

Introduction

“The reality by which spirituality becomes passionate is a metaphor,” write the philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. “An ineffable God requires metaphor not only to be imagined but to be approached, exhorted, evaded, confronted, struggled with, and loved. Through metaphor, the vividness, intensity, and meaningfulness of ordinary experience become the basis of a passionate spirituality.”¹ Browsing through the pages of the Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines² (PCP II), one finds an abundance of metaphors and images: lights and shadows, the way of Jesus, community of disciples, church of the poor, and others. More prevalent are metaphors from the Scriptures: the suffering servant (PCP II Acts, #37), evangelizer of the poor (PCP II Acts, #38), the kingdom of God (PCP II Acts, #42–43), the body and its parts (PCP II Acts, #91), a priestly people (PCP II Acts, #117), life in its fullness (PCP II Acts, #253). These images intend to tell the truth of our situation and rally us to passionately incarnate the experience of God and our mission during that memorable gathering called Second Plenary Council of the Philippines [PCP II] (20 January–17 February 1991). PCP II was the first national gathering of Catholic church leaders – bishops, priests, religious and lay people—in the country that consciously aimed to chart the path for the Philippine Church in the spirit of Vatican II. The choice of the above images then was crucial for the meaning that they wanted to convey. Let me comment on two central biblical metaphors.

In the “Message of the Council,”³ read in all churches all over the country after the conclusion of the Second Plenary Council on 17

February 1991, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, then the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), used a very powerful metaphor at the end his exhortation to encourage the participants to go and proclaim the message of the Council: Jesus's commissioning of the disciples in Galilee (Mt. 28:18–20).

It was in Galilee where it all started. Jesus was from Nazareth of Galilee. He called his first disciples by the Sea of Galilee. He taught people on its shores. He performed many of his miracles in its surrounding villages. Everything seemingly ended on the cross. But on his resurrection, the same disciples were instructed to go back to Galilee once more. Galilee this time would hopefully be a new beginning. He told them to go and make the whole world his disciples.

When we listened to how the participants of PCP II recount what happened there, we can hear the Spirit's enthusiasm, fire, and zeal in their testimonies during those four weeks (20 January–17 February 1991) in the San Carlos Seminary Complex. Some of the original participants of PCP II who were with us shared what they felt then: that God was really talking to them and their hearts were burning (Lk. 24:32–33). When Jesus said “go,” they all went—knowing full well that he was with them always as he had promised. This was the same assurance the participants felt during the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.

Ten years after PCP II, the same Church was invited to go back to its Galilee. Representatives of different dioceses all over the country (bishops, clergy, religious, and laity) gathered again in the San Carlos Seminary Complex to revisit PCP II (22–27 January 2001). This time, another metaphor was summoned to exhort the whole people of God. At the end of his message,⁴ Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, then the President of the CBCP, used the phrase from the third gospel: “*Duc in altum*. Put out into the deep” (Luke 5:4). The same image was employed by Pope John Paul II to introduce his apostolic exhortation, *Novo Millennio Inuente*, issued a year earlier (2000). But the context of the metaphor also subconsciously reveals the participants' self-assessment of what happened ten years after PCP II. In the biblical narrative, Peter was fishing the whole night and caught nothing. After ten years, there seemingly was a parallel feeling. In the words of the late Bishop Francisco Claver: “From the outset, I confess, the temptation is great to say with our farmers in Bukidnon after they had looked at what the New

Society had claimed to accomplish after ten horror-years of martial law: *Mao gihapon—things are as they have always been.*” He acknowledges, however, that many significant changes have happened in the short ten years but “even though after we mention them, I’m sure you will say to yourselves that saying about ‘how the more things change, the more they remain the same.’”⁵

There was a National Pastoral Plan drawn up two years after PCP II (1993) precisely to act as its implementing instrument.⁶ It is complete with orientational principles, operational decrees, implementing programs, their lead agents and partners, and so on. The diocesan evaluation of this Pastoral Plan was programmed on a bi-annual basis. Five years after (1998), there was a scheduled national evaluation at all levels. We are not aware whether these plans were implemented, monitored, and evaluated at all. Yet we continue to trust Jesus as he commands us to put our nets out into the deep. Despite having known “the frustration of having caught nothing,” we continue to act in hope. “We dare to begin again in the task of renewal,” Archbishop Quevedo exhorts.⁷ This undying hope shows itself in the metaphor used in its title: “Behold, I will make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

Twenty years after PCP II, we stop and look again if we have caught some fish after putting out into the deep. We are asking where in the deep has the catch come from, if there ever was. To which newness has God transformed the world and has invited us to continue this work of transformation? The articles in this book intend to reflect on these questions. But beyond examining the past, these reflections also look into the future and what it tells us. These papers are engagements with new aspirations and questions; they reflect the doubts and uncertainties of our times—the new areas “in the deep” where the Lord challenges us to go twenty years after PCP II. To commemorate this significant landmark of the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines (PCP II’s twentieth anniversary), St. Vincent School of Theology–Adamson University organized a nationwide conference on 13–15 January 2011 in order to revisit and reflect on the impact of the Second Plenary Council among our people. This conference was attended by around 600 participants—some bishops, clergy from different dioceses, seminarians from theological seminaries all over the country, members of religious communities, and representatives of lay organizations and ecclesial

movements. Key speakers were invited and delivered plenary sessions but there were also papers read in concurrent sessions and open discussions in small groups. The purpose was not to make an evaluative study of PCP II—a parallel national evaluation was done by the CBCP in the same year—but to reflect on the experiences from the ground and the new questions and contemporary challenges these experiences engender. This book is a product of that Conference.

The first article by the late Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, “Looking Back, Looking Forward: Revisiting PCP II,” furnishes us with a good review of the spirit of the Plenary Council and its subsequent development. Because he was at the helm of the project twenty years ago, this insight from an “insider” looking back is a valuable contribution to this collection. Using the three-stage movement of the pastoral spiral, Legaspi comments on some areas not mentioned by the existing literature on PCP II: the validity of the situationers (see), some useful critiques of the Council document (judge), and the National Pastoral Plan (act). First, Legaspi argues that the situationers used by the Council were quite helpful as they were fruits of discernment “in the eyes of faith,” not products of some ideological readings common to many church groups before PCP II. Second, he assembled some significant post-PCP II critiques as a continuation of the spirit of “listening to all shades of opinion” that pervaded during the Council itself. Third, Legaspi also thinks that many inspiring stories of renewal were heard from the grassroots even as the National Pastoral Plan was evaluated to be “practically absent at the diocesan level.”

The biblical scholar Bishop Pablo David, in his essay “Being Rooted in the Word: Sacred Scripture and PCP II,” traces the biblical foundation of the Conciliar documents and decrees. His paper tries to answer the question: “To what extent is PCP II both biblically-based and biblically-oriented?” In the context of the Church of the Poor, Bishop David, the head of the CBCP Commission on Biblical Apostolate also painfully admits that after twenty years, the poor in the Church are still deprived of access not only to material resources but also to its “spiritual goods” (PCP II Acts, #128), in this specific case, the Word of God in the bible. Despite some programs to subsidize bible distribution, he underlines the continuing challenge for the Church to effectively give “greater exposure” to the faith through the Word of God.

In “Jesus in PCP II, Jesus of the Margins,” Daniel Franklin Pilario and Luciminda Baldicimo reflect on the Christology of the Plenary Council. They start with the images of Jesus culled from people’s experiences as products of storytelling sessions and focus group discussions. New insights emerge from these interviews which are most often quite contrary to some dominant “official” and academic theological reflections on who Jesus is for Filipinos—be it in their traditional, contextual, or liberationist varieties. These “grassroots Christologies” are made to confront the Christology present in the Conciliar documents as an attempt is also made to trace and comment on the genealogy of this specific text in PCP II. This confrontation of text and new context/grassroots experience aims at inquiring into the practical challenges of Jesus to the Church of our times—and the authors identified three areas in their concluding reflections: to make dialogue as a way of life for the Church, to recover Christological paradigms suppressed by the dominant models, and to live out a real Christology and ecclesiology from below.

Another Christological essay, “Christ and Social Transformation: The Christological Journey from PCP II to CFC” by Adrian Louie Atonducan, argues that the PCP II Christology is mainly a descending Christology. Even as it attempts to establish a link between Jesus and the Kingdom, it still starts with the ontological relationship of Jesus and God. The Catechism for the Filipino Catholics (CFC), which was inspired by PCP II, was a positive development as it proclaims that the historical Jesus is the “indispensable starting point for knowing Christ” (CFC, #475). However, it also falls short of articulating a truly inculcated Christology because of its neo-scholastic and foreign language, and neglect of local cultural resources that can move Christians toward active participation in social transformation.

From Christology, the reflections of Bishop Teodoro Bacani moved to ecclesiology. In the “Church of the Poor: An Unfinished Agenda,” he points out that the idea of the “church of the poor” did not just fall from the skies but was grounded in the real situation of our people and the vision of the Gospel. For many delegates of PCP II, the success of the Council hinged on the realization of the Church of the Poor in the Philippines. Twenty years later, Bacani assesses that we have failed: “The Church has not been identified by the poor as their friend.” He cites

different initiatives from the grassroots, and by NGOs and ecclesial groups to respond to the problems of housing, livelihood—as emerging signs of hope toward the realization of this PCP II dream.

Another feature of the contemporary Philippine church is the emergence of transparochial communities. Emmanuel S. de Guzman's article on "Philippine Transparochial Communities" asks whether they are forces of renewal or blocs of resistance in PCP II's vision of the Church of the Poor. It describes the new ecclesial landscape as challenged by the presence and proliferation of these new communities which are quite different from the traditional mandated lay organizations or the progressive Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs): their notion of revelation, their view of the bible and the role of the Holy Spirit, their vision of personal renewal and social change, their relationship with the traditional parish and Church authorities. In an attempt to lay down the *status questionis* of this phenomenon, this article brings out the "good news" in these new developments as well as some of their ambivalent features.

Agnes Brazal's "Faith and Politics" inquires into the relationship between faith and politics in the reflections of PCP II (PCP II Acts, #330-374) vis-à-vis some post-PCP II developments. In her analysis, what constitutes a weak link in this relationship is the lack of effective mediating structures that can serve as "spaces for the formation" in democratic participation, justice issues, and formation of political ideologies. To mind this gap, she suggests strengthening liberational BECs, developing democratizing potentials of lay organizations, movements, associations, and societies (LOMAS), and promoting lay engagement with political parties.

As a delegate of PCP II and a theologian who helped in the formulation of the "Final Draft" of the Working Papers on Religious Life, Lode Wostyn reflects on the challenges of religious life twenty years later. In the article, "In Search of New Trajectories in Religious Life," Wostyn looks into the pre-history of the Conciliar text on religious life from the initial working paper to the Final Draft submitted to the Council for discussion. Comparing the Final Conciliar Text (PCP II Acts, #448-506), he argues that some compromises were made and these subtle changes in the final text can lead to the reintroduction of dominant dualisms in religious life and its role in the Church. In the end, Wostyn presents

several helpful trajectories to map some directions religious life needs to tread in our times.

The last article, “Parallel Paradigms of Evangelization: FABC and PCP II” by James Kroeger, compares the documents of PCP II and FABC in order to point out the connections and mutual emphasis in their paradigms of evangelization: inductive methodology, underlying sense of mission, integral evangelization, awareness and commitment to the poor, and the centrality of the local church. Both FABC and PCP II are considered the continuing reflections of Vatican II in the Asian context. If Vatican II is a “new Pentecost,” FABC and PCP II are the continuing Pentecosts in the Asian and Philippine contexts. Kroeger also presents a comprehensive “compendium of resources” intended for Church personnel who desire to appreciate the rich theological thought and pastoral vision inherent in PCP II. Filipino Catholics—bishops, pastors, religious, seminarians, laity, youth—will find in this compendium helpful materials to guide them as active participants in the “ecclesio-genesis” of the local Church.

In the epilogue, Eric Genilo discusses the Church’s response to the Reproductive Health Bill—then a raging debate during the twentieth-anniversary of PCP II—and situates it within the spirit that guided PCP II. Genilo brings out the conflict points between the position of the Catholic hierarchy and that of the bill’s proponents, most of whom are Catholic lawmakers. In his analysis, this debate has damaged the Church as it created a highly polarized environment in the Catholic community, with some members of the clergy engaging in “partisan political activity” in order to advance their positions. The dawn of hope only came with the election of Pope Francis who advised us not to insist on these issues all the time. Preaching the Gospel, the Pope remarks, should not be obsessed with transmitting “disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently.” It should focus on the essentials, that which “fascinates and attracts more,” that which “makes the heart burn, as it did for the disciples at Emmaus.”⁸

The metaphor of “burning hearts” on Pentecost day was used by Archbishop Legaspi during the Eucharistic Celebration at the closing ceremonies of the PCP II at the Manila Cathedral on 17 February 1991.⁹ He said that the PCP II experience was our “new Pentecost.” Hearts were burning among the participants and it felt like Jesus was talking

to them on the road in that journey called PCP II. But then, they also knew it was incomplete. Something was missing in that experience: the rest of the Christian community who could not be in the San Carlos Seminary Complex during those graced-filled days. There was a realization that “only after the proposals of the Council have taken root in the life of far-flung communities like Tayum in Abra, Jordan in Guimaras, Banay-Banay in Davao will our land be blessed by a New Pentecost.”¹⁰ It is in this same spirit of a Philippine “Pentecost-in-the-making” that we offer these reflections in order to search for the ever dynamic movement of the Spirit in our midst.

We owe words of gratitude to those who have helped us realize the nationwide commemorative conference “The Church of the Poor: PCP II after Twenty Years” (13–15 January 2011) from where the above reflections were drawn. We are indebted to our speakers and panel of reactors: Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, Bishop Pablo David, Bishop-Emeritus Teodoro Bacani, Luciminda Baldecimo, Agnes Brazal, Leticia Garcia D.C., Henrietta de Villa, Karl Gaspar C.Ss.R., Rissa Singson-Kapweng, Dexter Prudenciano R.C.J., Enrico Adoviso, Mar Arenas, and Joey Clemente. Not all papers of the conference are included in this collection because of limitations of space and editorial demands, but we are deeply grateful for all their significant insights and contribution. Thanks to our moderators and synthesis facilitators: Mario Francisco S.J., Jimmy Belita C.M., Emmanuel S. de Guzman, Eric Genilo S.J. and Raul Pura, C.M.

Three groups closely collaborated with us and shared their financial and technical resources: Mary Mother of the Poor Foundation and founder, Fr. Fernando Suarez; Adamson University and President, Gregorio Bañaga, C.M.; Socio-Pastoral Institute and Executive Director Jose Clemente. Almost all seminaries and schools of theology all over the country were represented in this commemorative conference. We are grateful to their professors and students who not only came to participate but also contributed papers and facilitated the concurrent sessions. The faculty and students of St. Vincent School of Theology and the Institute of Religious Education of Adamson University provided the needed human resources on the ground under the leadership of the Conference Steering Committee: Rolando Tuazon, C.M. and his team—Rafael Eloriaga, C.M., Geowen Porcincula, C.M., and Rainier Torres. We thank them all for their dedication and generosity of spirit.

Notes

1. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (Basic Books, 1999), 567–68.
2. Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Manila, CBCP, 1992). Henceforth, CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*.
3. Leonardo Legaspi, "Message of the Council to the People of God in the Philippines," in CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, XCIII–XCIX.
4. Orlando Quevedo, "Behold, I make all things new (Rev 21:5): Message of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal," Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), 27 January 2001, accessed 19 January 2013, http://www.cbcponline.net/v3/documents/2000s/2001-BEHOLD_I%20MAKE_ALL_THINGS_NEW.htm.
5. Francisco Claver, "The Contemporary Situation of Church and Society: A Faith Reading of the Signs of the Times," in CBCP, *Church Renewal: Proceedings and Addresses of the National Pastoral Consultation* (Manila: CBCP, 2001), 118–19.
6. Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, *In the State of Mission: Towards a Renewed Integral Evangelization* [National Pastoral Plan—Second Plenary Council of the Philippines] (Manila: CBCP, 1993).
7. Quevedo, "Behold, I make all things new."
8. Pope Francis, quoted in Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," *America: The National Catholic Review*, 30 September 2013, www.americamagazine.org/pope_interview.
9. Leonardo Legaspi, "The Council's Gift to our People: The Vision of a Church Renewed," [Homily during the Closing Ceremonies, 17 February 1991] in CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, 81–87.
10. Ibid.