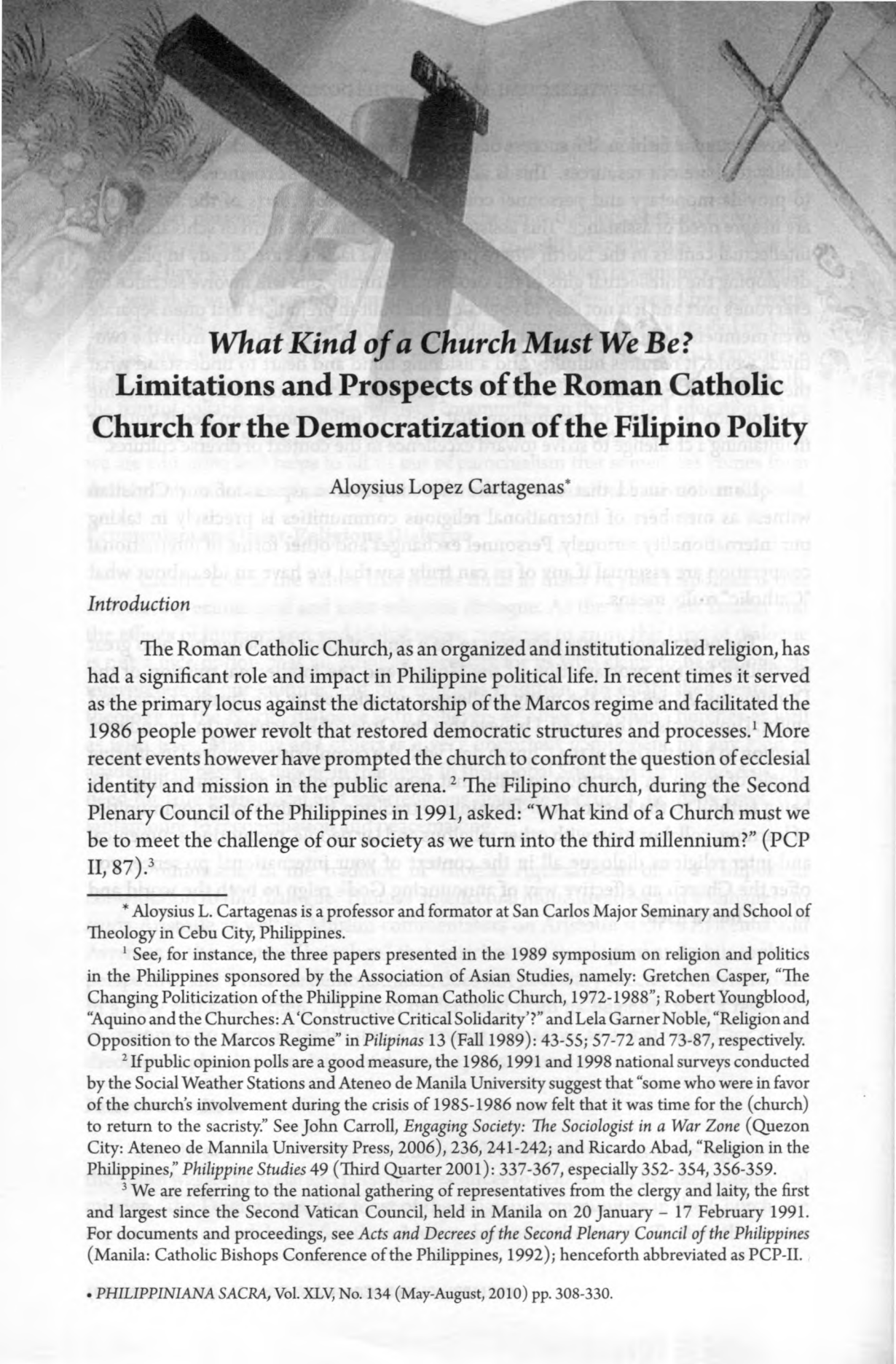




What Kind of a Church Must We Be?

Limitations and Prospects of the Roman Catholic Church for the Democratization of the Filipino Polity

Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas*

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church, as an organized and institutionalized religion, has had a significant role and impact in Philippine political life. In recent times it served as the primary locus against the dictatorship of the Marcos regime and facilitated the 1986 people power revolt that restored democratic structures and processes.¹ More recent events however have prompted the church to confront the question of ecclesial identity and mission in the public arena.² The Filipino church, during the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1991, asked: "What kind of a Church must we be to meet the challenge of our society as we turn into the third millennium?" (PCP II, 87).³

* Aloysius L. Cartagenas is a professor and formator at San Carlos Major Seminary and School of Theology in Cebu City, Philippines.

¹ See, for instance, the three papers presented in the 1989 symposium on religion and politics in the Philippines sponsored by the Association of Asian Studies, namely: Gretchen Casper, "The Changing Politicization of the Philippine Roman Catholic Church, 1972-1988"; Robert Youngblood, "Aquino and the Churches: A 'Constructive Critical Solidarity'?" and Lela Garner Noble, "Religion and Opposition to the Marcos Regime" in *Pilipinas* 13 (Fall 1989): 43-55; 57-72 and 73-87, respectively.

² If public opinion polls are a good measure, the 1986, 1991 and 1998 national surveys conducted by the Social Weather Stations and Ateneo de Manila University suggest that "some who were in favor of the church's involvement during the crisis of 1985-1986 now felt that it was time for the (church) to return to the sacristy." See John Carroll, *Engaging Society: The Sociologist in a War Zone* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), 236, 241-242; and Ricardo Abad, "Religion in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 49 (Third Quarter 2001): 337-367, especially 352-354, 356-359.

³ We are referring to the national gathering of representatives from the clergy and laity, the first and largest since the Second Vatican Council, held in Manila on 20 January - 17 February 1991. For documents and proceedings, see *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1992); henceforth abbreviated as PCP-II.

From an ecclesiological point of view, the question is important for it courageously establishes the possibilities and humbly recognizes the limitations of an institutional church as a “social force”⁴ of humanizing transformations. All the more important because, while the 1986 People Power revolution was clearly a confluence of the moral vision of Christian experience and the strategic requirements of mass action, of which the church was largely instrumental, it was, as Lejano puts it, “essentially a movement without an ideology” or, better yet, without “a coherent vision for nation-building.”⁵ Two decades after, the current institutions and culture of the nation’s polity continue to connive to hinder a democratic envisioning of the nation’s common good.

To sketch a reply to the ecclesiological question is the modest aim of this paper. To achieve that we shall first examine how the Philippine church, particularly its current leadership, understands the challenge and evaluate its responses in light of church social teachings. In part two, we shall propose a radical change in the church’s social location and pastoral strategy if the church wants its theological-ethical tradition to effectively bear on the democratization of the Filipino polity and the nation’s common good.

The Current Limitations of Philippine Church Polity

Does the Philippine church currently have the resources necessary for it to be a “social force” for necessary radical transformations in Philippine politics? Or is it saddled with features in its structures and policies as well as ethos and programs that put serious hindrances to its mission of integral salvation?

1.1 A church for the poor but not yet of the poor

In the Philippines poverty is not only widespread, it has also become intergenerational.⁶ It is a social evil that deprives majority of Filipinos, including its indigenous or religious minorities, from a greater sharing in responsibility and in decision-making about the good the nation should hold and promote in common.

⁴ The concept of church as ‘social force’ was used by John Paul II in his address to the general assembly of Italian bishops on 29 May 1980, says John Carroll, “Religion and Social Change: A Sociologist’s Viewpoint,” *Philippine Priests Forum* XIII, no. 4 (1981):5-9; here, at 8.

⁵ Raul Lejano, “Problematising the People Power Revolution,” *Budhi* X, no. 1 (2006):71-110, at 108-109. According to Maria Christina Astorga, “Culture, Religion and Moral Vision: A Theological Discourse on the Filipino People Power Revolution of 1986,” *Theological Studies* 67, no. 3 (2006):567-601, at 585, “the dynamics of culture and religion were at the base of the moral vision of the Filipino struggle for justice and freedom at EDSA.” For a similar but earlier view, see Douglas Elwood, ed., *Toward a Theology of People Power: Reflections on the Philippine February Phenomenon* (Quezon City: New Day, 1988).

⁶ See, for instance, Ana Maria L. Tabunda, “Perceptions of the Poor: The Poverty Scorecard,” in *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*, ed. Paulynn Sicam (Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007), 16-39.

The common good in the church's understanding does not suggest the utilitarian formula of "the greatest good for the greatest number." It refers to a "social reality in which all persons should share through their participation in it," not only in the sense of benefiting from it but also as contributing in its creation and promotion (cf. MM 65, PT 58, GS 26).⁷ The Philippine church has been cognizant in the aspiration to equality and participation as a "basic demand of human nature, a concrete exercise of human freedom and a path to development" (OA 47; also OA 22; PT 26). But translating that moral agenda into effective nationwide pastoral strategy is another story, as the case of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) would show.

The claim of the landless on the conscience of the nation

When the nationwide debate on the long-standing social problem of landlessness heated up in 1987, the bishops boldly asserted that "the landless, the exploited, the disadvantaged, the powerless... have the single most urgent claim on the conscience of the nation." They argued for a "truly realistic and comprehensive reform program," one that "will make it possible for all, the 70% who live below the poverty line especially, to have more in order to be more." They urged "those in authority to abide by the principles of social justice and preferential option for the poor" and pleaded "with all landed people... to share not simply of their superfluous goods but out of their very substance."⁸

Twenty years after, the program, which was supposed to end in 1998, is far from completion if, in terms of distributive justice, it is not already a failure. Studies converge to show that if not for the return of the elite and landed politicians into the legislature in the 1987 elections and if not for President Aquino's decision to let this newly elected body craft the law, the land redistribution program would have altered the feudal power structure radically and fast.⁹ Four administrations since then and the centerpiece of social justice has been mangled by a barrage of exemptions and amendments to favor the landed gentry and slowed down by their strong resistance and the government's lack of political will.¹⁰

⁷ David Hollenbach, "Common Good," in Judith Dwyer, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1994), 192-197; here, at 193.

⁸ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Thirsting for Justice: A Pastoral Exhortation on Agrarian Reform* (14 July 1987). Landlessness is a global moral problem as analysed by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in "Towards a Better Distribution of Land: The Challenge of Agrarian Reform," *L'Osservatore Romano* 3 (21 January 1998):1-8.

⁹ See, for instance, James Putzel, *A Captive Land: The Politics of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992); and M.D. Litonjua, "The State in Development Theory: The Philippines under Marcos," *Philippine Studies* 49 (Third Quarter 2001): 368-398.

¹⁰ See Walden Bello, *The Anti-Development State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2004), 33-90; Ronna Mercado, "Is the end near for CARP?" *Intersect* 21, no. 4 (October-December 2006):26-29.

In hindsight, it may be correct to argue that “there was virtually no tradition of state action independent of the powerful political clans in society upon which the Aquino government could draw.”¹¹ But, if a survey is a reliable indicator, there was a majority of Filipino voters “who wanted the president to use her decree powers to institute land reform right away, without waiting for the legislature to convene.”¹² There was even an experienced input that “prolonged implementation makes landlord evasion easier and is often associated with loss of political will.”¹³

A preferential option crippled by the fear to take sides with the landless

What was perhaps lacking was a church leadership that would have sided with the social class that it considers to have the single most urgent claim of the nation’s conscience. Had the church, which at the time was enjoying moral credibility unprecedented in Philippine history, done that, Mrs. Aquino might have been persuaded to seize the historical moment of choice as a *kairos* for social justice. Be that as it may, what is more certain however is the appalling lack of a concerted church effort to express solidarity with the peasants if not a mechanism to monitor with vigilance the integrity of what was left in the already watered down agrarian reform law in order to shield it from further disfigurement.¹⁴

In July of 2008, the bishops tried to make up for the lack by campaigning to complete the program. Through a National Rural Congress, only the second since 1967, the church leadership launched a nationwide consultation with representatives of farmers groups and rural peoples, and advocated to extend the agrarian reform program and address its loopholes. Although a little too late, and bitterly fought for some time, the campaign nevertheless succeeded to convince lawmakers to pass into law certifying a five-year extension.¹⁵ Despite the fact that the resistance to the

¹¹ James Putzel, *A Captive Land*, 249.

¹² Memo from Mahar Mangahas of the Social Weather Stations dated April 21, 1987 cited in David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), 321.

¹³ “Obviously to press her to action, the World Bank gave this input in confidential report to Mrs. Aquino in June 1987.” See *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁴ For instance, when lawmakers of Davao (Mindanao) sought to declare a 25-year moratorium on CARP implementation, the church leaders of the Davao dioceses did not think it important to speak with one voice in opposition. See Karl Gaspar, “*Abante, Atras, Abante: Patterns of Mindanao Catholic Church’s Involvement in Contemporary Social Issues*,” in Miriam Coronel Ferrer, ed., *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society, Volume 3* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 149-170; here, at 161-162.

¹⁵ See Kristine Alave and Norman Bordadora, “Special Session on CARP urged,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 6 June 2008, A-1 and A-10. Voting 12-0 with 2 abstentions, the Senate approved on final reading their version of the extension, whereas the House of Representatives agreed for the extension by voting 211-13 with 2 abstentions. See the report in <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/163740/Senate-approves-CARP-extension-bill> and <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/164001/House-approves-CARP-extension#> (accessed 1 June 2009).

extension showed yet again the consolidation of elite interest to thwart any program of social justice, there hardly was any official prophetic critique from a united church hierarchy.

The Philippine Church wagered “to become the Church of the Poor” (PCP II 122-136) in 1991. But, except for the occasional yet heroic public witnessing of a very few bishops to support the landless farmers’ cause to extend the program, there was no serious and collective move on the part of church leadership to re-examine its historical ties with the urban and rural landed class. Neither was there a collective willingness on their part to renounce whatever privileges this traditional arrangement have, even if it has become clear that their use raises doubt about the sincerity of their witness and demands new social arrangement.¹⁶ With this historical failure to help concretize that which would have abolished the feudal power structure in Philippine social economy, one could not help but infer that for the many in the church hierarchy agrarian reform is just another poverty-alleviation project.

Universal Church teaching is clear: “when a man falls into extreme poverty, human freedom is crippled” and he “can scarcely arrive at the needed sense of responsibility” (GS 31). In a country where poverty has become a “pandemic that threatens the very essence of nationhood”¹⁷ daily misery inhibits the many poor from meaningful political processes while short-run survival fosters an understandable political myopia and leaves them open to manipulation. The bishops’ apparent lack of a united moral conviction that the program is not just about raising income but rather guaranteeing the existential base of the poor landless majority for their equality and participation in Philippine society is very telling of the type of pastoral leadership they prefer.

1.2 A church committed to the procedure, but not the substance, of democracy

In the task of inscribing the aspirations to equality and participation, one has to contend with political power. It is, according to church social teaching, the element upon which “the ultimate decision rests” being “the natural and necessary link for ensuring cohesion of the social body” (OA 46). How political power is structured, organized and managed is crucial for the envisioning of and commitment for the common good.

¹⁶ We are paraphrasing *Gaudium et Spes* 76: “(The church) does not lodge her hope in privileges conferred by civil authority. Indeed, she stands ready to renounce the exercise of certain legitimately acquired rights if it becomes clear that their use raises doubt about the sincerity of her witness or that new conditions in life demand some other arrangement.”

¹⁷ See, for instance, Howard Dee, “The Need for a Christian Response,” in *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*, ed. Paulynn Sicam (Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007), 98-101; and Edna Co, Ramon Fernan and Filomeno Sta. Ana, *Philippine Democracy Assessment: Economic and Social Rights* (Pasig City: Anvil, 2007).

The fixation on the ritual of elections

The church's efforts to help balance and establish boundaries of power in the Filipino polity revolve around the axis of clean, honest and fair elections. Every election season is a ritual for the church to harness all its institutional and human resources in voter's education, poll watching, and monitoring the canvassing of votes.¹⁸ While this may indicate a commitment to democracy as a procedure, much leaves to be desired in terms of substance and process.

The principles of this pastoral strategy were laid down in the bishops' 1997 pastoral exhortation on Philippine politics. The bishops rightly lamented at how the electoral process is always systematically subverted with sophisticated methods of fraud, and expressed grave concern "that elections are losing their credibility as a reliable means for effecting change."¹⁹ Shortsightedly, however, they did not unmask the viciousness of a political structure that is promoting a predatory oligarchy, a patrimonial state, and weakly institutionalized political parties. Despite the abundance of studies on this regard,²⁰ church leaders have yet to change the axis of their discourse. No amount of "political education," "preparation for political leadership," "conversion to values," "structural change" and "organizing for effective change" can dislodge the structures of elite democracy so long as the axis of their prescriptions is the moral integrity of electoral contest.

The bishops also rightly describe how the gridlock in the legislative and executive powers of governance is settled by either "padding the government budget with all kinds of pork barrel items" or by making revenue-generating agencies "easily

¹⁸ Church instrumentalities include Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPC-RV) of the Council of the Laity, and Voters' Organization, Trainings and Education towards Clean, Authentic and Responsible Elections (VOTE-CARE) of the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA). How the corporate world has been the church's long-time ally in this crusade is explored in Eva-Lotta Hedman, "Whose Business Is It Anyway? Free and Fair Elections in the Philippines," *Public Policy* II, no. 3 (July-September 1998): 145-170.

¹⁹ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics* (Manila: Paulines, 1997), 9. Recent studies show the persistence of the subversion. See Belinda Aquino, "Filipino Elections and 'Illiberal' Democracy," *Public Policy* II, no. 3 (July-September 1998): 1-26; Sheila Coronel, *Cockfight, horserace, boxing matches (Why elections are covered as sport): Lessons learned from the 2004 campaign* (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004); and Filomeno Aguilar, "Betting on Democracy: Electoral Ritual in the Philippine Presidential Campaign," *Philippine Studies* 53, no. 1 (2005): 91-118.

²⁰ See, for instance, Paul Hutchcroft, "The Politics of Economic Liberalization," *Public Policy* I, no.1 (October-December 1997): 121-133; Paul Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998); John Sidel, "Take the Money and Run? 'Personality' Politics in the Post-Marcos Era," *Public Policy* II, no. 3 (July-September 1998): 27-38; and Rupert Hodder, "The Philippine Legislature and Social Relationships," *Philippine Studies* 53, no. 4 (2005): 563-598.

accessible for political ends.”²¹ While they are correct in criticizing this as “corruption, influence-peddling and indiscriminate use of public funds for partisan or personal purposes,” they did not advocate for a structure that coerces “the legislators out of the business of providing social services and back into lawmaking for the nation.”²² The necessity of preparing candidates for political leadership is rightly argued but, given the reality of weakly institutionalized political parties and family political dynasties,²³ it is a serious failure of church leaders not to advocate for the birth of genuine political parties of the poor or parties based on policies that represent them.²⁴

The call to help institutionalize people power

It will therefore be a great service to nation-building if the Philippine church recognizes that the benefits of democracy do not come from simply having elections. “They require a whole array of institutions that make popular participation possible and effective, and act as a barrier against the tyranny either of a few elite or the masses whipped up by populist rhetoric.”²⁵ This direction is nonetheless hinted at when the bishops said that “pastoral action in the political sphere should also take the form of active advocacy” which it has to do in solidarity with civil society.

The prospects are bright. For instance, at least two laws have managed to be enacted to institutionalize democracy from below, despite the strong resistance of an elite dominated legislature.²⁶ The 1991 Local Government Code transfers governance from the national into local government units where citizens at the grassroots can effectively take part in governance and delivery of basic services. While the 1995 Party List Representation Law guarantees twenty percent of seats in Congress for the

²¹ CBCP, *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics*, 8-9.

²² John Carroll, “Democracy from Below,” *Intersect* 19, no. 3 (2004):12-18; here at 17. This means cutting back drastically the funds available to congresspersons, strengthening with additional funds the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and keeping the fund under social service professionals rather than politicians. See Sheila Coronel et al., *The Rulemakers: How the Wealthy and Well-Born Dominate Congress* (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004).

²³ For instance, see Alfred McCoy, ed., *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993); and Ladylyn Lim-Mangada, “Grooming the Wards: Dynamics between a Political Party and Community Groups,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society, Volume 3*, ed. Miriam Coronel Ferrer (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 259-270.

²⁴ The well respected Philippine sociologist John Carroll has repeatedly argued this case in “Society: Civil and Uncivil,” *Intersect* 17, no. 8 (September 2002):4-6; “Entomb them Alive,” *Intersect* 18, no. 6 (December 2003):4-8; and “Philippine Democracy: Will it Self-Destruct?” *Intersect* 19, no. 1 (January-March 2004):20-25.

²⁵ Carroll, “Society: Civil and Uncivil,” 5.

²⁶ Agustin Martin Rodriguez, “The Limits of Legislating Democracy: A Sketch for a Study on the Possibility of Legislating Discourse,” *Philippine Studies* 50 (2002): 93-112. For details of the laws, see Patricia Ann Paez, “State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Legislative,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Volume 2*, eds. Marlon Wui and Ma. Glenda Lopez (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 33-70; here at 38-39.

organic representatives of marginalized sectors or “those who are often left out of the direct discourse of national legislation.”

But the church’s pastoral advocacy on the implementation of participatory local governance and direct representation of the marginalized has been very dismal for a number of reasons, says a study.²⁷ Getting involved in the mechanisms of the Local Government Code, particularly monitoring the performance of elected officials or enactment of local ordinances is generally seen as partisan. Key church leaders do not have the patience to study issues in depth and, like ordinary citizens, lose interest once the winning candidates take office. While politics is asserted as an arena of the laity, very few church leaders collaborate with them or accompany their organizations and groups towards evolving viable models and strategies. The few non-elite or non-traditional politicians who succeed in providing alternative leadership did so with very limited systematic input from the church. Church leadership support in education-organization of marginalized sectors is very marginal, especially if these are seen as leaning to or influenced by those in the left of the political spectrum.

Today, the democratic potential of the said laws are as yet under-utilized. In fact, with the non-involvement of the most credible institution of the nation, the implementation of said laws is easy target of local and national predators.²⁸

1.3 A church seduced by the simplistic discourse of graft and corruption

In the Philippines today, the fight against a dysfunctional and corrupt bureaucracy²⁹ has evolved, particularly within church circles, into a dominant discourse in the analysis of the country’s social ills. Corruption is the cause of massive poverty therefore it “is the cancer of the nation.” Drawing from principles of the church’s social teaching, church leaders always remind the state that the common good is its “full justification and meaning” as well as “source of its specific right to exist” and demand restitution as a requirement of authentic conversion.³⁰

²⁷ Gaspar, “*Abante, Atras, Abante*,” 155-158.

²⁸ For instance, some local executives set up dummy non-governmental organizations to fill the seats of local consultative bodies even as some national lawmakers put up dummy party-lists for elections accreditation. On this see Agustin Martin Rodriguez, “Limits of Legislating Democracy,” 106, 102; and Jeremiah Opiniano, “Party List Groups: Struggling to represent the marginalized,” *Intersect* 18, no. 6 (December 2003):20-24.

²⁹ Confer Emmanuel de Dios, “Corruption: A Framework,” *Public Policy* III, no. 3 (July-September 1999: 35-54; Cristina Lim and Ronald Amorado, “Corruption in the Philippines,” *Intersect* 17, no. 9 (October 2002): 12-27; and Doris Dumlaog, “World Bank lists sources of corruption in RP,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 1 April 2008, B1.

³⁰ See, for instance, “Towards a Morally Rebuilt Nation,” a Pastoral Statement of the Archbishop and Bishops of Manila on 16 March 2008 in *CBCP Monitor* 12, no. 6, (17-30 March 2008): B5; also see RN 26, QA 25, MM 20, PT 54, GS 74, and OA 46.

A double-standard in the crusade against corruption

But the Philippine hierarchy is not as homogeneous as it is touted to be. Cracks within it became most pronounced when in late 2007 views clashed as to whether or not Estrada, the first president of the Republic ever to be convicted of plunder, deserved to be granted presidential pardon. Citing church teaching on mercy and justice, some preferred to gloss over the fact that the said executive did not even acknowledge his sin, much less seek forgiveness. The others, trying to be consistent with the crusade against corruption, cried: “where is the justice capable of restoring harmony in social relations disrupted by the criminal act committed?”³¹

This striking clash of moral views betraying either political expediency or moral bankruptcy was not however the first. Earlier in July 2006, at the height of the second impeachment case against the Arroyo administration, sealed envelopes containing money from the same administration were given purportedly without “strings attached” to bishops during their annual meeting. Many returned to their poor dioceses with it; but the absence of institutional stance condemning such implicit bribery by the highest public office of the nation is appalling.³² Most unfortunate was the fact that those who refused the bribe did not even bother to “rock the boat” and chose to be mum about the whole affair.

Besides the inconsistency of church witnessing, also at the roots of the nation’s moral confusion is the seduction of church leaders into accepting the discourse – powerful and resilient yet lacking of empirical basis – “that the Philippines is so poor because its leaders are corrupt.”³³ There are many corrupt countries that are poor as there are many corrupt countries that are rich. Comparative studies show that the more convincing explanation for the country’s poverty and underdevelopment lies more with how the elite factions compete for control over people, production, markets and resources and the success with which the winning faction, acting as patrons to government bureaucrats and politicians, uses the apparatus of the state to pass or enforce laws and policies which preserve or promote their class interests. While elites in other Asian countries “were in a constant state of equilibrium” and “were also constantly disciplined by the state,” their counterparts in the Philippines “were locked in a permanent state of rivalry and whoever was winning at a certain moment also got to control the state,”³⁴ observes Bello.

³¹ Confer the views of CBCP president, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, cited in Editorial, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 November 2007.

³² This incident is analyzed in Fermin Adriano, “Undermining Democratic Institutions,” *Intersect* 21, no. 4 (October-December 2006):10-13; here, at 12.

³³ Bello, *The Anti-Development State*, 244.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 284. Bello cites the studies of David Kang, *Crony Capitalism: Corruption and development in South Korea and the Philippines* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Mushtaq Khan and Jomo Kwame Sundaram, eds., *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development: Theory and Evidence in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Jens Chr. Andvig and Odd-Helge Fjelstad, *Corruption: A Review of Contemporary Research* (Bergen, Norway: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2001).

The challenge to shield the state bureaucracy from predators

Seduced by a simplistic discourse, the church and some advocacy groups have designed countermeasures on the premise that all is well if only the voters remove those who are corrupt and replace them with better alternatives. In packaging elections and vigilance as the way to end corruption, the bishops are naively opening up the door either for the elites who are “in” to project accountability or those who are “out” to position themselves as the alternative to solve it. In the meantime, the system that allows ruling elites to rotate power like a merry-go-round, as Bello aptly describes it, never comes into question.

Church social teaching contends that institutions of governance, “on which public authority depends and through which it functions and pursues its end, should be provided with such structure and efficacy that they can lead to the common good by ways and methods which are suitably adapted to various contingencies” (PT 136). If our observations are correct, the greatest service the Philippine church can render is not simply to help convict corrupt and jail corrupt officials or remove one elite faction and replace it with another. It is rather to help create countervailing social institutions or structures that effectively shields the nation-state and its bureaucracy from the vicious inter-elite struggle.

1.4 A church lacking in democratic ethos

Church social teaching has consistently taught that, while the ultimate responsibility to care for the common good through laws and policies belong to the state, the cultivation of convictions, habits and institutions necessary for its advancement belongs to civil society.³⁵ Nurturing a democratic culture is a form of political activity that disposes the energies of the whole citizenry “to ensure that the various institutions – whether economic, social, cultural, or political purpose – should be such as not to create obstacles, but rather facilitate” the attainment of the common good (PT 146).

Hierarchicalized patterns of relations

In the Philippines, hierarchical patterns of relations are a serious constraint to developing a culture of equality and participation. For instance, “those in roles of low status are expected to defer to the opinions of those above them”³⁶ even as “it is not customary for decisions to be deliberated upon in a collective manner where

³⁵ See RN 38-39; QA 37-38; MM 53; GS 75; OA 25; LE 14; SRS 39; CA 49.

³⁶ Fernando Zialcita, “Barriers and Bridges to a Democratic Culture” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, ed. Maria Serena Diokno (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 39-68; here at 61.

family members who are not directly involved in a problem also participate.”³⁷ While Filipino culture contains some democratic impulses, the dominant “indigenous tendencies toward authoritarianism”³⁸ promote subservience to those vested with power and authority. They are also often wielded as an excuse for stifling dissent, and publicly stigmatize questioning by a social inferior.

The dominance of and dependence on patrons

The general preference for patron-client relations has hindered structural changes that can truly empower the poor. Filipinos, for example, do not see welfare policies as obligations performed by the state “but as a set of rights and duties expected between patron and client.”³⁹ Even populism, which has become quite efficient in mobilizing poor sectors for change, are “unguided by ideological commitments” and “critical frame of analysis on which to anchor their actions,” thus cultivating instead “the dependence of subaltern groups on politicians who represent the poor’s only access to the political system.”⁴⁰

The hegemony of family and kin

Extreme familism seriously narrows the Filipino’s capacity for solidarity and the public good.⁴¹ Socialized in families that still provide “stable basis for social cohesion” and “social welfare,” Filipinos tend to frame their relations with public civil servants as “extensions of their family with whom they have personal ties, rather than as public officials performing their official roles.”⁴² Filipino families are prone to exact “compliance and loyalty over and above common welfare” and, consequently, “a concern for the broader community’s interests is notably weak” even as concepts such as “nation” or “Filipino people” as owners of the *res publica* “are too abstract for many.”⁴³

³⁷ Anna Marie Karaos, “Perceptions and Practices of Democracy and Citizenship among Urban Middle Class Families,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, ed. Maria Serena Diokno (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 113-132; here at 123.

³⁸ See David Wurfel, *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), 44-46.

³⁹ Ricardo Abad, “Attitudes towards Welfare and Inequality,” *Philippine Studies* 45 (Fourth Quarter 1997): 447-476; especially 469-473.

⁴⁰ See Aya Fabros, Joel Rocamora and Djorina Velasco, eds., *Social Movements in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2006), 31-35.

⁴¹ See Maria Luisa Doronila, “An Overview of Filipino Perspectives on Democracy and Citizenship,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, ed. Maria Serena Diokno (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 69-111; and Niels Mulder, *Filipino Images: Culture of the Public World* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000), 187-189, 192-193.

⁴² Karaos, “Perceptions and Practices,” 114.

⁴³ Zialcita, “Barriers and Bridges,” 47.

Uncivil habits

The lack of habits of good citizenship erodes the credible and effective functioning of institutions.⁴⁴ Filipinos, in general, conceive of citizenship almost solely in terms of electoral exercise and are prone to express their views through the “parliament of the streets,” consequently, the mechanisms of legislation and policy making remain the most under-utilized areas of civil society intervention for meaningful change.⁴⁵ There is also a general lack of understanding of legislative processes and dynamics even as there is the unwillingness “to accept that legislation (and policy-making) is the politics of consensus.”⁴⁶ In fact, there is the prevalent “defeatist attitude” or cynicism, given the long history of betrayal by elite-dominated political institutions.

A culture of impunity

What makes matter worse is the culture of impunity over crimes against the nation and reform advocates.⁴⁷ The newborn Republic of 1946, for instance, failed to prosecute the primary collaborators of the Japanese occupying forces during the Second World War. After the 1986 People Power revolution, only a few Filipinos wanted Marcos to be prosecuted for his crimes, and, worse, the question of “hidden wealth” took precedence over his regime’s violations of human rights.⁴⁸ Not too long after, many of his cronies and accomplices were elected into public office or able to get back to their business interests. To date, the culture of impunity has reared an uglier head in the government’s inability or unwillingness to solve the extrajudicial killings of land reform and human rights advocates, judges, journalists, labor union and civil society leaders as well as church persons.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ See Maria Serena Diokno, “Becoming a Filipino Citizen: Perspectives on Democracy and Citizenship,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, ed. Maria Serena Diokno (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 17-38, especially 19-22.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Alex Brillantes, Jr., “State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Executive,” and Patricia Ann Paez, “State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Legislative,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Volume 2*, eds. Marlon Wui and Glenda Lopez (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 21-32 and 33-80 respectively.

⁴⁶ Paez, “State-Civil Society Relations: Legislative,” 55.

⁴⁷ See John Carroll’s “The Philippines: Forgiving or Forgetting?,” *Public Policy* III, no. 2 (April-June 1999): 83-92 and “Entomb Them Alive,” *Intersect* 18, no. 6 (December 2003):4-8; and Frank Golay, *Face of Empire: The United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997).

⁴⁸ See the studies in Aurora Javate De Dios, Petronilo Daroy and Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, eds., *Dictatorship and Revolution: Roots of People Power* (Manila: Conspectus, 1988) and Mark Thomson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day, 1996).

⁴⁹ To cite a data, extra-judicial killings include 60 journalists since 1986 People Power and 13 judges since 1999, says Reynato Puno, “Extrajudicial killings: View from the mountaintop,” *Philippine*

All these cultural constraints create distortions in the trajectory of democratization of the Filipino polity. But while the Church's potential as a social force to arrest these distortions has always been recognized, it "has had only limited success as an agent of social change."⁵⁰ What could account for this limitation may not be the lack of institutional resources and moral credibility because the Philippine church has both in abundance. The reason perhaps is its inability if not unwillingness to witness in its own institutional life and structures the very moral values and standards it demands from political life and processes. At least for now, it seems, if we take the status of Base Ecclesial Communities as case study.

The hope of democratization through Base Ecclesial Communities

Studies conducted during the transition years from Marcos' authoritarianism to Aquino's restoration of democracy reveal a strong desire of both hierarchy and laity to embrace Basic Christian Communities (BCC) as ecclesial vision and structure alternative to a church whose life and service was too dependent on bishops and priests and their mandated religious organizations.⁵¹ From the faith-experiences of these communities, particularly in Mindanao where they were initially born in the 1970s,⁵² came radical changes that, had they been sustained, would have held tremendous impact for renewal of church and the democratization of society.

In these communities, sacred liturgy became more meaningful and spirituality more nourished by the Word of God and rooted in the daily struggles of the members. Power-structure was revolutionized because decision-making shifted from the center (priest) to the periphery (laity) as priests cultivated the habits of delegation and sharing of authority as well as consultation and participation in decision-making,

Daily Inquirer, 22 July 2007, A16. Of the twenty-five (25) church people, ten (10) were clergy, says the March 2007 report "Let the Stones Cry out: An Ecumenical Report on Human Rights in the Philippines and a Call to Action" by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). See "Taking God's Gift of Life," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 March 2007, A16.

⁵⁰ Patricia Licuanan, "Basic Christian Communities as a Force for Social Change," in *Church of the People: The Basic Christian Community Experience in the Philippines*, eds. Gabino Mendoza, J.M. Luz and J. Deles, Jr. (Manila: Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, 1988), 28-34, at 28.

⁵¹ See John Carroll and Francisco Claver, "The Pastoral Priorities of the Philippine Bishops: A Report on a Survey," *Philippine Studies* 34 (1986): 21-40; and Gabino Mendoza, "Basic Christian Communities in the Philippines: Synthesis of Experience from 18 Case Studies," in *Church of the People*, eds. Gabino Mendoza, J.M. Luz and J. Deles, Jr., 1-17.

⁵² It is acknowledged that the first Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference (MSPC-I) provided the overall framework and impetus for the birth of these communities in the country. See Francisco Claver, "The History of BCCs: The Philippines," in *Church of the People*, eds. Gabino Mendoza, J.M. Luz and J. Deles, Jr., 18-27; Antonio Ledesma, "Basic Ecclesial Communities: A Socio-Pastoral View," in *Building Basic Ecclesial Communities: Case Studies from the Philippine Experience*, eds. Antonio Ledesma and Amado Picardal (Manila: NASSA-Caritas Philippines, 2000), 13-16; and Karl Gaspar, *To be Poor and Obscure: The Spiritual Sojourn of a Mindanawon* (Quezon City: Center for Spirituality, 2004), 152-163.

planning and implementation. With that, the sense of community beyond family and clan expanded and reliance on communal resources increased and dependence on outside support became less necessary. With a heightened self-confidence and sense of personal efficacy they also become more demanding as they hold accountable the integrity and competence of their leaders. In all they had the hallmarks of a church with a democratic ethos, if by that is meant, “communion, participation and mission” (cf. PCP II 137-140).

But as the BCC program was adopted as official pastoral strategy during the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1991, “each diocese re-appropriated (the program) in whatever way they wished, often moving drastically away from its holistic and prophetic framework.”⁵³ “Moves to minimize the ideological characteristics and political engagements” of BCCs, according to Gaspar, became more intense than before due to the perception that some pastoral workers had strategic links with the underground and also because of the church policy to collaborate with the Aquino presidency. In due time, base *Christian* communities became Base *Ecclesial* Communities (BEC) to emphasize ecclesiastical control. To date, many of these communities are mainly concerned with cultic or worshipping activities; others function as the *longa manus* (long arm) of the hierarchy’s agenda in the public sphere or a herd ready to be summoned to generate a display of force in sheer numbers in religious processions or devotional ceremonies.

The BEC’s conscious attempt to integrate faith and life as well as prayerful reflection and discernment that accompanies every decision and action could have been a most convincing expression of the credibility of the Christian message in the public square. The ethics of participation that tilted the balance of power within the institutional church to favor the laity could have mitigated a too hierarchized pattern of relations of Filipino society. Sharing power with the *anawim* of society in ecclesial processes could have gradually altered the penchant to depend on patrons. Reliance on group resource and its highly communal orientation could have punctured the narrow confines of extreme familism. The BEC’s democratic ideals and dynamics could have been an antidote to the Filipino’s impatience with processes, difficulties with pluralism and dialogue, and unwillingness to arrive at consensus. In a word, had the BEC’s evolved in its holistic and prophetic character, the Philippine church would have, as “a society leavening Church,”⁵⁴ optimized its unique potentials for the common good of the Filipino nation.

⁵³ Gaspar, *To be Poor and Obscure*, 158. In 162-163 Gaspar asks, “What percentage of the BECs throughout the Philippines could claim to have such comprehensive engagements?” “Not too many,” he opines; in fact, as thousands of BECs would see the light of day, “these may not be the BECs envisioned by PCP II.”

⁵⁴ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture* (Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 2000), especially 28.

Becoming a Church-in-Civil Society at the Nexus of Democratization for the Common Good

Despite the limitations we have sketched in the preceding, the Filipino church's potential to be at the service of common good-democracy nexus should not be underestimated. In 1991, it envisioned a "church of communion and participation" and a "church of the poor" proclaiming integral salvation through "new methods, fervor and expressions."⁵⁵ So that this dream is translated into courageous and concerted shifts in pastoral plan, and the church will become a stronger link in the transformation of Philippine political life and culture, the paper proposes the following action agenda:

2.1 Shifting socio-pastoral location from "Church-State Relations" to "Church-in-Civil Society" paradigm

A church's chosen social location is crucial in the effectiveness of its pastoral mission, particularly in the political sphere. From all indications presented in the preceding, Church leadership in the Philippines still prefer to work within the old framework of "Church-State" relations with the regularity of elections as main axis in public interventions. In such a framework, bishops and priests mirror themselves as the religious counterparts of elected public officials in society, with the former for the administration of spiritual goods, the latter for the delivery of public material services. In this social location the church is feared less as an institution with a moral ascendancy but more as a "power-broker" – one that can depose and install even presidents or an institution that can influence in the election/appointment and defeat/removal of public officials. If it wants something done or enacted, the preferred strategy is less to engage in the tedious process of deliberation and consultation on equal terms with other stakeholders but more to fast-track the process by using its influence upon the decision-makers and taking advantage over the others, not to mention the ease with which veiled threats are employed if matters will run out of hand. In a country where Roman Catholicism is dominant, church leaders are always tempted to wear a political garb even as government officials are enticed to constantly seek for their blessings.

In "Church-State" relations paradigm, church leaders also cultivate alliances with the oligarchs and business community that are "in," not "out," with the state and its apparatus. This the church does for and in behalf of the poor, but not so much from the logic of empowering poor people but more from the instinct of preserving church interests and favorable business climate. But, as church social teaching says, "a greater sharing in responsibility and in decision-making is a basic demand of human nature, a concrete exercise of human freedom and a path to development."

⁵⁵ Cf. PCP II, 89-101; 2-136; 93-201.

So although choices can be complex, considerations numerous, and consequences full of risks relative to the common good, “these obstacles must not slow down the giving of wider participation in working out decisions, making choices and putting them into practice” (OA 47; also OA 22). In “Church-State” relations, at least in the Philippine experience, the poor easily becomes excluded, their exclusion easily justified by utilitarian considerations.

It is our contention that so long as the Philippine church is fixated in this paradigm, its prospects as credible and effective social force for the common good will run out, inasmuch as patronage is cultivated as church leaders functions as the patron of the people in the field of religion, the politicians in the realm of politics, the business community in the sphere of the economy. As pointed out earlier, instead of filling the gaps created by the weakness of democratic institutions and Filipino political culture, many aspects in current Philippine church life and practice appear to be enlarging them.

2.2 Interfacing with other civil society participants as new partners in the renewal of the Filipino polity

To move out of the “church-state” fixation, the church has to seek a new social location and, by implication, link with new partners in its socio-pastoral ministry, particularly in the nation’s polity. Such location we contend is civil society. Like the proverbial “leaven in the dough,” the church is at a historic moment to insert itself in the bosom of, and interface with, civil society. The church’s social tradition has consistently valued the social agency of the various intermediary bodies and numerous social undertakings of citizens and their organizations that are working to ensure that the various institutions – whether economic, social, cultural or political in purpose – should be such as not to create obstacles but rather facilitate the attainment of the common good (cf. PT 146; MM 65: GS 25: CA 13, 49).⁵⁶

Historic because never has the Filipino polity seen the proliferation of such undertakings that “intersect with the domain of the state but are not part of the state apparatus” operating “within existing cultural and economic structures.”⁵⁷ They are diverse in origins and composition and specific goals. Some are referred to as “people’s organizations,” many are called “non-government organizations,”

⁵⁶ The scope of the term ‘civil society’ varies, and the church’s description leans towards the more “exclusive view” if we use the distinctions in Miriam Coronel Ferrer, “Civil Society: An Operational Definition,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship, Volume 1*, ed. Maria Serena Diokno (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 5-15.

⁵⁷ Karina Constantino David, “Intra-Civil Society Relations: An Overview,” in *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society, Volume 3*, ed. Miriam Coronel Ferrer (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997), 21-50; here at 2.

still others are known as “social movements.”⁵⁸ While this diversity has engendered a corresponding wealth or plurality of approaches and strategies, their common basic thrust is “to contest state power, individually or in concert, by attempting to transform unequal power relations,” on the one hand, and “actively bring to the fore issues for public debate with both alternative visions as well as concrete experiences and experimentations that challenge the standard ways of doing things,”⁵⁹ on the other.

Also historic because, according to Silliman and Noble, civil society in the Philippines at present is characterized by a “vibrant public discourse” where diversity of views is addressed by dialogue geared towards consensus and plurality of options is strengthened by forging coalitions, alliances and networks. It is redefining the content of politics by bringing to the public agenda a host of issues and concerns particularly those of the marginalized.⁶⁰ Aside from promoting democratic habits, Philippine civil society engages with government to directly influence policies or to institutionalize certain program initiatives thereby strengthening democratic institutions. And, while civil society groups demand good governance, transparency and accountability from the government, they too apply the same ethical standards on themselves.⁶¹

Given this new development, the Philippine church ought not to miss the opportunity, for although institutions of diverse origins as well as identity and mission, civil society and church, by the very nature of their commitment to democracy and common good, do converge. A church interacting with civil society can resist the simplistic discourse of corruption or the reliability of electoral contests as main axis of its moral interventions in the political sphere. Instead, it can, for instance, advocate for the full implementation of participatory local governance and direct representation of the marginalized perhaps through the birth of genuine political parties of the poor sectors or parties based on a program of governance that truly represent their agenda.

⁵⁸ The terms are contested but, for our purpose, by “people’s organizations” (POs) we mean the formation of sectoral groups that refer either to class (e.g., labor, peasants), non-class (e.g., women, indigenous peoples, youth) or issues (e.g., human rights, environment). By “social movements” (SMs) we mean organized political action or social mobilization of poorer and disenfranchised sectors of society, while “non-government organizations” (NGOs) refer to organized non-state groups that provide support to the POs and SMs. For these distinctions, see Aya Fabros, Joel Rocamora and Djinora Velasco, eds., *Social Movements in the Philippines*, 15.

⁵⁹ David, “Intra-Civil Society Relations,” 23. For a concise account of the history of Philippine NGOs, see Karina Constantino David, “From the Present Looking back: A History of Philippine NGOs,” in *NGOs, Civil Society and the Philippine State: Organizing for Democracy*, eds. G. Sidney Silliman and Lela Garner Noble (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 26-48.

⁶⁰ G. Sidney Silliman and Lela Garner Noble, “Introduction,” in *Ibid.*, 18-21.

⁶¹ See Fernando Aldaba, “Doing Good and Being Good: Aspects of Development NGO Governance in the Philippines,” *Public Policy VI*, no. 2 (July-December 2002):1-26; and Filomeno Sta. Ana III, “Afterword: NGOs Face Bigger Challenges,” *Public Policy VI*, no. 2 (July-December 2002):91-107.

As the church helps widen “the avenue of participation and provides a climate favorable to the democratization of state and society,”⁶² as Moreno rightly envisions, it also assimilates the ethical standards set by civil society groups on their collective or institutional structures and behavior. These standards – such as good governance, transparency, accountability, participation, equality, respect of human rights and others – are not at all foreign to the church’s social moral tradition. In fact the church has consistently demanded such standards on states and governments. But they are as yet to be thoroughly applied to the church’s internal structure, ethos and government.

2.3 Nurturing democracy from below through the re-orientation of base ecclesial communities

The last ecclesiological challenge is political socialization: “how to develop a sense of community and public good” and “how to empower the people.”⁶³ A coherent vision of the common good “is not simply the sum total of particular interests; rather it involves an assessment and integration of those interests on the basis of a balanced hierarchy of values” (CA 47). A truly democratic polity, upon which the common good depends, cannot be sustained only by political structures, laws and institutions or by a merely individualistic or oligarchic ethic but rather by that which nurtures the moral and social virtues of citizenship and promotes them in society (cf. GS 30).

The evidence we have put forward suggests a preferential option for every base ecclesial community, instead of families and schools, as the locus for the socialization of church leaders and members into the habits of equality and participation, empowerment of the poor, solidarity with the weakest, vigilance in democratic processes, legitimate plurality and dialogue. BECs that are holistic and prophetic, not unlike the earliest New Testament communities, can renew the church’s own polity according to communion, participation and mission. If the cultic fixation is overcome, base ecclesial communities can become milieus where members are socialized in the habits and virtues, lifestyles and values that promote the common good. BECs can also become a public space or forum of sustained and collective grassroots deliberation about the public good where the voices of those who have been systematically excluded from the democratic processes are valued and consolidated. Through BECs the church can help expedite the creation of a countervailing social force that can provide a strong and effective challenge to both the patrimonial features of Filipino polity and the long standing dominance of the oligarchy.

⁶² Antonio Moreno, *Church, State, and Civil Society in Postauthoritarian Philippines: Narratives of Engaged Citizenship* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), xi.

⁶³ Diokno, “Becoming a Filipino Citizen,” 34.

Church teaching has irreversibly declared that, in keeping with human dignity, it “values the democratic system” because in it “each power (is) balanced by the other powers and by other spheres of responsibility which keep it within proper bounds” (CA 44). This suggests that the church’s role as a social actor in the growth and nurturance of democracy increases its efficacy only to the extent that the church willingly witnesses in its own polity the democratic ethos that it passionately values and advocates. Signs of hope already abound. BECs that have re-oriented themselves according to the original – holistic and prophetic – vision of PCP-II are producing modest gains for the local common good through democracy from below.⁶⁴ These early signs also show that a church with new set of collaborators and in a new social location has very rich and promising prophetic prospects.⁶⁵

Concluding Remarks

To meet the challenges of Filipino society into the third millennium, the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines must widen the scope and breadth of practicing what it seriously preaches. It can be a better social force for the democratization of the Filipino polity to the extent that it applies the principles, criteria and norms of its social teachings into its internal structures, governance, and ethos.⁶⁶ As decisive as the church’s doctrinal self-understanding is the moral quality of its ecclesial polity in that it “affects not only how churches govern their own affairs and how they relate to each other as ecclesial institutions, but the stances they take in relationship to the world and its institutions.”⁶⁷

In this vein, “even if the church is not, formally, a democracy,” following Coleman, “its theological self-understanding, especially since Vatican II, encourages a deep-

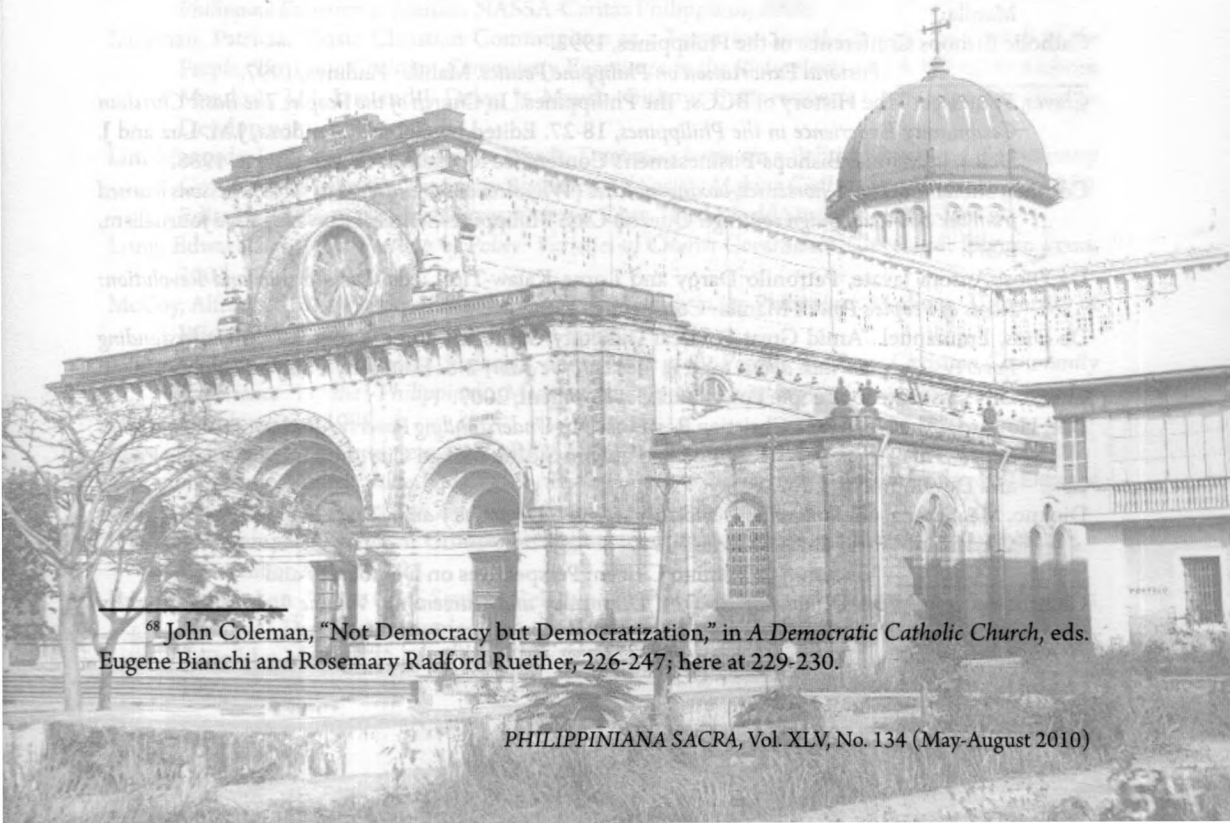
⁶⁴ Examples include how a church-owned radio station in the Diocese of Infanta (Quezon Province) has been a catalyst in community building, how the Diocese of Bacolod (Negros Occidental) has strengthened democratization through peacebuilding and engaged citizenship, and how the local church in Isabela Province has helped end a family’s political dynasty through grassroots discussion and organizing. Confer Doronila, “An Overview of Filipino Perspectives,” 86-88; Antonio Moreno, “Peacebuilding and Engaged Citizenship: The Role of the Diocese of Bacolod,” *Philippine Studies* 52, no. 2 (2004): 225-255; and John Carroll, “Democracy from Below?” 18.

⁶⁵ See, for instance, *Activist Church: How SAC-Legazpi’s PPLG Helped Reshape the Local Governance Landscape of Albay* published by the Social Action Center-Diocese of Legazpi (2006) and *Counting the People In: Sharing the Bicol Agenda* published by the Bicol Consortium for Development Initiatives (BCDI), 2008.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Richard McBrien, “An Ecclesiological Analysis of Catholic Social Teachings,” in Oliver Williams and John Houck, eds., *Catholic Social Thought and the New World Order* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 147-177, here at 176-177; and Charles Curran, “What Catholic Ecclesiology Can Learn from Official Catholic Social Teaching,” in Eugene Bianchi and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., *A Democratic Catholic Church: The Reconstruction of Catholicism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 94-112.

⁶⁷ Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 156.

going application of the democratic ethos to its structures and behavior.”⁶⁸ Although the church is not a “government by the people” but by the Word of God, it should be passionate about becoming a community of participatory decision-making and democratic leadership, otherwise the church cannot practice a discipleship of equals gathered and sustained by God’s Word. Indeed the church cannot be a “government of the people” but a “government of God’s grace.” But if it grows secure in its alliance with an elite few and in the privileges offered by dominant power structures, it would lose its credibility as sign and sacrament of God’s special predilection for the poor. Finally, the church is not merely a “government for the people” but a “community for God’s kingdom.” But a church that hesitates to be prophetic against the power structures that prevail in the world cannot be God’s sacrament for the “fullness of life” (John 10:10) Jesus has come to inaugurate.



⁶⁸ John Coleman, “Not Democracy but Democratization,” in *A Democratic Catholic Church*, eds. Eugene Bianchi and Rosemary Radford Ruether, 226-247; here at 229-230.

References:

- Abad, Ricardo. "Attitudes towards Welfare and Inequality." *Philippine Studies* 45 (Fourth Quarter 1997): 447-476.
- Abueva, Jose. "Tracking the Nation." *Public Policy* II, no. 2 (April-June 1998):83-104.
- Aguilar, Filomeno. "Betting on Democracy: Electoral Ritual in the Philippine Presidential Campaign." *Philippine Studies* 53, no. 1 (2005):91-118.
- Aquino, Belinda. "Filipino Elections and 'Illiberal' Democracy." *Public Policy* II, no. 3 (July-September 1998):1-26.
- Bello, Walden. *The Anti-Development State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2004.
- Brillantes, Alex, Jr. "State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Executive." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Volume 2*, 21-32. Edited by Marlon Wui and Ma. Glenda Lopez. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- Carizo, Jay. "Human Rights, Human Wrongs and the Fallacies of the Palace." In http://ipd.org.ph/main/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&pop=1&page; Internet accessed July 14, 2008.
- Carroll, John. "The Philippines: Forgiving or Forgetting?" *Public Policy* III, no. 2 (April-June 1999):83-92.
- _____. "Society: Civil and Uncivil." *Intersect* 17, no. 8 (September 2002):4-6.
- _____. "Entomb them Alive." *Intersect* 18, no. 6 (December 2003):4-8.
- _____. "Democracy from Below." *Intersect* 19, no. 3 (July-September 2004):12-18.
- Carroll, John and Francisco Claver. "The Pastoral Priorities of the Philippine Bishops: A Report on a Survey." *Philippine Studies* 34 (1986): 21-40.
- Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. *Thirsting for Justice: A Pastoral Exhortation on Agrarian Reform* (14 July 1987), 299-303. In *Responses to the Signs of the Times. Selected Documents of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines*. Edited by Abdon Ma. Josol. Cebu City: Redemptorist Publications, 1991.
- _____. *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II)*. Manila: Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1992.
- _____. *Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics*. Manila: Paulines, 1997.
- Claver, Francisco. "The History of BCCs: The Philippines." In *Church of the People: The Basic Christian Community Experience in the Philippines*, 18-27. Edited by Gabino Mendoza, J.M. Luz and J. Deles, Jr. Manila: Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, 1988.
- Coronel, Sheila. *Cockfight, horserace, boxing matches (Why elections are covered as sport): Lessons learned from the 2004 campaign coverage*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004.
- De Dios, Aurora Javate, Petronilo Daroy and Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, eds. *Dictatorship and Revolution: Roots of People's Power*. Manila: Conspectus, 1988.
- De Dios, Emmanuel. "Amid Great Political Difficulty, Some Economic Progress." In *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*, 2-8. Edited by Paulynn Sicam. Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007.
- Dee, Howard. "The Need for a Christian Response." In *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*, 98-101. Edited by Paulynn Sicam. Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007.
- Diokno, Ma. Serena, ed. *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship, Volume 1*. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- _____. "Becoming a Filipino Citizen: Perspectives on Democracy and Citizenship." *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship, Volume 1*, 17-38. Edited by Maria Serena Diokno. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.

- Doronila, Maria Luisa. "An Overview of Filipino Perspectives on Democracy and Citizenship." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, 69-111. Edited by Maria Serena Diokno. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- Fabros, Aya, Joel Rocamora and Djorina Velasco, eds. *Social Movements in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2006.
- Ferrer, Miriam Coronel, ed. *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society, Volume 3*. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- _____. "Civil Society: An Operational Definition." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship, Volume 1*, 5-15. Edited by Maria Serena Diokno. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- Gaspar, Karl. *To be Poor and Obscure: The Spiritual Sojourn of a Mindanawon*. Quezon City: Center for Spirituality, 2004.
- Golay, Frank. *Face of Empire: The United States-Philippines Relations, 1898-1946*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997.
- Hedman, Eva-Lotta. "Whose Business Is It Anyway? Free and Fair Elections in the Philippines." *Public Policy* II, no. 3 (July-September 1998): 145-170.
- Hodder, Rupert. "The Philippine Legislature and Social Relationships: Toward the Formalization of the Polity?" *Philippine Studies* 53, no. 4 (2005): 563-598.
- Hutchcroft, Paul. "The Politics of Economic Liberalization." *Public Policy* I, no. 1 (October-December 1997): 121-133.
- _____. *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998.
- <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/163740/Senate-approves-CARP-extension-bill> (1 June 2009)
- <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/164001/House-approves-CARP-extension#> (1 June 2009)
- Karaos, Anna Marie. "Perceptions and Practices of Democracy and Citizenship among Urban Middle Class Families." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, 113-132. Edited by Maria Serena Diokno. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- Ledesma, Antonio and Amado Picardal. *Building Basic Ecclesial Communities: Case Studies from the Philippine Experience*. Manila: NASSA-Caritas Philippines, 2000.
- Licuanan, Patricia. "Basic Christian Communities as a Force for Social Change." In *Church of the People: The Basic Christian Community Experience in the Philippines*, 28-34. Edited by Gabino Mendoza, J.M. Luz and J. Deles, Jr. Manila: Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, 1988.
- Lim-Mangada, Ladylyn. "Grooming the Wards: Dynamics between a Political Party and Community Groups." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society, Volume 3*, 259-270. Edited by Miriam Coronel Ferrer. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- Long, Edward LeRoy, Jr. *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001.
- McCoy, Alfred, ed. *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*. Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993.
- Mendoza, Gabino, J.M. Luz and J. Deles, Jr., eds. *Church of the People: The Basic Christian Community Experience in the Philippines*. Manila: Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, 1988.
- Mercado, Ronna. "Is the end near for CARP?" *Intersect* 21, no. 4 (October-December 2006): 26-29.
- Moreno, Antonio. *Church, State, and Civil Society in Postauthoritarian Philippines: Narratives of Engaged Citizenship*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006.
- Opiniano, Jeremiah. "Party List Groups: Struggling to represent the marginalized." *Intersect* 18, no. 6 (December 2003): 20-24.
- Paez, Patricia Ann. "State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making: Focus on the Legislative." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Volume 2*, 33-70. Edited by Marlon Wui and Ma. Glenda Lopez. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.

- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. "Towards a Better Distribution of Land: The Challenge of Agrarian Reform." *L'Osservatore Romano* 3 (21 January 1998):1-8.
- Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (RN), 1891.
- Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (QA), 1941.
- Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (MM), 1961.
- Pope John XIII, *Pacem in Terris* (PT), 1963.
- Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens* (OA), 1971.
- Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (LE), 1981.
- Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS), 1987.
- Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (CA), 1991.
- Putzel, James. *A Captive Land: The Politics of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992.
- Quezon, Manuel III. "The civic imperative." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 March 2008, A-11.
- Raquedan, Pia Bennagen. "If Things are So Bad, Why Aren't People Out in the Streets." In *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*, 49-60. Edited by Paulynn Sicam. Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007.
- Riordan, Patrick. "Is there a Common Good?" *Landas* 4 (1990):70-89.
- Rodriguez, Agustin Martin. "The Limits of Legislating Democracy: A Sketch for a Study on the Possibility of Legislating Discourse." *Philippine Studies* 50 (2002): 93-112.
- Second Vatican Council. *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), *The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* (1965).
- Sicam, Paulynn, ed. *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*. Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007.
- Sidel, John. "Take the Money and Run? 'Personality' Politics in the Post-Marcos Era," *Public Policy* II, no. 3 (July-September 1998):27-38.
- Social Action Center-Diocese of Legazpi. *Activist Church: How SAC-Legazpi's PPLG Helped Reshape the Local Governance Landscape of Albay* (2006).
- _____. *Counting the People In: Sharing the Bicol Agenda* (2008).
- Tabuenda, Ana Maria. "Perceptions of the Poor: The Poverty Scorecard." In *Understanding Poverty: The poor talk about what it means to be poor*, 16-39. Edited by Paulynn Sicam. Makati City: Institute for People Power and Development, 2007.
- Thomson, Mark. *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines*. Quezon City: New Day, 1996.
- Villarin, Tom, "Decentralizing Government," *Intersect* 18 (March 2003)3:4-6.
- Wui, Marlon and Ma. Glenda Lopez, ed. *Philippine Democracy Agenda: State-Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making, Volume 2*. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.
- Wurfel, David. *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988.
- Zialcita, Fernando. "Barriers and Bridges to a Democratic Culture." In *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Democracy and Citizenship in Filipino Political Culture, Volume 1*, 39-68. Edited by Maria Serena Diokno. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.