 Toronto had 386 diocesan priests and 464 religious priests from 90 religious orders. Hence the religious were more than one-half (83 percent). Therefore the archdiocese depends on the religious congregations to recruit and for staff replacements in their parishes. The archdiocese also has 116 permanent deacons; 56 brothers and 643 sisters.

The said Catholic directory lists 33 linguistic or ethnic chaplaincies. Toronto's linguistic richness almost represents the whole world. The Sunday masses are suited to the linguistic diversity. The directory of the Toronto archdiocese lists the following linguistic and ethnic chaplaincies: African, Arabic, Brazilian, Caribbean faithful, Chaldean (Aramaic), Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin), Croatian, Czech, English, Eritrean/Ethiopian, Filipino, French, German, Ghanaian, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Korean, Latin, Lithuanian, Malayalam (Kerala, India), Maltese, Native People, Polish, Portuguese, Punjab, sign (for deaf and hearing impaired), Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Syriac, Tamil, Vietnamese. While masses in English are celebrated in all parishes, the next in frequency is in Italian, followed third by Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. Filipino comes next with masses celebrated in three parishes of Toronto. Present also in Toronto are Eastern Churches in commu-

nion with Rome (such as the Alexandrian Rite, Antiochene Rite, Byzantine Rite, Chaldean Rite, Armenian Rite).

In terms of parishes, the demographics have changed. The first churches were situated in areas of Catholic population, often a few blocks apart because each church served a distinct linguistic clientele. But as the Catholic population got mainstream, the populace gradually moved from downtown Toronto to the suburbs, partly because of high prices and the availability of cars. During my stay in Toronto I noticed that parishes which have Italian and Portuguese masses were attended by senior citizens; children and young people were absent. What is the explanation of this phenomenon? One pastor explained that these old parishioners just walk in, meaning they do not use cars because they reside around the neighborhood of the church. That the young people are absent means either that they have moved out or that they have been assimilated into the Canadian culture and prefer English for the liturgy. The said pastor explained that these old people refuse to move out with their children to the suburbs and prefer to stay in the cozy old homes downtown. And as these senior citizens die out, so will be the demand for masses in Italian and English. In another parish, the pastor told me that he foresees that within ten years there will be no demand for Italian liturgy. This explanation may apply to other linguistic groups in Toronto.

On the other hand, the parishes in the suburbs are separated by several miles. They are also designed to accommodate twice or more people with cars than the downtown churches which often lack parking spaces. Cars were not common then. Perhaps one reason for the huge capacity of these suburban churches is to maximize on the priests' availability. These new parishes have Catholic schools (elementary and high school) entrusted to them. Although the parish priests do not administer the schools which have state funding, they take care of the spiritual side of the students, teachers and staff.

Filipino Catholics

The Canadian Census of 2001 reported that Canada has 327,550 Filipinos, of which 82 percent are Catholics. Fifty percent of them or 115,132 lived in Toronto (Fay 2005:31). The first wave

in the late sixties and early seventies were the professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers. The second wave were the parents of the first wave, most often to baby-sit for their grandchildren. The third wave in the early nineties were Filipino families. The fourth wave were the nannies and domestic helpers, and the fifth wave were those with business visas. The change of nature of the waves may also reflect Canada's manpower needs.

Prior to 1970, middle-level professionals made up 50 to 70 percent of total Filipino immigrants. The clerical group grew steadily through the 1970s. In the 1980s, the service class doubled, then tripled, to become the largest category of immigrants to date. One reason for this was the 1981 policy that gave domestics the right to apply for immigrant status after two years of residency. With the tightening of requirements concerning immigrants who might compete with Canadians for jobs, the easiest and fastest way of coming to Canada for Filipino women was to be a domestic (Crisostomo 1996:28).

Filipino Catholics in Canada personally support their parishes and are the warm bodies that fill the churches, sing in the choir and join other activities. But in terms of monetary contribution, the newcomers, who are used to the Philippine system, only give a little. Some of them have low-paying jobs, as nannies. But those who are established follow the system of donating through envelopes. According to a Jesuit historian: "Over the past thirty years Filipino Canadians have made significant contributions to the energy of the Canadian nation in their ability to acclimatize and in their ready willingness to resolve inevitable cultural clashes" (Fay 2005:59). Fay continues:

Since the 1990s, Filipinos have dominated the field of domestic employment in Canada. They are treasured as domestics because they are helpful in the home and most loving with children. To the business community, Filipinos bring excellent administrative skills and strong company loyalty. They are positive and cheerful and have a vigorous commitment to the Canadian Catholic Church. They are generally from middle class families who are attracted to medical, teaching, and caring professions and are less intrigued with the world of business, economics, and politics. (Fay 2005:56)

Like in all Catholic dioceses in the world, parishes are considered either as territorial parishes or personal parishes or both. Personal parishes are non-territorial because take care of an ethnic group. Fr. Rene Gallardo, a Filipino religious assigned to a Toronto parish, says: "During his term Cardinal Ambrozic made it very clear: personal churches should have at least one mass in English, which is the national language. For example, we have personal churches and they like having masses in Portuguese. But the Portuguese national churches are obliged to have one mass in English/French. For example here [in our parish], although it is composed mostly of Portuguese-speakers, we still have masses in Italian and in English." In other words, normal parishes should have masses in English while national parishes should at least have an English mass once a week. Because Filipinos speak English, they attend masses in all churches where English is used.

Filipino Catholic priests. With the arrival of Filipino immigrants also arose the need of Filipino priests. The first to arrive in the early 1980s was Fr. Daniel Palillo and followed in 1983 by Fr. Rudulfo Imperial; both are now retired. Fr. Ted Valencia, a Basilian priest who was educated in Toronto, established the chaplaincy for Filipino Catholics in Toronto. It was based at St. Basil's Church in downtown Toronto. The chaplaincy office was moved in 1985 to Blessed John XXIII church at Don Mills. The John XXIII parish was originally under Fr. Rudy Imperial. A successor, Fr. Vincent Lazarte, says: "When I came to the parish, most of the devotions were already there. I had just to continue what was there in place. If you look at the Filipino chaplaincy, you have groups like El Shaddai, Couples for Christ, *Bukas Loob sa Diyos*, the Magnificats – these are usually charismatic communities. There are also a slew of popular devotions – these are also groups with their sets of officers: Santo Niño, Black Nazarene, Perpetual Help, Knights of Columbus, Daughters of Isabela."

In 2007 the archdiocese had 30 Filipino priests, 24 of whom were diocesan. Fr. Lazarte remembers: "In those early days, it was easy to enter Canada. The bishop did not object because if you have served the [Philippine] diocese for a long time, they will allow you to go. When the papers are arranged, assignment is immediately given. If you served for a while, they will give you the option to stay here." Although there were attempts to recruit early

as seminarians, the policy was discontinued due to the high rate of drop-outs.

What are the motivations of the Filipino priests to migrate to Canada? The various motivations may overlap each other. Here we must distinguish the motives of the religious clergy and those of the diocesan clergy. When Filipinos join international religious congregations, they submit themselves to the goals of their respective institutions which sometimes entail assignment overseas. Now the policies may differ for the diocesan clergy. One diocese in northern Luzon has a mutual arrangement with a diocese in Hawaii where Filipino clerics are allowed to have exposure for some years, in the hope that ideas and practices gained in the exposure will enrich the parish when they return to the Philippines. Since the retirement age for parish priests in the Philippines is 65 (in contrast to the Canadian norm of 75 years), Philippine bishops gladly allow their senior clergy to go abroad for a period of time. Another diocese sends some of their clergymen on rotation basis for fund-raising. Of course, we cannot over-rule the financial angle. The lure of a higher standard of living is there. That is why some religious priests leave their congregation to become diocesan priests and look for a bishop in Canada. If there is a brain-drain of Filipino professional health workers and technicians to go abroad because of financial reasons, the same motivation can also apply to some clerics.

But not everything is money. Fr. Nestor Apao, who was ordained in Rome and studied there later, worked in the seminary of his diocese for seven years. When he was allowed by his bishop to work in Canada, he applied as a chaplain in a Catholic hospital. Recounts Fr. Apao:

When I applied at the hospital, I remember the priest-director of the chaplaincy who asked me, "How much salary do you want?" I was shocked. I was never asked that question during my priestly ministry because I was teaching in a seminary. That question threw me off balance. I said, "I don't know. What do the other chaplains receive?"

Another motive is to relocate to North America because most or many of the immediate family members reside there. A diocesan priest who had studied earlier in Canada no longer felt at home

after he returned to the Philippines after studies. His bishop allowed him to migrate to Canada.

2. The Challenges of Cross-Cultural Ministry

From the data gathered, the challenges which Filipino priests face in Toronto are more focused on the culture than in other areas such as dialogue with poverty and with other religions. When Filipino priests come to Canada, they carry with them their model of culture and their model of the Church. The model of culture also influences the model of church. How the Filipino priests face and adapt themselves to these changes of models will be the focus of this section.

Here we take the anthropological definition of culture, meaning the acquired set of physical, social, and religious practices and values which a group of people have. Each member of a culture acquires its way of looking at reality, values, beliefs, social orientation, including one's taste of food and other aspects. One important aspect of culture is the way of truth-telling. In the Asian setting, as in the Philippines, the over-all value is harmony with others, with nature, and with oneself.

Truth telling. Because Philippine culture stresses harmony in society; it avoids confrontation (Mercado 1974:72-91; 2005: 180-183). Hurting words are avoided because they can last for a long time. Hence the typical Filipino prefers to indirectly express the truth. For example, even the terms *no* or *yes* have nuances which can only be understood in the context. Because saying no may offend the other party, the expression 'Maybe' or 'I will try' is used. Requests are also done indirectly and both parties know the indirect procedure. Conflicts are patched up through mediation. That is why some traditional Filipino tribes still negotiate through spokespersons who negotiate in terms of metaphors. On the other hand, Western culture which stresses truth is reflected in its either – or form of logic is also reflected in the abundance of lawyers. Frankness, even to the point of bluntness, is the rule. Now in Canada, the culture stresses being direct in truth-telling. Parishioners will praise or criticize the priest's homily. Issues are frankly discussed where quarrels can follow; but after the discussion everything is settled and differences are made up.

Now let us take the case of a Filipino priest who is the associate pastor of a Caucasian pastor. The former who has the culture of indirectly telling the truth and who needs new eyeglasses may say: "Father, my eyeglasses are broken." The message means the pastor will provide the cash for the new eyeglasses. But the Caucasian pastor, who is not culturally trained to hear the nuances, will most likely not see the point. He will say, "So what do you need?" The moral therefore is that the Filipino goes to the point. And instead of saying "maybe" or "I will try", he has to frankly say: "Father, I cannot take the seven o'clock mass because I will be busy that time." In group meetings, Filipinos may keep the issues to themselves and not share their sentiments to the greater group. The culture demands that the issue be aired frankly.

Communication. Being understood through linguistic communication is another factor. Whereas native-born Ontarians have no problem in communicating in English, immigrants whose first language is not English face that problem. The *Encarta* encyclopedia enumerates the various kinds of English, such as Hong Kong English, Singapore English, Caribbean English and so forth. The long international list includes Filipino English. Filipino priests who come to Canada, depending on their various abilities, will have to adapt to the spoken language. Another part of communication is the choice of categories. Philippine bamboos can grow taller than ordinary trees and have certain characteristics. One priest said that when he was speaking of the traits of the Philippine bamboo, his audience in Canada, who were used to seeing only the tiny ornamental bamboo in pots, did not understand the message.

Social philosophy. Filipinos by nature are in-group oriented. The in-group begins with their extended family, to their neighborhood, gangs, school-batch, province groups, etc. It is similar to the concept of the Japanese *batsu* or the *wantok* system of Papua New Guinea. The value of the in-group most often prevails over individual needs. In terms of social obligation, duty prevails over individual right. On the other hand, Canadian culture, like other parts of the West, stresses the individual and the nuclear family. Individualism, individual rights over duty and independence are programmed since childhood.

The differences in social philosophy explains the nature of the rectory of a diocesan Filipino priest. Says Fr. Mark Chavez: "In

the Philippines you have your nephews and nieces, your spinster sisters living in the rectory. Here [in Canada] there is none. Here you have a secretary, a janitor and maybe a housekeeper who cleans the house for you. But here you are alone. You can save their salary if you do it alone. Can you be alone in a big house?" The Filipino priest in Canada then has to learn to lifestyle of being an individual and find his niche in an individualistic society. This requires a shift from a group-oriented culture to learning to be alone in an individualistic culture.

Food as culture. Differences in food as culture plays its role. What the individual has been trained to eat since childhood will also determine his later taste for life. Filipinos, like the Indonesian and other Asian people, are used to eating rice in all its forms of preparation. Rice is served for breakfast, lunch, and supper. "If you can't eat rice, you feel weak; I get a headache," said one Filipino priest. "At least I must have rice for lunch time." On the other hand, rice is rarely found in the Canadian diet. Potato, bread, pasta are the staple food. If the pastor, who is a Caucasian follows his food culture, like eating corn flakes for breakfast or pasta for lunch, the Filipino assistant priest will not insist on his own diet preference in order not to be out of place.

During an archdiocesan-sponsored course on communication and culture for newly arrived non-Canadian clerics, reports Fr. Chavez: "It was a workshop for Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipinos. In the course we were asked to report of our culture shock in Canada. A Vietnamese priest said he was quite shocked because in the parish where he was assigned, there was no rice. And the pastor was an Italian who ate pasta. And the pastor said, 'If you want rice, go out! Cook your own rice!'" Getting used to the Canadian food is one of the requirements of acculturation. One survival strategy for new Filipino priests is to get invited by Filipino parishioners for meals. One priest said that he ate out on week-ends to restaurants of his choice. Toronto has a lot of Filipino restaurants.

Another cultural feature is that in the Philippines, one can enter any house during meal time and will be gladly invited to share the meal, no matter how meager it may be. Inviting to share a meal is a part of the culture. Fr. Lazarte notes: "Here, if you are not expected, even at meal time, they won't feed you. You just wait there. If you invite others for a meal, you must take the

exact number. The food is exactly for those invited. Even in children's party, only children are invited, and you are not, even if you come from a distant place. In the Philippines no worry about unexpected guests."

Model of the Church

Says Msgr. Giuseppe Fabro, who works at the Toronto chancery: "All of us are products of our heritage, of our background. And I think one of the difficulties of priests who come from other countries is that they have a model of church already established in them. It must be difficult for them to come into what is perceived as different model of church." The differences may be in (1) the model of the relationship between the profane and the sacred, (2) the priest as a professional, (3) the perception on the role of the laity, (4) the organization of the parish, and (5) the sacraments and devotions.

The Profane and the Sacred. In traditional Philippine culture the profane and the sacred intermingle. For example, prayers and rituals are part of clearing a land for farming, in the rites of planting and harvesting. Although the Philippine government has embraced the American brand of separation of church and state, still one finds interfaith invocation during public functions (Mercado 2005:131-150).

On the other hand, the Canadian government has been pushing that all religious feasts be non-denominational. Thus the Christmas season has been consciously promoted as the winter holiday and Easter as the summer holiday or the harbinger of summer. Instead of greeting "Merry Christmas," its counterpart of "Happy Holiday" has been emphasized. This means that Christmas cribs cannot be displayed in public places. But the Jews, Muslims, Hindus have objected to that lumping of their respective holidays. While the United States still keeps "In God We Trust" in its legal tender, Canada has no counterpart.

This separation of the profane and the sacred has implications in the ministry. Fr. George Uy comments on this issue:

In terms of religious practice, there is really a clear separation between religious practice and secular culture. Even-

tually it has affected us. We would be behaving in those ways. We could easily discern which realm we are in. There are Catholic principles in the Catholic realm. When you deal with secular matters, there are just some things which you have to accept. Sometimes there is a clash. For example, attitudes on sexuality: how do you preach on issues affecting sexual life styles when the government, based on the charter of rights and freedoms, says there should be no discrimination in terms of sexual orientation? How will you preach against homosexuality without being arraigned in court for preaching discrimination? You have to learn to speak in a way that is embracing and not alienating. It is really tough to negotiate those two waters. You don't have to sacrifice your values and at the same time not alienate people. I guess it is a challenge in your ministry.

Priesthood as a profession. The priesthood is both a call or vocation and a profession. In the Philippines the priesthood is considered more as a calling or a vocation than as a profession. Having a vocation means that one is theoretically on duty twenty-four hours a day for sick calls and other emergencies. Parishioners claim to have the right to call on the pastor any time of the day, even while he is eating. Appointments are seldom necessary. The demand for the celebration of holy masses can be overwhelming. Masses are celebrated in shopping malls, in funeral parlors, cemeteries, and even in houses. Baptisms can run to the dozens. Funerals are also many. Then there are weekly devotions like Mother of Perpetual Help. St. Jude and seasonal devotions of Christmas and of Lent. Groups like Couples for Christ, covenant families, Life in the Spirit Seminars can also be demanding.

But the Filipino interviewees said in Canada the concept of the priesthood is more of a profession than as a vocation. The priest is a professional like a doctor or psychologist who keeps office hours. That means dealing with parishioners also has to be done professionally in the office. Because appointments are observed, to see the parish priest outside office hours and appointments will be hard. Even getting to see the bishop will need an early reservation. Reservation for funerals and holy masses must also be scheduled. One parish I know requires a month's time for reservation for masses, which is quite too early in Philippine standards. Observes Fr. Mario Puno: "In the Philippines you are

on the go 24 hours. The rectory there is open all the time when somebody has a problem. But the rectories here are more private. It was really different for me." And Mondays are the usual day-offs of the clergy. Some parishes have no masses on Mondays because it is the pastor's day off.

Is the reason because of the difference between rural culture and urban culture? The lack of technology (when there were no cell phones yet) in rural culture may spawn a set of practices in contrast to urban culture with its corresponding practices. While this may be partly true, another factor is the interpersonal nature of Philippine culture where the human person is more important than rules (Mercado 1974:92-104). Furthermore, the design of buildings, which protect and insulate its dwellers in winter and summer, may affect the dwellers' social philosophy. This in contrast to tropical buildings which are open and crowd-friendly. At any rate I do not see a strong dichotomy between rural and urban culture in Metro Manila. In fact studies have shown that Philippine rural culture also thrives in the urban setting (Mendez-Jocano 1974:38-391).

In fairness to the Canadian clergymen, I have seen some of them on call twenty-fours a day when it is their turn to take care of emergency calls in hospitals. Parish work is not only about sacraments because it also involves Catholic school visitations, running baptism and confirmation classes, bible studies, fund-raising and other pastoral concerns. The observation about clerics acting as professionals in Canada came from the interviews, the judgement of Filipino priests who have experienced the priestly ministry in both countries. This controversial topic on stereotypes may be researched further.

Another aspect of professionalization is the salary. In Toronto the clergy are salaried according to a pay scale. After serving ten years, an associate pastor's salary is raised and made equal to pastor's salary. Likewise the category of administrator differs from the one of pastor. An administrator can be changed according to the need but a pastor is secure of the tenure of six years. There are also a corresponding church insurance and government insurance. Canadian welfare includes free doctor, medicine, hospitalization and insurance. But in the Philippines the traditional system was based on stipends, meaning those of bigger parishes get higher

compensation than those in smaller parishes. Although the system is gradually being changed to the salary system in some Philippine dioceses, the financial angle is still fluid.

The workload of a priest in Canada is definitely much less than that in the Philippines. The interviewees said that Canadian priests complain as overworked if they have celebrated three masses on Sunday, something Filipinos think as light in Philippine standards. While canon law limits three masses as the maximum which a priest can celebrate on Sundays, pastoral reasons make Filipino priests to exceed that limit.

Role of laity. Msgr. Fabro says:

I am not familiar with the Filipino culture. But there are some cultures which look at women differently. There are some who look at the role of the laity in the church differently. The sharing of administration, the sharing of responsibility – for some cultures – the priest is the one who does all that. I think those are some of the difficulties that priests coming from other cultures, where the culture is so priest-centered that the people leave everything to the priest to run things. But if the laity have their role, it creates some kind of angst for priests. We had some priests who over-stepped their responsibility, have basically led their parishes away because they have not engaged the people in their ministry as priests. It makes its more difficult for them to work.

The pre-Vatican II theology of being priest-centered has long been in effect in the Philippines. But the reforms of Vatican II with the empowerment of the laity have slowly and reluctantly been growing in the Philippines. Another aspect in Philippine culture is the high esteem for clerics. Historically the position of parish priest was higher than the town mayor. Many traditional parishes in the Philippines are still priest-centered. Although empowerment of the laity has been mouthed, not a few bishops and parish priests have been reluctant to give that power. On the other hand, the laity in Canada is more awakened. Unlike the Philippines, several Canadian parishes have permanent lay deacons who perform ministries short of celebrating the Eucharist and confirmation. The priest is just another professional in the parish. The newly-arrived Filipino priests in Canada have to adjust to the role of the laity.

Parishes as organized in terms of families. During the Philippine colonial times, Spain provided the clergy and paid their salary. The part of the laity was through labor in building the churches. Hence weekly collection was not a part of the practice and therefore voluntary. The parish earns its keep partly from the sacraments and other stole fees. Although parishes are territorial in the Philippines, the parishioners are free to attend to the church of their choice. Professionals, members of charismatic groups, prefer to attend the services in their non-territorial parishes.

But the North American practice of parish membership is registered by family. Member families get a registration number. The families support the parish by their weekly support through envelopes which have the membership number written on them. Besides the weekly donation through envelopes there are also second collections for specified purposes. Baptisms and marriages also have donations (which are not considered as stole fees) for the church and for the minister. All donations in envelopes are computerized. At the end of the calendar year the parishioners are given a receipt of their total donations for the whole year and they may present these receipts to the government for tax deduction purposes. Money such as loose coins and bills not placed in envelopes are not counted. In return the pastor will furnish the sacramental and other church needs of the parishioners. The non-registered faithful have the right to all the sacraments. Newly-arrived Filipino lay persons tend to continue their Philippine practice. Another reason for their meager donation is because many of them support a family back home, because they accumulate their savings to buy a home and a car, and adjust to the Canadian standard of living. But as they get into the Canadian way of life, they eventually join the envelope system.

Another feature of the Philippine church is the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC), a development from Vatican II (Giordano 1988). It means organizing the parish by communities which are often centered around their far-flung chapels. The community is then responsible for their liturgy, for solving their own problems and running their respective communities. It implies frequent meetings in houses of member families. But such a practice may not be feasible in Canada. Says Fr. Lazarte:

Many things in the Philippines cannot be introduced here like the Basic Ecclesial Community because you cannot just bring people to your house. Here [in Canada], if you visit, you must first call and have an appointment. You cannot visit them on weekdays because they have work the following day. You cannot also eat there because they have to prepare. They arrive at 6:00 PM from work, then they want to do the laundry and rise the following day early for work. They are only free on week-ends, but that is also the time when we work. I understand why people are happy on Friday, because Saturday and Sunday are near, when you can sleep longer. You have to sleep early on weekdays because you have to wake up early at 5:00 AM, leave at 6:00 to avoid the traffic. But in the Philippines, any day is like any day. That is why the BEC won't work here.

Hence migrant Filipino priests also have to adjust to the Canadian system of running parishes. While Canadian parishes do not have the Basic Ecclesial Communities, the lay ministries work for the objectives of the BECs.

The Sacraments and Popular Devotions. Another difference between the Philippines and Canada is in the celebration of the sacraments and popular devotions. Because the population is mostly Catholic, the churches cannot accommodate the crowd. In big cities like Manila, to have masses celebrated in smaller chapels and even in side streets is common. Moreover, masses are celebrated in shopping malls, in funeral homes, cemeteries, and even in private homes, reminiscent perhaps of the early Church as *ecclesia domestica*. But in Canada masses are celebrated only in churches, except perhaps for the disabled who cannot walk. Special permission from the bishop is needed for celebrating masses in the park because the park is for all religions and where people can dance and play aloud music.

Visiting Filipino priests tend to continue that practice when they visit Filipino friends in Toronto. Says Gallardo:

A lot of complaints have been filed. Some newcomer Filipinos want private masses at their homes. But old-timers know the policy and don't want to and are considered conservative. If a priest who celebrates home masses is known, he is given a warning. But here we celebrate only in churches. Fiesta masses outside the church need the permission of the bishop.

The Canadian church expects good homilies in Eucharistic celebrations. At the beginning of every mass, the announcement distinguishes who is the celebrant and who is the homilist. In the tradition before Vatican II, the sacraments were emphasized but not the homily. Parish announcements overshadowed the homily. On the other hand the Reformation stressed on the primacy of the word of God. Vatican II restored the balance of the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Philippines the old tradition of neglecting the homily is still prevalent. But in Canada with its Protestant tradition, the people expect a good homily.

In addition to the Roman ritual, weddings in the Philippines have adopted the Mozarabic ritual which is also found in other ex-Spanish colonies. It has additions like the veil and cord for the couple, and the *arrhae*, the monetary symbol which the groom offers to the bride as the treasurer of the family. Besides the usual two sponsors or witnesses, the Philippine practice can include other secondary sponsors. Elaborate entourages that flaunt status and wealth are common. Rehearsals of the wedding hardly take place. But in Canada the marriage rehearsal can be longer than the wedding itself. In cases of mixed marriages wherein one partner is not a Catholic or a non-Christian, no holy mass is performed. Fr. Lazarte says: "You must ask for a permission for mixed marriages. When that happens, there is no holy mass because it would be unjust to give communion to the Catholic partner while the non-Catholic is not given communion. Furthermore, many non-Catholics also attend." But if the non-Catholic allows the Catholic partner to receive the Eucharist, a mass is celebrated.

Another area of difference is the practice of popular devotions. "Filipino religious faith is intuitive in the eastern tradition and not analytical as in the western tradition" (Fay 2005:38). The coming of immigrant Catholics has added more variety to the parishes. This explains why they, like many Italians, Portuguese and other Latinos as well as Indian and Sri Lankan Catholics practice the wiping of sacred statues in churches or walk on their knees on the aisle and have processions of their favorite patron saints. Fr. Mario Puno, a former religious missionary and currently a pastor in Toronto, says: "There are devotions to the Blessed Virgin which you cannot find here in North America or in Canada. Of course, each country has its own religious tradition. The devotions

to the Blessed Virgin and to some particular saints are not familiar here. The same with Hispanic religious spirituality. The songs, dances and language of the Spanish are more expressive of their culture."

Fay (2005:43) observes: "Some Anglo-Canadian Catholics raised in a Protestant environment are dazzled by the elaborate Filipino devotional style, the free display of sentimental emotions, and feel uncomfortable" Fr. Chavez concurs:

The Canadian church is not so fond of devotions. They don't appreciate long homilies and staying long in the church for prayer. Some cannot stand the holy hour. But for us a hour's devotion is ordinary. Other immigrants [like Indians] are like the Filipinos. Even the devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help which is popular in the Philippines is not popular here. But they pray the rosary before or after mass in the churches.

In short, the Canadian church culture is not as devotional as the Filipino counterpart. Fr. Chavez adds:

The Toronto church is really very simple. Priest say a mass per day and some would probably say the rosary after mass. And nothing else. That is why when I was home in the Philippines, I was joking with my friends and classmates that some of them were saying eight masses per day, and I said I celebrate one mass and after fifteen minutes I would feel tired. That is the church here. Of course you spend your time dealing with other issues, like counseling, visiting hospitals, hospital ministry. But in terms of religious service you have the rosary, the mass. At least the first two years or three years in the parish I was at, they rarely had benedictions. I remember one of things that my pastor said to me, he said to his [Caucasian] associate: "We are going to have a benediction." And the associate said: "What's that?" There a number of those white Canadian priests who are not familiar with what we Filipinos would take for granted. The Toronto church does not subscribe a lot to popular religiosity. Aside from Filipinos who practice popular religiosity would be the Italians, Polish, and the Portuguese.

But while Canadian clerics may more cerebral in their pastoral approach, they are more socially-involved than just fostering popular devotions.

The foregoing differences of Philippine and Canadian culture as well as in differences of church models challenged the Filipino priests in Toronto. How did it fare in them the jump from the Philippines to Canada? This is the topic of the next section.

3. Experiences of Filipino Guests

The reactions of Filipino priests to the challenges mentioned above focus mainly on their dialogue with Canadian culture and less on dialogue with the poor and with non-Christian religions.

Dialogue with Culture

From the answers given in interview and from the questionnaire, the period of adjustment of Filipino priests to Canadian culture took between half a year to one year and a half, that is, depending on the person. The initial encounter with Canadian culture ranged from familiarity to culture shock. Those who had previous cultural experience in other countries coped easily with Canadian culture. Says Fr. Apao, "My exposure when I was studying in Rome and part of my vacation spent in the US helped me." On the other extreme, Fr. Chavez says:

I was shocked. I was questioning myself whether I was in the right place. I had to make adjustments to the culture for one year. I also had to adjust to the typical English expressions and pronunciation which is sort of different from ours. If the pastor eats pasta, you as an associate have to do so. Breakfast was cereal; I was not used to that. Lunch was just a sandwich. It was difficult for me.

Fr. Lazarte, who takes a middle position, says: "When I was an associate pastor to a white pastor, I ate their food during weekdays. But during week-ends I got what I liked. But from Monday to Friday, you eat what your pastor eats. It looks anomalous if what you eat differs from the food of the pastor. Because we have been Americanized, we can eat their food. On Saturday and Sunday the Filipinos give you food. Furthermore, there are many Filipino restaurants around." Joel Dimaculangan, who came to study theology in Canada as a seminarian, thinks most Filipino clerics suffer some culture shock: "That is why probably some of

the Filipino priests go home every six months although they like it here. Some priests still think of keeping up the Filipino tradition. Although it helps the Filipino community, it is not really helpful for everyone."

On Discrimination. While the Canadian constitution disallows discrimination of any kind, its practice cannot be ignored. And it can be shown indirectly, be it racial, economic or whatever. Ethnocentrism can happen anywhere because within the same country members of a sub-cultures make fun of people of another sub-culture. Although Filipino Catholics were discriminated against in the United States in the early 1950s (Cordova 1983:171-172; Bandon 1993:95), this does not seem to be apparent in Canada. Perhaps this is partly because the first wave of Filipino migrants to Canada were skilled professionals, unlike the earlier waves of non-skilled Filipinos in the United States (Pido 1986:91-92). In spite of Canada as one of the top three countries desired by Filipino domestic workers, they still suffer from relative discrimination.²

Did the Filipino clergy suffer discrimination? The answers from the questionnaire and interviews were varied; some said no, while others admitted some discrimination. Those who had earned higher degrees in Europe or elsewhere said they did not feel any discrimination. Fr. Dimaculangan said that he experienced discrimination from the Canadian-born clergy but not from the parishioners:

Some priests feel that they know everything, especially if they are white. Because they speak better English than us, sometimes when we are speaking with them, they say, "Can you repeat that?" We pronounce wrongly some words. I remember when I was a seminarian, I was reading a newspaper. And this new seminarian said, "What are you reading

² "In Canada, the Live-in Caregivers Program requires an initial two years of live-in service of foreign domestic workers before they can become eligible for landed immigrant status. During this time, they are restricted to the status of temporary visitors, are denied of a family life, and are more prone to face abusive working conditions, including long hours and inadequate pay. Without the protection of labor laws granted to Canadian workers, migrant domestic workers in Canada – the majority of whom are Filipinos – have fewer rights than full citizens." (Parreñas 2003:50)

in the newspapers.” The newspapers was about Canadian politics and election. And I told him, “Don’t I have any right just to read the newspapers without being bugged by you? There’s nothing wrong with reading the newspapers!” And some of those seminarians became priests!

Those newly-arrived Filipino priests who still speak English with an accent may trigger native-born Canadians to feel superior not only in language but also in other areas. Lazarte shares his experience of discrimination from the Euro-Canadian pastors:

I experienced that as an associate pastor. The pastor said: “You who are from other countries just come here for the money.” They furthermore think that because you are a foreigner, you don’t know how to work well. But I showed to my boss that he does not know how to work. I told him, “Whatever work you give me, I can do it.” Over here if they celebrate mass twice or three times a day, they feel exhausted. That is nothing for us who are accustomed to celebrating more than that number. Sometimes I celebrated eight at home! First you must get their trust before they give you any responsibility. One priest who was sent here by his bishop was first subjected to an examination. But they also know that many Filipino priests here have higher degrees than their pastors. There are also many white priests who did not become pastors.

Chavez says that suffered discrimination at the start but he overcame the feeling.: “I overcame it when I realized that most of the people here were immigrants. I suppose it applies also to other Filipino priests in our encounter with the culture and the language, such as the pronunciation. I do not have a feeling that there is a first class or second class of clergy in Toronto. Perhaps there is discrimination on the color, a first impression. But at the end we discover that we can also compete with them.”

Puno says that the parishioners look up to the priest: “Even as a priest, they look at you as a foreigner too. The new landed immigrants here look at the priest as somebody special because of his education and calling. They treat the priest, even as a foreigner, with respect as a religious leader.”

Any discrimination in terms of ecclesiastical rank? The American church, for example, has several black bishops and a Filipino auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles. That is not evident in the Toronto archdiocese. Fr. Apao says he is not aware of rank discrimination in the archdiocese and that one Filipino priest belongs to the priests' council of the archdiocese:

That position is open for nomination. Every two years I think we are given ballots with the names of all the priests and everybody is a candidate. The priests ordained in five or ten years are in one section and two are chosen for that slot. In other words it is a democratic process. Everybody is a candidate to become a member of the priests' council.

In other words, the democratic process will allow all clerics to rise to higher positions, even as bishops.

Msgr. Fabro summarizes the point of acculturation thus:

Some [Filipinos] have adapted very well to the culture here and others haven't. It really depends on the individual in their comfort level. Some of the pastors who are Filipinos run their parishes as if they were Canadian parishes. A Canadian parish by definition is multi-national and multi-ethnic. Where some Filipinos have run into difficulty is when they ran as if Filipinos were the only parishioners, which sets up a little bit of difficulty.... That was also the difficulty one time with the Italian communities and the Portuguese. Because they have been here for a long time, the priests are far more inculturated to the archdiocese. Most of them are aware that they must also take care of the other ethnic groups.

Dialogue with the Poor

Because of poverty and unjust social structures in the Philippine church, it has poverty and justice as one of its focus. But the situation differs in Canada which ranks among the world's most desirable countries in terms of standard of living. It offers equal opportunity to everyone. The government as well as non-government agencies aim at that nobody should die of hunger, that nobody should be left alone in the streets, that the sick get proper aid.

Toronto has no slum dwellers. One such non-government agency is the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The parishes network with these agencies in poverty-alleviation. Says Fr. Chavez:

The Saint Vincent de Paul Society here assists the poor. Before assistance is given, the St. Vincent de Paul personnel first visit the residence of the applicant to verify if the applicant is deserving aid. In Christmas time we visit the poor apartments and give them gifts. We also assist their needs. If they need a refrigerator, we give them one. The poor phone us about their needs. And we give them bed sheets, etc. Every Sunday we have special collection for the poor. The parishioners of all nationalities donate us stuffs like slightly-used bedding which we give to the poor.

Fr. Lazarte adds: "Every Christmas they are given Christmas hampers which contain goods and gifts for their children. You tell them how many children you have, their age and gender. And they give a gift to each one during Christmas. If they are hungry on the daily basis, the poor can call up for assistance."

The interviews and questionnaires said that the typical parishioners are middle-class. One hardly sees the rich and the poor because having a car is ordinary and even necessary, whereas owning a car in the Philippines is a sign of wealth. Toronto's upper class have moved north in rich subdivisions. The few beggars in the streets and those who sleep in the streets are those who refuse to get welfare or do not know how to get through the social welfare system. The newly landed immigrants go to the parish church so that they can get social services from the government. Adds Fr. George Uy:

There is always government assistance. If you are employed you can get benefits. You can get food vouchers. There are social safety nets to address situations of this nature. No one should be removed from his apartment because he cannot pay the rent. Again there a number of interventions on that matter. If you happen to be in the streets, most likely you are lazy or you are mentally imbalanced. You are not able to process the services that are available. For example, we have places for them to sleep in the evening. But they do not want to go there. They would prefer to sleep in the park.

In the winter some people make fire. But civic organizations would go around the city to provide shelters, especially when the weather drops to minus twenty degrees. In five minutes you are frozen. Some of our churches are open in the evening so that those people can enter and sleep. When we had a black out, people were told to knock at their neighbors, especially for the elderly. So there is help along these issues.

Hence dialogue with the poor, which is a priority in developing countries, is not so necessary in Canada. The role of the Catholic Church functions in enabling migrants to get adjusted to their new country like giving a moral support to make them feel at home. After the immigrant families have adjusted in around three years and saved enough money, they buy a house or an apartment.

Dialogue with Other Religions

The interviewees revealed that most of the ecumenical encounters are tied down to the annual Church unity octave each January. Fr. Lazarte says. "Every January we have the church-unity octave. We are encouraged to preach in Protestant churches and their pastor preach in ours. Every year we set a venue for ecumenical prayer. We dialogue only with the Protestant churches which are listed officially. The born-again are not members. We stick to the rule of non-proselytizing." Fr. Gallardo has similar views: "We meet with the Baptist and Anglican church. Once a month we have a meeting."

If ecumenical dialogues are comparatively few, much fewer are inter-religious dialogues. In one parish, it happens indirectly through helping non-Christian immigrants. George Uy illustrates the point:

There are non-Christians who come to us. For example, this Muslim family came to me to ask if our church could sponsor their relatives in Pakistan. They are from Afghanistan and are refugees of Pakistan. My reaction was, "Why don't you go to your imam in your mosque and ask them for assistance?" After some inquiry I learned that they don't have the mechanisms in place for this request. So we went to the cross-culture services of our diocese for guidance. We prepared a signed document and sent to the government in the hope of

bringing the three families to Toronto and we will help the transition when they arrive with a commitment of one year.

The parishes then avail of the various programs which the archdiocese has in stock. Says Uy: "The resources are there and the diocese has so many financial resources as to be able to hire people. All they do is to think and plan what will be beneficial to the parish. Then they just download the programs to the parish. It is up to the parish to pick what they think is okay rather than for the parish to analyze the situation, to come up with programs, and finding the personnel. The diocese provides that assistance; all you do is to see whether the problem is applicable to your particular context. You have volunteers to undergo the training."

In brief, the challenges of Filipino priests in Toronto are more in the area of culture. Dialogue with the poor and people of other faith takes a back seat.

4. Filipino Contributions to the Canadian Church

Let us put the contribution of the Filipino clergy in the context of the contribution of Filipino laity in general.

Contribution of the Filipino Laity

The U.S. bishops' conference issued a document in November 2001 entitled "Asian Pacific Presence: Harmony and Faith." Although it was meant for the U.S. context, its content can also be applied to the contribution of Filipino Catholics in Canada (Fox 2002:115-122). Among the gifts which Asian Catholics have brought to the United States is their culture of harmony, their value for the family where education is central, their profound spirituality and religiosity, their long tradition of lay leadership, their contributions as clergy and as religious. The pastoral letter praises these immigrants' contribution as people, some of whom have risen to national and international status. Crisostomo's (1996) book, *Profiles of Excellence: Filipino Achievers in the USA & Canada*, gives examples.

Although Filipino immigrants are fewer than the Chinese, Italians and Portuguese in Toronto, their presence is felt in churches. Why? According to Fr. Lazarte:

We are most visible in all the churches because Filipinos are church-oriented. That is why you see Filipinos in the churches. That gives the impression that Filipinos are very many. But other groups, although much bigger, are not visible in the churches. Filipinos also volunteer in church activities. That is why they appreciate us Filipinos. Charismatic movements in the churches are mostly Filipino. We have *El Shaddai*; its chaplaincy is Filipino. *Couples for Christ* is another Filipino chaplaincy. But there are no chaplaincies for devotions like *Santo Niño* because they are not organized.

El Shaddai is a Filipino lay charismatic movement which has international branches. The archdiocesan policy of not creating cultural enclaves makes Filipino parishioners go to English masses.

Since popular devotions in regular parishes are open to all parishioners, so are Filipino devotions. For example, the popular *Simbang Gabi* (the novena of early dawn masses before Christmas) becomes a novena of nine evening masses before Christmas and open to all parishioners. Likewise membership in *Couples for Christ*, *El Shaddai* and other Filipino-based charismatic groups is open to all.

What makes the Filipino laity different from other parishioners? It is their willingness to volunteer in parish activities, says Fr. Lazarte. The activities of Filipino Catholics are reflected in lay movements. The directory of the Toronto archdiocese lists 59 spiritual movements or associations. Of the 59 listed, at least 20 or one-third are Filipino. Examples are *Barangay ng Virgen*, *Black Nazarene*, *Bukas Loob sa Diyos*, *Concerned Filipinos of St. Anthony Parish*, *Couples for Christ*, etc. The list can go on. Their contribution is not in terms of financial matters but in terms of involvement in various ministries such as in the choir, as mass servers, as Eucharistic ministers, lectors and in other parish organizations. Chavez says: "Canadians are generous to their church. Filipinos are also generous to the church but they are more generous to the priest. They give you two envelopes, one for you and another for the church." Adds George Uy:

Those who have been here for a longer period of time are now involved in other ministries that directly are in charge of administration of parishes, like the finance committee, the pastoral council. When I was in Nativity church, the

president who was voted again and again was a Filipino because she had the leadership skill. If you go to the arch-diocesan headquarters, you will see the finance department. Out of five employees in that department, four are Filipinos handling those 230 parishes. In terms of mass attendance, Filipinos for the most part go to mass on Sundays. The family is still very strong. They go by families to the churches. Other communities don't do that anymore.

Perhaps it is because of the contribution of Filipino volunteers in parishes that made Cardinal Ambrozic praise them. In one address to the Catholic Women's League, the cardinal before he shortly retired said that the future of the Canadian and Toronto Church lies in the hand of Filipinos.

Contribution of Filipino Priests

Aside from the personal pastoral assistance which is common to all priests, what else do Filipino priests contribute to the Canadian church? They invigorate the community through popular devotions. Their multi-linguistic talent is another contribution. They inject some life to the individualistic society. And they are known to be hard-working. Let us go over these points.

Invigorating the community through devotions. We mentioned above that popular devotions form an important part of Filipino Christianity. This is also found among the Italians and Portuguese as well as Indian Catholics. For example, one can see also Italian and Filipino Catholics wiping sacred statues in the church. The idea is that the holy as immanent in the statue can be transmitted by touch (Mercado 1992:48-63). Since Filipino priests are attuned to popular, they can empathize with immigrant Catholics. Fr. Chavez says:

The Spaniards who have colonized and influenced other countries have effected similar devotions. Filipino priests are also sensitive to the folk religiosity of other immigrants. The white priests look down on those devotions as superstition. They do not fathom the expression of kissing statues. But Filipinos are sensitive to those expressions because they know where they come from. From my experience here, white priests are scared of Mary. They have been influenced by

Protestants. They hardly pray the rosary. They also do not promote devotions to the Blessed Mother. White-born pastors remove the devotions of those immigrants.

Mario Puno agrees: "I have been for more than 20 years here in Canada. From my experience we Filipino priests cater to Filipinos on their practices and faith. They continue their religious practices here. We cater to their requests for prayer, for blessing their houses and cars. But in general the Filipino priests adjust to the Canadian culture and its practices. So we follow the guidelines of the archdiocese on the parishes. Because there are many different cultures here, we cater to everyone."

Concludes Fr. Uy: "I think we really contribute specially in invigorating the community. We give more life to what we have basically have. All the parish programs are more active."

Linguistic talents. Another service of Filipinos is their talents as polyglots. In the Philippines for a Filipino to speak two local languages and English is ordinary. This multilingual talent perhaps fosters learning other languages as well. Now this talent is a service in the Toronto church. Says Fr. Gallardo who celebrates mass in Portuguese and in Italian in a multi-ethnic parish:

That we Filipinos provide services for them is something different, a Filipino speaking their languages. But they don't speak our languages. When I started to speak their language, then they said, "This is our priest." Speaking their language and living in their community as a Filipino – a non-European – is something we can be proud of. A lot of Filipinos here are giving services to the archdiocese. We serve also in leadership. Because of our facility in the English language, we can work with other people and learn their languages.

Social Contribution. The individualistic nature of Canadian society is also reflected in its locally-born clergy. But Filipinos who are group-oriented by nature make a difference. Fr. Lazarte says:

When we have retreats we stick together because we have the same language and come from the same place. We understand each other and our jokes. But they [that is, the locally-born clergymen] are individualistic and serious. But

we play together. The other non-Canadians also get together like the Chinese, Spanish, Italians. Those who are individualistic are the native-born Canadians and those who passed through the seminary here.

Uy concurs with Lazarte's observation:

One thing nice with the Filipino priest is that we have a sense of camaraderie among us. Although we have our differences, when we come together, it is as if we are one happy family. In fact the white Canadians would always remark, "Here comes the Filipino mafia." They see a certain closeness, that we seem to be comfortable with each other. We are always laughing, joyful whether in retreats or seminars where we see each other. There is a camaraderie among us. When we come together, we eat together in the same table. This is not the nature of other communities to do that.

Music helps in the bonding. George Uy continues:

Besides we are also a musically-inclined people. We like to sing and dance. That breaks the ice. One time we went to a seminar and one of our Filipino priests loved to play the guitar. We were at the bar. The pianist was basically hired by this bar. He had no job that night because the Filipinos sang together. I remember that two or three of the white Canadian priests came and joined us. "Gee, this is different with you guys!"

In addition to the social nature of Filipinos, another reason is formation which they receive in the Philippines. Uy explains:

We did not come from the same seminary. But the seminary formation seems to be similar that fosters this sense of belonging, of being part of a *presbyterium*. The semi-monastic lifestyle of the seminary fosters that sense of community, of belonging. If you compare that with the seminary lifestyle here in Canada and North America, how can you foster a sense of belonging where the seminarians take their classes at the university? When they wake up in the morning, they are rushing to downtown Toronto. When come back home it will be already late afternoon or early evening. They have a lot of reading to do, papers to write and then off to bed.

In the Philippines you eat together, attend classes together. Here you may not attend classes together because there are so many options. If you don't like one professor, you go to another professor. In the Philippines you share the work, you clean the toilets, you serve at the dinner table. These foster a sense of community, of being together. Here we have all those people cooking and feeding the facilities. During family nights attendance here is even optional whereas it is mandatory in the Philippines. You have to be there even if you don't feel liking it. That fosters a sense of community. That type of training which we got in the Philippines helped us here and fosters that camaraderie. We come from different parts of the Philippines. It is something that amazes me that someone from Davao or from Cebu would speak the same language. When we are speaking of experiences in the seminary, we are basically talking about the same thing. I don't know whether other cultures have the same because I see them during retreats and seminars. I don't see them as one as Filipinos are when they get together.

This bonding helps when it comes to problems. The *Filipino Clergy Pastoral Council* meets once a month. Although it is more of a social night, the contact promotes mutual help. Says Lazarte: "We have a support group here of Filipino priests to help you. Then there is prayer. This is done every month." Uy concurs: "Even when we have priests that have problems, once the Filipino priests come to know about it, they go out of their way to help that brother Filipino priest. They offer their assistance that they could provide. And I don't know whether that is true with other nationalities. We had several priests who had some problems, one way or the other. I have seen Filipino priests that went of their way to help out."

Priesthood as a vocation. We mentioned earlier that since Filipino priests hold the model of the priesthood as a vocation (and less as profession), they are more available to helping others outside office hours. Fr. Chavez says:

The white priests appreciate us that we contribute to the Canadian church. Our contributions are the devotions. We are more hard-working. Priesthood in Canada is considered as a profession. But Filipinos look the priesthood as a vocation.

We are here not as professionals like doctors and lawyers. We work beyond office hours. In the Philippines people go to you even when you are having a coffee. But here you have to be in an office. You have to have an appointment. But we welcome them even without an appointment. Here, if you want to see the bishop, you must have an appointment, days and days before you can have it. But for Filipinos you can come any time, just like a walk-in clinic.

Gallardo concludes: "We [Filipino priests] are also known to be hard-working. People recognize that."

The Question of Incardination

While the religious have their major superiors, the diocesan priests have their bishops and are tied by incardination. In spite of their many years of service in the Toronto archdiocese, this study revealed that around one-half of the Filipino diocesan priests are not incardinated to the archdiocese. Although canon law states that a domicile of five years is like being incardinated, some of the Filipino priests either postpone or do not want to be incardinated. What is the reason for this fact? The issue is also related to retirement, whether it be in Canada or back to the Philippines. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines encourages that priests who have been abroad for a long time must get incardinated in whatever parishes they work.

Being incardinated brings some privileges. First is that of stability, meaning, one cannot be removed from the position outside the term of six years. The rank of being an administrator does not have stability and is subject to transfer at any time. On the other hand, not being incardinated has no sense of security because for any mistake committed, one can be evicted or transferred by the bishop. Furthermore, incardination is a requirement to promotion as pastor. But why the hesitancy of some to take the further step of incardination? Perhaps one reason is the strong attachment to the home diocese. There may be other personal reasons which are only known to the individual priest himself. For most, "no place like home" as the saying goes.

Incardination is also related to the question of retirement: whether to retire in Canada or back to the Philippines. As men-

tioned earlier, the obligatory retirement age is 65 in the Philippines but 75 in Canada. One strong reason for retirement in Canada is financial. Says Msgr. Fabro: "The archdiocese has been quite generous to retirees even if they are not incardinated. When a priest retires at age 75, they are entitled to a monthly allowance. If the priest decides to retire and stay here in the archdiocese, they will treat him as if he were incardinated." In addition to the government retirement plan is the diocesan plan as well as the *Shepherd's Trust*. Hence the free medical and dental expenses in Canada for retirees is a great incentive, which is missing in the Philippines. To retire in the Philippines means losing all the retirement benefits. In order to keep the best of both worlds, some visit the maximum of five months a year, especially during winter. This is what many Filipino Canadians do.

5. Some Concluding Recommendations

To these conclusions, we may add some recommendations centered around the recruitment of future immigrant priests to Canada as well as programs on acculturation.

We situated the study in the context of Canada opening its doors to migrants from the whole world. The study was limited to the Filipino clergy in the archdiocese of Toronto. Of the four problems which this study tries to probe, we may summarize them in the following way. The first problem is about what Canadian culture poses as challenge to Filipino priests who practice their ministry in this North American country. The challenges are in terms of cultural differences such as in truth-telling, communication, the individualistic social philosophy, and differences in food taste. Now since the culture also affects church culture. The issues are about the relationship between the profane and the sacred and its implication in the ministry. Another issue is that Filipino priest carried with them the model of the priesthood more as a vocation than as a profession, on their understanding of the role of the laity, how parishes are organized, the different ways of exercising the ministries and the role of popular devotions.

Secondly, how did the Filipino priests react to those challenges? Since they had to adapt to a new environment, it was a way of "doing as the Romans do," to unlearn their cultural habits

and to adapt to the new situation. The period of adaptation ranged from half a year to one year and a half, depending on the background of each individual. Dialogue with justice and peace is not a challenge as Canada enjoys a high standard of living. Likewise dialogue with other religions has been minimal.

If dialogue is a two-way process of giving and receiving, what have been the contributions of the Filipino priests? In addition to their personal contribution to the dwindling number of priests in the archdiocese of Toronto, the Filipino priests enriched the archdiocese by invigorating the parishes with the popular devotions, by their multi-lingual talents, by enriching the individualistic trend, and as hard-working priests with the model of the priesthood as a vocation.

In the context of the archdiocesan closing its doors to fewer foreign clergy, the policy is to be more strict to future migrant priests and seminarians. What programs are to be made? More practical ways of acculturating oneself to the Canadian church is through mentoring, that is, one-on-one basis, to have previous look-see visits, and basically to use one's efforts in going through the cross-cultural ministry.

On the recruitment of future immigrant priests

Given that vocations to the priesthood are drying and slowing down in North America, the question is therefore how to look on replacements. The number present aging clerics of the Canadian church is barely replaced by the number of new ordinations. The names of the newly ordained in 2006 have Mexican, Italian or Polish names. Should the Canadian church encourage recruiting priests from other countries?

We find a change of policy, that is, from opening the doors to the slowly closing of the doors to migrant priests. In the early days the archdiocese recruited foreign priests to pastor the various immigrants. The Canadian bishops had somebody in the immigration to help them apply. But the archdiocese of Toronto has been rethinking its policy of accepting foreign clergymen. What are the reasons behind this gradual closing of the door? One is the nature of immigration. Says Msgr. Fabro: "With immigration from the

Middle East and from the Far East, the percentage of Christians that are immigrating is diminishing. Our society is becoming less of a Christian culture." Second is the involvement of the laity. With the empowerment of the laity, many clerical roles have been delegated to responsible lay people. Thirdly, the reason of demography and its financial consequences. We mentioned earlier the trend to leave down-town parishes and move to the suburbs. Amalgamating these parishes will free many priests to serve in bigger parishes in the suburbs. Fourthly, the rise of suburban parishes also means English is the language of the liturgy. This means less demand for immigrant clergy who speak foreign languages that cater to the parishioners. Fifthly, the archdiocese has the policy of handing over more parishes to religious congregations. These religious congregations take care of the staffing these parishes as well as maintaining them. From the statistics, the archdiocese has more religious priests than diocesan clergy. That means the archdiocesan task of staffing parishes is lessened. Sixthly, there is the feeling of some local clergy that they have been disenfranchised by foreign multilingual clergy, many of whom are better trained (some with doctorates) and have been appointed to responsible positions. Only twenty percent of the local priests are born in Canada.

The above-mentioned reasons have made the leaders of the archdiocese to rethink its policy of importing priests. Msgr. Fabro concludes:

We want to slowly wean off ourselves of being dependent to our priests from other cultures and other countries. So it does not affect the Filipino culture. We just don't just canvass for priests from Italy anymore. There are still a couple of ethnic groups that demand the need for their particular linguistic demand, for example, the Portuguese. The Portuguese are where the Italians were maybe twenty years ago. The Chinese is another issue because there is a large Chinese population here. And we have not produced a Chinese priest in the North American system. So we are still dependent on foreign priests of those languages.

Since the archdiocese has stopped the direct hiring of foreign clergymen, those who want to apply must arrange their own immi-

gration papers and the clearance of their respective ordinaries. Says Msgr. Fabro: "When a priest comes here, we put him in contract for two years. That gives us leverage. We feel that "it is time for you to go back to your diocese." In cases it works, in some cases it does not. It depends on the individual. Do they integrate to the archdiocesan priesthood? I think it works most of the time."

Fr. Lazarte says: "They are quite strict. They only give temporary permits. Gone are the days that you came here and tomorrow you got a parish." George Uy says that the Toronto hierarchy is "very cautious because they have had experiences in the past where bishops were not very truthful about certain priests who have come to work here, that these priests have some problems back home." Chavez recommends says that applicants to Canada

must have the recommendation of their respective dioceses. If they are assets of the diocese, recommendation will be hard. But now they are very strict in acceptance. Some of the priests here could not adjust in the Philippines. The Philippine priests here are happy and the archdiocese is also happy. We are talented. I was lucky to come in a time when the archdiocese was not so strict.

The same reluctance applies to accepting foreign seminarians to study in the archdiocese. In earlier times the archdiocese also welcomed Filipino seminarians, that is, those in final years to take up their theological studies in Toronto. The rationale was that being more exposed to Canadian culture would give them a better chance of acculturation. The archdiocese facilitated their immigration papers, paid for their transportation and formation expenses. But the greater majority of them did not persevere and left the seminary. Many found it hard to adjust to the culture. Now the policy is that seminarians from other countries must come to Canada on their own, arrange their own papers. Only them will their application for the seminary be considered.

Acculturation Programs

The Canadian bishops proposed an acculturation program for incoming foreign clergy, assuming that there be some twenty or thirty participants. Says Msgr. Fabro: "The Canadian bishops

would fund a program in Ottawa, that if they were coming to bring a priest to come and serve in the archdiocese, then they would go to Ottawa for six months or a year before they start. St. Paul's University in Ottawa proposed this program. And they have the seminary there. You are looking at an official transition period for these priests." But if that number is not met, the economy of scale makes the program prohibitive.

One alternative is mentoring, that is, the newcomer is put as an associate to a senior clergyman who will teach the ropes to the newcomer. But it has also its negative side as Mgsr. Fabro explains: "The other difficulty is that if there are a good number of priests who are good mentors, generally they have associates and once they have an associate they are not willing to lend him after a year and start with somebody else because they want continuity in the parish as well. So we stay generally for three years as associate to give them a number of experiences as associates before we move them on."

The archdiocese once had the "Culture and Communication Program" for its foreign priests. It was designed for foreign priests to get the opportunity to adjust to Canadian culture and how to administer in the Canadian parishes. The participants gathered once a month. It was also a time for socialization. But the program was discontinued. The archdiocese also offers free tutorial on communication skills and remedial courses in English speech improvement for those who are not comfortable with it.

Aside from the above-mentioned programs, Filipinos have to be on their own in adapting themselves to Canadian culture. One is overcoming the Asian culture of harmony and to be assertive and frank. Filipino priests have to learn not to give special preferences or exceptions to Filipino Catholics. For example, baptizing outside the scheduled times will make one vulnerable to others. They have to adapt to the individualistic culture of Canada. Says George Uy: "You rarely see your brother priests. It is good if you see them every six months or several times a year. You have to be prepared as a lone ranger most of the time. You have to create your own niche like if you know the instructions, then you are left on your own on how you exercise your priesthood."

Fr. Chavez suggests a previous visit as tourist for prospective immigrants to test the waters:

Before they settle here for a couple of years, I suggest that they first visit Canada to have an idea on how to live in Canada as priest. If you like it you go back again. When you return, you are ready. I came to Canada in order to be exposed on family life. I was given a chance to come here in Montreal to attend a congress on family life. I was in charge of Filipino family life in my diocese. I spent a month, especially in Toronto and met some Filipino priests. When I returned I asked my bishop: "Can you give me a couple of years in Canada? Not to study, but to experience since I am working on family life in the Philippines. I want to make a comparative study of how Filipinos live in Canada and in the Philippines." He gave me permission to come here for a couple of years. After two years, I asked for an extension. And I stayed longer. After staying for one month as a priest, try to find out if you can stay alone in a house." □