



# EDIBLE THEOLOGY: REFLECTIONS OF A PASTORAL CENTER ON DOING THEOLOGY WITH GERMAN DIOCESES

*Estela Padilla*

*Theologizing, as an action of Christian faith, is a community enterprise. But communities in our globalized world are hardly homogeneous but would be intercultural. This paper wishes to explore how a Filipino pastoral team – Bukal ng Tipan – does theology and facilitates theologizing among its diocesan partners. Although Bukal ng Tipan works in the Philippines, Asia and Europe, this paper will focus on its work with German dioceses because of marked difference in context/ cultures and theological backgrounds (!). Perhaps ‘food’ as an enduring Christian faith symbol could also link intercultural theologizing and produce an ‘Edible Theology’.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Bukal ng Tipan – CICM Pastoral Center

#### History, Programs, Theology

**B**ukal ng Tipan – CICM<sup>1</sup> (from here on will be designated as *Bukal*) started in 2001. It was initially composed of a team of pastoral workers (which includes me) coming from the Parish of St. Joseph in Las Pinas, together with Fr. Mark Lesage, CICM, who was our parish priest. Even as a parish, St. Joseph was a frequent place for immersion on Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) and Participatory Church praxis for Asian and Western pastoral ministers. Even then, fulltime pastoral workers dreamt of setting up a pastoral center. This dream became a reality when CICM turned over the parish to

---

<sup>1</sup> Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, founded in Belgium, serving the Philippine church for more than 100 years.

the diocese in 2000. Fr. Mark called on some of the fulltime pastoral workers in the parish (six of us) to concretize this dream. Thus *Bukal ng Tipan* was born. Our first task was to clarify our vision and our mission. Bukal's mission<sup>2</sup> is ***to journey with peoples towards a participatory church in the world.*** From its parish experience of two decades where the pastoral workers became active agents of moving the parish from a priest-centered to a participatory church, Bukal's main pastoral programs, tools, methods and processes were designed.<sup>3</sup>

In the first few years, we thought *Bukal* programs should be given at the center, in Taytay, Rizal. We invite people from the different dioceses for courses in *Bukal*. As we worked with dioceses, dioceses began to invite us to their places. From these initial visits to dioceses, we will learn the foremost principles of our pastoral center and our life as pastoral ministers – we need to be contextualized (not just wait for people to come to the center and attend a predesigned program), we need to build up local teams in the dioceses we work with (instead of them depending on us), we need to set up sustaining systems (so that the dioceses themselves are motivated and empowered to design their own processes and programs based on their own vision and mission).

We moved from the *center* to the *local* areas, and in doing so became context-based, responsive to specific needs and thus more mission-oriented. From giving pastoral *courses*, *Bukal* moved to facilitating *processes* of local church development. From pastoral *consultants*, we became more conscious that we are *partners* and *co-disciples* with the different teams we encounter.

### **Processes, Methods, Tools**

We have three units – the BEC/Local Church Unit, the Youth Unit and Contemplative Spaces. Most of the programs of *Bukal* focus on pastoral skills training on moving towards a Participatory

<sup>2</sup> For complete framework – vision, mission, philosophy, values, visit [www.bukalngtipan.com](http://www.bukalngtipan.com).

<sup>3</sup> The website of Bukal ng Tipan ([www.bukalngtipan.com](http://www.bukalngtipan.com)) may be accessed for a longer description of courses and programs, as well as its history.

Church in the World. BEC and Local Church Unit has several courses on the following topics: BEC-Organizing, Leaders' Training, Designing and Facilitating Awareness-raising (Conscientization) Programs, Designing and Facilitating Community Liturgies, Designing and Facilitating Retreats and Recollections, Setting Up Ministries in Neighborhood Settings. The Youth Unit would have parallel courses but appropriated for the youth.

However, because of this fundamental realization that we cannot simply give our programs thinking that it is applicable and relevant for all, much of our work revolves around immersion, culture research, communal articulation of vision and partnering with local teams and a lot of consultancy work for designing localized program. The following diagram below will explain our macro (e.g. when asked to work on diocesan vision-mission-goals) and micro (when asked to work on a particular pastoral program, e.g. BEC or Family, etc.) approach to pastoral work with dioceses.

### **Bukal Community Journeying Process**

From this framework, our work with dioceses always start with immersion and culture research BEFORE designing any pastoral program. When a diocese invites us to work with them or even sometimes to simply give a talk, we will request first if we could visit them and get to know their diocese a bit. Even if it is a short immersion time, we make sure we encounter center and periphery places, get a sense of context and culture, be exposed to people and programs. From the very start we make it clear that we are *not* there to *give a program* but to *journey with them as they build up their local churches*. Being oriented to and grounded on local contexts, cultures and challenges help Bukal to be relevant, responsive and mission-oriented.

We have developed some tools to help us do immersion and culture research together with the local teams who have invited us. Even if we are invited as resource persons and pastoral consultants, we do not presume that we have the answers for these dioceses' concerns or challenges. We want to listen to people and we make it a point to listen especially to those who are far away from the church center, those at the periphery and margins, especially the poor. Togetherness is the key word of this working framework.



**Reflections of a Pastoral Center on Doing Theology with German Dioceses**

Togetherness necessitates a deep respect for every one, especially those without a voice in the usual center-based set-ups<sup>4</sup> of most dioceses.

Togetherness is also manifested in our community life. Because we promote community/BEC, *Bukal* believes that we also need to witness as a community. We strive to live as a community in *Bukal* and want to build community with the diocesan teams we work with. Most importantly, we want to be *together* with the people closest to Jesus' heart, the poor, that is why we want to involve them. We believe that the medium is the message.

Another important step of this journeying process is 'experiencing God together'. We make it a point that our pastoral work is not just social work or effective implementation of pastoral programs. We are conscious that we are called to be family of God following God and extending Jesus's Kingdom-mission. Praying, reflecting on God's word, rituals and different forms of worship are integral part of this journeying process. Every church activity – liturgy, seminars, conferences, meetings, and even planning meetings – should facilitate an experience of God. Pastoral planning should also be a spiritual experience. Time and again we have received the comment – “We didn't expect to experience God in a planning meeting! Thank you for making us feel God is so near!” If church activities do not facilitate experiences of God, whose dream and whose mission are we promoting? However, spiritual experiences are not simply activities but the intention is to facilitate the shifting of paradigms. To be disciples of Jesus and to take part in his Kingdom mission needs a different perspective, a different attitude and a different way of doing things.

Only after listening to people - especially the poor – (first spiral) and listening to God (second spiral), only then can we dream (third spiral). We have seen some dioceses who would *start* with planning a pastoral program – sometimes even a 5-year pastoral program! – without going through spiral one and two, and they wonder why

<sup>4</sup> Parishes, Cathedrals, Diocesan Centers are usually located in the center of economic, social and political life. If consultation only happens in the center, then most probably we would only be reaching out to the richer, more educated percentage of the population and church membership.

they could not implement their programs. They find it difficult to see that it was THEIR (pastoral ministers’) program, their dream, and not the peoples’. If we do not go through spiral one and two, pastoral programs could be so out of touch with the reality of people’s lives, creating a possibility that ‘church’ becomes a separate compartment instead of a core energy in people’s daily living.

The important thing also about this framework is sustainability (fifth spiral). What does it take to sustain this movement? How are former (and traditional) church structures reshaped so as to serve the common vision? What type of formation can bind and link this journeying together? Sustainability ensures that it is the conviction and the commitment of the faith community – not just its leaders, and definitely not *Bukal* - who will sustain this journey. Another valuable element here is networking with those outside church structures - local government units, people’s organizations, etc. The longer the church remains inward-looking, the sooner it will die.

### **Bukal Theology - Teolohiyang Bayan<sup>5</sup> (Local Theology, People’s Theology)**

The Community Journeying Process framework facilitates a theology/theologizing from the ground, highlighting the importance of context, community and mission.

#### **a. ‘mula sa bayan, para sa bayan’ – from the community, for the community**

‘*Bayan*’ could mean two things – place and people. But more than physical place or people, ‘bayan’ is the sum-total of a community’s lives, struggles, aspirations, energies to collectively work for their wellbeing (*kaginhayanan at kasaganaan ng bayan*)<sup>6</sup>. ‘*Bayan*’ is also related

<sup>5</sup> I first explored this concept of ‘*teolohiyang bayan*’ when I wrote Contextual Theologizing in the Philippines as part of INSECT report in 2012. Such concept came from our experience of theologizing in *Bukal*.

<sup>6</sup> MaryJane Rodriguez-Tatel, *Ang Dalumat ng Bayan sa Kamalayan at Kasaysayang Pilipino*, Bagong Kasaysayan: Mga Pag-aaral sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas Lathalain Bilang 15 (Lungsod Quezon:Palimbagan ng Lahi, 2005).

to '*bayanihan*' or collective effort of neighbors/community to be in solidarity, to work for a common project towards a common good.

All the above meanings of ' *bayan* ' are reflected in this framework (Community Journeying Process). Firstly, we believe that it is the  *bayan* /community that owns the journey – they wish to journey towards a vision and they will decide every step of the way to pursue this journey or not. Whatever is produced from this journey – pastoral assemblies, statements, programs, structures – witness to their faith and therefore manifest a local faith community's theology. At  *Bukal* , we call this theology,  **Teolohiyang Bayan** . We used to think of theologizing as done solely by 'experts', professional theologians. We can see from this framework how the  *bayan* /communities, and not just individuals, are theologizing. Such a framework also shows that theologizing is ' *mula sa bayan* ', rooted in and arising from the actual situations and problems of people living in particular social locations. The role of  *Bukal*  is to facilitate this ownership process and to journey with the local community. The local community is the  *locus theologicus* .

*Teolohiyang bayan*  is a  *bayan*  (people/community from a particular place) actively engaging their faith with their specific context ( *bayan* ) and difficult challenges they are facing. It is indeed a  *bayanihan* , a collective effort that binds common goals towards a local faith community's wellbeing.  *Teolohiyang Bayan*  is the witness of the local church.

**b. 'talastasang tumatalab sa buhay' – processual and missional**

' *Talastas* ' - 'to know' or 'to understand' - and ' *talastasan* ' - a process or a space for understanding - are interesting words to use for theologizing. Theology is not a finished product but a process, in  *via* ; theologizing is an experiential and a continuing experience.

' *Tumatalab* ' (literally, 'effective') is to feel something in the gut to the point that one is affected, changed and moved to do something. ' *Talab* ', as feeling, is related to ' *ramdam* '/' *dama* ' (to feel/sense). Something is true for the Filipino if s/he can  *ramdam* / *dama*  it (feel/sense).  *Dama* / *ramdam*  points to the primacy of experience in learning/knowing/understanding something.

Experience – *karanasan* - root word is ‘*danas*’<sup>7</sup>. *Danas*, as experience, is to go through something thoroughly, a body-mind-soul event. Another word for experience / *danas* is ‘*pinagdaanan*’ or what one has gone through or going through at the moment. The root word ‘*daan*’ means ‘path’, ‘way’, ‘road’. What has been ‘*pinagdaanan*’ <experienced; gone through> provides a ‘*daan*’ <way, path> to follow. Learning is by doing; understanding is by experiencing. Experience provides wisdom.

*Teolohiyang tumatalab* affirms the primary role of experience in theologizing. Because theologizing arises from a community’s experiences (*karanasan, pinagdaanan*), *teolohiyang tumatalab* is theologizing that affects people in way that moves them (*may talab*). *Teolohiyang tumatalab* involves people, engages them in a wholistic way - not just intellectually, but emotionally, socially, spiritually – as they live out their faith life in their specific settings. *Teolohiyang tumatalab sa buhay* is a theology that makes sense to people’s lives. It is a theology that is practical, effective and missional; it is not an impotent theology.

### Journeying with German Dioceses: A Brief History

In 2006, the Asian team I belonged to<sup>8</sup> had this idea of conducting a seminar on BEC that will put together theologians who teach in schools and BEC practitioners who have doctorate degrees in theology. We started this seminar in India (Bangalore) and in this first meeting, a German theologian Dr. Fr. Christian Hennecke attended<sup>9</sup>. Hennecke has been interested in BECs a few years back and has done BEC immersion in different countries. In 2008, he organized

<sup>7</sup>Jose de Mesa has written comprehensively on the Filipino way of theologizing, see: “Buhay, Karanasan, Aral at Turo: Filipino Hermeneutics of Experience”, *East Asian Pastoral Review* Vol. 32: 3-4 (1995), pp. 251-276; see also “Mabathalang Pag-aaral: Filipino Theologizing”, *Chakana* 2 (2004), pp. 121-137.

<sup>8</sup>I am a founding member of the AsIPA/BEC Team of FABC which has started, promoted and facilitated conferences, seminar-workshops and retreats to different Asian countries for the past 21 years.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Fr. Hennecke would be the theologian writing the most books on BEC and participatory church in the next three years and a popular speaker in different dioceses among bishops, clergy and lay, as well as invited to different European countries interested in local church development.



**Reflections of a Pastoral Center on Doing Theology with German Dioceses**

the same meeting in Germany with German theologians and BEC practitioners from other countries. I was invited and my talk was ‘Are BECs for Germany?’ After this, there were two more talks on the same topic in other places in Germany. *Bukal* as a team was also invited twice in Missio campaigns where we got to talk to different Catholic parishes and groups. Whatever we said there must have interested some Germans and by 2009, the first group of German pastoral workers arrived in *Bukal* to have an Orientation and Exposure to BEC and Local Church Development Processes that run for 14 days. Since then, in the past 5 years, we have about 150 pastoral workers from 19 of the 27 dioceses in Germany coming in 2-3 batches a year for this particular course.

In 2012, we were invited to facilitate a summer course in Germany itself (hosted by Hildesheim diocese inviting other dioceses from the northern part of Germany). A year later, because all those interested could not be accommodated in the summer courses, a winter course was opened, and recently a spring course. To date, the people who have attended the summer courses we have facilitated together with the Hildesheim team in 2012, 2013 and 2014 in Germany would number about 300 coming from 11 German dioceses and 4 from other European countries (Zurich, Vienna, Salzburg, Luxumburg). In 2015, we will [sic] hold summer courses in three more dioceses – Limburg, Paderborn and Osnabruck. We have new dioceses coming to *Bukal* in 2014-2016, including Berlin and Erfurt from the East. In 2015, aside from the regular summer courses, I have [sic] invitations for two international conferences hosted by Germany on the same topic.

Joining the first German group that came to *Bukal* was a team from Mary Lourdes Parish in Zurich, Switzerland led by Fr. Martin Piller. They have also become part of the team in Germany that gives the summer, as well as the winter and spring courses. This parish team also reaches out to other parishes in Zurich and nearby dioceses in Switzerland.

## Edible Theology: Reflections of a Pastoral Center on Doing Theology with German Dioceses

*Love bade me welcome;  
yet my soul drew back, guiltie of dust and sinne...  
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?  
My deare, then I will serve.  
“You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat”  
So I did sit and eat.<sup>10</sup>*

Jesus left us with the image of food and eating to remember him by and to relive his memory. I wish to use the same imagery for theologizing in a globalized world. This paper is a sharing of our experiences of working as a pastoral center with dioceses in general and with German dioceses in particular. Culled from and limited by these intercultural experiences, I wish to present a methodology for doing theology in a globalized world via the imagery of cooking and eating food, hence, Edible Theology.

I used the image of food and eating for theologizing – edible theology - for several reasons. One is: ‘snacks’ and *salo-salo* (eating together) are the two words the Germans take home with them when they come from Bukal courses the past 5 years. They are very amused that we take snacks several times a day. They were also surprised with the concept of *salo-salo* and how they are welcomed with lots of food when they visit different places in the country. Back in Germany, a few mentioned that when they remember us in a restaurant, they would order food to share (*salo-salo*).

Whenever we are in Germany, before a seminar, we would gather for a meal as we plan the course. In the duration of a seminar, we meet with the local team in the evening for a drink while evaluating the day and planning the next day. After the seminar, again we would gather for a meal to evaluate and to plan the next steps. Food and eating are therefore used in this paper literally as well as metaphorically because Edible Theology summarizes our learnings in doing theology in a globalized world.

<sup>10</sup> “Love” by George Herbert (full poem attached) from A.M. Allchin, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 45, cited in S. Holland, “How Do Stories Save Us?”

## Elements of Edible Theology

### *Gutom/Uhaw (Hunger/Thirst)*

Gutom/Uhaw starts a whole eating process. Gutom/Uhaw is a reminder that theology/ theologizing<sup>11</sup> starts from a context, from a need, from a question, from a desire. As has been affirmed, theology is always local.

Our pastoral processes and programs were doing quite well when we were working with Philippine dioceses. But when we started getting invited in Germany and working with German dioceses, it was a different story all together. Firstly, the economic and social environments were very different: Germany is one of the richest country in the European Union and living in a postmodern context and we are one of the poorest in this region, still mainly agricultural and modern. Secondly, majority of the Filipinos are Catholic and churches are bursting at the seams. Meanwhile in the German church, parishes were being fused as baptized members and ordained ministers lessen in number. Thirdly, diocesan pastoral workers are professionals in their field (most have masteral and doctoral degrees in theology, counseling, organizational development, etc.) whereas in the Philippines, we work with parish or diocesan volunteer or employed pastoral workers, who while educated, were mostly not educated or trained formally in theology or pastoral ministry.

But the German church, through the people we met in the different dioceses, is a church desiring relevance and renewal. Their sustained interest and search for another way of being church was evident in their continued immersion in and study of different places where they hear something new developing in church life and mission, especially in Africa, Latin America and North America.

---

<sup>11</sup> A reminder that I am referring to theology/theologizing as a pastoral center working with church (diocese/parish /BEC) teams or communities, not in academic, institutional (theological commissions at the national or regional level) or other settings.

***Mula sa Palengke (From the Market)***

Good food is ensured if fresh ingredients come from the locale. Ingredients for a meal could also be a metaphor for daily life as ingredients come from the fields and the market to the kitchen and the dining table, the most used space in a family house. Theology/theologizing should revolve around daily life concerns because it should make sense to people. Otherwise, whose theology is it?

We make it a point to have an immersion in German settings – society and church – as much as we can so that we are aware of their context and concerns; what makes them tick, what irritates them, what energizes them, and their dreams and hopes. This is the reason the church programs (meetings, seminars, courses) we have designed used daily life experiences – roads, names, crowd, time, seeds, doors, etc.

Here are two examples of pastoral programs, a meeting and a course *Bukal* facilitated:

1) First meeting with 13 deanery pastoral teams of the Diocese of Hildesheim. It was a planning meeting with these teams who want to go the way of local church development. *Bukal* designed a program using ‘roads’. We used the images of ‘road signs’ (‘parking’, ‘danger’, ‘40 km per hour’, ‘no U turn’, etc.) to assess where their parishes are at. Then further on which roads their parishes have taken in the past. To guide their planning, we took different roads in the scriptures - the starlit road of the wise men, the road to Bethlehem, the road to Jericho, the road to Jerusalem.

2) In the first planning meeting with the diocesan formation team of the Diocese of Hildesheim, we used Mt. 13:31-32 and asked the following questions to facilitate both prayer and planning workshops for 3 days: “the kingdom of God is like...” as they shared their recent experiences of the ‘kingdom’; what seeds have been planted the past years; what fruits do they want to see in three years, what birds (people) do they want to ‘dwell in their branches’. Responses to such questions formed the agenda which we proceeded to plan on.

Designing the courses was also very challenging. We have decided to use very open frameworks so that everyone could speak, learn and decide together. Like the meetings, basically a course or seminar

starts with something from daily life. For example: for the first summer course in the Diocese of Limburg (which has become infamous because of a financial issue with the bishop), we took the topic of ‘names’. For introductions, we asked them to recall different names they have been called since they were kids until now and recall what experiences brought on such names. Some had funny and some had sad experiences. That introduction was intended to drive home the point that experiences name us. It was a good bridge to discuss the different names the Catholic Church has been given through the years (hierarchical church, sacramental church, church of the poor, etc.) and especially the bad name that has been attached to their diocese. We used different stories in the Bible about people who have changed their names and was guided by their experiences. We ended with a new name they wish for their diocese and experiences that need to be facilitated so that the diocese gets this new name.

We used the concept of doors for our course on creativity in liturgies, shared about home and neighbourhood experiences to understand church in the neighbourhood in a deeper way, looked into the culture of time in daily life and time in the Bible to explore deeper the need for contextualized and responsive formation.

### ***Niluluto (Being Cooked Together)***

*Niluluto* means theology/theologizing is a process. It is not a finished product to be consumed (which could give one indigestion or dislike). *Pagluluto*, like theologizing, has basic steps (a recipe) which could refer to a basic framework of open dialogue with context, culture and community and a sensitivity to God and God’s spirit. (See in this article, the section on Community Journeying Process and its accompanying theology.)

### ***Pinagsasaluhan (Eaten Together)***

Food and eating connotes togetherness, sitting around a table eating in fellowship. Theology/theologizing is something done together by the whole community. Because it is a community process, each participant is important because one is a *lahok* (ingredient) and

contributes something important to the dish. Because it is about eating together, the process should be enjoyable, not heavy, not boring.

As what we can see from the sample design for meetings, seminars and courses with different groups – diocesan teams, bishops, priests, lay leaders – we design a framework meant for everyone to speak their mind, to design their agenda and intentions together, to share their questions and seek together for answers. From the very start also, we have worked with the local teams. We ask them to express what they want to happen, then we propose a flow for comments. We dry run and evaluate and adapt again. Always sensitive to and responsive to group process, we sometimes change program directions midway during the meeting or course. After the meetings, courses and seminars, together with the local team, we evaluate and plan.

One indicator of our *pagsasalo* is the result of our first planning meeting with the Hildesheim Teams assigned for Formation on Local Church Development. We asked them to express what kind of church they believe in and would like to work on. Following are the key words they used.

- Promoting a culture of dialogue, evaluation and innovation
- Participation of all
- Partnership with the local teams
- Aware of and responsive to context and challenges
- Experience of God, Spirituality
- Word of God as guide
- Partnership with local teams

Such descriptions tell us that the *salo-salo/pagsasalo* will continue as the diocesan team works with the local teams in the parishes.

### ***May Epekto sa Katawan (Affects the Body)***

Edible also means something they enjoy and affects their health. Theologizing builds up a faith community's health as it nourishes their fellowship and builds them up as well in their sense of mission. Mission as such is based on daily life concerns. Because theology is a process, it is ongoing, not final and definitely not perfect. Its effectiveness is only in its applicability. Evaluation has been a constant

## Reflections of a Pastoral Center on Doing Theology with German Dioceses

feature of our theologizing work. In doing so, we see its effects and its possibilities for renewal. Evaluation also helps us to innovate. (See Appendix 1 for the Survey conducted with German partners.)

Since we were dealing with professional pastoral workers most of whom were also professional theologians (with masteral and doctoral degrees), their theological reflections were articulated through some articles and books. Recent books<sup>12</sup> on theological reflections<sup>13</sup> in Germany on BECs/Participatory Way of Being show how we at Bukal has also been part of their learning experience.<sup>14</sup>

### By Way of a Summary: *Bicol Express* Undressed

#### *Ingredients:*

- ½ kilo pork, boiled and chopped*
- 2 onions, chopped finely*
- 12 labuyo, chopped finely*
- 12 long green chilli, seeded*
- 1/2 cup bagoong alamang (shrimp paste)*
- 1 cup fresh coconut cream*
- 3 tablespoon blue cheese*
- 1 bar Lindt dark chocolate (optional)*

<sup>12</sup> Padilla, Estela and Mark Lesage, “Das Engagement basiskirchlicher Gemeinschaften in ihren Lebensraum” in Hennecke, Christian and Mechtild Samson-Ohlendorf, eds., *Die Rückkehr der Verantwortung Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften als Kirche in der Nabe* (Wurzburg: Echter, 2011), 91-109; Padilla, Estela and Mark Lesage, “Basis kirchliche Gemeinschaften” in Christian Hennecke, ed., *Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften verstehen Ein Weg, Kirche mit den Menschen zu sein* (Wurzburg: Echter, 2011), 75-88; Estela P. Padilla, “Kirche als Gemeinschaft von Gemeinschaften: Zur Rolle der Kirchlichen Basisgemeinden in Asien” in Vera Krause, Marco Moerschbacher, Raphael Rauch, edd., *Angekommen in der Welt von heute: Basisgemeinden erneuern die Praxis der Kirche* (Ostfildern 2014), 133-142.

<sup>13</sup> See also other recent theological reflections on BEC in Germany: C. Hennecke, *Glanzende Aussichten: Wie Kirche über sich hinauswächst* (KG, Munster: Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co., 2011); C. Hennecke, D. Tewes and G. Viicens, eds. *Kirche geht...Die Dynamik lokaler Kirchenentwicklung* (Wurzburg: Echter Verlag, GmbH, 2013); C. Hennecke, *Ist es Möglich? Vom Wunder des kirchlichen Aufbruchs* (KG, Munster: Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co., 2013).

<sup>14</sup> For the history of the development of BECs/interest in BECs in Germany, see Klaus Velguth, “Ein Funke springt über” in Klaus Kramer and Klaus Velguth, eds., *Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften: Impulse für eine zukunfts-fähige Kirche* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2012), 235-279. Although Germany’s interest in BECs have been going on for more than a decade or so and they have had contacts with BECs in Africa, Latin America and Asia, increasing participation and sustained programs on BEC and Local Church Development have been observed in the past 5 years.



**Estela Padilla**

*Partly slice lengthwise one side of seeded long green chili so it becomes like a small pocket. Insert small amounts of chopped boiled pork, onion, labuyo, bagoong (shrimp paste) and blue cheese. Arrange stuffed green chili/jalapenos on a platter. Pour generous amount of fresh coconut cream on the stuffed jalapenos. (Optional – for the adventurous - Insert a small piece of Lindt dark chocolate on top of each chili/jalapeno before serving). Serve pica-pica.*

I decided to use Bicol Express to symbolize the need to be located. Theology is always local, always contextualized. In this recipe, I used all the ingredients used for Bicol Express, **but** they will not be cooked. Instead they will be served raw (except for the pork) to symbolize openness to another way of eating a traditional local dish.

In our limited experience with working with German dioceses (but also with the dioceses in the Philippines), we did **not** have a recipe. We were making the recipe and menu **together** with them as we go along. Therefore I decided to revise the recipe of Bicol Express and called it *Bicol Express Undressed*. This symbolizes *Bukal* coming into another context with a ‘recipe’<sup>15</sup> – symbolized by the basic ingredients of Bicol Express – but **without** an agenda – symbolized by ‘Undressed’ – to allow the opinion, philosophy, context, culture of the other to enter – symbolized by blue cheese and dark chocolate. Our journey partners added their own indigenous wisdom to the open ‘recipe’, giving it a different flavor. These raw ingredients will be put together inside a base – the green chili/jalapeño – then mixed with foreign elements – blue cheese and dark chocolate – and fresh coconut milk will be poured as sauce or dip before serving.

Below are a few insights and questions on this process in doing theology in a globalized world based on our experience. Such insights are also applicable from our experiences in the Philippines, but perhaps the experience in Germany highlighted them and made them clearer.

---

<sup>15</sup> Community Journeying Process, pp.2-3.

## **Boundaries and Bridges**

One of the main features of globalization is the ability to connect instantaneously, across boundaries of space and time. Theologizing should connect with people and not alienate them. We were wondering what made us connect with German partners quite effectively? Perhaps as Filipinos, our being island peoples, open to the seas and elements, defined our initial approach to a different context/culture, which on their side would be a sad history of walls and boundaries (e.g. Berlin Wall and the division between East and West). We are aware that they would be wary of any wall (imposition), especially from outsiders like us. Perhaps coming in without an agenda – theological or otherwise - and working with them via the framework of the journeying process became a bridge to connect us. In this sense, theology is more of a process and a framework than a product<sup>16</sup>.

## **Global and Local**

Another byword in these times of globalization is the local – or glocalization – one area of which is on the concern for the identity of the local community that gets affected or even swallowed up by globalization. The global (elements, issues and challenges) resides in the local. As what has been mentioned, the actual content of the programs we designed were grounded on local situation and concerns and intended to serve local purposes. Theology arises from, belongs to, and articulated by faith communities<sup>17</sup>. Local faith communities, and not just professional theologians, are doing theology and allowing that theology to energize them in their search for relevance and renewal. ‘Local’ communities however are not a homogenous mass. ‘Local’ is also a networking of different identities in one locality. Members of a local community come from different parts of the

---

<sup>16</sup>See the account of a theologian on how working closely with Bukal the past 5 years has reframed his theology, cf. Appendix 2.

<sup>17</sup>See discussion on ‘placeable social identities’ by R.Williams, quoted in D. Pilario, ‘Locus Theologicus’: Place, Theology and Globalization, accessed from [www.academia.org](http://www.academia.org).

globe, probably bringing something of their local cultures with them. This constant awareness of plurality and difference and therefore the need for dialogue and working with fluidity characterize theologizing in these times of globalization.

### Open and Fluid

Boeve expounded on this need for identity-building in postmodern times<sup>18</sup>. He said postmodernity is challenging the churches of Europe to recontextualize the Christian narrative and the church's long standing Tradition. Discussing at length the characteristics of postmodern societies from a religious perspective – secularization/detraditionalization, individualization and plurality – Boeve expanded that such a context brought about a problem of identity and meaning in people's lives. Rejecting fundamentalism and critiquing relativism, Boeve suggests the facilitation of open narratives as the task of theology. Open narratives call for: 1) deep respect and sensitivity toward the other in 'his/her/its irreducible otherness'; 2) witness of our own narrative as it is interrupted by the other; and 3) 'critical consciousness and praxis' of self and world which generates mutual tolerance and dialogue. Perhaps our limited processes/experiences in Germany contributed to their identity-building process? Maybe our experiences with them added to the open narratives being constructed by these faith communities?

Another note on identity-building: postcolonial theologizing also makes us aware of listening to subaltern voices. In their context, one of the subaltern voices would be the voices of immigrants. German theologian Nausner laments the dearth of postcolonial theologizing in Germany<sup>19</sup>. Perhaps this experience of local church development in Germany – with impulses coming from subaltern voices of formerly colonized peoples of Africa, Latin America and Asia (especially the Philippines) – could also contribute to postcolonial

<sup>18</sup>Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup>M. Nausner, "Nefertiti's Long Shadow: Postcolonial Theory and Theology in Germany", *Concilium* 2013 Vol. 2, 88-90.



## **Reflections of a Pastoral Center on Doing Theology with German Dioceses**

theologizing. A more important contribution perhaps would be the experience of the small (neighborhood) groups that have been organized in some parishes that have immigrant members or reach out to immigrants in their area<sup>20</sup>. It is interesting for Bukal to note how theology/theologizing functions as a spiritual energy for identity-building in globalized/postmodern/postcolonial settings.

### **Friendships and Community**

A final reflection on this experience is we realized that it was friendship that bridged our boundaries, for indeed, between the global and the local is the human. In spite of all the economic, cultural, etc. differences, we are all humans and respond to human concerns. A relationship-oriented working style has developed friendships among us that make working together easier, more satisfying and something to look forward to. Building themselves up as a community of friends is also one of the things we have enjoyed seeing these past years. Building friendships and community in this whole process of local church development is nearer to the leadership style of Jesus who says “I call you friends...” (Jn 15:12ff). In line with this, experiencing friendship with Jesus and nourishing a faith community around him has been a renewing and refreshing experience for all of us, as gleaned from the survey responses. Perhaps this friendship/community-building aspect of theology/theologizing could be a response to the plural, individualized and secularized context of a globalized world?

---

<sup>20</sup> Germany is the second most popular destination after the US for immigrants, as its migration laws became more open in 2005 especially to those with professional background. I have heard of some neighbourhood groups who have immigrant members. Perhaps the welcoming and supportive atmosphere attracted them and helped them to integrate more into German society.

## APPENDIX 1

### Survey for German Partners On Partnership

#### With *Bukal Ng Tipan* 2014

To evaluate effectiveness (effectiveness as *tumatalab*) of our journeying with them, I surveyed last summer (July 2014) eight Germans from the four dioceses we have worked with at least three years (5 respondents) and at most six years (3 respondents). Here is a summary of their responses.

1. Please encircle the rate the effectiveness of our ministry in your dioceses with 1 as lowest and 10 as highest. Average Score: **9.5**
2. Please give a comment or two on what makes us connect with you (even if we are coming from a different country/context/culture) in the following areas:

#### a. Our Formation Programs, Tools, Methods, Processes

- Are very compatible with the postmodern European situation. The preparation of the Bukal Team is excellent – and tends to inculturate in our situation.
- The contents, implementation and attitude are a unity. Participation and appreciation (in the team; men and women) can be experienced.
- Deep connection of spirituality, liturgy and contents.
- A great sensibility for the process and a process orientation during the course.
- The method is the message!
- Formation programs are based on your insertion. You create a close interrelational working context, so that programs are not “put over the heads” of the participants, but target their wishes and needs. Same is true for tools, methods and processes. Tools are constructed very much with the focus of enabling as much participation as possible. You have a good way of giving examples. Your Programs, Tools, Methods and Process are very close to our way of supporting and counselling our Teams and

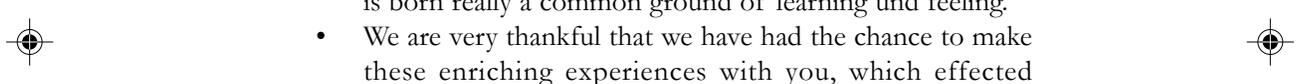


**Reflections of a Pastoral Center on Doing Theology with German Dioceses**

Development processes. It is very easy to transport these into our context. Your programs are very clear and very practical so that it is possible to follow and to bring it to the people.

- The tools, methods and processes of Bukal (especially the spiral) are quiet clear, simple and logical for Germans. Germans do need structures, but also experiences which come out of the real life of communities.
- All this is comprehensible to us and a lot can easily be tried out in our own context; you offer illustrative examples and processes it in a very varied exchange of theory and practical experience; your processes enable and offer spiritual experiences in liturgies, prayers etc.

**b. The Way we Relate with You**

- 
- Is really relation-oriented, mutual and full of love. So there is born really a common ground of learning und feeling.
  - We are very thankful that we have had the chance to make these enriching experiences with you, which effected community, also between us as German team.
  - We meet with a great faith/trust, appreciation and confidence.
  - The trust and confidence we place in each other by the common made experiences lead to a fruitful mutual teamwork and cooperation.
  - No matter whether it is in Bukal or here with us you establish a working context at eye – level. This is how friendship comes into being and makes working with you so enjoyable. It is also very feasible that you are not just doing a “job”, but that we are share a way – of learning and of being.
  - You are always friendly and open to us and on a partnership level; always interested in our situation and in our experiences. We can relate on the same eye-level.
  - It is your way of pleasant communication and how you value the contributions of the people that makes the participants happy and makes them open for new insights.

This is a great gift for us and makes a learning process very much easier. A second point which is also very important is how you combine pastoral work, church development and spirituality. You let the people experience in the workshops how the gap between life and faith can be bridged.

- Your very kindly way of relating with us can be characterized as like brother and sister, you offer well founded help and experiences without any kind of absorption but with humility and last but not least, with refreshing sense of humour.

**c. Our Theology/Theologizing**

- In the last years I rarely was confronted with such a creative theology that is grounded in a ecclesial life experience – and deeply spiritually grounded.
- A theology which is shaped by Vatican Council II (Gaudium et Spes, Dei Verbum)
- It's an experience-based and refreshingly down-to-earth and true to life theology, a theology which is humble without being simple or any shortening effect. You awake the potential of non-theologians and make the common priesthood to be experienced.
- SCC/ BEC; everyone is a theologian!
- We noticed that we have a common ecclesiology: the mission of all the baptized.
- 1st point: your way of talking theology is very profound, but in a very simple language – not to be mixed up with a simplified theologizing, but you can put it into words that appeal to a theologian as well as to a person who is not an expert in theology.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> point: experience before reflection – this we have really learned from you. It's a clue to theologizing.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> point: It is true that you come from a different culture and context, but your way of theologizing is never far from our context. You can make connections that are very understandable. And often you surprise us with new insights (the reflection on the miracle of the bread in our last summer school!; from crowd to community – we have been reflecting on that a lot!)

- Very clear on the basis of Vatican II. And brought into the life of the church what I could experience. During the last summer school in Hildesheim, I was very deeply touched with the theology of participation and theology of crowd and community.
- The participants of the workshops appreciate your theology and theologizing very much because it is clear, based on the Second Vatican Council and gives new insights how to read the bible and the teachings of the church from an angle of a participatory church. Especially the focus on God experiences and how people can experiences God in the liturgy during, gospel sharing and also in community is for a lot of people something new and they value it very much.
- Your theologizing is very qualified but even easily assimilated by us; it is not abstract but full of contacts to usual life; it excites our curiosity and encourages us to dare new steps and ways in our own work in Paderborn.

## APPENDIX 2

### Change of Paradigm – An Insight into a German Theologian

*Fr. Dr. Christian Hennecke*

My theological background is not normal for a German theologian: before studying theology I made a spiritual experience with a renewal movement in the church that has reconfigured my thinking about church and being christian: I understood that the core of the christian experience is the presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his people. “Where are two or three gathered in my name...” (Mt 18,20). This experience has signed also my theological studies about Bonhoeffer and I arrived at a new ecclesiology focused on the experience of the Risen Lord.

Studying theology focused on a lived ecclesiology I went in a parish, but I don't have the understanding of vision and process and a deeper practical understanding of the revolution that *Lumen Gentium*



**Estela Padilla**

and *Gaudium et Spes* brought into the thinking of church and developing church.

When I came to know the experience of the small christian communities I was very thrilled about gospel sharing and the way of thinking church, but I thought, these elements and methods could be applied easily. I was not aware about the architecture underlying these methods and fruits of a participatory process.

The big change and deepening in my theology and ecclesiology comes with the encounter with the Asipa Approach and especially with the team of Bukal. I have learned an approach of participation that renews every context of my theology. But in fact I am aware that these experiences of a lifebased theology fullfills the expectations I had long time ago. I think I had the vision of a church of the risen Lord, but the meeting with Bukal concretized not only the special “what” of this vision, but gives also a concrete way to design the process and its thousand “hows”.

From there all my ecclesiological thinking is in a way reframed.



***Estela P. Padilla***

Bukal ng Tipan-CICM, Maryhill Compound  
Km. 22, Brgy. Dolores, Tikling  
Taytay, Rizal, Philippines  
Email: [padillaestela@gmail.com](mailto:padillaestela@gmail.com)

