

# Refiguring the Ecclesiology of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines for Filipino Catholics

Allan A. Basas\*

Institute of Religion, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines

**Abstract:** The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) expresses one of the hopes and memories of Vatican II, which is to witness the emergence of world Church or the realization of the Church in a given place, time, and people. Guided by the query, “How do we live as Christians ... in our situation of lights and shadows?,” the Council determined that the Church in the Philippines should be a Discipleship in Community. To understand the outcome of the Council, it helps to situate it within the broader movement during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, which saw the emergence of contextual theologies. The integration of the total human reality in doing local theology responds to the predicament of Asian theological associations during the said decades which struggled against the so-called “burden of the past” or the “petrified status quo,” referring to the western ecclesiological framework, which was viewed as hindrance in the building up of a truly local church. In light of all these, this paper proposes a refiguration of ecclesiology of PCP II. This article, looks into those experiences of Filipino Catholics where they can encounter the Church that was described by PCP II and proposes in view thereof, that our experience of sociality, e.g., *bayanihan* and *pakikipag-kapwa*, provide experiential structures that set in motion our initial experience and understanding of the Church.

**Keywords:** *Ecclesiology, PCP II, Discipleship in Community, Contextual Theologies, Creative Imagination, Culture, Bayanihan, Kapwa*

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\*Allan A. Basas can be contacted at [allan.basas@ust.edu.ph](mailto:allan.basas@ust.edu.ph) or [aabasas@ust.edu.ph](mailto:aabasas@ust.edu.ph).

## Introduction

In 1991, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) asked the question, “How do we live as Christians, as Filipino Catholics in our situation of lights and shadows?”<sup>1</sup> Urged on by this query, the PCP II sketched the mission of the Church in the Philippines when it proposed that this local Church should be a “Discipleship in Community.” This Church envisions leading her members and inspiring them to imitate the examples of the early Christians who were “fired up by the love of Jesus Christ and moved by his word and Spirit, gathered to worship, to pray, to share, and to serve.”<sup>2</sup> Ten years later, in a review of the results of PCP II in the life of the Church, the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR) confessed: “the Church in the Philippines has, to our shame, also remained unchanged in some respects... many prescriptions of PCP II have not been implemented.”<sup>3</sup> More recently, in 2012, ten years after the review of the NPCCR and twenty years after PCP II, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), in anticipation of the fifth centenary of the coming of Christianity to the Philippines, issued a pastoral exhortation, which calls for a new evangelization that hopes to reawaken the enthusiasm of Filipino Catholics in being members of the Church and to overcome the separation of the Gospel from their lives.<sup>4</sup> Desiring to contribute to this never ending reflection, I propose, in this paper, the integration of some life narratives of the Filipino Catholics, in the hope of contributing to the task of refiguring the ecclesiology of PCP II. To do so, this paper undertakes the following: first, it describes the world of the text, i.e., of PCP II in terms of its structural, temporal, and symbolic features; second, it weaves together of the abovementioned features in order to form a concordant meaning; and third, it refigures the ecclesiology of PCP II through the integration or appropriation of the life narratives of the Filipino Catholics.

## Emergence of Contextual Theologies

PCP II expresses one of the hopes and memories of Vatican II, which is to witness the emergence of world Church. This world Church, Avery Dulles explains,

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: 20 Jan – 17 Feb 1991* (Manila: Paulines, 1992), 35, 8 -33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *Church Renewal: Proceedings and Addresses of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal* (Manila, Philippines: St. Paul's Press, 2001), 56.

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, “CBCP Pastoral Exhortation on the Era of New Evangelization (longer version).” Retrieved 23 February 2015 from <http://cbcwebsite.com2010s/2012/newevangelizatio.html>.

“marks the end of the period when Catholicism as a whole would be equated with its expression in the forms of Greco-Roman, Mediterranean, or European Culture.”<sup>5</sup> A world Church, we are reminded, is at the same time rooted in Tradition and open to possibilities. In this way, a healthy balance is maintained between what is necessary and contingent in the Church: necessary pertains to the visible bonds of communion while contingent refers to the ever-changing context or locale of the Church. Romano Guardini poignantly describes this movement, as the “awakening of the Church in peoples’ soul,” one of the most important sentiments leading to the Vatican II.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, John XXIII, in his thoughtful remark, articulated the radical shift that would lead the Church into the era of Vatican II: “The Church does not identify herself with any particular culture, not even European and Western culture ... the Church is ever ready to recognize, to welcome and indeed encourage all things that honor the human mind and heart even if they have their origin in places of the world that lie outside this Mediterranean basin.”<sup>7</sup>

Leonardo N. Mercado and Jose M. De Mesa concur in the idea that the impetuses for change are the emergence of empirical approaches and the openness of theology to interdisciplinary approaches.<sup>8</sup> Here, the Church considers as part of her pool of sources those contributions coming from secular fields or other specialized sciences, thus paving the way for the influx of cultural data, which introduced culture as a *locus theologiae*.<sup>9</sup> This is evident, for example, in the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes*, which reads: “the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> This development highlighted a Church that is docile to human experiences. Catalino Arevalo referred to this as “ecclesio-genesis, or the realization of the Church in a given place, a given time, within a given people and duration.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Avery Dulles, “The Emerging World Church: A Theological Reflection,” address at the Catholic Theological Society of America annual Convention (Washington D.C.: June 13, 1984), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council,” *Communio* 13, 3 (1986): 238. Cardinal Ratzinger quotes Guardini.

<sup>7</sup> Encyclical on the Missions, Native Clergy and Lay Participation. *Principes Pastorum*. AAS, 51, 6 (10 December 1959), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, *Inculturation and Filipino Theology*, *Asia Pacific Missiological Series 2* (Manila: Divine Word Publication, 1992), vii. See Jose M. De Mesa, *Why Theology is Never Far from Home* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2003), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. *Gaudium et Spes*. AAS 57, 15 (7 December 1966), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Catalino G. Arevalo, S.J., “Inculturation and the Church: The Asian Context,” *Landas* 25 (2011), 96. Arevalo wrote the paper as a personal contribution to the International Theological Commission in Rome: October 1984 session.

The failure of European and North American theologies to respond to local needs necessitated the development of so-called contextual theologies during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>12</sup> This newness and dynamism affirms those theological thinking and writing being done in Asia during the decade of the '80s that hoped to engender a relevant ecclesiology. Arevalo provided a sketch of how responsible Church bodies in Asia, during this period, articulated their reflection on the mission of the Church in Asia.<sup>13</sup> As a cursory observation, the theological associations in this part of the world lamented the so-called “burden of the past” or the “petrified status quo,” referring to the western ecclesiological framework that hinders them from creatively responding to the pastoral needs of their people. Despite the differences in the way that various Asian theological associations expressed their vision of ecclesiology, what can be discerned as a common underlying wish was to be given more elbowroom, so to say, to build a relevant local church or one that is responsive to the unique context or situation of their people; more concretely, an attitude of openness to the living cultural and religious traditions of the people. Arevalo opined that this project warrants a methodology that takes as its starting point, or integrates, to say the least, the concrete social, political, economic, cultural, and religious experiences of the people.<sup>14</sup> And to do so, theologians or pastors would need the help of social scientists or experts in the gathering and processing of data so as to cull or formulate responses and discern imperatives that are appropriate to the pastoral needs of their people.

The emergence of contextual theologies presents to us the imperative to integrate culture or the total human reality in the scheme of doing local theology. Moreover, we also heed intercultural concerns such as meaning, truth, sameness/difference, and agency. In other words, meaning is not a unilateral decision or an imposition but is arrived at through participative efforts, akin to the hope of Asian theologians who feel that they need to be given significant roles in the building up of a truly local church. In the case of our present study, we attempt to refigure the ecclesiology of PCP II, via reference to Filipino culture. More specifically, we ask: Where in our experience as Filipino Catholics can we find the Church that was described to us by PCP II? In this article, my humble proposal is to locate the Church in our experience of sociality, i.e., in *bayanihan* and *pakikipag-kapwa*, which provide experiential structures that set in motion our experience of the Church.

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<sup>12</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), ix.

<sup>13</sup> Arevalo, S.J., “Inculturation and the Church,” 83.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 90.

## Describing the Features of a Local Church

We lay the groundwork for the representation or refiguration of the Council's concept of ecclesiology by describing its structural, symbolic, and temporal features. The structural feature reveals how the Discipleship in Community is a determinate application of the ecclesial objective, agenda, and directional area of PCP II. As such, it is a response to the situation of lights and shadows that pervades the socio-cultural, economic, and religious context of the Philippines. The temporal feature shows that PCP II transpired within the context of various pressing societal and ecclesial challenges and questions. Lastly, the symbolic feature stresses two main symbols, namely: Jesus Christ being the ground of the Church and source of conversion; and Discipleship, signifying the peoples' response of faith to the call of Christ.

### *Structural Features: Goals, Motives, and Agents*

PCP II was convened in order to review and resolve the proper pastoral orientation, which the Church in the Philippines needed to adopt for the decade of the '90s.<sup>15</sup> With Most Reverend Leonardo Z. Legaspi, OP, S.T.D., D.D. as Conciliar President, the Council was a gathering of all sectors representing the faithful. The scriptural passage "unite all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10), which opened the Decree of Convocation proclaimed the overarching agenda of the Council, to wit: "the promotion and renewal of the Filipino Christian life through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ."<sup>16</sup>

Four directional areas guided the Council. First, *Christ as focus*. This directional area defined the identity of the Church as configured to Jesus Christ who is her origin. As no mission is activated and no identity is clarified apart from Christ, "the primary task of the Council was to discover those meeting places where Christ encounters the Filipino in his and her culture and society."<sup>17</sup> Second, *pastoral as orientation*. The pastoral thrust of the Council strongly emphasized the social ministry directed towards social transformation with a special preferential option for the poor.<sup>18</sup> It is to the poor that the Church in the Philippines must proclaim the love of

<sup>15</sup> Pedro S. de Achutegui, S.J., *121 Questions and Answers on The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Quezon City: Cardinal Bea Institute, Ateneo de Manila University, 1991), 10.

<sup>16</sup> PCP II, XXIV.

<sup>17</sup> Leonardo Legaspi, "The *Kairos* of the PCP II Implementation Stage," *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas* LXVIII, nos. 754-755 (1992): 532.

<sup>18</sup> Achutegui, *121 Questions*, 15. See Legaspi, "The *Kairos* of PCP II," 532. "The spirituality of social transformation endeavors to reflect Jesus Christ's way of life and ministry of service, especially to the sick, the needy and dispossessed... His ministry of service and consolation was given at an ordinary level which can be understood, the level of the sick, the grieving and the hungry... His conversations were addressed to small and ordinary people."

God. This area demands the unceasing conversion of the Church in the Philippines if she is to be a credible and effective witness of the love of God. Third, *evangelization as spirit*. The Council called for the need to discover new methods and new expressions of the Gospel message in view of new circumstances, and struggle for a just society; *context as Filipino*. In view of the insistence on inculturation, the context could not be otherwise Filipino, the Council further pointed out. With New Evangelization's demand for new fervor, new methods, and new expressions, the Council insisted on a continuous dialogue between the Filipino culture and the Gospel message so as to lead the Filipino people to true and genuine conversion.

### *Temporal Features*

Gaining apostolic approval, the Council was convoked from 20 January to 17 February 1991, inspired by significant ecclesial and national events most notably: the promulgation of the New Code of Canon Law, the impact of the Second Vatican Council, the changes in the Church in the Philippines after the celebration of the First Plenary Council in 1953, and the changes in the societal condition of the Philippines due to the advent of a new government brought about by a peaceful revolution.<sup>19</sup> Such movements, regarded as “lights and shadows,” were viewed as opportunities for a local Church setting out to chart new frontiers. Thus, the path towards renewal and revitalization hopes to open up a new kind of evangelization, one that heeds the stories and realities of ordinary people. This openness to the “joys and fears, hopes and pains of the Filipino people” paved the way for PCP II's seven-point agenda, namely: Christian life, Religious Concerns, Social Concerns, Church and Society, Laity, Religious, and Clergy, all of which were culled out of a nationwide survey of all sectors representing the Filipino faithful.<sup>20</sup>

### *Symbolic Features: Jesus Christ and Discipleship*

The Council envisioned a Church that incarnates Christ's mystery and ministry in the situation of Filipino Catholics. This is specifically expressed in the preferential option for the poor, patterned after Christ's ministry to those who are marginalized in the society. According to Lode Wostyn, the Council retells the story and evokes the prophetic figure of Jesus Christ, “the memory of the other Jesus who proclaimed the kingdom, who gave testimony of love of preference for the poor, who

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., XVI.

<sup>20</sup> Pedro de Achutegui, SJ, “Historical View of the Preparation and Celebration of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines” in *Journeying with the Spirit: A Commentary on PCP II*, eds. Paul Bernier and Manuel G. Gabriel (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications), 4. See, Acts and Decrees of PCP II, XXIV.

prayed to his Abba, who clashed with the religious powers of Israel and was crucified as a criminal, this memory is explosive in a society that does not honor its poor, prays to the God of capitalism, and serves the power of guns, goons, and gold.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, there is no symbol or imagery more powerful than Christ, who, by words and actions, exemplified that love is first of all, seeking the lost and the last in the society.

Discipleship, on the other hand, responds to the question: How does one react after an encounter with Christ? The initial response of conversion leads to an authentic faith: “this personal faith is the loving acceptance of Jesus Christ, through whom believers have a relationship with the Father and the Spirit.”<sup>22</sup> Consequential to this response of faith is the desire to share this faith to others, which leads to the building of a community of believers who are configured to Christ.<sup>23</sup> This faith, which comes from Christ, is expressed in the act of loving those who are marginalized in the society. This faith grows as it is nurtured through prayer and worship, by proclaiming it through words and deeds, and by loving others: “The faith that emerges here is not simply an assent but trust and obedience. It is the faith of the total human person, committing and entrusting himself to Jesus. And it is a faith that reaches out through prayer, witness and service to the gift of life received.”<sup>24</sup> As this faith grows by participating in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it endows the believer with virtues necessary for confronting personal and structural sins. Overall, discipleship presents the growth from the personal response of faith to the commitment to participate in the communal witnessing of the life of Christ in the Community of Disciples with preferential option for the poor. This must be interpreted from the perspective of discipleship, as it is a call for Filipino Catholics to live up to their identity as followers of Jesus Christ in the midst of “lights and shadows.”<sup>25</sup> Propelled by Christ, the Council envisioned Filipino Catholics living their faith as disciples in community.

<sup>21</sup> Lode L. Wostyn, CICM, “The Way of Jesus” in *Journeying with the Spirit, Journeying with the Spirit: A Commentary on PCP II*, eds. Paul Bernier and Manuel G. Gabriel (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications), 29. See, Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr., D.D. *Towards the Third Millennium: The PCP II Vision* (1991, no other biographical details were provided), 20. In the same way, according to Bacani the Christ of PCP II is “not passive and resigned before evil. He resisted evil and clashed with the religious powers of Israel. His death was not only an injustice to him but a sacrificial offering for our salvation. He challenges each of us...”

<sup>22</sup> PCP II, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Achutegui, *121 Questions*, no. 27. “This means a faith that is not privatistic, individualistic or superstitious faith. Precisely as deeply personal, it must be communitarian, formed and informed, missionary and maturing, loving, and inculturated.

<sup>24</sup> Bacani, *Towards the Third Millennium*, 21. See Green, *Spirituality in PCP II*, 139.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Anicina Co, RVM, “The Call of Jesus Today” in *Journeying with the Spirit, Journeying with the Spirit: A Commentary on PCP II*, eds. Paul Bernier and Manuel G. Gabriel (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications), 36. See Pedro C. Sevilla, S.J., Teaching Christology According to the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, retrieved 20 December 2014 from <http://www.lst.edu/academics/landas-archives/293-teaching-christology-according-to-pcp-ii-p-sevilla-sj>.

Concretely, the Council outlined this vision through the following major themes, namely: communion, participation, mission, the threefold office of Christ, and Church of the Poor, Basic Ecclesial Communities, and Paschal Pilgrimage. Scriptural passages mostly lifted from the Epistles of Saint Paul, Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospel according to Saint Mark, and Vatican II documents, serve as main sources of PCP II.

### **Discerning the Meaning of Ecclesiology**

In gathering or weaving together the manifold features of PCP II, we arrive at a meaningful story that presents a Church imbued with the values of discipleship, to wit: communion and participation, among others. Herein, we can discern PCP II's image of a Church where Filipino Catholics are first of all, in communion with the Blessed Trinity and then, with one another. Moreover, the Council also envisions the participation of Filipino Catholics in the mystery and ministry of Christ, which is realized in their experiences of sharing of responsibilities, especially in their solidarity with the poor.

#### *Communion*

The Council looked up to the life of the early Christians to describe how it desires communion to be lived out by Filipino Catholics. In going back to the common life of the early Christians, the Council points out the identifiable bonds that foster unity among all the members, and the evangelical charity that inspires the actions of the members.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the disciples embodied communion by supporting one another in the faith and they actualized this faith when they depended on each other. (Acts 2:42; Acts 4:32; and Acts 4:35).

The Council used the phrases “unity in diversity” and “equality in dignity” to highlight the meaning of communion which underscores the notion that each member has a role to play in the one body as Saint Paul pointed out (1 Corinthians

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<sup>26</sup> The bonds of communion enumerated in Acts 2:42 are articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Definitive Edition (Manila: Word and Life Publications, CBCP/ECCCE, 1994), no. 815. The CCC enumerates these bonds of communion as such: “profession of one faith received from the apostles; common celebration of divine worship; and apostolic succession through the sacrament of the Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God’s family.” See also Richard J. Dillon, “Acts of the Apostles,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1999), 734. On the other hand, Acts 4:32-35 expresses how the virtue of charity must be exemplified by the disciples who are one in mind and heart: “no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all accorded great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any who might be in need.”



12:12). The meaning of Communion is poignantly mirrored in the song composed by Maestro Lucio San Pedro, titled: *Isang Pagkain, Isang Katawan, Isang Bayan*, as theme song for the 1987 National Eucharistic Congress held in the Philippines, to wit: *Katulad ng mga butil na tinitipon upang maging tinapay na nagbibigay buhay. Kami nawa'y matipon din at maging bayan mong giliw* (Like grains which are formed to become life giving bread, may we also be gathered to be your dear people).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, in the body analogy, communion implies that, in the Church, no ministry or role exists for its own sake but always for the good of the Church and contributes “according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”<sup>28</sup> This also means that service is an integral part of communion, and is an exalted vocation of all the members of the Church and while there are different states of life that exist in the Church, services are distinguished only in form but not in dignity.

### *Participation*

In describing participation, the Council points out the importance of shared responsibility in the Church.<sup>29</sup> This was underscored in PCP II's thoughtful statement, to wit: “nobody is so poor as to have nothing to give, and nobody is so rich as to have nothing to receive.”<sup>30</sup> This notion finds affirmation in Saint Paul who exhorted the Corinthians thus, “in the body of Christ, each has a gift from the Spirit to share, and each has a need of the others' gifts for the building up of the body and for the fulfillment of its mission” (1 Cor. 12: 4-36). And in another letter, he urged the Ephesians, “we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together every joint adding its own strength, for each part to work according to its function” (Eph. 4:16). The Council, therefore, encourages active participation by all for the good of the Church. More specifically, this participative approach expresses the “new method” that PCP II wants the faithful to embrace, exhorting them to be more actively involved in the life of the Church as they are not mere objects of evangelization.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the members of the laity are called to active participation in the life and mission of the Church just as the members of the hierarchy are engaged in it although differently, as allowed by their status in life.

<sup>27</sup> The song is entitled, *Isang Pagkain, Isang Katawan, Isang Bayan*, composed by Lucio San Pedro as theme song for the 1987 National Eucharistic Congress held in the Philippines. Translation mine.

<sup>28</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. *Lumen Gentium*. AAS, 57, 1 (30 January 1965), 13.

<sup>29</sup> Luis Antonio G. Tagle, “Discipleship in the Church,” in *Journeying with the Spirit, Journeying with the Spirit: A Commentary on PCP II*, eds. Paul Bernier and Manuel G. Gabriel (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications), 50.

<sup>30</sup> PCP II, 98.

<sup>31</sup> De Achutegui, *121 Questions*, 31, 47. See also Moreno, *PCP II Ecclesiology*, 46.

### *Church of the Poor*

The notions of communion and participation are concretized in the concept of the Church of the Poor. In imitation of Christ, the Council calls on those who are well off in the society to listen to the cries of the poor and from there, to commit to live in solidarity with them. For the Church in the Philippines to be truly a Church of the poor, a conversion among its members must happen first. To emphasize conversion as a starting point, the Council invites the faithful to turn their hearts and minds towards the poor and to be committed to serve the poor, thus affirming the words of Jesus Christ: “the greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who raises himself up will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be raised up” (Mt. 23: 11-12). Demanded here is humility that inspires the people to imitate Jesus Christ who emptied himself. Thus, the Church in the Philippines, denying earthly glory, must proclaim the message of the Gospel through the practice of humility and self-sacrifice.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the “Church of Poor” as the Council describes, is willing to stand against any unjust and oppressive structures in the society that exploit and worsen the condition of the poor. Thus, to work for the poor is a moral obligation. PCP II uses the principles of the universal destiny of the goods of the earth and the struggle against injustice and oppression to demand solidarity with the poor.<sup>33</sup>

### *Basic Ecclesial Communities*

Communion and Participation are also realized in the concept of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). This ecclesial movement is offered as venue whereby rural grass root communities under the condition of their poverty foster communion, participation, and mission amongst themselves. The flourishing of BECs highlights the needs and potential of Filipino communities, i.e., those on the *barangay* level to bear witness to their faith, through the promotion of common good, justice, and peace through unity, interdependence, compassion, and other relevant inter-subjective values. In this way, BECs are able to show that as Christian communities they are not merely human associations but are congregations of faith centered on the presence of Christ.

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<sup>32</sup> LG, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 23. For it is the duty of all bishops to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith and the discipline common to the whole Church, to instruct the faithful to love for the whole mystical body of Christ, especially for its poor and sorrowing members and for those who are suffering persecution for justice's sake. See Quevedo, *Missions and the Church in the Philippines*, 3. “Mission is about the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the struggle against sinfulness in the heart of humanity, in individual lives and in the relationships and structures of injustice, domination, alienation which sin establishes in the society.”

## Refiguring A Local Ecclesiology

The ecclesiology of PCP II unfolds its specific temporality in the world of the Filipino Catholics. Twenty-six years ago, PCP II envisioned an ecclesiology that is based on theological constants and local contexts. It was mentioned earlier that a decade after the adjournment of PCP II, a nationwide study revealed that the Council's decrees were not fully implemented and that being the case, this study is offered a very good starting point for reflection. In going back to the text, we can aver that it is a well-constructed and well-thought-out theological and pastoral piece. But this study posits the task of bringing down the concepts to the level of the ordinary Filipino Catholic. Perhaps, the Council envisioned the text that they produced to be always a work in progress. It is in this pretext that all discussions redound to: to contribute to the ongoing uncovering of what it means to be a Filipino community of disciples.

### *A Propaedeutic Understanding of the World of the Reader*

*Pakikipag-kapwa* is regarded as a Filipino core value derived from the root word *kapwa* or *kapuwa*, loosely translated as “fellow being” and “other persons.” *Kapwa* also means the perceived state of shared identity and interdependent relationships.<sup>34</sup> The notion of shared identity or state of equality arises from the belief that people have inherent dignity, which means that all are endowed with their own perfections. Grace H. Aguiling-Dalisay avers that the nuance of *kapwa* as pertaining to the “other” stresses “same nature” and “shared orientation” where the self and the other are interconnected.<sup>35</sup> As such, Katrin de Guia opines that “individuals who are guided by *kapwa* can be recognized by their genuine people-centered orientation, their service to those around them and their commitment to their communities.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, *kapwa* engenders a heightened sense of interdependence. In this context, *kapwa* implies that no one is self-sufficient but is almost always in need of the other. Moreover, *kapwa* does not look at the other in a condescending way, as if the other is

<sup>34</sup> See Ibid., 62. See also Miranda, *Loob*, 113, quoting Virgilio Enriquez, “Filipino Psychology in the Third World”, *Philippine Journal of Psychology* 10, 1 (1977). See Katrin De Guia, *Kapwa, The Self in the Other: Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture Bearers* (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2005), 28.

<sup>35</sup> Grace H. Aguiling-Dalisay, “Sikolohiyang Pilipino sa Ugnayan ng Pahinungod: Pakikipagkapwa at Pagbabangong Dangkal ng mga Pilipino,” retrieved 5 November 2014 from [journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/djwfarticle/viewfile/3815/3495](http://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/djwfarticle/viewfile/3815/3495). “Ang pakikipagkapwa... ay may malalim na implikasyon. Nangangahulugan ito ang pagtanggap at pakikitungo sa ibang tao bilang kapantay,” quoting Enriquez in “Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology. *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*. 42 (1978): 1-4. Aguiling-Dalisay emphasizes the nuance of *kapwa* as recognition of shared identity unlike that of the western other which implies recognition of the self as a separate identity. See also Miranda, *Loob*, 50, quoting Virgilio Enriquez, “Filipino Psychology in the Third World.”

<sup>36</sup> De Guia, *Kapwa*, 28.

a parasite, always in need, and incapable of reciprocity. Lastly, the notion of *kapwa* as interdependent relationship also implies empathy or compassion, where one “suffers with” or commiserates with a neighbor who is in need.

Another expression of Filipino inter-subjectivity is *bayanihan*. Two threads shed light on the meaning of the term: the first is that which links *bayanihan* to the word *bayani* or hero and the second relates it to two words, namely: *bayan* (people, community) and *anihan* (harvest).<sup>37</sup> The root word *bayani* (hero) refers to a person who has extraordinary courage and abilities; one that bears admirable traits and has done a significant deed; a creature who possesses god-like characteristics.<sup>38</sup> *Bayanihan* translates this individual trait into socio-personal values where every individual is called to be heroic through active participation in collective actions. On the other hand, *bayan* and *anihan* emphasize, “working together” “mostly demonstrated when farmers help out their neighbors in rice planting, in harvest, and in other community endeavors.”<sup>39</sup> Tomas Andres synthesizes the values embedded in *bayanihan* as follows: *pagkakaisa ng layunin* (unity of objective), *pagkakaisa ng kilos* (brotherhood), *pagpapaunlad ng bawat isa* (developing of everyone), *masigasig na paggawa* (devoted and whole-hearted work), *kinikilala ang malakas at pinalalakas ang mahihina* (recognizing the strong one and strengthening the weak ones), and *pag-ibig at katapatan* (love and loyalty).<sup>40</sup>

As can be seen from the foregoing, sociality is a strong Filipino trait. It endures and shines out brightly at any opportune time, i.e., most especially when Filipinos are confronted by challenging situations. Therefore, as a noble aspect of the Filipino life, it can worthily articulate the values of the Gospel, specifically those that are demanded by the ecclesiology of PCP II. The following are modest attempts to refigure, or as mentioned hitherto, unfold the specific temporality of the concept of “Discipleship in Community” in the Filipino experience sociality.

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<sup>37</sup> See *Historical Dictionary of the Philippines*, 2012, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “Bayanihan,” 69. See also Republic of the Philippines, Department of Agrarian Reform, retrieved May 4, 2015 from <http://www.dar.gov.ph/contact-us/9-main>. “*Bayan* means people and *Anihan* means harvest and *bayanihan* means working together. *Bayan-Anihan* means a united people working together for the successful implementation of agrarian reform. The GMA administration has adopted the BAYAN-ANIHAN concept as the implementing framework for its Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).”

<sup>38</sup> *UP Diksiyunaryong Filipino, Binagong Edisyon*, 2010, s.v. 1, 2, 4: 156. “*Bayani*,” original text reads, “*tao na may kahanga-hangang katapangan at abilidad; tao na may itinuturing na may kahanga-hangang katangian at may nagawang napakahalaga*” (Translation mine).

<sup>39</sup> *Historical Dictionary*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Andres, *Positive Filipino Values*, 116.

### *Discipleship in Community is Pagkakaisa*

When the Spaniards first came in contact with the natives in Limasawa, they recognized community life in those families who lived in boats called *balanghai*.<sup>41</sup> In this context, one can imagine that no one was self-sufficient and therefore they have to take care of one another. The notion of Communion, which PCP II summed up through the scriptural passage describing the first Christian Community as “of one heart and mind” can be imagined in the Filipino culture of sociality, which can be traced back to the *balanghai* system and which later evolved in forms of *bayanihan* and *pakikipag-kapwa*.<sup>42</sup> The way that this indigenous tradition emphasized community life and shared-responsibility evokes the body analogy of Saint Paul, which described communion as having different parts conjoined to one another to constitute the body. Communion, which implies the act of unity, sharing, and service, where every member is needed for the good of the whole, is profoundly experienced in the context of the Filipino family and other related forms of collectives, such as *barangay*, and in the larger context, *bayan*. In this primacy or centrality of the family, the members show mutual love for one another and commit their actions to whatever brings the greater good for the family.<sup>43</sup>

### *Discipleship in Community is Pakikibahagi*

For the Filipino, *bayanihan* entails *pakikibahagi* (participation); a gesture realized when all the members work for the common good. The Council suggests this description when it described the need for the Church in the Philippines to be participatory, inspired by a quote from Saint Paul, to wit: “We shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function” (Eph. 4:16). But more than the Pauline inspiration, participation draws wisdom from the Blessed Trinity, which is a unity of difference with a common mission, so the members of the Church, made one in their shared baptism, have particular roles and responsibilities that serve their mission.<sup>44</sup> The call for shared responsibility that the Council desired is a strong trait that is already ingrained in the dispositions

<sup>41</sup> See William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>42</sup> See Dennis Doyle, “Mohler, Schleiermacher, and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology,” in *Theological Studies* 57 (1996), 472. See also Ola Tjorhom, “The Ecclesiology of Communion: On the Church as Vertically Grounded, Socially Directed, and Ecumenically Committed Fellowship,” *Heythrop Journal* (2010): 894.

<sup>43</sup> Gregorio F. Zaide, *Outline of Philippine History*, (Manila: National Bookstore, 1968), 193.

<sup>44</sup> Lennan, Richard “A Continuing Pilgrimage: Ecclesiology Since Vatican II,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 91, 1 (Jan. 2014): 33.

of the Filipino people. In *pakikipag-kapwa*, as De Guia emphasized, interdependent relationship is fostered. In the context of *bayanihan*, Andres emphatically calls this gesture, *pagpapaunlad ng bawat isa*, which means that everyone has something to give, regardless of quantity. This participative action, which presupposes complementarity or mutual reciprocity, is also known locally as *ambagan*, which implies gathering contributions from all the members for the purpose of helping someone in need or achieving a collective goal.<sup>45</sup>

### *Discipleship in Community is Malasakit*

*Malasakit* is a Filipino expression for compassion, also known in Cebuano, as *pahinungod*, which implies a high form of self-sacrifice or an offering of self to others.<sup>46</sup> These indigenous terms aptly describe PCP II's Church of the Poor. Pope John Paul II highlights the challenge of standing on the side of the poor in his statement, "before today's forms of exploitation of the poor, the Church cannot remain silent. She also reminds the rich of their precise duties. Strong with the Word of God, she condemns the many injustices which unfortunately, even today are committed to the detriment of the poor."<sup>47</sup> By fulfilling the vocation to be a Church of the Poor, the Church in the Philippines truly becomes a communion because the poor are made to feel that they belong fully to the Church. *Malasakit*, and its implications to the Church of the Poor are deeply rooted in the sociality of the Filipino people, specifically in the concept of the *kapwa*. According to Virgilio Enriquez, the term *kapwa* as "shared identity" explains that to be compassionate is to be genuinely *tao* or *kapwa*. To be a *kapwa* is to reach out or extend a helping hand to a neighbor who is in need and if need be at the expense of personal convenience, which is expressed in Andres' description of *bayanihan* as "*pinalalakas ang mahihina*" (the weak are uplifted). As already hitherto pointed out, the iconic representation of *bayanihan* expresses or symbolizes the willingness of every Filipino to offer one's shoulder to help ease the burden of a fellow human being. These notions richly imply the kind of conversion and solidarity demanded by the Church of the Poor: detachment from the self and orientation to the other, articulated by Alberto Alejo as *pagsasantabi ng sarili upang higit na masakyan ang karanasan ng kapwa* ("setting aside one's welfare to empathize with the experience of others").<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See Grace H. Aguilung Dalisay, and Jay A. Yacat, *Extending the Self: Volunteering as Pakikipagkapwa* (Manila: Center for Leadership, Citizenship and Democracy, National College of Public, University of the Philippines, 2004), 33.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>47</sup> PCP II, 131 quoting Pope John Paul II to the Cardinals, Members of the Pontifical Household and the Curia: "The charism of Peter: to serve universal unity by protecting and defending the Gospel's authenticity," *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 21, 1985, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Albert E. Alejo, S.J., *Tao Po! Tuloy!: Isang Landas ng Pag-Unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Quezon City: ADMU, Office for Research and Publications, 1990), 93.

*Discipleship in Community is Pagpapaunlad ng Bawat Isa*

PCP II describes Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) as rural grass root communities of Christians who gather together around the Word of God and the Eucharist.<sup>49</sup> Centered on the essential dimensions of their faith, these small communities consciously strive to integrate their faith and daily life. BECs become the venue where small communities under the condition of poverty foster sense of belongingness and sharing of responsibilities reminiscent of the traits of *bayanihan*. The flourishing of BECs highlight the need and the potential as well of Filipino communities, i.e., those on the *barangay* level to exemplify their faith, through the promotion of common good, justice, and peace through unity, interdependence, compassion, and other relevant inter-subjective values. The structures of BECs and *barangay* put in perspective and give bases to the centrality of the family as expressed in a description of the Philippine society being “familiar in nature that almost all social activities in the community center on the family.”<sup>50</sup>

**Summary**

Right at the onset, we have clarified our intention to undertake a refiguration of the ecclesiology of PCP II. This is deemed a timely reflection, as this serves as an appraisal of the text by making its concept more palatable or concrete in order to foster its reception. The first part of this paper describes the features of the PCP II, which are crucial for understanding why the Church in the Philippines should be a discipleship in community. What follows was a synthesis of the features of PCP II, thus, determining that the Church in the Philippines is built around the values of communion and participation, as conditioned by the temporal context of the Filipino people, described as lights and shadows. In the last part, the Filipino culture of sociality, expressed in the terms *bayanihan* and *kapwa*, were borrowed to articulate more concretely those concepts that constitute the discipleship in community.

The traversal from describing the features of PCP II to the refiguring of its ecclesiology marks the intersection of the world of the Council and the world of Filipino Catholics wherein real action occurs and unfolds in its specific temporality. In other words, in this traversal, the conceptual or theoretical components of the ecclesiology of PCP II finds real action in the experience of sociality of the Filipino Catholics.**PS**

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<sup>49</sup> PCP II, no. 138.

<sup>50</sup> Jocano, *Corporate Culture*, 86.

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