

SPIRITUALITY IN PCP II: INTEGRATED, SCRIPTURE-BASED, COMMUNITARIAN

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INTRODUCTION: A GRACEFUL CAMEL

It has been said that the camel is an animal designed by a committee. By accommodating everyone's taste you end up with an ungainly, improbable type of beast. In the case of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II), which was in session from January 20th to February 17th of 1991, the committee responsible for constructing the "camel" which is the Conciliar Document was extraordinarily large: there were 479 delegates, including 146 lay persons, from all over the Philippines. And yet the single document which emerged is clear, unified and readable. Much of the credit for this must go to the President of the Council, Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., of Naga City — whose firm leadership and listening ear kept the wide-ranging discussions on track — and to the three members of the "ad hoc committee for the final drafting of the document": Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, O.M.I., of Vigan, Bishop Teodoro Bacani, auxiliary of Manila, and Bishop Francisco Claver, S.J., formerly of Malaybalay. The document was accepted unanimously (with but a few abstentions) — testimony to the drafters' skill in catching the sense and intent of the delegates. At the same time, it reads well, particularly for a beast constructed by a committee.

One of the major themes of PCP II is the importance of a sound spirituality for the Philippine Church today. In the sections to follow, I would like to focus on two central ideas of the conciliar document: the need today for an integrated spirituality; and the

importance of prayer as the core and heart of any authentic spirituality for our times. Before doing so, however, let us ask an important preliminary question: Just what is "spirituality"? The term is admittedly vague, in the sense that it can mean, and historically has meant, many things. It can sound very "high" and exalted to the average person. Or it can be identified with a "party line": Dominican spirituality, or Carmelite spirituality, or "creation" spirituality.

While PCP II does not attempt a precise definition, it is clear that they have in mind something down-to-earth and applicable to *all* Catholics, at least in the Philippines. In teaching a course on "Apostolic Spirituality" at Loyola School of Theology, I find the definition of George Lane, S.J., most helpful in clarifying just what "spirituality" is.¹ Father Lane says:

In a broad sense spirituality may be described as a way to holiness; but more technically spirituality is one's possession by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. There is, then, only one spirituality because there is only one Christ; but when the means of union with God become concretized, various different styles of approach appear.

To summarize briefly, we could say that *Christian* spirituality is one's way of relating to God in Christ Jesus. Since God is one, and Jesus is one, there is really only one Christian spirituality.

But, as Lane also notes, given the diversity of ages, cultures and personalities, "various different styles of approach appear." He cites the great John Courtney Murray, S.J., as having said "that God would have each person wholly to be His witness, but not necessarily a witness to the whole of Him. Only the Church, as the community of the faithful, in many-splendored variety can really bear witness to the whole counsel of God." I am reminded of the Buddha's story of the blind men touching and describing an elephant: each describes correctly the small part he is touching; but each is mistaken if he thinks the *whole* elephant is like that part.

1. George A. Lane, S.J., *Christian Spirituality* (Allen, Texas: Argus Communications, 1968) 6 f. The book was reprinted, with a brief "Afterword" by Robert Sears, S.J., by Loyola University Press in Chicago in 1984.

PCP II, then, finds itself in a difficult position. It wishes to proclaim an authentic spirituality for *all* Filipino Catholics. It does not want to be sectarian or monastic. And yet it must be particular: particular in the sense that it speaks to *this* people at *this* "acceptable time" in their history. In seeking to be authentically Catholic and yet truly relevant at this moment in the faith life of the Filipino people, the Council (as I read the document) focuses on the two themes noted earlier: we need, especially now, an integrated spirituality; and we need a solid, scripturally-based prayer life as the heart and core of that spirituality. Let us consider each of these major themes in turn.

I. AN INTEGRATED SPIRITUALITY

THE TEXT

PCP II uses the term "integrated" in at least two places.² The first is in Part III of the document, "A Renewed Integral Evangelization." In speaking of the characteristics of this renewed evangelization, the Council discusses first "The Goals of Evangelization." The Council says:

Renewed evangelization must aim first of all at the formation of Catholics in a properly *integrated* spirituality. This *integrated* spirituality is a response to God who calls us all to be holy as the Father is holy (no. 187).

The desired type of an *integrated* spirituality may be described in these words: . . . an *integrated* spirituality that unites faith in the

2. *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* 20 January — 17 February 1991 (Manila: Secretariat, Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1992). (Henceforth *Acts and Decrees*.) The numbers in parentheses within the article refer to the marginal numbers of the Conciliar Document. The Decrees are referred to by the number of the article. — The original text of the part studied here used the word "holistic" which was changed into "integrated" after the review of the Decrees by the Congregation for Bishops. For uniformity purposes the same terminology was adopted in the Conciliar Document, or the doctrinal-pastoral part of the *Acts and Decrees*; the Conciliar Document itself was left untouched during the review by the Congregation.

Lord with justice and charity to His brothers and sisters and joins together a hope for the world to come with an intense commitment to transform the world; a spirituality that seeks the salvation of the total human person; . . . that seeks for change not only in interior attitudes but in ecclesial and societal structures; . . . that witnesses through action to the faith . . . ' (no. 188)

This spirituality begins with a conversion to the Lord. . . . Without this conversion, evangelization is fruitless³ (no. 189).

So "integrated" is understood to involve the whole person, mind and will and heart and hands. It opposes any dichotomizing of human life: spiritual vs. material; religious vs. secular; heavenly vs. earthly. As we will see shortly, the Bishops in council were aware that such dichotomies have tended to dominate the religious outlook of most Filipinos, even after the strong holistic stress of "The Church in the Modern World" in Vatican II. First, however, let us note the other reference to an integrated spirituality.

It is brief, and appears in the Decrees, formerly Part V of the original document: "Agenda Towards Renewal." There are 132 Decrees, some encompassing several related resolutions, and they are intended to concretize and lead to implementation of the ideals espoused in the four parts of the Conciliar Document. The very first article mandates (in #1) "forging and implementing a five-to-ten year National Pastoral Plan" for renewed evangelization of the country. Then in #2 we read: "This new evangelization is aimed (a) at fostering an *integrated* Christian spirituality and (b) at building a truly local Church in communion with the Apostolic See" (art. 1).

THE CONTEXT

This resolution is evidently based upon the section of Part III extensively quoted above. What, then, was the *context* of PCP II's stress on an "integrated" spirituality for all our Filipino

3. Ibid. nos. 187-189. Underlining added. The quotation cited in the document is from "One People, One Mission," Reflection Paper of the Tagaytay Echo Seminar on the 1987 Synod of Bishops.

people? The Conciliar Document, as we noted above, is divided into four parts: Part I: Our World — The Philippines: Lights and Shadows, is a situationer; Part II: Envisioning a Church Renewed, which proclaims the ideal presented by the Council to the Catholic people and to the world; Part III: A Renewed Integral Evangelization, in which the means of realizing this renewal are presented under two rubrics: announcing a message of salvation (renewing worship and catechesis), and announcing a message of liberation (renewing and deepening our commitment to social justice and to political maturity — with a special role accorded the laity in both areas). Finally, Part IV discusses The Community of Disciples: Workers of Renewal. It treats in turn of the laity, religious, the ordained ministry, and "other communities of renewal."

Other authors will treat of important areas of this wide-ranging document. For the moment, my purpose is to see the call for an "integrated spirituality" in the total context of PCP II's vision. It is evident, even from the titles, that the document's key idea is "renewal." It intends to take the good that is in our culture and our traditions — not as a fortress to be defended and protected, but as the starting point for a genuine deepening of our faith-life as a people. One or two quotations may help to make this clearer.

At the very outset of the Conciliar Document the question of fundamental concern is posed:

We look ahead to the coming millennium, the third since the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We look ahead. We look back too. And we ask questions: For all who firmly profess that Jesus is the Lord, has He, does He, make any difference in their life, in their world? (no. 2)

For us Filipinos, the first century of the coming millennium will mark the 500th year since we as a people first accepted the faith. And we ask: Has that faith, does that faith, make any difference in our life, in our nation? (no. 3)

The Philippine Church has answered the call [of Vatican II for renewal]. Not always faithfully, not always wholeheartedly. But answer it did — still does — in little and big ways (no. 6).

Hence the necessity of the Second Plenary Council: to take stock of where we are; to look where we are going, to reanimate our life in Christ Jesus; to unite all things in Him (no. 7).

As the title of this first part, *The Philippines: Lights and Shadows*, already suggests — and as the preceding quote implies — the Council sees both defects and strengths in the present situation of Catholicism in the Philippines. The defects are noted first:

For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship (beyond baptism and matrimony). Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom. And we say it is because the 'un-churched', the vast majority of our people, greatly lack knowledge of and formation in the faith (no. 13).

In a sense they are "nominal Catholics" although, as the document hastens to add: "To judge them as Christ Himself would judge them, we have to ask what they do to one another as simple human beings, whether they feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless." By this standard the Council finds much room for hope:

There is much of the Gospel that has become part of us — compassion, forgiveness, caring, piety — and makes of us a basically decent people. So even as we speak of change and renewal, we see that we have a solid base to build on — even among those we call the 'un-churched'. . . . There are so many of them because there are not enough priests, religious and other Church personnel to work with them. And the lack of 'workers in the vineyard' is due in turn to a lack of Church-going, of catechesis and formation, the very factors that would encourage more vocations of service to the Church. A vicious circle (nos. 15-16).

These few quotations perhaps suffice to give the "flavor" of the situationer. It is lengthy (nos. 1 to 33 in the text) but the essential thrust is captured by the lines quoted: There is a solid base of faith in the Filipino Catholic Church. But much needs

to be done to strengthen and solidify this sound foundation. The people's faith needs to be deepened, and a much stronger and clearer integration of the divine and the human, of worship and daily life, of prayer and action is needed. This is the task the Council sets itself and the Philippine Church as we look forward to the third millennium.

This is also the context of PCP II's call for an "integrated" spirituality. It was, I believe, a major achievement of the Council to make its own the desire of Vatican II to see spirituality as coextensive with life lived in Christ Jesus. As PCP II says: "All life is worship" (no. 167). We cannot afford to live, as many have done in the past, dichotomized lives. Since others will discuss various specific aspects of this integrated vision of Christianity, let us focus more specifically in the next section on the Council's vision of prayer as the heart and core of this authentic spirituality. Before turning to that topic, however, one final quotation — this time from the "Message of the Council to the People of God in the Philippines," accepted and published on the final day of the Council, February 17, 1991 — can summarize well the holistic vision of which we have been speaking:

Accompanied by the Spirit of Truth, we can purify our popular devotions and rituals from some of the superstitions that still contaminate them. He, the Spirit of Wisdom, can help our Basic Ecclesial Communities progress from external rituals to internalized values. As the Spirit of Fortitude, he brings us out of our selfish isolation and gives us the courage to be involved in those tasks which lead to the transformation of our society.⁴

II. PRAYER: THE HEART AND CORE OF AN INTEGRATED SPIRITUALITY

KNOWING JESUS AND RESPONDING TO HIS CALL

One of the difficulties which any apostolic spirituality faces is finding the proper balance between prayer and action. From the time of the earliest apostolic spiritualities of the 13th century

4. Ibid. XCVII-XCVIII.

— notably the Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians, with their stress on prayer *and* service — there has always been a problem balancing and integrating the two. In theory the balance may be clear, but in practice there is always the danger that service will swallow up prayer. “My work is my prayer” — all the more dangerous because it is half-true — has been the motto of many dedicated apostles who gradually lost their spirit, their very reason for service in the first place.

PCP II was well aware that the same danger lurked in the dark corners of its proclamation of an “integrated spirituality.” Thus we find a section (“Title VIII. Spirituality”) in the decrees which seeks to strike a balance between work and prayer. The first of three articles, 36, proclaims the basic principle of balance which the Council proposes: “The integration of prayer and action should be a paramount concern in the formation program of seminarians and lay faithful.” The following two articles, 37 and 38, address the specific components of this integration.

First of all, article 37 stresses “formation in a work ethic characterized by commitment, diligence, rigorous honesty and Christian love” as an essential element of any well integrated spirituality (#1). It also inculcates (#2) “a more thorough-going dimension of social responsibility” as a necessary complement of the personal spirituality of *all* Church movements. In the same spirit, and strikingly, article 38 #2 proclaims that: “Service should complement worship in sanctifying Sunday as the Lord’s day.”

A work ethic, social concern, and service: the stress in the foregoing articles is on the action pole of the “integration of prayer and action” for which PCP II calls. In article 38 #1, however, we read: “Those involved in every form of the apostolate should *complement their involvement with continuing growth in the spiritual life* and adherence to the laws and guidelines of the Church in their activities.”⁵ It is this statement which is of particular relevance to our topic. How does the Council understand this “continuing growth in the spiritual life”? To find the answer, I believe, we have to return to Part II of the document: “Envisioning a Church Renewed.” At the outset of this part,

5. Ibid., art. 38 #1. Underlining added.

immediately after the situationer in Part I (to which we referred earlier), the Council says:

We are followers of Christ, his disciples. Tracing his footsteps in our times — to utter his word to others. To love with his love. To live with his life. This is why we must move forward. To cease following him is to betray our very identity (no. 34).

And the question, then, that we must ask is: how? How to live as Christians? As Filipino Catholics? In our situation of lights and shadows? How?

The answer cannot be abstract. For it leads us back to the person of Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus who preached and worked miracles. Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, died and, from the dead, rose again. Jesus who now lives at the right hand of the Father — but continues to be in our midst (no. 35).

How to live as Catholic Christians today? *It is to know, to love, to follow Christ in the Church which he founded. This is why we need to contemplate the face — and the heart of Christ. We have to retell his story to ourselves, that we may, more credibly, more authoritatively, tell it to others. This is our belief*” (no. 36).⁶

This passage expresses beautifully, even poetically, the central importance of prayer in any authentically Christian spirituality. “We have to retell his story to ourselves” if we are to have any hope of telling it credibly, with authority, to others. We can only proclaim what we ourselves have experienced.

This is what we proclaim to you:
 what was from the beginning,
 what we have heard,
 what we have seen with our eyes,
 what we have looked upon
 and our hands have touched —
 we speak of the word of life (1 Jn 1:1).

6. Ibid. no. 36. Underlining added.

In the pages that follow, the Council gives a splendid summary of this experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ, the heart and soul of Christian prayer, which is also the substance of the Good News we preach to others. This is done under two titles: "The Way of Jesus" (nos. 37-61) and "The Call of Jesus Today" (nos. 62-86). While we cannot here survey the full content of these pages, we can note that the first section describes Jesus' sending by the Father, to proclaim and establish the Kingdom here and now, with a message of liberation especially for the "poor," — a message which he, as prophet, priest and king, realized in the paschal mystery. And the second section, "The Call of Jesus Today," centers on our faith response to Jesus' call. It is a call to the will and the heart, and not merely to the head. And the faith it demands must be "informed and communitarian," "missionary and maturing," loving and inculturated. It must be lived by prayer and worship, by witnessing and by loving service. And, as a sharing in the Paschal mystery, it must join with Jesus in overcoming both personal sin and sinful societal structures.

The crucial element here, from the perspective of prayer as the heart and core of Christian spirituality, is the need to be deeply immersed in the gospel story of Jesus, and to be truly sensitive (discerning) to the way that story is to be continued and lived out today in our lives — as individuals and as the Filipino people of God. It would be difficult to give a better description of the real essence of Christian prayer.

CONCLUSION: THE PERFECT DISCIPLE

The remainder of Part II explores, under the title "Discipleship in Community — The Church," the ways in which this experience of Jesus and our faith response to his call are to be lived out today, in our time and place. Thus the stress on "integration" is continued: prayer and action, faith experience and good works, must always complement one another if our Filipino Catholicity is to be authentic and solid. We must have the prayer, or else we have nothing to share. But (like Magdalen and the Emmaus disciples), we can only keep the Lord we have found by giving him away.

It is only fitting, then, that this Part II ends by referring to

"Mary, Model of Discipleship" (nos. 145-153). Very much in the spirit of the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, the PCP II delegates see her as the perfect disciple of Jesus, her Son. They discuss her role in the drama of salvation under two titles: "Mary, the First to be Evangelized," and "Mary, the First Evangelizer." Just as every Christian, and the Church as the community of believers, must first be evangelized — must first encounter the Lord in prayerful openness, and respond to His call in loving faith — before evangelizing others, so too Mary was first "evangelized" herself:

She heard the word of God from the angel and she inquired into its meaning. Through faith she conceived the Son of God in her heart, and by the power of the Holy Spirit conceived him in her body. . . . She submitted her whole self to God, believing his word, trusting his power, and obeying his will. By that act of faith she committed herself in faith irrevocably to her Savior-Son and his mission for the world's salvation (no. 146).

The document reviews the references to Mary in the infancy narratives, and concludes: "She treasured in her heart and pondered in faith all that concerned her Son" (no. 147). Similarly, after recalling Cana, Calvary and her waiting "in constant prayer together with the disciples of her Son for the promised Holy Spirit," the section on Mary as first of the evangelized concludes: "She certainly belongs to that group of ideal disciples whom St. Luke describes as 'the ones who, when they have heard the word, embrace it with a good and generous heart, and bear fruit through perseverance'" (no. 148).

As the last phrase suggests, Mary was also the first evangelizer. From the very beginning, when she hastened to share the good news with Elizabeth, and proclaimed in her *Magnificat* the word of God both to Elizabeth and to the Lord's chosen people, Mary was a model of the integrated spirituality which the Council seeks to inculcate in the Filipino people. "She was always a giver of Jesus to people. She gave him birth and presented him to the shepherds and the Magi. She gave him also to the old man Simeon who received him joyfully in his arms" (no. 150).

The Council concludes this Part II of the document with a tying-

together of a number of conciliar themes:

While many today attack our devotion to her, the Church of the Philippines, as a 'pueblo amante de Maria' — 'a people in love with Mary' — will always continue to seek her intercession and learn from her way of life what we need to be as a community of disciples. She is truly what her oldest extant image in the Philippines calls her: Nuestra Señora de Guia, Our Lady Guide of the Way (no. 153).

In this brief statement we see the "lights and shadows" of the present state of the faith in the Philippines: There are distortions in popular Marian devotions. But there is also a solid foundation for a deeper understanding of Mary's role in the drama of salvation — and a deeper appreciation of the way she models for us a truly "integrated" spirituality. She was truly a woman of prayer. This was the heart and center of her life with God. But her prayer was not divorced from her life of service. It is this balanced approach to spirituality, beautifully exemplified in the human life of the Mother of God, which the Council, PCP II, proposes to us today as we seek to renew our Church and our country in Christ, her Son.