

Philippine Contextual Theology and Interreligious Dialogue

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1. Introduction

I will limit the development of the two main topics suggested by the title, namely, contextual theology and interreligious dialogue, to my experience in Mindanao. Hence, I prefer to speak from my personal reflections and basing less on written documents.

I have been in Mindanao for twenty-eight years, and seventeen years of them were spent in Iligan, which is a predominantly Muslim area and later on in Davao. My experience in that area covered dialogue with Muslims, *lumads* or indigenous peoples and the local Christians. These encounters with peoples of different faiths have been occasions for me to reflect on my personal faith in Jesus Christ and as a Church man. In general, I can say that I have been encouraged to move ahead and to share these experiences with other persons and places where people are finding difficulties in living with followers of other faiths.

The Mindanao Situation

Contextual theology does not happen in a vacuum because it is situated and conditioned in time and space. The same is true with our reflections on Mindanao. Mindanao has a 400-year Christian history which has been generally characterized by conflicts between Muslims and Christians as well as between *lumads* and Christians. These conflicts have affected the socio-economic and political life of the people for the past 400 years.

Spain was never entirely successful in conquering and evangelizing Mindanao. But when the Americans came, they came with another strategy, namely, that of attraction, principally with schools. At the beginning of 1900, the Americans encouraged settlers from the Visayas and Luzon to settle in the *lumad* and Muslim areas of Mindanao. The second wave of Christian settlers continued from the time of President Magsaysay when he encouraged the Huks of Central Luzon to have land in Mindanao, the land of promise.

What are the causes of the religious conflict in Mindanao? Many Muslim Filipinos and Christian Filipinos claim that they are two different peoples and cultures. But that is not true. Before Islam came to the Philippines in 1380 and before the coming of Christianity in 1521, the people of what is known today as the Republic of the Philippines shared the same culture. Their languages reveal that they are all related. They had similar rituals like the blood compact and the chewing of betel nut. If Filipino Christians developed folk Christianity, the Filipino Muslims also developed folk Islam.

But these commonalities slowly eroded with the historical experience. The enmity between the Muslims and Christians has been the product of historical factors. The hatred has been fostered by the three centuries of the Moro Wars during the Spanish rule. This relationship worsened further with the coming of the American colonizers who invited Christians to settle in Mindanao. Particular events, like the Jabidah Massacre in 1968 and the Martial Law in 1972 under Ferdinand Marcos, led to a heightened Muslim consciousness to the making of the Muslim armed liberation fronts, such as the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

If there are Catholic bishops, priests, religious and lay people in the Philippines who feel anti-Muslim, this is mainly because they carry with them the burden of history. The same applies parallelly to Filipino Muslims. The present situation of Mindanao therefore is the result of that history. For a more detailed history, I recommend two works. From the Catholic perspective, Maryknoller Fr. William LaRousse (2001), has presented a masterpiece. Bishop Hilario M. Gomez, Jr. (2000) presents the Protestant perspective.

2. Philippine contextual theology

2.1 Principles

I take contextual theology to also mean inculturated theology. The experts can quarrel over nuances between culture and context. But if we take culture in its broad anthropological sense, it can include history, politics, and economics. Furthermore, the word "inculturation" does not appear in the Vatican documents. The word contextualization can be traced to the Protestants, particularly to the Theological Education Council in the early 1970s.

Here I support two theological principles. First, the incarnation is the basis of contextual theology. When the Logos, the Divine Word, became flesh (John 1-14), he assumed all the human traits and weaknesses except sin (Heb. 4:16). If the Word became flesh, then the Church, His body, must also be incarnated. Vatican II states in *Ad Gentes* (no. 10), "In order to be able to offer all to them [that is, all humans] the mystery of salvation and life brought by God, the Church must become part of all these groups for the same motive which led Christ to bind Himself in virtue of His Incarnation, to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt." The principle of incarnation means that contextualization is a two-way process of giving and receiving. A one-way process would be indigenization or adaptation.

Secondly, inculturation or contextual theology is the by-product of faith. It is something that is not intended directly but is the expression of faith of the believers who are situated in their culture, time, and context. We find this example in how the various gospels were written. The four gospels have four complementary pictures of Jesus Christ because of the varying audience of each of the four evangelists. And history shows that Christians have always been contextualizing their following of Christ.

I would like to point out that the Christianity of Mindanao is the result or by-product of Christian faith. Now what is the Christianity of Mindanao? How does it differ from the Christianity or Catholicism of the Visayas and Luzon? The Christians of the Visayas and Luzon have a long history and tradition of Christianity, mostly from the imported Spanish way of living the faith as Catholics. Now the settlers from the Visayas and Luzon brought

long this kind of Christianity to Mindanao. So there are areas in Mindanao, for example, with pockets of Ilonggos or Ilocanos who replicate their respective traditions of their forefathers from their places of origin. But there is a difference. As the settlers rubbed elbows with other groups, the settlers became more open to change. Some of the people from the Visayas and Luzon retain their traditional practices but they are open to be enriched by the local cultures of Mindanao. Since the tradition is new or even absent, their Christian life is malleable. So if a parish priest of a new settlement wants to change the date of the town fiesta, he will not find much opposition because the settlers there have no tradition. To do so in the Visayas and Luzon would invite a rebellion from the people.

Furthermore, their brand of Christianity in Mindanao was also transformed and began to be corrected. How? After Vatican II, the foreign missionaries in Mindanao have been open both to the local cultures of the south and to other changes coming from abroad. The missionaries educated the young clergy of Mindanao. The Mindanao-born Filipino priests went to the same seminaries in Mindanao where the professors are theologians who were open to the new ways of evangelization of being Christian. So the traditional practices coming from the Visayas and Luzon began to crumble. But there are some good points that are preserved in Christianity.

2.2 Contextualization in the Basic Ecclesial Communities

The main source of contextualization is the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) or *Gagmay'ng Kristohanong Katilingban* (GKK). It is very clear when we talk about the domestic church in Mindanao. The people there understand that the GKK is composed of families, that the parish is composed of GKKs, and that the diocese is composed of parishes. It really begins from the concept of family as the basic unit of Church. The GKK is strong there with its leadership, structure and participation. Although some people do not know it explicitly, they are already doing the theology of the GKK, even before the publication of Pope John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio*.

The GKK allows the lay participation, decision-making, in liturgy, in education of the people like family life. The leadership structure is excellent. There is a *pangulo* or head for liturgy, for catechesis, community leader, youth leader. Together with the parish priest they compose the council.

In Mindanao many people were wondering why we do not have married deacons as they have in the United States. We do not need that in Mindanao because the leaders of our chapels are doing what the married deacons are doing abroad. They preach; they can even baptize as provided by Church law, in emergency situations. The lay leaders in Mindanao sometimes pray for the dead. Because of the thousands of tombs, how can the priest go from one tomb to another? The lay people can do that and they get the offering. They take many of those obligations which is not just the monopoly of the priests. The lay people assume not only some of the priestly obligations but also decision-making in the GKK. The concept of the *Gagmay'ng Kristohanong Katilingban* or Basic Ecclesial Community is very strong in Mindanao, stronger than the Visayas and Luzon.

Another example would be the sense of community which is stronger in Mindanao than in the Visayas and Luzon. Our liturgical celebrations have much good singing on the part of the people. But elsewhere in the Philippines, the choir does much of the singing.

Some bishops of Luzon have sent their priests to Mindanao for exposure. Archbishops Quevedo and Rosales, Bishops Claver and Tobias and others who were formerly in Mindanao, have sent their priests to Mindanao in order to experience its brand of BEC. Now the bishops say that exposure is not enough. Fostering the BEC has to be well-planned on the part of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). Although the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1991 stressed the formation of BECs, almost nothing happened in Luzon and the Visayas. So the CBCP has now a desk to go back again to the provision of PCP II to strongly promote the BEC in Luzon and the Visayas.

2.3 Contextualization and the Clergy

The visitors are also struck by the simplicity of lifestyle of the bishops and priests of Mindanao. There are exceptions, of course.

In Mindanao acquiring a luxury car would immediately cause a lot of talks and comments not only from the part of the people but also the priests themselves. Once I drove two sisters from France in my Volkswagen. Along the way we had a flat tire. While I was changing the flat tire, the sisters shot a good photo of me. They said, "This is something we can present to the bishops in Europe!"

Another unique trait of the bishops, priests, religious and lay people of Mindanao is that they frequently meet. They find that meetings are important to plan and so forth. Even those far away travel just to come to a meeting. People sacrifice to go to meetings. But those from Visayas and Luzon dismiss meetings as useless. They complain: why spend hours in meeting? But in Mindanao meetings are very important.

The spirit of frequent meeting contributed to the establishment of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference, a feature not found in the Visayas and Luzon. Every three years the bishops, priests, lay leaders and the religious meet to talk about the pastoral needs of the Church in Mindanao. Since the 1970s until now the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference has stressed the thrust of the Church, to have the Basic Ecclesial Community that is self-nourishing in faith, self-sustaining in needs, and self-governing in leadership structures. These communities began by being liturgical, developmental. Now the BECS have also taken a liberational aspect because they can also stand for their rights that are being trampled by outsiders. If there are BECs in the Visayas and Mindanao, they would be mostly liturgical, less on the developmental and liberational. Even in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, we bishops from Mindanao have our own meeting before the CBCP convenes twice a year. Why? It is a habit that we have inherited in Mindanao.

The lay people question the leaders on top on decisions taken without previous consultation. Consultation has something that has become very important in the life of the priest and bishops in Mindanao.

Each province now, like in our ecclesiastical province of Davao, has a clergy house where the priests meet once a week, to have dinner together, to have sports together. I am speaking now about the priests in southern Mindanao. If there is no clergy house, they

come to the bishop's house. You do not find that feature in the Visayas and Luzon. Generally, every Monday we have supper together, aside from the monthly presbyterium. This practice has been inherited from the foreign missionaries. For the missionaries, their source of survival was to come together even if they are far away to talk. And this practice has influenced our young clergy and young bishops of Mindanao.

What do visitors observe about the Mindanao church? The visitors that I received in Iligan and Davao reported that what struck them was the closeness between the bishops and their priests. It is a trait that they hardly see in Europe where the clergy only meet when there is a big celebration. When I was in Italy in September 2003 for the *ad limina* visit, I told some priests there about our Monday meetings and gatherings. My listeners, who were very socio-politicalized, said that they could hardly imagine it because for them the bishop is quite removed from his priests and the people.

Another observation which comes from other people is about the type of clerical formation. In Mindanao the basic thrust of the BEC is taught in the seminaries and many priests graduate with that idea. You cannot pass as priest or bishop if you do not promote the Basic Ecclesial Community, which is the way of the Church of tomorrow. Most of the clergy from Mindanao first studied in the regional seminary. Now they come from three seminaries: one in Davao, one in Ozamis and another in Cagayan de Oro. The major seminaries of Ozamis and Davao are run by diocesan priests. The Jesuits run the seminary in Cagayan de Oro. But those from the Visayas and Luzon are sent to different seminaries. Most of the priests are sent to Manila or Cebu where the outcome is different.

I have also a type of BEC in the bishop's house and in some parish convents or rectories; we have to give a good example to our people.

2.4 Liturgical contextualization

Since I have been to a few places in Asia, I can therefore compare the Christianity of Mindanao to other Asian countries. With the exception of the Philippines, Christians in the rest of Asia are

a minority. Although there are cultural differences in terms of symbols, signs and decorations, I noticed that the liturgical celebrations in other Asian countries give you the impression of being in Europe. The priests and bishops wear the western garb. The exception is India. When I went to the place of Fr. Amalorpavadass in Mysore, Karnataka, I saw a rare example of an inculturated Holy Mass. Although the other Catholic Asians are a minority, they have a lot of desire to inculturate. But their difficulty is communication with the curia of the Vatican. In spite of the strong statements of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences on inculturation, I have observed little of its practice in other Asian countries. I think the main reason is because the Asian Catholics are a minority, to contextualize would diminish their identity. So they have to stress their identity by showing their Roman-ness, which at times is justifiable.

On the other hand, in Mindanao, there are many "violations" of non-essentials in liturgical law. But the bishops encourage the people to go ahead in terms of translations of the liturgical books. We still follow the Roman ways. There are cultural adaptations of cultural symbols which we see very often in the offertory of the Mass. But in terms of vestments and the order of the mass, it is still the same. The main difference in Mindanao is the active participation of the people.

Each BEC has a liturgical leader or *pangulo sa liturhiya* (PSL) and there are other *pangulos*. There are preconditions for the election of a BEC leader. Each candidate has to take five kinds of basic seminars: a seminar on evangelization, a seminar on liturgy, a seminar on ecclesiology with GKK as base, a seminar on scripture, and another on social action. When I say that the people participate, they participate with the knowledge of what the community is about. The parish priest knows this fact because he is the one appointing the lay leader in the seminar. When they participate in the celebration, they participate with knowledge of what they are doing. In many places of Luzon and Visayas, people know liturgy; but lack the feeling or consciousness of community. Their lay leaders are hardly fully formed and given the necessary preparation.

What strikes visitors is the people's active singing in the liturgical celebrations in Mindanao. In Europe and other places,

the people are just spectators of the choir. When people know the community, the liturgy becomes very alive. That is the difference and the specialty of Mindanao. And I heard that observation from visitors from Luzon and Visayas when they saw people sing as if they were at home in the church! Why? Because they have the *kasaluogan sa pulong* (liturgy of the word) in their chapel every week; the BECs have the liturgy of the word even without the priest. The sense of community influences the celebration and spells out the difference. The Mindanao BECs have the gift-bearers, lectors, lay ministers of communion, those who are getting the second collection. Visitors could hardly believe that it is possible in one Mass!

The people are obedient to their bishops. When Rome will open itself to major changes in the liturgy, the Catholics of Mindanao are ready any time. For example, if allowed to use *bibingka* (rice cake) for the host in the eucharist, we are ready. We have to obey the rules but people are ready for change because the community has been established. And the community is not authority-oriented. It is a community where participation is allowed from top to bottom. They are ready for radical changes, if Rome allows it. I do not think other regions are ready; but we are ready!

3. Interreligious Dialogue

So far I have presented the contextual Church of Mindanao. Now let us apply it to interreligious dialogue. When Pope John Paul II appointed Francis Cardinal Arinze to head the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the Holy Father had in mind of elevating the status of Traditional Religion to the level of the other world religions. That is why in inter-religious meetings in Rome, you will always find representatives of Traditional Religion with other religious leaders. Traditional religion as practiced by indigenous peoples all over the world is the earliest religion.

During the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, in 1991, I pointed out that the Traditional Religion indigenous peoples of the Philippines should also be considered as a religion. But my intervention was not followed. That is why in the document of PCP II, there is no mention of Traditional Religion among the partners of interreligious dialogue. And the indigenous peoples of the Philip-

piners are classified with the other recipients of special concerns, like the children and youth, women, peasants, urban poor, fisherfolk and the disabled (PCP II, nos. 375-401)!

When I was chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue, I pursued the policy of dialogue with Traditional Religion together with the other world religions. Fr. Leonardo Mercado, SVD (2001) in his book, *From Pagans to Partners*, points out to this change in the thinking of the Church towards Traditional Religion.

In Mindanao our dialogue partners are the *lumads* who follow their Traditional Religion and the Muslims. And the Christians, *lumads* and Muslims pursue peace together in their unique fashion.

3.1 *Dialogue with the lumads*

Earlier we said that contextual theology or inculturation is a two-way traffic or give and take. We also found this in our dealing with the *lumads*.

One area is the presence of God. We tell people of the transcendental existence of God Who is beyond everything. We also teach people that God is immanent, that He is everywhere in the whole of creation. Theologians and church people eloquently explain this point. But in practice the *lumads* have a better understanding of the immanence of God than us Christians. In the forests where they live, they ask the permission of the spirit living in the trees before they do something. Many of us have studied creation spirituality but in practice we do not really respect creation and ecology. My frequent contacts with *lumads* have also changed my outlook towards creation. It has quite helped my personal spirituality.

Fr. Albert Alejo, SJ (2003) narrates his experience with the Manobos up in the mountains of Agusan. After a long journey, he found himself with these *lumads* and a simple meal was served on the floor. He asked whether they had the custom of praying before meals. The leader said, "Up here, Father, we do not pray before eating. Why? Because we bless the food from the very beginning. When we cleared the land, we prayed over it. When we sowed the seeds, we asked the guidance of the spirits. When we harvest the fruits, we gave thanks in our ritual to our spirit, to our God, the

Heavenly Provider. And so when the food comes in front of us, it is already blessed!" In other words, they are always in touch with creation and are always aware of the presence of God. My numerous encounters with the *lumad* outlook have changed my personal outlook as a believer and as a religious leader.

When we interact with the *lumads*, we are surprised that our belief of the Trinity seems to have a counterpart in the local belief system. God the Father would be *Manama*, and God the Son would be *Mambabaya*, and the Holy Spirit would be *Paminturan*. This similarity facilitated the dialogue because it opens them to participate in our ceremonies. This similarity perhaps explains why the early Filipinos easily embraced Christianity.

The principle of incarnation involves critiquing the partner. We have some socio-economic projects for the *lumads* such as literacy, income-generating projects, water system. There is always an educational component in giving these skills to the *lumads*. We have been able to correct certain negative practices of the *lumads* in these encounters. One of these is the practice of parental pre-arranged marriage. That practice is called *buya* in the language of the Matigsalog, a tribal group in Davao. The children, after listening to us, have made up their personal decision when they get married. Now the children realize that this practice cannot continue any more because they have discovered the value of freedom of choice. We are happy about this development. Our faith was able to critique the *lumad* way of parental arrangement of the wedding of the children.

Another example is the practice of *sablag* which is a forced payment of debt. Since there were no courts at that time, the debts used to be paid in kind. If somebody is offended, he will get anything from your property. The offended person can get your cow, your carabao or another piece of property. But when we gave this seminar on the dispersal of animals, its educational component taught them: "this is your property." They understood and accepted the principle of personal property and changed their idea of *sablag*, that the payment should not be forced on the individual. People now see the value of dialogue, the value for freedom and the respect for personal properties which was not there before. These are some of the effects of our relationship with the *lumads*.

3.2 *Dialogue with Muslims*

We also learned the principle of giving and taking in our dialogue with Islam. With regards to the Muslims, our respect for the Word of God is lesser than what the Muslims have for their Qur'an. For them the Qur'an is said to be the dictation of God to Muhammad. That is why each copy of the Qur'an receives much care and respect. It is not just thrown anywhere but put in a very prominent place. But we do not have that equal concern in treating our Bible. Copies are sometimes thrown away and put aside. I remember an incident in a hundred percent Muslim village called Bauyan, in Karomatan, where Msgr. Desmond Hartford lived for a year. One day he was driving by the road and he passed by a Muslim. He invited the Muslim to sit beside him in the jeep. The Muslim would not sit because there was a copy of the Bible on the seat. Msgr. Hartford had to remove the Bible so that the Muslim could sit down there. This incident has also personally affected me. I tell people that the Word of God is really a living Word. But the way we handle the Word of God does not come from that conviction. This incident has changed my outlook. It has helped me in my relationship with the Word of God.

There are two slogans which characterize this animosity between Christians and Muslims: first, Christians are wont to say: "A good Muslim is a dead Muslim." And the Muslims would say: "You can never trust a Christian."

In general, I can say that the Church in Mindanao has been able to make an impact in Muslim-Christian relations because of its approaches such as the interreligious and ecumenical dialogues. The policy of interreligious dialogue and ecumenism in the Church has lessened the animosity because we have been able to learn more about Islam and the Muslim leaders with whom we dialogue know more about Christianity. There much tolerance emerging now in Mindanao. One fruit and sign of this good relationship between Muslim and Christian communities is the founding of the Bishops-Ulama Conference in 1996. There many other structures that came out of this dialogue like the Silsilah, dialogues between young people – *lumads*, Christians, and Muslims.

3.3 *Peace-making and peace zones*

The peace zones are a collaboration between of grassroots Christians, Muslim and *lumad* communities. Each peace zone is an example of a tri-partite agreement or consensus through our initiative. Armed groups should not enter each area of peace. The Christian rebel groups, Muslims rebels or military have respected this decision of the local leaders. Of course it took a long time to convince the outsiders of this neutral tripartite agreement which was not in the local culture before. It was through the interaction of Christian, Muslim and tribal values that this consensus of the peace zones has become a reality in several areas of Mindanao.

3.4 *Forgiveness and peace*

There have been various models of reconciliation in Mindanao. One form of reconciliation was through peace talks. The *lumads* way of reconciliation was through the exchange of gifts or through blood compacts between opposing parties and through peace pacts. Then there were development projects in an area where there were casualties during the war, evacuation centers for the civilian victims of war. This kind of peace-making did not work because the hatred is still there. For example, in an evacuation center for the Muslim children in Pikit, Cotabato, a seven-year old Muslim boy who saw a helicopter fly over remarked: "When I grow up, I will destroy what is flying up there!" The Muslims receive those gifts – or whatever you call those gifts – from the Christians, such as projects or housing, schools or markets, but the hatred lingers. Those people who were promoting those methods of peace are good Christians. But they cannot handle the healing and forgiving process, which is the basis for reconciliation. This is what God wants of us. In other words, peace comes from order. If you restore order in human relations, you have to restore the dignity of the human person. Restoring dignity is also acknowledging that you have offended others and that you also forgive those whom you offend. If somebody commits a crime, he becomes a monster. But there is still hope and the belief that healing and forgiveness can restore broken relationship.

I believe the Christian way would make lasting and durable peace. Many people are talking about lasting peace which is a nego-

tiated peace through socio-economic and political and projects. But I believe that these negotiated projects that promote peace, like poverty alleviation, will not heal the wounds created by conflicts, by war, by violence in Mindanao for the past 400 years.

I believe our new approach now would be more effective and lasting: it is the reconciliation through forgiveness and healing. My ulama friends, those experts of the Qur'an tell me that, according to the Qur'an, you cannot receive our reward in the afterlife if you do not forgive others. But if you retaliate now, you have already received your reward here on earth. It is similar to what we say in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." God can forgive those who seek forgiveness. In tribal culture there are many practices where conflicts are resolved according to the tribal system. In fact I challenged the presidents of Catholic universities to do research on this matter because the young tribal or indigenous peoples are forgetting their cultural tradition. Although they have no courts, there was a system of resolving conflicts through certain practices.

Their languages explain the meaning of those practices. For instance, we say *pasaylo* in Cebuano, *patawad* in Tagalog, or *pakawanen* in Ilocano. But each concept has different nuances. In Cebuano *pasaylo* means just passing over. In Tagalog, forgiveness as *patawad* connotes bargaining. But in Ilocano forgiveness as *pakawanen* means entirely erasing the harm done. There are also similar equivalences in Maranao and in Maguindanao which is actually taking out the animosity and transferring it somewhere else.

For me reconciliation is the area where the Church should concentrate now. It is something new for the Catholics of Mindanao because it is quite difficult and needs a lot of education in the area of healing and forgiveness. But it is possible because it has been done in other places before, like in South Africa where Nelson Mandela invited his torturers to his inauguration. Kim Dae Jung invited the ex-president Chun Doo Hwan to attend the former's celebration as president of South Korea. King Hussein of Jordan, who is a Muslim, went to a Jewish family whose children were killed by Jordanian soldiers. He knelt down and kissed the feet of the parents, asking forgiveness. To me peace would be possible. In other

words, harmonious relationship between Muslims, Christians and *lumads* would come about if we begin with forgiveness. I agreed that there is a need for negotiated peace, projects and seminars but wounds first have to be healed. Both sides – Muslims and Christians, *lumads* and Christians – have been wounded.

Our Holy Father has a beautiful statement in this regard. He said: "There is no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness." But forgiveness does not exclude the restitution or payment of damages. In my experience there were people who no longer demanded compensation for damages or restitution once they hear the offender say, "I am sorry." That is enough for us, because if they pay us for what we have suffered, that belittles or demeans our suffering. And so to me this is very important message for human rights and peace advocates who demand payment.

In the Christian way forgiveness is important and indispensable if there has to be reconciliation. So is it with the Muslims and with the *lumads*. I think this movement towards forgiveness and reconciliation is picking up a lot of followers. It is an emerging movement and the momentum is increasing right now.

This new approach to peace-making has yet to be tested in Mindanao. It calls for a cultural change. But I believe the dynamic nature of the Mindanao people will make it possible.

4. Conclusion

I have shown that contextualization or inculturation is based on the principle of the incarnation and that contextualization is a by-product of faith. The situation of Mindanao produced a particular brand of Christianity which is different from that of the Visayas and Luzon. The brand of BEC in Mindanao illustrates that the contextualization of the community is a by-product of faith. It is the result of the situation of the encounter of the Christian settlers, of *lumads*, and the Muslims. But the intervention also came from the part of the missionaries, the formation of the clergy, the particular spirit of the Basic Ecclesial Community which is typical of Mindanao. This strong basis of the BEC showed its strength in the dialogue with the *lumads* and Muslims and the formation of peace zones. Contextualization is like the chemical reaction of different components.

Dialogue with Traditional Religion and with Islam illustrates that our dialogue partners can enrich us and make us rediscover what we have forgotten in our long tradition. The creation spirituality of the *lumads* reminds us of St. Francis of Assisi who spoke of Brother Sun and Sister Moon. The Muslim respect for the Qur'an reminds us of the patristic doctrine that the presence of Word of God in scriptures is dynamically equal to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. St. Caesarius of Arles said: "The Word of God is not to be treated as inferior to the body of Christ."

In short, dialogue helps us Christians. According to *Dialogue and Proclamation* (no. 49), "...Christians must be prepared to learn and to receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions. Through dialogue they may be moved to give up ingrained prejudices, to revise preconceived ideas, and even sometimes to allow the understanding of their faith to be purified."

As far as I know, it seems the fruits of the Mindanao contextualization are positive. The correct practice or orthopraxis shows its authenticity.

Now what model of contextual theology do we follow? Fr. Stephen Bevans, SVD (2003) presents six models of contextual theology, namely, the translation model, the anthropological model, the praxis model, the synthetic model, the transcendental model, and the countercultural model. But if I look at the Mindanao experience, it seems that we follow all the models except the transcendental model. That *lumads* adapted to Christianity reveals the translation model. That we Christians are also influenced by *lumad* culture implies the anthropological model. That the Mindanao basic communities are liberational shows that they also follow the praxis model. That we combined all the previous models shows that we also follow the synthetic model. That we go against the prevailing practice of taking revenge or that we critique some features of *lumad* culture shows that we also follow the countercultural model. Nobody is a judge in his case because I am too much involved. It takes somebody who can view the reality from a distance, where he can differentiate the trees from the forest. I therefore invite theologians to study the contextual model or models of the Mindanao church. □