Studies in World Christianity and Interreligious Relations

CATHOLICISM IN MIGRATION AND DIASPORA

CROSS-BORDER FILIPINO PERSPECTIVES

Edited by
Gemma Tulud Cruz

Catholicism in Migration and Diaspora

This book focuses on the Philippines as a powerhouse in the Catholic and global migration landscape. It offers a wide-ranging look at the roles, dynamics, character, and trajectories of Catholic faith and practice in the age of migration through an interdisciplinary, religious, and theological approach to Filipino Catholics' experience of migration and diaspora both at home and overseas. In so doing, the book introduces the reader to the hallmarks and characteristics of a contextual model of world Christianity and global Catholicism in the twenty-first century.

Gemma Tulud Cruz is Senior Lecturer in Theology and a member of the Institute of Religion and Critical Inquiry at the Australian Catholic University. She is author of numerous publications on migration theologies including *Christianity across Borders: Theology and Contemporary Issues in Global Migration* (Routledge, 2021).

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2023
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-032-21442-9 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-25256-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-28231-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310

Typeset in Sabon
by Taylor & Francis Books

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Introduction

Gemma Tulud Cruz

With membership at more or less 1.28 billion, Catholicism remains the world's largest religion.[1] As of mid-2020, Catholics also represent about half of the Christian population worldwide.[2] Not surprisingly, the Catholic Church, which is largely considered the oldest globalized institution on earth, continues to be the single largest international religious organization in the world. Its hundreds of religious orders, which have members and missions dispersed across the planet, have been heralds of world Christianity for centuries. Its formidable global presence, which is intensified by its ongoing growth, expanding international structures, and members' intensified mobility, puts it in a good position to engage in multistranded cross-border ties.

While cross-border connections are not new for Catholicism and its members who move(d) across borders, there are significant differences that characterize such connections in the current historical period—often referred to as the age of migration—due to various factors. These factors include: (1) density, multidirectionality, and frequency of human mobility; (2) exponential increase in the types of migration or demographics of people on the move; (3) more developed or sophisticated institutional systems and infrastructures for transnational connections between and among Catholics at the parish, (arch)diocese, and episcopal conference level; and (4) new communication technologies and networking strategies that facilitate more frequent connections across borders between individuals, families, and church leaders as well as religious groups and institutions. These create, among others, high intensity of exchanges, new(er) modes of maintaining relationships and carrying out mission and ministry, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contact on a sustained basis. Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini of Guatemala, for example, developed a sister relationship with the Diocese of Wilmington in Delaware in the USA where many of his parishioners—displaced by the coffee crisis—ended up laboring in poultry packing plants. In the early years of their settlement in Oceania, meetings between representatives of various Cambodian Catholic communities in Australia and New Zealand, meanwhile, were facilitated by the yearly visit of Bishop Ramousse or one of the French priests who worked in the Cambodian Church before 1975. There have been instances, too, when the church used by Filipina migrants in Paris became a refuge for migrant Filipina domestic workers

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-1

employed in the Middle East, who fled from their abusive employers while on holiday with them in France. Social services provided by the chaplaincy for Ukrainian Catholic migrants in Rome demonstrates, as well, impressive cross-border connections and relationships: (1) information sessions on immigration laws, Ukrainian elections, and voting; (2) helping workers wanting a pay raise to write a letter in Italian to the employer; (3) keeping a list of people going to Ukraine for a visit of 1–3 months so when people come looking for work the church has temporary jobs for them; (4) mediating disputes between Italian employers and Ukrainian domestic workers; (5) helping people fill out Western Union forms to send money home; (6) providing a "left-luggage" service at the monastery where live-in workers could leave suitcases or other possessions that did not fit in the small living spaces provided by employers; and (7) fostering national consciousness through church-sponsored events, for example classes for children in Ukrainian language, history (taught from a Ukrainian nationalist perspective rather than the Russian version), folklore, and literature as supplement to catechism. Catholics of Mexican descent in the USA, in the meantime, create links to their homeland by annual visits back home or by the yearly visits to the USA by the parish priest, local bishop, or religious image of devotion from their hometown or region. Allan Figueroa Deck, former executive director of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), maintains that these activities would have been impossible 25 years ago.[3]

To be sure, the history and significance of human mobility runs deep within Catholic Christianity.[4] Like the apostle Paul, Catholic missionaries themselves—whether in the past or present—are "a form of migrant."[5] As indicated in the preceding discussion contemporary migration is transforming the role and significance of mobility within Catholicism, driving home the point that migration has a role in the "incarnation of meaning."[6] This is profoundly illustrated in the case of the Philippines.

Filipino Catholicism, Migration, and Diaspora

A scrutiny of Catholicism in the context of migration and diaspora today is essential insofar as it is *a*, if not *the*, critical medium and embodiment of global Catholicism and is, consequently, potently revelatory of world Christianity in contemporary times. Current literature on this topic is weakened by its focus on multiple racial and ethnic groups and focus on a specific theme, such as transnationalism, or subdiscipline, such as ethics, as well as limiting case studies or contextual focus to those in host or destination countries.[7] These and other existing religious and theological literature on the topic also tend to focus on either migration or diaspora, not both.[8] A focus on Filipino Catholicism in the context of migration and diaspora is well positioned to fill the gaps for two reasons.

The first relates to the Philippines' place and status within the global Catholic Church. The Philippines is recognized as a giant of Christianity in Asia and Catholic Christianity, in general. With about eight in ten of its

population of more than 100 million identifying themselves as Catholics, it is home to Asia's largest Christian population and the third largest Catholic population in the world. The 2021 Vatican Statistical Yearbook even has the Philippines on top of the list of Catholic countries with the most baptism of children under seven, a key indicator of the continuing vitality of Roman Catholicism in the country at present and well into the foreseeable future.[9] There are also a number of Filipino Catholics who occupy high-ranking position in the universal Catholic Church at the time of writing, notably Cardinal Antonio Tagle, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, who is widely considered to be among the *papabili* (next pope),[10] and Gerard Francisco Timoner, Master of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), the first Asian to hold the position. The Philippines, according to Stephen Cherry, is "a nation whose importance to global Catholicism is not only on the rise" but also "quickly surpassing its European counterparts."[11] The increasingly significant place that the Philippines and Filipino Catholics occupy in global Catholicism in contemporary times is reflected in how Pope Francis himself "took" and led the Mass at Saint Peter's Basilica in March 2021 to mark the beginning of the year-long celebration of 500 years of Filipino Christianity,[12] and in the Masses and various activities conducted or planned in different parts of the world for the extended observance and celebration of the milestone.

It can also be argued that the Philippines is a Catholic juggernaut primarily because Filipino Catholics generally do not shy away from expressing their faith. On John Paul II's second visit to the country in 1995, an estimated 5 million people attended a Mass in Manila's central park that was, at that time, the world's biggest papal crowd. The record was broken in January 2016 when an estimated 6 million people gathered at the same park for an open-air Mass by Pope Francis.[13] This ongoing vibrant state of the Catholic faith in the country could also be glimpsed in a study that showed the numerical expansion of major seminaries in a ten-year period.[14]

A second reason stems from the vital multidimensional role of migration among Filipinos and their faith as well as to Catholicism or the Catholic Church itself. The Philippines, which is described as the "HR Department of the World" and a country where "migration is a civil religion,"[15] is a powerhouse in global migration. About 70 percent of the Filipino population is affected by international migration. More than 10 million Filipinos, who are renowned for their Catholic Christian faith, live and work overseas.[16] Filipinos alone make up a quarter of the world's seafarers. These tens of thousands of seafarers and the millions of other Filipinos in migration and diaspora, who are scattered in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide, are considered by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization as "God's secret weapon."[17] This religious vitality—combined with the cross-border pastoral ministry of the Philippine Catholic Church and the fact that the experience of millions of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) is often riddled with challenges that are emblematic of the pathos of people in migration and diaspora—bolsters the case for a scrutiny of the experiences of Filipinos as a window into world Christianity, in general, and global Catholicism, in particular.

Mobility itself occupies an important place in Filipino Catholic history. The country's first two saints were both martyred overseas. The first, San Lorenzo Ruiz, was killed in Japan in 1637 and canonized in 1987. The second, San Pedro Calungsod, was a catechist who was killed in Guam in 1672 and canonized in 2012. Further, the Venerable Mother Ignacia, foundress of the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM)—the first institution for religious life among native women—also has a migrant background. She was born to a Chinese father and a Filipino mother. This migration-related contribution of the Philippines to the Catholic Church lives on today in the hundreds of Filipino clergy and religious who serve as missionaries overseas. The late Wenceslao Padilla, a pioneer missionary and first bishop of the youngest Catholic Church in the world (Mongolia), is a Filipino.[18] In addition, three current bishops in Papua New Guinea are Filipinos,[19] and at least two bishops (Oscar Solis and Alejandro Aclan) in the US Catholic Church are of Filipino descent. These pioneering leaders overseas are just the tip of the iceberg of Filipino Catholicism's global footprint when one takes into account the millions of active lay Catholics in migration and diaspora. Sixty-five percent of Filipino Americans, for instance, identify as Catholics, and, as illustrated in Chapter 4, they have made lasting contributions to US Catholicism.[20]

Indeed, as Filipino Catholics scatter across the globe, they carry with them their faith, rituals, and practices. As they settle in new parishes, dioceses, and different countries, the potential for tensions and conflict, as well as collaboration and understanding, grows. Various studies have shown how local churches, especially where there is a large concentration of Filipino (im)migrant Catholics, experience some transformation.[21] At the same time, Filipino (im)migrants' religious faith and practice is reshaped by life in the context of migration and diaspora.[22]

Hong Kong is a case in point. In the city state the estimated 120,000 Filipino Catholics has considerably altered Catholic demographics, making up about a third of the Catholic population. St. Joseph's Church, a historically English-speaking parish, has three *Tagalog* Masses every Sunday afternoon in addition to the six English Masses that many Filipinas line up to attend. I myself went through this uncommon experience of joining a queue to enter the church for a Mass when I did a research on Filipina domestic workers in the city-state.

Filipino clergy in Hong Kong note how Filipino Catholicism is focused on devotions and ritual and how *Tagalog* Masses stress Filipina commonality. Enrique Oracion's study of the celebration of the Sinulog Festival—a religious and cultural festival particular to Cebu, Philippines—shows this marked emphasis on ethnic unity among migrant Filipino Catholics. Oracion notes that though the festival is a well-guarded marker of local identity in Cebu, participation in it opens more broadly in Hong Kong, where "everyone is seen as a Filipino, not a Cebuano."[23] Filipinas in Hong Kong themselves often described their religiosity at home as something family led. Grandparents may gather the whole family once a day for prayer, or the extended family may attend Mass together. While no one regarded that home practice as in any way coerced, in Hong Kong, they

suggested, they independently make the choice to attend church. The church community then often becomes a surrogate family.[24]

The rise in lay leadership also attests to the reshaping of Filipino Catholic faith in migration and diaspora. Cherry points to this rise in lay leadership among Catholics of Filipino descent in the USA, and even globally, as a trend that continues, particularly through the growth of prayer groups and fellowships that facilitate Filipino traditions and practices both within and outside of the Church.[25] Despite the depth of their faith as Catholics, however, many Filipinos in migration and diaspora—like their compatriots at home—would be fuzzier on doctrinal details and would not really count systematic theological debates as particularly important. Catholicism for most Filipinos, whether at home or abroad, is more of a *way* of life, not simply a *view* of life. As a migrant in Hong Kong intones: "If you asked most of us Filipinos to explain our faith, we would say instead, 'Come to church with me, and experience it'."[26] The late eminent Filipino theologian Jose de Mesa echoes this lived character of Filipino Catholicism in his contention that in the Filipino hermeneutics of experience there is a predisposition towards "what is felt" over "what is cognitively grasped" in the interpretation of reality.[27]

Catholicism and Lived Religion

The Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) contends that "culture must be made to bear on the integral perfection of the human person, and on the good of the community and the whole of society."[28] Interpretation is crucial to experience. By the same token, faith interpretation is vital to religious experience. For any group of people, interpretation of reality virtually means the cultural interpretation of it. For this reason we can speak of the very notion of experience itself as culturally conditioned. At the same time, de Mesa submits,

> There can be no life worthy of human beings without a degree of institutionalizing. Personal identity needs social consensus; it needs to be supported by structures and institutions which make possible human freedom and the realization of values. This social dimension is not something additional to our personal identity; it is a dimension of this itself.... Culture and history are the crucible where new ways of perceiving reality are forged.[29]

Religion is as much practice as it is the theoretical formulation of the meaning of that practice. It is, according to William James, founded upon the subjective experience of an invisible presence.[30] Taking as its point of departure the original Latin etymology of religion as "to bind" and the centrality of the subjective dimension of religious experience, this book focuses on an exploration of how religion, in this case Roman Catholicism, is actually felt and experienced within specific contexts, in this case Filipino contexts, rather than simply how it is understood. This explicit concern with the somatic and experiential qualities

of religion situates this book within the framework of recent research on what has broadly been termed the materiality of religion, which is concerned primarily with understanding religion as a practical activity—something that people "do"—rather than any willful manifestation of a theoretical contemplative stance.[31] The book, therefore, looks to bring into critical focus the manifold ways in which migration and diaspora facilitate access to and affect that "binding" with the elusive and the unknowable at the margins of lived experiences.

It goes without saying that this book is underpinned by lived religion as both a concept and approach, particularly as a way of going beyond the emphasis on texts and institutions, on the one hand, and the focus on the fate of religion in modern times, on the other hand. The emergence of lived religion as a field stemmed from an interest in ordinary people as religious subjects.[32] Its key proponents include sociologists Nancy Ammerman and Meredith McGuire and the historian Robert Orsi.[33] Put simply, the concept refers to religion as interwoven in the everyday lives of people.[34] Rather than assuming an inherent incompatibility between religion and modernity, it inquires into how religion is encountered and experienced—how it comes into play—in different environments: public and private, official and informal, sacred, secular, and religiously "neutral."[35]

Lived religion as a concept and approach is akin to what Leonard Norman Primiano refers to as vernacular religion, that is, "religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it."[36] It focuses on "practicing religion" rather than particular practices, and as opposed to the deep-seated assumption that religious activity only takes place in a designated "religious" sphere. It unfolds in the junction of structure and agency.[37] Taking these foundational points on lived religion and Ammerman's warning against the exclusive focus on non-professionals and non-institutional settings as *de facto* perpetuating the binary between the "official" and "unofficial"[38] into account, this book forays into both institutional and non-institutional contexts of Filipino Catholicism across borders, with contributors from academic and pastoral background and topics spanning the family, parish, institutional church structures, as well as marginalized overseas Filipinos and religious practices.

About this Book

In a nutshell, this book explores the roles, dynamics, character, and trajectories of Catholicism in the context of contemporary migration and diaspora as experienced by Filipino Catholics at home and overseas. More specifically, it seeks to examine the relevance and implications of the experiences of Filipino Catholics in the context of migration and diaspora to world Christianity, in general, and global Catholicism, in particular.

The book is divided into three parts or themes. The first five chapters, which are clustered around the theme "Culture and Religious Experience," navigate the gifts and challenges embedded in living out Filipino cultural and religious

identity in migration and diaspora. Chapter 1, "Looking for God in the Complexities of Filipino Migration and Diaspora: Theology and Filipino Cultural Identities in a Globalized World," surveys the big picture of contemporary Filipino migration and diaspora from cultural perspectives and suggests the contours of what may still be considered as shared "Filipino identity." Starting with an essentialized idea of "culture," the chapter goes on to show how migration, diaspora, and hybridity in their Filipino versions necessitate a process of complexifying the notion of cultural identity. What this means concretely is that migration and diaspora produce what could be called a hybrid "Filipino-X" cultural identity. It is not just a sum of its component parts but a complex and hybrid entity that must be dealt with on its own merits. The chapter, therefore, argues that this "Filipino-X" cultural identity in the Filipino diaspora should be made as the explicit and primary context, as well as object, of theological reflection if theology is to indicate that it is in the context of the diversity and complexity of various Filipino-X cultural identities around the world that the process toward a greater wholeness (salvation) is being continually realized in the reign of God.

Chapter 2, "Toward *Sambayanihan* in Europe: A Filipino Ecclesiology of Migration," explores an inculturated vision of what it means to be church (*sambayanihan*) among Filipino migrants in Europe. The chapter is structured into three parts. It opens with a mapping of the context for theological reflection, that is, the experience of Filipino Catholics in Europe. The mapping is followed by a discussion on *sambayanihan* as a Filipino way of being church in Europe in response to their experiences. In this section, the practices and/or *gawain* (works) of the Filipino Catholic Charismatic Community of Brussels (FCCC) are sketched as a possible example of *sambayanihan*. The chapter then considers two "marks" of *sambayanihan*, that are rooted in quintessential Filipino practices (*salu-salo* and *tagay*) and may help foster the inculturative process. The chapter posits that becoming *sambayanihan* communities helps Filipino Catholics in Europe not only to embody a Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) that is profoundly Filipino but also to, potentially, "migrate" from simply being an economic workforce to becoming Christian ambassadors in a continent where the "eclipse of God" is profoundly felt.

Chapter 3, "Popular Piety in Migrant Journeys Toward Redemption," investigates the role and significance of popular piety in Filipino migrants' quest for redemption. It begins with an exploration of the key expressions of popular religious practices among Filipino migrants, particularly the *Simbang Gabi* and devotions to Mary and the Infant Jesus, followed by critical reflections on key themes that underpin the practices: religio-cultural symbols, separation and fragmentation, and the journey toward redemption. The chapter contends that the liberating potential of popular piety in the context of Filipino migration lies in the spaces it provides for living out one's identity more meaningfully, fostering integration amidst the fragmentation that characterizes migration in contemporary times and, consequently, in working toward redemption.

Chapter 4 "What I Have Seen and Heard: The Gifts of Filipino Catholics to the US Catholic Church," interrogates the contribution of Filipino Catholics to the US Catholic Church by wrestling with the experience of Filipinos in the Archdiocese of Seattle, particularly in a local parish. It begins by problematizing the questions raised regarding the number of Filipino-American priests ordained in the Archdiocese of Seattle as devaluing the role and contributions of the laity in the church. The chapter then examines how part of the problem to appreciating the importance of laity engaged in various ministries is the clericalism and colonial mentality that continue to plague the Filipino community even in the United States. The chapter maintains that, on closer examination, Filipino-American Catholics bring distinctive gifts that invite the church in the United States to spiritual depth and commitment.

Chapter 5, "Faith on the Move: Religious Conversion among Filipino Migrants in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and the United States," deals with the role and place of religion in the life of Filipino migrants, with a focus on religious conversion. The chapter has five parts. The first defines key terms and presents the motifs of conversion. The second characterizes the Filipino religious experience in the host country. The third examines the conversion narratives of selected Filipino migrants in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and the United States. The fourth offers insights on the patterns of conversion and the factors that lead to conversion in the abovementioned narratives. The concluding part reflects on the implications of religious conversion for the Catholic Church by suggesting possible paths forward. The chapter claims that while religion and the faith community provide spiritual and social supports that facilitate the process of adjustment in the new country, social, economic, and personal factors play major roles in migrant's religious conversion process. Examining such factors and its implications for the Catholic Church can help in interpreting and defining the social, cultural, personal, and religious issues that confront migrants in the new country, whose lives are complicated by their new situation as ethnic and, in some cases, religious minorities.

The next five chapters, which are bound by the theme "Political Economy and Social Ethics," wrestle with sociopolitical, economic, and ecological issues connected to Filipino migration and diaspora. Chapter 6, "Migrant Remittances, Development, and Catholic Social Teaching," interrogates the impact of Filipino diaspora's remittances at the micro (families) and macro (local communities and the country in general) level in relation to development, and how such links between remittances and development may be apprehended through the lens of Catholic social teaching. The chapter begins with a discussion of the impact of two key types of remittances—financial remittances and social remittances—on the family and the wider community. Catholic social teaching's reflections on development are then brought to bear on the Filipino experiences of the nexus between migration and development based on remittances and vice versa. The chapter contends that while migration and migrant remittances provide opportunities for development, they also bring questions and challenges to the quest for an authentic and sustainable human development.

Chapter 7, "Migration with Dignity and Climate Justice: *Haiyan*, Climate Change and Displacement," considers the relevance and implications of climate change-induced migration and displacement to social ethics, particularly in relation to climate justice. The chapter asks the question: Is the current response by the international community to anthropogenic climate change and, in particular, the treatment and reception of people displaced by the effects of climate change—whether voluntary or involuntary—meeting the demands of justice? To respond to the question, the chapter is developed in four parts. The first discusses climate change as a wicked problem, whose complexity can be understood from a plurality of perspectives. The second describes, in broad strokes, the Philippine experience of climate change and its connections with displacement, with attention to super typhoon *Haiyan* to give a "face" to the natural and human devastation wrought by climate change in and to the Philippines. The third part considers climate change as a structure of violence and the ethical imperative for climate justice. The chapter then concludes by offering a road map for migration with dignity in the face of climate change. The chapter posits that climate justice is an ethical imperative and that humanitarian policies and responses connected to migration are not adequate to meet the demands of justice as these can mask how those who cause climate change should be made responsible.

Chapter 8, "The Ties That Unbind: Filipino Female Transmigration and the Left-Behind Family through the Lens of Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences' Domestic Church of the Poor," probes the impact of the absence of transmigrant mothers from their family. In particular, it asks: What effects does international migration have on the family left behind, especially children left behind by transmigrant mothers employed in domestic work? Will the maternal ties that once bound the family together, held dearly by the mother as *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home), now come unfastened? Will nurturing children who are not their own unbind the ties at home? What insights might we draw from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' (FABC) theology on the family, especially its reflections on the family as domestic church of the poor? The chapter begins by outlining the migration context of Filipinas employed as domestic workers overseas and the effects of migration on them and their families in the Philippines. This is followed by reflections on the experience of these transnational families in conversation with the FABC's theology on the family, particularly as the domestic church of the poor. Family practices in view of living out the Catholic family's identity as the domestic church of the poor are then offered. The chapter submits that being a domestic church of the poor in the context of female transmigration is about engaging in a collective mission of binding up the wounds of the small (biological) and the larger (human) family, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Chapter 9, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Filipinas in International Marriage Migration," delves into the theological implications of the gendered character and dynamics of the experience of Filipinas who engage in international marriage migration. It begins with the mapping of the vulnerabilities

experienced by Filipina wives married to foreign men with higher socio-economic status, and how these wives negotiate tropes that impinge on their identity and agency, such as "woman in danger" and "dangerous woman." This is followed by an exploration of the theological implications of the experiences of these Filipinas to Catholic theologies on marriage and gender, particularly on church teachings on the true and good marriage and the ongoing debate on the gender complementarity conundrum. The chapter proposes the expansion of theological frameworks for marriage, particularly as these relate to gender, to more substantively engage the *oikos*, friendship or human connection, and marriage as a social and moral good, not just a spiritual good.

Chapter 10, "Cosmopolitanism and Filipinx Crossing Borders: Agency Faces Ethnic and Gender Profiling," looks into agency in the context of border-crossing among some typical sectors of those with Philippine origins or ethnicity, who live and work in cosmopolitan sites. The chapter opens with a description of cosmopolitanism's understanding of agency followed by a critical discussion on agency as it plays out in the context of Filipinx border crossing. More specifically, the latter unpacks agency outside the family and within the family. The chapter concludes by pointing out what cosmopolitan and migration perspectives contribute to each other. The chapter submits that agency in the context of Filipinx border-crossing is deeply embedded in both cosmopolitan sites and at home and is inevitably shaped by social and structural forces operating in these domains such as ethnic and gender profiling and that though quotidian, but no less important, acts of resistance may not overturn these forces; they diminish Filipinxs' power over their lives and wait to be better harnessed into organized transformative political agency.

The last four chapters, which are organized under the theme "Mission and Ministry," map the faces and facets, as well as directions and trajectories, of lived Catholicism in the context of migration and diaspora from missiological and pastoral perspectives. Chapter 11, "Home and Away: The Philippine Catholic Church's Local and Global Migrant Ministry," scrutinizes the key faces of the ministry by the Catholic Church in the Philippines for and among migrants and their families both at home and overseas, with a focus on Asia and with attention to religious education and faith formation. Drawing largely from his extensive experience in migrant ministry in the Philippines and overseas as part of his work as a Scalabrinian missionary priest, Edwin Corros critically describes and reflects on the Philippine Catholic Church's pastoral care of migrants in the Philippines and overseas. The chapter contends that meaningful and effective ministry among migrants within and beyond national borders in contemporary times requires a multipronged and multisectoral cross-border collaborative strategy that addresses overlapping needs on multiple fronts, particularly through a more robust formation of missionaries and members of the hierarchy, including bishops, on migrant ministry insofar as this has repercussions on the provision of relevant ongoing spiritual accompaniment as well as advocacy and care for migrants and their families.

Chapter 12, "Catholicism across the Seas: Faith and Pastoral Care among Filipino Seafarers," focuses on seafarers, the role that religious faith plays in dealing with the challenges of life onboard ships overseas, and the ministry of the Catholic Church among them. Myrna Tordillo approaches the subject from the lens of someone who has been involved in the ministry to seafarers through Stella Maris, formerly known as the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), in the United States and in the Philippines. The chapter opens with an historical overview of the connections between seafaring and (Catholic) Christianity, as well as seafaring among Filipinos in the past and in contemporary times. This is followed by a sketch of the issues and challenges faced by Filipino seafarers and the role of religious faith, particularly the Catholic faith, in dealing with these issues and challenges. The ways in which the Catholic Church ministers to, or accompanies, seafarers onboard ships, particularly based on the experience of the AOS–Stella Maris in the United States, are then discussed before the chapter ends with a brief conclusion.

Chapter 13, "*Ginhawa*: In Pursuit of Immigrant Life in Abundance," examines the conditions in, as well as the fruits of, the pursuit of *ginhawa* among Filipino immigrants in the USA. It discusses how the pursuit has resulted in encounters with trauma and despair, particularly for foreign-born Filipino guest workers in the USA who have fallen prey to human traffickers, while for others immigrant life has crumbled into a dystonic experience of dislocation and disorientation while searching for a deeper sense of identity and belonging. The chapter demonstrates how, as visible subject-agents, Catholic ministers' intersectional vocations, contexts, and practices must foster *ginhawa*.

Chapter 14, "Overseas Filipino Workers and Missionary Discipleship: Rethinking *missio ad gentes* in the Context of the Filipino Diaspora," takes stock of the experiences of overseas Filipino Catholics, in general, and OFWs, in particular, as a context for reflection on Filipino missionary activity in contemporary times. It begins with an outline of the history of mission in the Filipino context, with attention to shifts in missionary thinking and practice, followed by a discussion on the missionary dimensions of the experiences of Filipinos in diaspora, particularly OFWs. The chapter then offers reflections on the (dis)continuities of the experiences of OFWs with the understanding and practice of *missio ad gentes*. The chapter argues that OFWs' practice of missionary discipleship provides clues for re-thinking or re-interpreting *missio ad gentes* as a missionary paradigm and that incarnational cross-border encounters are at the heart of such reinterpretation.

Constructing themes obviously served as a fruitful way of organizing the book. Through this approach individual or related ideas converge into a cluster, throw light on one another, and form distinct yet integrated wholes. The (re) negotiations of faith in migration and diaspora context underpin the book's three core themes. As could be seen in its chapters, the book is interdisciplinary and polyvocal. It sits, first and foremost, within the "mobilities turn" or "mobilities paradigm" in migration studies, which views the world as fluid and always in motion rather than largely fixed with some movement between locations. Following from "turns" in the more recent past, notably the linguistic

turn, the cultural turn, and the spatial turn, the "mobilities turn" regards people as mobile subjects who constantly move about to interact, work, consume, and so on, and need to be comprehended as such. As the name indicates, this paradigmatic turn theorizes movement and circulation holistically and relationally, rather than as separate, discrete forms of action associated with particular activities. Like lived religion it puts a premium on practice, albeit with attention to the meanings, subjectivities, and spaces of movement.[39] The "mobilities turn," in other words, shifts the focus from simply the source or destination to movements, networks, shadow circuits, and flows themselves, and to their meanings. Accordingly, this book conceives religious transformation not as an end state, but a process with no fixed or determinate destination.

The book also has religious and theological underpinnings, particularly from a contextual and liberationist perspective. As reflected especially in Part I and, to a certain extent, Part II and III, this liberationist framework is significantly informed by what de Mesa calls a hermeneutics of appreciation as an approach and methodology. It is an approach that is creation-centered; cultural elements that are positive are foregrounded before tending to what is negative in the culture to give space to the wisdom and genius of the culture.[40] It highlights cultural "treasures," or cultural energies, such as *bayanihan, salu-salo, bahala na*, and *ginhawa* or, in the words of the apostle Paul, "whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise."[41] However, this turn to the culture does not mean concentration solely on the traditional culture, but rather on worthwhile communal living at the present time.[42] Indeed, the book's cultural gaze is not parochial nor naïve. American theologian Robert Schreiter, a well-known proponent of the theology of catholicity as theology between the global and the local, drives home the significance of this expansive approach within the contextual theological method

> In a world keenly aware of cultural flows encountering one another, we assume that everything we say and do is influenced in some manner by the contexts in which ideas are born, shaped, and articulated. But embedded deeply within us is also a sense that those things most important to us somehow transcend space and time.... We are deeply aware of how important it is to be able to cross those boundaries to foster the communion and solidarity necessary to make this a livable world.[43]

The book's focus on the experiences of Filipino Catholics at home and overseas in the context of migration and diaspora is valuable, first and foremost, for the depth (Filipino focus) and, at the same time, breadth (cross-border approach, migration and diaspora contexts) that it provides in its treatment of the topic. Second, and equally important, it fills a critical gap in (contextual) studies on contemporary Catholicism's demographic shift from the Global North to the Global South insofar as it is focused on Filipino Catholicism. These contextual and methodological merits of the book are complemented by the fact that it not only will be the

first publication on cross-border Filipino Catholicism from primarily religious and theological perspectives; its list of contributors comprises noted scholars of Filipino descent based in the Philippines and various parts of the world, who are no stranger to the migrant and diasporic experience themselves.

This book serves as a contribution to literature on world Christianity in its cross-border approach and perspectives on a truly global Christian denomination, that is, Catholicism as it is lived by a key ethnic group within Catholicism that has a profoundly global reach and presence, that is, Filipinos. By bringing together experiences and perspectives from various parts of the world that describe, situate, and analyze Catholic faith and practice among Filipinos in the context of migration and diaspora in a manner that takes into account global forces as well as local specificities, the book introduces the reader to the hallmarks and characteristics of a contextual model of world Christianity and global Catholicism in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1 This is despite the increase in the number of converts to Pentecostal and evangelical Christianity, as well as to Islam. Cindy Wooden, "Global Catholic Population Tops 1.28 Billion; Half Are in 10 Countries," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 8, 2017, www.ncronline.org/news/world/global-catholic-population-tops-128-billion-half-are-10-countries

2 See "Status of Global Christianity 2020," Center for Global Christianity, www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2020/01/Status-of-Global-Christianity-2020.pdf

3 Allan Figueroa Deck, "Pastoral Perspectives on Migration: Immigrants as New Evangelizers," in *On "Strangers No Longer": Perspectives on the Historic U.S.–Mexican Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Migration*, eds Todd Scribner and Kevin Appleby (New York: Paulist, 2013), 58.

4 For a bird's-eye view of this history and relationship see Ezio Marchetto, CS, *The Catholic Church and the Phenomenon of Migration: An Overview* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1989).

5 Andrew Walls, "Mission and Migration: The Diaspora Factor in Christian History," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 5 (2) (2002): 6.

6 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 73. An example of this is the shift in the image of the missionary as a white person sent to a distant land. Jehu Hanciles, "Migration and the Globalization of Christianity," in *Understanding Word Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew Walls*, eds William Burrows et al. (New York: Orbis, 2011), 229.

7 See Dominic Pasura and Marta Bivand Erdal, eds, *Migration, Catholicism, and Transnationalism: Global Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

8 See, for example, Michael Budde, ed., *Scattered and Gathered: Catholics in Diaspora* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017). While this book embraces the usage of migration as part of the notion of diaspora, it subscribes to the idea of diaspora as a broader and distinct reality, that is, as both a condition of people as well as a discourse. Eleazar Fernandez, *Burning Center, Porous Borders: The Church in a Globalized World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 210.

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10 Andrea Gagliarducci, "Is Pope Francis Setting Up the Next Conclave?" *Catholic News Agency*, May 6, 2020, www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/54164/is-pope-francis-setting-up-the-next-conclave
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12 Zacarian Sarao, "Pope Francis 'Took' Presiding of Mass to Celebrate 500 Years of Christianity in PH," Inquirer.net, August 25, 2021, https://globalnation.inquirer.net/198731/pope-francis-took-presiding-of-mass-to-celebrate-500-years-of-christianity-in-ph
13 Agence France-Press, "Factbox: Catholicism in the Philippines," *ABS-CBN News*, January 10, 2017, https://news.abs-cbn.com/life/01/09/17/factbox-catholicism-in-the-philippines
14 The study focused on 1999–2008. Jocelyn Uy, "As Clergy Ages, Many Called but Few Chosen," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 8, 2012, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/173233/as-clergy-ages-many-called-but-few-chosen
15 Joe McKendry, "The HR Department of the World," *The Atlantic*, September 2019, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/09/jason-deparle-a-good-provider-philippines/594763/
16 This is a pre-pandemic statistic. The pandemic affirmed the pervasive and critical place of migration in Philippine society. More than a million Filipinos have been sent home since 2020 due to the pandemic, 791,623 of whom are OFWs (481,305 are land-based workers while 308,332 are sea-based). The repatriation, which is ongoing at the time of writing, was described by the foreign-affairs minister as "the biggest repatriation ever in our history, possibly the biggest repatriation anywhere, of any country, in the world." Cristina Baclig, "'Biggest Ever Repatriation in PH History' Is Ongoing," Inquirer.net, August 12, 2021, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1472769/biggest-ever-repatriation-in-ph-history-is-ongoing
17 See, for example, Sadiri Emmanuel Santiago Tira, *Filipino Kingdom Workers: An Ethnographic Study in Diaspora Missiology* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2012).
18 Edmund Chia and Gemma Cruz, "Mongolia: Youngest Church on Earth Turns 25," *National Catholic Reporter*, September 14, 2017, www.ncronline.org/news/world/mongolia-youngest-church-earth-turns-25
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20 See also Cecil Motus, "Harmony in Faith: Asian and Pacific Catholics in the United States," in *Scattered and Gathered: Catholics in Diaspora,* ed. Michael Budde (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).
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Manila Center in Houston and facilitating a space between the larger Filipino American community and its growing presence in the American Church. Cherry, *Faith, Family and Filipino American Community Life*, 154.

26 As cited in Thomas Landy, "Filipinas in Hong Kong Focus More on Devotions than Chinese Catholics Do," Catholics & Cultures, July 18, 2013, www.catholicsandcultures.org/hong-kong-china-sar/filipina-migrants/filipina-worship

27 Jose de Mesa, *Why Theology Is Never Far From Home* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2003), 85.

28 Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 59, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

29 de Mesa, *Why Theology Is Never Far From Home*, 167.

30 See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longman Green, 1902).

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38 Nancy Ammerman, "Lived Religion as an Emerging Field: An Assessment of Its Contours and Frontiers," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society*, 29 (2) (2016): 86–88.

39 Thomas Faist, "The Mobility Turn: A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36 (11) (2013): 1639–1640. See also Alisdair Rogers et al., eds, *Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

40 José de Mesa, *A Theological Reader* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 2016), 102–195.

41 Philippians 4:8.

42 José de Mesa, "Contextual Theology from a Cultural Perspective," in *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue*, eds Dale Irvin and Peter Phan (New York: Orbis, 2018), 198–199.

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Part I

Culture and Religious Experience

1 Looking for God in the Complexities of Filipino Migration and Diaspora

Theology and Filipino Cultural Identities in a Globalized World

Julius-Kei Kato

Introduction: Framing Our Theme, Challenges, and Task

As the title boldly declares, our quest here is to "look for God" in the complexities of Filipino culture as found in migration and diaspora. A more properly theological way of expressing it would be: reflecting on Filipino migrant-diaspora culture as a *locus theologicus*.[1] Is that even possible? How might we go about correlating theology with the complex varieties of Filipino cultural identities in our globalized world? It is obvious how challenging it is to identify even just the main characteristics of Filipino cultural identities as they are present in the various loci of migration and diaspora today because Filipinos around the world have, and continue to go through, extensive and complex migratory patterns. Moreover, they have established diaspora communities in many places around the world that interact with local contexts in multifarious ways, producing a variety of new cultural forms. As if that were not enough, we could even throw in the fact that "Filipino culture" in the diaspora means vastly different things across different generations of people who still self-identify in some way as "Filipino-a, not to speak of various mixtures or hybridities in which the Filipino element is mixed with other cultural elements. In the face of all these factors, could we still speak of these diverse, continually developing cultures as "Filipino" in some way?

This chapter surveys the big picture of contemporary Filipino migration and diaspora from cultural perspectives and suggests the contours of what may still be labeled as shared "Filipino identity." Starting with an essentialized idea of "culture," it will go on to show how migration, diaspora, and hybridity in their Filipino versions necessitate a process of complexifying the notion of cultural identity. What this means concretely is that migration and diaspora produce what could be called a hybrid "Filipino-X" cultural identity. It is not just a sum of its component parts (Filipino plus some other concrete cultural context[s]) but a complex and hybrid entity that must be dealt with on its own merits. The chapter argues that this "Filipino-X" cultural identity in the Filipino diaspora should be made the explicit and primary context, as well as object, of theological reflection. After all, it is the task of theology to indicate that it is in the context of the diversity and complexity of various Filipino-X cultural identities

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-3

around the world that the process toward a greater wholeness (salvation) is being continually realized in the reign of God.

Describing "Culture": A First Take

Culture is one of the most commonly used words to describe the human condition. Yet, when examined more deeply, it might come as a surprise that its precise meaning is quite difficult to state plainly. Theologian Robert Schreiter, who has worked extensively in the field of culture and theology, comments that "culture is a notoriously slippery concept, with no agreed upon definition."[2] Thus, it might be best to begin with a survey of some conventional definitions of culture as preliminary heuristic aids to have a framework for understanding this slippery concept. These definitions will be critically engaged with later to see if and how they might apply to culture as lived in Filipino migration and diaspora.

A classic definition of culture is offered by Clifford Geertz, who holds a prominent place in cultural anthropology. Geertz defines culture as an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.[3] Theologian Michael Gallagher provides a helpful synthesis of the "essential aspects for any description of culture," that adds a rich nuance to our understanding. Culture, according to Gallagher, is a uniquely human product inherited from the past yet ever-changing in order to cope with different historical environments. It evolves into *a set of assumptions*, often unconsciously assimilated by a given group or society, involving an entire way of life that, in turn, becomes a source of solidarity and identity for the group members. Culture, Gallagher adds, is a whole complex of ways of interpreting the world. It carries with it meanings and beliefs, values, customs, practices, and traditions. This complex of factors extends from the most mundane human activities to more profound concerns, such as the significance of existence. Not to be forgotten is culture's communicative dimension: it seeks to pass its cumulative wisdom to future generations. Last but not least, culture often involves some religious vision.[4]

As a third heuristic aid, we turn to Kathryn Tanner, another theologian who has reflected profoundly on the relationship of culture and theology. In *Theories of Culture*, Tanner summarizes the "modern" view of culture (as opposed to a "postmodern" one). More specifically, she speaks of culture as a universal element defining what is human. At the same time, Tanner says culture highlights human diversity in that it varies from one social group to another, distinguishing the specific pattern of behaviors which define a society as different from all others. One can, therefore, say that the boundaries of a particular culture become the boundaries of a particular society. Considering culture as specific to a particular group, one can understand that a group's culture refers to its entire way of life.[5]

A Stab at Describing Filipino Culture

Given the abovementioned conventional meanings of culture, let us take a first stab at delineating some dominant features that might give us some idea of "Filipino culture." Imelda Marcos, the (in)famous former First Lady of the Philippines, once declared, "The Philippines is in a strategic position—it is both East and West, right and left, rich and poor.... We are neither here nor there."[6] This intriguing description captures—what I consider—an essential characteristic in attempting to describe Philippine culture. Philippine culture, both in the country itself and more widely in the diaspora, can be considered a "mixture" of many things. Niels Mulder, for example, speaks of the "mixed-up" symbolic language of the Filipino whom he describes as "an English-speaking Malay, with a Spanish name, who loves to eat Chinese food."[7] Others refer to the Filipino as the "brown American" with a contemporary culture that gives the impression of a "bricolage."[8] I will use "hybridity" here to capture this characteristic of Filipino (cultural) identity.

Indeed, Filipinos/-as, as a group, are living embodiments of hybridity. Although present-day Philippine society is composed of an ethnically diverse people, the ancestors of the vast majority came from Southeast Asia, especially the islands that make up Indonesia and environs. These Filipino ancestors were of the Malay ethnic group. Hence, we can say that this original and dominant Malay ethnicity and culture forms a cultural bedrock together with those of the smaller number of indigenous peoples. Subsequent history brought waves of other ethnicities and cultures to the Philippine archipelago that transformed it in irrevocable ways. We can include here the waves of Chinese immigration, the influence of Islam in the southern part of the country, the long colonial reign of Spain from the mid-16th to the end of the nineteenth century, the US occupation and administration period (1898–1946), and the brief Japanese occupation during World War II (1941–1945).[9]

With such a history, we can say that Filipinos/-as have a cultural identity stemming from original indigenous cultures that have subsequently been hybridized in many ways through the waves, and long periods, of colonial history and through ongoing globalization. Thus, the Filipino language, ethnicity, and culture constitute an interesting amalgam (a hybrid) resulting from the various mixtures of indigenous elements with the uneven power relations to which they have been subjected to (between colonizer and colonized), and continue to be subjected to by other forces in our contemporary globalized world.[10]

What then could be named as the most common and typical values and characteristics that define Filipino culture? In my quest to sketch the general contours of what may be considered a corporate Filipino identity,[11] I turn, first, to an enlightening study of Philippine politics by sociologist David Timberman, where he identifies what, he posits, are key traits that profoundly shape the dominant political culture of the country: the primacy of kinship, the influence of particularism and personalism, the importance of reciprocity and patron–client relations, the emphasis on smooth interpersonal relations, and the effect of pervasive poverty on values and behavior.[12]

Another helpful resource is a list of Filipino personality traits and values identified in a 2010 research paper published by a team of researchers of Rishō University in Tokyo for the purpose of advocating for Filipinos/as to come to Japan as caregivers.[13] Noteworthy here is the fact that their list was compiled from a study of 24 works of pertinent research previously published by Filipino scholars[14] and augmented by personal interviews conducted by the research team. The study mentioned the following as the most "characteristically Filipino" personality traits[15] in the order that they appear in the list: *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relationships), *hiya* (embarrassment, shame, timidity) and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), close family ties, *bahala na* ("come what may" optimism along with feelings of submission and resignation to fate or luck), *amor propio* (personal pride, self-esteem), *bayanihan* (mutual aid and cooperation) and hospitality, and *ningas cogon* (doing well, in whatever one is doing, at the beginning).

To the abovementioned studies, could be added the characteristics that the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (*CFC*) identifies as fundamental traits of Filipino identity:

1 family-oriented (particularly shown in the *anak–magulang* [child–parent] relationship);
2 meal-oriented (*salu-salo, kainan*);
3 *kundiman*-oriented (in the sense of "heroes sacrificing everything for love");
4 *bayani* (hero)-oriented;
5 spirit-oriented (having a spiritual sense or *pagiging relihiyoso*).[16]

CFC suggests that these five characteristics are key to shaping a Christian catechesis that is well suited to the Filipino identity.

The abovementioned cultural characteristics are obviously not authoritative nor all-encompassing. Rather, they should be treated as merely sketching the general contours of Filipino culture and a Filipino corporate identity. Clearly, Philippine society is quite diverse with significant differences between urban and rural areas, as well as between different regions and ethnic groups. It is also constantly evolving as a result of different historical and social forces. Any list of so-called Filipino cultural identity traits, therefore, cannot be universally applied to all sectors.

Nevertheless, we can now paint, with the above as heuristic aids, a broad picture of a corporate cultural identity using the abovementioned traits that can be arguably identified as "Filipino." For our subject matter here, we should go further and ask: If those are salient markers of Filipino culture and corporate identity *in* or *within* the Philippines, what happens when a large number of the population carrying such a cultural identity moves out of the country and disperses to different parts of our globalized world because of different push and pull factors? This phenomenon of large-scale migration is not only hypothetical but, in the case of the Philippines, it has truly happened and is an ongoing process.

The Global Philippine Migration-Diaspora and Culture

According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, there are 10.2 million Filipinos outside of the Philippines.[17] Out of that number, 4.8 million were "permanent" migrants, 4.2 million were "temporary" migrants, and 1.2 million were "irregular" migrants. The term "permanent migrants" relates to Filipino immigrants, legal permanent residents, and naturalized citizens of their host country. "Temporary migrants" pertains to the documented land-based and sea-based workers and others whose stay abroad is six months or more, including their accompanying dependents. "Irregular migrants" include Filipinos who are without valid residence or work permits, or who may be overstaying workers or tourists in a foreign country.[18] Temporary and irregular migrants comprise those who are commonly called "overseas Filipino workers."

A *National Geographic* article in December 2018 provides an insightful, vivid, and expansive analysis of those figures. The 10.2 Filipinos living and working abroad, the article notes, have been "pushed" abroad mainly because of unemployment, scarce opportunities, or low wages. They have been "pulled" to over 200 countries or territories to do all kinds of things such as:

> [being] domestic workers in Angola and construction workers in Japan … staff[ing] the oil fields of Libya and [serving as] nannies to families in Hong Kong, … sing[ing] on the stages of far-flung provinces in China and help [ing] run hotels in the Middle East.[19]

One can find Filipinos in all kinds of professions and jobs in the diaspora from medical professionals, health-care workers, teachers, and technicians to those performing what are conventionally considered "lowly" jobs such as fast-food workers, nannies, and household help. Noteworthy here is the fact that a full quarter of the world's seafarers, a crucial workforce that keeps the global supply chain of goods functioning, is Filipino. The large-scale labor migration, which has been officially and constantly encouraged by the Philippine government, has made the Philippines one of the top exporters of migrant labor worldwide. Critics, however, problematize the brain drain suffered by the country, the disruptions of family life, and the persistence of the image of the Philippines as a servant, even a "slave" nation.[20]

Faced with such a large-scale movement of Filipinos/-as outside the country, it is logical to wonder what happens to the Filipino cultural identity sketched above, albeit in an essentialist way, in the complex contexts of migration and diaspora. Moreover, are the conventional ideas and descriptions of "culture" introduced earlier in the chapter even applicable to the contexts of migration and diaspora?

Complexifying the Idea of Culture

To date, the views of culture presented in our "First Take" remain widely held. The question now is can these standard notions of culture *really* apply to the

complex and diverse Filipino diaspora? A closer examination of the abovementioned descriptions of culture vis-à-vis the complexities of the Filipino migration and diaspora will reveal that the element of "mixture" (of Filipino cultural elements with various other cultures) that normally occurs through migration and diaspora does not seem to be clearly recognized in them. Although Geertz's "pattern of meanings" or Gallagher's "set of assumptions" does describe culture *as it has been traditionally conceived*, they seem to presuppose either *a* pattern of meanings, or *one* set of assumptions (in the singular).

It is evident that these definitions of culture cannot be applied to the many incarnations of Filipino diaspora culture located in various contexts around the world because the very people in those situations would instinctively know that their experience of "culture" normally takes the plural form: They involve what I would describe as "Filipino culture + X (some other cultural influence)." Second-generation Filipino American theologian Michael Sepidoza Campos describes Filipinos in the diaspora as "nomads who interrupt citizenship."[21] Hence, for them (even more so for their offspring and later descendants), there are normally at least *two or more* "patterns" or "sets" of meanings (or assumptions) to which the notion of culture refers.

The abovementioned description of modernity's view of culture found in Tanner's study, meanwhile, might make Filipino migrants even more uncomfortable. The notion that culture is "a boundary that marks off one group from another," cuts them in half and gives the impression that they are not whole but rather fragmented, fractured beings lying on the boundaries of (at least) two self-contained entities.

The reason why the nuance of "mixture" or hybridity has little recognition in conventional descriptions of culture is that cultures have been traditionally understood to be *consistent wholes*. In contemporary times, especially in the context of migration and diaspora, that presupposition is being seriously questioned. Postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha points out that "the very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions … are in a profound process of redefinition."[22] Tanner certainly critiques the modern view of culture and points out that the tendency to see cultures as consistent wholes could be traced to the anthropologists' own need to interpret and decipher the constituent elements of a particular culture. Consequently, after having examined specific elements of a given culture, anthropologists tend to construct generalizations about the culture. This is what postcolonial theorists frequently refer to as "essentialism."[23]

It is proper, therefore, to admit at this point that the sketch of dominant Filipino cultural traits presented above is actually an exercise in essentialism. We have seen that such preliminary and essentialist generalizations still form the backdrop against which "culture" is usually studied. Unfortunately, if we do not start heuristically with an essentialized idea of a culture, cultural study, it may be argued, becomes very challenging because it is hard to begin to interpret a culture intelligently without seeing it first as a consistent whole. The irony of an essentialized picture of culture, however, is the fact that, to the participants of a given culture, their own culture is almost never a consistent whole.[24]

Further, Tanner offers an alternative postmodern reconstruction of the notion of culture. Significant for us here is her suggestion that in the postmodern view differences (among cultures) are not marked by boundaries separating self-contained cultures. Rather, "cultural identity becomes … a *hybrid*, relational affair, something that lives between as much as within cultures."[25] It goes without saying that I subscribe to the postmodern position, that is, that culture is more complex than previously thought, and that it is a hybrid, relational affair, living in between as much as within what has hitherto, been clearly demarcated from other types of culture.

"Diaspora" and Filipino Migrant Culture

When a significantly large segment of a people bearing a particular culture (in this case, Filipino culture) moves and disperses from a home country to different parts of a globalized world due to various push and pull factors, diaspora happens. In postcolonial studies, diaspora is a technical term that means the "voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions."[26] Particularly insightful is Robin Cohen's picture of diasporas as communities of people living together in a (often new) country who "acknowledge that 'the old country'—a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions."[27] Cohen explains that a member's adherence to their diasporic community consists of accepting an "inescapable link with their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background."[28]

I prefer to use the term "diaspora" in a broader sense in line with what postcolonial biblical scholar Fernando Segovia refers to as "a minimalist approach with its emphasis on geographical dispersion or scattering from one's own land and people to somebody else's land and people"[29] without preoccupying oneself excessively with defining minute criteria. Again, in line with Segovia's position, I am not concerned with specifying and expanding a particular experience of diaspora into an "ideal."[30] Instead, I focus on a continuum of experiences that involves being uprooted from one's original homeland and transferred to a new land where one experiences marginalization from the dominant group and further alienation from one's homeland. One then develops a hybrid identity as a result of being located betwixt and between this new land and one's original homeland.

We must also note that "diaspora" is often used interchangeably with the term "migration." In this study, I prefer the former because if we keep to Cohen's definition of diaspora as people affected by "past migration history," we will be able to include in diaspora the offspring of migrants who have not actually experienced migration at first hand but who continue to be affected (albeit quite differently in many significant ways) by their forebears' migration history.[31]

Obviously, the experience of diaspora alters people in a profound way. Being uprooted from one's homeland and transported to a different land continues to have effects on a person long after the formal act of migrating has been

completed. In fact, "for some groups, migration is not a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but a *mode of being in the world*."[32] In this vein, it is justifiable to speak of "diaspora identities" of migrants, an identity situated in between and in both the worlds of origin and residence.

The perception of "home" in diaspora merits particular attention. What has been referred to above as a diaspora identity is well illustrated by how people in a particular diaspora (e.g., Filipino) come to perceive "home." Home as an idea is normally linked with shelter, stability, security, and comfort. To be "at home" conventionally means to feel comfortable in a place where one belongs and is accepted by the people with whom one shares salient commonalities.[33] But for the diaspora person, what really is home? Some may continue to consider the land they left behind as "home," but this home often exists only in their minds. The home that they knew has also changed over the passage of time with the result that if they were to go back after much time spent away, they might not actually feel at home there anymore. Conversely, and especially for immigrants, the new home, that is, the country of settlement, does not necessarily fully become one on account of discrimination or racism[34] and/or transnationalism. Home in the diaspora, in a sense, is profoundly reflective of the metaphor of "resident aliens" as it is used in the Bible to describe the relationship of the people of God to the world they live in.[35]

Nuancing Cultural Identity: A Hybridized Filipino Cultural Identity in the Diaspora

A second immense process that happens when a people with a particular cultural identity is dispersed throughout our globalized world is what I refer to as hybridity. I take hybridity to mean, at the most basic level, the mixture of phenomena, in particular, relating to culture, tradition, race, ethnicity, and religion that have been hitherto commonly considered self-contained, monolithic, or distinct from others. The mixture occurs to such an extent that a *tertium quid* (a third entity distinct from its parent substances) often results from it.[36] Such a mixture reveals an important facet of hybridity: that it is a cross-category process. What the "categories" in question are—cultures, nations, ethnicities, classes, genres, or anything else—is secondary. The essential point is that the hybridization *blurs the distinctions* in a process of dynamic boundary-crossings and mixing between categories (categories that, as stated, have hitherto been commonly conceived of as self-contained), and eventually results in a new entity that carries traits from all the ingredients of the mixture but cannot be identified exclusively any longer with any one of them.

In the Filipino diaspora, the corporate Filipino cultural identity undergoes a process of hybridization. The process differs, of course, from person to person and from community to community depending on many factors, the dominant one still arguably being the encounter and mixing of Filipino culture with the dizzying array of diverse cultures and contexts in which Filipinos are located the world over. We have seen that this corporate Filipino cultural identity could

be identified by some typically Filipino traits such as close family ties, *utang na loob, pakikisama, hiya, amor proprio, bayanihan*, and *pagiging relihiyoso*. In the Filipino diaspora, however, when this corporate Filipino identity encounters and absorbs other cultural influences in diverse contexts, it inevitably changes into what I call a hybrid "Filipino-X"[37] ("Filipino" combined with something else such as Filipino-US, Filipino-Japanese, Filipino-Italian, etc.) cultural identity. This is more evident in migrants whose ability to assimilate to different host cultures is stronger, certainly among the later generations born and/or raised outside the Philippines.[38] Moreover, this hybrid Filpino-X identity is not only a sum of its parts but is a more complex hybrid entity that has to be dealt with on its own particular and contextualized merits.[39] When we talk about Filipino cultural identity in the diaspora as a place of theology then, it is this hybridized "Filipino-X" identity that, I contend, is our primary *locus theologicus*.

Filipino-X Cultural Identity in the Diaspora as a Locus of Theology

Here we come to a point where, as it were, the rubber hits the road. We have endeavored thus far to examine different facets of Filipino cultural identity in the diaspora in order to provide the context for theological reflection, that is, the hybrid "Filipino-X" identities[40] that are hard to classify because they are found in a dizzying array of diversity in different locations in our globalized world.

A methodology based on liberation theology,[41] I suggest, works in such context, especially since the theological task should start, ideally, with a thick description of the particular "Filipino-X" cultural identity within which one is trying to reflect theologically. A liberationist approach would also work since it is firmly rooted in people's concrete *lo cotidiano* (daily reality) experience and is strongly oriented toward liberative praxis. Further, and as reflected in Jon Sobrino's dictum *extra pauperes nulla salus* (without the poor there is no salvation),[42] a liberationist approach privileges the experience of the poor and marginalized, making it profoundly useful in wrestling with the migrant plight, or human condition, that *Fratteli Tutti* refers to as being an "existential foreigner,"[43] or what the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral statement *Encountering Christ in Harmony* laments as the treatment of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners.[44]

A theology that has Filipino-X cultural identities in the diaspora as its locus could, therefore, be assisted by the "Galilee principle," a critical reflection on the story of Jesus related to the story Mexican Americans, for whom *mestizaje*—the mingling of ethnicity, race, and culture—is a distinctive feature of their identity. In this theological concept, the person of Jesus, whose marginalized Galilean identity also marked him as a mestizo, the Mexican-American struggle for identity and new life becomes luminous.[45] This concept clearly aligns with the marginality and struggle for *ginhawa* that characterize life among many Filipinos in the diaspora[46] whether as temporary, permanent, and, certainly, as irregular migrants.

It also bodes well for a Filipino-X theology on cultural identity to approach binaries in contextually diverse and nuanced ways. This approach could prove useful in negotiating the debate and divide between those who advocate the use of Filipinx and Pinxy (an approach largely associated with those, albeit not all, in the US) and those who continue to use Filipino (an approach largely associated with those, albeit not all, in the Philippines) as a gender-neutral term not simply for historical or nationalist reasons.[47] It is a theology that embraces not just "interstitial integrity"[48] but also superdiversity. Superdiversity is a concept that points to the necessity of considering multidimensional conditions and processes affecting migrants in contemporary society. It is characterized by an interaction of variables that connect the more obvious dimensions of migrant life (nationality, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, age, education) with the ones that are less obvious like legal status, social networks, and labor-market niches.[49] In theological terms it is about creatively navigating the "betwixt and between predicament" of migrants and the "multi- and inter-culturality" of theology.[50] This is illustrated in theological works on *bahala na* that reframe it as an explicitly religious value in the context of the precarity of diasporic life.[51] To do theology that has Filipino-X cultural identities in the diaspora as locus, in other words, entails doing theology *en via* or, perhaps more appropriately, *via theologica*. Migrant/diasporic identity, like theology, is always on the way.

Conclusion: Toward an Incarnational Theology of Cultural Identity

Due to the prevalence of the experience of migration in our globalized world,[52] theologians and biblical scholars are increasingly taking this phenomenon seriously and, consequently, attempting to theologize and interpret the Bible more explicitly from the context of migration. The chapter demonstrates that to look for God in the complexities of Filipino migration and diaspora entails complex and contextualized sensitivity to the impacts and implications of movements and transitions to cultural identities. *Deus migrator est*, that is, "God is a migrant" encapsulates the framework and fruits for this theological task. Rendered more creatively, God can be considered as the "Migrant *par excellence*" if we interpret the central Christian mysteries of Creation and the Incarnation as God's "moving" from a state of relative stability to a new adventure characterized by uncertainty and suffering. In creation, God "migrates" from a state of absolute spirit to finite matter. In the Incarnation, God migrates from divinity to humanity. In these events, God embraces the precarious, marginalized, threatened, and endangered condition of the migrant.[53] This embrace can be taken, too, as a migration from the safety of an eternal home to the strange and risky land of the human family in which God also becomes a "foreigner" needing embrace, protection, and love.[54] In this "downward mobility," or "crossing over into the dark territory of a sinful broken humanity," Jesus, as the perfect embodiment of the *imago dei*, helps people migrate back to God by restoring in them what was lost by sin.[55] To look for God in the complexities of the Filipino migration, therefore, is to adopt an incarnational imagination. In the Incarnation, God assumes a divine–human identity that

can be ambiguous, disorienting, and even marginalized in a way that is similar to what I have proposed in this study as a hybrid "Filipino-X" identity.

Notes

1 See Gemma Tulud Cruz, *Toward a Theology of Migration: Social Justice and Religious Experience* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1–9.
2 Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 29.
3 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.
4 This paragraph has been summarized from Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 22–23.
5 Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 25–29.
6 David Steinberg, *The Philippines: A Singular and Plural Place* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 129.
7 Niels Mulder, *Inside Philippine Society: Interpretations of Everyday Life* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1997), 4.
8 Raul Pertierra, "'The Market' in Asian Values," in *Asian Values: Encounter with Diversity*, eds Josiane Cauquelin et al. (London: Curzon Press, 1998), 119.
9 See Chapter 1 of Jose Canoy, *An Illustrated History of the Philippines* (Oxford: John Beaufoy Publishing, 2019).
10 See Chapters 4 and 6 in this volume.
11 With the proviso that this should be regarded with caution and used only as a heuristic aid because lists of this sort always run the risk of unfairly essentializing what, in reality, is a more complex phenomenon.
12 David Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 16–21.
13 Isamu Saito et al., "Filipino Personality Traits and Values for Social Support: FOW [Filipino Overseas Workers] as Human Resources for Work Life Balance in Japan," *Rishō Daigaku Shinrigaku Kenkyūjo Yōki*, 8 (2010): 1–16, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/268585064.pdf
14 The 24 documents include F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System: A Cultural Definition* (Manila: Punlad Research House, 1997); Tomas Andres, *Understanding the Positiveness of Filipino Values* (Quezon City: Rex Bookstore, 1996); Crispin Maslog, *Communication, Values, and Society* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992); Evelyn Feliciano, *Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith* (Manila: OFM Literature, 1990); Tomas Andres, *Positive Filipino Values* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1989); and A.S. Lardizibal, *Customs, Beliefs, and Superstition: Readings on Philippine Culture and Social Life* (Manila: Rex Bookstore, 1976).
15 The Filipino traits were extracted from the 24 literary documents studied as part of the research then ranked based on the number of times each trait was mentioned in the documents.
16 Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *The Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, new edn (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 1997), 35–44.
17 The latest government data available at the time of writing is for 2013.
18 Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Philippine Migration at a Glance," Commission on Filipinos Overseas website, https://cfo.gov.ph/statistics-2
19 Aurora Almendral and Hannah Reyes Morales, "Why 10 Million Filipinos Endure Hardship Abroad as Overseas Workers," *National Geographic,* December 2018, www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/12/filipino-workers-return-from-overseas-philippines-celebrates

20 See Chapter 13 in Yves Boquet, *The Philippine Archipelago* (Cham: Springer International, 2017). See also Rhacel Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, 2nd edn (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); and Geraldine Pratt, *Families Apart: Migrant Mothers and the Conflicts of Labor and Love* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
21 Michael Sepidoza Campos, "Not Quite Here: Queer Ecclesial Spaces in the Filipino Diaspora," in *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body*, eds Susanna Snyder et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 175.
22 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.
23 Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2006), 77–80.
24 Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 42.
25 Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 58 (emphasis added). See also Peter Phan's excellent summary of the critiques of the modern notion of culture as well as the advantages of the more nuanced postmodern view. Peter Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (New York: Orbis, 2003), 13.
26 John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 68.
27 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997), ix.
28 Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, ix.
29 Fernando Segovia, "Interpreting beyond Borders: Postcolonial Studies and Diasporic Studies in Biblical Criticism," in *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, ed. Fernando Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 17.
30 Segovia, "Interpreting beyond Borders," 17.
31 Frank Yamada, "Constructing Hybridity and Heterogeneity: Asian American Biblical Interpretation from a Third-Generation Perspective," in *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*, eds Mary Foskett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2006), 164–177.
32 Emphasis mine. Russell King et al., *Writing across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xv.
33 McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 210.
34 A classic text on this topic is Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History*, rev. edn (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2014).
35 Hebrews 13:14.
36 Julius-Kei Kato, *How Immigrant Christians Living in Mixed Cultures Interpret Their Religion: Asian-American Diasporic Hybridity and Its Implications for Hermeneutics* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2012), 25. I would like to emphasize that by using the expression *tertium quid* I do not intend to essentialize the result of the hybrid mixture which itself is not easily amenable to fixed descriptions but should be properly treated on a case-by-case basis.
37 Filipino-X, as used in this chapter, is different from Filipinx, which is a term associated with the advocacy for gender-neutral language that is largely rooted in US multiculturalism.
38 Kato, *How Immigrant Christians Living in Mixed Cultures Interpret Their Religion*, 97–98. For an insightful anthology of stories and reflections on this theme, see Virgie Chatterby and Pepi Nieva, eds, *Pinay: Culture Bearers of the Filipino Diaspora* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).
39 See Martin F. Manalansan IV and Augusto Espiritu, *Filipino Studies: Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2016). For a study on Filipino-X identity focusing on race, see Anthony Christian Ocampo, *The Latinos of Asia: How Filipino Americans Break the Rules of Race* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016); and E.J.R. David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino-American Postcolonial Psychology* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2013).

40 It is better to use the plural form in order to clarify the multiplicity of Filipino-X identities in the Filipino diaspora. However, I sometimes use "identity" in the singular as a way of saying that despite its multiplicity, there is some common Filipino root in all these very diverse identities.
41 For details on this method, see Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, eds, *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1993), 57–85; and Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1987), 22–42.
42 See Chapter 4 of Jon Sobrino, *The Eye of the Needle* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008). The liberative principle, including the preferential option for the poor, has also been reinforced by the church in the Philippines. See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: Paulines, 1992), 22–23.
43 Existential foreigners are "citizens with full rights, yet (they) are treated like foreigners in their own country." Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), 97, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html
44 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015), 18. See also Chapter 4 in this volume.
45 See Virgilio Elizondo, *The Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (New York: Orbis, 2005).
46 See Chapters 2, 3, and 13 in this volume.
47 The debate started with dictionary.com's standardization of Filipinx and Pinxy as the name, term, or signifier for all native inhabitants of the Philippines, implying that Filipinos need to call themselves Filipinx if they wanted gender-neutrality. For a critical discussion on the debate see John Toledo, "Filipino or Filipinx?" *Rappler*, September 15, 2020, www.rappler.com/voices/ispeak/opinion-filipino-or-filipinx
48 Rita Nakashima Brock, "Cooking without Recipes: Interstitial Integrity," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, eds Rita Nakashima Brock et al. (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 2007), 125–143.
49 Steven Vertovec, *Migration and Diversity* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 733.
50 Peter Phan, "The Experience of Migration as a Source of Intercultural Theology," in *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*, eds Elaine Padilla and Peter Phan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 183–189.
51 See, for example, Rowan Rebustillo, "*Bahala Na*: In Search of an Ordinary Theology for the Filipino Diaspora," *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 22 (2) (2018): 234–252.
52 For a succinct survey of migration from a Catholic perspective, see Elizabeth Collier and Charles Strain, *Global Migration: What's Happening, Why, and a Just Response* (Winona, MN: Anselm, 2017). See also Elaine Padilla and Peter Phan, eds, *Christianities in Migration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and Peter Phan, ed., *Christian Theology in the Age of Migration* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).
53 Peter Phan, "*Deus Migrator*—God the Migrant: Migration of Theology and Theology of Migration," *Theological Studies*, 77 (4) (2016): 845–868.
54 Phan, "*Deus Migrator*," 861.
55 Daniel Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies*, 70 (3) (2009): 648–649.

2 Toward *Sambayanihan* in Europe
A Filipino Ecclesiology of Migration

Rowan Lopez Rebustillo

Introduction

The year 2020 was one that will not be forgotten, as the COVID-19 pandemic brought the entire world to its knees with its economic shockwaves and unprecedented impact on mobility. The nightmare that the pandemic brought for the millions of Filipinos in diaspora is evident not only in the deaths and infections among overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) but also in its impact on job markets worldwide.[1] Added to these challenges for Filipino migrants are the restrictions that have forced places of worship to close and suspend, or limit, mass gatherings. Such restrictions are a serious blow to Filipinos overseas, who are renowned for their faith and who consider participating regularly in liturgical activities as a vital element in their diasporic survival.

Nevertheless, and as in most unfortunate circumstances, Filipino religiosity and resilience persist.[2] They are not hailed as "God's secret weapon" by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization without reason.[3] Time and again, like the pliant bamboo tree, they have proven their ability to survive and, to a certain extent, thrive under difficult conditions. Thus, even in the midst of the pandemic parish life among Filipino migrants continues to flourish, a fitting tribute to the celebration in 2021 of the 500th anniversary of the Christianization of the Philippine archipelago.

The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* stress that "the setting for pastoral action [in the context of migration] is first and foremost the parish."[4] It is in the context of this guideline as well as Italian theologian Luigi Sabbarese's observation that migrants pose a church "issue" in terms of *communio* (fellowship),[5] and, to a certain extent, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the quincentennial celebration of Philippine Christianity, that this chapter explores an inculturated vision of what it means to be church among Filipino migrants in Europe. Drawing mainly from my personal ongoing immersion in Filipino Catholic communities in some parts of Europe, particularly with the Filipino chaplaincy in Brussels,[6] this chapter reflects on *sambayanihan* as a possible Filipino ecclesiology in the context of migration.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-4

The chapter is structured into three parts.[7] The chapter opens with a mapping of the context for theological reflection, that is, the experience of Filipino Catholics in Europe. This part is informed by *pakikiramdam/pakikipagkuwentuhan* and *pagdadalaw-dalaw/pagtatasa*. *Pakikiramdam/pakikipagkuwentuhan* is considered to be a nonintrusive process of gathering information that makes use of the art of empathy and listening. *Pagdadalaw-dalaw/pagtatasa* entails spending time, both in quantity and in quality, with the community to validate whatever was provisionally gathered in the initial encounters with them. The mapping is followed by a discussion on *sambayanihan* as a Filipino way of being church in Europe in response to their experience. In this section the practices and/or *gawain* (works) of the Filipino Catholic Charismatic Community of Brussels (FCCC) are sketched as a possible example of *sambayanihan*. This part is informed by *pakikisangkot/pagtataya*. *Pakikisangkot/pagtataya* involves harnessing my role as a chaplain of Filipino Catholics in Brussels and my involvement in other Filipino communities in western Europe. At this stage of being *sangkot* (involved with or part of), I cease being a complete outsider and become, to a certain extent, an insider who, like the opening statement of *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) shares their joys and their woes.[8] The chapter then considers two "marks" of *sambayanihan*, that are rooted in quintessential Filipino practices (*salu-salo* and *tagay*) and may help foster the inculturative process. This part is informed by *pagpipiging* and *pagsasalu-salo*. *Pagpipiging* and *pagsasalu-salo* center around moments of celebration, especially the celebration of the Holy Eucharist that is usually followed by feasting over Filipino food. The chapter posits that becoming *sambayanihan* communities helps Filipino Catholics in Europe not only to embody a basic ecclesial community (BEC) that is profoundly Filipino but also to, potentially, "migrate" from simply being an economic workforce to becoming Christian ambassadors in a continent where the "eclipse of God" is profoundly felt.

Mapping Ecclesial Life among Filipino Catholics in Europe

Filipinos have already penetrated the nooks and crannies of the global village, yet it could be argued that they remain undervalued. Emily Ignacio, for example, laments the "erasure" of Filipino narratives from both the American and world historiography.[9] Similarly, Victoria Bataclan, the former Philippine ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, notes how the publication of the book *In De Olde Worlde: Views of Filipino Migrants in Europe* is a remarkable achievement for it serves to remediate an apparent "disinterest" in the role of Filipinos in contemporary Europe.[10] One could say that this unenthusiastic appreciation persists despite decades of Filipino presence in many parts of Europe.

Filipino migration to the European continent began in the 1960s, prompted by Europe's need to recover from the war years as well as the need for the expansion of its health sector and tourist industry. The number of migrants increased dramatically beginning in the 1980s. In contemporary times, the bulk of Filipino migrants in Europe can be found in Italy, Spain, and Britain,[11] with

a sizable presence in Germany, Greece, France, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Belgium.[12] The majority of Filipino migrants is composed of a relatively young (21 to 45 years old) and female (about 80 percent) workforce.[13] Equally worth mentioning is the fact that most of them have undergraduate degrees, are highly skilled but underemployed, or are in jobs that are not commensurate to their educational attainment. Their reasons for moving to Europe is the same as their fellow migrant Filipinos, that is, to escape the financial insecurity they experience in the Philippines.

As part of an earlier study on Filipino migrants' contribution to ecclesial life in western Europe, I distributed a brief survey made up of ten open-ended questions with a view to getting a sense of the reality surrounding Filipino migration, as well as Filipino Catholics' ecclesial life, in Europe. I received 77 responses out of 400 survey forms I distributed. The responses came from Filipino Catholics in Antwerp, Brussels, Ieper, Amsterdam, Nice, Paris, Athens, and Barcelona, who provided details on their answers in a follow-up discussion. The survey and follow-up discussion yielded the following snapshot:

1 Their stay in Europe ranges from one to ten years (11–40 years for some), and most are employed as either factory workers, housekeepers, babysitters, hotel supervisors, administrators, accountants, dental assistants, receptionists, caregivers, and teachers.
2 Most have been involved in various roles in their local parish communities for approximately ten years: as community coordinators, council members, lectors, choir members, catechists, collectors, and extraordinary ministers of the Holy Eucharist.
3 Their greatest joy in relation to church life includes: meeting fellow Filipino members, sharing or serving in church, strong commitment and dedication to the church, and their experiences of prayer, love, and respect in church.
4 Their greatest frustration lies in the lack of commitment and unity, as well as gossiping and tardiness that they witness in church.
5 They wish that their local parish community will have unity, acceptance of individual differences, active engagement in the community's mission, growth in number and spirit, and to have their own Filipino chaplaincy or parish.
6 The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is seen as a source comfort, inspiration, joy, and hope as well as a way to become closer to God. The Eucharist itself is highly regarded for its solemnity and as the highest form of prayer.
7 Genuine inculturation entails the use of Filipino language, Filipino priests, and Filipino songs.
8 The impact of Filipino communities includes being shining examples of hospitality, hopefulness, love, unity, creativity, and heartfelt service.
9 Undesirable traits of Filipino communities include passivity, infiltration of perceived negative European traits, jealousy, competition, lack of unity, "crab-mentality," and gossiping.
10 They suggest that both the local community and the Filipino community must be more accepting and tolerant, open-minded, less judgmental, helpful

> toward each other, especially in developing a strong sense of participation and a regular formation program. They also believe that they can extend their involvement to the wider community by: (1) becoming more active in their parishes/dioceses and not only in their respective cultural ghettoes; (2) assisting and supporting fellow migrants no matter what their cultural backgrounds are; and (3) assuming leadership roles in their communities. They envision that Filipino communities will one day become a model of missionary communities.[14]

In 1910, Europe was home to about two-thirds of all Catholics in the world, and nearly nine in ten lived either in Europe (65 percent) or Latin America (24 percent). By 2010, by contrast, only about a quarter of all Catholics (24 percent) were in Europe.[15] As of December 31, 2019, worldwide church figures from the Statistical Yearbook of the Catholic Church showed that only 21.2 percent of the world's Catholics now live in the continent,[16] a number that is heavily propped up by migrants.[17] In post-Christian Europe, there is a decrease in people professing belief in a God and an increase in people veering toward agnosticism. This complex phenomenon provides an opening for Filipino migrants and other ethnic minorities from the Global South to fill the empty pews in western European churches abandoned by their former local occupants. To be sure, and as indicated in a study of the spirituality of Filipino migrants in the Netherlands, the process of secularization has penetrated pockets of Filipino migrants' population in Europe.[18] A great number of them, however, still consider the church as an essential aspect of their life. Externally, at least, this reality is expressed clearly in how Filipino migrant families decorate their houses. Almost always they devote a certain spot in their homes for their religious images and devotional item, which they call "altar."

As already revealed in the abovementioned responses of Filipino migrants, the conspicuous presence of Filipinos in parishes in the West cannot be swept under the rug. However, unlike the USA, where Filipinos are generally actively immersed and involved in parish life, the impact of Filipinos on ecclesial life in western Europe has remained peripheral. This is despite the proliferation of national chaplaincies. It is my contention that this is because they are not yet fully integrated. They continue to be relegated to the fringes. At most, they are generally regarded as auxiliary communities, that are given a special privilege to gather and celebrate liturgies as an ethnic enclave within the premises of the parish on the condition that they do not interfere with the established structure of the local community. They are still generally treated as second-class members of the parish, who can participate actively in the activities of the church but are not given major positions in managing the parish. While class differences may be a factor, Dutch theologian Frans Dokman's point on differences in worldviews as a factor in the distance between native and migrant Catholic churches is important to note, as well. "Most migrants," Dokman argues, "are unable to accept the legalization of abortion, prostitution, euthanasia, soft drugs, and same-sex marriages that are accepted as normal by a majority of the Dutch people."[19]

Nevertheless, like most Filipino migrants, they

> are valued for their respectful English communication skills (*marunong makiusap*), [being] responsible (*responsable*), cheerful disposition (*masayahin*), industriousness (*sipag*), ability to blend in and be a team player (*marunong makisama at lumaro*), creative abilities (*maabilidad*), [being] easily trained or taught (*madaling turuan*), as well as their can-do (*kaya natin ito*) and never-say-never (*susubukan ko po*) attitudes, among others.[20]

They are "soft-power diplomats" armed with the "adaptive spirits … [that] allow them to transcend the acculturative stress caused by the complexities of migrant life."[21] For most Filipino Catholic migrants, their faith and their church form part of their anchor in life.[22]

Saskia Sassen has downplayed the significance of the Filipino Catholic migrants for by pointing out how they are "simply blending in with mainstream … Catholicism."[23] I argue that they contribute to the ecclesial communities where they belong. Filipinos' customary initial attitude is to "get a feel of" (*pakikiramdaman muna*) the people, or the place, and stay on the sideline, or try not to rock the boat, until they have gained a certain level of leverage and are confident they can already freely express and share their ideas and ways of doing things.[24] When they see an opening they start infusing Filipino flavor to the local faith community as they establish a more solid footing. Slowly but surely, they bring into the ecclesial community "their own iconography, music pieces, singing styles, language, homilies, liturgies, priests, nuns, saints, practices, food, drinks, celebrations, holy days, devotions, groups, and reading materials into church leadership, bible studies, and Mass content."[25] As a result, Filipino traditional devotions, such as the *Simbang Gabi,* are now celebrated in the major parishes in western Europe.[26] Pope Francis even presided over this Advent devotion in Rome in the first years of his pontificate. The introduction of these cherished Filipino traditions into Catholic parishes proves that they have the potential to leaven and transform contemporary church life in the continent.

I have seen this growing influence of Filipino Christianity in Western contexts during my years as a chaplain in Brussels and my ongoing involvement with Filipino Catholics in some parts of Europe and the USA. For instance, Patrick Lynch, Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark, England, commends the "deep faith" and "commitment to the family and … loyalty to the Church" of Filipino migrants.[27] Interestingly, even in the midst of the pandemic, several Filipino communities in western Europe have carried on their regular, albeit mostly online, liturgical and paraliturgical activities. Moreover, they continued some of their outreach programs, especially to those who have been severely affected by the global health crisis. Their traditional *Simbang Gabi* devotions were also celebrated in Rome, and in other major cities in Europe, with significant attendance.

Oftentimes, Filipino migrants are not seen for their real worth and potential because they appear to be submissive and "too weak to influence" the mainstream. Nevertheless, beneath what seems to be "weakness" lies what I call

"subversive subservience." In the most inconspicuous way, they assert themselves and infuse Filipino flavor in the western European social and ecclesial landscapes, something akin to what Victorino Cueto refers to as "tactics of the weak."[28] These tactics include, but not limited to, the sphere of gastronomy. People are indoctrinated through their "gastronomic miracles." As Joaquin Gonzales points out these "sensory enticements" are "effective missionary tools."[29]

As indicated in the celebration of *Simbang Gabi* and other Filipino customs and traditions in various parts of the world their missionary impact extends to culture and the liturgy.[30] They have also made their presence felt in both the civic and political spheres. I have been a witness to the many noble endeavors of these "diaspora diplomats" in Europe, as also observed by Gonzales, in the area of charity and social justice.[31] Gonzales describes Filipino migrants' contributions in four ways. First, they play a role in public diplomacy alongside nation-state efforts, particularly in spreading knowledge about Philippine culture, which provides benefits for country of origin and country of destination or settlement. Second, they act not only as diplomats but also as missionaries by spreading and influencing the practice of faith and religion in close to 200 countries. Third, they earn money while transferring business, technical, service, and other skills to recipient states, which allows them to send back money not only for family necessities but nation-state needs, thus reducing dependency from foreign aid and foreign investments. Fourth, they infuse much-needed social, spiritual, organizational, and civic diversity into the multicultural ethnoscape of global cities and communities.[32] It is no surprise, therefore, that John Paul II expressed his conviction that Filipino migrants can serve as a wonderful example for other Catholic faithful.[33]

Sambayanihan: A Filipino BEC in Western Europe

It is my contention, based primarily on my previous study of, as well as ongoing immersion with, Filipino Catholic communities in western Europe that configuring these communities as *sambayanihan* could help them migrate from their peripheral existence to becoming a viable and important presence. This proposal, which is inspired by the four inculturative moments identified by the late bishop Francisco Claver,[34] necessarily entails an inculturative process, which I call "transcultural inculturation." Using the biblical story of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:9–42), Claver argues that inculturative moments entail interculturality and inculturation. He maintains that the process is about not only the ongoing and mutually enriching dialogue between cultures but also the encounter, or dialogue, between the spirit and the particular recipient of the Christian message that goes beyond the limits of culture. Interculturality and inculturation are, therefore, complementary moments. Because the inculturative process is ongoing, I call it "transcultural inculturation." It is an inculturation that continues to evolve as indicated by the prefix "trans." The "mutation" or adaptation is never ending as it continues to interact with its environment.

If I am to give appropriate Filipino metaphors that essentially capture the notion of "transcultural inculturation," they would be the two favorite Filipino dishes, *adobo* and *pancit*, which are cooked in many versions depending on where they are cooked and who cooks them. The different flavors—sweet, sour, salty—tastefully blended, as well as the different ingredients mixed (depending on the region), in every *adobo* represent the fusion of different cultures creatively transformed to embody transculturality. By the same token, the different kinds of noodles and ingredients used for cooking the *pancit* represents the countless permutations of transcultural identities as they reflect, in one plate, a confluence of indigenous, Chinese, and European flairs. Whether it is *canton, lomi, bihon, habhab, palabok, miki*, among others, it is called *pancit*. Together with *adobo, pancit* is a gastronomic feast of multiple ingredients and cultures in one mouthwatering dish, a manifestation of what *metissage*[35] is, a meaningful and wonderful marriage of different cultures.

Provisionally, the theological nomenclature that I give to this prospective contribution of Filipino migrants is *sambayanihan*, an inculturated configuration of the BEC in the context of contemporary Filipino migration. The formation of this contextualized BEC is deemed to be a viable evangelization vehicle that could reshape the landscape of ecclesiology, especially in areas where the "eclipse of God"[36] is profoundly felt.

Sambayanihan contains key elements drawn from Filipino culture and language: *Sam/isa* (oneness), *samba* (worship/religiosity), *bayan* (community), *bayani* (heroism/martyrdom), and *bayanihan* (collaborative endeavor *en via)*. *Bayanihan* also embodies the dialogic, co-responsible, and participative church envisioned by the Second Vatican Council while *anihan* (harvest) reflects the temporal and eschatological harvest.

Sam/isa, or oneness, represents the unity of the Trinity, which serves as the principle of unity of all relationships—between persons, between communities, between the laity and the hierarchy, between the local and universal, among others. It is the unifying factor among the concepts embedded in the term *sambayanihan*. *Samba*, in the meantime, illustrates the role of worship and religiosity as vital aspects of Filipino (migrant) identity. The concept of *sam*, together with *bayan*, is an expression of *communitas*, that is, the church as a community of the people of God united in Christ.

The concept of *bayani*, meanwhile, relates to how OFWs serve as conduits of: (1) evangelization through their witness to their *pananampalataya* (faith), particularly through their religiosity; and (2) soft-power diplomacy through their care for, or service to, one another, the local and global (Filipino) community through diaspora philanthropy, among others. Their liturgies and their food are important instruments in spreading the reign of God in European societies where secularism and individualism are an intense reality.

Bayanihan, in the meantime, flows from the concept of *bayani* and conveys the spirit that animates Filipino migrants' care and service for others, notably fellow Filipinos at home and abroad, as well as the economic, civic, and sociocultural contributions they provide for their countries of destination or

settlement. In this context, *bayanihan* is seen not only as an expression of community, generosity, and solidarity but also as a powerful image of a church in pilgrimage, *en via*, where people are called together as one community to share each other's burdens and, at the same time, enjoy God's blessings together as they hope and strive for individual and collective well-being. As *Lumen gentium* reminds us

> The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name.[37]

Generally speaking, *sambayanihan*, or Filipino diaspora BECs, could serve as effective agents of inculturation because they are in the crucible of the universal church. They are caught in the crosscurrents of cultures and inhabit liminal spaces. Their God talk, liturgical celebrations, and the structures of their ecclesial communities straddle several cultures. *Sambayanihan* communities approximate Claver's "essential definition of BECs," that is, "worshipping communities of faith-discernment and action at the lowest levels of the church that try, in a participatory way and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to put life and faith together into an integrated whole."[38] In a sense, Filipino migrant communities in western Europe are on the way toward being evangelized and evangelizing members of the Catholic Church who are spreading, in their own little but significant ways, the Christian virtues of love, justice, and mercy in a dialogical, participatory, and co-responsible way. They are not just exercising their identity as economic migrants whose desire is to improve the quality of life of their families but are also treading the path of mission as they share their narratives of history and theology "in their own tongues" and as they celebrate their cherished liturgies that express hybridity and globality through a creative confluence of religious and cultural influences. Their presence and practice of *pananampalataya* creates a space for faith in the midst of the so-called eclipse of God. They are, to borrow Filipino American theologian Eleazar Fernandez's description of the church in a globalized world, "burning centers" of faith with/amid "porous borders,"[39] as they continue to reach out to and welcome others with the hospitality and generosity of the stranger.

The FCCC offers us glimpses of the ecclesiological concept, that is, *sambayanihan* that I am proposing here. The regular Sunday routine of this group includes Mass with the English-speaking community, socialization with other members of the parish, recitation of the rosary, praise and worship, Bible-sharing or testimonials, preaching of an ordained minister, business meeting or discussion of community concerns, and thanksgiving accompanied by monetary offering that goes to the needs of the community and other charitable works.

My personal encounter and knowledge of this particular ecclesial community have been deepened through the Masses, retreats, pilgrimages, and outreach programs that I have been privileged to be part of. I have learned that this

group does not only exist to worship but also to help each other in various aspects of life in the best way they could amid their limitations and human foibles. The members also endeavor to reach out to the wider community by being part of the English-speaking parish in Brussels. In this parish, they actively participate in the liturgical activities by being members of the choir, serving as lectors and acolytes, among others. They also regularly volunteer to prepare coffee and other refreshments that are served after every celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the aforementioned community in Brussels. The relationship of the members with the wider parish community and other migrant communities proves that this community is not an inward-looking religious ghetto.

What makes the presence of Christ even more palpable in this particular community are the discussions and actual works that they do that have personal, communal, and national/international implications. In their own simple way, they try to help the members in resolving issues on marriage, employment, migration, and the like. They also do their best in reaching out to those afflicted by natural and human-made calamities in the Philippines and in Belgium. The money that they collect in their regular offering and Christmas fundraising goes to the community's fund for activities and outreach programs, such as helping poor communities in the Philippines, sponsoring meals at the Missionary of Charity that feeds the homeless people in Brussels, and other forms of aid to fellow migrants. It also needs to be mentioned that they have members who are non-Filipinos. Moreover, as a genuine Filipino ecclesial community, the *gawain* is not complete without the table fellowship wherein Filipino dishes are served. From time to time, especially during their anniversary celebrations, they would have an inculturated/Filipino Mass. In doing so this community illustrates the three typologies of BECs that Claver has underlined: liturgical, developmental, and liberative.[40]

Pagpipiging and Pagsasalu-salo: Marks and Paths of the Sambayanihan

In classic ecclesiology there is a well-known description of the church in terms of its four marks: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Similarly, Vatican II's ecclesiology, particularly as laid out in *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), is characterized by the understanding of the church as the pilgrim people of God. It is in the spirit of such ecclesiological reflections that I offer here two possible features of *sambayanihan* that could be pursued by Filipino migrants themselves and those who minister to them, especially in the area of liturgy, as part of the process of inculturation.

The first is *salu-salo*. The term literally means eating together. It refers to a shared meal such as a banquet. It is used here to refer to familial meal-sharing. *Salu-salo* is a permanent feature in every Filipino gathering. No Filipino gathering is complete unless a meal, no matter how simple it is, is shared by everyone. It is a hallmark of Filipino hospitality. As Jimmy Belita maintains, hospitality is a question of life and death for Filipinos.[41] It is more than just welcoming guests to one's home. It is about offering the visitor food, even if the

food is not enough. Hosts are ready to sacrifice their hunger just to offer something to the guest. In this context, it is not unusual that the first words uttered by Filipinos in welcoming a visitor is *kain tayo* (roughly translated as "let's eat") or *kumain ka na ba* (have you eaten). The greeting can also be used in connection with drinking, that is, *inom tayo*[42] ("let us drink"). Expected or not, invited or not, a visitor is always welcome to join the meal if they come during mealtime.[43]

The meal is so central to the Filipino way of life that it is considered vital in forging relationships and cementing friendships. A meal, according to Leonardo Mercado, "is the pleasure of food and company."[44] Thus, Filipinos are generally willing to share the food that they have, no matter how scarce it may be, to their guest even to the point of sacrificing one's share, just to make the guest feel welcome. It can even be said that the company of the guest takes precedence. For this reason, the Filipino host often makes sure that guests have their fill before they eat.

In the Filipino worldview, a meal is regarded not only as a sign of friendship and unity among the living but also as a sign of communion with the dead.[45] Big meals are prepared at the end of a novena for the departed, on the 40th day after death, and on the death anniversary. According to Mercado, "veneration for the departed ancestors has been the core of Filipino religion because the departed are believed to take interest in the living and also to have intercessory powers with God."[46] *Fiesta* is the expression *par excellence* of Filipino hospitality and love for the meal. Although fiesta started as a religious event related to the annual patronal feast day that is celebrated with Holy Mass and religious procession, it has become a family affair (family reunions) and the primary event for strengthening friendship where the whole *barangay* (village) or town is involved.[47]

A second possible mark, or distinguishing feature, of *sambayanihan* is *tagay*. *Tagay* is another Filipino trait that is related to the notion of fellowship, specifically with the act of drinking together. It is normally understood by Filipinos as an occasion for fellowship as they enjoy a drink—oftentimes an alcoholic drink—by sharing or drinking from the same glass as a seal and symbol of friendship and communion. While the practice may look unhygienic to the outsider, the meaning that it carries speaks volumes. It is considered as a sign of true solidarity because, with it, they share each other's saliva and run the risk of sharing bacteria, as well. In Filipino perspective it is the real test of unity and trust. They become part of one another as they partake of the same drink from the same glass as Jesus did with his disciples at the Last Supper.

Indeed, the practice is the essence of sharing the same chalice in the context of the celebration of the Holy Mass. By sharing the same cup, Christians share each other's life and suffering. Whenever Christians do it, they show their willingness and boldness to suffer with one another as Christ did for us. *Tagay* implies that members of the group, in this case the *sambayanihan*, should never shy away from the challenges, sacrifices, and risks involved in following the way of Christ and in being part of each other's life. It is about co-responsibility, which is the essence of *damayan* (helping each other) or *bayanihan*.

Conclusion

Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher talk about "shifting the border" in theologizing on migration.[48] In a sense, this chapter is an exercise of venturing into the uncharted territories of theologizing, that Gruber and Rettenbacher proposed in reflecting on contemporary migration, as it mapped the context, markers, and trajectories of *sambayanihan* as a Filipino ecclesiology of migration. Clearly, *sambayanihan* is not a panacea. It could, however, serve as a viable option for Filipinos in diaspora, who exhibit a veritable amount of religiosity while, contestably, remaining in the peripheries. By becoming *sambayanihan*, Filipino migrants' faith communities could make their presence and contributions felt. With proper formation and pastoral accompaniment, they can become evangelized and evangelizing communities in the contemporary Western European landscape as they foster Christian values among themselves, in society, and with other faith communities. By becoming *sambayanihan* communities, they could "migrate" from simply being an economic workforce to becoming Christian ambassadors in a continent where the "eclipse of God" is profoundly felt. As arguably a new way of being church among Filipino Catholics in Western Europe, this ecclesial configuration can be thought of as a unity of worshipping community (The People of God) of Filipino hero-martyrs in active, participatory, and co-responsible journey with one another and with other communities, aimed at building communities with liturgical (priestly), developmental (kingly), and liberative (prophetic) thrust modeled in the Trinitarian communion.

Notes

1 See Regine Cabato, "For Filipino Migrant Workers Coronavirus Dashes Their Ticket to a Better Life," *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2020, https://tinyurl.com/ybf8zunj
2 The tendency to use resilience as an excuse to absolve civil leaders of their accountability and responsibility must be noted here. See Abu Al-Rasheed Tanggol, "Challenging the Narrative of Filipino Resiliency," *Rappler*, November 18, 2020, www.rappler.com/voices/imho/opinion-challenging-narrative-filipino-resiliency
3 Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *The New People Next Door: Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 55*, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization Forum, Pattaya, Thailand, September 29–October 5, 2004, www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/LOP55_IG26.pdf
4 Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, *Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons: Pastoral Guidelines*, no. 91 (Vatican City, 2013).
5 Luigi Sabbarese, "Pastoral Care for and among Migrants: A Plea for 'Catholic Diversity' within the Church," in *Flight and Migration: Between Homelessness and Hospitality*, eds Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon City: Claretian, 2020), 210.
6 I was physically involved with these communities from 2001–2018, even serving as *ad interim* chaplain for the chaplaincy in Brussels in 2015–2016. Despite my physical absence since my return to the Philippines in 2018, I have kept in touch with these communities through regular online formation sessions and recollections, not to mention the online Masses I celebrate with them even during the pandemic.

7 The chapter's structure is based on a contextualized version of Cardijn's See–Judge–Act methodology, which is based on the stages of my involvement with the said communities. The contextualized methodological moments that inform the key parts of the chapter are not absolute discrete events but rather instances that organically flow into each other. I have written about this in detail elsewhere. See Rowan Lopez Rebustillo, "*Sambayanihan*: From Economic Migration to Soft-Power Evangelization: Towards a Trans-disciplinary and Trans-colonial Inquiry into the Impact of Filipino Catholic Communities in Diaspora," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2018.
8 Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 1, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html
9 Emily Noelle Ignacio, *Building Diaspora: Filipino Community Formation on the Internet* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 49.
10 Victoria Bataclan, "Preface," in *In De Olde Worlde: Views of Filipino Migrants in Europe*, ed. Filomenita Mongaya Høgsholm (Quezon City: Philippine Social Science Council, 2007), 6–7.
11 Christina Boswell and Andrew Geddes, *Migration and Mobility in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 4.
12 Ildefonso Bagasao, "Filipinos in Europe: An Economic Profile," in *In De Olde Worlde: Views of Filipino Migrants in Europe*, ed. Filomenita Mongaya Høgsholm (Quezon City: Philippine Social Science Council, 2007), 29–30.
13 Bagasao, "Filipinos in Europe," 30. It must be noted that, in addition to the countries aforementioned, smaller pockets of Filipinos are living in other countries of the European Union and in Scandinavia.
14 Rebustillo, "*Sambayanihan*," 493–497.
15 See "The Global Catholic Population," *Pew Research Center*, February 13, 2013, www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/
16 Carol Glatz, "Vatican Statistics Show Continued Growth in Number of Catholics Worldwide," *National Catholic Reporter*, March 26, 2021, www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-statistics-show-continued-growth-number-catholics-worldwide
17 See Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
18 Rico Palaca Ponce, "Spirituality and Quality of Life: An Empirical-Theological Exploration among Filipino Migrants in the Netherlands," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2006.
19 Frans Dokman, "Europe and the World: World Christianity and the Transformation of Christianity in the Netherlands," in *World Christianity: Perspectives and Insights*, eds Jonathan Tan and Ahn Tran (New York: Orbis, 2016), 73.
20 Joaquin Jay Gonzales III, *Filipino American Faith in Action: Immigration, Religion, and Civic Engagement* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 30.
21 Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 182.
22 See Mary Grace Betsayda, *"Bahala Na Ang Dios" ("Leave it to God"): The Church's Role in the Socialization of Filipinos in the Greater Toronto Area* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010).
23 Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 45.
24 Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 45.
25 Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 45.
26 Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 102.
27 Gonzales, *Filipino American Faith in Action*, 100.
28 Victorino Cueto, "Tactics of the Weak: A Critical Appropriation of Everyday Resistance with Michel de Certeau—Towards a Theology of Everyday Life," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2011.

29 Joaquin Jay Gonzales III, *Diaspora Diplomacy: Philippine Migration and Its Soft Power Influences* (Minneapolis, MN: Mill City Press, 2012), 56–58.
30 See Chapter 3 in this volume.
31 Gonzales, *Diaspora Diplomacy*, 114.
32 Gonzales, *Diaspora Diplomacy*, 246.
33 Gonzales, *Diaspora Diplomacy*, 134.
34 Francisco Claver, *The Making of a Local Church* (Quezon City: Claretian, 2009), 116.
35 Donald Cuccioletta, "Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship," *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17 (2001/2002): 1–11.
36 See Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).
37 Paul VI, *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 12, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html
38 Claver, *The Making of a Local Church*, 91.
39 See Eleazar Fernandez, *Burning Center, Porous Borders: The Church in a Globalized World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011).
40 Claver, *The Making of a Local Church*, 133–135.
41 Jimmy A. Belita, "A Filipino Eucharist? A Theological Reflection on the Misa Ng. Bayang Pilipino in the Light of a Tillichian Sacramentology," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1983.
42 Leonardo Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology* (Tacloban: Divine Word University, 1975), 177–178.
43 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 177.
44 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 177.
45 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 177.
46 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 177.
47 Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, 177.
48 See Judith Gruber and Sigrid Rettenbacher, eds, *Migration as Sign of the Times: Towards a Theology of Migration* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

3 Popular Piety in Migrant Journeys toward Redemption

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Introduction

As early as May each year, Bicolanos[1] in Norwich, England, become very busy preparing for the fiesta (feast) of Our Lady of Peñafrancia, the patroness of Bicolandia. They were especially excited in 2020 because it was the tenth year since they had the first Peñafrancia fiesta in Norwich. They lined up several events and activities to make that year's fiesta extra special. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, struck down all their plans. The group was downcast—but only for a moment. They resolved that they would not allow the lockdowns and restrictions imposed by the pandemic to hinder them from honoring their beloved *Ina* (mother), especially on a very special year. They decided to bring the celebration online via the Zoom platform. The novena prayers prior to the feast day and the solemn Mass on the feast day itself were held via Zoom. The result was beyond their expectation. Not only were they able to fulfill their vow to the Virgin of Peñafrancia to mark her feast day in a special way, they were able to gather as many devotees online as they would have if it were an in-person celebration.

Deeply embedded in Filipinos is their affiliation to popular religiosity,[2] in particular their devotion to Mary, religious drama, and Christmas traditions. Not surprisingly, these popular religious practices are an important part of their life in the various parts of the world where they are scattered. Indeed, these popular religious customs and traditions have crossed borders without the formality of a visa and have surfaced in towns and cities across the world where Filipinos in diaspora live temporarily or permanently. These religious practices are varied, but, in all of them, the spirit of community, ethnic identity, and the ritual of tradition are manifest.

This chapter investigates the role and significance of popular piety in Filipino migrants' quest for redemption. It begins with an exploration of the key expressions of popular religious practices among Filipino migrants, particularly the *Simbang Gabi* and devotions to Mary and the Infant Jesus, followed by critical reflections on key themes that underpin the practices: religio-cultural symbols, separation and fragmentation, and the journey toward redemption. The chapter contends that the liberating potential of popular piety in the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-5

context of Filipino migration lies in the spaces it provides for living out one's identity more meaningfully, fostering integration amid the fragmentation that characterizes migration in contemporary times, and, consequently, in working toward redemption.

Filipino Traditions Crossing National Borders

Popular religious practices are an essential element in the practice of the Christian faith among Filipino migrants. Besides filling up empty churches in the West and congregating in private houses for group prayer in the Middle East, Filipino migrants bring along with them popular religious devotions with which they grew up with as Catholics in the Philippines. Initially unacquainted and unfamiliar with the formal rubrics, plainchant music, and foreign language with which liturgies in their host countries are conducted, they seek ways to make their personal and communal prayer life more meaningful. As they did back home in the Philippines, they resort to their novenas and rosaries, pray to the statues of their favorite patron saints, and organize the usual fiestas for them. It is to some of the notable expressions of these distinctively Filipino popular religious traditions that find their way into the host parishes and dioceses of Filipino migrants in various parts of the world that this chapter now turns.

Devotions around the Liturgical Calendar: The *Simbang Gabi*

The most attended and, perhaps, most anticipated among the Filipino popular religious traditions is the *Simbang Gabi,* the nine-day novena Masses in preparation for Christmas Day. The origins of *Simbang Gabi* can be traced back to 1668, when religious missionaries brought the practice to the Philippines from Mexico. In the Philippines, these novena Masses are usually celebrated around four o'clock in the morning on December 16–24.[3] Thus, they are also called dawn Masses or *Misa de Gallo*, Spanish for "Rooster's Mass," since the rooster's crow is traditionally associated with the dawning of a new day. The traditional dawn schedule for the *Simbang Gabi* in the Philippines is believed to have originated from priests from the Spanish period who agreed to hold the dawn Masses so that farmers could hear Mass before they set off to work in the fields. Whether in the past or present, and despite the cold December air, churches across the country are usually packed, with mass-goers even overflowing to the church grounds. Hence, some parishes add another Mass at 3 a.m. or 5 a.m. to accommodate the people. In recent years, the practice of having *Simbang Gabi* in the evenings (7 p.m. or 8 p.m.) on December 15–23 is becoming increasingly popular, especially in urban areas. After these Masses, parishioners are treated to coffee and *pandesal* (local bread) or hot porridge. Local delicacies are also on sale like *puto bumbong, suman, biko*, and other varieties of rice cakes. These are best enjoyed with hot drinks like coffee or chocolate.

It is beyond the imagination of non-Filipinos, especially in the West, to get out of bed at three in the morning in the middle of a cold and dark winter night. But Filipinos do just that. In the Parish of St. Isidore in Bloomingdale, Illinois, for example, the *Misa de Gallo* is also held at 4 a.m.! They bring along their half-awake children, some of whom were born in the USA and who, hence, speak English rather than Filipino. Whether as dawn Masses or evening Masses, the *Simbang Gabi* is a popular religious tradition that makes Christmas truly Filipino. The significance of the *Simbang Gabi* in the faith life of Filipino migrants is recognized by church leaders in host countries as they preside over the *Simbang Gabi* in their respective dioceses. Washington archbishop Wilton Gregory presided at a *Simbang Gabi* on December 23, 2019, at St. Columba Church in Oxon Hill, Maryland. Wilton led a standing-room congregation of about 600 people, including many families with children in the parish that has the largest population of Filipino Catholics in the Archdiocese of Washington. St. Columba's pastor, Father Gary Villanueva, who is a native of the Philippines, estimates that about two-thirds of the members of that parish of 1,400 households have roots in the Philippines.[4]

Pope Francis himself presided over the first *Simbang Gabi* of 2019 at St. Peter's Basilica on December 15, 2019.[5] With over 100 priests concelebrating and thousands of Filipinos in attendance, the *Gaudete* Sunday Mass was distinctively Filipino, with Filipino hymns sung and the first readings proclaimed in Filipino. That *Simbang Gabi* was a historic event in that it was the first ever *Simbang Gabi* held at St. Peter's Basilica and the first *Simbang Gabi* presided by a pope. In his homily, the pope noted how, in recent decades, the devotion has crossed national borders and has landed in many other countries, thanks to Filipino migrants.[6]

Other devotions connected to the liturgical season are those that are held during Lent or Holy Week. These include the *Via Crucis* (Way of the Cross), *Pabasa* (chanting of the Passion narrative), *Visita Iglesia* (visitation of churches), and *Salubong* (Encounter of the Risen Christ and His Mother).

Devotions to Jesus: The *Sinulog*

Next to the *Simbang Gabi* in popularity is the *Sinulog* fiesta celebration in honor of the *Santo Niño* (Infant Jesus) on the third Sunday of January. The *Sinulog* fiesta is held mainly in Cebu City, Philippines, which is recognized as the cradle of Christianity in the country as it was there that the Filipinos' first encounter with the Christian faith happened. The revered image of the *Santo Niño* is believed to be the baptismal gift of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan to the wife of Rajah Humabon, who was baptized as Queen Juana. The image is said to have survived fires as it remained untouched despite the church being burned to the ground. Devotees believe in its miraculous power, and they invoke the help of the *Santo Niño* by performing the traditional Sinulog dance whenever they visit the shrine of *Santo Niño* in downtown Cebu City. Hence, the *Santo Niño* is as much a religious as it is a historical symbol.

Just like the *Simbang Gabi*, it traces its roots back to the beginnings of Christianity in the Philippines.

In various parts of the world where there is a Filipino community, the *Sinulog* fiesta in honor of the *Santo Niño* is celebrated with much festivity and revelry. In the United Kingdom, for example, the fiesta evolved into an archdiocesan celebration of the Archdiocese of Southwark from simply an event within the Scalabrini mission chapel in Brixton Road, London.[7] Similarly in Norwich, the capital city of England's Norfolk region, the Sinulog celebration started in 2011 only within the Filipino community there. The event was organized by the Cebuanos and Visayan-speaking group, but all the Filipino Catholics were invited. Then, in 2013, Filipino communities from neighboring towns of Ipswich, Kings Lynn, and Bury St. Edmunds started joining in. Hence, the *Sinulog* fiesta became a diocesan celebration with delegations from various other parts of the Norfolk region, or diocese of east Anglia participating in the celebration held in St. John Roman Catholic Cathedral. The celebration begins with the dancing of the *Sinulog* around the cathedral prior to the Holy Mass. After the Mass, the people then transfer to a venue where fellowship, program, games, and a Sinulog dance competition are held.

In Switzerland, where there are separate chaplaincies serving the French-speaking Geneva area and German-speaking Fribourg area, the Filipino communities come together in one big joint celebration of the *Sinulog* fiesta every third Sunday of January.[8] In Milan, where there are ten Filipino communities under the umbrella of the Pastoral Council for Filipino Catholics in Milan, it is the Filipino Catholic Community of Santo Niño de Cebu that organizes the annual *Sinulog* festival. They invite all the Filipinos in Milan and in the Lombardy region. According to Fr. Sonny de Armas, chaplain of the San Tomasso Filipino Community, a grand *Sinulog* festival in the Vatican to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines was initially planned for January 2021. However, the continuing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to settle for a much simpler celebration in Milan.

Devotions to Mary: Our Lady of Peñafrancia Fiesta

An equally well celebrated popular religious practice among Filipinos, especially among the Bicolanos, is the Peñafrancia fiesta in honor of Our Lady of Peñafrancia, patroness of the Bicol region. The center of the Peñafrancia fiesta is Naga City in the province of Camarines Sur, where the miraculous image of Peñafrancia is enshrined. The Peñafrancia fiesta is a week-long celebration that begins with the *Traslación* procession, or the transfer of the Peñafrancia image from her shrine to the Naga Metropolitan Cathedral where the novena is held. A week later, on the third Saturday of September, the image is brought back from the cathedral to the shrine through a fluvial procession in the Naga River. This fluvial procession is the highlight of the Peñafrancia fiesta and is held with much grandeur and solemnity. Hence, it is the fluvial procession that is replicated in various parts of the world where migrant Bicolanos organize a

Peñafrancia fiesta. This is done at London's Thames River, Norwich's Wroxham Broads, Dublin's River Liffey, Sydney's Silverwater River, and various other places where Bicolanos have migrated.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Bicolanos in Norwich were looking forward to, and preparing for, a special celebration of the Peñafrancia fiesta in Norwich in September 2020 to mark the tenth anniversary of the devotion in Norwich. The pandemic, however, prevented them from gathering even in small groups to hold the celebration. Unhindered by the government-imposed lockdowns, the Bicolano organizers used online platforms to conduct the novenas and the feast-day Mass. In fact, the Mass presider led the Mass from the Philippines with a face-to-face congregation while the UK-based devotees joined from Norwich. They made use of Zoom to gather online and hold the annual fiesta in honor of the patroness of Bicolandia. Similar to the previous years' celebrations, devotees from nearby towns and regions of the United Kingdom joined them for the annual fiesta.

Two other popular Marian religious traditions, the *Flores de Mayo* and *Santacruzan* devotions, are noteworthy to mention here. The *Flores de Mayo* is a Marian devotion which consists of praying the rosary, reciting prayers, singing hymns, and offering flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is usually combined with the *Santacruzan* or procession in honor of the Finding of the True Cross of Christ. The *Santacruzan* features girls and young women dressed as queens to represent the queens invited by Queen Helena and her son, Prince Constantine, in the fourth century to honor the Cross of Christ. These events are held in May which is summertime in the Philippines and spring in the West. Among migrant Filipinos, these events are another perfect chance to gather in a mix of religious practice and social fellowship. With a favorable spring weather, barbeque parties following the *Flores de Mayo* and *Santacruzan* are common.

Digging Deeper: Popular Piety from Liberationist and Pastoral Perspectives

For a long time, even within the Catholic tradition where the practice is more common, popular religiosity has been at best ignored and at worst dismissed and discouraged (rightfully so in some cases),[9] especially by social and religious elites, as it was traditionally associated with the unlettered masses, magic, superstition, and religious ignorance which had somehow not been "christianized." Ernest Henau thinks that this is because as a religion that is (1) lived and experienced; (2) not expressed in formulas; and (3) transmitted by means of other forms, popular religiosity leads to insights and intuitions that cannot be adequately contained within the framework of formulated logic. It can, therefore, be easily dismissed as subjective and emotive, attributes that are downplayed in mainstream theology, which is highly rational and logical.[10]

The Second Vatican Council, the irruption of the poor in history and, with it, the rise of liberationist theologies, brought a marked shift in looking at popular religiosity from an elitist to a more pastoral perspective. The Second

Plenary Council of the Philippines itself called for a renewal of popular piety. While cautioning about the possibility of these practices becoming "distortions of religion" or remaining "at the level of superficial forms of worship"[11] and advocating for their critical use, e.g., making sure Catholicism "does not become saint or Mary-centered but that it always remains Christ-centered" and "lead to the liturgy," the Council insists on their value and significance.[12] "These religious practices," the Council maintains,

> are rich in values. They manifest a thirst for God and enable people to be generous and sacrificing in witnessing to their faith … show a deep awareness of the attributes of God … engender attitudes of patience, the sense of the Cross in daily life, detachment, openness to others, devotion.[13]

This perspective is discernible when one digs deeper into the role and meaning of popular religious practices in the life of Filipino migrants.

From Separation to Integration

A cursory look at the websites of Philippine embassies and consulates in various countries show photos of Filipino migrants happily gathering in various socio-civic and religious events in their respective countries. Most of these embassy or consulate-sponsored activities are formal events, such as the Independence Day celebration, the induction of officers of Filipino communities, and a welcome for a new ambassador or consul. In their personal Facebook pages, Filipino migrants post photos of informal social gatherings such as birthday or baptismal parties, domestic and local travels, summer barbeque parties or even *inuman* (drinking sessions) among friends and relatives. These activities reveal that somehow many Filipino migrants, especially those who have lived abroad for some time, have found ways to actively engage in socio-civic activities. The fact that some could travel and go on holidays also means that they have learned to set aside time and funds for leisure.

What these photos do not show, however, are the real challenges that Filipino migrants face, regardless of the length of their stay abroad, their job or profession, or their religious affiliation. Elsewhere, I cited the findings of some earlier studies that Filipino migrants "have to endure the pain of being physically and emotionally separated from their loved ones. This separation actually results in some form of identity and crisis of selfhood characterized by fragmentation and incoherence."[14] The departure of one or both parents to work abroad transforms the traditional household into a transnational household, and overseas Filipino workers try to maintain their psycho-emotional connection through the iconic *balikbayan* boxes that have become the symbol of Filipino migrants. These *balikbayan* boxes and cash remittances give them "a sense of minimal continuity with their previous setting in life prior to migration as they strive to develop and negotiate new and competing senses of personhood."[15] To ease their emotional displacement and disconnection, Filipino migrants make

use of digital means of communication like Viber, Facebook, and Messenger. These modern means of connection establish the migrants' virtual co-presence in their transnational households.

Depending on where they are, Filipino migrants face varying challenges with regard to practicing their Catholic faith. In more restrictive countries in the Middle East, Filipinos have to endure months or years without the sacraments. They are not allowed to carry religious symbols such as rosaries or Bibles, even in their personal belongings. Prayer-group gatherings are held inside tightly closed rooms in staff houses. On the other hand, in countries like Korea and Japan, Filipino migrant workers are easily attracted and recruited to any of the numerous Christian sects and denominations, mostly of the charismatic persuasion, because of their lively worship and, at times, monetary benefits. In the West, newly arrived Filipino migrants are surprised to see huge and magnificent churches left empty or turned into museums and tourist destinations. As they settle into their host country, they enjoy the socioeconomic benefits of their new immigrant status yet find themselves struggling to shield themselves and their children from the dominant secularist and materialistic mentality.[16]

In all of these varied settings, the common element is the readiness of many Filipino migrants to take an active role in the parishes where they belong. Many begin by signing up for the cleaning rota, Sunday tea and coffee groups, choir, or the lectors' rota. Then, when they have become more confident as parishioners and when they feel that their presence is appreciated, they begin to join meetings of pastoral councils and be elected as officers. The welcoming disposition of the parish and of the diocese is crucial in the Filipino migrants' integration into their host community. Where there has been a long history of migration, dioceses have set up chaplaincies and permanent diocesan commission attending to the specific needs of migrants. The Mission Catholique Philippine in Geneva, Switzerland, began in 1994 with Sister Olivia Racinez, WCW ministering to all Filipinos in Switzerland as chaplain.[17] In the Archdiocese of Washington, pastoral care for migrants fall under the Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach, which "supports the apostolic works of the Archdiocese of Washington in its evangelization, planning, coordination, ministry and outreach to the various racial, ethnic, and cultural diverse communities within its pastoral care."[18] Furthermore, this office organizes and supports "ethnic festivals, neighborhood celebrations, intercultural conferences and dialogue, workshops, special liturgies, pilgrimages and public devotions—such as the living stations of the cross, *El Señor de los Milagros* procession, and Walk with Mary," all of us which aim "to bring hope and healing to a world that too often sees others as strangers and not neighbors."[19]

Indeed, besides contributing their time and services to their host parishes, Filipino migrants have greatly enriched parish life with the Filipino religious traditions that they introduce to the parish. Many are fortunate to find themselves in dioceses and parishes that are sensitive to the specific needs of migrants for hospitality and integration. However, it is the popular religious practices such as novenas, devotions, processions, and pilgrimages that exercise

a powerful influence in Filipino migrants' search for wholeness and coherence even as they struggle to make ends meet for their families back home. The power of popular piety lies in its rootedness in the migrants' native culture and current reality as well as in its capacity to tap simultaneously into the archetypal symbols of the faith and into the depths of migrants' spiritual yearnings. Hence, through the constant practice of these popular religious traditions, Filipino migrants are able to negotiate the challenging transition from separation and fragmentation to integration and mission.

Engaging Religio-cultural Symbols

What draws Filipino migrants to the annual *Simbang Gabi* is the deep longing to have a feel and taste of *Paskong Pinoy* or Filipino Christmas amid the cold and dark winter in the West. *Paskong Pinoy* concretely means *parol* (star shaped lanterns), *puto bumbong* (rice cake), carolling, *Simbang Gabi*, and for *noche buena*, sweet-tasting spaghetti, *keso de bola*, and *hamon*, or in the absence of these, barbeque (grilled chopped pork in skewers) and *pritong lumpia* (spring rolls). The fellowship among themselves, enlivened by Filipino music and Filipino food, gives migrant Filipinos a sense of home—a deep connection to their roots back home even as they begin to strike roots in their newfound land. Within the worshipping community that practices popular piety, Filipino migrants feel they belong, and from within their person, they feel a sense of wholeness and connectedness with their fellow Filipino migrants, with their families at home, and with their adoptive community of migrants. As Peter Williams asserts, the symbols of popular religion serve to address the immediate needs of those who engage them, something which the official rituals of the "big tradition" could not satisfactorily fill in.[20] In the case of migrant Filipinos, it is the need for an anchor especially during the uncertain transition phase of familiarizing themselves with the new context and culture into the more stable and secure period of settling down as permanent residents or naturalized citizens.

Elements of popular religiosity are not simply religious but are also cultural symbols. In engaging these symbols, migrant Filipinos uprooted from their native land seek to maintain connectedness with their own culture even as they redefine it in their new context. The Peñafrancia fiesta is one such example. In the Philippines, the various parts of the celebration are held in different venues, and it is extended over one week: novena and Masses in the church, procession in the river, and fellowship in homes. In London, however, due to the hectic schedules of the devotees, many of whom juggle two or three jobs even on Sundays, everything has to happen in one afternoon in a rented boat that cruises the river Thames for a good three hours: the novena prayers, the Mass, the fellowship, the planning for the next year's celebration. London's one-afternoon Peñafrancia fiesta is celebrated with the same fervor and devotion as Naga's week-long Peñafrancia fiesta, restructured to adapt to the concrete exigencies of migrant Filipinos in London. The same is true for the *Simbang Gabi*. Whereas it is still overwhelmingly held at dawn across the Philippines, most Filipino

communities overseas do it in the evening, especially in the northern hemisphere where the wintry weather may impact attendance. Other factors such as the more urban lifestyle and, in particular, the realities and challenges of (im) migrant life, account for the change in the Mass time. Many may need to sleep in as they work, or socialize, at night, while others who juggle two or more jobs may already be at work at dawn. Some may simply not have the energy to attend a *Simbang Gabi* if it is held at dawn as they work long hours.

For Pope Francis, culture is "a dynamic reality which a people constantly recreates; each generation passes on a whole series of ways of approaching different existential situations to the next generation, which must in turn reformulate it as it confronts its own challenges."[21] From being recipients of these cultural symbols, Filipino migrants become active agents of recreating these symbols as they adapt them into their new cultural settings.[22] These symbols, thus, are spaces within which they can create and recreate themselves and build their new identities. Worshipping God with and through these symbols,

> reflects—in form and content—the world it is in. When life is hectic, the liturgy is also shaped in a hectic, sometimes even aggressive and provocative, fashion. If life is provisional, looking for something, then liturgy will be a peregrination … The world that comes up in worship is not at all abstract, but presents its members' life and struggle in all its crudeness.[23]

As Filipino migrants translate the gift of faith in accordance with their new setting in life, they give witness to the faith even as they grow stronger in it. They enrich it with new and eloquent expressions. Thus, through popular piety, Filipino migrants spontaneously exercise their self-evangelizing and missionary activity.[24]

Further to their rootedness in the dynamism of culture and their adaptability to the concrete realities of Filipinos migrants, popular religious traditions draw their power from the embodiedness or physicality in practicing them. One needs to kiss the *bambino* (baby Jesus) or touch the statue of the Peñafrancia. One has to dance during the *Sinulog* procession. One has to feel the cold December air and taste the *puto bumbong* during the *Misa de Gallo*. As Pope Francis points out, popular piety "discovers and expresses that content more by way of symbols than by discursive reasoning."[25] Its way of communicating and expressing the meaning of the faith is more verbal and gestural than cognitive and cerebral. For Nathan Mitchell, the physicality and embodiedness of popular piety reminds us that we access the mystery of God through our bodies because "the body maps our access to God."[26] More than abstract dogmas and complex doctrines, popular religiosity, through its concrete expressions in statues, images, songs, and dances, illustrates the incarnational principle that is at the heart of the church's sacramental theology.

The physical participation required in the practice of popular religiosity symbolizes the total commitment of Filipino migrants to the Catholic faith, which they practice with zeal and dedication. Once they have integrated into

their host parishes, Filipino migrants cease to become mere recipients of the goodwill of their receiving parish but themselves become active participants in the life of the parish. Almost all of the popular religious traditions include a procession, either by land such as the *Santacruzan* or by water as in the case of the *Peñafrancia* fluvial procession. These processions very well symbolize the Filipino migrants' journey from isolation to communion and from fragmentation to integration. Having then achieved integration, they feel a sense of redemption, of having surmounted the obstacles that hinder migrants from living a meaningful life away from their homeland. For many, it is an uphill journey very much like the *Peñafrancia* fluvial procession that sails upstream the Naga River from downtown Naga to the foot of Mount Isarog where the Virgin's shrine is. The *Salubong* procession at the break of dawn on Easter Sunday is another powerful symbol of the migrant Filipinos' journey from the darkness of isolation and separation to the light of communion and integration.

Migrants as Agents of Their Own Redemption

The popular religious traditions that recall the Passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord are especially powerful in symbolizing migrant Filipinos' passage from the initial pains of being separated from their families and uprooted from their familiar surroundings to the hardships of settling into a new country with a very different culture and language, and to finding new friends and a welcoming community. The *Black Nazarene* of Quiapo, the *Santo Intierro* (Holy Sepulchre) and other images and traditions that illustrate the scenes of the Passion of our Lord "serve as concrete visual and tangible representations through which migrants can mirror their own heroic sacrifice for their loved ones."[27] In the Lenten popular religious traditions, migrant Filipinos identify themselves with Jesus Christ who sacrificed his own life for the redemption of humankind. He is the *bayani*, the hero who was not only born into the margins of society but was also an exile himself. He surrendered everything, including his own life, for the sake of those he loves.[28] In Jesus's kenotic spirituality of redemptive self-sacrifice for the good of others, migrant Filipinos find a deep well of spiritual nourishment and inspiration to pursue their goal of a better and more humane life for their families and for themselves. Thus, popular religious traditions practiced in foreign lands by Filipino migrants could be regarded as an exercise of redemptive *anamnesis*. By commemorating the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ, migrants recall their own crosses and deaths. At the same time, they celebrate the hope kindled by their own resurrections. As Adam says,

> the dimension of anamnesis in worship helps us say who we were, who we are, and who we will be. Memory helps us identify and celebrate not only the incarnation of God in Christ centuries ago, but also this same incarnation that happens every day and in different places … The history of salvation includes the people when we remember them while telling the history … The story of salvation also includes those who are to come after us. As memory—and only as memory—the future grows, hope grows.[29]

The liturgical celebrations colored by these popular religious traditions truly become celebrations of migrants' liberation, not only from the fires of eternal damnation as the elementary catechism taught them, but also from material poverty and psycho-emotional distress. As Daniel Groody asserts, the exercise of popular religiosity

> builds on the yearning of every person to engage in meaningful relationships that recognize their being as persons, soul and body. It allows them to get in touch with their deepest identity as *imago Dei*, created in God's image, which is the basis of their fundamental humanity.[30]

Hence, beyond simply giving a sense of wholeness and connectedness, popular religiosity empowers migrants to become agents of their own redemption. Through their ongoing engagement with the religio-cultural symbols of popular piety, they are able to fulfill their unique mission as migrants: to be leaven in their respective parish communities and to multiply opportunities for encounter by which the exchange of cultural and spiritual richness could mutually enrich each other. Pope Francis underlines the need to integrate and involve migrants. He writes:

> If we really want to promote those whom we assist, we must involve them and make them agents in their own redemption. The pandemic has reminded us of how essential co-responsibility is, and that only with the contribution of everyone—even of those groups so often underestimated—can we face this crisis. We must find "the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity, and solidarity."[31]

In *Fratelli tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), Pope Francis reminds us that "a land will be fruitful, and its people bear fruit and give birth to the future, only to the extent that it can foster a sense of belonging among its members, create bonds of integration between generations and different communities."[32] He speaks of the love that opens to the "beyond" and "hospitality" that makes possible the establishment of social friendship and fraternity. Social friendship and fraternity do not exclude but include. The challenge is to build structures toward "universal communion," or "a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another."[33] This is precisely what is at the heart of popular piety when seen from a more pastoral perspective.

Conclusion

The late John Paul II's apostolic letter *Vicesimus quintus annus* attests that popular religiosity "can neither be ignored nor treated with indifference or disrespect because of its richness and because, in itself, it represents a religious attitude in relation to God."[34] Pope Francis himself talks about popular

religiosity in *Evangelii gaudium* (On the Joy of the Gospel) as *locus theologicus* and source of evangelizing as well as missionary power that one must not underestimate or stifle.[35] The chapter shows that the power of popular piety lies in the spaces it creates, or provides, for living out one's ethnic identity more meaningfully, fostering integration amid the fragmentation that characterizes Filipino migration in contemporary times, and, consequently, experiencing glimpses of redemption. It affirms the Catholic faith not simply as a view of life but as a way of life and points to the challenge for pastoral ministers to Filipino migrants to continue to harness the potential of popular religious traditions to effectively minister to migrants' human and spiritual needs. Using the paradigm of accompaniment, that is, journeying with migrants in their labors for a better life for their families and in their search for human fulfillment and spiritual maturity, pastoral ministers can make use of popular religious traditions that have proven to be powerful instruments in articulating and deepening the faith convictions of migrants.

Notes

1 Filipinos who reside in, or trace their birth or ancestry from, the Bicol region, which is located south of the Philippine island of Luzon.
2 This chapter uses popular piety interchangeably with popular religiosity and popular religion.
3 It was at the First Plenary Council of the Philippines (1953) that a formal petition to Rome was made on *Simbang Gabi*. The Papal Indult was given on March 24, 1961. Since then it became a traditional practice across the country.
4 Mark Zimmerman, "Archbishop Gregory Praises Faith of Filipino Catholics at *Simbang Gabi* Mass before Christmas," *Catholic Standard*, December 24, 2019, https://cathstan.org/news/local/archbishop-gregory-praises-faith-of-filipino-catholics-at-simbang-gabi-mass-before-christmas.
5 See "Pope Francis Presides over Mass for Rome's Filipino Community," *Vatican News*, December 15, 2019, www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-12/pope-francis-presides-over-mass-for-rome-s-filipino-community.html
6 Pope Francis, "Santa Messa Per La Comunità Cattolica Filippina: Omelia Del Santo Padre Francesco," www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/homilies/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20191215_omelia-comunitacattolica-filippina.html
7 In conversations with the author, Fr. Jake Dicto, a priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark, mentioned that it was in 2011 that the Santo Niño fiesta became an archdiocesan celebration.
8 See "Filipino Community in Switzerland Celebrates Sinulog 2018," Philippine Mission to the United Nations website, February 9, 2018, https://genevapm.dfa.gov.ph/consulate-press-releases/583-filipino-community-in-switzerland-celebrates-sinulog-2018
9 See, for example, Thomas Tweed, "Identity and Authority at a Cuban Shrine in Miami: *Santería*, Catholicism, and Struggles for Religious Identity," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*, 4 (1) (1996): 27–48.
10 Ernest Henau, "Popular Religiosity and Christian Faith," in *Popular Religion*, eds Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette (London: T&T Clark, 1986), 79.
11 Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (PCP II), *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: 20 January–17 February 1991*, no. 173 (Pasay City: Paulines, 1992).
12 PCP II, 174, 175.
13 PCP II, 172.

14 Norlan Julia, "Strengthening Filipino Migrants' Faith through Popular Religiosity," *Mission Studies*, 33 (2016): 355. See also Clement Camposano, "Balikbayan Boxes and the Performance of Intimacy by Filipino Migrant Women in Hong Kong," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 21 (1) (2012): 83–103.
15 Camposano, "Balikbayan Boxes and the Performance of Intimacy," 88. On the challenges faced by transnational families, see Maruja Asis et al., "No Longer Just a Mother's Job: Filipino Fathers as Carers in Transnational Households," in *Left-Behind Children and the Idea of the Family: Research on Families of Migrant Workers in Asia*, ed. Beni Hari Juliawan (Yogyakarta: Peneribit PT Kanisius, 2016), 1–16.
16 Julia, "Strengthening Filipino Migrants' Faith," 356.
17 In 2006, after a series of group discussions and reflection sessions, it was proposed to the Swiss bishops that the mission be divided in two. The proposal was approved. Hence, a chaplain was each assigned to the two regions of Switzerland: one for French-speaking part of the country, based in Geneva, and one in the German-speaking part, based in Fribourg.
18 See "Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach," Archdiocese of Washington website, https://adw.org/archdiocesan-offices/office-cultural-diversity-outreach
19 "Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach."
20 Peter Williams, *Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 68.
21 Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* (On the Joy of the Gospel), 122, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html
22 *Evangelii gaudium*, 122, 123.
23 Júlio Cézar Adam, "Liturgy with Your Feet: The Romaria Da Terra Pilgrimage in Parana, Brazil: Appropriating Liturgical Rites in the Quest for Life Spaces and Their Liberation," in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives: Only One Is Holy*, ed. Claudio Carvalhaes (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 157.
24 Julia, "Strengthening Filipino Migrants' Faith," 364.
25 *Evangelii gaudium*, 124. See also Williams, *Popular Religion in America*, 88.
26 Nathan Mitchell, "Theological Principles for an Evaluation and Renewal of Popular Piety," in *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines: A Commentary*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 71.
27 Julia, "Strengthening Filipino Migrants' Faith," 366.
28 Daniel Groody, "Jesus and the Undocumented Immigrant: A Spiritual Geography of a Crucified People," *Theological Studies*, 70 (2) (2009): 315.
29 Adam, "Liturgy with Your Feet," 158.
30 Daniel Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies*, 70 (3) (2009): 642–648.
31 Pope Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020," September 27, 2020, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20200513_world-migrants-day-2020.html
32 Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), 50, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html. Francis specifically tackles the plight of migrants in *Fratelli tutti*, 37–41.
33 *Fratelli tutti*, 95–96.
34 John Paul II, *Vicesimus quintus annus*, 18, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19881204_vicesimus-quintus-annus.html
35 *Evangelii gaudium*, 122, 126.

4 What I Have Seen and Heard

The Gifts of Filipino Catholics to the US Catholic Church

Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos

Introduction

The Filipino theologian Jose de Mesa argues that the construction of a contextual theology genuinely grounded in culture must first listen humbly to the genius contained within that culture. He argues for, and appeals, to "an attitude of humility," of "listening and learning" that is necessary not only for those who seek to enter into dialogue with another culture but even for those of us who have been trained to do theology in Western categories who seek to do a theology rooted in our own culture. "The recognition of intrinsic cultural values is the point of departure."[1] This can often be a real challenge as Filipino colonial history is not only reflected in the theological categories in which Filipinos express and understand our faith but also in the ambivalent attitudes toward the particularly Filipino expression of faith, whether conceptual or in action.

After moving from Washington's city of Seattle to the suburb of Renton, it took me over a year to leave the Jesuit parish I had attended and join a community closer to my new home. A significant motivation was that my in-laws, who were living with us at the time, had started to attend our local parish because of its large Filipino community. After giving myself some time to become familiar with the parish, I became more engaged and became particularly interested in getting to know the active members of the Filipino community better. During those years, I have been simultaneously encouraged and confounded. On the one hand, the level of engagement of many from immigrant communities was striking. Parishioners of Philippine descent could be found in every committee and commission of the parish. They form prayer groups and create committees to oversee preparations for special Filipino liturgical celebrations such as the feast of San Lorenzo Ruiz and *Simbang Gabi* (literally, night Mass). During one liturgy, all those in the sanctuary were Filipinos, from presider to altar servers and readers, from the sacristan to the members of the choir. The only minister at the Mass who was not Filipino, was the deacon, who was Chicano. On the other hand, it was not unusual to hear criticisms from some members of the Filipino-American community about the actual depth of the spiritual commitment of other members of the community.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-6

One particular event that triggered such doubt and criticism of the "spiritual depth"[2] found among visibly engaged members of the community was a homily delivered by the then archdiocesan director of vocations. It was in a homily in early 2010 that the director noted that there had not been any native-born Filipino-American who had been ordained to the diocesan priesthood in the Archdiocese of Seattle in the history of the diocese. This was to be distinguished from the fact that there are several Philippine trained priests who serve in the archdiocese as well as Filipino-American men from the archdiocese who have joined religious orders. The lack of homegrown Filipino diocesan priests was especially striking given the long historical presence of Filipino immigrants in Seattle.[3] Seattle was one of the destinations of the first wave of Filipino immigrants to the USA in the early 1900s and has continued to welcome new waves of Filipino immigration to the present.

What lingered as a nagging doubt for some Filipino parishioners about the spiritual depth of their community seemed to be confirmed by the incident. Even with the large number of Filipino-American Catholics in the archdiocese, we were not raising sons who joined the diocesan priesthood. With the exception of Deacon Fred Cordova, who passed away on December 21, 2013, there have been no other Filipino-American in the history of the Seattle archdiocese to enter ordained ministry. One conclusion Filipino-American community leaders in the parish drew is that there must be a lack of spiritual depth in the community. This would explain why the children of even active parishioners were not being inspired to enter the archdiocesan seminary and continue on to become priests. While stories of youths from the Vietnamese community entering religious life could be heard, the same was not true for the Filipino community.

This chapter interrogates the contribution of Filipino Catholics to the US Catholic Church by wrestling with the experience of Filipinos in the Archdiocese of Seattle, in general, and with a local parish, in particular. It begins by problematizing the questions raised regarding the number of Filipino-American priests ordained in the Archdiocese of Seattle as devaluing the role and contributions of the laity in the church. The chapter then examines how part of the problem to appreciating the importance of laity engaged in various ministries is due to clericalism and colonial mentality that continue to plague the Filipino community even in the USA. The chapter argues that, on closer examination, Filipino-American Catholics bring distinctive gifts that invite the church in the USA to spiritual depth and commitment.

Measuring Commitment and Depth

Filipinos are the fourth largest immigrant group in the USA behind Mexico, China, and India,[4] and the USA has the greatest number of Filipino immigrants of any other country.[5] This should come as no surprise given the relatively recent colonial history of the Philippines and the USA. Until the Tydings–McDuffie Act of 1934, Filipinos were US nationals and, while unable to be US citizens, had a level of freedom of movement into the USA. Many who made

the journey in the early part of the twentieth century were men who worked on farms in Hawai'i and the West Coast as well as canneries in Alaska. There was a smaller number who came as students, who were sponsored to study in the USA and expected to return to become future leaders of the Philippines. While these were not the first Filipinos on the shores of the USA, this group would be designated as a first wave of Filipino immigrants into the USA. Scholars would mark two more waves before the largest numbers began to enter with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that opened the door to family reunification. The number of Filipinos in America swelled from just over 100,000 in 1960 to 500,000 in 1980.[6] Between 1981 and 2011, almost 1.9 million Filipinos emigrated, with approximately 65 percent of those headed for the USA.[7] In 2013, of the 4.9 million Filipinos who have settled outside of the Philippines, 64 percent were living in the USA.[8] According to the 2018 Community Data Survey of the US Census, there are more than 4 million people of Philippine descent living in the USA.[9]

The majority (65 percent) of Filipinos in the USA identify as Catholic,[10] a number that is slightly lower than the 81 percent of Filipinos in the Philippines.[11] Of the 19 percent of US Catholics who are Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders, almost 65 percent (2.2 million) of these identify as Filipino.[12] This is slightly larger than the number for non-Hispanic Black Catholics (2.1 million) and more than four times greater than Vietnamese Catholics (0.5 million), who constitute the second largest in the Asian American and Pacific Islander category of Catholics. With over 100 years' presence in the USA and boasting significant numbers of Filipinos who identify as Catholic, the number of native-born Filipino-American clergy and hierarchs is worth noting. Bishop Oscar Solis, bishop of Salt Lake City, is the first and only Filipino-American to be consecrated bishop in the USA.[13] He is an immigrant, trained and educated as a priest in the Philippines. In 2008, he gathered 24 priest leaders and planted the seed for the National Assembly of Filipino Priests, USA, where they discovered that there were over 800 Filipino priests serving in the USA.[14]

Questions regarding the number of Filipino-American priests ordained in the Archdiocese of Seattle is worth asking.[15] After all, is it not true that, traditionally, a young man's consideration of such a vocation would be a kind of family decision?[16] What this suggests is that Filipino-American families either do not encourage their sons to become priests or potentially discourage them from doing so. Myrna Tordillo, noting the value of education for Filipinos, suggests that young people get into debt to finance their education and so must attend to this burden rather than pursue a religious vocation.[17] This, she conjectures, might affect the number of priestly vocations from the community. It is also worth noting that there are currently ten Filipino priests, trained and ordained in the Philippines. Of these, seven have been incardinated in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Nevertheless, it remains disconcerting to observe that such an absence leads to a judgment that appears to discount the countless hours given by so many lay volunteers and ministers. It can be argued that this reflects a kind of

clericalism that is still found among many Catholics. The reaction devalues the role of the laity in the church or so elevates the vocations of the priest over that of the laity so as to practically render the work of the Filipino-American lay community invisible. The presence of ordained ministers from the community is somehow a marker of "spiritual depth" whereas lay leadership and active engagement with the parish are not. The sheer number of hours given as members of various parish councils and committees, leaders of faith formation groups for youth, young adults and families and volunteers for social ministries and Filipino liturgical celebrations fall short of what is expected to demonstrate "spiritual depth." How else might one explain the erasure of the contribution of the Filipino-American lay community to the parish and archdiocese, at least if not especially to Filipino-Americans themselves?

At the same time, I wonder if the failure to see, appreciate, and value the contribution of the Filipino lay minister is a manifestation of colonial mentality. Psychologists E.J.R. David and Sumie Okasaki have studied colonial mentality among Filipino-American immigrants and found that some "may hold deep, internalized, and automatic inferior, unpleasant, undesirable, or negative perceptions of anything Filipino; and an automatic superior, pleasant, desirable, or positive perception of anything American."[18] This may hold true of ministries dominated by other members of the community. Even for those who would not explicitly endorse the idea that things Filipino are inferior and things American are superior, it "may operate automatically without intention or control."[19]

Data from a study of three parishes in the Archdiocese of Seattle appear to confirm this. Frank Savadera, author of the study that focused on Filipino adaptation to multicultural parishes, noted that "Filipino volunteer church workers seem to have more positive sentiments for non-Filipino parishioners than fellow Filipinos with whom they supposedly more closely associate."[20] In the realm of theology and spirituality, this can be manifested in a lower regard for popular forms of religiosity compared to what the Jesuit Filipino theologian, Catalino Arevalo, describes as a pseudo-intellectualist theology. Or does a fractured community lead to judgments about motivations behind more traditional expressions of faith like novenas, devotions to saints, and traditional celebrations like *Simbang Gabi* or long hours of service to the parish? After all, while the Filipino-American community is spoken of as monolithic, what the term describes is a group of people coming from a country composed of thousands of islands, almost 200 languages and dialects with diverse cultures that are further differentiated in the USA by various waves of immigration.[21]

Internalized oppression can be passed on intergenerationally through "familial socialization and continued oppression by the dominant group (e.g., lack of opportunities to discover accurate history, forced assimilation, lack of acknowledgement by the dominant group, and unresolved confusion or struggles),"[22] all of which are descriptive of the Filipino-American experience as told by various scholars of Filipinos in America.[23] An example is the limited knowledge of the history of Filipinos in America. The fact that they/we have been variously described as the "forgotten Asian Americans"[24] speaks to this. This dynamic of

being rendered invisible is not only true in the writing of the history of the USA but, in the Filipino-American community, erasure of its contribution to the US Catholic Church.

I would like to contribute to the effort to shed light on the significant contribution of the Filipino-American community as I have observed it in my parish and among the active leaders of the Filipino Council for Pastoral Affairs (FILCOPA) against the tendency within the community to devalue these. Colonial mentality and clericalism are deeply entrenched in the psyche of Filipino Catholics. What I would like to offer in the remainder of the chapter are points of reflection that might open an alternative evaluation of what the Filipino community has to offer the church. I want to suggest that the gifts given through Filipino-American Catholics are not just for the benefit of Filipino-American Catholics but for the whole US Catholic Church.

The Gifts of Filipino-American Catholics to the US Catholic Church

I am no objective observer to the Filipino-American Catholic community but a member who is both immersed in and attempts to step back to understand what I am observing. Filipino-Americans, like many other Americans of Asian descent, are perpetual foreigners. No matter how we might fit all other categories of whiteness through acculturation as well as economic and educational status, we will not overcome the phenotypic elements of what counts as white. Colonial mentality brings with it constant subjugation to the white gaze and so a constant feeling of simultaneously belonging and not belonging. This is true even in a faith community that many have served for decades and even generations. In many instances, like that of the parish noted in this chapter, the comment of the white American priest had such weight that members of the community turned in on themselves and their fellow Filipinos and verbalized a sense of insecurity about the commitment and depth of faith found among them.

I am inspired by the African American bishops' pastoral letter *What We Have Seen and Heard*. In 1984, the Black bishops of the United States wrote a pastoral letter to Black Catholics in which they named the gifts that Black Catholics bring to the US Catholic Church. In it, they called upon the Black Catholic community to claim their unique history, culture, and expressions of their faith and share these both to the Catholic Church and to the Black community. "Just as we lay claim to the gifts of Blackness so we share these gifts within the Black community at large and within the church. This is our part in the building up of the whole Church."[25] When I was invited to speak to parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish in the Central District neighborhood of Seattle on Black Catholic History Month, I wanted to remind the parishioners of this call. The parish is predominantly Black and Filipino. It was in this context that the call of the African American bishops felt like an invitation to the Filipino community as well. Lay claim to the gifts of what it is to be Filipino and share these gifts both within the Filipino community and within the church. The 2020 publication, *A Treasured Presence: Filipino American Catholics*, begins to do this. Unlike the

African American bishops' pastoral letter, this document "foster[s] knowledge of and awareness among clergy, ministers, and parishioners of the traditions and expressions of faith,"[26] in this case Catholics of Philippine descent, rather than addressed to Filipino-American Catholics and, therefore, seeks primarily to inform rather than to inspire.

In *Faith, Family, and Filipino American Community Life*, Stephen Cherry speaks of how Filipino immigrants are "a mounting force within American Catholicism." Based on a study of Filipino-Americans in Texas, Cherry notes their growing impact on the American Catholic Church, especially in terms of their increased presence in the American clergy, growth in lay leadership, and their growing presence as parishioners.[27] As a community, Filipino Catholics need to lean into the gifts they bring and proudly share these with the church. Here, I offer three distinctly Filipino contributions to the US Catholic Church that can inspire Filipinos and our way of evangelizing faith communities:

1 liturgical celebrations that express Philippine culture and religiosity;
2 the inspiration and example of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and Saint Pedro Calungsod;
3 the Filipino attitude of *bahala na* coupled with the concept of *malasakit* as expression of deep trust in God's providence coupled with concern and care for others.

In the Archdiocese of Seattle, Filipino communities from parishes throughout the archdiocese come together for a commissioning Mass, usually on the second Sunday of December, to officially send out leaders of parishes to celebrate *Simbang Gabi* in their respective parishes and deaneries.[28] While very few parishes actually celebrate all nine days of the novena Masses leading up to Christmas, parishes are assigned days that their communities host the celebration so as to complete these Masses with neighboring churches. Deanery leaders participate in an annual day of recollection in preparation for the commissioning Mass. The celebration itself is marked with much pageantry. Men and women come dressed in their best *barong* and *saya* (traditional formal dress for men and women respectively), carrying elaborately decorated and lit *parol*, a star-shaped lantern representing the star of Bethlehem that is a ubiquitous symbol seen throughout the Philippines during the Christmas season, which for Filipinos starts when the "-ber" months begin (September, October, etc.).

At St. Anthony Parish, parishioners are invited well ahead of Advent to participate in *parol*-making classes, which are intended to also educate those in attendance about the meaning of the symbol and the role it plays in the celebration of Christmas in the Philippines.[29] The church is decorated for Advent using some of the stars made by parishioners. When the evening comes for the parish to host the *Simbang Gabi*, a virtual feast is prepared after the liturgy to share with those in attendance. It is in this moment that the culture clash can manifest itself. The celebratory feeling that accompanies the sharing of food in abundance is seen as ill-timed because this takes place before the

liturgical season of Christmas. Such attitudes fail to take account of the culture of hospitality that is characteristic of the Filipino community. It lacks awareness of how the *Simbang Gabi* Masses in the Philippines are often followed by parishioners streaming out into the portico of the church to buy freshly baked *bibingka, puto bumbong*, and other treats before heading home.

Knowingly or unknowingly, parishioners have an opportunity to enter more deeply into the season of Advent by participating and becoming more aware of the meaning of these Filipino symbols and activities. During these gatherings, the Filipino community ensures that there is an educational component to explain the symbols and practice to the broader community. Often, members of the parish multicultural committee and other engaged parish leaders participate. What is less clear is whether such celebrations are understood as integral to the life of the parish, as marking the rhythm of the liturgical calendar or are seen as merely celebrations added on to the liturgical calendar of the parish. Compare the addition of an evening Mass to mark *Simbang Gabi* for St. Anthony, like other parishes, to that of the annual blessing of the chalk during all the Sunday Masses to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. What would be the message sent if the nine daily Masses before Christmas were celebrated as novena Masses, evoking the tradition of *Simbang Gabi*? Might the integration of such a tradition offer a way for the whole parish, or at least those who attend daily Mass, to enter more deeply into the season of Advent through such a tradition? Would a blessing of *parols* to mark the beginning of Advent with a clear explanation of the source and meaning of the tradition of hanging *parols* outside your home enrich the experience of liturgical celebrations throughout the season as people gaze upon the stars that decorate the church? Indeed, as has been shown in other parishes in the USA, *Simbang Gabi* has immense potential in leavening religious experience among St. Anthony's parishioners. It is considered as Filipino Catholics' spiritual gift,[30] and, as Cecil Motus insists, a "lasting legacy" to the church in the USA.[31] Motus maintains the devotion is no longer only for and by Filipinos, pointing to an informal survey of dioceses in the USA in 2010, which showed that more than 2,000 parishes (some without Filipinos) celebrated *Simbang Gabi*.

Simbang Gabi is only one of many liturgical and spiritual practices that nourish the spiritual life of Filipino-American Catholics. Devotions and practices that enliven faith life in the Philippines have been brought across communities throughout the USA.[32] Such devotions and practices have declined in many mainstream US parishes. Yet they continue to nourish the faith of many immigrant communities. The virtues of community, devotion, joy, and celebrations are expressed through these practices.

For Filipino Catholics, devotion to the first two Filipino saints canonized by the Catholic Church have become part of this rich tradition.[33] The lives of San Lorenzo Ruiz and San Pedro Calungsod speak to a community that doubts its members even as so many are actively engaged in their parishes. It is worth noting that neither San Lorenzo nor San Pedro Calungsod were ordained. Both began as altar boys and continued until their deaths to serve and minister to the

clergy. They served the church as sacristans, catechist, and calligrapher. It is worth reflecting on the fact that what the church has put forward to Filipino Catholics as models of holiness are two lay individuals who served the church in humble roles and demonstrated their faith by laying down their lives for the faith when the moment of truth was upon them. Ordination was not the mark of the depth of their commitment.

In joining four Dominican friars and fleeing the dangers of home, San Lorenzo Ruiz was unaware of the dangers toward which he was headed. Nevertheless, when his faith was tested with the threat of martyrdom in Japan, he stood firm and remained faithful like the priests he served and accompanied. While many may look to such an ultimate sacrifice as the mark of his sainthood, there is much, even of the little that is known about him, that invites examination. As a patron saint of migrants, he knew the pain of separation from family, a separation hardly softened by necessity. That he was not ordained but served the clergy he accompanied did not mean he lacked commitment.

San Pedro Calungsod offers a similar example. He was not an ordained minister but devoted his life to his faith, accompanying Jesuit missionaries to Guam and the Marianas Islands, where he would die with them. His story is of a man who, from boyhood, served the church. Not having received the sacrament of holy orders did not mean his faith was any less deep than the priests with whom he served. He, like they, laid down his life for his faith.

That the first two canonized Filipino saints both served the clergy rather than being clergy themselves is noteworthy. They were lay ministers. The church presented them to the Filipino people and to the church as exemplars of faith. Lay ministers do not have the visible authority of ordained ministers in a hierarchical and patriarchal church. Instead, their contributions are often invisible or undervalued, especially in communities marked deeply by the sin of clericalism. Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and Saint Pedro Calungsod invite reverence for humble ministries that can nevertheless nourish a faith so deep as to be available to God even to the point of martyrdom.

One can only hope that no one will ever be called upon to lay down their life for their faith. Yet all are called to live lives of holiness in the ordinary and every day. Vatican II's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* enshrines the laity's "indispensable role in the mission of the Church," saying "the Church can never be without it" and that "their apostolate [needs to] be broadened and intensified."[34] In his 2018 apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate* (On the Call to Holiness in Today's World), Pope Francis invites people to notice "the middle class of holiness."[35] In this exhortation, he insists we look upon "the call to holiness that God addresses to each of us … each in his or her way."[36] He cautions against being discouraged by another's way of holiness that may seem unattainable and "avoid hard and fast rules for all."[37] Holiness is to be lived in ordinary life.

Pope Francis notes "signs of holiness in today's world" as:

1 perseverance, patience, and meekness;[38]
2 joy and a sense of humor;[39]

3 boldness and passion;[40]
4 community;[41]
5 constant prayer.[42]

These are not markers that immediately come to mind when thinking of contemporary American culture. They may become more visible when one looks upon communities that have historically experienced marginalization and exclusion. Such signs can be found among immigrant communities whose strategies for survival through migration and settlement have required these.

de Mesa's seminal work *And God Said, "Bahala Na!,"* which examines how what has often been construed as a sign of fatalism, that is, *bahala na*, can be understood as an expression of trust and confidence in God's providence, especially in circumstances where one has limited control,[43] is helpful in this regard. Instead of an attitude of disempowered resignation, *bahala na* can also be an expression of "hopeful risk taking" and a confidence in God's providence.[44] A people with a long history of being at the mercy of colonial powers, local oligarchs, and an unpredictable natural world is a people that is deeply aware of the limits of their agency. It is also a people that learns patience and perseverance and develops meekness and humility. Such qualities are often seen as problematic, especially when applied to a historically oppressed people because they suggest disempowerment. For dominant cultures replete with unearned privilege, such survival strategies born of a realistic assessment of situations can be difficult to understand. The attitude of *bahala na* need not stand in the way of boldness and passion. One need only look to the history of a people that has freed itself from one colonial power (Spain), resisted a second (USA), and showed the world how faith can guide a peaceful revolution (People Power of 1986).[45] Today, passion and boldness are seen in the millions of Filipinos who leave family and home every year to work temporarily in foreign lands or attempt to build a new life as immigrants. The stories of immigration for the millions of Filipinos in the USA are varied. For many, it is an attempt to build a better life for themselves and their families. Some fled political persecution and others left lives of relative comfort. Often drawn to the "American dream," which proves to be more difficult than often imagined, all are confronted by the experiences of being a foreigner in a foreign land. Culture shock, homesickness, and experiences of racism overlay the struggle to leave a life and build a new one and construct the context in which Filipinos again and again show resilience.

That such a people should be a people marked by joy and humor is often confounding to those they encounter. All over the world, Filipino migrants find ways to gather, share a meal, sing songs, and just share stories and laugh. Every excuse is found to gather together and celebrate. This is seen in the devotional practices, whether in parishes or homes, which always lead to food and feasting. Filipinos are a people of fiestas. These fiestas are about community and faith, for they celebrate feast days of the Blessed Mother and of the communion of saints.

Pope Francis, who has a special concern for the plight of immigrants, warns of the dangers of clericalism. While his challenge to overcome such attitudes are often addressed to the clergy, the laity have a role in overcoming or perpetuating the culture.[46] In addressing the faithful in his apostolic exhortation on *The Call to Holiness*, he never puts forward ordained ministry as somehow a better path to holiness. Instead, he states:

> to be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.[47]

He provides example after example of holiness in ordinary life. While offering "signs" of holiness, he invites each to discern their individual call, the unique mission that each is given by God. There is no rigid rule or path to be followed except, maybe, that of discernment, of a deep, prayerful listening to God's call in one's life.[48]

Conclusion

There are sociological and culture questions that can be asked about how vocations to the priesthood are nurtured in the Filipino community. That has not been the interest of this chapter. Instead, this chapter sought to challenge the tendency to devalue or miss the contributions of Filipinos to the church. I want to suggest that part of the problem to appreciating the importance of laity engaged in various ministries is due to clericalism and colonial mentality that continue to plague the Filipino community even in the USA. Yet there is so much in the life of the Filipino community and their service and contribution to the church that can enliven, and be further enlivened, by both the Filipino community and the church. Filipino Catholics can be proud of what they already bring to the church and challenged to deepen their understanding of the traditions they have inherited as they offer these as part of what it means to be church in the USA.

Notes

1 Jose de Mesa, "Re-thinking the Faith with Indigenous Categories," *Inter-Religio*, 13 (summer 1988): 20.
2 The term "spiritual depth" is being used because it is the term that was used by members of the Filipino parish community. While widely used in the conversations in the community, its meaning was not necessarily the same for each person who used it.
3 Cynthia Mejia-Giudici, "Filipino Americans in Seattle," HistoryLink.org, December 3, 1998, www.historylink.org/File/409
4 Luis Hassan Gallardo and Jeanne Batalova, "Filipino Immigrants in the United States," *Migration Information Source: The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*, July 15, 2020, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/filipino-immigrants-united-states

5 Here, the term "immigrant" is being used in a technical way to describe those who enter a country with the intent of settling in that country. Other countries can boast of a large number of Filipino migrant workers such as those in the Middle East. While the number of Filipinos who have chosen to settle in countries outside their place of birth has increased over the past couple of decades, the USA remains the choice destination of the majority who do. International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC), *Country Migration Report: The Philippines 2013, International Organization for Migration*, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/cmreport_philipines2013.pdf
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5 Faith on the Move

Religious Conversion among Filipino Migrants in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and the USA

Vivienne S.M. Angeles

Introduction

Human migration is a feature of human civilization that has been told in ancient narratives.[1] It has continued through the centuries, with people moving within a country or to another for various reasons, ranging from search for better economic opportunities to forced displacement due to food insecurity or conflicts. In the twenty-first century, migration continues at an unprecedented rate, with the United Nations reporting that the estimated number of international migrants[2] has reached 281 million in 2020.[3]

An overwhelming majority of migrants are Christians, followed by Muslims, Hindus, and other religions.[4] Of the Christian migrants, Filipinos make up the only Asian American community that is predominantly Roman Catholic.[5] The Philippines was the second-largest origin country for immigrants to the USA in 1990, and throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, but was overtaken by India and China in 2010. Statistics on overseas Filipino workers indicate that Saudi Arabia is another choice destination, with 938,490[6] living and working there in 2015. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia ranks next to Singapore in terms of the number of Filipino overseas workers.

This chapter deals with the role and place of religion in the life of Filipino migrants, particularly focusing on religious conversion. I argue that while religion and the faith community provide spiritual and social supports that facilitate the process of adjustment in the new country, social, economic, and personal factors play major roles in migrants' religious conversion process. Examining such factors and their implications for the Catholic Church can help in interpreting and defining the social, cultural, personal, and religious issues that confront migrants in the new country, whose lives are complicated by their new situation as ethnic and, in some cases, religious minorities. The chapter uses archival and ethnographic materials on religion and migration, as well as interviews of migrants at various times in the USA, Philippines, and Malaysia.

The chapter has five parts. The first, "Migration and Religious Conversion," defines key terms and presents the motifs of conversion. The second, "Diasporic Religion, Community, and Belonging," characterizes the Filipino religious experience in the host country. The third, "From Roman Catholic to Muslim

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-7

and Evangelical Christian: A Snapshot of Religious Conversion among Filipino Migrants," examines conversion narratives of selected Filipino migrants in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and the USA. The fourth, "Making Sense of Religious Conversion in the Context of Migration," offers insights on the patterns of conversion and the factors that lead to conversion in the abovementioned narratives. The concluding part, "The Road Ahead for the Catholic Church," reflects on the implications of religious conversion for the Catholic Church by suggesting possible paths forward.

Migration and Religious Conversion

Religion provides migrants with spiritual and social capitals,[7] which may facilitate their process of adjustment. However, it is not a static entity[8] and, like the migrant, may change in response to migrants' needs and demands of the new environment. Migration and religious practice are dynamic processes that constantly shift from place to place over time.[9] Previous works have been done on migration and religion,[10] and scholars have also addressed the issue of migrants changing religions after settlement in another country.[11] However, conversion deserves more attention as the pace of migration intensifies and conversion becomes part of the coping and adjustment process.

Religion and conversion are complicated concepts, but I use Cunningham and Kelsay's definition of religion as signifying

> those ways of viewing the world that refer to a notion of a sacred reality made manifest in human experience in such a way as to produce long lasting ways of thinking, feeling, and acting with respect to problems of ordering and understanding existence.[12]

They comprise different dimensions: doctrinal, mythical, ritual, ethical, social, and material.[13] A migrant's understanding of and practice of these dimensions are influenced by various factors, including life situations, and may change in the course of the migrant's life in a new geographic area.

Rambo and Farhadian concede that there is no universal definition of conversion that reflects all aspects of religious conversion.[14] Marc Baer's approach to conversion is helpful, however, as it integrates conversion of self, others, and space as well as the contexts in which the conversion takes place. Conversion involves both internal component (belief) and external aspect (action) that leads to a new self-identity and way of life.[15] It is a gradual and communal process sustained by participation in the new religious community.[16] For the migrant, this process of conversion may involve a deeper or lesser acceptance of the role of the sacred in one's life, or an intensified commitment to religion that is akin to the experience of Malcolm X during his pilgrimage to Mecca.[17] It may also involve a switch to another denomination, or to an entirely different religion or to abandonment of religion—depending on the level of religious commitment

and circumstances of the migrant. In whatever case, the common thread that runs through these various forms of conversion is change.

In studying the conversion of migrants, it is also helpful to look at the motifs of conversion—intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalist, and coercive[18]—and see whether the migrant experience of conversion could be understood and explained according to these types. Unless indicated otherwise, intellectual, experimental, and affectional appear to be the motifs demonstrated by the converts included in this study. Intellectual motif involves individual study, learning about the new religion and being convinced by what the person has learned. Experimental motif has to do with an individual's exploration of other beliefs that might not initially involve total commitment but could eventually result in such. Affectional conversion, meanwhile, emphasizes interpersonal relationships where personal attachments and preference for members of the new religion are crucial to the individual's conversion. While helpful for understanding conversion, it is also necessary to investigate the multiple factors involved including the influence of sociocultural forces, psychological influences, identity formation, immigration, and intercultural contact. Another important factor is the individual's own engagement with the conversion process that involves the evaluation and assessment of the new religion and what it could do for them—in other words, the active agency of converts.[19]

Diasporic Religion, Community, and Belonging

Since there are migrants who maintain linkages with religious groups and families back home,[20] it is instructive to have an understanding of diasporic religion.[21] In a diasporic religion, the migrants' actions and sentiments toward the homeland are mediated by and articulated through religion in ways that approximate the practices in the homeland. As migrants cross boundaries and create new domiciles, they carry memories and maintain connections in the home country. In contemporary times, this distance is bridged and facilitated by the electronic media and the ubiquitous cell phone, which has become a major link among the migrant, the family, and friends left in the old country.[22] This diasporic religion is transtemporal and translocative, where the migrant is moving between the past and future history and location, which in turn, creates the experience and symbolization of the present.[23] The migrant's religion becomes more complex in this situation, as it intersects with the economic, political, social, and religious aspects of the new society. Economic, as the migrant seeks for better economic opportunities and responds to labor demands; political, since migration polices are political instruments; social, as the migrant joins or creates social networks; and religious, as the migrant draws upon human and superhuman forces in the process of negotiating the new environment.[24]

In Philadelphia and suburbs, this diasporic religion is manifested by Filipinos who, while scattered in different parishes, gravitate to churches where there is a Filipino pastor or where they are able to practice the rituals as done in the

home country.[25] Singing the *Pasyon* (Passion Story) during Holy Week,[26] celebrating *Flores de Mayo* (a Marian devotion) in May, the *Sinulog* (feast of the *Santo Niño*), in August,[27] and other devotions to the Virgin Mary are among the events and rituals that bring Filipinos together in places like Philadelphia, Vienna, Milan, Turin, Dubai, and London.[28] During celebrations in Philadelphia, Filipino businesses sell traditional foods, souvenirs, and religious images such as those of the Santo Niño, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Fatima, which allow Filipinos not only to enshrine these images and recreate home altars but also to continue to practice religious rituals from home. The venues also allow for celebration of national holidays where both US and Philippine flags are displayed and Filipinos wear traditional outfits. In these settings, love of God, love of country, and nostalgia converge. Like the transient Filipino workers in Singapore, replication of rituals from home helps give a feeling of community and a sense of continuity[29] in what is otherwise a disruption (albeit necessary due to economic circumstances) of their lives. These activities take on new meanings for the migrants, demonstrating the continuity of things and actions learned and practiced in the homeland, thus mitigating whatever sense of displacement they might have encountered. In California, bay area Filipino Catholics organize prayer services and take turns bringing food to bereaved families—a practice that has now given way to caterers back home. In the past year, with restrictions required by the COVID pandemic, novena prayers, rosaries, and Masses continue, albeit in a new medium—Zoom.

The new religious spaces also open up paths for Americanization for migrants in the USA. Language and citizenship exam review classes are held in the social halls attached to Christian churches, and earlier migrants dispense advice on government social services and medical referrals, as well as useful information on children's education, buying a home or renting an apartment, where to purchase ethnic food and job opportunities,[30] buying a vehicle, how to pay a traffic ticket, finding a babysitter and, for Korean migrants, how to join a credit association if they need financial capital to start a business.[31] They also organize health fairs, where medical practitioners volunteer their services and donate medical supplies. These activities create social networks for the migrants and facilitate adjustment to the new environment.

Members of these diasporic religions also maintain connections to the homeland by organizing medical missions and donating medical equipment and supplies. Known as *balikbayans* (returnees),[32] they return to the Philippines to participate in religious ceremonies like *Sinulog* in Cebu, or to host the whole town in celebrating the Holy Thursday Last Supper reenactment in Morong, Rizal or to make financial contributions to religious projects. For Filipino migrant Catholics, these actions are expressions of thanksgiving to God, whose blessings allowed them to succeed in the new country. Filipino Muslims who have worked in the Middle East have also either built mosques or contributed to the construction of one for the same reasons.

From Roman Catholic to Muslim and Evangelical Christian: A Snapshot of Religious Conversion among Filipino Migrants

On the one hand, religious conversion in the context of migration and diaspora can be broadly or metaphorically understood. For example, a migrant's sense of belonging as well as responses to socioeconomic and political factors in the new environment can affect the religiosity of the migrant and result in conversion. Whatever the cause, this process of conversion is gradual and transformative, requiring commitment, dedication, and learning.[33]

The migrant's intensification of commitment to his homegrown religion correlates with having hurdled challenges of settlement and negotiating the complexities of living in a new country. As Mrs. Cargado in Philadelphia notes, organizing *pasyon* singing in her home is a way of thanking God for the blessings her family has received since they settled in Philadelphia—from her husband and herself getting jobs soon after arrival, to their children finishing college and being gainfully employed. She made a vow to hold the ritual every year as long as she is able. Another Filipino at St. Augustine Church shares this sentiment and sponsors *pasyon* reading as a way of recreating her family's religious rituals in the Philippines. In both cases, their successful migrant journey and settlement intensify their religious commitment that is shared through their sponsorship of the *pasyon* singing. They are also active participants in the various Filipino celebrations at St. Augustine Church and in Our Lady of Hope Church where the pastor is a Filipino.

Another avenue by which Filipino migrants intensify their religiosity is through charismatic movements within the Catholic Church like the *Bukas Loob sa Diyos* (Open in Spirit to God), a global community with districts in the USA, Philippines, Hong Kong, and Canada. In addition to the regular church services, they engage in various activities that include Bible study, prayer and healing sessions, and Friday worship. Participants in the movement in New Jersey claim an open commitment to God through the direction of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, literal migration-related religious conversion in the Filipino (im)migration context, or conversion from one institutional religion to another, also occurs among Filipinos either directly (among migrants themselves), or indirectly, that is, through a migrant relative, friend or acquaintance who helps them convert to another religion.

From Catholic to Muslim: Migrant Workers in the Middle East and Conversion to Islam

Saudi Arabia is a choice destination for overseas Filipino workers because of higher compensation compared to other countries.[34] The majority of overseas Filipino workers are from the Calabarzon region,[35] and are predominantly Roman Catholics. In a host country where public practice of a religion other than Islam is prohibited and where there is a lack or absence of sacred spaces for non-Muslims, conversion to Islam allows enjoyment of privileges and the

creation of a social network that could be tapped for non-religious purposes such as contract extension or job referrals.

Nur,[36] a Filipino who converted while in Saudi Arabia,[37] admitted that his motivation for conversion was the higher pay that Muslims receive, especially during the month of Ramadan. As the main source of financial support for his family in the Philippines, he had to earn more, and since Muslim workers are better paid, and new converts receive some money, he saw conversion as the solution. He had no intention of fulfilling the religious duties required in Islam, but memorized the prayers and joined Muslim coworkers during prayer times. Fearful that he might be asked questions about Islam, he decided to study the Qur'an and the Sunnah (traditions). When he informed his supervisor that he wanted to be a Muslim (although privately it was mainly for the pay and benefits), the latter brought him to an Islamic center where he met other Filipinos. He recited the *shahada* (testimony of the faith), which formally made him a Muslim. After hearing a *khutbah* (homily) about hypocrisy during a Friday prayer, he felt guilty of pretending to be a Muslim for worldly benefits. That was the turning point to his becoming a serious Muslim which motivated him to continue religious studies at the Islamic center. Nur noted that in Saudi Arabia, it was very common to meet around 30 Filipino converts during Friday prayers.

When Nur returned to the Philippines, he became part of the Islamic Studies Call and Guidance group (ISCAG), and engaged in *da'wa*.[38] ISCAG is a Muslim group in the Philippines organized by former overseas workers in the Middle East who either converted while a contract worker or upon return to the Philippines. Two years after I first interviewed Nur, he had become an imam and a popular lecturer on Islam with a radio program. His sister, whom I met in my visits to ISCAG, spoke about his brother's work in converting her and their extended family. Nur returned to Saudi Arabia, where he gave lectures and *khutbah* to Filipino Muslims. He came home to the Philippines after three years and established a mosque and *Safinat Nuh* (Noah's Ark—an Islamic center) in Cavite. Nur's conversion experience demonstrates his progression from the tentative experimental motif motivated by economic needs to the intellectual motif and eventually to the conviction that Islam is the true religion for which he has the responsibility to share with others.

Jamal,[39] another member of ISCAG who worked in Saudi Arabia, converted after returning to the Philippines. He was impressed by the kindness of Muslims who took care of him when he was confined in a hospital in Saudi Arabia. At the time of my visits, he and his wife were very involved in running ISCAG, with his wife, a nurse, working in the free clinic that caters to both Muslims and non-Muslims in the area.

The women converts I interviewed at ISCAG are all married to men who are overseas contract workers in the Middle East. Six of the eight women are former Catholics who were converted by their husbands and a brother. Another woman was a lapsed Muslim, until she worked in Dubai and rediscovered Islam—an instance of deepening her religious commitment while a migrant in a Muslim society. Although only two women had worked in the Middle East, the

conversion of seven women is, in effect, a result of the migrant experience of their husbands and a brother, whose conversion in the Middle East provided entry into a Muslim society where the public practice of their former religion was not allowed. The women converts all live in the ISCAG compound, all wear the long dress and head cover, do not work outside the home, and emphasize their primary roles as wives and mothers who also have the responsibility of raising their children as Muslims. Their conversion narratives support the idea that close relationship to a convert opens up the possibility of conversion.[40] For the ISCAG women, conversion was also a gradual process, initiated and encouraged by their husbands and supplemented by audiotapes, reading materials on Islam, and lectures on being a Muslim woman provided by ISCAG. These, they claim, distinguish them from those who were born Muslims and those who were merely swayed by the emotional appeal of those converting them to Islam. Their roles as wives and mothers are emphasized during weekly lectures—something Ruqayya said they never had when they were Catholics. Their conversion validates the affectional motif, since it was persons close to them who introduced Islam, and the intellectual motif because the decision to convert was a result of careful study.

From Catholic to Muslim: Filipino Conversion in Malaysia

Malaysia has the fourth largest number of overseas Filipinos in the world, totaling 620,040,[41] with contract workers representing the most numerous of the group. A significant component of Filipino migrants in Malaysia, albeit in smaller numbers, are those in the skilled workers category, which includes Filipino wives of Malays.

The Filipinas I interviewed—designated here as Layla, Fatima, Maryam, and Zahrah[42]—met their Malay husbands in the Philippines, India, Canada, and Australia then settled in Malaysia after marriage. All, except Layla, converted to Islam upon marriage because, as Fatima put it, "if you marry a Muslim you have to convert to Islam whether you are a male or female." This is in keeping with the Qur'an 2:221 which says; "Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe." Layla, who I assumed to be a convert, told me six years later that she did not formally take the *shahadah* (testimony of the faith) but "kind of went with the flow." Everyone thinks she is a Muslim so she just let it go at that. When she goes home to the Philippines, she gets back to attending Masses and receiving the Eucharist—something that she does not do in Malaysia. Educated at a Catholic girls school from kindergarten to college in the Philippines, she had a mixed marriage—a Catholic wedding in the morning (without the Eucharistic celebration) and a Muslim wedding at the home of the Malaysian ambassador in the Philippines. The others had civil weddings. These conversions through marriage parallel the cases of Filipinas in Hong Kong who converted to Islam upon marriage to Pakistanis.[43] For Zahra, it was a second conversion. She was a Catholic who became an Episcopalian before converting to Islam. She was the only one of the four who attended classes for converts at

Pertubuhan Kebajikan Malaysia (Muslim Welfare Organization Malaysia). The others, including Layla, read the Qur'an on their own and say that they are aware of the different interpretations.

Conversion brings about a new identity, and, in Malaysia, the new religious affiliation is indicated in the identity card. This identity is also expressed visually, through the use of the *baju kurung* (the Malay Muslim dress that has been designated as Islamic dress). Zahrah is the only one who uses the *tudong* (head cover) while the others take the position of the Sisters in Islam[44] that wearing the head cover is a personal option. For religious events, however, they all wear the head cover. Women are not required to attend *jum'ah* prayers in the mosque so they celebrate Muslim holidays and attend prayers in people's homes. It is only Zahrah who observes the five daily prayers. By themselves, however, Layla, Fatima, and Maryam continue to pray the way they learned as Catholics, and Layla, who continues to pray to Jesus, does not see the conflict between the Christian and Islamic ideas of God. She said that her prayers get answered anyway so it does not matter whether she is praying the Muslim or Christian way.

In several conversion narratives, women speak about better perception of their roles as women and of changes in the way they view themselves and their social roles.[45] Rambo asserts that converts acquire a new perception of themselves that empowers them to do things, believe, and feel in ways that they have not been able to do prior to conversion.[46] However, these Filipino Malays claim that they did not experience nor perceive any change in their roles since they "already had the ability to do what they wanted to do." They are professional women: a professor, a dentist, a psychologist, and a nurse turned businesswoman. Two of the husbands are pilots, and the other two have Ph.D.s who served as vice chancellor of a public university and the other, as president of a private university in Malaysia. The women believe that it is important to follow the religion of the husband to avoid conflicts and because Islam is the religion that is safeguarded by the state and Malay Muslims[47] enjoy affirmative action privileges. Filipinos belong to the Malay race and are technically in the category of *laing laing* (others) in Malaysia but being a Muslim and almost "Malay Malay" through marriage also provide a sense of belonging and identity in the larger Malaysian community that is not available to those of other ethnicities and religion.

The responses to conversion of the Filipino Malay Muslims are markedly differently from those of women of ISCAG. One of the factors to consider here is the educational level and the socioeconomic status of the converts that also have a bearing in the way they respond to the new religion and the community. The conversion histories of the Filipino Malay women follow the affectional pattern where personal relationship, in this case marriage, brought about the conversion. The women did not feel a change in their lives, however, as they are able to pursue their professions and their interests. They move around in the upper-middle-class circles in Malaysia and among other Filipinas also married to Malays.

From Catholic to Evangelical: The Conversion of a Family in Philadelphia

A growing Filipino American church in Philadelphia is the Philadelphia Bible Church International (PBCI). It is affiliated with the Pennsylvania–South Jersey Convention under the Southern Baptist Convention's umbrella. Some of PBCI's members were already Baptists when they migrated, but many converted from Roman Catholicism in the USA.

The Filipino family I interviewed converted from Roman Catholicism in 2007. Their son, who had converted earlier, convinced them to join the Bible study group and to attend a service. After declining the invitation several times, the father relented. Hearing the pastor talk about accepting Christ as his personal savior convinced him to change the kind of life he led before. He "became a Christian,[48] and was born again." Although the father's story reflects the affectional motif, since his initial contact with the church was through his son, the narrative also connects to the crisis theory of conversion that is linked to biographical experiences.[49] Prior to conversion, the father used to hang out with friends, drink, and gamble, to the extent that he neglected his family. He discovered that PBCI offers hope, and gives him a sense of optimism that he had not expected. Eventually, the mother and the whole family converted.

The mother said it was a gradual conversion that led to their baptism in 2007. She emphasized that the church made them part of a community in a way that they did not experience when they were Catholics. They used to attend Filipino Masses in Philadelphia but did not feel the personal connection that the PBCI community (there were about 100, mostly former Catholics during the service I attended) provides. They value the Bible study, which they did not do as Catholics, and find the preaching during the service relevant to their everyday lives. Another evangelical convert said that while she learned good values as a Catholic, "they were not sufficient to reveal Christ and His authority and they were too focused on the Virgin Mary." The PBCI Sunday service begins with a youth band playing songs that emphasize taking Jesus as a personal savior and giving up everything for the joy of being with the Lord. The music is engaging, with the congregation joining in the lively songs, alternating with claps and amens.

The pastors are well-respected leaders, and the family feels that they are all on equal terms, without the hierarchical structure reminiscent of the Catholic Church. When they were Catholics, they did not feel any connection to the pastor, nor to Filipino members of the parish council and various committees. At the dedication of a PBCI member's daughter, about a dozen sponsors stood in front of the congregation, and everyone gave blessings to the daughter and the family. The pastor spoke about the biblical basis of the dedication, with the ceremony taking on a collective experience rather than just limited to the family and the pastor. The church provides not only spiritual fulfillment and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as savior but also a strong sense of community, enlivened by the presence of the youth band. At the end of the service every Sunday, dinner consisting of traditional Filipino food brought by church members is served, and everyone goes home with a "food bag to go," Filipino style.

Almost two years later, when I interviewed the mother again and asked the same questions on what made them join the church, her responses now focus on Jesus and cited several biblical passages while emphasizing that it is the Lord that works on "changing the heart of a sinner." She suggested that I check out biblical passages she listed as they might give me "some thoughts." Two years ago, she was talking about how this evangelical group provided them with a sense of community and belonging that they did not find in the Catholic Church. The transformation from a feeling of marginalization to joining a community that answered their social and spiritual needs was very evident, but, this time, she is empowered and confident in sharing her faith community's teachings. Her discourse now is on the truth of conversion—it was God who made it happen.

Making Sense of Religious Conversion in the Context of Migration

The cases mentioned above demonstrate various characteristics of migrant religion. Whether migrants intensify their religious commitment, or convert, religion still continues to play major roles in their lives by providing spiritual and social supports that migrants consider important as they negotiate their lives in the new country. The migrant religious communities are diverse not only in terms of ethnicity and language but also in terms of economic, political, and religious distinctions. The forms of linkages to home, from the medical missions under the auspices of migrant churches as well as the sending of donations and the circulation of religious artifacts in the process of creating memory and spaces, are worth investigating further in the attempt to understand the dynamics of migrant religious communities.

The cases mentioned above also show that Nur's conversion followed the experimental and the intellectual patterns resulting in his being convinced of the truth of Islam. He became a popular and well-respected *imam* (religious leader) not only in the Philippines but also in Islamic centers in Saudi Arabia where Filipino workers attend congregational prayers and religious classes. Being a Muslim in the Middle East allows them entry and acceptance in a society that is in many ways closed to non-Muslims, thereby transforming the migrant from being an ethnic and religious minority to being part of the host society.

Although the stages of conversion as well as the motifs are helpful in framing the conversion experiences, they are not adequate for understanding the migrants' religious as well as conversion experiences. It is necessary to take the context of conversions into consideration. It is evident that economics plays a major part in the conversion of the migrant, especially for overseas Filipino workers for whom the reason for migration is to provide for the family back home. The economic factor also figures prominently in the response to conversion. The economic diversity can have a bearing, too, on the religious practices of the migrants and the way they create space and memories in the new environment. Moreover, conversion is a coping mechanism for some migrants with the complex situations they encounter—from the moment they leave the home

country either by force or by choice, through the journey, to creating space in the new environment. The intersections of religion, economics, politics, and social life have their effects on migrants' religious experience and, therefore, are critical to understanding why and how the migrant changed religious affiliation.

The PBCI evangelical family, Nur, Jamel, and the husbands of the ISCAG women, migrated to the USA and the Middle East respectively for economic reasons. For Nur, it was also economics that made him convert to Islam. For the Filipinas in Malaysia, marriage necessitated conversion, although, compared to the women of ISCAG, their responses to conversion differed. Except for one, three Filipinos in Malaysia demonstrate a curious case of double belonging: the Malay Muslim identity expressed publicly and, the other, an internal continuation of their Catholic religious orientation demonstrated by their admission that they continue to pray the Catholic way. They have integrated Muslim practices and rituals into their religious experiences and have all blended into Malay society, enjoying the rights and privileges of Malay Muslims. Like the ISCAG women and the evangelical family, their conversions followed the affectional and intellectual patterns, and while the ISCAG women and the evangelical family now speak about the truth of their conversion and spoke of the changes after conversion, the Malay Filipinos have a more inclusive view of religion and people.

Admittedly, the sample is very small, but my interviews opened a window into factors at play in the conversion process and also made me realize that studying conversion requires an integration of multiple approaches that pays attention to the context of migration and settlement as well as the intersections of religion, social life, economics, and politics that influence migrant conversion.

The Road Ahead for the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in the twenty-first century faces multiple challenges requiring creative solutions that will not only sustain the faith but keep the membership as well. Together with the demands for labor and economic necessity, globalization and migration have sent Catholics to various destinations, several of which have systems, structures, and people whose religious beliefs and practices are unfamiliar to the Catholic migrant. This calls for learning and engagement with other religions coupled with the willingness and openness to understand the other. It has also been more than 50 years since *Nostra aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions),[50] and yet most Catholics are not aware of its provisions. If we have to live in a world that is increasingly diverse, educating ourselves about other religions is necessary, and the church needs to lead in this endeavor in the grassroots level.

Another challenge facing the Catholic Church is the issue of Catholics converting to other religions. Numbering 1.28 billion adherents,[51] it is still the world's largest religion, but the number of converts to Pentecostal and evangelical Christianity, as well as to Islam, is increasing. With thousands of Filipino Catholics going to the Middle East as part of the Philippine labor export program, the need for community and belonging in a country not receptive to other

religions increases; hence, conversion to Islam becomes an important alternative, with the only other alternative privatizing one's Catholicism. Although today it seems impossible, hopefully in the future the Catholic Church can engage in initiatives with the Saudi Arabian officials on allowing Catholic sacred spaces in the kingdom in the spirit of interreligious understanding for which there are relevant verses in the Qur'an.

A third challenge to the Catholic Church is the second generation of migrants who did not experience the journey of migration and the trials of settling in an unfamiliar world. Religion may not fulfill the same function to them, and it is very likely that some of them consider themselves as religious "nones," which, as the Pew Research indicates, is increasing in number in the USA.[52] Their number-one reason for not affiliating with any religion is because they question religious teachings. And yet, as Sister Loreto Mapa says, the depth of understanding of religious teachings among Filipino migrants varies as many are "sacramentalized but not cathecized" (know and do the rituals but have little knowledge of the faith).[53] This, to Sister Loreto Mapa, is one of the challenges in the Filipino migrant church community: the need for catechetical instruction for faith formation for those who are already in the church.

Sharing the gospel is a mission of the church, but in this age of religious pluralism there is a need for a shift from looking at other religions as "others" to finding shared values and working on a creative evangelization that recognizes and respects differences. A Catholic who converted to evangelical Christianity in California spoke of the ostracism received from Catholics, but her belief in the truth of her conversion and the support of her new faith community strengthened her instead. It is also necessary to recognize the factors that brought about such conversions because, as indicated in the narratives, the economic and personal factors largely account for the migrant's conversion.

Notes

1 See Patrick Manning, *Migration in Human History* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005).
2 This chapter uses the term "migrant" to refer to any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from their habitual place of residence regardless of their legal status, causes of movement or length of stay or whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary. See "Who Is a Migrant," International Organization for Migration website, www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant
3 "International Migrant Stocks: February 5, 2021," Migration Data Portal website, https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-migrant-stocks
4 The United Nation Migration Report lumps together Jains, Sikhs, Taoists, Chinese folk religions, African traditional religions, and other smaller religions under the category of "other religions."
5 James Fisher, *Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 156.
6 "Distribution on Filipinos Overseas," Department of Foreign Affairs website, https://dfa.gov.ph/distribution-of-filipinos-overseas
7 Here, I take Bourdieu's definition of social capital as the "actual and potential resources available by virtue of their participation in social networks." See Michael

Foley and Dean Hoge, *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 30.

8 Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

9 Miguel Vasquez, "Studying Religion in Motion: A Networks Approach," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 20 (2) (2008): 151–184.

10 See Charles Hirschman, "The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States," *International Migration Review*, 38 (3) (2004): 1206–1233; Helen Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz, *Religion and the New Immigrants* (New York: Altamira Press, 2004); Foley and Hoge, *Religion and the New Immigrants*; Manuel Vasquez and Josh Dewind, "Introduction to the Migrant Lives of Minorities: A Transnational and Multi-sited Perspective," *Global Networks*, 14 (4) (2014): 251–272.

11 See Sebnem K. Akcapar, "Conversion as a Migration Strategy in a Transit Country: Iranian Shiites Becoming Christians in Turkey," *International Migration Review*, 40 (4) (2006): 817–853; Carolyn Chen, "From Filial Piety to Religious Piety: Evangelical Christianity Reconstructing Taiwanese Immigrant Families in the United States," *International Migration Review*, 40 (3) (2006): 273–602; Vivienne Angeles, "Changing Perceptions of Gender in a Balik Islam Movement in the Philippines," in *Gender and Islam in Southeast Asia*, ed. Susanne Schroeter (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 181–206.

12 Lawrence Cunningham and John Kelsay, *The Sacred Quest: An Invitation to the Study of Religion* (New York: Pearson, 2013), 21.

13 Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Cross-cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, 2nd edn (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995).

14 Lewis Rambo and Charles Farhadian, *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

15 Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13.

16 John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review*, 30 (6) (December 1965): 862–875.

17 Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964). For an example in the Filipino migration context, see Jonas Nakonz et al., "And All Your Problems Are Gone: Religious Coping Strategies among Philippine Migrant Workers in Hong Kong," *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 12 (1) (2009): 25–38. See also Chapter 2 in this volume.

18 John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Conversion Motifs," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 20 (4) (1981): 373–385.

19 Rambo and Farhadian, *Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, 6–11.

20 Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 92.

21 Paul Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions: Black Caribbean Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 258.

22 Text messaging via cell phone is the primary link between the fathers who are migrant workers in the Middle East and their families, who live in a Muslim community in Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines.

23 Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 92.

24 Glenda Bonifacio and Vivienne Angeles, *Religion, Gender, and Migration: Pathways of Integration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).

25 In Philadelphia, St. Augustine Church serves as the national shrine of the Santo Niño (Infant Jesus).

26 This practice refers to the continuous singing of the Passion narrative of Jesus, starting with the book of Genesis and ending with the death of Jesus. It starts in the early morning and ends around midnight. The sponsor provides food throughout the day.

27 This is celebrated on the third Sunday of January in the Philippines, but, since the ritual involves dancing in the street and it is wintertime in the USA, Filipinos celebrate it in August. They have a smaller indoor celebration in January.
28 See Chapter 3 in this volume.
29 Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan, "Christianity as a Culture of Mobility: A Case Study of Asian Transient Migrants in Singapore," *Kritika Kultura*, 25 (2015): 215–244.
30 Patricia Dorsey, "Southwest Assembly of God: Whomsoever Will," in *Religion and the New Immigrants*, 291–324.
31 Rebecca Kim, "Migration and Conversion of Korean American Christians," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion,* eds Lewis Rambo and Charles Farhadian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 196.
32 *Balikbayan* (literally, "return to the country") refers to migrants who come back to the home country for visits, extended stay, or even to retire.
33 Juliette Galonnier and Diego de los Rios, "Teaching and Learning to Be Religious: Pedagogies of Conversion to Islam and Christianity," *Sociology of Religion*, 77 (1) (2016): 59–81.
34 "Total Number of OFWs Estimated at 2.2 Million," Philippine Statistics Authority website, https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos
35 Calabarzon includes the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon on the island of Luzon, close to the Philippine capital.
36 A pseudonym.
37 He claims that he reverted instead of converted. Muslims claim that Islam is the first religion, the religion of submission, with Adam submitting to God. In the Philippine context, Muslims claim that Filipinos were already Muslims when the Spanish colonizers came so they are just returning to their original religion.
38 Islamic missionary activity.
39 A pseudonym.
40 Lewis Rambo, "The Psychology of Religious Conversion." Paper presented at the International Center for Religious Freedom Conference on Religion, Religion and the New Millennium, Berlin, Germany, May 29–31, 1998, www.peakstates.pl/duchowe/lekcja2e.html; Mojan Momen, *The Phenomenology of Religion* (Oxford: One World, 1999), 155.
41 "Distribution on Filipinos Overseas," Department of Foreign Affairs website, https://dfa.gov.ph/distribution-of-filipinos-overseas
42 All pseudonyms for privacy reasons.
43 Sithi Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent: Religious Conversion of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 11 (3) (2010): 347–367.
44 A progressive Muslim women's group in Malaysia.
45 Karin van Nieukerk, ed., *Women Embracing Islam: Gender and Conversion in the West* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006); Carol Amway, *Daughters of Another Path: Experiences of Women Choosing Islam* (Lee's Summit, MO: Yawna Publications, 2002).
46 Rambo, "Psychology of Religious Conversion."
47 Article 160(2) of the Constitution of Malaysia defines a "Malay" as "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay customs and (1) was, before Merdeka Day, born in the Federation, or in Singapore, or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or (2) is the issue of such a person."
48 For many Filipinos, becoming a Christian means joining one of the Protestant denominations.
49 Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Conversion to Islam: Between Syncretism and Symbolic Battle," *Social Compass*, 46 (3) (1999): 351–362.

50 Paul VI, *Nostra aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html
51 Cindy Wooden, "Global Catholic Population Tops 1.28 Billion; Half Are in 10 Countries," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 8, 2017, www.ncronline.org/news/world/global-catholic-population-tops-128-billion-half-are-10-countries
52 "Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants," *Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life*, March 8, 2021, www.pewforum.org/2012/03/08/religious-migration-appendix-b
53 Sister Loreto Mapa, an Assumption nun, was coordinator of the Filipino Apostolate of the Migrant and Refugee Ministry of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Part II

Political Economy and Social Ethics

6 Migrant Remittances, Development, and Catholic Social Teaching

Alellie B. Sobreviñas and Gemma Tulud Cruz

Introduction

International migration has been an important issue in the Philippines since the 1970s when the government embarked on labor export policy as development strategy. Estimates in 2016 from the Commission on Overseas Filipinos indicate that about 10.2 million Filipinos live and work overseas.[1] These Filipinos migrate for different reasons. One of the common reasons for migration is better employment opportunities and labor conditions in the country of destination. Due to the preference of some countries for Filipinos for their generally congenial attitude and facility with the English language, there is demand for Filipino workers worldwide. In fact, the Philippines is ninth on the list of the top 20 countries of origin of international migrants in 2019.[2]

The majority of overseas Filipinos send cash remittances to their families, which serve as an important source of income for households and the country's economy. Total cash remittances sent by overseas Filipinos in 2019 reached US$42.8 billion, accounting for about 10 percent of the country's GDP.[3] Although financial remittances are considered to be migration's most direct conduit for development, the developmental impact of migration can also be transmitted through social remittances, such as transfer of knowledge, skills, and values. Like financial remittances, social remittances make some difference in families and communities across the Philippines. This chapter interrogates the impact of the Filipino diaspora's remittances at the micro (families) and macro (local communities and the country in general) level in relation to development and how such links between remittances and development may be apprehended through the lens of Catholic social teaching (CST). The chapter begins with a discussion of the impact of two key types of remittances—financial remittances and social remittances—on the family and the wider community. CST's reflections on development are then brought to bear on the Filipino experience of the nexus between migration and development based on remittances and vice versa. The chapter contends that while migration and migrant remittances provide opportunities for development, they also bring questions and challenges to the quest for an authentic and sustainable integral human development.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-9

Migrant Remittances and Development

It is common knowledge that the vast majority of Filipinos who migrate do so due to poverty that is linked to unemployment and low wages. Thus, the primary reason for international migration for many Filipinos is the search for better employment opportunities and a better life for themselves and their families. Michael Todaro argues that migration is a result of a person's utility maximization such that an individual will maximize their utility by choosing a location where they can potentially earn the highest income.[4] However, other authors extend this model to household utility maximization. Based on the New Economics of Labor Migration theory, this model holds that the decision to migrate is jointly made by the migrant and the wider social entity, including the household.[5] For instance, labor migration of a household member is viewed as a strategy to lower the risk of reducing household income. This is because the member who migrates abroad may provide economic security for the household, primarily through cash remittances.

There is consensus that remittances are the primary means in which international migration affects poverty and development in the Philippines. In 1998–2004, for instance, a positive and significant correlation between economic growth and remittance growth was observed in the country.[6] The increase in remittance flows increased consumption, investment, labor productivity, and economic growth.[7] At the regional level, there is evidence, as well, that remittances contribute to development mainly through increased spending on consumption and increased investments in human capital and housing.[8] These have the potential to generate multiplier effects, thereby contributing to regional development.

To be sure, the way remittances are spent, e.g., consumer goods versus human capital investment, has implications for development. There are two different perspectives in measuring how remittances affect poverty and development. First, the fungibility of remittances is recognized such that remittances are spent just like income from other sources, which makes it difficult to attribute development to remittances per se. Second, remittances may lead to changes in the behavior of households such that remittances may be more likely spent on consumption goods rather than investment goods,[9] hence may have limited impact on development. Although some argue that spending remittances on conspicuous consumption might not provide long-term benefit, others believe that consumption spending can increase local demand, thereby creating more employment and livelihood opportunities for people in general.[10] What is clear is that remittances have implications on development on two levels, namely the family and the wider community.

The Impact of Financial Remittances

Not surprisingly, the family is the social unit directly impacted by remittances, particularly financial remittances. A simple comparison of households with and without a migrant member working abroad, for example, reveals that the

former group moves up the income ladder quite rapidly,[11] mainly due to the remittances received by these households. Further, households with a migrant member are more likely to move out of poverty compared to those without a migrant member. In fact, remittance-receiving households in the Philippines are likely to achieve better economic conditions, although the extent of benefits depends largely on intra-household allocation of remittances.[12]

Related to the permanent income hypothesis, remittances may also be treated by households as transitory type of income and, therefore, are likely to be spent more at the margin on investment goods, that is, human and capital investment goods than on consumption goods. In fact, in some cases, return migrants and their families invest a part of their remittances in either existing or new small businesses, which can potentially contribute to development in the communities. For example, when households use their remittances to increase agriculture production, this not only expands the family's source of income but also generates increased local demands for some products such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, which help people and businesses engaged in these industries.

As seen in a study conducted in two villages (Barangay Saguing in Mabini, Batangas and Barangay Villa Angeles in Orion, Bataan), however, it appears that very few households use remittances for entrepreneurial activities.[13] These few households, which used remittances for entrepreneurial activities, either put up a small store, e.g., *sari-sari* (variety) or convenience store or engage in the business of public transportation, e.g., tricycle and jeepney services. For those households that do not engage in entrepreneurial activity their reasons include: (1) lack of education or skill among the household members to engage in entrepreneurial activities; (2) limited financial resources to start a business; and (3) high risks involved in managing a business. Although most local governments usually implement a few initiatives, such as providing livelihood training, it appears that these fail to reach most migrant households. Other factors that constrain households to invest in business include the number of dependents, food expenditure, level of wages, and home construction—e.g., in the case of households in selected communities in Carmona, Cavite, and Mabini, Batangas.[14]

Households with a migrant member usually put priorities in investing in human capital by allocating a significant portion of the remittances for the education of the children. Thus, children of migrant parents are more likely to be enrolled in school and more likely to finish education compared to their counterparts with non-migrant parents. This is because migrant's families can pay for the school fees using the remittances they receive. In addition, the children no longer need to work, or help their parents earn an income; hence, they can go to school.

In the Philippines, in general, a 3.5 percent increase in secondary-school enrollment is seen as a result of an average increase in international migration.[15] This, of course, is not surprising since providing good education for their children is one of the most common motivations of parents for working abroad. To be sure, children's education can generate long-term benefits not only for the children but also for their households. Further, children who are

more educated are in a better position to be able to contribute to the development of their communities and the country in general.

Aside from better education outcomes, remittance-receiving households are also more likely to have better health outcomes as the remittances they receive enable them to pay for good medical care as well as buy healthy food, resulting in better nutritional outcomes. It goes without saying that a community and country with well-educated and healthy citizens puts it in a good position to achieve sustained growth and development.

In order to provide more comfortable living conditions for their family, it is also common for remittance-recipient households to spend remittances on repairing or building the house, which generates jobs and economic activity. Most migrants and their households view the house as a symbol and marker of their social status in the community. They believe that owning a well-constructed house accords them a higher social status in the community. Houses are also seen to be an expression of the ties of relatedness within kin groups and the broader community.[16] Thus, investing in the house can be seen from not only an economic but also a social and cultural perspective.

It can also be argued that improved housing conditions is a reflection of the improvement of the living conditions of households in a particular area. This is evident among households in Barangay Saguing in Mabini, Batangas, where houses owned by migrant households are usually bigger and made of more modern and expensive construction materials. In addition, many of the houses owned by migrant households in this community seem to adopt the Mediterranean or Italian-inspired designs, which is a common trend not only in the village but also in other villages within the municipality of Mabini where most migrants work in Italy.

In general, international migration's positive implications for development in the case of families are connected to the fact that the decision to migrate is always made with some degree of altruism toward the interest of the family. Therefore, the income derived from migration of a household member is usually shared through remittances with those left behind. This spirit of altruism can also be seen when migrants send larger amount of remittances when their families experience unforeseen events, such as calamities or economic shocks. Remittances, in this sense, act as insurance for households.

Alongside the positive consequences are the negative consequences. There is, for example, the possibility for households to be too dependent on remittances, which may lead to reduced labor-force participation among the left-behind members. In addition, misuse or mismanagement of remittances, e.g., spending on consumer goods instead of investing in education, health care or housing means that remittances do not end up providing effective vehicles for meaningful development. Oftentimes, mismanagement of remittances is tied to a materialist and consumerist mindset. Remittances then become a source of the corruption or destruction of the family's values.

Last but not least, the financial remittances received by left-behind families from their migrant member can benefit not only the receiving household but

also the wider community. At the national level, and as alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, the sizable remittances sent by Filipinos in the diaspora, particularly OFWs, constitute a significant portion of the country's GDP and, in effect, props up the Philippine economy. At the regional, or provincial, level, the increased consumption of migrant households can stimulate local economic activities. For instance, those engaged in the production and retail of food may benefit due to increased local demand as migrants' families fuel consumption with their (increased) disposable income. In addition, new employment and business opportunities may arise for the local community and its members due to increased expenditures on housing, e.g., home renovation or construction of a new house, among migrant households. In the abovementioned study on Mabini, Batangas, for instance, there was an increase in businesses that offer money-transfer services to cater to remittance transfers from migrants. Further, increased investments in education among migrant households create a more educated population, which can generate long-term benefits toward development.

The Impact of Social Remittances

International migration's contributions to development are not just on the financial side because migrant remittances go beyond sending money. There are also the so-called political and social remittances: the ideas, behaviors, identities and economic resources that flow from host-to-sending country via migrants and their transnational networks and that promote entrepreneurship and community development as well as greater political consciousness and participation in sending countries.[17] The term "social remittances" itself was first used more than 30 years ago to highlight the important contributions of migrants aside from money. It includes ideas, behaviors, practices, social capital, and identities[18] that are exercised, or engaged, transnationally.

It is expected that those who are more integrated in their host country are more exposed to different norms and practices. Hence, they may have more potential to change their own thinking and practices. These changes may then be adopted, or absorbed, over time by their families. Greater availability and affordability of communication technology means that migrants and their families can now communicate more regularly through various communication channels, such as social media. This further contributes to the strengthening of ties between the migrants and their families and, consequently, the intensity of social remittance flows. When migrants come home, they also bring with them social tools gained from their experience abroad. This may result in the changes in the way they live their lives in their home country while, at the same time, influencing their family members' perspectives and, possibly, their communities. For instance, the new ideas, values and beliefs they gain from their experience abroad may change their expectations as to how a family, an organization, church, or society should function. They may also change their notions on critical issues such as those concerning governance, gender relations, and democracy, among others.

The positive contributions of social remittances go beyond the family. Based on the available data from Commission for Filipinos Overseas (CFO), majority of the projects supported by diaspora philanthropy during the period 2007–2017 are health-related/medical mission (88.35 percent) while the rest focused on skills transfer, infrastructure, education/scholarships, and livelihood.[19] Filipino practitioners and professionals overseas are also given the opportunity to share the expertise they acquired abroad through a Philippine government's initiative called the *Balik* (Return) Scientist program, which helps in filling up resource and knowledge gaps in the country. Others offer their expertise through their own initiatives or professional networks. These Filipino migrants, by way of being intermediaries between the Philippines and their destination countries, become instrumental in establishing trade ties and technology transfer between the two countries.[20] Hence, they also become channels of development between migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries.

International migration also contributes to the welfare of the communities of origin as migrants provide various services and donations to their religious, educational, and sociocultural institutions. Such services and donations are usually driven by religious influences, particularly the belief in the importance of giving to those who are in need. Stephen Cherry speaks along these lines based on his study of the impact of Roman Catholicism as a cultural framework and mediating institution on US Catholic civic life for first-generation Filipino Catholic communities in Houston, Texas. Cherry argues that there is a relationship between the religiosity of Filipino Catholics and transnational civic engagement.[21] Jeremiah Opiniano echoes this Catholicism-related transnational philanthropy among Filipinos and cites *Gawad Kalinga*, the development arm of the Filipino charismatic group Couples for Christ, which has branches overseas and has raised more than PhP25 million from overseas Filipinos aimed at building low-cost housing for poor Filipinos.[22] Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot also mentions the church-related transnational humanitarian activities practiced by Filipina migrants in France, particularly fundraising for victims of natural disasters in the Philippines.[23]

These philanthropic remittances are transmitted to the home country by individuals themselves or through various types of organizations in their destination country, such as hometown associations, professional bodies, spiritual and religious groups, and federating bodies. For example, in Japan, the association of Filipino brides contacts formal institutions such as the Catholic Church, hospitals, and educational institutions in order to find suitable avenues for their charity.[24] To provide a venue for Filipino migrants to come together and be involved in various development initiatives in the Philippines, the CFO identified ten areas in which Filipinos in the diaspora can engage in depending on their skills, experiences, resources, and inclination. These engagement areas under the Diaspora to Development (D2D) are presented in Table 6.1.[25]

The diaspora philanthropy Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL) was institutionalized by the CFO in 1990 and serves as one of the pioneer government programs that provides a conduit for development support and assistance

Table 6.1 Ten areas of engagement under the Diaspora to Development (D2D) of the CFO.

Area/Program	*Description*
Business Advisory Circle	A matching and linkage program that assists overseas Filipino to set up business partnerships in the country
Alay Dunong	Systematizes and strengthens skills and technology exchange between overseas Filipinos and the Philippines in fields such as science and technology, engineering, and arts and culture
Diaspora Investment	A program where new financial instruments are developed and promoted for overseas Filipinos to invest in
Balik-Turo (Teach-Share)/Educational Exchange	A professional and vocational education exchange program that encourages the return of academics and professionals to teach, mentor, and provide training and work with partner schools in the country
Tourism Initiatives	Focuses on supporting the drive for *balikbayan* tourism by encouraging migrant investments in small tourism enterprises such as local bed-and-breakfast and other tourism-related services, such as medical tourism and health and wellness programs
Global Legal Assistance and Advocacy Program	Mobilizes the support of overseas and local Filipino lawyers and legal experts to provide assistance and advice to overseas Filipinos in distress and promotes and supports issues of global interest to overseas Filipinos
Medical Mission Coordination	Facilitates the conduct of medical missions sponsored and organized by overseas Filipinos in areas requiring these interventions
Arts and Culture Exchange	Promotes and facilitates the exchange of artistic and cultural workers and programs between the Philippines and Filipino communities abroad
Return and Reintegration	Provides information to returning overseas Filipinos and retirees as well as services to facilitate their successful reintegration into local life
Diaspora Philanthropy	Focuses primarily on facilitating donations in cash or in kind for development projects especially through Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL)

Source: Nicolas, 2016

from overseas Filipino organizations to marginalized sectors and communities in the Philippines. Indeed, diaspora philanthropy can be considered as one important way in which migration contributes to local development. In the Philippines, some projects supported by the LINKAPIL include livelihood development, education, health-related activities, and small-scale infrastructure. Specific examples of assistance provided include scholarships for micro-enterprise development, medical and surgical missions to underserved areas and to communities affected by calamities, feeding programs for children, and construction of school buildings and water systems. For instance, when natural

disasters affect the Philippines, there is an increase in remittances sent by Filipino migrants to their families back home. Donations also increase when the country experiences disasters. For example, during the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo, donations from Filipinos overseas through LINKAPIL reached about PhP117 million, demonstrating the Filipino value of *bayanihan* as a cultural trait that facilitates cooperative engagement among families and communities. The *bayanihan* spirit is also evident for some overseas Filipinos coming from the two villages in the abovementioned study by Sobreviñas. The OFWs sent donations to specific local projects or institutions in their communities, such as schools, health facilities, religious and civic organizations. An increase in remittances was also reported when the communities experienced a "crisis," such as when they were hit by typhoons and floods.

Various Filipino associations worldwide also continue to provide support and help in mobilizing resources through fundraising activities and through sharing of skills, knowledge, and expertise. In 2007–2017 alone, a total of 1.58 million individuals benefited from the projects under LINKAPIL.[26] A study conducted in 2012 found that the biggest donors to LINKAPIL include larger Filipino populations abroad.[27] In particular, the majority of the donations (91 percent) were from Filipinos in the United States. Moreover, Filipinos with better economic standing, that is, in terms of employment status and income, are more likely to donate. Another important factor that encourages overseas Filipinos to donate is their hometown affinities. In fact, there is evidence that Filipino migrants usually direct their donations or philanthropic remittances to their province of origin. This trend can lead to more inequalities among provinces if these philanthropic Filipino migrants come from more developed areas. Less developed communities will receive less support from migrant's cash donations or philanthropic remittances. To address this concern and to facilitate needs-based donations, the CFO established partnerships with organizations and agencies that provide poverty-related data, e.g., on education, literacy, health and nutrition, housing, income and employment, water and sanitation, and peace and order.[28]

Toward Authentic and Integral Development: Insights and Challenges from Catholic Social Teaching

The Filipino experience of international migration confirms the consensus among migrants and migration scholars that international migration is a decision made by people with development as the ultimate goal. As the preceding section demonstrates, there is a link between migration and migrant remittances with development. How might we make sense of this link from a Catholic perspective? How might CST, in particular, provide insight(s) and challenge(s) to the migration and development nexus as experienced by the Philippines and Filipinos in the diaspora?

The migration and development framework embraces the idea of "human development," which relates to expanding people's freedom's choices, and

capabilities. As with Christianity, in general, Catholicism sees a relationship between economic science and Christian morality. This relationship, which is distilled in CST, has evolved at key periods in the history of the modern Catholic Church. An analysis of socioeconomic development in CST before and after the Second Vatican Council (hereafter Vatican II) shows that in the period leading up to it (1891–1962), the idea of development was connected both to technical and industrial progress and to the universal values of justice, charity, and truth, which national communities were asked to follow. During and right after Vatican II (1962–1979), the concept of development assumed a social and economic dimension. Integral human development was also introduced at this time, becoming one of the main pillars of CST. In the post-Vatican II phase (1979–2009), including Benedict XVI's pontificate, the idea of integral human development reached some maturity by incorporating the complexity of real-world economic interactions.[29] Today, the centrality of the concept of integral human development in the Catholic Church is reflected in the creation of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, in which the Section of Migrants and Refugees is located.

In general, CST affirms the role of development in the motivations for migration among Filipinos in the way it highlights how development must be about the whole person. This resonates with how, as indicated in the previous section, the benefits of migration to migrants and recipients of social remittances go beyond economic growth or improvement. *Populorum progressio* (On the Development of Peoples) drives home this holistic vision of development by speaking of how authentic development must be "complete" and "well-rounded."[30] Further, *Populorum progressio* insists that this (human) development not only has personal but also communal aspects.[31] Development, in other words, must be for every person, for all peoples, and nations with particular attention to the poor and vulnerable.[32] This perspective affirms, on the one hand, the practice of social remittances and diaspora philanthropy. On the other hand, it provides food for thought in view of the uneven distribution of the benefits of remittances, including social remittances. It throws a challenge to the Philippine government and Filipinos in diaspora, particularly those involved in D2D initiatives, to ensure no Filipino and no part of the country is left behind by the benefits of migration.

CST's vision of development also speaks to the Filipino experience of development in the context of migration with its emphasis on freedom and solidarity as hallmarks of authentic development.[33] In regard to freedom, for instance, a case could be made regarding the presence of "unfreedom" in the Filipino migration context given that mass poverty,[34] unemployment, and labor issues (e.g., ENDO[35]) force people to look for work overseas. On a positive note, solidarity as a vehicle for development could be glimpsed in the benefits that remittances bring, particularly to the wider community. This is particularly evident in the case of diaspora philanthropy. In fact, CST provides strong affirmation for the practice of social remittances and diaspora philanthropy in *Caritas in veritate* (On Integral Development in Charity and Truth), which

highlights how altruism, generosity, heroism, and love play important roles in integral human development; that our own good cannot be effectively pursued without consideration of the good of other people, communities, and generations; and that human ecology and natural ecology are intimately linked. *Caritas in veritate*'s key concepts of "principle of gratuitousness" and "economy of communion" lend credence to this point.[36]

As also indicated in the previous section, however, migration and remittances are not a panacea, or a cure-all, for development woes. First, there is the question of how remittances are used or spent. As *Populorum progressio* points out,[37] charity toward the poor should not only be "more solicitous and more generous" but also "more effective," a point that echoes the question of the concentration of the benefits of remittances in areas where migrants come from, thereby creating uneven development and, potentially, rendering certain parts of the country poorer. Second, the deployment of migration and remittances as economic strategies can breed dependence at the global and local level.[38] The Philippines' continuing status as a developing country, despite decades of labor export policy, and the social costs of migration[39] point to the insufficient and questionable nature of migration as a means for authentic development. Thus, while it understands and recognizes the right of people to migrate for purposes of development, the primary position of the Catholic Church itself is that of the right of people not to have to migrate.[40] *Caritas in veritate* points to this double-edged perspective within CST in its discussion of migration as "an aspect of integral human development."[41] Depending on who and how one looks at it, this position is both gift and challenge to the Filipino experience.

It must be pointed out, too, that modern CST's capacity to respond to the Filipino experience of development in connection with migration may be hobbled by its decentering of the economic as well as the technical, or scientific, dimensions of development.[42] While the transcendental basis that informs this approach makes sense, it potentially diminishes the argument against the mass poverty and underdevelopment—reinforced by the lack of technical and scientific progress (as also evidenced by the need for the aforementioned *Alay Dunong, Balik-Turo* and *Balik* Scientist initiatives)—which remain at the heart of the (continuing) Filipino exodus. It marginalizes the case, as well, for responsibility, which CST considers as a component of authentic development. The argument for responsibility, especially from a governance perspective, is essential in the case of the Philippines. *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (The Social Concern) contends that authentic human development at the level of nations include, among others, "the right to life at every stage of its existence; the rights of the family … justice in employment relationships; the rights inherent in the life of the political community."[43] These assertions fly in the face of the Philippine government's rendering of, and overreliance on, labor export policy as arguably the flagship economic and development policy to the detriment of the need for a more diversified and sustainable model of development and to the point of commodifying its own OFWs.[44] Indeed, successive governments have actively marketed overseas labor migration directly and indirectly, e.g., by

calling OFWs *bagong bayani* (new heroes). The tragic consequences of this economic approach and development model is illustrated by the thousands of OFWs who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic but still did not want to come home despite repatriation offers from the government.[45] On a more practical note, and as Mary DeLorey contends, given its deep local involvement and international network, as well as its faith conviction, the Catholic Church (with the help of CST) remains well poised to address links and gaps between migration and development.[46]

Conclusion

The chapter examined the intersections between development and migration in the Filipino context and how CST might be engaged as a conversation partner. The chapter shows that development is at the heart of any discourse on migration in the Filipino context and that the Catholic Church's social teachings provide both insights and challenges for Filipinos when it comes to making sense of the migration and development nexus.

CST's approach to migration includes both the reduction of the need to migrate and the protection of those who have little choice but to do so. The chapter demonstrates that CST provides a challenge to the Filipino experience insofar as its long-term goal is about equitable development for all peoples so that migration becomes a choice rather than a necessity. CST, in a nutshell, raises questions, as well as provides insights, regarding the authenticity and integral nature of international (labor) migration as a Filipino model or framework for development. To be sure, there is still a need for a more systematic study on measuring the impact of diaspora philanthropy on local communities, especially in terms of its potential to reduce poverty. Since evidence shows that diaspora philanthropy somehow becomes a channel for Filipinos overseas to demonstrate their Christian values and beliefs by helping the needy, there is also value in determining how diaspora philanthropy can be further promoted and sustained, especially in relation to a more even distribution of its benefits. For example, employing a more systematic, data-based, and targeted manner of identifying the most deprived individuals, families would be crucial in ensuring that no community will be left behind in the long run.

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7 Migration with Dignity and Climate Justice

Haiyan, Climate Change, and Displacement

Ma. Christina Astorga

Introduction

People migrate for many and complex reasons. Across the globe, millions leave homes and families to seek economic opportunities and, consequently, a better life. In contemporary times, the migration of an increasing number of people is driven by climate change. Environmental migration is not a new phenomenon. Changes in environmental conditions have been migration-drivers throughout history. What is new are the anthropogenic drivers of climate change.

Scholars on climate change and migration distinguish between voluntary and involuntary migration. Involuntary migration refers to those who are forced to take flight from their inhabitable places of residence due to the effects of climate change. They are mostly poor and vulnerable people who are forcibly displaced because of the severe deterioration of land and resources due to high sea levels and other factors. Voluntary migrants are those who choose to leave their country; they are, often, those with resources. Multiple drivers, one of which could be related to climate change, are linked to their choice to leave. Scholars also differentiate climate migrants from climate exiles. The former refers to those who are displaced by the drivers of climate change—mostly internally displaced—but can have the opportunity to return to their countries or regions. The latter, meanwhile, are forced out of their countries and become permanently stateless.[1]

Echoing the position of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), scholars also distinguish refugees from climate migrants. Refugees are those who are fleeing from persecution, armed conflict, ethnic strife, or human-rights violations. Unlike climate migrants, who are leaving due to climate-change drivers, refugees are abandoning their homes because of actions of their leaders or of other states.[2] These categories and descriptions, however, are not neat or clear-cut. There are, for example, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have fled, or have been forcibly displaced, from their homes for the same reasons as refugees but who remain in their own countries. Because they have not crossed the border, they have no assured source of protection and assistance. Excluded from the protections provided by the United Nations, IDPs remain under the jurisdiction of their own governments.[3] Then there are the IDPs due to climate

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-10

change. Unlike climate migrants, they do not cross the borders of their countries; they remain in their countries, mostly living in abject poverty.

Climate-induced migration-displacement cannot be addressed without considering climate justice. "An exclusive focus on climate-induced migration can easily mask the issues of injustice that have caused the forced migration or relocation; it can also overlook the responsibility of the people causing it."[4] The concept of climate-change justice brings to question the equity question and human-rights issues. Unless climate justice is addressed, the global problem of climate change cannot be addressed at its source. Only its effects would be mitigated as far as human effort possibly can, but the root of the problem would not be dealt with.

This chapter considers the relevance and implications of climate-change-induced migration-displacement to social ethics, particularly in relation to climate justice. The chapter asks the question: Is the current response by the international community to anthropogenic climate change and, in particular, the treatment and reception of people displaced by the effects of climate change—whether voluntary or involuntary—meeting the demands of justice? To respond to the question and pursue its main assertion, the chapter is developed in four parts. The first discusses climate change as a wicked problem, whose complexity can be understood from a plurality of perspectives. The second describes, in broad strokes, the Philippine experience of climate change and its connections with migration-displacement, with attention to super typhoon *Haiyan* to give a "face" to the natural and human devastation wrought by climate change, particularly to developing countries. The third part considers climate change as a structure of violence and the ethical imperative for climate justice. The chapter then concludes by offering a road map for migration with dignity in the face of climate change. The chapter argues that climate justice is an ethical imperative and that humanitarian policies are not adequate to meet the demands of justice as these can mask how those who cause climate change should be made responsible.

Climate Change as a Wicked Problem

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change refers to climate change as any change in climate over time, whether due to natural activity or as a result of human activity (anthropogenic). Various catastrophic events in different parts of the world in the past decade cement the seriousness and urgency of this issue: tropical storm *Haiyan* in 2013 (Philippines) and Idai in 2019 (Mozambique), the Amazon fires in 2019 (Brazil), and California's gigafire (a new term that refers to a blaze that burns at least a million acres of land) in 2020. Scholars on climate change, such as Kevin O'Brien, contend that climate change could be regarded as a wicked problem. A wicked problem is "ill-defined and can never be solved. At best, they are only resolved—over and over again."[5] From this perspective, climate change has no irrevocable solution. It can only be managed and controlled; it has no final resolution. We live with it, as we deal with its effects in our daily lives, struggling against it, but never ever quite able to overcome it.

A problem like climate change, in other words, defies definitions because of its complex nature. Only by viewing it from multiple perspectives does one grasp its nature. There is, first and foremost, the scientific perspective. Science shows how it is caused by global warming as we burn fossil fuels to produce electricity, transport ourselves around the world, and make all the products we need for daily life. Climate-change activists place their faith in science and technology to address climate change. However, science and technology alone cannot address the pernicious effects of climate change. Many argue that the problem is basically about consumption rather than engineering and that it stems from the faulty relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world. They see the natural world only as a resource to meet their insatiable consumption.[6] Hence, whereas those advocating technological solutions look to human ingenuity to reverse climate change, environmentalists summon people to stop threatening the ecosystems through their wasteful way of life. Those who espouse this political perspective believe that the only way to address the dire threat of climate change is to change political structures and institutions. They argue that because climate change is a global problem, it requires global political action to effect change. The 2016 Paris Agreement exemplifies how the world can come together to unite around a common cause, in this case to radically reduce global warming to stop rendering the earth extinct.[7]

Political advocates against climate change have their most vocal critics among those who advocate a market-based, economic approach. Roger Scruton, for instance, says that political proposals are "too often made without being priced" and insists that any endeavor that is not based on a clear analysis of costs and benefits is doomed to failure.[8] He is an advocate of climate change as an economic rather than a political problem. Those who take the same position hold that what is best for the ecology of the earth is best for the economy of the earth. Restricting the use of fossil fuels limits innovation and slows economic growth. They claim that political advocates do not reckon with the economic cost or price of such restriction. Naomi Klein, taking a contrary position, holds

> that the real solutions to the climate crisis are also our best hope of building a much more enlightened economic system—one that closes deep inequalities, strengthens and transforms the public sphere, generates plentiful, dignified work, and radically reins in corporate power.[9]

Many climate activists have distinguished themselves from environmentalists, who speak of climate change as not only, and primarily, destroying the habitat of endangered species but also sustaining the habitats of invasive species. These climate activists, who see climate change as a human problem, emphasize climate change more as a threat to human communities than to other species and ecosystems. As climate change rages, violent conflicts rise over resources, food supplies become scarce, extreme weather assaults cities and towns, and vectors of diseases and pests threaten human beings. From a human-problem perspective, climate activists call attention to the unjust distribution of the damage

caused by climate change. The poorest and the most marginalized, those who have contributed the least to global warming, suffer disproportionately its ravages compared to the consumerists and polluters from affluent nations.[10]

For communities of faith, climate change is not just scientific, environmental, political, economic, and human; it is also a religious problem. The traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are bound by the doctrine of creation, which asserts God as creator and all that is created as good. In light of this fundamental teaching, human abuse and exploitation of lands, seas, and nonhuman creatures is disrespectful. This is highlighted in Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* (On Care for Our Common Home).[11] The responsibility for "care for creation" becomes pronounced in view of the disproportionate impact of the effects of climate change on poor and vulnerable people, especially in the Global South, and how, as Mozambique archbishop Thabo Makgoba observes, the poor's voice "is almost inaudible in decision-making that impacts radically upon them."[12] Indeed, only through the lens of multiple perspectives, with special attention to the poor and vulnerable, can we come to more fully understand and address a complex problem like climate change.

Climate Change, *Haiyan*, and Filipino Migration

Understanding climate change from multiple perspectives necessitates viewing it from the concrete experiences of communities and nation-states. While the vectors of climate change are the same, its causes and effects differ from place to place as climate change is shaped not only by socioeconomic and political factors but also by physical and geographic influences. Migration-displacement is one of the effects of climate change that deserve attention. The experience of the Philippines lends credence to this imperative.

The Philippines looms large in the global migration landscape. Migration has become a way of life for Filipinos that one can speak of a culture of migration. Millions of Filipinos are all over the world in various kinds of work, impacting more than 70 percent of the populace. Economics, particularly poverty, unemployment, and low wages, has always been considered and accepted as the reason for this mass migration, which started in the 1970s with the Philippine government's institutionalization of overseas labor migration through the labor export policy. In contemporary times, however, climate change has become an increasingly important driver of Filipino mobility within and beyond national borders.

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands, with a population of more than 100 million. With a total area of approximately 300,000 square kilometers, the Philippines is located in Southeast Asia, close to the equator and on the Pacific Ring of Fire. Its vulnerability to geographical hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and, in particular, El Niño–induced drought and typhoons or tropical cyclones makes it a disaster and climate hotspot. The most salient of these hazards are typhoons. The country, which has a typhoon season, is lashed annually by an average of 20 typhoons, which bring heavy rains that trigger deadly landslides and leave a trail of devastation. In just

a month's time (October 11–November 12) in 2020, for example, eight typhoons entered the Philippines. Typhoon Goni (local name: Rolly), the country's 18th tropical storm and the world's strongest typhoon in 2020, affected 2.1 million people in Luzon, displaced 372,381 and killed at least 20 people, on top of over PhP6 billion in damage to agriculture and public infrastructure, including in areas that suffered under *Haiyan* (local name: Yolanda). As the third monster typhoon after *Haiyan* in 2013 and Meranti (local name: Ferdie) in 2016, Goni served as a grave reminder that the Philippines is facing ever-greater odds due to climate change. Not surprisingly, some climate change experts in the country argue that "It is time to shift from using the term 'climate change,' a declaration of an observation, to 'climate emergency,' a call to action."[13]

Haiyan is one of the strongest tropical cyclones that has ever swept across any nation in the world. It hit the Philippines on November 8, 2013, and wreaked massive and widespread havoc and devastation. According to reports, 14 million people were affected, with 4 million people displaced, including 1.8 million children, more than 6,200 deaths, and 1,795 people reported missing. More than two months after the catastrophe, bodies were still being found as the country reckoned with US$10 billion worth of loss, 93 percent of which was not protected by insurance. The force of destruction of *Haiyan* was breathtaking, with its force and rapidity likened to that of a destructive tsunami.[14] Those who were forced to flee from their homes and migrated to safer grounds lost everything except their lives and are now among the millions of IDPs.

As mentioned earlier, the Philippines has already experienced several record-breaking typhoons prior to *Haiyan*. One of them was Ketsana (local name: Ondoy), which ravaged the Philippine capital of Metro Manila, leaving 1,000 dead. In total, 5 million Filipinos living in the capital were caught in the vortex of the typhoon, which cost the country 11 billion pesos in damages.[15] The poor bore the brunt of these typhoons as they live in the most vulnerable areas. Without resources they could not also relocate, leaving them in the most desperate and deprived situations.

To be sure, the country's mass poverty poses a major obstacle in its disaster adaptation and mitigation. Corruption and inept governance,[16] reflected in poor infrastructure and inadequate social services and protection, aggravate the country's disaster reduction and resilience strategies. Disaster capitalism[17] completes this trifecta of "disasters within disasters" ensuring that the crippling impact of typhoons, which often unleash the greatest devastation in a matter of hours or a day, last for years if not generations. The severe and lasting damage then compels more Filipinos to join the millions of fellow Filipinos already living and working abroad. Evidence shows a growing number of overseas labor migration connected to the effects of climate change.[18]

Climate-induced Migration and Climate Justice

It is widely recognized that those most at risk of the effects of climate change are not those who belong to economically privileged countries and cultures that

have higher carbon footprint, but the poor and marginalized who are least responsible and whose lot depends on how those who are most responsible would repent and fulfill their ethical responsibilities. The impact of climate change is anticipated to displace up to 250 million people worldwide by 2050. The UNHCR estimates that "an annual average of 21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced by weather-related sudden onset hazards—such as floods, storms, wildfires, extreme temperature—each year since 2008."[19] The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center's (IDMC) 2016 Global Displacement Report, meanwhile, recorded 19.2 million new displacements across 113 countries as a result of disasters in 2015.

The massive loss of habitat increasingly drives the need for people to migrate, changing the nature and profile of migrants. Indeed, people who move due to the effects of climate change are no longer the "migrants in search of a better life who hope to send money and perhaps return the family left behind. These are people in search of bare life, with no home to return to."[20]

In line with the core argument of Seforosa Carroll in "Too Late for Justice? Disappearing Islands, Migration, and Climate Justice," I explore in this section how climate-induced migration-displacement is addressed, keeping at the forefront the demands of climate justice that consider the social roots of migration and displacement. The inclusion of the perspectives of those who suffer most the effects and consequences are considered to affirm their dignity, identity, and agency. As a whole, this section shows the complex and necessary relation between climate justice and climate migration-displacement.

Scott Leckie and others contend that "the global displacement crisis is an outcome of decades of political and ecological displacement of the world's most polluting nations."[21] He echoes the statement of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on April 22, 2010: "Developed countries, as the main cause of climate change, in assuming their historical responsibility, must recognize and honor their climate debt in all of its dimensions as the basis for a just, effective, and scientific solution to climate change."[22]

Carroll makes distinctions between migrants and refugees as well as climate migrants and climate exiles.[23] She also notes the difference among climate-induced migrants, particularly those who fall under voluntary and involuntary migration and those who are internally displaced who may not fall strictly under the category "migrants" because they do not cross national borders. I argue that the demands of climate justice necessitate the inclusion of all climate-induced migrants according to their context and needs.

Climate justice is an intrinsic element in policy-making to reduce climate-induced migration. It is a practical expression of the acceptance of our responsibility for climate change: "Anthropogenic climate change exacerbates existing environmental, economic, and social vulnerabilities."[24] Climate change does not take place outside of human rights or human security, the inequalities within and between countries, global injustice, and the lack of solidarity between states.[25] "Given this interrelationship, climate-induced migration and internal

displacement cannot be addressed without considering climate justice. In this instance, people are moving out not because they choose to, but because they are forced to."[26] Their places of residence have become inhabitable. The international community must recognize its responsibility, which includes, first of all, reducing carbon emissions, making preparations for receiving migrants from climate hotspot countries, and making deliberate efforts toward removing the causes of forced migration.[27]

Climate justice is premised on repenting for climate change. This repentance is a recognition of climate change not only as a scientific, environmental, human, political, economic, and religious problem but also as a structural problem. To understand climate change as a structural problem necessitates an understanding of violence. French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas contends:

> Violence is to be found in any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act: as if the rest of the universe were only to *receive* the action; violence is consequently any action which we endure without at every point collaborating in it.[28]

Thus, for Levinas, violence occurs when one lives as if they were at the center of the universe, ignoring other people, other creatures, and the rest of the world. It is an act of selfishness, as it is without any consideration of how it affects others. For the victims, violence is what is done to them without their consent.

In this light, climate change is violence. Dumping toxic pollution into rivers, living a wasteful life—e.g., excessive use of energy, maltreating animals, and illegal logging—are violent. Beyond single acts, the violence of climate change is structural. The concept of structural violence has been applied to patriarchy, racism, and classism. In contrast to the direct violence of abuse, assault, or murder,

> structural violence is caused indirectly by social systems; it is no one single person's responsibility, and no one single person's fault. It has no single architect and no direct cause, but it is nevertheless violence—a selfish expression of power that harms others.[29]

To speak of climate change as a problem that amounts to structural violence, one would need to consider all acts that exploit the resources of the earth, pollute the air, and hurt plant and animal life and that cause pain and suffering, as constituting structural violence. Christian ethicist Cynthia Moe-Lobeda writes, "Climate change degrades, dehumanizes, damages, and kills people by limiting or preventing their access to the necessities for life or for its flourishing."[30] She points out that the "insidious characteristic" of structural violence is "its tendency to remain invisible to those not suffering from it."[31] With the effects of climate change largely invisible to them, wealthy people in industrialized countries can still deny the problem and, consequently, ignore its violence. Rob Nixon describes climate change as a form of "slow violence": pain and harm that are "neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather

incremental and accretive, [their] calamitous repercussions playing across a range of temporal scales."[32] Filipino theologian Benigno Beltran speaks of a planet in peril, using the image of Smokey Mountain—a trash heap in Manila that burned continuously for more than 50 years until it was closed in 1995—as a horrifying symbol. Beltran writes

> Smokey Mountain is a metaphor for a planet slowly choking with plastic and all kinds of garbage in its cities and oceans; its rainforests denuded and arable land turned into deserts; with thousands of species of plants and animals facing extinction; its life-support systems poisoned by pesticides and toxic wastes; gasping for breath in cities smothered by smog and noxious fumes; with more and more human beings living ever closer to each other, as resources quickly disappear.[33]

In responding to structural violence, we have to "see" the structural sin of which we are a part, and to which we contribute, in order that we might repent of it, renounce it, and resist it. Repentance is crucial for privileged people to cut through the smog, see reality for what it is, and assume their responsibility for it. Repenting of climate change is recognizing one's complicity in the grand scheme of things through one's individual acts because, despite the fact that no one deliberately intends to cause climate change, everyone is part of the problem. We are, in a way, complicit to the global warming each time we drive our cars, ride on an airplane, buy imported products over local goods, drink milk produced on a factory farm, and use energy for our mobile phones. Our actions lead to the (increased) release of carbon and methane into the atmosphere. Corporate and institutional decisions also contribute to climate change. This happens, for example, when a company chooses to prioritize the financial value of fossil fuels over their restriction to keep the security of the jobs of its employees at the cost of long-term damage to the environment and ecosystem. Politicians, under pressure from lobby groups, capitulate to demand to stop the ban on fracking, which can cause land subsidence. These choices are made in conflict situations, but admitting our complicity to climate change in our personal and corporate lives can be empowering. It can lead to repentance and concrete agency for change.

Since individual decisions are ours, and systems are constructed by us, they can be changed by us. The neoliberal economy was constructed by people. Hence, it can be replaced by people. If we, who profit from this system, seek to change and transform it to build new systems that can benefit the whole earth community, especially the poor and marginalized, we stop acting as though we are alone in the world and begin living as deeply connected with others.

Concluding Remarks: A Road Map for Action

Beltran believes that each one of us has an obligation to give hope to our planet, and he is not talking about empty or false hope. It is hope grounded in transformative action. Beltran reckons

> The most urgent task for humanity is to preserve the biosphere for future generations, to share the wealth of the earth, and to live together in harmony. We have to recognize the planetary dimension of the ecological crisis, summon the moral vision and fortitude to collaborate through aggressive societal action on a global basis in order to blunt climate change and other problems that plague our planet.[34]

The world has shrunk into a global village. Though separated by lands and seas, people find and foster shared space, e.g., through digital technology, where they interact across time and distance and build virtual communities. Migration goes beyond this virtual connection as it crosses borders and builds new commons in new lands and nations. Climate change has created a new push factor for migration. With climate-induced migration, people voluntarily move, or are forcibly displaced, as their lives are seriously impacted by the effects and consequences of climate change.

How migrants are viewed is critical in developing a road map for action toward building a new world order in view of climate change. There are two contrasting views of migration and migrants in climate change and environmental discourse. On the one hand, the discourse conjures apocalyptic images of the "hordes at the gates," political violence, and "climate wars." On the other hand, it impels a form of liberal humanism that measures our humanity by the way we treat those who leave their homes because of climate change—the internally displaced, the dispossessed, and the stateless.[35] In the former, the migrant is seen as an agent of violence and death, while in the latter the migrant is endowed with capacity, dignity, and agency.

These two positions—sovereigntist and liberal humanist—clearly hold contrary worldviews about migrants. The sovereigntist position, which is the most prevalent between the two, casts the climate migrant as a threat to national or international security. It is premised on the view of the climate migrant as a catalyst of domestic or cross-border political or religious violence. The sovereigntist invokes the notion of sovereign authority and is wedded to the fortification of borders as a policy or response to climate-induced migration. The implication is that without border fortification, climate migrants will cross the border and overwhelm a country's sovereignty. Seen as an agent of insecurity and disorder, the migrant is routinely invoked to stoke fears of political violence and social ruin, as a political strategy to galvanize action on climate change.[36]

For those who subscribe to the liberal position, meanwhile, climate-change-induced migration is regarded as a fundamental part of the human condition; hence, migration is viewed as a universal value. This is contrary to the sovereigntist view where the migrant is constructed as an inherently destabilizing figure, a threat to security that drives the imposition of restrictive border measures and military intervention. Those who hold the liberal view are against a security-minded response to climate-induced migration and are in favor of a more nuanced and constructive approach, one that is development-oriented. Instead of a security-minded approach,

where migration is viewed as inevitably leading to political violence, liberals protect the rights of migrants, viewing migration as providing benefits to both origin and destination countries as well as to migrants themselves. Rather than holding a disruptive potential for environmental change, as found in security narratives, migration can represent a "transformational" adaptation that builds long-term resilience.[37]

The liberal position coalesces with climate justice as the measure of what should determine a road map for action for climate-induced migration. Climate justice focuses on the humanity of the migrants—their faces, their well-being, and their integrity. It also makes us reckon with our responsibility for climate change. Julia Haggstrom argues that climate justice must be taken as a basis for international policies on migration as this "allows responsibility to be put on those who caused the problem."[38] Exploring the role of climate justice in climate migration policy, Haggstrom acknowledges that climate justice is not instituted as legally binding as climate migration; it still exists as an ideal. She argues, however, that climate justice should be used as a basis for an international treaty on climate migration and sharing responsibility.[39]

The heads of state of Bolivia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela assert that capitalism is leading humanity and the planet to extinction, with climate change as a key example. They emphasize the disproportionate distribution of climate change's effects, with those who are least responsible for the problem suffering the full brunt of its devastating consequences.

> Developed countries should pay off their debt to humankind and the planet; they should provide significant resources to a fund so that developing countries can embark upon a growth model which does not repeat serious impacts of the capitalist industrialization.[40]

Climate debt, as it is called, is prominent in Latin America and Africa but has yet to be validated by leaders in the developed nations of Europe or North America.

The climate-justice approach reveals how people are affected by climate change not just disproportionately but also differently. When applied, it should observe the principle of equity as voluntary migration is different from forced migration and climate exile. Applying the principle of intersectionality to climate justice, the many common threads that link environmental abuses to patterns of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other social factors are brought to light. To be sure, climate change exacerbates poverty and gender inequality. The poor are, clearly, the most vulnerable to climate change. Research has also shown that women are more vulnerable to climate change than men. As caregivers and nurturers of communities, who are predominantly responsible for food production as well as for household water supply and energy for heating and cooking, women bear the full brunt of the climate-change impact.[41] Women, who make up 70

percent of the world's poor, are therefore doubly marginalized on account of class (as poor) and gender (as women).

Clearly, migration is not as simple as "packing your home on your back." It involves a number of issues that must be addressed such as the preservation of the identity and cultures of a community as well as the role of the church and its pastoral practice. Also, the countries that receive displaced people will need appropriate preparation, education, and consciousness-raising. A just response to climate-induced migration entails a long-term commitment involving all concerned parties.[42] What climate justice, in short, requires is migration with dignity, and this will largely depend on the nations which welcome, facilitate, and support the resettlement of climate migrants.

Canada and the USA provide examples of migration-related responses that prosperous host nations can implement to meet climate-change-induced humanitarian crisis in poorer nations. During typhoon *Ketsana* in 2009, Canada introduced immigration relief measures as part of their humanitarian assistance to the Philippines. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada released a Notice to Counsel in October 2009, which stated

> In response to the recent typhoons Ketsana and Parma affecting the Philippines, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has announced that it will give priority to the processing of existing and new applications of Family Class applicants under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (specifically, spouses, common law and conjugal partners, dependent children, parents, grandparents, and orphaned family members) who are directly and significantly affected by the current situation.[43]

Canada also implemented this same response in the aftermath of typhoon *Haiyan*. Since November 13, 2013, Canada has been prioritizing the processing of applications already in progress, upon request from Filipinos who are significantly and personally affected by the typhoon.[44]

Answering the call for assistance in response to a major environmental disaster, the USA also made certain forms of relief available to Filipino nationals affected by typhoon *Haiyan*. More specifically, relief measures were instituted for Filipino nationals residing in the USA upon request. One of these measures was a request for a change, or an extension, of nonimmigrant status for Filipinos in the United States at that time who were out of status. Other immigration relief measures for Filipino nationals affected by the typhoon involved extension of grants of parole and advance parole. Over 200 Filipino American organizations across the USA also submitted a request to the Department of Homeland Security to grant temporary protected status (TPS) to Filipino nationals in the USA. TPS beneficiaries and eligible applicants can obtain temporary authorization to remain and work in the USA for a set period of time. It may be prolonged if the conditions in the country of origin do not change.[45]

The abovementioned measures are laudable cases of humanitarian post-disaster interventions in the sense that they make immigration and admission

policies flexible to meet needs. They represent paths forward in terms of assistance and protection given to people affected by a humanitarian crisis.[46] It must also be pointed out, however, that while such humanitarian acts are laudable, they can easily mask the issues of injustice that have caused the forced migration, or relocation, due to the effects or consequences of climate change. In their article, "The Politics of Environmental Migration and Climate Justice in the Pacific Region," Silja Kleep and Johannes Herbeck argue that, for the Global North, migration due to climate change is reduced to either security threat or purely humanitarian issue.[47] In contrast, the Pacific focuses on fostering "global and regional solidarity to assist them in their search for long term adequate solutions for potential climate migrants."[48] Only when climate-induced migration is addressed on the basis of climate justice that the social roots of the issue, the reckoning of responsibility, and the necessary agency for change are dealt with. Furthermore, it is only on this basis that a policy of migration with dignity can be envisioned and enforced.

Humanitarian acts can give a false notion that one has already done one's part without dealing with the root causes of why such humanitarian acts should be done in the first place and how one's actions have led to the problem that one is now trying to address. They deal with consequences rather than the causes. It is about time that polluting prosperous nations should repent of climate change, make reparations of the havoc that their actions have wreaked on the world, and pay their climate debt to humankind as climate justice requires.

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8 The Ties that Unbind

Filipino Female Transmigration and the Left-Behind Family as Domestic Church of the Poor through the Lens of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

Maria Elisa A. Borja

Introduction

Human mobility is as old as life itself. People have moved for centuries and generations in search of material and spiritual goods, even inhabiting foreign lands to attain them. In contemporary times, global social, economic, and demographic imbalance, as well as civil, political, ethnic, and even religious conflicts have intensified migration.[1] Indeed, not all migration is by choice. The Catholic Church asserts that when their homeland cannot provide for them due to poverty and other reasons persons have the right to emigrate. The Holy Family of Nazareth migrated temporarily when they fled to Egypt to escape the wrath of a tyrannical king. Thus, they remain the "archetype of every refugee family."[2]

There are ties that bind people together: marriage, family, friendship, community, country, and ethnicity. To be sure, primordial ties belong to the nuptial family and family of origin. Migration creates new ties for female migrants in host countries, but these tend to unbind existing family ties. Filipino mothers, naturally, do not want to strain family ties by working overseas, but their exodus is often a matter of survival. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) says that poverty "is the silent killer of families,"[3] as economic hardship and bleak job prospects force mothers not simply to seek greener pastures but to try to beat poverty.

The strong culture of migration makes the Philippines one of the largest labor exporters in the world. Of 110.3 million Filipinos as of January 2021,[4] 10.2 million are working and living in over 200 countries. Of these, 4.2 million are temporary migrants and 1.2 million are irregular migrants.[5] The Philippine government regards overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as *bagong bayani* (new heroes) because of their sizable economic contribution.[6] Yet, at what cost? In the 1970s, Filipino families lost their fathers to labor demands overseas, especially in the Middle East. In the 1980s, families began losing their mothers with a second migration wave that saw the exodus of female laborers in the fields of care and domestic work. In 2019, females surpassed males in migrant labor (56

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-11

percent female to 44 percent male), positioning the Philippines as an unenviable exemplar of the feminization of migration.[7] As a result, over 9 million Filipino children experience feelings of being "orphaned" by migration,[8] an experience that is complicated by the fact that a considerable number of the mothers of these children work in family settings and care for other people's children.

Studies on Filipino migration have noted that when parents, especially the mother, engage in migration, family ties are weakened.[9] This chapter probes the impact of the absence of transmigrant[10] mothers from their family. In particular, it asks: What effects does international migration have on the family left behind, especially children left behind by transmigrant mothers employed in domestic work? Will the maternal ties that once bound the family together, held dearly by the mother as *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home), now come unfastened? Will nurturing children who are not their own unbind the ties at home? What insights might we draw from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' (FABC) theology on the family, especially regarding reflections on the family as domestic church of the poor? The chapter begins by sketching, in broad strokes, the migration context of Filipinas employed as domestic workers overseas and the effects of migration on them and their families in the Philippines. This is followed by reflections on the experience of these transnational families in conversation with the FABC's theology on the family, particularly as domestic church of the poor. Family practices in view of living out the Catholic family's identity as domestic church of the poor are then offered. The chapter submits that being a domestic church of the poor in the context of female transmigration is about engaging in a collective mission of binding up the wounds of the small (biological) and the larger (human) family, especially the poor and vulnerable.

The Landscape of Transnational Families

The increasing feminization of international migration is a phenomenon caused by globalization engendered by neoliberal capitalism. More women in both developed and developing countries now participate in the labor force, creating a rise in the global care work economy. At least 50 percent of all Filipina female temporary migrant workers are domestic workers, whether direct, serial, or stepwise migrants.[11] Figures for new-hire female domestic helpers employed through established channels saw a rise from 71,557 in 2009 to 94,880 in 2010.[12] Top destinations for domestic work include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Italy, and Singapore. Yet, even for stepwise migrants, domestic work remains a low-wage occupation with no stability or permanence.[13] In fact, studies show that social reproduction of poverty still occurs in multinational migration for those in low-skilled or elementary occupations, such as domestic workers,[14] thus dispelling the notion that migration offers an inevitable path to socioeconomic mobility.

There is a double care transfer that occurs in transnational childcare. The first involves the care transfer from middle- and upper-class women in high-income

countries working outside the home to migrant Filipina domestic workers. The second revolves around Filipina migrants transferring care responsibilities to their female kin or to a poor(er) Filipina whom they employ as domestic worker in their home in the Philippines. This global care chain sees migrant domestic workers move between families and households, that is, from their family at home to the family of employment, and fill a labor niche of caregiving and reproductive labor, including "mothering" by caring for children other than their own.[15]

Physical separation as a result of migration clearly does not make being a family easy. Families provide our most intimate relationships such that protracted separation threatens our well-being and subjectivity as human beings. Jason DeParle sheds light on how separation is a constant worry and an endless toll on transnational Filipino families in *A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves: One Family and Migration in the 21st Century*. The book reflects not only the pained mix of self-affirmation and abnegation that characterizes the lives of Filipino migrants and their families but also the gendered dynamics that continue to play a role in Filipino migration.[16] So what happens to the OFW mother and her family as a result of transmigration? In particular, how is the family impacted by the absence of the mother in a culture where domestic roles and responsibilities largely remain gendered?

Effects of Migration on the Female Domestic Worker

On the one hand, migration provides economic relief and some personal growth and development, e.g., intercultural and interreligious literacy and increased sense of independence for the mother. On the other hand, migrant domestic work generally produces a rupture in daily life and a gamut of challenges. The migrant worker may experience loneliness, poor network support, and stress related to living away from her family, which may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Within her work setting, that is, her employer's home, she may be at risk of adverse occupational threats, including long working hours, substandard working conditions, abusive or exploitative relationships with the employers, and work-related injuries.[17] Those who are required to live with their employers, such as those in Hong Kong, face potential additional challenges not only in terms of poor accommodation but also being on call for 24 hours.

Globalization within a neocapitalist setting keeps wages low to increase profits. As temporary migrant workers, those employed in domestic work generally receive a meager income, have no possibility for permanent residency, and no civil rights.[18] The low income delays family reunification for as long as 16 years.[19] The migrant mother is also exposed to threats of exploitation as well as sexual abuse and harassment in a foreign land. These difficulties can take their toll on the OFW mother and, in one way or another, have a flow-on effect to family roles and relationships. In some cases, migrant mothers come back home in a casket, e.g., Flor Contemplacion, who was hanged in Singapore for the questionable conviction of two murders. Filipina domestic workers make up 20 percent of the overseas workforce but account for 80 percent of its

problems.[20] In 2020, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration even issued a total ban on newly hired and returning domestic workers in Kuwait due to the pending investigations on reports of abuse and the death of seven OFWs, including the publicized case of Joanna Demafelis and Jeanelyn Villavende.

Even without work-related issues, the migrant mother usually worries that her family will spend her hard-earned wages recklessly and not appreciate all her sacrifices.[21] Despite regular remittances, the migrant mother may return home to find that there are no savings, or no money left, as the family falls into the trap of materialism and, worse, "become parasites, who no longer have the drive to work."[22] Never mind if the OFW incurs debts as long as there are *pasalubong* (gifts) when she comes home and as long as there are occasional *padala* (money sent through wire transfer or goods sent through returning OFWs) or *balikbayan* (overseas Filipinos) boxes.[23]

The migrant mother's loneliness, meanwhile, drives her to seek incorporation into her employer's household, especially when the employer is trusting and kind. She attempts to develop bonds with the children in her care, treating them as her own, while her children remain in the hands of relatives. However, because relationships with her employer's family are fleeting and unpredictable, she often remains like family but not family in the true sense of the word.[24] Migrant mothers are forever in between families, never quite incorporated into one family or another.[25] The guilt of missing their children's growing-up years sometimes leads to some detachment and emotional distance, but it pales in comparison to the guilt they experience for not being able to physically care for their children and transferring care work to relatives while they take care of other people's children. This is evident in the following lament

> When that girl I take care calls her mother "Mama," my heart jumps all the time because my children also call me "Mama." I feel the gap caused by our physical separation especially in the morning, when I pack her lunch, because that's what I used to do with my children … I begin thinking that at this hour I should be taking care of my very own children and not someone else's, someone who is not related to me in any way, shape and form … Some days I just start crying while I am sweeping the floor because I am thinking about my children … Sometimes, when I receive a letter from my children telling [me] they are sick, I look up out of the window and ask the Lord to look after them and make sure they get better even without me around to care after them. If I had wings, I would fly home to my family. Just for a moment, I want to see my children, take care of their needs, help them, then fly back over here to continue my work.[26]

Indeed, while she may delegate some mothering duties, she never forgets her role and identity as a mother. This leads to the practice of transnational motherhood, which is described as the organizational reconstitution and rearrangement of motherhood to accommodate the temporal and spatial separations forced by migration. Transnational mothers, often described as

"supermoms" by their children, do not only reconstitute mothering by providing acts of care from afar but also by overcompensating for their physical absence. "In sharp contrast to migrant fathers who reduce their relationship with children to monthly remittances, mothers personalize their ties" by making "regular communication part of the weekly routine of transnational family life."[27] Irregular Filipina migrants, who cannot easily visit their family back home due to their migration status, try harder to compensate by resorting to more intense transnational communication and gift-giving practices.[28]

Migrant domestic work is both a labor of love and sorrow. Given a viable choice, migrant domestic workers would rather stay in the Philippines and be with their family. As it is, migrant worker mothers normally endure family separation for as long as eight to ten years. They long for the day when they can finally come home, hoping that family ties are not seriously, or permanently, unbound while fearing reunification with their children because of the long time apart.[29] Mothers can miss out on entire childhoods. Sometimes their relationship with their children remains damaged and distant, years after they return. Dolores's son, whom she left in the care of the grandmother when he was six months old, did not recognize Dolores when she saw him again when he was two and a half years old. Catalina's son, meanwhile, asks, "Why do you look after other kids but you can't look after us?" despite coming home for visits twice a year. Krizzel, who was left by her mother, Divina, when she was ten years old to work in Taiwan and Hong Kong, could not bring herself to talk to her mother about her first menstrual period because of the wall she felt between them since she was not always around. Krizzel, who was raised by her grandparents, instead sought out her older sister, who filled the gap and "acted like a mother" as they grew up.[30] These feelings of estrangement often linger after mothers come home for good, putting these mothers between a rock and a hard place.

Effects of Migration on the Children Left Behind

As is the case with the migrant mother, the family in the Philippines have both positive and negative experiences. To be sure, remittances create a better standard of living and better education for members of the family, both immediate and extended. However, the real and perceived care gap created by migrant women's absence results in a crisis of care in the family[31] as family relationships are put to test. In-laws may look down on the left-behind husband for not being able to provide for his family. Traditionally, a real man in the Philippines is perceived to play the roles of provider, protector, and lover. While some husbands and fathers rise to the challenge of reevaluating traditional Filipino masculine roles to fill the care gap left by the absence of the wife and mother, others find it very difficult to shift roles, especially in relation to housekeeping and child-rearing.[32]

Just like migrant mothers, children feel displaced, neither here nor there, with a mother they cannot be with.[33] Preschool children do not seriously feel the absence because bonds have not yet been established. However, children

aged between six and 16 years have established those bonds, making them the most affected age group among left-behind children. The younger ones may see migration as an act of abandonment, while adolescents' perceptions may vary between feelings of receptivity and resentment.

Studies in the past point to school-related problems and mental-health problems for children,[34] an observation echoed by Filipina theologian Mary John Mananzan who noted how, in the 11 schools run by her religious congregation in various parts of the Philippines, the majority of students needing psychological counseling have one or both parents abroad as OFWs.[35] More recent research reveals that family separation is less likely to produce extreme cases of depression, delinquency, or poor academic performance.[36] Rather, the issue revolves around a sense of powerlessness, longing, and deep sadness. With long periods of the migrant parent's absence, children experience feelings similar to orphans and abandoned children. Hence, CBCP describes children of temporary migrants as "seasonal orphans."[37] As could be seen in the abovementioned case of the children of Divina and Catalina, they hunger for maternal bonds, feel hurt, abandoned, and even bitter. Children's psychological and spiritual needs, in other words, are often unmet, and they become weary of the adjustment cycle that accompanies their migrant parent's coming and going. They often remain unsatisfied even with transnational motherhood or reconstituted motherhood through quality care by a substitute mother.

Left-behind children also experience gender-related discrimination. In some cases where the father does not perform the care work, the heavy burden is transferred to the eldest girl child. Likewise, Philippine society favors male migration and perceives female migration as a national crisis and child abuse by migrant mothers in the diaspora.[38] There is a strong belief that the mother plays a crucial role in the life of the family, in general, and the children, in particular, due to the mother–child bond and womb connection that they share. This cultural value is illustrated in the persistence of traditional Filipino gendered references to the wife and mother as *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home) and the husband and father as *haligi ng tahanan* (pillar of the home), as well as the denigrating term for husbands and fathers who defer to the wife and mother and do domestic work as *andres/ander de saya* (under the woman's skirt)—in short a henpecked husband.

Another possible adverse effect of female transmigration on children is the decline in the transmission of cultural and religious values. While children are generally appreciative of their parent's sacrifices, they may imbibe a materialistic mindset, monetize migration, and see their mother as merely a regular provider of their financial resources. Such materialism often leads to a low sense of well-being and even entitlement, especially when children are not trained to count their blessings.[39] In some cases, the material benefits of migration create a desire among children to follow the footsteps of their migrant parent such that they resort to studying courses that are in demand for migration such as shipping and nursing. This chain of intergenerational migration that fuels the culture of migration in Filipino society is problematic since most parents make the painful decision to

work overseas to give their children a better future and not have to resort to overseas labor migration in the first place.

The Transnational Family as Domestic Church of the Poor: The FABC's Theology on the Family as Reflective Lens

The previous section illustrated that migration can be disempowering for both mothers and their children. The ties that bind mothers to migrant domestic care work unbind them from their family as children suffer from the prolonged absence of their mother. The FABC's reflections on the family, particularly as the domestic church of the poor, provide a lens in making sense of the experience of migrant domestic workers and their families. This is particularly true in the case of the final document from the 11th FABC Plenary Assembly titled *The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy*.[40]

The FABC submits that migration and dislocation, as a result of poverty associated with economic globalization, is a major pastoral challenge to the family.[41] Labor migration, according to the FABC, is often to the social detriment of the families left behind for various reasons.[42] First, there is the suffering migrant workers' experience. Second, conjugal bonds and family relationships are broken by prolonged absences. Third, migration leads to dysfunctional growth and development of the children, especially those who grow up without the guidance of both parents. Love, the FABC insists, cannot be expressed merely by remittances sent to support families. Fourth, the drive for a better quality of life begets a craving for higher lifestyles and for luxury goods that may result in a narrow utilitarian one-child view of family. So, how might the FABC's theology on the family in the context of being church, particularly its reflections on the family as domestic church of the poor, shed light on binding up the (family) wounds of female domestic worker transmigration?

The FABC describes being church in terms of communion, discipleship, prophecy, and dialogue.[43] These dimensions of being church in Asia inform the FABC's theology on the family, particularly as expressed in *The Catholic Family in Asia*. The first, communion, speaks of engaging in an interactive and reciprocal love at the service of one another, rooted in communion with God who makes conjugal and family love possible. The Eucharist, where God's family is united in Christ through worship and mission, is the center of this communion. It nourishes the marriage and empowers the family to be a school of prayer, and sends off every family on a mission of mercy. Thus, the FABC speaks of the family as a Eucharistic family, that is, a "'sanctuary of love and life,' an icon of God's mercy and compassion."[44] In family communion, the FABC explains, "the members of the family are united together, indeed through natural physical generation, but more profoundly through interactive reciprocal love and service of one another."[45]

The FABC's understanding of the family in relation to the Eucharist is notable in terms of how it recognizes the family's "spirit of sacrifice as it mightily struggles daily for a better life and strives to respond to the needs of

others."[46] Such perspective is in tune with the reality of how all members of mother-away transnational families have their own share of difficulties and challenges. Moreover, it aligns with how such sacrifices and struggles are, for better or worse, often framed from a "family welfare" perspective by family members themselves, particularly the migrant mother. At the same time, the emphasis on the need for an interactive and reciprocal nature of love and service sits well with the reality of how migrant mothers suffer disproportionately. Such stance is important in view of how relatives staying at home are sometimes ignorant of, or do not fully understand and appreciate, the extreme sacrifices of their relatives abroad.[47] To be sure, migrant mothers themselves tend to refrain from informing, or involving, their family back home of the problems they face overseas out of the desire to spare their family from anxiety or pain. This, from the FABC perspective, does not absolve the family of the obligation to reciprocate the love and service of the migrant mother by assuaging her burden.

The FABC also understands the family in terms of missionary discipleship. The family is, by identity, a "missionary disciple"; mission is its birthright.[48] Further, this discipleship is participatory and collaborative. As a focal point of evangelization, the family is both a place for, as well as a partner in, the church's missionary work. Parents live out authentic discipleship when they provide witness to their children and to the world through care and spiritual formation.[49] Children, in turn, collaborate and participate in the family care work by loving their parents and one another through sacrifice and fidelity to studies and house chores. As a locus for missionary discipleship, the family becomes the primary basic ecclesial community. It is a place of word, witness, and worship. It becomes, in other words, a microcosm of the church and its missionary work.

In addition, the family, according to the FABC, is a community on a mission of mercy and compassion not just *ad intra* (within the family) but also *ad extra* (outside the family).[50] In fact, "it is when 'biological families' open themselves to Christ and to others, particularly the poor, that they become 'domestic churches'."[51] A domestic church of the poor, therefore, is "a family not of blood but of faith … live a spirit of evangelical poverty and … solidarity with the poor…. a way of poverty and simplicity, a way of humility … a life of … sharing."[52]

The FABC's reflections on the family as domestic church of the poor is instructive as it affirms and, at the same time, challenges the experience of migrant mothers and their families. To be sure, family in the context of migration, as the FABC—quoting Matthew 12:46–48[53]—posits, is beyond biological ties. This could be seen in migrant domestic workers' forging of familial bonds not just with their employer's family but also among fellow Filipino migrants and domestic workers. Their children at home, meanwhile, may search for, and find, "family" among their peers, their own *yaya* (nanny) at home or teachers and other authority figures in school.[54] The FABC's notion of evangelical poverty in relation to the family also serves as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it speaks to the various forms of poverty (economic,

psychological, and spiritual) migrant mothers and their families experience, which can be considered evangelical in the sense that these are revelatory. Their poverty raises questions on what it means to be a Christian today. Hence, the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (On Love in the Family) considers the experience of families of migrants as a "sign of the times."[55] At the same time, the FABC's notion of evangelical poverty strikes at the heart of some of the problems plaguing migrant domestic workers and their families. It has been observed, for example, that they become addicted to consumption. CBCP writes

> Not only do they buy so much, but their taste has also changed. They now wear signature items, eat at more expensive restaurants, go for imported goods, and aspire for more material things. Children … have demonstrated a certain degree of arrogance because of their newly-achieved economic status … There are families left behind who worry about the change in the outlook of the FMW (Filipino Migrant Worker). They are concerned that they have become materialistic.[56]

From a Catholic perspective, evangelical poverty does not mean living in ignorance of the economic realities connected to community life and the mission of serving the world in the name of the church. A circular from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for example, points out that gratuity, fraternity, and justice ought to characterize the practice of evangelical poverty. The circular's reminder on "the importance of working with a budget and estimates in the knowledge that these reflect the values and spirit of the institute" (religious order) and the need to "define which works and activities to pursue, which to eliminate or modify"[57] provides clues for migrants and their families on how to more meaningfully and effectively manage the fruits of OFWs' hard labor overseas.

As households that experience(d) poverty, families of migrants are well placed to identify with the poor and vulnerable in society. They are well positioned, in other words, to put into practice the FABC's vision of families making an option for the poor by being in solidarity with the poor. It is in being a household of faith, that lives simply to be a "Church of the Poor," that Catholic families become a domestic church of the poor.[58] This is very much in keeping with one of the key insights from the Plenary Council of the Philippines on being a church of the poor: "No one is so poor as to have nothing to give and no one is so rich as to have nothing to receive."[59] To be sure, many OFWs bear witness to service and solidarity with the poor through social capital and diaspora philanthropy.[60]

Transnational families' practice of evangelical poverty and solidarity with the poor point to the abovementioned third dimension of being church in Asia, that is, prophecy. Prophecy is about being a credible sign of God's goodness to others, a light of hope and love, an agent of mercy. It aims for social transformation in and through the service of life. As the domestic church of the poor, mercy impels the family to move forward and renew itself and the world by

exercising compassion, love, and forgiveness.[61] More than a family simply loving each other, the family must go beyond itself to impact society, wherever it may be. As it seeks out the poor within and outside itself, it exercises the family's dual mission of intimate passion and social passion, the family's good and the common good, which is the family's identity and mission.[62] By standing in solidarity with the poor, the transnational family becomes *ecclesia domestica*—the church in the home or the mini church—which shares the same mission and identity as the church of the poor.[63] It is a church that begins within the biological family (*ad intra)* but moves in service to the world or the human family (*ad extra*).[64]

Last but not least, the FABC speaks of the family in relation to dialogue which, in FABC theology, is the Asian mode of being church.[65] The FABC reckons that in order to face contemporary challenges to the family effectively, collaboration with families of other faiths would be necessary.[66] The FABC adds that, where there is a hostile environment, the family "needs to persevere in a dialogue of life (through) fellowship, solidarity for the common good, friendship, a welcoming of the 'other,' respect, and understanding … even when they do not seem to be reciprocated."[67] Dialogue, in other words, could be fostered through working for peace and harmony[68] within the family and in society. Dialogue, in FABC thinking, is beyond mere communication. It is the openness and appreciation of the diverse other and the desire for harmonious relationships with all, amid difficulties and differences. It is not about having consensus at all cost. "Harmony is not 'an absence of strife.' Nor is it merely a pragmatic strategy for common living amid differences."[69] Rather, it is an Asian approach to reality, an Asian understanding of reality that is profoundly organic, i.e. a worldview wherein the whole, the unity, is the sum total of the web of relations and interaction of the various parts with each other.

The FABC itself emphasizes three areas of dialogue: with the Asian poor, with their cultures, and with their religions.[70] This "triple dialogue" is the modality in which the church in Asia carries out its evangelizing mission and, thus, becomes the local church. The triple dialogue is strongly relevant to OFWs, most of whom work in countries where Christianity is a minority religion. As foreigners, migrant mothers are also challenged to learn to inculturate in the host country without seriously compromising their religious faith and Filipino values. As marginalized residents and workers caring for the vulnerable (children and elderly) in their host countries, they embody poverty and, at the same time, enter into a dialogue with poverty. The triple dialogue is also valuable for the left-behind family given the presence of other cultures and religions as well as mass poverty in the Philippines.

One notable weakness of the FABC's reflections on the family as domestic church of the poor is its lack of critical attention to the gendered power dynamics of poverty and family life. As could be seen, for example, in the gendered nature and character of care such attention is vital in theological reflections on migrant domestic work and transnational family life. Reimagining family life in Asia itself entails a redefinition of power relations as an

alternative programmatic. It calls for a person-affirming theology of "loving without making a bondage of love"[71] and where powers are named anew unleashing its liberative potential of life and love.

Toward a Domestic Church of the Poor: Practices for Transnational Families

The permanence of female transmigration is a postmodern fact. So, how might the difficulties and challenges be minimized or, ideally, eliminated in view of the FABC's theology on the family? In particular, how might the FABC's reflections on the family as domestic church of the poor offer insights to transnational families on coping with, or mitigating, the adverse effects of separation without compromising the family's social mission?

Domestic Church of Communion

Relationships in transnational families could easily be reduced to mere functional roles if communion is not cultivated. It is essential to maintain presence amid loneliness, even if it may not be a physical presence. Constant attempts to "do family" through reciprocal care and bonding make for a healthy transnational family, as it strives to nurture closer connections and work for the family's collective welfare and unity.

Communion quenches the family's yearning for emotional and social support, and this can be realized in a number of ways. One ubiquitous means is the use of technology to build intimacy from afar so that family members may be separated but never apart.[72] Social-media platforms provide new ways of relating, that is, virtual forms of care, despite distance and time-zone differences. Family members can become Facebook friends to stay connected and virtually participate in each other's lives. They can also maintain a family Viber group (or group chat) as a venue for sending messages and posting pictures or birthday greetings. Technology-savvy children could provide digital support for parents.[73] Technology could facilitate virtual presence and participation in real-time anytime (through videos or live-streaming) during important family occasions such as births, deaths, or reunions.

A second means is by framing gender roles and relations in the family from the perspective of Filipino values that encourage the reimagination of gender stereotypes, e.g., the idea that *lakas* (power) and *ganda* (beauty) could be exhibited by both men and women in the migration context and can lead to harmony.[74] Further, members of the extended family could be requested to help fill the care gap as an expression of *pakikisama* (mutual cooperation) or *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) to reciprocate, or in gratitude for, the benefits and help they receive from the OFW's remittances and other forms of material support. Such reciprocal relations illustrate mutual assistance and responsibility that strengthens, harmonizes, and seals the interdependence of the extended family.[75] From this perspective the choice of grandmothers as carers, albeit not

free of criticism from a gender perspective, has some positive dimensions insofar as it creates or reinforces intergenerational bonds within migrant families.[76]

A third means for communion is the practice of reciprocal care as a form of *sukli* (the spare change after payment for services or goods) by making children active agents of family care, where relevant and appropriate. *Sukli* is used here to refer to an intentional labor of care linked to the Filipino value of *utang na loob* insofar as children's care work is a reciprocal response, or a result of gratitude, for the mother's love and sacrifices. Children can practice care for the family as *sukli* through house chores, acts of service, and transparency on their educational performance. Voluntary and truthful conversations with their mother about their academic results, regardless of whether the results are favorable or not, demonstrates honesty, builds trust, and maintains the transnational connection. Such possibly difficult conversations have the potential for profound interactions and, consequently, deeper relations. *Sukli*, in this sense, is about the unwritten exchange that happens between the economic remittance from the migrant mother and the socio-emotional remittance from the children. It is the attempt to reciprocate the maternal sacrifice of migration.[77] In the past, children tended to be perceived merely as developing persons without agency. In contemporary times, they are considered social actors who contribute through reciprocal nurturance and care work. From this perspective, communion, as family practice, is not simply one-way but a mutuality.[78]

Last but not least, transnational families can become a domestic church of communion through religious practices. Praying together, for example, can build or strengthen family bonds. Transnational families can also draw strength from the Eucharist and participation in various forms of Filipino popular piety. Family communion could be facilitated, as well, through pastoral support from the parish and family-centered communities like Couples for Christ, Kids for Christ, or Family Encounter.

Domestic Church of Discipleship

Discipleship may be practiced by members of the family in various ways. As illustrated in the previous section, motherhood does not cease but is reconstituted to mean breadwinning and nurturing from afar through transnational care practices. Such transnational care practices, which may take the form of remittances sent with love, compensating for physical absence through various means, and participation in family life, e.g., management of household finances,[79] are expressions of discipleship. The same is true with letters, phone calls, SMS, emails, and interactions via social-media platforms insofar as these may compensate for physical absence. Care, meanwhile, could be reinforced through *balikbayan* boxes, which are known as "love boxes" as they contain bulk items for daily use and intimate goods like clothes, goods, and toiletries. These "love boxes" fill the gap, lessen time and space between mothers and their children, and help mothers to be remembered for their mothering.[80] Surrogate caregivers, meanwhile, could participate in family discipleship through the values and spiritual formation they provide for the children.[81]

The reformulation of family roles, in the meantime, can allow left-behind husbands to claim a central role in parenting their children as MaPa (short for Mama, or mother, and Papa, or father).[82] Traditionally, the nurturing role is commonly delegated to female kin. In recent times fathers increasingly take on the role because societal criticisms of shame and disapproval have dissipated while sympathy for embracing the sole domestic parent role has risen, redefining masculinity.[83] These new roles of female breadwinner and male nurturer could reframe how we look at the mother as *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home) and father as *haligi ng tahanan* (pillar of the home), making parenting responsibilities a real partnership. Parents can involve children in partnership as an expression of family discipleship by refraining from the traditional top-down type of parenting that merely imposes rules and encouraging children to participate and collaborate in their own values and spiritual formation and in the struggle for family well-being. Raising the children and the family, in general, as faithful and responsible Christians and global citizens is part and parcel of discipleship as transnational family practice.

Domestic Church of Dialogue

The family is the cradle of support, self-discovery, self-worth, and self-reliance. Yet family is, likewise, a source of conflict, inequality, and misunderstanding. Hence, regular dialogue is essential as transnational family practice. Regular dialogue reinforces motherly love and helps children understand more effectively their mother's sacrifice and care. Such dialogues could also help mothers realize that they are not the only ones making sacrifices and adjusting to the impact of migration. It helps when mothers verbally acknowledge the sacrifices their children make due to the migration and affirm them for it. At the same time, it would be helpful for the mother to be transparent with her family about her own struggle in view of fostering authentic dialogue. It would also be beneficial for the mother to share her encounters with poverty, other cultures, and religions in her host country for the children to be able to understand and appreciate her experiences and, to a certain extent, broaden their horizons and perspectives on other people, cultures, religions, and the world, in general. Such intercultural and interreligious awareness would go a long way in building character for living in the Filipino context, which continues to be plagued by Christian and Muslim conflict, and in today's globalized world.

Conclusion

The chapter demonstrates that the absence of migrant mothers could be detrimental to family life and that families must engage in intentional family formation and nurturance by looking for new ways of being and doing family. Female migration can lead to the breakdown in family ties as well as loosening of maternal ties, but it could also be an opportunity for the family to reimagine these ties in transnational ways as a household of faith, with the migrant

mother and left-behind family members working together to keep and strengthen family bonds. Doing so enables the transmigrant and her family to be in a better position to live out the Catholic family's identity as a domestic church of the poor. Ultimately, to be a domestic church of the poor is about binding up the wounds of the family *ad intra* and *ad extra*. It would be difficult for transnational families to be a domestic church of the poor in the truest and fullest sense of the word unless they pay attention to their wounds and become wounded healers.

Notes

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2 Pius XII, *Exsul familia Nazarethana* (The Nazarene (Holy) Family in Exile), Introduction, www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12exsul.htm
3 Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, "Saving and Strengthening the Filipino Family: A CBCP Pastoral Statement on the 20th Anniversary of *Familiaris Consortio*," CBCP Online, December 2, 2021, http://cbcponline.net/saving-and-strengthening-the-filipino-family
4 "Philippines Population (Live)," Worldometer, www.worldometers.info/world-population/philippines-population
5 "Philippine Migration at a Glance," Commission on Filipinos Overseas website, https://cfo.gov.ph/statistics-2
6 See Chapter 6 in this volume.
7 Philippine Statistics Authority, *2019 Survey on Overseas Filipinos: A Report on the Overseas Filipino Workers* (Quezon City: PSA, 2020), 16.
8 Ana Santos, "Philippines: Missing Their Parents," Pulitzer Center website, July 27, 2015, https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/philippines-missing-their-parents
9 Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People-Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines et al., *Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children* (Manila: CBCP, 2004), 4–5.
10 "Transmigration" is used here synonymously with "transnationalism", which is characterized by migrants' maintenance of multiple engagements in, and between, home and host societies such that non-migrants, to a certain extent, participate in transnational social fields without leaving the country of origin. See Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," *International Migration Review*, 38 (3) (2004): 1002–1039.
11 Direct migrants stay in one country with the same or different employer while serial migrants seek out new contracts in other low-cost countries, such as Jordan, that do not provide upward mobility. Stepwise migrants plan out a multistage international migration, beginning with low-cost destinations such as the United Arab Emirates, then moving to a medium-cost one like Taiwan or Hong Kong and eventually moving to high-cost destinations like Canada or Italy.
12 Graziano Battistella and Maruja Asis, *Protecting Filipino Transnational Domestic Workers: Government Regulations and Their Outcomes*, Discussion Paper Series No. 2011–2012 (Makati: Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2011), 47.
13 Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, 2nd edn (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3, 6, 7, 10.

14 Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "The Mobility Pathways of Migrant Domestic Workers," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47 (21) (2021): 3–24.
15 Maruja Asis et al., "When the Light of the Home Is Abroad: Unskilled Female Migration and the Filipino Family," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 25 (2) (2004): 198–199.
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17 Norman Mendoza et al., "Evidence of the Paradoxical Effect of Social Network Support: A Study Among Filipino Domestic Workers in China," *Psychiatry*, 255 (2017): 263–271.
18 Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, *The Labor of Care: Filipina Migrants and Transnational Families in the Digital Age* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 159.
19 Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization*, 75.
20 Battistella and Asis, *Protecting Filipino Transnational Domestic Workers*, 6.
21 Chiho Ogaya, "When Mobile Motherhoods and Mobile Childhoods Converge: The Case of Filipino Youth and Their Transmigrant Mothers in Toronto, Canada," in *Mobile Childhoods in Filipino Transnational Families: Migrant Children with Similar Roots in Different Routes*, eds Itaru Nagasaka and Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 219.
22 ECMI-CBCP, *Character Formation Program on Migration* (Manila: St. Paul's, 2002), 105–106.
23 These are duty- and tax-free boxes containing various goods that are regularly sent (via shipping) or brought home by Filipinos overseas.
24 Asis et al., "When the Light of the Home Is Abroad," 206, 208, 210–211.
25 Brenda Yeoh et al., "Doing Family in 'Times of Migration': Care Temporalities and Gender Politics in Southeast Asia," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 110 (6) (2020): 1712. See also Asis et al., "When the Light of the Home Is Abroad," 211.
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28 Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, "Migration Status and Transnational Mothering: The Case of Filipino Migrants in France," *Global Networks*, 9 (2) (2009): 252–270.
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9 Between a Rock and a Hard Place
Filipinas in International Marriage Migration

Gemma Tulud Cruz

Introduction

Following global trends and patterns, the number of Filipinas moving across borders has been increasing in the past few decades. In fact, contemporary Filipino migration is considerably feminized. Data from 2018 from the Philippine Statistics Authority, for example, show that the number of Filipino female migrants (53.7 percent) exceeds that of males (46.3 percent). In Asia, the Philippines is the leading country sending female migrants.

To be sure, there are many faces of Filipinas overseas. It starts at birth for some, particularly for girls born to migrant workers. Life for these girls comes with immense challenges, especially for those born in countries that do not grant birthright citizenship, or countries that have highly restrictive systems for birth registration for children born to migrants with unauthorized status or in low-skilled contractual work, who are devalued. In 2016, lawmaker Jericho Nograles drew attention to the issue of so called "stateless Filipinos," especially the "illegitimate" Filipino children in the Middle East and other Islamic countries, who have no citizenship as they are not recognized as citizens by their host country and have not been issued a Philippine passport because a birth certificate, which is required for the issuance of a passport, could not be provided.[1] Stateless children are regarded as invisible children because their existence is not legally recognized. Their lack of citizenship often results in lack of access to medical care, education, and child-protection services.

A second face of Filipina migrants involves the increasing number of young women, mostly from affluent families, who leave the country every year to study overseas, particularly in Western or developed countries. For many of these young Filipinas, international education is a ticket to permanent migration either in the country where they study or in another developed country. Like many Asian female international students, Filipinas who study overseas face the triple disadvantage of being a woman, an Asian, and an international student. Their difficulties become more acute when they are held to Asian gender stereotypes, such as obedience, submissiveness, and subservience.[2]

A third face is the women who leave the Philippines permanently to immigrate to another country because of work or family reunification. Although their

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-12

situation may be significantly different over time, depending on their country of settlement, immigrant Filipinas are also not immune to patriarchal Asian and Filipino gender roles and relations. This is reflected in Perla Ibarrientos' observation on why the city council of San Mateo County in California was unreachable to Filipino American women before 2016:

> Our Philippine culture conditions our women to prioritize the home and family above all … Those of us who first settled down here were young immigrants. We were single or newlyweds, starting our families. We mothers stayed home to take care of the children. We deferred to the men to represent us outside the home then. Men don't mind reversing the roles anymore.[3]

The most dominant face of Filipinas on the move is the migrant worker, the majority of whom are in occupations that continue to be influenced by gender stereotypes. These include jobs in the service and hospitality industry or, more commonly, in care work, notably as health-care professionals and domestic workers. Those in contractual and elementary occupations, particularly domestic workers, constitute a good number of Filipina migrant workers and are usually the most vulnerable to discrimination based on gender.[4]

This chapter delves into the theological implications of the gendered character and dynamics of the experience of those who engage in international marriage migration. It begins with the mapping of the vulnerabilities experienced by Filipina wives married to foreign men with higher socioeconomic status and how these wives negotiate tropes that impinge on their identity and agency, such as "woman in danger" and "dangerous woman." This is followed by an exploration of the theological implications of the experiences of these women to Catholic theologies on marriage and gender, particularly on church teachings on the true and good marriage and the ongoing debate on the gender complementarity conundrum. The chapter proposes the expansion of theological frameworks for marriage, particularly as these relate to gender, to more substantively engage the *oikos*, friendship or human connection, and marriage as a social and moral good, not just a spiritual good.

For Better or for Worse? International Marriage Migrants and (Dis)empowerment

Every year, a significant number of Filipinas migrate as brides to men in developed countries in East Asia and other parts of the world. In South Korea, for example, the Filipina migrant-wife population, at 11,000, comprises 15 percent of the estimated 85,000 authorized and unauthorized Filipinos in South Korea, most of whom are industrial laborers.[5] It is a phenomenon that has been associated with Filipina marriage migrants through the problematic and contested term "mail-order bride,"[6] which arose out of the practice of getting into brokered marriages arranged through matchmaking. While the practice was

outlawed in the Philippines with the passing of Republic Act 6955 (Anti-Mail-Order-Bride Law) in 1990, it has evolved with the Internet, social media, and the rise of commercial marriage brokers.

Life for Filipina marriage migrants, particularly for those who are poor and with lower education who marry men in high-income countries, is characterized by dislocation on various levels and in varying degrees. Heightened loneliness and isolation, for example, is common among those who marry men who live and work in rural or remote areas such as mining or agricultural towns.[7] A few of a pioneering group of marriage migrants I met on a lecture tour of Australia spoke about not going out of the house for about a month after they arrived and being subjected to discriminatory treatment.

The majority of marriage migrants have no history of visiting or working in their country of settlement prior to marriage. As a result, they generally have no, or very little, ability to use the language in the new country. This has serious implications on their quality of life, both in the public and private sphere, especially when the children are fluent in the father's language but not that of the Filipina mother, partly due to the lower regard for Filipino language and culture.[8] In most cases, marriage migrants also have a limited understanding of the new country, for example, its culture and legal systems, which is often radically different from the Philippines. In Japan, for instance, a "legitimate" marriage marks a man's place in society, and the legitimacy of a match is reduced when the wife is foreign and, especially, when the wife is stigmatized by public assumptions about her respectability as it relates to her race and class. Failure to meet or secure approval from in-laws prior to marriage may also pose difficulties. This is particularly true in Asian contexts where there are complex gender politics relating to male children and their parents, most of whom often live in the same house with the couple. In Len's case, in-law-related challenges led to her mental breakdown. Since her Japanese husband married her against his mother's will, the mother threatened to disown him and forfeit his inheritance as the eldest son. She also made Len feel out of place in the house she shared with the couple and forced Len to have an abortion when she learned Len was pregnant. Len suffered trauma from the abortion, and when she discovered that she was pregnant again she was terrified of a second forced abortion so she ran away and sought refuge in a convent. It was only after getting the help of a psychiatrist, being allowed to keep her baby, and having a separate home with her husband that she regained mental stability.[9]

Marriage migrants make a permanent commitment to family formation and to settlement away from home without having established the assurance of a secure legal status in the country of settlement. When combined with lack of work rights (or not being able to find work), lack of familiarity with the country's culture and legal systems, and lack of support network, the insecurity of contingent immigration status makes them legally, economically, and emotionally dependent on their partner and creates the perfect environment for exploitation and abuse. It does not help that receiving countries' depiction of foreign wives as biological and cultural reproducers of the next generation,

which has been a discursive vehicle to implement various policies for marriage migrants, prioritizes both traditional gender roles and ethnocentric assimilation.

The problems of marriage migrants are compounded by negative public attitudes in the country of settlement regarding their identity (poor women from a relatively underdeveloped country) as well as their character and motivations. Like other marriage migrants from developing countries, they are often depicted as manipulators who marry only to gain better economic opportunities, a portrayal that promotes the stereotype of migrant wives as opportunists or "immoral migrants." The label "mail-order bride," for example, is an Australian colloquialism that emerged in the 1970s for Filipino women who married Anglo-Australians, with the pejorative implication that such women were either prostitutes or prepared to marry for financial gain. It is a caricature that penetrated the Australian collective imagination in the film *The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert* in the character of Cynthia, who was portrayed as a gold-digging Filipina whore beyond redemption. As a result, the Philippine-born community at that time, in general, and Filipinas married to Anglo-Australians, in particular, were subjected to a "sexualized citizenship" on top of racialized Otherness. Sexualized citizenship means that the migration of these women is portrayed and understood in terms of what they can do with their sex, which includes performing sex, giving birth as the reproductive role of their sex, unpaid domestic labor premised on sexual differences, and the specialized affective labor that the foreign wife's racialized and sexualized class provides.[10] In some cases, the husband is also on the receiving end of unsavory treatment from his own community,[11] which adds to the burdens carried by the Filipina wife.

Filipina marriage migrants experience what is perhaps the culmination of their disempowerment through violence. This is particularly true for those whose marriage was brokered through matchmaking agencies or facilitated via the Internet. In Jane's case, her Australian husband took her passport, got a security screen door, impregnated her within three months of the marriage, and locked her with her son all day when he went out to work to help ensure that she could not leave him.[12] The abuse is often inflicted by husbands who see their Filipina wife as a thing or possession or as a commodity they bought. In Asia, domestic violence is also triggered by the husband's unmet patriarchal expectations on the Filipina wife. Korean men, for example, are often greatly influenced by bias and misunderstanding when choosing their foreign wives. They characterize Southeast Asian women, including those from the Philippines, as people from a tropical and agricultural country who are docile and obedient and familiar with Korean patriarchal culture. Korean husbands also tend to think that coming from a poorer country, and being a stranger to Korean culture and language, will prevent their wife from running away.[13] Intimidated victims of domestic violence often suffer in silence not just for the sake of the marriage and the children but also so as not to compromise their visa status, the material help they provide for their family back in the country of origin, or the future immigration of other family members. The suffering of these women is abetted by the persistent and far-reaching stigma of the mail-

order-bride label. In the case of Gene and Elma—victims of domestic homicide in Australia—the deployment of the contesting images of "woman in danger" and "dangerous woman" by the Philippine and Australian media respectively drives home the interplay of gender with race and other fulcrum of oppression. While Filipino journalists often reinforced stereotypes of Filipino women, they largely portrayed the two with the "woman in danger" image. Australian media's heavy use of the "dangerous woman" image, on the other hand, not only masked the reality of the women's lives but also silenced the domestic violence both women experienced in their marital relationships and recast relations of violence in such a way that responsibility was shifted away from their killers and onto the women themselves.[14] The social disapproval and negative stereotypical representations attached to international marriage to women from low-income countries in Australia and elsewhere is potentially fatal as it leads to underreporting of emotional and physical abuse,[15] especially when the social stigma is exacerbated by the Filipino trait of *hiya* (shame).

At the same time, marriage migrants are not simply victims. For these women, marriage migration may be the most efficient, socially accessible means to achieve, among others, personal advancement and some measure of social and economic mobility for their family.[16] In the case of Perlita, her application to migrate as a contract worker under the Live-In Caregiver Program was connected to both family reunification strategies (joining a sister already in Canada) and marriage migration strategies (following up on her correspondence with a Canadian man she met through a "friendship office" her sister asked her to join).[17] Her story reflects how marriage, work, and migration are often inextricably linked.

Indeed, these women's experiences are also about empowerment born out of sheer persistence, tenacity, resilience, and the power of sisterhood.[18] This embedded agency, which is perhaps better described as negotiated agency, has discernible themes.[19] The first is active resistance and empowerment through "transgressions" such as abandonment, divorce, and collective organizing or mobilization, for example, the creation of the Filipina Korean Spouse Association. These strategies challenge normalized patriarchal and ethno-nationalist images and expectations that migrant wives should be obedient and submissive. A second theme is passive or everyday resistance, which involves various survival strategies or acts of symbolic resistance, such as attending church or language classes and participating in co-ethnic activities. A third theme revolves around the women's contributions to their marital families and the new country, e.g., as the face and facilitators of multiculturalism, which challenge the stereotype that women migrate only to help their natal families. A fourth theme involves the women's transnational connections, which allow them to maintain their ethnic identity, resist the pressure to be assimilated, and be unhinged from the scripted roles given to them as women and an ethnic minority.

Theological Implications

International marriage migration exists within the global imaginings of individuals and communities, but it is also built on concrete relationships, networks, aspirations, and motivations. How does international marriage stack up against Catholic theologies on marriage and gender? What are the implications of the experiences discussed above to Catholic understanding and practice of marriage, particularly in relation to gender?

The True and Good Marriage

On the one hand, the experiences of married life of couples in international marriage find some comfort in Catholic theology, especially for couples in more traditional societies where in-laws may try to exert undue influence or authority in the marriage and family life of the couple. The foundational biblical passage for marriage, Matthew 19:5 (For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh), provides a lifeline, especially for poor (er) Filipinas marrying into patriarchal families. As mentioned previously, East Asian grooms look for a bride in Vietnam or the Philippines precisely because they prefer women who would have no problem living with and taking care of aging in-laws, so the biblical injunction for the male spouse to leave his parents upon marriage is good news for the foreign wife. The abovementioned case of Len in Japan drives home the potentially devastating consequences of shared living arrangements and undue influence of in-laws in the context of international marriage. While the reality on the ground when it comes to relationships with in-laws may be more difficult to contest and change even in situations where the in-laws are not living with the couple, the biblical passage provides a clear basis for the more important place of the wife in the life of her husband when compared to the in-laws. The Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) reinforces Matthew 19:5 by insisting that "the parents themselves and no one else" should ultimately make the judgment in the education and formation of the children,[20] a teaching that is echoed in *Amoris laetitia* (On Love in the Family),[21] the most recent papal document relating to marriage and the family.

On the other hand, there are a number of texts that are also fundamental to Catholic teachings on marriage that leave couples in international marriage in a bind. Following Matthew 19:5 is the ever-contentious passage "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:6). Then there is Luke 16:18: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." These passages are central to what are perhaps the two most important church teachings on marriage, namely the heterosexual and indissoluble nature of marriage. While the former is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note it given the increasing recognition and legalization of same-sex marriage in a number of countries, including predominantly Catholic countries, such as Ecuador, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina. The latter, that is,

indissolubility of marriage, which is regarded by *Casti connubii* (On Christian Marriage) as "belong[ing] to every true marriage"[22] and reinforced by *Gaudium et spes*' exhortation for conjugal love not to be "profaned by adultery or divorce,"[23] could serve as a nail in the coffin for international marriages not only for those plagued by domestic violence but also those that could not really work despite the couple's best efforts given the good number of odds stacked up against them. The weight of living up to this religious injunction against divorce is heavier for commercially arranged marriages given their more fragile foundation which is further weakened by state and community discrimination. This anti-divorce stance has been heavily propped up by the writings of key Christian thinkers such as Augustine's famous threefold "good" of marriage (offspring, fidelity, and sacrament). The Catholic Church's staunch defense of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage in *Casti connubii*, for example, takes inspiration from Augustine: "In the sacrament it is provided that the marriage bond should not be broken, and that a husband or wife, if separated, should not be joined to another even for the sake of offspring."[24] Catholicism's unwavering defense of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage was laid bare in the spirited public debate surrounding the 2014–2015 Synod of Bishops on the Family on whether individuals who have divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church are living in sin and thereby prevented from receiving Communion. Any observant Catholic can see that it is not simply the sacrament of the Eucharist that was being vigorously defended in and by the debate but also the sacrament of Matrimony. This Catholic intransigence is examined and criticized by Michael Lawler and Todd Salzman from a practical theological perspective. Lawler and Salzman suggest the Orthodox Christian approach to the question known as *oikonomia*. While holding as firmly as the Catholic Church to the belief that Jesus presents Christians with a demand for fidelity in marriage, the Orthodox Church acknowledges that sinful men and women often do not measure up to the Gospel. They acknowledge that marriages sometimes fail and that when they fail it makes no sense to claim they are still binding. A dead marriage, they explain, is as dead as a dead spouse. When a marriage is dead, *oikonomia* impels the church to be sad but also to be compassionate and forgiving, even to the point of permitting the remarriage of an innocent divorced spouse.[25]

There have been some positive steps relating to the topic with Pope Francis's advice on the use of the "internal forum." *Amoris laetitia* asserts, "Conversation with the priest, in the internal forum, contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the church and on what steps can foster it and make it grow."[26]

Indeed, there have been some constructive developments in Catholic theologies on marriage as could be seen, for example, when one does a comparison and contrast of the view on marriage in *Casti connubii* (1930) and *Gaudium et spes* (1965). While the former recognized and stressed the role of love in marriage, the latter regards the spouses' love as the very essence of the relationship.[27] Pope Francis echoes the essential role of love in marriage in *Amoris laetitia*.[28] The focus on love and what arguably amounts to a de-emphasis on procreation as a key element of a true and good marriage is good news for international marriage couples,

especially for those who do not have a child due to, for example, infertility. The emphasis on love, however, may pose a hurdle for international marriages that are arranged commercially and may, therefore, have debatable motivations (at least at the beginning) that provide fragile foundations for marriage. Reflecting on the Taiwanese experience, Stephania Wei contends that these marriages "are often established on weak loving relationships [and] the higher proportion of new immigrants suffer from domestic violence."[29] Wei also takes issue with the commercialization of marriage in the case of mail-order brides.

Wei's viewpoint on the commercial aspects of such marriages is not without basis as far as Catholic theology is concerned. John Chrysostom is of the view that marriages are not to be arranged for political or mercenary motives for "marriage is not a business venture but a fellowship for life."[30] The perceived materialistic and instrumentalist character of certain international marriages could be of concern, as well, in view of the church's reference to an authentic married love informed and guided by divine love[31] and on what constitutes "true love between husband and wife" as described in *Gaudium et spes*.[32] A more nuanced understanding of the imbrication of marriage, including international marriages, in a variety of socioeconomic and political circumstances could help. Women's marriage migration is often seen as a social institution determined merely by kinship and custom and, to this extent, outside the realm of political economy and the operation of modern market forces. Therefore, regarding marriage in purely religious or spiritual terms, for example, as a sacrament that is "ordained toward the begetting and educating of children"[33] marginalizes international marriages. Such perspective does not take into serious account their contexts as well as their roots and relationships with economics and politics.

The preparatory document for the 2014 Synod of Bishops on the family, meanwhile, mentions "the importance of parents' sharing and explicitly professing their faith,"[34] which is echoed in the discussion on parents passing on their faith to their children in *Amoris laetitia*.[35] This poses complications since a considerable number of international marriages, especially in Asia, are interfaith or interreligious marriages. In reflecting on the experience of divorced women in the Taiwanese Catholic Church, Katherine Li Hsia Ho and Theresa Yih-Lan Tsou suggest that since many couples are in mixed marriages, marriage encounters have to be "modified with less emphasis on the Sacramental element of Reconciliation, so that more non-Christian spouses could be part of the weekend experience."[36]

The abovementioned preparatory document also presents potential problems in the way it encourages, or seems to presume, the need to conduct the marriage ceremony in the church.[37] How about international marriages where the ceremony is held in the other religion's rite or place of worship? Is their marriage less of, or not, a sacrament? Is the marriage, as one Catholic married to a Hindu puts it, "irregular" and "invalid"?[38]

Marriage between people of the same culture is already complex in itself, considering differences in family upbringing, beliefs, and value systems. Those in international marriage require double the efforts toward mutual

understanding because the greater the distance between the cultures of people, the more diverse the cultural expectations and assumptions regarding marriage and family life.[39] It would perhaps be more fruitful to view such unions not so much with a romantic and rigidly institutionalized view of marriage but one that stresses more the idea of companionship and growth. From this perspective, a deep and lasting genuine relationship is the true test of the morality of marriage not so much sex and sexual act or the formal institution of marriage. Contemporary international marriage migrants, for instance, challenge the common assumption that marriages are primarily contracted across borders for some objective gain. People, indeed, migrate in the hope of benefit. Assuming that the benefit is purely economic and individualistic, however, ignores the multifaceted and interconnected personal, community, and social gain migrants marrying across borders may be hoping for and actually experience.

The disparagement of motivations of mail-order brides and their families, for example, is often predicated on a split between economic aspirations and status-enhancing strategies, on the one hand, and love and romance, on the other, as contradictory and distinct motivations for relationships, particularly in a marriage. It is assumed that becoming a mail-order bride is an "economic strategy" pursued perforce by very poor women in contravention of the proper moral and emotional bases of marriage. It is true that the male-centeredness and profit-making aspects of mail-order bride matchmaking would seem to construct the wife as a mere commodity. Seen up close, however, the mail-order bride phenomenon is clearly much more complex, and the dividing line between women's exercise of agency, their seemingly cold-blooded self-seeking attitude, and their exploitation by commercial interests more blurred. While a number of these marriages are, indeed, mired in exploitative and abusive relationships as well as end in divorce, there are also success stories. Perhaps if the motivation and foundation for a true and good marriage are understood from a more nuanced and fluid continuum rather than a clear-cut insistence on (romantic) love as the foundation, there might be less sociocultural and religious censure for commercially arranged marriages, including those that involve mail-order brides. Does (romantic) love always need to come first? Does economic care and security in these marriages count less as a pillar for marriage because of their commercial roots or underpinnings? Are such marriages less true, and remain that way, even if they are successful, broadly considered? If sociocultural and religious censure is perhaps replaced by more pastoral accompaniment and protection there might be more successful international marriages. A more pastoral approach, such as allowing those divorced and remarried without annulment to receive Communion would go a long way in truly accompanying those whose marriages fail and who are, therefore, in need of greater practical spiritual care. This more pastoral approach is also helpful for those in interfaith international marriages, as well as those who do not get married in a church, because of the power imbalance that are often at play in these marriages, which often leaves foreign wives with no, or very little, choice. Such pastoral approach is crucial in international marriage contexts since religious

institutions, or religious faith and practice, are vital resources in the survival and flourishing of Filipino Catholics who move across borders. The vulnerabilities in international marriages that are outlined in the previous section make such pastoral approach essential.

The Gender Complementarity Conundrum

As shown in the previous section, assumptions and expectations about gender shape opportunities for, as well as the consequences of, international marriage migration. It is shown, for instance, to be a powerful force in challenging gender roles that can encourage conservatism as well as change. This can be seen in how traditional gender roles and relations, which disadvantage women, play a key role in the maintenance of international marriages. It can also be glimpsed in the tropes on foreign wives embraced by political authorities and the local community in the country of settlement that compound the disadvantage of Filipina wives.

The problem for foreign wives is that official church teachings over the centuries do not completely reject the patriarchal ideas that reinforce such traditional roles that account for their suffering, violence, even death in the context of marriage. One finds in *Casti connubii* explicit teaching such as "the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children."[40] Quoting Augustine, focus on motherhood as the distinguishing function of women is also linked in *Casti connubii*,[41] with the lengthy insistence on procreation as the primary goal of marriage, an idea strongly reiterated in *Gaudium et spes*.[42] The section on marriage and the family in *Gaudium et spes*[43] also reinforces women's traditional roles in marriage when it insists that the domestic role of mothers "must be safely preserved."[44] This appears to contradict the assertion in *Gaudium et spes* that "the unity of marriage will radiate from the equal personal dignity of wife and husband."[45]

One of the most influential contemporary responses to this conundrum is the idea of gender complementarity, which emphasizes an equality-in-difference between men and women. Prudence Allen has developed a detailed scholarly defense of this position, which she finds best articulated in the work of John Paul II, whom she regards as "the founder of integral gender complementarity."[46] In this view, the physical differences between women and men lead to psychological and spiritual differences such that there is a distinctly feminine nature or "genius" for recognizing and relating to the particular person, along with a distinctly masculine inclination to protect and provide for others.[47] John Paul II's theology of the body, which encapsulates the view,[48] maintains the age-old gender binary that casts women as passive material and men as active form. John Paul II elevates female "receptivity" to the status of an equal-but-opposite gift to be given, like male "activity," in reproduction. The specifically feminine and masculine "geniuses" enable women and men to make distinct contributions to society and to the church, according to Allen, at least when people freely accept and cooperate with their natural orientations.[49] In society, Allen underscores, the proper outcome is not separate spheres or jobs for men and women but rather

a difference in how one fulfills one's role; that is, women should always exhibit a feminine attention to the particular needs of the persons around them, whereas men should exercise their responsibility to protect others.[50] In marriage and in the church, however, gender complementarity does require different roles, as men and women relate as literal and symbolic grooms or brides in their orientation to each other and to the community they form. Mary Doak thinks that given how frequently the conclusion that women and men should have different social roles is explicitly drawn by conservative Catholic and Protestant advocates of gender complementarity, Allen's defense of integral gender complementarity does not successfully proffer a gender complementarity that safeguards women's full inclusion in society.[51] Doak posits that Allen's argument does not adequately explain why the logic that results in restricted ecclesial roles for women does not reinforce a similar limitation of women's proper roles in society according to their "nature." Doak also takes issue with integral gender complementarity's assumption that gender and sex are inseparable. Doak asks

> what room is there in this complementarity for those whose biological sex, either as phenotype or as genotype, does not fit the binary? Honest engagement with embodied experience surely requires grappling with the fact that nature is more inclined to continuums than to stark binaries.[52]

John Paul II's works do reflect not only a recognition of the contribution of women to society but also an affirmation of the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men.[53] However, he regards differences between men and women as evidence that they have different but equal and compatible gifts and together as man and woman image God. By offering a double ontology, and arguing for a unity and duality that requires the complementary unity of male and female to image God, John Paul II is able to argue that the apotheosis of sexed personhood is licit reproductive heterosexual sex.[54] The concern is how the use of the model of "complementary" male and female natures to define their personalities and their roles does not go far enough to address the manifold problems women encounter on account of their gender. The insistence on the "feminine genius"—women's unique gift, special capability, or particular genius for authentic relationships through their more receptive, caring, and nurturing (when compared to men) nature—does not offer much help either. "It is at least debatable whether the full equality of women with men in marriage, family, and society is compatible with seeing women primarily as compassionate nurturers and men as representing God to other family members."[55] Hsia Ho and Tsou illustrates how dichotomous thinking puts women at a disadvantage in the context of marriage, especially when buttressed by cultural beliefs. They contend

> As Catholics and Taiwanese with a Chinese cultural heritage we have placed much responsibility on women to keep the family in harmony; our church

> activities are geared for happy lasting ideal families. When a marriage is in trouble, the woman usually considers this a failure on her part and feels ashamed. She may pray harder, try harder to "correct" the situation, but she socially withdraws from the other parishioners … marriage troubles are not brought into the life of the parish. If in some way, a woman asks for help she usually receives the advice "to be patient, to have more love and charity to her husband and wait for his eventual change" … this traditional way of consolation actually just lays a guilt trap on the woman: That she has not worked hard enough in the marital relationship! Even in the case of domestic violence … she still hesitates to think about divorce.[56]

The impasse relating to the gender complementarity conundrum is reflected in theological reflections on the household codes (Colossians 3:18–4:1; Ephesians 5:21–6:9; Titus 2:1–10). Some feminist theologians, on the one hand, regard the texts as simply not revelatory[57] because they constitute clear and incontrovertible evidence for the inequality of men and women in marriage, such as the explicit instruction on the submission of the wife to the husband. The texts, however, still have value for other feminist theologians insofar as these can cause, or lead, modern-day Catholics to think deeply and critically about the genuine meanings of love, sacrifice, and mutuality in marriage.[58] I would also argue that the idea of the household itself is not beyond redemption. In fact, a theology of household perhaps makes more sense for international marriages. A theology of household affords a necessarily broader context for considering marriage, family, and attendant issues like widowhood and divorce.[59] Families borne out of international marriages, like ordinary households, can also be places for spiritual development.[60] "Broadly speaking, a household is two or more people sharing the daily round of life to a significant degree and over a significant period of time, whether the sharing is freely chosen or not."[61] In fact

> in Christian households, people learn the intricacies of what it means to love neighbors and live with each other in community via the "nearness" of household living. Thus, a household may be parents and children in all the variety of what that means in contemporary society (divorced, single, or remarried parents with all the children from past and present relationships).[62]

Meng Yanling proposes an interesting compromise to the complementarity issue by using the term "mutual complementarity" in her analysis of the idea of the "helper" (*ezer*) in Genesis 2:20–22. Meng insists that "helper" has no sense of higher or lower and that, in the dozen times it was used in the Hebrew Bible, it usually referred to the work of Yahweh and has no meaning of grade or level attached to it. Meng points out that "helper," as used in Genesis 2:20–22, is not a conferral of status. Hence, it should be taken not as simply helping in the work of everyday life or childbearing but as a mutual partner. A helper, Meng, contends, is "the role of one who knows to extend a hand in aid, like God who gives human beings aid in time of need but does not spoil the people he

loves."[63] Meng notes further that a fuller expression of the mutual complementarity of the union between a man and a woman is when the man, on seeing the woman, calls her "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23) for it is only when male and female are united, mutually helping, can perfection be achieved. Thus, the most important message Genesis 2 has for us is not the order of creation but the mystery of human connection, that "they become one flesh." Between male and female there is not opposition but mutual help.[64]

One cause for concern with such an idea is its possible descent into the idea of the virtuous Christian wife as one who gives herself entirely to her spouse and children without care for herself.[65] This is a problem Emily Reimer-Barry found in the American bishops' pastoral letter *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*[66] such that she insists on the need for an ethic of self-love or self-care that both enhances women's moral agency and encourages proper self-concern in marriage. Reimer-Barry writes

> Authentic self-love seeks the well-being of the totality of ourselves as multidimensional persons … entails caring for oneself by healthful eating, regular sleeping, working, learning new skills, protecting oneself from harm … mandates that we allow others to care for us, that we attend to friendships that nurture us, that we ask for support from friends and loved ones.[67]

Many of these are tasks that foreign wives forget to do for themselves in their effort and struggle to fulfill familial and social expectations or obligations, some of which they have internalized to their own detriment, such as the lifelong responsibility to take care of their family back in their country of origin.

Nancy Dallavalle's concept of "critical essentalism" may also provide clues in addressing the gender complementarity conundrum[68] in relation to some of the abovementioned challenges in the context of international marriage. Dallavalle's critical essentialism posits that any account of inherent differences in character or nature between men and women has to be a culturally embedded, historically specific interpretation.[69] Like Hsia Ho and Tsou, Dallavalle's attention to the cultural and historical embeddedness of differences will be helpful in making sense of the contextual nuances and complexities of international marriages. It could provide possibilities for apprehending and critiquing religio-cultural factors, such as those that involve parents or in-laws, and historical developments, such as the role of state or local governments in Japan and South Korea in facilitating international marriage to address population concerns, among others, in rural communities.

International marriages, especially those that involve mail-order brides, have always been described as not merely *individual* but also *family* aspirations and mobility strategies. It has also often been theorized, especially in the case of poor women marrying men in high-income countries, that given national and global disparities, a woman's marriage to a man in a desired location may appear to be compelled more by the structural constraints of her situation than by her willing exercise of choice and agency. In such cases, the family's role is

usually presented as having an equal or, sometimes, more important role in the decision-making, especially in the case of poor women. These analyses may not be sufficient in contemporary times where, with the exception of those marriages that have elements of human trafficking, the groom and the bride (including mail-order brides) exercise greater agency given sociocultural and political developments brought by the processes of globalization. The reasons for, as well as benefits of, migration for individual women in contemporary times also reflect a far greater exercise of choice and agency. There is value, therefore, in an intersectional engagement of patriarchy, kyriarchy, and heterarchy as hermeneutical frameworks for theological reflections on the gender conundrum. Patriarchy constitutes a form of structural or systemic violence against women by using the force of androcentric ideology and social structures in ways that harm women. In challenging the inadequacy of patriarchy to reflect the complex levels of oppression at work in the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation that make up the contemporary landscape, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza advocated for kyriarchy which she defines as "a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression."[70] Within this model one sees not only the propensity of male over female domination but also many different levels of domination rooted in race, class, and sexual orientation, which include structures of domination such as racism, heterosexism, classism, and colonialism. This means that elite women, such as the Filipina wife's Japanese or South Korean mother-in-law, may be in a position where they exercise power over other women and also subjugate men based on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexual orientation. Heterarchy, a more expansive term proposed by Carol Meyers, acknowledges the existence of hierarchies but recognizes "that different power structures can exist simultaneously in any given society, with each structure having its own hierarchical arrangements that may cross-cut each other laterally."[71] Meyers argues that "gender archaeology and biblical texts together provide compelling evidence for the managerial power of Israelite women in the household setting" and that "identifying female agency challenges the idea embedded in the patriarchy model that women were helpless victims of a male-dominant system."[72] Heterarchy is valuable as an analytical category insofar as it takes into account not just the contextual and political factors but also the complex nuances of women's experiences, especially the exercise of agency.

Conclusion

The nexus of marriage and migration, on the one hand, is acknowledged primarily as a factor contributing to the victimization of poor and marginal women in contexts of uneven social and economic development. On the other hand, there is also recognition that migration may encourage the rescripting of gender roles within the family and offer women economic security, escape from subjection and persecution, as well as enhanced autonomy and respect in both

the family and community. In short, international marriage migration appears to be a potent force in contesting gender roles but can also reinforce crippling cultural conservatism.

The chapter shows the importance of social justice and compassion toward international marriage, in general, and the couple, especially foreign wives from low-income countries, in particular. A helpful step in this regard, as the chapter demonstrates, is the articulation of a theology of marriage that recognizes the gendered difficulties and, at the same time, multifaceted complexities of international marriage. An expanded understanding of the value of marriage as not simply a spiritual good but also a social and moral good might be more reflective of the reality and integrity lived by couples in such union, especially since the union is embedded in a complex web of relations and motivations that go beyond love and procreation, beyond the personal and local, beyond the individual and the family. Even more helpful, perhaps, is a theology of marriage that celebrates what is and what may be made possible in these unions, such as a view of marriage as a unique form of friendship or human connection. Doing so opens up possibilities for finding, and learning from, what is truly good and true in the marriage and in the people who choose and keep it. There is room for this within the church, given Pope Francis's[73] perspective for the church "[t]o be set free from the fear that paralyzes us, makes us seek refuge in our own securities, and robs us of the courage of prophecy," a church that is "free from a religiosity that makes us rigid and inflexible … from the fear of being misunderstood and attacked," and a church whose heart is hardened by the "intransigent defense of tradition."

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10 Cosmopolitanism and Filipinx Crossing Borders

Agency Faces Ethnic and Gender Profiling

Jose Mario C. Francisco

Introduction

Contemporary discourse on cosmopolitanism and migration has been nothing but prolific and multidimensional because of their dynamic complexity. Cosmopolitanism, as David Held suggests, is poised between ideals and realities, between project and policy, and thus requires a layered account that "remains faithful to its foundations in the moral equality of all individuals while recognizing the necessity to include cultural specificity in the interpretation and implementation of cosmopolitan prescriptions and ideals."[1]

In contemporary times, migration appears even more intricately layered as the movement of peoples involves competing interests between migrants themselves, recruitment and placement businesses, and national and international institutions concerned about its regulation and protection. Hence, even the nomenclature for people on the move has been contentious. Some distinguish between migrants seeking better-paying work, refugees escaping forms of persecution and violence, and immigrants desirous of upward mobility. Many settle for a broad definition of migration as "crossing the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a minimum period."[2] Thus, this complex phenomenon of people crossing different borders engenders numerous multidisciplinary research.

Critical studies on cosmopolitanism and migration contributes much insight on specific aspects of both. But because they have developed independently and have been only recently linked with each other, this chapter explores how they enrich each other's perspectives. Neglecting this link runs the risk that the primary experience of people on the move would be buried under technical jargon and thus not sufficiently attended to. Susan Ossman reckons that "along with theories of globalization, these domains (cosmopolitanism and migration) share a common tendency to conceive of the world in terms of binary oppositions" and therefore insists that "by focusing on individual stories of lives lived in several countries, we show that the nomad is not a romantic hero who escapes detection, but an individual who desperately seeks to be given a name."[3]

Aligned with this perspective, this chapter explores agency in the context of border-crossing among some typical sectors of those with Philippine origins or ethnicity (hereafter identified with the gender-inclusive "Filipinx"), who live and

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-13

work in cosmopolitan sites, as well as their families. The chapter opens with a description of cosmopolitanism's understanding of agency followed by a critical discussion on agency as it plays out in the context of Filipinx border-crossing. More specifically, the latter unpacks agency outside the family and within the family. The chapter concludes by pointing out what cosmopolitan and migration perspectives contribute to each other. The chapter contends that agency in the context of Filipinx border-crossing is deeply embedded in both cosmopolitan sites and at home, and is inevitably shaped by social and structural forces operating in these domains such as ethnic and gender profiling and that though quotidian, but no less important, acts of resistance may not overturn these forces, they diminish Filipinxs' power over their lives, and wait to be better harnessed into organized transformative political agency.

Cosmopolitanism's Discourse on Agency

The word "cosmopolitan" traditionally applies to persons rather than places. This association emerged from European historical experience and was embodied in the elite cosmopolitan person, cultured or cultivated by classic erudition, refined sensibility, and social grace.[4] Contemporary discourse, however, has subverted such an elitist and Eurocentric image and paved the way toward its inclusive account of the agency of all people on the move. Many "challenge the assumption that being cosmopolitan is directly associated with privilege and high quotients of cultural capital" and expand our understanding of cosmopolitanism by "look[ing] for its expression in unexpected and counter-intuitive domains" such as "non-Western contexts, non-urban and relatively isolated or immobile citizens."[5] Moreover, this subversion interrogates the separate treatment between professional-occupational and migrant or refugee transnational cultures. Pnina Werbner asks, "why migrants and diasporics should be distinguished *analytically* from occupational transnationals, the oil engineers or foreign journalists who live in special compounds, or the Hilton, wherever they go."[6]

People inhabit different sites of diversity serially or simultaneously, where they "find themselves" in more senses than one. According to Kathryn Robinson, because migration "exposes the self to wide horizons and curiosity about the world, and the cultural richness, which characterize cosmopolitanism as political discourse," then "these sites exemplify the 'sticky materiality' of the friction of local/global encounters."[7] Such encounters can be revealed in the context of globalization, the "design to manage the world" and the realm of "planetary conviviality" and human compassion in which cosmopolitanism is given expression as political discourse.[8]

Given this, "even working class labour migrants may become cosmopolitan, willing to 'engage with the Other'" and "the transnationals—Hannertz's term redefined to encompass migrants, settlers and refugees as well as occupational travellers—inevitably must engage in *social* processes of 'opening up to the world,' even if that world is still relatively circumscribed culturally."[9] Because people on the move exercise agency in crossing to and from cosmopolitan sites,

"the very act of departure for work overseas is a complex assertion of subjectivity."[10] In fact, Robinson asserts, "the migrant figures as the quintessential image of the new cosmopolitan."[11]

Filipinx Agency in Cosmopolitan Sites

Due to decades-long sustained and systemic physical and digital mobility and connectivity, increasing numbers of Filipinx move to and from cosmopolitan sites in order to live, work or be with kin. Their circumstances and status vary according to many factors such as education, but they all negotiate living in sites of diversity and exercise agency, arguably the central trope of discourse on cosmopolitan. Inasmuch as these sites are fundamentally places of vibrant diversity—characterized by changing material, technological, and personnel resources, multiple institutional structures on all levels, different lifestyles fashioned by age, ethnicity, religion, and education—this diversity continuously increases in extension and depth.

Two popular stereotypes of Filipinx working in cosmopolitan sites suggest how their agency is construed. The first, "*Bagong Bayani ng Bayan* [the Nation's New Heroes]," [12] intends to honor them and is promoted by Philippine state leaders to recognize their significant remittances to the national economy. Second, and in an analogous way, Christian churches celebrate them as "new missionaries"[13] witnessing to the Gospel through their religious practices in secular and Christian-minority sites and, for home caregivers, sharing these practices with their wards.

Though this stereotypical image is well intentioned and has some factual basis, it is inadequate and even misleading. So with its underlying view of their agency—one that seems total and unrestricted. Put in plain terms, the Filipinx worker is made to appear as a subject who knowingly and willfully leaves homeland to live a heroic life for country or God.

This underlying view of unrestricted agency finds echoes in some accounts of cosmopolitan agency influenced by various streams of Enlightenment thought. In their reaction to the denial of agency to migrants, these accounts consider agency in terms of the "autonomous individual": "Unlike custom or tradition, civilization or culture was a self-conscious construction of human beings, a self-directed form of education, something made rather than found, the product of reason rather than blind habit."[14] The "enlightened" subject is portrayed as unrestricted by tradition or authority and acts accordingly. However, thanks to postmodern analysis, this view of absolute agency has been exposed as theoretically untenable and empirically nonexistent.

In contrast, the second popular stereotype points to actual and sometimes dire circumstances and consequences of living and working overseas. It highlights experiences of discrimination, harassment in many forms, and even fatality. Philippine and international nongovernmental and religious groups carefully document them and consistently work for the overall welfare of migrants.

Though this stereotypic image draws from actual experiences, its primary focus is centered on victimhood, and the migrant is portrayed as a passive victim of all-powerful forces and structures and, therefore, devoid of any real agency. As Filomeno Aguilar asserts, "Victimhood is itself an offensive crippling stereotype, a vestige of the colonial past that should be set aside with deliberate will."[15]

This critique echoes the consistent rejection of victimhood in the context of colonization and gender-related abuse. In postcolonial views on the Philippine experience, to label the native as victim devalues the multiple forms of resistance to Spanish and American colonial forces; among them, escape from colonial settlements, unrest among disenfranchised ethnic groups, Muslim resistance over trade and autonomy, and even the nation's "unfinished Revolution."[16] Besides these manifest signs of native agency, postcolonial analysis also highlights the existential agency of native subjects through what has been called "the weapons of the weak" and by transforming what colonizers brought into their own likeness. Surveying countless instances, Rene Javellana passes over essentialist conceptualizations like "Orientalism" and appropriately describes the interaction as "weaving cultures" seen from the postcolonial lens of *mestizaje*—a "complex and unfinished process" of communication that "transforms the sender and the receiver."[17]

This rejection of victimhood is also found in empirical and theoretical studies on gender-based abuse. Jan van Dijk explains: "The *victim* label precludes any hope of a rapid recovery or, in fact, of any recovery at all … By calling the affected persons sacrificial objects, the speaker suggests that the perpetrator has been motivated by higher, unselfish motives."[18] Given these patently distorting implications, he appropriately refers to B. Spalek's words: "If the stereotype of victim as 'passive' and 'helpless' is perpetuated in dominant representations of victimhood, during a time when individual strength is valued in society, then both males and females may increasingly refuse to situate themselves in terms of victimhood."[19]

Such critiques come not only from postcolonial and gender studies but also from recent work on communities ravaged by disasters.[20] They support the rejection of victimhood to define those crossing borders and their agency. Although some pejoratively call those who work abroad for material gain as "economic migrants" and practically deny their agency "*dahil napilitan sila* [because they were pressured]," anecdotal data during the current COVID-19 pandemic indicate their willingness to resume overseas work when possible and gainful.[21]

Though different, these two popular stereotypic images of overseas Filipinx as heroic or victimized reinforce each other. The image of hero and missionary is defined by civic and religious sacrifice, which is similarly associated with the stereotype of victimhood. Nevertheless, neither an autonomous or nonexistent agency suffices to represent the contours of their agency. This agency finds its best representation in the lived experiences of border-crossers and their kin in domains bounded by notion of family that is so central to Philippine experience and imagination. As Aguilar's in-depth study of a Philippine barrio (village) confirms, migrant workers and their families "cannot be seen as atomized

individuals, even as the pursuit of the family's interest is not necessarily in conflict with individual interests and personal goals" but "as members of wider social units bound by dynamic cultures of relatedness that respond as creatively as they can to changing times."[22]

Agency Outside the Family

Once living in cosmopolitan sites, Filipinx face diversity in relation to the wider social and structural forces operating manifestly or implicitly and generated by historical or contemporary experience. Their agency, like others, is composed of "infinite layers" and described as "hybrid," understood as referring "to the constant process of differentiation and exchange between the centre and the periphery and between different peripheries."[23]

Though they encounter many forms of diversity in beliefs as well as attitudes and practices, ethnicity and gender emerge as existential issues among other layers in self-formation. They indicate where differences between Filipinx and others appear most pronounced and, thus, clearly crucial for the exercise of agency.

Only with contemporary migration have Filipinx been present in many cosmopolitan sites in great number and extended duration. Their ethnic status there is generally shaped by ignorance, vague associations with Asia or the Orient and other factors such as social position, culture, and religion. For instance, male construction workers in the Gulf region complain, "The Arabs say that Filipinos are like dogs," knowing "that Arabs considered dogs the most loathsome of creatures."[24]

In places like the USA, other factors specify this status. As Yen Le Espiritu notes: "The history of US colonialism in the Philippines reminds us that immigrant lives are shaped not only by the social location of their group within the host country but also by the position of their home country within the global racial order."[25]

Furthermore, within the reality of traditional Caucasian prominence, the "American Dream" mythology establishes ethnic hierarchy for immigrants. For instance, compared with the "problematic" Latin American (especially Mexican) Filipinos, more specifically the post-1965 Filipino immigrants, constitute a relatively affluent group.[26] These stories of well-earned success often mask its accompanying human cost as well as the underside of the colonial legacy. Perhaps this Filipinx ethnic status is compensated by their pride over anyone traced to Philippine origins and victorious in any arts, sports, and even beauty competitions.

Moreover, such ethnic profiling often interacts the issue of gender on many levels, and thus the exercise of their agency also becomes gendered. In Espiritu's ethnographic analysis of women health-care professionals and Navy men, their migration to and settlement in the United States were facilitated through gender-different networks.[27]

Viewed like other Asian Americans, the Navy men "have been cast both as hypermasculine and as feminine" because, though able-bodied, many as ship

stewards did work associated with women.[28] Given this dynamic between ethnic and gender profiles, they exercised their agency by reclaiming the traditional masculine self-image and by willfully cultivating it before the local "hometown crowd." They projected themselves before family and friends as able economic providers and desirable sexual partners; one subject drove around town in his Pontiac Firebird sports car to attract "pretty girls."[29]

Women health-care professionals expressed their agency differently. While certainly aware of the benefits of overseas employment, many desired "to see the world and experience untried ways of living" and "reveled in their newfound freedom to befriend and date men," with some eventually settling there with men of their choice.[30] But despite this valued freedom from Philippine gender tradition, the same women insisted that they "don't sleep around like white girls do." "In other words, Filipino families forge cultural resistance against racial oppression by stressing female chastity and sacrifice, yet they reinforce patriarchal power and gendered oppression by hinging racial and ethnic pride on the performance of gender subordination."[31]

Thus, in both cases, Filipinx in the USA exercised agency by resisting American ethnic and gender profiling but reinforcing traditional Philippine gender ethos. Rather than being transformative, "this form of cultural resistance severely restricts women's lives, particularly those of the second generation, and casts the family as a site of potentially the most intense conflict and oppressive demands in immigrant lives."[32]

Analogous dynamics involving gender and ethnicity obtain in the experiences of Filipinx construction and domestic workers. However, because of differences in contexts, their agency's scope and form vary. Filipino construction workers in the Gulf region "were said to be 'cleaner' and hence deserving of higher wages than Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans."[33] But in their narratives, "tales of unusual punishments overseas (whipping, amputations, beheadings) alternate with some migrants' confessions of their fears of homosexual rape by employers—a worry unimaginable in the Philippines, where attitudes toward gay men (*bakla*) are tolerant."[34] They lived in enclosed spaces where "individual rights were suspended, persons segregated, sexuality frozen by multiple interlocking regulations, color stigmatized, and intelligence discounted."[35] All these were "perceived as assaults to their sense of manhood," traditionally characterized for Ilocano men by "verbal graces, emotional availability, a capacity for deep friendship with other men, and a willingness to be involved closely with children."[36]

In apparent contrast, Filipina domestic workers possessed wider spaces for their agency. For those in Italy, their nonbelonging status as noncitizen, together with other forms of dislocation, "generates two outlooks in the community: the urgency to leave Italy and the urgency to create a local supportive niche within the dominant society."[37] While working tirelessly to leave sooner, they establish pockets for gatherings, located in both private places such as church centers and apartments and even public places like bus stops and train stations.[38] Within them, they foster "the culture of solidarity, including the practice of sharing information, providing assistance to newer migrants, and

smiling at every single Filipino one sees in public."[39] Moreover, since many regard themselves as Christian, objects like rosaries and Bibles as well as practices like Christmas novena Masses and transferring statues from home to home bind them to each other and to Philippine religious traditions.[40]

Thus, aside from continuing in parenting from overseas, "as an acting subject, she [the Filipina domestic worker] responds in various ways to these dislocations and the 'conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions' that they elicit within her."[41] Her responses are "acts of resistance … that she deploys in her everyday practices … not only to temper them but also to ensure they do not interfere with her primary goal of capital accumulation."[42]

Outside the family, Filipinx in cosmopolitan sites face ethnicity- and gender-related profiling. However, gender-related forces from these sites, as well as from traditional Philippine gender ethos, shape the forms of their agency. Filipinx women and men do not only move with assistance from gender-differentiated networks but also exercise their agency as gendered, though in accordance with traditional ethos. In the most challenging of circumstances, men still try to project their dominant role. Women push traditional boundaries by assuming the roles of both breadwinner and mother, differentiating themselves from the prevailing profiles of women of other ethnicities, and creating networks of support and solidarity. Though these strategies seem to create isolated ethnic ghettos, they are rather generated while engaging diversity in cosmopolitan sites.

Agency within the Family

The family is the second domain affected by cosmopolitan border crossings. Whether they are immigrants to North America, skilled white- and blue-collar employees, or household caregivers and helpers, all agency is directly and profoundly consequential for and within the family. Filipinx "leave to 'provide for the family,' to 'escape poverty,' or to 'seek career advancements' and find 'better labor market opportunities'."[43] Though these seem pure economic considerations, they are inseparable from family dynamics in the context of traditional Philippine gender relations. Given traditional roles of father and mother as *haligi at ilaw ng tahanan* (pillar and light of the home), Parreñas stresses how even causes for migration are gender-differentiated: men leave to provide while women escape poverty and mothers "only leave out of desperation," and often because of husbands being "jobless alcoholics or womanizers."[44]

Moreover, as a sign of their agency, mothers "not only reconstitute mothering by providing acts of care from afar, but also a transnational version of … 'intensive mothering'."[45] They are referred to admirably as "super moms" or, ambiguously, as "martyr moms" who "portray that they would much rather be at home with their children then [*sic*] earning a living outside."[46]

This traditional female role is often replicated among other female family members, both overseas and in the Philippines. For instance, "eldest daughters do housework even in their adolescence" and "have much to say about their family life and the responsibilities accordingly placed on them by their mother's

migration."[47] Such traditional gender differentiation remains the framework for the agency of those left behind. Wives or husbands of migrant spouses manage to extend the boundaries of tradition. According to Roderick Galam, the wives of seafarers "employed various strategies to navigate their lives"[48] and "do not only develop and come to possess the character and efficacy that enable them to endure the physical, emotional, and mental demands they face as stay-behind women."[49] Given their husbands' absence, these women fulfilled their traditional mothering role better *and* extended its boundaries into other activities and into the future: "they endure because of their abiding faith that the future holds something for them: a promise yet to be fulfilled."[50] Thus, together with their husbands, they

> were investing in their future (through sending their children to school, saving money, starting some business projects, buying property, among others), aware that their husband's seafaring will come to an inevitable end and they also knew that there was a real possibility that they will go back to a life characterized by "there is nothing but hardship."[51]

They described such agency with the Ilocano image of *lung-aw* (rising above the waters to breathe) that "does not only embody a desired state of social and economic will-being but also the strategy of attaining it."[52] Hence, "agency is also about overcoming constraints and limitations and, therefore, about furthering or expanding what is possible."[53]

In Alicia Pingol's study, in the meantime, househusbands of migrant wives pushed boundaries of traditional gender differentiation by remaking masculinities. Their diminished role as primary breadwinners "brought a redefinition of masculine identity," which "they bore (it) for the sake of the family, for love of the wife, and, more importantly, for the future of [the] children."[54] Thus, "their day-to-day life revolves around their being *ama ti pamilia* [father of the family] even if they are non-earners, masters in bed even if they are non-providers of bread, well-loved nurturers even if they are not emotionally demonstrative like the stereotype mothers."[55]

Furthermore, this role reversal appears not to have threatened their masculinity: "They say *ammok ti luglugarek* [I know where I stand]"[56] and "project the new masculine image in the form of efficiently managing the remittances, of remaining strong against temptation or of becoming responsive to the needs of the children."[57]

Within the family, the agency of Filipinx, whether working in cosmopolitan sites or staying behind, operate within traditional gender-role differentiation. Though the women remain mothers from afar and at home, they introduce better strategies for this role; they develop other skills at managing household resources or small business ventures. At home and abroad, men's agency affirms their traditional dominant role within the family. But for those left behind and no longer breadwinners, househusbands remake their masculinity and, unfazed by taking on their wives' role, take pride in doing it better.

Lives Crossing Borders and Cosmopolitanism

Given the preceding typical accounts on the Filipinx and their families, one could point to how cosmopolitan perspectives and our understanding of lives crossing borders mutually enrich each other. Identifying all border-crossers as cosmopolitan, on the one hand, extends the meaning of cosmopolitanism and, on the other, reinforces the philosophico-ethical basis of the dignity they share with all humankind. Thus, it locates their lives away from both peripheries of cosmopolitan sites and margins of contemporary discourses.[58]

Moreover, cosmopolitanism confirms and celebrates diversity in sites where they live and work. This dialectic between humankind's equal and shared dignity and valued diversity among peoples and individuals is inherent in cosmopolitanism and plays out in their exercise of agency, which is cosmopolitanism's central trope. For all border-crossers then, these sites of diversity are not inert platforms but living habitats that shape forms of their agency.

This chapter's discussion of typical Filipinx lives in these sites and at home suggests the contours of this agency especially in relation to existential issues of ethnicity and gender. Far from absolute agency, or lack thereof, implied in stereotypes of hero or victim respectively, their agency is deeply embedded in and actively engaged with specific forces within particular cosmopolitan sites.

Parreñas' account of domestic workers' agency apply equally to others: "migrant Filipina domestic workers deploy tactics that are immediately made available to them in the process of their constitution, a process that they cannot escape but at the same time do not necessarily accept."[59] She explains this further by borrowing Butler's notion of "the bind of agency" that is simultaneously "recuperation" and "resistance" of power "because a subject can never be completely removed from the process of its constitution" and "agency is conditioned and therefore limited by the social processes from which it emerges and takes place."[60] This "bind of agency" even holds when social and structural forces diminish their status. For instance, Filipina registered nurses reduced to being Canadian registered nannies "uphold their identities and recuperate their sense of self" through "the counter discourse of responsibility by which migrants defend their right to earn a living as dutiful daughters or sisters or mothers."[61]

However, Filipinx border-crossers devise strategic ways of exercising this bound agency. Those overseas expand and create physical and social spaces of greater security and support, taking over public places like commercial and transport hubs (e.g., Central in Hong Kong and Termini in Rome) where they engage in common practices like eating comfort food, selling all things Filipino, and conversing about hometown and personal news. They also participate in spiritual and educational activities and create wider networks for advocacy and action at church and NGO migrant centers.

This bound agency is exercised as they navigate through complex ethnicity- and gender-related forces in cosmopolitan sites. Though often known for speaking better English than other nonnative ethnic groups, being "cleaner"

than South Asians, and being generally competent and dedicated, they are unavoidably inserted into an ethnic hierarchy and minority position.

Even more complex is their navigation through gender-related forces. Outside the family, these forces include diverse gender profiling by dominant sectors in these sites as well as the baggage of traditional Philippine gender-role differentiation, which reigns within the family. Within the family, the boundaries of this traditional role differentiation are pushed but not overturned. Mothers, whether working overseas or stay behind, continue in their traditional role but also extend their skill and dedication to other areas by being better household managers or small-scale entrepreneurs. Though similarly subject to tradition, fathers-turned-househusbands push its boundaries by taking on their wives' role and taking pride in doing so without compromising their masculinity. Thus, it could be said that though these acts of resistance on the part of both women and men "do not involve the direct diminishment of structural and institutional power," they "must be credited with possible interventions against the ways that structural inequalities operate in shaping their everyday lives."[62]

Due to such interventions, their bound agency is also, according to Galam, "hopeful and strategic."[63] Given the global impact of border-crossing, women and men, both overseas and stay behind, develop these strategic interventions within and outside their families in negotiating diverse forces. Agency then refers not only "to what extent we are able to act within a given context" but also to "overcoming constraints and limitations and therefore about furthering expanding what is possible."[64] It is this ability to muddle space and agency that illuminates most intimately the kind of hope that enlivens life in the context of Filipinx border-crossers.[65] This hopeful and strategic agency "might be said to emerge from the experience of hardship faced and overcome and the possible changes that have been achieved," allowing the Ilocano woman Nora to say "*Dumtengto latta, saan met a puro rigat ti biag* [It will come, life is not all hardship]."[66]

Voices such as Nora's outline the contours of the agency of the Filipinx facing the impact of border-crossing, whether in cosmopolitan sites or at home. Their bound but also hopeful and strategic agency puts flesh on formal notions of cosmopolitan agency and recognizes the value of enduring everyday resistance in their lives. In return, cosmopolitanism as programmatic further fuels the transformation of social and structural forces, so that these lives may truly incarnate cosmopolitan ideals of common humanity and valued diversity.

Conclusion

The lives of Filipinx who cross physical borders and social boundaries have been often portrayed as paradise-like or hellish, as success or failure according to different normative standards, and their agency as unrestricted or non-existent. The interface between cosmopolitan and migration perspectives belies both claims, and affirms their lives as well as confirms the reality and contours of their personal agency. On account of the impact of crossing on themselves

and their families, this agency is deeply embedded in both cosmopolitan sites and at home and is inevitably shaped by social and structural forces operating in these domains such as ethnic and gender profiling. They and their families face these forces in their everyday lives and respond by mitigating adverse effects and pushing social boundaries in pursuit of greater well-being. Though these quotidian but no less important acts of resistance may not overturn these forces, they diminish their power over their lives, and wait to be better harnessed into organized transformative political agency.

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Part III
Mission and Ministry

11 Home and Away

The Philippine Catholic Church's Local and Global Migrant Ministry

Edwin Corros

Introduction

Catholic Christianity occupies an important place in Filipino life since it was introduced in the country more than 500 years ago.[1] This vital position that Catholic Christianity has in Philippine society is particularly evident in how—together with thousands of Filipino Catholics—church institutions and leaders played pivotal roles in the bloodless "people power" revolt that ended the 20-year dictatorial rule of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.[2] The power of the Catholic Church is also palpable in its successful lobbying and influence on laws that have helped ensure the Philippines remains the only country in the world where divorce remains illegal and abortion and same sex marriage are outlawed.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) serves as a chief driving force behind the continuing vitality and influence of Catholic Christianity in the country. The CBCP traces its origins to the establishment of the Catholic Welfare Organization in 1945. Lope Robredillo identifies four key periods in the history of the CBCP: (1) period of defensiveness (1945–1965); (2) period of difficult transition (1966–1975); (3) period of awakening and prophesying (1976–1986); and (4) period of renewed vision for the church and society (1987–1995).[3]

At the time of writing, the CBCP has four objectives: (1) promotion of the spirit of solidarity in the Philippine church; (2) formulation of joint pastoral policies and programs; (3) active engagement of the Philippine church as a body in the pastoral thrusts of the universal church; and (4) assumption of responsibilities as evangelizer in its relationship with all peoples in the country, especially civil authority. Its pastoral policies and programs are implemented through its 23 commissions, which include the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI).[4]

This chapter scrutinizes the key faces of the ministry for and among migrants and their families by the Catholic Church in the Philippines both at home and overseas, with a focus on Asia and with attention to religious education and faith formation. Drawing largely from my extensive experience in migrant ministry in the Philippines and overseas as part of my work as a Scalabrinian priest, notably as missionary to foreign workers in the Archdiocese of Taipei

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-15

responsible for the Office for Migration under the Episcopal Conference of Taiwan (1994–2004), parish priest of St. Christopher's Parish in Taipei (1997–2004), and the ECMI's executive secretary (2004–2013),[5] I critically describe and reflect on the Philippine Catholic Church's pastoral care of migrants in the Philippines and overseas. The chapter contends that meaningful and effective ministry among migrants within and beyond national borders in contemporary times necessitates a multipronged and multisectoral cross-border collaborative strategy that addresses overlapping needs on multiple fronts, particularly through a more robust formation of missionaries and members of the hierarchy, including bishops, on migrant ministry insofar as this has repercussions on the provision of relevant ongoing spiritual accompaniment as well as advocacy and care for migrants and their families.

Migrant Ministry at Home

With more or less 10 million Filipinos overseas, about 70 percent of the Filipino population affected by international migration, and a national economy that is significantly dependent on migrant remittances, the Catholic Church in the Philippines is compelled to respond to the phenomenon of Filipino migration, including the social problems it has spawned. It took some time for the church[6] to firmly establish its ministry among migrants, but it has now evolved into what has been described as "the best organized ministry among migrants."[7] This laudable accomplishment is discernible in examples cited in a presentation by Cardinal Orlando Quevedo on the commendable observable practices of the Philippine Church for the care of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs): (1) 500 to 700 part-time and full-time chaplains from dioceses and religious congregations, some under contract with receiving countries such as Jordan; (2) annual gathering of 60 chaplains in Japan for ongoing formation; (3) collaboration with migrant-oriented NGOs; and (4) transnational links of the church with dioceses in receiving countries.[8]

This relative success is largely attributed to the ECMI's collaborative work with various public and private groups and institutions at home and abroad, particularly Catholic episcopates and religious congregations, such as the Scalabrinians. The ECMI was established by the CBCP to address the social costs of Filipino migration and to sensitize the local church to the needs and care of migrants. The ministry is rooted in the dream of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) of creating a "community of disciples" and becoming the "church of the poor."[9] PCP II recognized that "The social action of the church must set up special programs to address such crucial issues as … migrant and overseas workers."[10] At the same time, PCP II acknowledged OFWs as powerful instruments of evangelization by referring to its "growing awareness of the missionary potential of Filipino migrant workers abroad."[11]

The key tasks of the ECMI at the time of writing are a testament to the arguably successful local and global character of the Philippine Catholic Church's ministry among Filipinos in migration and diaspora:

1 to coordinate and develop specific pastoral and social programs and services for people on the move through its various apostolic structures and regional migration desks;
2 to prepare and conduct formation programs for OFWs to make them more aware of their missionary role of witnessing to the truths of the Gospel in their employment and residence overseas;
3 to conduct necessary studies and research on the phenomenon of migration, particularly for economic purposes;
4 to suggest ecclesiastical structures that will effectively coordinate and oversee the proper pastoral works of the ordained ministers in the pastoral care of migrants;
5 to prepare and provide well-formed and adequate number of priests, religious, and lay personnel for ministry to people on the move through proper representation before the bishops and the competent religious superiors;
6 to protect and promote the fundamental dignity and human rights of migrants and itinerant people;
7 to explore the solidarity among particular churches for the purpose of considering in the spirit of collegial commitment and co-responsibility, the advisability of the exchange of church personnel and experiences and the sharing of resources;
8 to offer encouragement to the government and the private sector to continue striving for the economic development of the country, creating job opportunities at home and thus providing practical alternatives to economic migration.[12]

The ECMI's work significantly evolved when it sought the help of the Scalabrinian missionaries. In collaboration with the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)—a think tank established in Manila in 1987 dedicated to the promotion of the interdisciplinary study of international migration with a specific focus on migration questions in the Asia-Pacific region—ECMI pioneered a pastoral formation program for migrants in early 2000 known as the "Exodus Formation Program."[13] In its initial stage, the participants for the program came from different countries and regions of the Philippines, who had expressed intention to learn more about migration and how the country can respond to its challenges.

In 2009, the Exodus Program was turned over by the SMC to the ECMI since most of the participants to the annual activity were from the latter's network. While the format remained the same, a sharper focus was made on the needs of the local church. The program was subsequently introduced extensively to dioceses across the country and those working in certain government agencies, especially partners of ECMI.

The Exodus Program entails almost a week of extensive study, workshops, and pastoral exposure. The program does not only orient participants on pastoral approaches but helps them, as well, to see migration as part of being church. It also continuously evolves with new developments and needs. To date, the program has eight modules:

1 Understanding international migration (with a focus on Asia);
2 Migration from a biblical perspective;
3 The church's social teachings on migration;
4 The mission with migrants in Asia;
5 The role of the lay in the church;
6 Specific issues in the care of the migrants in Asia, including models of pastoral approach to migrants;
7 Government programs for Filipino migrants and their families;
8 Networking and planning future program on the care of migrants.[14]

The program is meant to educate participants, to facilitate dialogue among missionaries involved in the same activity in various countries, and to provide an opportunity to deepen understanding of the care of migrants and of being church in Asia. This approach follows the encouragement of *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (The Love of Christ Towards Migrants) for receiving and sending churches of migrants to coordinate in their pastoral assistance. To run the program, the ECMI seeks and invites participants who are actively engaged in the care of migrants in Asia, such as missionaries, lay missioners, religious, and the clergy preparing to work with migrants, as well as pastoral workers and migrant workers who intend to deepen their Christian involvement while overseas. The contextual and collaborative vision for the program means that the resource persons are drawn from the academe, the church, certain government agencies, and the NGO community in the Philippines. The choice of resource persons is also in view of providing a more comprehensive and expert-based information on the complexities of the phenomenon.

While the program heavily utilizes the lecture method in terms of delivery, it is also participatory. Participants are expected to share actual experiences which then serve as the basis for discussion on programs and directions in the pastoral care of migrants. The program also includes daily Mass and liturgy where participants are invited to utilize migration themes, or relevant passages from the scripture, that have connections to their pastoral experiences. This spiritual exercise allows participants to become creative in developing worship rites that are useful for their own ministry as well as that of the other participants. Since the program is held in different parts of the country,[15] the ECMI tries to invite the local bishop to celebrate one of the Masses for the participants as part of building awareness campaign on migrant issues at the level of the local church.

In view of the CBCP's desire to mainstream the formation program and education of pastoral workers on the issue of migration, the SMC, the ECMI, and the Loyola School of Theology of the Ateneo de Manila University signed a memorandum of agreement in 2010 to collaborate and introduce a course on migration studies. The course—Certificate in the Pastoral Care of Migrants[16]—enables lay people interested in the field of migration to study alongside the clergy and the religious.

Besides the annual Exodus Program, the ECMI regularly provides other ongoing formation programs to diocesan pastoral workers, particularly short

seminars and conferences on various relevant topics, such as human-trafficking issues, updates on government programs for migrants and their families left behind, and peer counseling. There is also a trainer's training program for teachers accompanying children of migrants in schools. Indeed, the ECMI's pastoral ministry also has a strong focus on families left behind, especially children of OFWs who, studies show, exhibit problematic behavior allegedly as a result of their parents' failure to properly guide them because they are far away.[17] In schools, in particular, teachers and guidance counselors express concerns relating to these children's challenges and disruptive behavior. Thus, the ECMI established the Sons and Daughters of OFWs (SDO) Value Formation Program in collaboration with teachers and guidance counselors, who have completed the Exodus Program. SDO started in 2008 in different schools in various dioceses in Luzon, with high-school students who have OFW parents the primary beneficiaries. Annually, a search for "Ten Outstanding Sons and Daughters of OFW Student Achiever's Award" (TOSDOSA) is also held to help the children value the sacrifices of their parents.

Another pastoral project is the creation of a school club for children of OFWs, an initiative of teachers and guidance counselors with the assistance of the ECMI under the SDO Value Formation Program. In these clubs, members engage in specially designed activities such as learning how to lead prayers, mentoring younger children how to pray, visiting centers for indigents, and joining extracurricular events or sports activities that address their needs. Values formation is injected into the activities to help the children become God-fearing responsible citizens of the community.

From its humble beginnings in 2008 in Luzon, the program has now reached many schools in the Visayas and Mindanao region. In fact, the TOSDOSA search has now gone national. Students of schools from central and southern Philippines have joined the search, proving that the program is attractive and helpful toward young peoples' values formation. Further, the program was acknowledged by the Department of Education in the Philippines as a valuable school program. The Commission of Culture and Arts even serves as a partner of ECMI for the annual TOSDOSA search. The program has also been steadily supported by some business entities because they see it as a real instrument for change in the lives of the children left behind. The relative success of the program affirms ECMI's belief in the vital role of networking with various sectors, groups, and institutions in Philippine society, including the government.

Migrant Ministry Abroad

With Filipinos continuing to migrate in search for a better life, the church has developed a systematic pastoral response beyond Philippine borders by reaching out to episcopal conferences, dioceses, parishes, and other Catholic groups and communities in various parts of the world. As indicated in the abovementioned presentation by Cardinal Quevedo, hundreds of Filipino priests serve as chaplains, or parish priests, in various countries where Filipinos have pitched their

tent. A 2008 survey, for instance, showed that there are more than 800 Filipino priests serving the church in the USA in various dioceses, archdioceses and Catholic institutions. Many are involved in parish ministry, some in health-care and related agencies, in the military, in Catholic schools and universities, and in diocesan and archdiocesan leadership roles.[18] A report at the 2015 assembly of the CBCP also showed that between August 2014 and July 2015 alone about 449 men religious and 1,115 Filipino nuns were sent to do missionary work around the world.[19] A good number of missionaries can also be found at sea in cruise ships and, in particular, in ports where thousands of Filipino seafarers dock.[20] Added to this army of priests and religious missionaries are the thousands of lay people who fill the gaps in pastoral ministry exposed not just by the sheer number of Filipinos in migration and diaspora but also the enormity of the challenges of contemporary mobility. Noteworthy to mention here are the countless lay individuals and lay-led church-related groups, such as El Shaddai and Couples for Christ.

While missionary priests largely provide the traditional forms of migrant accompaniment, notably religious or sacramental services, the challenges and difficulties of migration, in general, and the nature and character of contemporary Filipino migration, in particular, means that they are compelled to offer countless other pastoral services.[21] Indeed, they not only provide for migrants' spiritual needs; they also minister to a variety of temporal needs. The following excerpt from a letter to a priest by a domestic helper in Hong Kong illustrates this multifaceted ministry:

> If you have received my letter which I mailed last October 2 because until now I haven't receive any reply regarding the extension of my visa … I have no money at hand if only I knew that I'm going to pay I should have sacrifice to borrow … All this was done too late. Is there any remedy for this father? I cry for self-pity. I spend all my money, sacrifices and efforts just for this but I'm frustrated so I call again for your help father on what I will do to extend my visa.[22]

The great disparity of issues and concerns of Filipino migrants in various parts of the world when comparing those in temporary labor-importing Asian countries to those in immigrant countries like Australia, New Zealand, North America, and Europe, means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The enormity of the work also means that networking among, and support for, missionaries and pastoral workers are essential. In Japan, for instance, Filipino missionaries—priests, religious brothers, sisters, lay workers, and seminarians—have formed a loose association called PhilMiss (Philippine Missionaries in Japan).[23] At the time of writing, there have also been five international consultations on Filipino ministry worldwide. The goals of the fifth meeting reflect the breadth of the church's migrant ministry overseas:

1 bring up to date situations of contemporary Filipino diaspora in general and review the present problems and challenges in the sending and receiving countries;

2 share and learn from the good practices employed by the local church and the chaplaincies abroad in responding to the challenges of international migration, including the examination of collaboration with GOs (government organizations) and NGOs, civic organizations, other faith affiliations, and other partner institutions employing pastoral programs and services to migrants and their families;
3 review the approaches and challenges posed in *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* and identify gaps, problems, and challenges in the effective implementation of church pastoral programs and services for migrants at the sending and receiving countries;
4 explore ideas in harnessing migrant philanthropy in projects that promote welfare and development of local migrant communities and dioceses.[24]

True to its collaborative approach, and in response to how the Philippine government has made labor migration a significant part of its economic policy, the consultation included representatives from a wide array of government agencies working directly with Filipino migrants overseas.

The commendable work of the Philippine Catholic Church among migrants overseas can be inferred not only in its well-designed methods and carefully crafted services but also in the expressions and fruits of its pastoral outreach, particularly in Asia.

South Korea

South Korea's vibrant ministry among migrants, which substantially relies on Filipino workers and Filipinas married to Koreans, has deep connections with the Catholic Church in the Philippines. This is reflected in how the late Fr. Jack Trisolini of Seoul's Labor Pastoral Center, who was among the participants of an Exodus Program in Tagaytay, Philippines, played a crucial role in the progress of the work of ECMI's counterpart in the Catholic Bishops Conference of Korea (CBCK). The initial training of migrant pastoral workers that was brought to Korea in 2000 was also initiated by the SMC in partnership with ECMI-CBCK. A 2011 seminar titled "Exodus: The Second Level" was also an ongoing formation seminar designed by SMC for those working in migrant ministry. Graziano Battistella and Marla Asis from SMC, as well as myself as former executive secretary of ECMI-CBCP, served as resource speakers. The participants of the three-day seminar included several Filipino missionaries ministering to the migrant workers and spouses coming from the Philippines.

Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore

The birth of the lay formation for migrant ministry in Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore could be traced to the two lay Catholic Malaysians who participated in the Exodus Formation Program conducted by ECMI in 2009 in Baguio City, Philippines. The positive experience of the two Malaysians made them decide to

convince the bishop in charge of the ministry to migrants in Malaysia to organize the same seminar in Johor so that pastoral workers from Brunei and Singapore could join. ECMI-CBCP then brought the Exodus Program to Malaysia with participants—composed of priests and mostly lay people—from the three-country-episcopal-conference of Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore attending the seminar.

The formation program was subsequently brought to the different dioceses of peninsular Malaysia, where it continuous to evolve as it helps the ministry among migrants respond to the many realities and needs connected to migration. According to Cheryl Lee, one of the two pioneer lay Malaysians, the ministry's continuing work is due, in part, to the bishops' strong support for it. Several activities exemplify this support. These include the 2017 Exodus Program for three dioceses in Singapore and a 2018 migration conference in Johor, Malaysia, where Fabio Baggio, CS, former director of SMC and, at the time of writing, an Under Secretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development served as resource speaker.

Taiwan

The face and fruits of the Philippine Church's ministry among Filipino migrants in Taiwan is arguably best reflected in St. Christopher Catholic Church, which is home to many Filipino Catholic migrant workers. In the early 2000s, migrant lay leaders in the parish were provided with a formation program to empower them not only on their rights as migrant workers but also to deepen or strengthen their religious faith. At that time there were an estimated 5,000 parishioners regularly attending six Masses every weekend, majority of whom are Filipinos.

Various formation initiatives and activities were provided to accompany these migrants and harness their potential as missionaries. First, catechetical and biblical formation was offered. These formation programs were aimed at improving ministerial service and faith commitment, particularly among the parish's more than 200 volunteers. Besides the Bible study that was given once a week to anyone interested in appreciating the Bible, the parish leaders who serve as choir members, lectors and commentators, altar servers, ushers or hospitality ministers, and special ministers of the Eucharist, were given ongoing formation to make them understand and appreciate the significance of their contributions to the church as lay leaders.

With the generous contribution of the parishioners through Mass collection and the support of the parish council, a multipurpose activity building that eventually became the venue of most of the formation seminars and training activities was also constructed. In other churches in the diocese the usual problem for migrant ministry boiled down to finding a place to hold any activity. In fact, early on in my appointment to oversee the migrant ministry in the Archdiocese of Taipei, I saw the need to provide a place where parishioners could conduct and receive ongoing formation.

Other religious missionaries tasked to provide catechetical formation to parish leaders and volunteers and the growing number of lay people interested in participating in the facilitation of the Sunday services of the parish also assisted in the ministry. These include the Dominican Sisters of Blessed Imelda, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, and the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master. The religious formation that was provided with the assistance of religious sisters and capable lay leaders nurtured Filipino parishioners' spirit of volunteerism that, in turn, fostered and intensified vitality in the parish. During my time as a missionary in Taiwan, St. Christopher had more than 12 parish groups and organizations helping in the animation of the liturgical celebration and other social services. During that period, the parish also had at least six choirs serving in the music ministry. Besides the nuns, at least 24 special ministers of the Eucharist took turns in helping to distribute the Holy Communion in six Masses every weekend. The same parish volunteers took turns in visiting and offering paraliturgical celebrations among foreigners in detention centers. Meanwhile, more than 20 parishioners volunteered as ushers on Sundays as the huge number of Filipino parishioners required a system of ushering people to enter and to exit using different doors to keep an orderly flow of parishioners and in order for the Eucharistic celebration to begin on time. Aside from the ushers, at least two dozen lectors, commentators, and altar servers provided assistance. These volunteers came from four important parish organizations that were in existence at that time: St. Christopher's Catholic Charismatic Community, Family Life Group, Legion of Mary, and the Filipinos Married to Taiwanese.

At St. Christopher, religious education and faith formation became vehicles for the cultivation of a sense of service, responsibility, and empowerment. Volunteers elect their representative in the parish council. Nobody could join the parish council without first becoming an active member of any parish organization or ministerial group. Further, they could only serve as parish council members for a maximum of two years to provide opportunity for other members, given the limit to the number of years that foreigners can engage in contractual work in Taiwan at that time. Those who serve in the parish council, who were given formation during the monthly meetings, were also required to provide a report of their yearly accomplishment at the parish assembly held at the beginning of the year.

In addition, a regular social worker was provided by the parish to attend to the needs of those who had problems with their labor contract. The Migrant Workers' Concerns Desk held office at the parish during weekend to respond proactively to the needs of migrants who encounter work related and other social problems. Another parish pastoral initiative, which was considered as a significant form of service for temporary overseas workers, was the sports tournaments.[25] In fact, the parish kept a sports committee that organized regular basketball, volleyball, and soccer games among Filipino, Indonesian, and Thai workers. Soccer was especially organized for the Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese workers while basketball became the domain of the Filipinos, who had as many as 30 teams. At one point, the chair for the sports committee organized indoor games such as Scrabble, chess, and table tennis to invite more people to relax or destress.

Japan

In Japan, ministry among Filipino migrants, particularly in the Tokyo archdiocese, is coordinated by the Catholic Tokyo International Center (CTIC), where I serve as a missionary at the time of writing. Through CTIC, Filipino missionaries give catechism to at least 16 parishes every Sunday. Moreover, the missionaries train parish leaders not only to assist in the Eucharistic celebration but to also provide pre-baptismal seminar to parents. At St. Anselm's church at Meguro in Tokyo Diocese, for instance, a group of lectors and commentators had undergone basic training in handling seminars for those who wish to serve as lectors in their parish. A similar formation was given to the hospitality ministry or ushers and altar servers who, in turn, train parishioners who express a desire to serve in the liturgical celebration. A monthly Bible study was also offered upon the request of parishioners who have attended the catechism since it began in January 2015. Those who frequent the Bible course are Filipinos married to Japanese and temporary workers who have the time to attend it.

Noteworthy to mention among the various pastoral programs that are provided to Filipino migrants in the archdiocese of Tokyo is the Night of Prayer. The Night of Prayer, which saw interested participants gather in the parish once a month for an hour of prayer, arose from the request of migrants who needed spiritual assistance beyond the Sunday Mass.[26] The event is divided into four parts. The first is the Evening Prayer, which is normally lifted from the Book of the Liturgy of the Hours—the official prayer of the Catholic Church that is regularly used by the priests and religious. The second is a short catechism on a topic requested by the participants or what the facilitator deems most helpful in deepening faith. The third is the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, where the participants engage in 30 minutes of silent prayer. The benediction concludes the activity. Table 11.1 lists the topics for the short catechism in 2018 for the Night of Prayer at Meguro Parish:

Table 11.1 Topics for the short catechism in 2018 for the Night of Prayer at Meguro Parish

Session number	*Date*	*Topic*
1	January 26	Holy Week Preparations
2	February 23	Easter Triduum
3	March 23	Easter Season Practices
4	April 27	Mayflower and *Santacruzan*
5	May 25	Holy Trinity
6	June 29	Knowing Saints Peter and Paul
7	July 27	Year of the Clergy and the Consecrated
8	August 24	Liturgical Actions and Gestures
9	September 28	Healing
10	October 26	All Saints and All Souls

The Filipino missionaries working in CTIC invest time in teaching catechism to those interested in deepening their faith (it is normally done after the Sunday Mass) because catechism classes usually become a vehicle for forming participants into small Christian communities.

Growth Edges for the Ministry

The preceding discussion shows that pastoral approaches to the needs of Filipinos in migration and diaspora vary based on the profile of migrants, e.g., marriage migrants vis-à-vis migrant workers in highly skilled and low-skilled work, as well as the openness, readiness, and capacity of the local churches to help the foreigners in their midst. In addition, pastoral interventions depend on the reality of the parish where migrants find themselves. Unlike the Philippines, most churches in Asia exist as a religious minority. This minority position has serious implications on the willingness and capacity of local churches to criticize government policies that impinge on migrant welfare. In some less democratic Asian countries, the space and ability to advocate for migrants, especially against policies that pose problems for migrants, is severely limited. In some cases, Filipino missionaries themselves encounter problems with state actors or authorities as I have once experienced, for example, with Taiwanese police who arrested a Filipina migrant in St. Christopher's Church.[27]

In fact, there are local bishops in Asia who are forced to be silent about the abuses migrant suffer from their employers, the local population, and the government. In most cases, these bishops and other local church leaders are not comfortable with speaking against the government for fear of being accused of intruding over government policies. They are afraid, as a religious minority, that the church may be negatively targeted by the host society and by the government. To avoid being criticized for lack of concern toward foreigners and, at the same time, avoid ruffling the feathers of state authorities some local churches limit their involvement to providing space for the use of migrants and doing purely sacramental activities. This shows that education on the multifaceted dimensions of mission and ministry, in general, and migrant mission and ministry, in particular, is a need even among those in the hierarchy. In other words, members of the church hierarchy are, at times, the ones who need education and faith formation on migrant ministry first and/or the ones who need it most. They cannot encourage members of the clergy, religious institutes, and lay leaders in their diocese if they are not, in the first place, fully and more courageously convinced of the need to take care of the migrants in their midst.

The development and presence of a robust migrant ministry in local churches may also be hobbled by the lack of openness to, as well as appreciation of, the ministry by members of the local church. To be sure, the mission to migrants needs local lay professionals and committed missionaries who understand very well the complexities of international migration and could, therefore, assist in providing pastoral care. Indeed, migrant ministry requires a local church that is truly and profoundly open to the mission to migrants.

The experience of Filipino missionaries overseas, meanwhile, shows that the ongoing formation of missionaries needs attention, too.[28] The reality is that many missionaries are sent by their religious congregation to minister or work among the locals. They are not trained as pastoral workers for migrants; their pastoral approach to migrants is heavily based on the basic theological formation they received as seminarians or religious sisters. In most cases, they are simply trained as diocesan priests or religious for mission *ad extra*. Further, there are religious superiors who question their missionaries when they get more involved with foreign workers because this is not the mission intention of the congregation. Foreign missionaries are, at times, prohibited to get involved with migrant ministry on the basis of the fact that they are sent to work for the needs of the local people, not for the foreigners (which includes Filipinos). Religious missionaries, in particular, find this challenge difficult to overcome. The initial reaction by a Filipina religious missionary in Japan when sought by a Japanese member of her congregation to start a ministry among Filipina victims of human trafficking reflects this quandary:

> How could I be of help since I was an educator and not a social worker? … The Japanese nun offered to guide me since I was at a loss as to how to help these victims … I needed to consult my provincial superior. Would I even be allowed to get involved in this type of work?[29]

This is highly problematic in the face of the fact that there is a "lack of laborers in the field."[30] Indeed, there remains a lot to be done even in the Philippine Church as seminarians tend not to see migrant ministry as an attractive or desirable ministry among the poor. Most seminarians I have encountered at a theological school in the Philippines, for example, were not inclined to consider taking the course on migration when it was introduced because of the perception that migrant workers and their families are not poor; they are better off economically than ordinary Filipinos. In fact, most of those who initially enrolled into the course were foreign students.

Conclusion

The chapter shows the complex and multifaceted nature and character of cross-border migrant ministry. At the heart of this ministry is caring for migrants, especially vulnerable migrants and their families, through attention to various needs, including ongoing spiritual accompaniment and, more basically, through more vigorous formation of those who accompany them. The chapter demonstrates that formation on migrant ministry among missionaries and pastoral workers, including bishops, is essential to more successfully carrying out the ministry itself, especially in the Asian context. Ultimately, meaningful and effective ministry among migrants within and beyond national borders in contemporary times necessitates a multipronged and multisectoral cross-border collaborative strategy that addresses overlapping needs on multiple fronts,

particularly through a more robust formation of missionaries and members of the hierarchy on migrant ministry, insofar as this has serious repercussions on the provision of relevant ongoing spiritual accompaniment as well as advocacy and care for migrants and their families.

Notes

1 Michael Lipka, "5 Facts about Catholicism in the Philippines," Pew Research Center, January 9, 2015, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/09/5-facts-about-catholicism-in-the-philippines
2 Ma. Christina Astorga, "Culture, Religion, and Moral Vision: A Theological Discourse on the Filipino People Power Revolution of 1986," *Theological Studies*, 67 (3) (2006): 571–572.
3 Lope Robredillo, "History of CBCP," CBCPOnline, http://cbcponline.net/history-of-cbcp
4 The commission is hereafter referred to as ECMI or CBCP-ECMI.
5 OFWs make up 98 percent of the parish. Their presence has transformed the parish into Taipei's largest parish. I have also served multiethnic migrant communities in the Scalabrinian mission in Australia (1993–1994) and taught a class on "Management of Pastoral Programs for the Migrant Ministry" at the Loyola School of Theology in Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines (2009 to 2013).
6 Unless indicated otherwise, "the church" is used interchangeably with the CBCP and refers to the institutional church in the Philippines and the groups, systems, and structures that are connected to it, such as religious congregations.
7 ECMI Staff, *Proceedings of the Meetings on the Filipino Ministry: Period 1988–2000* (Manila: ECMI-CBCP, n.d.), 5.
8 The level of sophistication of the ECMI's migrant ministry can also be glimpsed in the ECMI OFW Case Flow Chart (for OFWs in crisis situations). Orlando Quevedo, OMI, "Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees: Models." Paper presented at the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office National Conference on Pastoral Care in a Multicultural Church and Society, Melbourne, Australia, July 19–20, 2017.
9 PCP II was celebrated January 20–February 17, 1991. ECMI Staff, *Proceedings of the Meetings on the Filipino Ministry*, 5.
10 Decrees, Section 2, Article 23, no. 1. CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*. Seventh Printing (Pasay City: Paulines, 2015), 239–240.
11 Acts, no. 108. CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, 42.
12 See "Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People," CBCPOnline, http://cbcponline.net/commission-for-the-pastoral-care-of-migrants-and-itinerant-people/
13 Hereafter Exodus Program. Fabio Baggio, *Pastoral Planning in the Migrant Ministry*, Exodus Series No. 16 (Quezon City: Scalabrini Migration Center, 2010), 12.
14 As of 2017, the program has six modules. Orlando Quevedo, OMI, "Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees: Models." Paper presented at the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office National Conference on Pastoral Care in a Multicultural Church and Society, Melbourne, Australia, July 19–20, 2017.
15 Diocesan ministers for migrants and their collaborators are normally targeted by ECMI as primary participants of the program. Diocesan priests normally opt for the short program because of their full-time job in the parish.
16 See "Certificate in the Pastoral Care of Migrants," Loyola School of Theology website, www.lst.edu/academics/non-degree-programs/144-certificate-in-the-pastoral-care-of-migrants

17 See, for example, ECMI-CBCP, *Hearts Apart: Migration in the Eyes of Filipino Children* (Manila: ECMI-CBCP, 2004) for the discussion on a research project undertaken by ECMI in collaboration with SMC and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).
18 See "About Us," National Assembly of Filipino Priests—USA website, https://nafpusa.com/about-us. See also Chapters 4 and 13 in this volume.
19 "Religious and Lay Filipino Missionaries in the World Are 'Christ's First Witnesses'," Asianews.it, July 16, 2015, www.asianews.it/news-en/Religious-and-lay-Filipino-missionaries-in-the-world-are-%E2%80%9CChrist-first-witnesses-34790.html
20 See Chapter 12 in this volume.
21 These services are usually informed by the geographic location and the dominant profile of Filipino migrants in the host country. Countries in Europe, for instance, are known to provide better treatment of Filipinos than those in Asian countries where concerns mostly involve human-rights abuses primarily because most migrants are in low-skilled temporary and contractual work such as domestic or factory work.
22 Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers, *Filipino Workers: Off to Distant Shores*. MFMW Documentation Series No. 2 (Hong Kong: MFMW, 1983), 98. See also Edwin Corros, CS, "A Bitter Choice," *ABS-CBN News*, February 2, 2012, https://news.abs-cbn.com/global-filipino/02/02/12/bitter-choice
23 Felipe Muncada, SVD, "Japan and Philippines: Migration Turning Points," in *Faith on the Move: Toward a Theology of Migration in Asia*, eds Fabio Baggio and Agnes Brazal (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), 40. Another example is the National Assembly of Filipino Priests—USA, which emerged out of a consultation in 2011 that was convened to, among others, increase effectiveness as missionaries and ministers.
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25 The sports activities were also organized to attract non-Catholics and other nationalities.
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12 Catholicism across the Seas

Faith and Pastoral Care among Filipino Seafarers

Myrna Tordillo

Introduction

Over 80 percent of the world's goods and commodities such as food, clothing, cars, electronics, medicine, oil, livestock, and raw materials for industries are transported through the waterways. Vessels of every tonnage and type ply the world's waterways from the Pacific Atlantic, Baltic, and Indian Ocean, to the Panama and Suez Canal, St. Lawrence Seaway, the Great Lakes, the Strait of Malacca and many other shipping lanes. As illustrated in the worldwide news coverage of the six-day grounding of the mammoth container ship *Ever Given* in the Suez Canal in March 2021—in view of the billions of dollars held up in hundreds of stranded cargo ships in transit—maritime transport is critical for the movement of goods and commodities that fuel the global economy.[1] According to the United Nations, 11.9 billion tons of goods were shipped internationally in 2019.[2]

Playing a crucial role in the maritime industry are the 1,647,500 seafarers worldwide.[3] Among them are seafarers, who include those who work on cruise and cargo or container ships as well as ferries. It is estimated that one out of five seafarers in the world are Filipino. These men and women are the hidden and unsung heroes who toil day in and day out onboard ships in the high seas and mighty rivers, loading and unloading cargo in ports or ensuring the safe and orderly embarkation or disembarkation of cruise passengers.

While travel and adventure may seem to make the work of seafarers enviable, it is actually a high-risk job. Most Filipino seafarers often remain resilient in the midst of manifold risks and challenges. One may ask why. What values do they cling to in the face of difficulties and struggles? Is it simply grit and determination? Is their indomitable spirit buoyed by faith? How does the Catholic Church help? This chapter focuses on seafarers, the role that religious faith plays in dealing with the challenges of life onboard ships overseas, and the ministry of the Catholic Church among them. I approach this subject from the lens of someone who has been involved in the ministry to seafarers through Stella Maris, formerly known as the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS),[4] in the USA and in the Philippines. The chapter opens with a historical overview of the connections between seafaring and (Catholic) Christianity, as well as seafaring

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-16

among Filipinos in the past and in contemporary times. This is followed by a sketch of the issues and challenges faced by Filipino seafarers and the role of religious faith, particularly the Catholic faith, in dealing with these issues and challenges. The ways in which the Catholic Church ministers to, or accompanies, seafarers onboard ships, particularly based on the experience of the AOS (Stella Maris) in the United States, are then discussed before the chapter ends with a brief conclusion.

A Historical Overview

As humanity explored the open sea and beyond, discovered new frontiers, traded commodities, conquered territories, and established settlements in new lands, the saga of seafaring evolved. Naval historian Richard Woodward explains that from the era of the Phoenicians, who are regarded as the earliest masters of the art of navigation, to the Chinese voyagers, the Spanish and Portuguese explorers, the British peoples' dominance of the sea and decline post–World War II, to the ascendant American maritime power in the mid-twentieth century,[5] there had been an accelerating change in maritime history. Woodward points to "a revolution in the world of shipping" as a consequence of "advances in electronics, increasing automation, and the loss of traditional labouring work within the international free market," among others.[6]

Seafarers as Integral Part of Early Christian Communities

As a religion that counts fishermen among its key figures (Matthew 4:18–22) and developed along the Mediterranean Sea, bodies of water figure prominently in the history and identity of Christianity. Catholic maritime ministry historian Vincent Yzermans writes that Alexandria, a major seaport in Egypt, was a Christian center where St. Athanasius (295–373 CE) served. In Amsterdam, a medieval church named St. Nicolas, which stood along a quay, was known for centuries and until today as a sailor's church. Yzermans notes that seafarers were very much part of the social and religious fabric in port cities early on. "Their devotion to Mary, Star of the Sea, prompted them to name many of their guilds and chapels in her honor, and they visited her shrines before departing and upon returning from a voyage," so "from the earliest times the church provided chaplains for seamen, both on ships and in port."[7] According to Roald Kverndal, during the Crusades, "Franciscan Friars would frequently leave with transport ships and share the privations of the crew and others who sailed them" and during the "Age of Discovery, Catholic monks and priests regularly accompanied the galleons of Portugal and Spain across every ocean."[8]

A Seafaring Tradition: Filipinos of Old

Long before Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer who represented the Spanish empire, arrived in the Philippines in 1521, the indigenous people of the

islands, especially those living in coastal areas, were known to be intrepid and ingenious seafarers. Filipino American author Luis Francia writes that during precolonial times, there were active trading ports in the archipelago and natives engaged not only in domestic commerce in neighboring islands but ventured the high seas and beyond in their *balangay* (a long-distance seaworthy vessel outfitted with bamboo outriggers) to hub ports in the region, including the port of Malacca in what is now Southeast Asia. Francia adds that the port of Butuan in northern Mindanao was a center of trade and commerce during the eleventh century, and Butuan traders were said to have reached Beijing and other bustling ports in Asia. It is believed that Portuguese explorers first encountered Filipinos in Malacca a decade prior to Magellan's arrival in the Philippines. This pre-Hispanic Filipinos were referred to as *Luzones* (the region where they come from) and were known not only as merchants and traders but also as skilled warriors.[9] Another name given by the Spaniards to seafarers is *Luzon Indios* (which means Luzon Indians).

The subsequent arrival of the Portuguese and Spaniards in the Philippines in the sixteenth century opened trade routes between Manila, Acapulco in Spanish Mexico, and Peru. Ships needed workhands on board so colonial subjects were conscripted. It is estimated that about 40,000 to 100,000 Asians, majority of whom were native Filipinos and mestizos (people of mixed race of Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish descent), were brought to New Spain as sailors, servants, and slaves.[10] Part of New Spain was what is now the state of California in the USA. Historical records show that *Luzon Indios* arrived on October 18, 1587, as crew members of the Spanish galleon ship *Nuestra Señora Esperanza*, which anchored in what is now Morro Bay, California. Two and a half centuries later, Filipino crew members jumped ship, made their way into the coastal shores of Louisiana, and established the St. Malo village in St. Bernard Parish, which was the first known settlement of Filipinos in the USA.[11]

Historical accounts may have been silent about the intervening centuries relating to Filipino seafaring, but, as Filomeno Aguilar Jr. points out, there has been proof of the "transcontinental passage" of seafarers called Manilamen (so named for the place where they came from), when the bustling city of Manila opened to world trade starting in the late eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century. These Manilamen found employment on American, British, Japanese, and other foreign vessels.[12]

A New Wave of Filipino Seafarers

The long history of Filipino seafarers' sojourn to foreign shores illumines a trajectory of their increasing global presence. It was in the 1970s when large-scale overseas labor migration was commenced by the Philippine government that Filipinos began joining the ranks of seafarers in significant number. Several factors contributed to the intensification of overseas labor migration, such as the absence of sustained economic development, political instability, a growing population, double-digit unemployment levels, and low wages. The country's

dominance in providing workers for cruise and cargo ships began in the 1980s with an organized campaign to train Filipinos for careers at sea. In provincial villages they leave behind seafarers could expect to earn about US$100 per month. Work as seafarer offer ten times that amount, often more, hence many embrace work at sea. As an industry of marine colleges flourished, and employment agencies marketed Filipinos to international shipping companies, the government reinforced the trend by stepping in to manage the deployment and setting up an integrated mobilization system with the launch of the One Stop Service Center, housing under one roof 14 cooperative government agencies in the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency building in Manila.

Data confirms the rapid rise in the number of seafarers deployed overseas. In 1975, a total of 23,534 sea-based contracts were processed. In 2000 the number grew to 198,324[13] then jumped to 406,531 in 2015.[14] Latest available data shows the Philippines as the biggest supplier of ratings;[15] it ranks second in the top five seafarer-supply countries.[16] Because of the prevalent practice of multinational crewing, and English being the language of the sea, Filipino seafarers are better positioned to capture job opportunities than their counterparts in China and Russia, for example, because of the use of English as a medium of instruction in the educational system in the Philippines.

Navigating the Currents: Issues and Challenges Faced by Seafarers

Since the 1980s, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs)—among them seafarers—have been hailed as *bayong bayani* (modern-day heroes) because of their contribution to the country's economy in the form of remittances. In 2010–2018, Filipino seafarers' remittances amounted to a staggering US$47.075 billion. In 2019, they sent US$6.539 billion, then US$6.353 billion in 2020, a 2.8 percent decline from the 2019 remittance but noteworthy, nevertheless, considering the fact that it accounted for 21 percent of the total remittance by OFWs.[17] The remittance inflow has been a lifeblood for the Philippine economy and the families of seafarers themselves, who are kept afloat and sustained by the hard-earned money received from a seafarer spouse, parent, sibling, son, or daughter.

The money does not come easy as the job comes with a plethora of challenges. Most of the challenges relate to job conditions. It is common for Filipino seafarers to work onboard under temporary contractual arrangements between six and 12 months, with eight- to 12-hour workdays. Watchkeeping deck officers work seven days a week, on a "week in and week out" basis. Seafarers in other positions may have an occasional Sunday off when their vessel is not in port.[18] Indeed, long hours of work is a common challenge associated with the job. Cruise-ship workers, for instance, are known to have typically many hours more than any developed nation (where shipowners are typically based) allows, with pay at rates far below minimum wage in any developed nation. Maids often work ten- to 14-hour-days, seven days a week. Like cargo ships, there is also a hierarchy among cruise-ship workers, which impact not just wages but also other factors that relate to well-being such as food and shore leave.[19]

A *New York Times* article describes the work of seafarers as lonely and dangerous (the latter is often given as the reason why it remains a male-dominated work). A mooring rope could snap with enough force to rip off a man's head, a falling grate could shear off fingers, a large swell breaking over the side could slam a man against pipes or wash him into the sea. Help for medical emergencies such as electrocutions, burns, and appendicitis may be hours or days away by rescue helicopter. Jun remembers crying three times when, on his first voyage, he was made to shovel iron ore in the bowels of a cargo ship for 12 hours. Rodrigo, meanwhile, experienced sleeping on the deck with an ankle tied to a vent to keep him from sliding into the sea in a commercial fishing vessel, where three dozen men were allowed to bathe once a week.[20]

There is also the danger of being lost at sea due to extreme weather events, particularly typhoons or cyclones. In 2009–2019 alone, about 1,036 ships have been lost at sea, some without survivors. The case of the *Gulf Livestock 1* in 2020, which had 39 (out of 43) Filipino crew members and had a lone (Filipino) survivor, exemplifies the extreme physical risks that come with each voyage.[21] These risks are compounded by the threats of attacks by pirates.[22] A final nail in the coffin is the labyrinthine ownership structure of cruise and container ships, and how difficult it can be to determine who should be held responsible when something goes wrong at sea. The laws that regulate ships are those of the nation of the ship's registration, which are oftentimes developing nations without strong and comprehensive regulations. Ships registered in the Bahamas, for example, fall under a code virtually unchanged since the British law of the sea of the nineteenth century, which allowed captains to jail, fine, and even physically punish crew for any verbal or bodily signal of disrespect of the captain's authority.[23]

Last but not least is what many seafarers consider as the biggest challenge: enduring the mental strain of isolation. This is particularly true for those who work on cargo ships. Deployed Filipino seafarers are often away from their families for many months on end, and the months away from family exact a heavy toll on them. Reduced opportunities for shore leave make the ship even more confining in what is already a risky and uncomfortable environment. This stark reality has been brought to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of crew change and repatriation issues, seafarers were literally stuck onboard ship longer than their contracts specified. Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, lamented how the travel restrictions, border closures, and quarantine measures due to the pandemic has triggered a humanitarian emergency crisis at sea. Turkson noted the then more than 300,000 seafarers and marine personnel stranded at sea with contracts extended far more than the 11-months limit set out in the Maritime Labour Convention, thereby prolonging separation from loved ones and exacerbating mental stress as well as physical fatigue.[24] The International Maritime Organization pointed out that significant numbers of seafarers have been unable to go home because they could not be replaced by much-needed relief crews.

Crew changes are vital to prevent fatigue and protect seafarers' health, safety, and well-being—thereby ensuring the safe operation of maritime trade.[25] In some cases, seafarers were stranded due to COVID infections on their ship leaving them largely at the mercy of foreign governments. To make matters worse, their arduous journey does not end upon arrival on Philippine soil. The 441 Filipino ship crew on board the COVID-19-infested MV *Diamond Princess* cruise ship that was quarantined at the port of Yokohoma for 14 days were repatriated by the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs on February 25, 2020. They were only allowed to go to their home destinations after 14 days of quarantine and after being cleared by the Department of Health.[26] In the Sea Sunday Message 2020, a day that is set aside annually by the Vatican to pray in a special way for people who work at sea, Cardinal Turkson pointed to how "some unscrupulous ship-owners, crewing agencies and managers use the excuse of the pandemic to dismiss their obligations to guarantee their labour rights, including proper wages and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all them."[27]

Much is needed for the protection and welfare of seafarers. The Philippines has ratified several international instruments that deal with seafarers' decent working conditions, employment, and rights. These include International Labor Organization conventions such as the Maritime Labor Convention (2006)—often referred to as the Seafarers' Bill of Rights—which ensures decent work for seafarers,[28] and the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, or Convention No. 185 (2003). The Philippines is also a party to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW1978).[29] This convention sets minimum standards on training, certification, and watchkeeping for officers and ratings, which countries are obliged to meet or exceed.[30]

Filipino Seafarers and Their Faith[31]

The Philippines is home to Asia's largest Catholic population, with July 2020 estimates putting the Roman Catholic population at 80.6 percent of the Philippines' total population of 110.8 million.[32] While it is admittedly problematic to simply equate numbers of a certain population with their religious affiliation and practice, the religiosity of Filipinos in migration and diaspora, including OFWs, has been the subject of a number of studies.[33] To ground us in our scrutiny of the religiosity of Filipino seafarers, this chapter uses the common understanding of the word "religiosity," which, in social-scientific use, is "a generic term for religious commitment."[34] According to the European Values Study, religiosity has two indicators. The first are the soft indicators, which include feelings, experience, and religious beliefs, and the second are the hard indicators, which measure religious orthodoxy, ritual participation, and institutional attachment.[35] These indicators resonate with the four dimensions of religiousness outlined by Clark and Schellenberg, which are affiliation, attendance, personal practice, and importance of religion.[36] Thus, I endeavor to describe Filipino seafarers' religiosity taking into consideration the individual

aspects, such as feelings and religious experience, and the communal aspects, such as adherence to Catholic teaching and participation in ritual activities.

Faith plays an important role in the everyday life for a believer. Like other migrants, uprootedness drives seafarers to seek channels of connection, socialization, and ties. The need for connection is even more acute for them since the nature of their work confines them onboard ships adrift at sea for weeks, even months, before seeing land. Noteworthy are the familial concerns that seafarers have, particularly about their loved ones back home. While seafarers "develop firm solidarity and close relationship with their workmates on board, creating with them a temporary but intense life community,"[37] conditions onboard a ship and living and working with other seafarers of different nationalities in a confined space for months compel them to go ashore when in port. Unfortunately, setting foot on shore does not always happen when a seafarer does not have shore leave.

Religion offers the Filipino Catholic seafarer strength, hope, and some peace. Romeo, a seafarer for nine years and a sole provider for his family in Mindanao, offers insight into the role of religious faith as a means to deal with the challenges:

> Life at sea is not easy. Every day, I must be courageous to battle loneliness and countless hardship at work on board. Prayer is my number one weapon in order to deal with these challenges. I unceasingly pray for our [seafarers] safety and protection because life at sea is unpredictable and highly risky. This is the reality of a seaman's life. Thus, I lament when many people back home only see the other side of a coin, when what they can appreciate in us are money and imported goods.[38]

One Filipino ship cook I met in one of my port visits commented on participating in the Mass after being at sea for several months: "Mass is very good. It provides a recharge." Indeed, engaging in sacramental and liturgical practice poses a challenge for seafarers due to lack of opportunities to be in a regular parish community. Those who attend weekly Mass in the Philippines, as in the case of the cook, would find it impossible to be at Mass on a regular basis while onboard and at sea. The captain of a ship with an all-Filipino crew, whom I met several years ago during a ship visit in the port of Houston, lamented that he missed Mass for long periods of time and looked forward to the time when a port chaplain would come on board and celebrate Mass for the crew. One crewmember said that the praying of the rosary was done on board once a week when many of the seafarers were not on duty.

A study by Helen Sampson et al. on the relationship between religion and work among seafarers provides a clearer and substantive glimpse into religious faith and practice among Filipino Catholic seafarers.[39] Using nonparticipant observation and semi-structured interviews onboard two different vessels crewed by individuals from different countries, the research considered faith as it is experienced and negotiated on board the vessels alongside the provisions

for faith and welfare made by charitable organizations based in ports ashore. All but seven of the 44 Filipinos onboard the vessels are Catholics. They spoke of various ways in which religious faith plays a role in their life as a seafarer. One felt that God helped him to cope with the boredom of life at sea. He shared:

> religion has a role to play in making life on board bearable in many ways. When you are bored to death of life on board, you are fed up with what you're doing in the lounge, like watching the television, you go to your cabin and pray, you talk to God and then when you are done, you feel refreshed.[40]

Many regard faith as helpful in withstanding difficult emotional shipboard conditions. One explained, "When that [difficulties and challenges onboard] happened, I was on my own and God was just there, and he's the only one you could talk to."[41] In these situations, seafarers can feel extremely alone, and the research uncovered several examples where faith in God was described as beneficial. A galley staff who had a strained relationship with the chief cook spoke of how

> there are times that you are lonely and all that you can do is to have faith. On my first ship, I struggled hard … back in my cabin, I was thinking, why is this work like this? Then I told myself, I have faith in God; I'll just pray to Him. […] I was able to finish my contract.[42]

Their faith—prayer, in particular—becomes a powerful tool in coping with fear and finding strength during emergencies at sea. One revealed:

> There was one time when for one week the weather was very rough. That was the time when I felt I really needed God because I had nothing to hold on to. Our safety was in the balance. […] You would not wish to be on board. It's total chaos. I wish I could describe it to you properly … All of us were already instructed to wear life vest just in case. I was already prepared for the worst … That was the time when I felt that I really needed God in my life.[43]

In most cases, indeed, seafarers draw on their faith to increase their resilience in dealing with stressful and dangerous workplace situations. Several of the seafarers interviewed for the study brought a rosary with them to sea and felt comforted that it would protect them, while others carried pamphlets and written materials such as religious books and written prayers. The multinational character of the crew means that these seafarers are also exposed to, and learn to be more tolerant and respectful of, believers who belong to another religious tradition, or a different Christian denomination. Among those who share the same faith, the long and challenging time together amid strangers sometimes yield to deep conversations and joint religious activity such as a Bible study.[44]

Apostleship of the Sea: The Catholic Maritime Ministry

The Catholic Church accompanies seafarers largely by caring for their special and spiritual needs and primarily through the AOS. In fact, the church has been ministering to seafarers for more than a century. The AOS, also known as Stella Maris, is the church's maritime ministry to seafarers regardless of nationality, belief, sex, or race.[45] It was inaugurated in Glasgow in 1920. Pope Pius XI blessed and approved the first constitution of the AOS in 1922. Successive popes have encouraged the growth of this apostolate, notably John Paul II with the 1997 apostolic letter *Stella maris* (On the Maritime Apostolate).[46] It is auspicious for Filipino Catholic seafarers, who have a strong Marian devotion, that the apostolic letter on maritime apostolate is titled *Stella Maris* (Star of the Sea), in honor of Mary whose protection seafarers have always trusted, as they do in Jesus as the one who calmed storms (Mark 4:35–41).

A century later, hundreds of AOS chaplains and volunteers present in around 300 ports worldwide are carrying out at least 70,000 ship visits a year and reaching out to more than a million seafarers.[47] The ministry is coordinated by the Stella Maris International office under the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The local church has the responsibility to implement the pastoral care to seafarers and fisherfolks and to their families in any region, diocese or port. In every major country, the AOS Bishop Promoter oversees the work of a national director whose responsibility is to coordinate the chaplains' efforts and assist them in developing their ministries. In most major ports around the world, the diocese assigns a chaplain (a priest), a deacon, and a religious or lay ecclesial minister to serve mariners aboard ship and ashore.

A Pastoral Outreach: Apostleship of the Sea–Stella Maris in the United States

Before the founding of the AOS, there was a pioneering and short-lived ecumenical group called the Boston Marine Society, which ministered to seafarers in 1812. The group included Boston bishop John Lefebvre de Cheverus. In 1894, a reading room for Catholic seamen was provided near the port of New York, which was then the busiest port in the United States.[48] Since then the Catholic maritime outreach took on several forms.

Today, the AOS continues to be a vital ministry of the US Catholic Church in providing pastoral care to seafarers and all people of the sea. At the national level, the AOS is organized through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops under the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church/Pastoral Care of Migrants Refugees and Travelers. The ministry is active in 48 dioceses and archdioceses in the USA and with pastoral outreach in approximately 56 maritime ports. There are about 100 chaplains and pastoral agents, not counting a significant number of volunteers.[49]

The AOS-USA, an association of Catholic maritime ministers, cruise ship priests, and mariners describes the work of port chaplains as follows:

> Merchant vessels, cruise ships, crowded wharves, hospitals, mariners' academies, centers, clubs and retirement homes all make up the port chaplain's community. Trained and experienced in the specific concerns of the maritime world, these chaplains, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers represent the local diocese bishop and serve as the mariners' minister and friend … Chaplains provide the Catholic Mass, Confession, Anointing of the Sick, and the Sacraments of the Church and Pastoral Care. In addition, AOS ministries also work to ensure a safe work environment, just contracts, a genuine welcome and safe haven while in port, spiritual renewal, communication with loved ones back home, and recreational possibilities.[50]

AOS chaplains and volunteers continued their pastoral presence even in the midst of the pandemic, adapting to situations in order to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone. In March 2020, as the pandemic began to make waves at the port of Baltimore, Andy Middleton—the director for Stella Maris Seafarer Center—and a few volunteers continued ship visits, bringing religious items such as rosaries, scapulars, and prayer cards along with secular magazines. Shortly after, Middleton had symptoms of COVID-19 and had to self-quarantine. He resumed ministry once he recovered, observing health protocols and not boarding ship. He only went up the top of the gangway to drop off care bags.[51]

Deacon Paul Rosenblum, the port minister for the Diocese of Charleston, works ecumenically with the Charleston Port and Seafarers' Society to serve the crews of oceangoing vessels. He works alongside an Episcopal priest.[52] Pre-COVID-19, Sister Roschelle Isada, MSCS—a volunteer at the Stella Maris Center in Baltimore—did ship visits, which included encounters with six Filipino crew stranded for almost a year on a ship abandoned by the owner because of bankruptcy proceedings. The crew relied on AOS charity for assistance with their basic needs. Monsignor Fitzgerald also celebrated Easter Mass for them onboard.[53]

The AOS-USA has a special mission to the cruise industry for all passengers and crew. The AOS-USA Cruise Ship Priest Program vets, approves, and schedules priests onboard contracted cruise lines to provide daily and Sunday Mass onboard, as well as pastoral and spiritual care. According to Ms. Doreen Badeaux—secretary general of the AOS-USA—as early as January 2020 ships started being rerouted and AOS priests began having difficulty traveling to certain areas in order to board their scheduled ships. Ms. Badeaux recalls:

> On February 1, 2020 one of our ships, the Holland America Line Westerdam departed from the Wuhan area of China and quickly became a ship without a country. Because it departed from the area where the COVID-19 virus began, no country would allow the ship to stop in port. The AOS-USA cruise ship priest onboard, Fr. Rob Waller did an outstanding job

> helping to keep people calm and kind. He created a novena for the coronavirus. They prayed it daily onboard, and he sent a very thoughtful card to the captain letting him know they were praying for everyone onboard. After nearly four weeks at sea, no one had taken ill, and they were finally allowed off the ship. We were thankful and inspired by Fr Waller's gentle and calming ministry onboard![54]

There are countless narratives on the pastoral outreach of AOS and Stella Maris centers in the USA. This pastoral outreach is a beacon and source of comfort and hope for those who are on the peripheries.

Conclusion

Seafarers are essential workers who have crucial roles in the global movement of goods through the waterways of the world. As Filipino seafarers navigate the complexities, challenges, and issues they are confronted with, it is clear that there is a need for the church to continue and strengthen pastoral care through the AOS-Stella Maris's ministry of presence, accompaniment, and charity, e.g., providing much-needed relief and assistance for seafarers and advocating for better working conditions for seafarers by engaging governments, the private sector, and maritime bodies. The chapter demonstrates that Filipino seafarers are not only sites of need; they also have gifts to share. Aside from their professionalism and work ethic, they embody a deep religious faith that offer insights for Christian living. There remains much to be done, especially in responding to social-justice issues that plague the maritime industry. What is clear is that it is important for pastoral care of seafarers to be holistic and, at the same time, collaborative, universal, national, and local.

Notes

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13 *Ginhawa*

In Pursuit of Immigrant Life in Abundance

Faustino M. Cruz

Introduction

Jocelyn Panganiban has been a nurse in Florida for decades. At the blessing of her new home, I met her mother, Nanay Clara, who had recently arrived from the Philippines.[1] Reflecting on her generative years, Nanay recounted:

> *Madaling araw pa lang, luluwas na kami ng Tatang mo sa Bulacan para kumuha ng gulay na paninda sa palengke ng San Andres. Ganiyan naming napag-aral ng nursing si Jocelyn at ang isa pa niyang kapatid. Kahit na hindi kami nakapag-aral, hindi kami makapag-ingles, sa Awa ng Dios, nakaraos din kaming mag-asawa at napaunlad namin ang aming pamilya.*
>
> Early morning, my husband and I traveled to Bulacan [a province adjacent to the capital city] to pick up vegetables to sell at the San Andres Public Market [located in a district of Manila]. That's how we were able to send Jocelyn and her sister to nursing school. Even though my husband and I are not formally educated, we can't speak English, by the grace of God, we were able to survive and witness our family flourish.

I acutely listened to Nanay Clara's story with the heart of a *kababayan* (compatriot) priest, utterly inspired by her candid narratives of migration. Her stories became "our stories," as I began retrieving my own memories of struggle, hope, and transition. Her trust and vulnerability prompted me to recall that, as a 14-year-old boy, I skillfully sold bundles of merchandise to sidewalk vendors on Carriedo Street in Manila's Quiapo shopping district. The abaca-strung packages that I transported on city buses and jeepneys had etched indelible marks of courage and resilience on my hands. By the end of my visit, Nanay Clara and I recognized that, for her daughters and me, one of the vital keys to survival was education.

Philippine society views education as the "great equalizer," to the extent that it attempts to narrow the gap between the haves and the have-nots in a country that is unmistakably stratified on the basis of social class. We regard education as the necessary solution to the daily life and struggle that Brazilian educator Paulo Freire steadfastly contested. Writing about children who were "prematurely

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-17

forced to become adults," whose "childhood was squeezed out between toys and work, between freedom and need," Freire probed: "How could I have learned … if the only possible geography was the geography of my hunger?"[2] When grounded in faith, education is a plausible pathway to *ginhawa* (life in abundance),[3] a noble purpose that becomes more achievable for some by becoming a "good immigrant."

This chapter examines the conditions in, as well as the fruits of, the pursuit of *ginhawa* among Filipino immigrants in the USA. It discusses how the pursuit has resulted in encounters with trauma and despair, particularly for foreign-born Filipino guest workers in the USA who have fallen prey to human traffickers, while for others immigrant life has crumbled into a dystonic experience of dislocation and disorientation while searching for a deeper sense of identity and belonging. The chapter demonstrates how, as visible subject-agents, Catholic ministers' intersectional vocations, contexts, and practices must foster *ginhawa*.

Interrogating Immigrant Life

The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that persons have the right to emigrate based on their right to life; their right to asylum in situations of great peril or denial of basic conditions of human dignity; and their right to emigrate and provide for their material well-being and that of their family.[4] To exercise fully our right to life, we must have access to essentials for our sustenance and growth and to the systems that generate them: food, shelter, clothing, education, employment, medical care, social service, rest, and political liberty.

Among the estimated 4.2 million Filipinos in the US, 2.1 million are foreign-born—a cohort that comprises those without US citizenship at birth (such as naturalized citizens), lawful permanent residents, refugees, asylum-seekers, legal nonimmigrants (those on student or temporary work visas), and those residing without authorization.[5] Rutgers University sociologist Robyn Magalit Rodriguez examined how the Philippine government facilitated the passage of its citizens as "migrants for export" to the global labor market, analyzed the causes and consequences of migration, and explored the vital role of transnational migrant movements in promoting the human rights and economic well-being of workers and their families. She argued that labor migrants could protect wage, employment, and other rights more aggressively by integrating divisive factors that fragment them abroad, such as ethnicity, race, and gender.[6] What follows are vignettes of four cases of foreign-born Filipino guest workers who experienced "trafficking in persons."

Grand Isle Shipyard (GIS)

Philippine-based Industrial Personnel and Management Services Incorporated recruited workers proficient in skills such as welding and pipefitting to work for Grand Island Shipyard, an oilfield contracting company based in Galliano,

Louisiana. The job posting quoted an hourly wage of $16.25 and an overtime rate of $24.27 per hour, plus transportation to the USA, housing, and food. Brendan McCarthy of television station WWLTV Eyewitness Investigation in New Orleans and Mark Schleifstein of *The Times-Picayune* covered this case involving a company that has employed hundreds of Filipino migrant workers.[7] Many of these workers have alleged slave-like conditions that required up to 400 hours a month of work at $5.50 per hour, after deductions for living expenses and use of work equipment. The company was sued for unlawful acts, such as failing to pay federally required overtime pay, not compensating employees for travel time to work site and time required to prepare and clean protective equipment, and charging $2,000 to $3,500 a month for a substandard 10 x 10-foot living quarters that accommodated six workers. When the investigative team traveled to the Philippines, they uncovered a complex network that funneled workers to machine shops and off-shore oil platforms in South Louisiana. The US Department of Health and Human Service certified that several GIS workers were victims of human trafficking under the 2000 Human Trafficking Protection Act, subsequently granting them amnesty and eligibility for a T-visa (human-trafficking visa).[8]

Filipino Teachers in Washington, DC

School districts in the US recruit overseas trained teachers from countries such as the Philippines to staff classrooms in inner cities and comparable high-poverty areas. This phenomenon of global migration has created spaces of enslavement that depict dehumanizing conditions of modern-day labor.

Together with advocacy group Migrante International, GABRIELA—a Philippine women's movement with US chapters—launched the "Justice for Filipino Trafficked Teachers" campaign. In a December 2013 document, the organization featured the case of Isidro Rodriguez of Renaissance Staffing Support Center, formerly the Great Provider Service Exporters.[9] Since 2004, Rodriguez allegedly recruited and trafficked teachers—mostly women—for employment in US public schools. More than 50 teachers in Washington, DC alone had been victimized. After having paid over $18,000 in placement and other fees, teachers were often told that, either due to an economic recession or their late arrival past the opening of an academic year, there were no longer jobs available. Ostensibly, some ended up performing non-teaching-related tasks such as cleaning bathrooms and changing diapers in day-care facilities.

Teachers were paid $10–$12 per hour with no overtime—a rate significantly lower than the contracted $26.50–$32 per hour basic salary, plus medical, housing, vacation, travel, and other benefits. Those who complained were coerced and threatened of deportation. Arrested by Philippine authorities in November 2013, Rodriquez was also accused of sexual harassment and verbal assault. Legal and social-service agencies assisted the teachers in acquiring the T-visa for victims of human trafficking.

Sentosa Health Providers

Francis Luyun of Philippine-based Sentosa Recruitment Agency allegedly recruited, from 2004 to 2006, 26 nurses on permanent resident visas. He also sponsored one physical therapist on a H-1 nonimmigrant "specialty occupation" foreign-worker visa. The health providers were assured immediate employment in designated sponsoring nursing-home facilities. Limited permit applications had also been processed on their behalf. However, they discovered upon arrival that each was assigned to a facility different from their original sponsors and had de-facto become employees of Prompt Nursing Employment Agency/Sentosa Services.

In March 2017, Rose Ann Paguirigan, "individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated," brought a lawsuit under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) representing more than 200 nurses recruited to work in Sentosa nursing homes in New York.[10] According to legal commentator Oscar Michelen,

> Paguirigan presented evidence that the Filipino nurses were not paid the prevailing wages promised in their employment contracts, and that they were required to work in unsafe conditions with inadequate staffing. She also presented evidence that the nursing homes and their recruiters used threats of serious harm to keep the nurses from leaving.[11]

When Paguirigan attempted to leave the locus of abuse, "she couldn't because a provision on her contract said she could not leave unless she paid a $25,000 fine." On September 23, 2019, New York federal judge Nina Gershon ruled that Sentosa had violated TVPA.[12]

Florida Fifteen: Hotel Workers in Miami, Florida

From 2008 to 2009, Philippine-based San Villa Ship Management Company allegedly hired 15 workers on behalf of W Hotel in Miami, Florida as housekeepers and managers.[13] The workers paid the recruitment agency placement fees of up to $7,000. Once employed at the hotel, they were paid an hourly rate of $6 rather than the contracted hourly wage of $16 to $17. Other allegations against the recruitment agency included failure to renew H-2B visas for workers, consequently placing them "out of legal status" and at risk of possible deportation. After seeking the assistance of Anakbayan and other migrant advocacy organizations, all 15 workers relocated to other states on a continued presence temporary status while seeking employment in other institutions. In 2013, the 15 workers got T-visas and employment certification cards.[14]

Trafficking in Persons

In a 2000 document titled "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons," the UN General Assembly describes the three constitutive elements of "trafficking in persons" (commonly known as human trafficking):

what is done (action), how it is done (means), and why it is done (purpose). In practice, such egregious violation of human rights involves at least one of the following *actions*: recruitment, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving of persons. These actions are carried out by *means* of threat, use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, subjection to a position of vulnerability, and exchange of payments or benefits. These actions and methods of gaining control over another person are implemented and executed primarily for the *purpose* of exploitation, within one or more of the following contexts: prostitution, pornography, visual or sexual exploitation, forced labor, involuntary servitude, debt bondage, unfair wages, slavery, or forced organ removal. Deplorably, every country today has been involved either as a country of origin, a transit point, or destination of alleged victims.

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, human trafficking is the fastest growing and second largest criminal industry in the world today; it is second only to drug trafficking and tied with illegal firearms. In its June 2020 "Trafficking in Persons Report," the US State Department discloses that we continue to be a source, transit, and destination country for children and adults of US or foreign nationalities who are victims of human trafficking. Former Secretary of State Michael Pompeo warns that the "instability and lack of access to critical services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic mean that the number of people vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers is rapidly growing."[15] Among the largest sites of human trafficking is the state of California—where nearly 50 percent of foreign-born Filipinos live—with 1,507 cases involving both sex and labor trafficking.[16] For fear of deportation or retaliation from employers, victims tend to underreport such exploitative and heinous actions that fuel further unlawful migration and organized crime activity. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the US government made it clear that "neither terrorism nor financial crisis nor a pandemic will stop us from pursuing freedom for victims."[17]

For pastoral leaders, intentional participation in education, advocacy, vigilance, reporting, and institutional mobilization remains our ethical responsibility. We must become subject-agents of *ginhawa* toward a slave-free world, one city at a time.[18] Moreover, our ministerial response must be rooted in the US Catholic Church's mission: "We Catholic bishops commit ourselves to continue to work at the national level to promote recognition of the human rights of all, regardless of their immigration status, and to advance fair and equitable legislation for refugees and prospective immigrants."[19]

A Response Rooted in Catholic Social Teaching

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) has been an active agent toward the eradication of modern-day slave labor. As a ministry of the US Catholic Church, it promotes public awareness, engages in federal policy initiatives, provides leadership and technical training to allied service providers, and directly ministers to trafficking victims.[20] In fulfilling its mission, it subscribes to the basic principle that "those with the greatest needs

require the greatest response."[21] Likewise, MRS firmly believes that its pastoral response must be deeply grounded in the church's living tradition of thought and action embodied in its social teaching.[22]

Catholic social teaching impels us to discover "creative ways to expand the emphasis of our nation's founders on individual rights and freedom."[23] We can carry out this vision by intentionally locating democratic ideals in mutual receptivity with economic life to ensure "that the basic requirements for life with dignity are accessible to all."[24] Thus, the pastoral care of immigrants is a critical locus of prophetic challenge and hope. It is a visible sign of how the church has evangelized and transformed "humanity from within and making it new," acting from within a culture in a "vital way, in depth and right to … the very root" of the lives of people in relationship with one another and with God.[25] The church calls for solidarity to carry out this mission, particularly when government policy and societal indifference have further relegated the poor, minorities, and immigrants to the margins of society.[26] Toward this end, we must engage in public discourse to aggressively influence government policy and educate our communities of practice to respond to the Christian call and welcome the stranger (Matthew 25:35).[27] When we live out this responsibility to be prophets for our times, we advance the ministry of Jesus and manifest more concretely God's saving action in human history here and now. Let us further examine the notion of *ginhawa* in relation to labor migration, particularly through the lens of some of the key principles and themes of Catholic social teaching.[28]

The church's pastoral care of immigrants is embedded in a biblical admonition: to promote the inherent dignity and protect the inalienable and inviolable rights of all humans—both male and female—created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–28). *Imago dei* is the source and summit of the church's conviction that human dignity is not contingent upon gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, social class, or human achievement.[29] Concomitantly, every immigrant—regardless of immigration status—is endowed with this fundamental and transcendent dignity from which one's basic right to life (*ginhawa*) flows.

Gaudium et spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) decries perverse acts against immigrants and denounces all forms of discrimination, for they are "contrary to God's intent."[30] *Pacem in terris* (Peace on Earth) exhorts that any attempt to limit the vitality and growth of ethnic minorities is an openly scandalous violation of justice, particularly if such depraved actions are directed at people's very extinction.[31] *Centesimus annus* (The Hundredth Year) forewarns that when offering migrants material assistance, we must neither deprecate nor diminish them to "mere objects of assistance";[32] rather, we must help them to leave their perilous situation by upholding their dignity as persons.

John Paul II, in his encyclical *Laborem exercens* (On Human Work), regards work as a fundamental and vital dimension of human existence.[33] In essence, work is our response as humans to what God has given: the earth will yield little fruit without human hands and intelligence to fashion it into a suitable home. God blesses us with this gift of creation for the sustenance of all, without excluding or favoring anyone, marking the universal destination of the earth's goods.[34]

Additionally, work transforms us into "a more human being" and advances our human dignity;[35] therefore, it carries an intrinsic moral value. Our human dignity is imperiled when the basic structure of society fails to provide us the opportunity to work.[36] The same dignity is compromised when those capable of and looking for work cannot find jobs that enable them to participate in an effective and humanly dignified way within a productive system.[37] Work engenders social responsibility; it does not sanction tyranny and exploitation.

While work is an obligation—God commanded it—labor is intrinsically a source of other human rights and a fundamental condition for peace.[38] It is a grave injustice not to afford persons the basic human right to work and significantly contribute to the common good of humanity, especially when they are exploited or reduced to the level of commodity.[39] Unemployment deprives us of our moral dignity: "Being out of work or dependent on public or private assistance for a prolonged period undermines the freedom and creativity of the person and his (or her) family and social relationships, causing great psychological and spiritual suffering."[40] In order to promote the dignity of workers, we must ensure access to employment, and economic choices must not "cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner."[41]

Pope Benedict XVI upheld "that the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man (sic), the human person in his or her integrity."[42] For this reason, he warns that while migration stimulates global economy and promotes cultural exchange, "the uncertainty over working conditions caused by mobility and deregulation, when it becomes endemic, tends to create new forms of psychological instability, giving rise to difficulty in forging coherent life-plans, including that of marriage."[43]

For us to claim our inviolable human right to abundant life [*ginhawa*], we must claim the right to emigrate.[44] As individuals and families, we have the right to cross international borders, to flee political repression and social upheaval, and to find relief from severe economic adversity that imperils our lives and those of others. We find in the writings of both Leo XIII and American Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray that these rights, such as the right to work, are economic rights stemming from our inherent human nature in solidarity with our communities of accountability.[45]

It is in the spirit of community and solidarity that the US Catholic bishops warn against the ultimate injustice: "for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race … (or) simply do not count as human beings."[46] Solidarity with immigrants is clearly not just an altruistic compromise or an act of mercy; rather, it is a prerequisite of justice.[47] Consequently, we must redefine the ministerial objective: from the immediate challenge of caring for migrants to a long-term challenge of identifying and managing the root causes of a global migration crisis.[48]

On May 13, 2020, at the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis underscored the need for us to act, to participate in promoting those whom we assist by making them agents of their own redemption, "leaving no one excluded."[49] How are we to do this? Essentially, we must reflect on who

God is and who we are before the one who created us as God's image and likeness. Subsequently, we must carry out God's life-giving, justice-doing, and peace-making actions by building and maintaining a common home where rightful relations, peace, and charity prevail.[50] By living more fully as the image of God on earth, we enliven *ginhawa*—a noble vision grounded in our common identity and belonging.

Never Just a Single Grain

I remember my grandmother, Basilisa, instructing me to dip my middle finger into a pot of uncooked rice to gauge the right amount of water for steamed rice to come out fluffy. Rice instills in me a syntonic sense of identity and belonging. It assures me that I am one with a people that tills the earth in order to feed all those—without exception—who need sustenance and nourishment. Rice is blessed, portioned, and shared toward *ginhawa*. It is common food for the common good; and that is probably why Filipinos, in particular, rarely think of rice as a single grain.

One of my former senior colleagues, the late Franciscan priest and theologian Kenan Osborne, OFM, used to be amazed by how ten students could easily congregate in my cramped faculty office. "Like rice bunching up," I once remarked. On one hand, rice is a sign and symbol of mutual support, hospitality, and mentoring for those of us who are homesick, tired, and discouraged. On the other hand, it is dis-comfort food for it can incite us to relive memories of want and despair.

"*Awan bagas tayon* [We ran out of rice]," my grandmother used to lament in Ilocano.[51] As Filipinos, we gather—like rice bunching up—to recognize that it is precisely in being together that each of our distinct lives, every single grain, finds meaning. We collectively remember moments of comfort and discomfort, times of nourishment and hunger, seasons of living and of dying in pursuit of *ginhawa*. For the second-century theologian Clement of Alexandria, such vision is further attained by "feeding on Christ."[52]

In the Acts of the Apostles (8:26–40), Philip feeds the Ethiopian eunuch with a deeper meaning of Isaiah's dis-comforting words: "Like a sheep he is led to the slaughter…. For his life is taken away from him" (Isaiah 53:7). Philip proclaims the good news of Jesus and teaches the eunuch how to attain life in abundance by feeding on Christ. He instructs him to dip his finger into the comforting and nourishing Word of God, persuading him to dip his whole body—indeed his entire being—into the life-giving water of Christ in baptism. Undoubtedly, the eunuch cannot understand the meaning of scripture alone. He exclaims, "How can I unless someone guides me?"

In effect, we must ground our ministry with immigrants in the fundamental belief that we never feed on Christ alone; that in Christ—in word and sacrament and through Eucharistic communion—we will never know hunger again. We are never a single grain; we become one body—the Body of Christ. Accordingly, we can build upon the words of Augustine and proclaim: See what we are, the Body

of Christ. Be what we see the Body of Christ, the Lamb of God led to the slaughter. Happy are we who are invited to feed on Christ. Comforted are we who are invited to feed on Christ.[53]

Identity and Belonging

In 2021, the Philippines commemorates 500 years of Christianity, recognizing that the early sixteenth-century missionaries were successful in convincing Filipinos to baptize their children. Apparently, there were parents who alleged that baptism "also helped to cure the ailments of the body."[54] Michael Cullinane, a scholar of Philippine social, political, and demographic history, argued that missionaries did little to discourage this belief, citing that "the acceptance of the sacrament of baptism became widespread and led the way to further religious instruction."[55] He maintained that, "in the nineteenth century, few Christian parents would fail to have their children baptized and many would travel considerable distances to the *población* to cleanse their children of original sin, protect them from illness, and acquire for them a Christian name."[56]

Interestingly, the practice of baptizing children ineluctably included etching an indelible colonial stamp through an alternative system of naming.

Pre-Hispanic Filipinos were not accustomed to handing down either middle names or family names from one generation to another. Mothers named their children at birth and gave them a single name. Only in the mid-nineteenth century did Spanish colonial state and church authorities begin requiring Filipinos to use last names.[57] The use of Spanish first names is a direct outcome of missionary evangelization that led to conversion and Christian initiation. In baptism, families more often chose the name of the saint on whose feast their children were born.

However, there was no explicit prohibition against the use of local names such as Luningning or Matatag; in fact, hybrid versions containing both indigenous and colonial names such as Don Francisco Ugbo became widespread. Until the eighteenth century, baptismal names were mainly for official use; only the name received at birth was commonly used.[58] Undoubtedly, indigenous names were preserved, so much so that in 1849 the friars even listed them in the *Catálogo de Apellidos* (Catalog of Surnames). After 1850, Filipinos had at least two formal names: *ngalan* (first name) and *apelyido* (family name). In 1894, Governor General Narciso Clavería decreed as mandatory the use of permanent family names, either chosen or assigned.[59] Imposed colonial practices, such as prescribing a naming system, did not totally dismantle indigenous ways of knowing and habits of being.

Filipinos generally see reality "as an ordered whole." We negate the dualistic orientation of a western worldview; for instance, we generally regard religion as inextricably conjoined with culture.[60] We consider theory-practice as a unitive, empathic way of knowing toward *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (right relationships) rather than as a binary opposition. Accordingly, we uphold a holistic understanding of the human person[61] that echoes the Hebraic "alive body" notion of

basar-nephesh (body-soul). This inclusive anthropology conflicts with any view embedded in Hellenistic thought that subscribes to a body/soul dichotomy.[62]

A conjunctive understanding of human beings corroborates with what Michael Himes and Kenneth Himes maintain as the core vision of the Catholic church: "The actual, realized individual existence is achieved only in the interplay of countless relations, lifelong and transient, momentous and casual.... Our relationships are who we are."[63] Thus, to understand more fully who we are, we must empathetically engage in dialogical conversation with others.

By sharing a common humanity, Himes and Himes argue, we participate in the life of God in communion with Jesus Christ (1 John 4:16).[64] We experience divine love through the fullness of human intimacy; "we discover God's agape within our philia."[65] In Filipino popular tradition, such experience of God necessitates effective mediation.

Our relationship with a seemingly impersonal and distant God requires a *sugo* (mediator). As a result, we maintain close affinity with our deceased relatives and patron saints believed to be interceding for us. These intermediaries are quite indispensable; that is why a daily concurrence with the supernatural is more critical than any possible encounter with *Kabunian* (high god) of the Ilocano indigenous system.[66] Thus, the veneration of ancestors has been a salient cultural expression of many local spiritualities.[67]

Grounded in the ethical virtue of filial piety, what was once a civic practice finds itself inculturated in Catholic popular rituals such as devotions to patron saints and feasts of the dead. These spiritual practices celebrate our distinctive understanding of the *communion of saints*. Communion also denotes "suffering with." Embodied in the religious traditions of *Hesus Nazareno of Quiapo*[68] and Christ of the *Pasyon*,[69] Christ suffering with the *anawim* personifies a Filipino face of Christ.[70]

Templates of Resilience, Hope, and Transformation

Hesus Nazareno is an icon of solidarity and hope.[71] This icon expresses *damay* (sympathy) and *pakikipagkapwa-tao* (empathy). Sympathy and empathy form part of the deep structures of authentic human relationship in Filipino society: a person's capacity to apprehend the suffering of a neighbor as a possibility for oneself (*unawa*).[72] Christ suffers with the *anawim*, and in mutual receptivity, the *anawim* empathetically suffers with Christ *my neighbor*.

To ritualize this belief, devotees walk on their knees to venerate the suffering Christ, clad in purple, kneeling, and carrying a cross. Some wipe off or kiss the feet of Jesus in the tomb (*Santo Sepulcro*).[73] They beseech *Nuestro Padre Hesus Nazareno* (Our Father Jesus Christ) to grant them material and spiritual petitions,[74] so much so that a boy whose mother is healed promises to visit the shrine in Quiapo on Fridays for as long as he lives.[75] Some devotees even live out vows inherited from parents (*panata*).[76] Others flagellate themselves on Good Friday as a rite of penitence or thanksgiving.[77] Still others ask to be nailed to a cross.[78]

For leaders rooted in faith, the empathic notion of "suffering with others" offers a paradigm for pastoral care. Villote maintains that the image of the suffering Christ inspires devotees to become *bayani* (martyr).[79] In essence, this concept denotes losing one's life that others might live: *kenosis*. In contrast, the *pasyon* portrays a subversive figure of Christ "who draws the common people (*taong bayan*) away from their families and their relations of subservience … to proclaim a new era" of full humanity.[80]

The *pasyon* is a nineteenth-century social epic of the Tagalogs and other lowland groups that has been chanted from generation to generation.[81] Historian Reynaldo Ileto emphasizes that the "most dramatic and memorable parts" of the epic reflect the daily struggle and survival of a people oppressed by a colonial regime.[82] Second, the *pasyon* symbolizes the "collective consciousness of the Filipino masses."[83] It enables them to address generative themes that exposed social, economic, and political contradictions within a culture of silence and normal abnormality. Moreover, the *pasyon* publicly opposes social stratification based on wealth and education.[84] Paradoxically, the *pasyon* provides Filipinos with a subversive language for unfreezing suspended longing for liberation.[85]

Theologian Leonardo Mercado reminds us that, during colonial times long before the biblical movement, Filipinos learned their catechism through the *pasyon*.[86] We have appropriated the colonial elements of the *pasyon* for nationalistic gains. The salient religious themes of liberation in the epic are indelibly marked in our Filipino psyche. Chanted from memory, the dynamic symbols of the *pasyon* have profoundly shaped our understanding of God's compassion as a possibility for ourselves and our neighbors, in the midst of negative experiences of contrast (e.g., human trafficking).

As pastoral leaders, we can harness the *pasyon* as a viable instrument for critical consciousness, upholding the inherent dignity of the common *tao* (human being) toward full inclusion as agent-subjects of their own liberation. Templates of resilience, hope, and transformation, like the *pasyon*, enable us who seek to participate in a moral discourse and engage in pastoral ministry among Filipino immigrants, to subvert domination or oppression, power or privilege. These rituals of liberation empower us to choose, as well as witness to, community over isolation.

Conclusion

As US immigrants, we are often viewed as "problems to be solved" or mere beneficiaries of civic and pastoral services. In schools, we are better known as recipients of academic accommodation rather than authors of educational reform. At church, we resort to singing other people's hymns and adapting to normative ways of giving thanks and praise. As pastoral ministers many of us are still invisible subjects of leadership, "outsiders from within" the US sociopolitical and religious landscape. We have become even more susceptible to the harsh realities that are embedded in the dark web of injustice, which have only

become more heinous since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—a period marked by a prophetic cry for authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Pope Francis was in the midst of writing his social encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship) when the COVID-19 pandemic "unexpectedly erupted." In advancing a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship, he underscores that "no one can face life in isolation"; thus, "we need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead." He calls us to "dream, then, as a single human family as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."[87]

Pope Francis's vision depicts the very essence of *ginhawa*, which ultimately must be our primordial concern as ministers, educators, and leaders rooted in faith.

Notes

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14 Overseas Filipino Workers and Missionary Discipleship

Rethinking *Missio ad gentes* in the Context of the Filipino Diaspora

Andrew Gimenez Recepción

Introduction

The Philippines is regarded as a demographic powerhouse in Christianity, in general, and Catholic Christianity, in particular. The Catholic Church in the Philippines is in the top ten list of countries with the biggest Catholic population in the world.[1] In fact, it is the first[2] and largest Catholic country in Asia. At the time of writing, this vaunted position of Filipino Catholicism is in the spotlight as the Philippine church celebrates the arrival of the Christian faith 500 years ago (1521–2021).[3] To be sure, it is an opportune time not only for a celebration of faith but also for a reflection on the mission of the Philippine Church. The significance of this missiological lens on the celebration is evident in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' dedication of 2021 as the Year of *missio ad gentes* (Mission to the Nations)[4] and the release of the November 2020 pastoral letter titled, "Becoming Jesus' Missionary Disciples."

The letter points to the missionary framework that underpins the celebration by drawing attention to the idea of "gifted to give" as an overarching theme in the nine-year preparation for the celebration. The letter contends that this "giftedness," which motivated missionaries over the centuries, should also enflame the hearts of all Filipinos "to engage in mission here at home and in other countries (*missio ad gentes*)."[5] Further, the letter expressed hopes for a missionary renewal of the church—both at home (*ad intra*) and beyond Philippine borders (*ad extra*) during the celebration and beyond.

Not surprisingly, the celebration of the quincentennial of the arrival of Christian faith in the Philippines has been a topic of debate among historians, missiologists, and theologians in general. Questions on the historical accuracy of the date and place of Christianity's arrival in the country were raised. Others, meanwhile, cast doubt on the meaning and significance of the celebration by arguing that the arrival of Christianity is a clear example of the exploitation of people and resources and the destruction of unique cultures. There was even a proposal to change the name of the country, which reflects Spanish colonial legacies,[6] with a new one. It seems to me that one primary invitation for such a momentous celebration is to reflect on this milestone of

DOI: 10.4324/9781003282310-18

Catholic ecclesial history not simply in terms of postcolonial discourse but also, more importantly, in terms of ecclesial maturity and missionary fruitfulness.

This chapter takes stock of the experiences of overseas Filipino Catholics, in general, and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), in particular, as a context for reflection on Filipino missionary activity in contemporary times. It begins with a sketch, in broad strokes, of the history of mission in the Filipino context, with attention to shifts in missionary thinking and practice, followed by a discussion on the missionary dimensions of the experiences of Filipinos in diaspora, particularly OFWs. I then offer reflections on the (dis)continuities of the experiences of OFWs with the understanding and practice of *missio ad gentes*. The chapter argues that OFWs' practice of missionary discipleship provides clues for rethinking or reinterpreting *missio ad gentes* as a missionary paradigm and that incarnational cross-border encounters are at the heart of such reinterpretation.

Shifts in Missionary Thinking and Practice in the Filipino Context: Historical Perspectives

The history of mission in the Philippines can be seen from three waves of missionary activity.[7] The first wave of missionary activity (sixteenth–nineteenth centuries) is very much connected with the Spanish colonizers whose main interest was the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources and services of the *indios*.[8] Historian Samuel Tan contends that the goals of the Spanish empire in the Philippines could be summarized in terms of God, glory, and gold.[9] Indeed, apart from expanding its trade, the evangelization of *indios* was a mission of the empire. Led by Father Urdaneta, Spanish Augustinian friars moved from Mexico to the Philippines upon the request of Philip II and became the first official Catholic missionaries in the country. The Dominicans, Recollects, Franciscans, and Jesuits followed suit over the centuries. The fervor of the first missionaries in converting the people of the islands to Christianity was exceptional given the difficult circumstances they had to face. Accounts of mission initiatives from the stories of the first missionaries show how the encounter between the Christian faith and the people of the islands was not easy.[10] Not all natives embraced the religion wholesale. In 1621, local leaders Bankaw and Tamblot led anti-Catholic uprisings on the islands of Leyte and Bohol. Spanish forces also tried to penetrate some parts of Mindanao, but resistance among Muslim communities relegated them to coastal areas.[11] Nevertheless, the social structure of the pre-Hispanic political units, which were totally dependent on the decisions of the chiefs or local rulers, facilitated the baptism of a large number of the population to the Christian faith.

The first wave's missionary paradigm was basically to *baptize then teach*. The dominant preoccupation was "conversion of pagans," that is, to free the heathens, or the godless, from the darkness of unbelief to the light of faith in Jesus Christ. The indispensable sign of conversion was baptism, which was also considered as the necessary guarantee of salvation and the only way to be incorporated into the Catholic Church. The passion and toil of the missionaries

were motivated by the theological paradigm of *missio ad gentes*,[12] or mission to the nations, understood as going to territories that did not yet know Jesus Christ. The success of missionary activity was measured by the number of baptisms and the creation of local settlements with the necessary structure for teaching the Christian doctrine and the reform of un-Christian practices such as polygamy, superstitious animist practices, and local rituals.

The second wave of missionary activity (late-nineteenth–early twentieth century) started after 1898—the transition from Spanish colonization to American occupation—when new missionary orders or institutes were invited to begin a series of missionary outreach outside the established institutions and parishes of religious institutes that came to evangelize the Philippine islands during the first wave of missionary activity.[13] After independence from Spain, many of the Spanish friars were forced to leave the country. Further, very few of the Spanish clergy could go outside Manila. Martin Ueffing notes that there had been fewer than 675 Filipino priests for the 967 parishes and missions that existed in 1898. By 1900, the number was considerably lower since the seminaries were closed and most would not begin to reopen before 1904.[14] Local and internal factors also played a role in the post-Spanish missionary landscape. Ueffing writes

> Alarmed by the spread of Protestantism, the growth of the Philippine Independent Church (Aglipayan Church) and the influence of the Masons who supported the revolution, the Catholic Church in the Philippines appealed to religious orders all over the world and the second wave of mission started … Mainly because of the lack of priests, the bishops sought religious priests from countries other than Spain. In the first decade of the century the following congregations entered the Philippines: Redemptorists (CSsR.), Mill Hill Missionaries (MHM), Scheut Missionaries (CICM), Sacred Heart Missionaries (MSC), Divine Word Missionaries (SVD).[15]

Areas inhabited by indigenous peoples in the north of Luzon were given to new congregations. At that time, Christians were a minority in many places in the south of the Philippine islands as the majority of the population embraced Islam and indigenous peoples kept their own cultures and faiths.[16] The missionary paradigm during this period could be described as *teach then baptize*. This paradigm is reflected in how the missionary initiatives were focused on Christian education that is open not just for Christians but non-Christians, as well, notably Muslim Filipinos. In fact, many of the religious institutes eventually established schools and universities that were not exclusively for Catholic Christians. Thus, mission schools became places of and for Christian teaching and fertile grounds for meaningful encounters between Christians and Muslims, as well as between Christians and indigenous peoples. The main thrust of mission work is that of being inserted into the reality of the people as a Christian presence and witness in multireligious and multicultural communities.

The third wave (late twentieth century–present) is a period where local churches have become fully established with the creation of dioceses that

provide institutional ecclesiastical stability and the emergence of local ecclesial leaders both in terms of growth in priestly vocations and in terms of a greater participation of the laity in church ministry and apostolate. It is the time referred to by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (hereafter PCP II) as "a new age of mission" in so far as the Philippine church has become a sender of missionaries overseas.[17] This period is also associated with the rise of basic ecclesial communities, which PCP II has promoted as a new way of being church. This period saw the emergence, as well, of new lay ecclesial renewal movements—locally inspired and founded—that have created and animated a new enthusiasm for new evangelization, e.g., El Shaddai,[18] Couples for Christ, and other charismatic groups with Pentecostal spiritualities. Today, a good number of these movements, particularly Couples for Christ and El Shaddai,[19] have traveled with Filipinos who bring their faith as they move and work overseas. At the time of the council, there was already a sense of the missionary role of Filipinos in diaspora as evidenced by following observations:

> A growing awareness of the missionary potential of Filipino migrant workers abroad has also dawned upon us. For economic reasons, wave after wave of Filipinos have sought work in other countries. There they witness through their religiosity and piety whenever this is possible for them. Many are the stories of the positive effects of their faith witness on others.[20]

The increasingly global reach of Filipino missionary activity and PCP II's emphasis on witness as a critical part of mission means that the missionary paradigm during this period could be described as *making disciples* to all nations. In the words of PCP II, "The first and most potent means of renewed evangelization is not the teaching of doctrine (which remains indispensable), but the *witnessing* to others of the working of God's grace in our lives."[21] Part of this new method of evangelization, PCP II contends, is the participative approach "which will lead Catholics to realize that everyone needs to be evangelized, and that everyone is called by the faith to be an evangelizer."[22] PCP II called for a new fervor among all the members of the Filipino Christian community to proclaim the Good News.[23] In contemporary times, the Filipino diaspora, particularly OFWs, provides an increasingly important role in carrying out this missionary mandate. It is to the missionary dimensions of the experience of OFWs that this chapter now turns.

Filipinos in Diaspora and Mission

According to the Philippine government, Filipinos in diaspora can be categorized into three groups, namely permanent migrants (4.8 million), temporary migrants (4.2 million), and irregular migrants (1.2 million). Of this more than 10 million Filipinos in diaspora, 3.2 million are considered by the government as overseas workers.[24] Further, the majority of OFWs are women and men between 30 and 40 years of age.[25] In addition, many OFWs work in the service

sector, providing supply for a growing demand on global householding jobs such as homecare for the elderly, childcare and other domestic work for working parents, and housekeeping and janitorial services in hotels and houses of upper- and middle-class families in Europe, the Middle East, and some Asian countries. A good number are also employed globally in the health-care sector.

The migration of Filipinos is often interpreted from the labor-market point of view and from the financial benefits that migrant families receive. Analyses of Filipino migration also tend to focus on the social costs, with particular attention to the negative consequences of migration to families. Social analysis, although necessary, is not enough to adequately understand Filipino migration. It is equally important to understand migration axiologically.[26] As it is, "migrations of every type, as also the incessant journeying about the modern world of certain groups—such as seamen, flight crews and wandering peoples—not only offer new pastoral difficulties, but raise new problems pertaining to the spiritual life,"[27] thereby creating a need for missionary presence. The presence of Filipino chaplaincies in Europe, the Middle East, and in some countries in Asia, where there is a considerable number of OFWs, attest to this new frontier for Filipino mission. At the same time, the manifold and complex social issues that underpin the overseas labor migration experience require a multifaceted missionary activity, that is, beyond spiritual accompaniment and beyond a myopic focus on OFWs. The following observations on Asian migrant workers by the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC), which ring true for OFWs, lend credence to this argument for a reimagined multilateral missionary presence:

> At the same time, migrants are problematic. Not only do they ask for help from the local Church in their legal or social needs, but sometimes their presence becomes overwhelming, and they upset the local communities. In addition, because of their quest for earnings, they accept occupations of dubious repute and compromise moral standards, becoming counter-witness to the Gospel. Victims of greedy recruiters and unscrupulous employers, they venture into irregular migration and are considered willing participants of their own victimization. Migrants, therefore, are blamed for the disruption and bad image they bring to Christian communities.[28]

Indeed, like their fellow Asian migrant workers, OFWs are not blameless. However, their contributions to the local churches, especially in countries and communities where they are welcomed as residents, cannot be denied. Further, and as indicated in the abovementioned quote from PCP II (no. 108), such contributions have missionary potential and dimension[29] such that it could be said that not only are OFWs the new missionaries of the Philippines to all peoples (*ad gentes*); their experience also provides clues in reimagining missiology in general, and Filipino missiology in particular.

The missionary dimension of the experience of OFWs is discernible in three ways. The first is through their reasons and motivations for migration. The

existential horizon of the Filipino worldview is essentially conjunctive: it sees every experience, every effort, every sacrifice—practically everything—from a personal yet communal relationship made concrete in the immediate and extended family. Thus, migration is not simply for financial reasons, career opportunities, or personal advancement but, more importantly, for love of family even at the cost of separation from family and friends as well as the comforts of home.[30]

A second expression of missionary life among OFWs is their religious practice. The late Filipino bishop Francisco Claver pointed out that, for all their defects and faults, ordinary Filipinos are a deeply religious people, and their religiosity migrates with them in their new places of residence and work. Claver wrote:

> It is a common enough phenomenon, but everywhere OFWs go they bring their religiosity along with them and they seem to be more faithful to their practice of religion than they show back in the Philippines—at least where weekly church-going is concerned … in the unfamiliar ultimate surroundings of their migrant situation, it is the Catholic faith and its rituals that make them feel at home amid the strangeness of all other aspects of their new life.[31]

Noted Filipino sociologist Randy David echoes Claver's observation in his description of his experiences with Filipina migrant workers:

> I once visited a bar in a suburb of Tokyo where the hostesses were very young *Pinays*. I was very impressed with the way they dealt with the more aggressive among their Japanese customers. These girls were in total command of themselves and of the situation, even if their Japanese was barely understandable. One of them told me that all five of them prayed together at the beginning and at the end of every night—- before an image of the *Santo Niño* (Infant Jesus) which was magnificently enshrined right among the cognac and whisky bottles. I also remember sitting in a plane beside a sexily dressed Filipina bound for Japan. She must have carried with her more than a dozen novenas to various saints. She did nothing but mumble her magical prayers through the entire trip, her contemplative pose only occasionally disturbed by the chatter of her Japanese recruiter. I asked her if she was nervous and if this was her first time to leave the country. No, she was not, and this was her third time.[32]

Indeed, Filipino migrants carry and observe their popular devotions all over the world.[33] The challenges of working and living away from one's home country oftentimes create, or rekindle, a desire to live a more intentional life of faith. Filipino cultural values such as *bayanihan* and *malasakit* help in dealing with the challenges.[34] Elsewhere, in an exploration of Filipino core values in relation to the experience of Filipino migrants, I contend that the core values are not complete without the Catholic faith that gives deeper meaning to all experiences

and circumstances of life in the eyes of the Filipino.[35] I posit that this enduring and deep faith of Filipino migrants make them "missionaries."[36]

In Canada and elsewhere, Roman Catholic churches are centers of Filipino social interaction outside the confines of their home.[37] The loneliness and isolation as well as the need to connect, especially to people and rituals that remind them of home, strongly account for weekly church attendance. As a Filipina live-in caregiver bemoaned, "I will go crazy if I cannot go to church."[38] The missionary fruits of OFWs' steadfast faith can be glimpsed in the following statement from a diocese in a host country:

> Our churches are very alive on Sundays because of their presence. The Filipinos have brought their religiosity and faith to the Church of Hong Kong—they enhance the faith of our local people with their presence, witnessing hospitality, joy, and love for music. The diocese is truly blessed in many ways because of the Filipinos, and their dynamism will keep alive the faith in the territory … In short, *the Filipinos are to be called missionaries first before they are labeled as domestic helper*.[39]

OFWs' witness goes beyond religious practice and well beyond the Filipino migrant community. Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong, who are at the forefront of the struggle for justice for migrant domestic helpers, often get their inspiration and begin their "social mission" in and through the church, or through church involvement. A good number of OFWs worldwide are also actively involved in the local parish, e.g., choir and the local community. Some do pastoral work every Sunday by caring for sick people, visiting the needy, and performing other charitable activities, particularly for the local people.[40] OFWs' practice of diaspora philanthropy[41] also demonstrates this missionary witness of love and service simultaneously in both sending and receiving country.

A third and final missionary dimension of OFW life is their indirect witness to their faith in the context of their work. This is particularly true for the vast majority of OFWs who are engaged in care work for the poor and vulnerable, such as the children and the elderly in households or the sick in hospitals, whether in secularized countries in the West that used to be bastions of (Catholic) Christian faith or in Muslim-majority countries of the Middle East. In informal settings, OFWs have indirectly evangelized households by teaching children to pray and by caring for old people not only as caregivers but also as spiritual support in their loneliness and search for a meaningful (faith) life in old age. Quoting an Italian couple reflecting on how their daughter learned to go to church by joining her Filipina nanny who never fails to go to Mass on Sundays, Claver points to the practice of reverse mission among Filipino migrants:

> This is what Filipinos are doing around the world, without any fuss, without strong statements, and just by their own presence. If centuries ago European colonizers went abroad far and wide to conquer countries and peoples with the sword, a new colonization is taking place today, and no

> one knows about it. But it's just as powerful and effective even if they are often dismissed as "maids" or "nurses." Yes maids, nurses, seafarers, but with a soul that can change everything around them.[42]

Missiological Implications: *missio ad gentes* as *missio inter gentes*

Vatican II's mission document *Ad gentes* (On the Mission Activity of the Church)[43] and Pope Francis's vision of missionary discipleship highlight the idea that every baptized Christian is a missionary. Filipino Catholics themselves have been challenged to see the Filipino missionary vocation as not limited to priests and religious men and women, and to become missionaries to Asia and to the world. Paul VI, for instance, encouraged Filipinos to share their faith when he visited the country in 1970:

> At this moment one cannot but think of the important calling for the people of the Philippine islands. This land has a special vocation to be the city set on the hill, the lamp standing on high (Matthew 5:14–16) giving shining witness amid the ancient and noble cultures of Asia. Both as individuals and as a nation you are to show forth the light of Christ by the quality of your lives.[44]

John Paul II reiterated this cross-border missionary vocation of the Philippine church to all peoples during his apostolic visit in 1981: "There is no doubt about it: the Philippines has a special missionary vocation to proclaim the Good News, to carry the light of Christ to the nations."[45] A critical correlation of the missionary dimensions in the experience of OFWs, as discussed in the previous section, with the missionary paradigms in Filipino mission history, particularly as reflected in the first two waves of evangelization, opens up space for us to look into a possible reinterpretation of *missio ad gentes*.

In the first two waves of Philippine missionary history, *missio ad gentes* was understood in relation to the conversion of pagans in places that were geographically distant from the then center of Christianity, that is, the West. The dominant missionary paradigm, especially during the first wave, was conquest of peoples for Christ by baptism and doctrinal instruction.[46] Many who were baptized embraced Christianity without a profound and mature awareness of one's faith in Christ. In other words, the challenge after baptism was to help those who were baptized to grow into mature and committed Christians. Contextual realities at that time did not facilitate the much needed growth in mature Christian faith. As a result, many were baptized yet remained nominal and marginal Catholic Christians. Not surprisingly, these Catholic Christians tended to live their faith like a cultural ritual. During the second wave of missionary activity, the theological vision of mission as the conversion of all to Christ remains dominant. This dominant theology of mission, which emphasized "salvation of souls" (*salus animarum*) and "planting of the church" (*plantatio ecclesiae*),[47] was challenged by the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the permanent validity of mission to all peoples which is always in the light of the principal and creative agency of the Holy Spirit.

The missionary dimensions of the experience of Filipinos in diaspora open a new horizon in rethinking mission beyond the geographical or territorial paradigm and in terms of new missionary situations, or new *areopagi*, of mission.[48] Diaspora mission, as seen in the experience of OFWs, can be considered as a new locus for a theology of mission. First, it shines a light on missionary activity that is, to a large extent, beyond the purview of the structures and process of the church and state, who were key players in the first two waves of mission in the Philippine context. During the first wave, for instance, missionaries "were powerfully aided" not only by the imperial connections of the Catholic Church but also "by the secular forces of [the] government, while they themselves helped materially in the preservation of order and the establishment of stable government."[49] The educational thrust of the second wave, meanwhile, meant that mission remained largely within church structures and organizations, notably religious congregations.

Second, and more importantly, OFWs' global presence and the steadfast, incarnational, as well as cross-border character of their witness in the midst of situations of social injustice as well as intercultural and interreligious settings, illustrate the need for rethinking missionary discipleship in multiple (and circulatory) territorial and existential geographies.[50] On the one hand, OFWs' experience reflects continuity with the missionary mandate for all baptized Christians. On the other hand, it shows discontinuity in the traditional understanding of mission "frontier" since mission is not limited to territorial geographies but extended to human-existential realities and to "evolving frontiers of hybridity and their relevance for diaspora missions."[51] OFWs' missionary experiences affirm that:

> While it is true that the work of missions focuses on people, it cannot be divorced from the worlds they move and live in … the world's peoples [who are] on the move enter new spheres which they have to negotiate and navigate. As they move and mix, they spawn hybridization and are themselves hybridized.[52]

In other words, in the language of existential faith migrants are challenged to live and share their Christian faith in new spheres of work and encounter.

It can be, therefore, argued that *missio ad gentes* acquires a new dimension in the context of diaspora, particularly in the experience of OFWs. The expression "to all peoples" or "to all nations" (Matthew 28:20) in the missionary mandate of Christ, or in his great commission to all his disciples, takes on new layers and multiple settings in the experiential mold of migration-diaspora expanding mission *to* the nations (*missio ad gentes*) to mission *among* the nations (*missio inter gentes*). The traditional meaning of mission to all peoples is going to another place, territory, or destination, where a missionary is sent, or "assigned," to proclaim Christ and his salvation. Mission, however, in the experience of OFWs becomes not only a matter of going to a country as a destination but also as a place of encounter, of crossing multiple borders

(increasingly in a circulatory manner) and various cultural and religious boundaries, of being welcomed as a stranger, of being able to work with dignity, of caring for others and being able to live one's culture and faith freely and, as illustrated in the abovementioned case of the Filipina nanny and the Italian girl she was taking care of, drawing others to the faith in the process. Thus, by focusing on the people who move across various borders with their unique identity, cultural diversity, and existential faith, *missio ad gentes* acquires a different interpretation in which mission is not a "planned" or "assigned" activity restricted to the work of priests and religious men and women and under the watchful regulatory eye of religious institutions and authorities; it becomes a more natural, spontaneous experience of being a leaven of goodness, a channel of gospel-oriented values, and a witness of Christ's love to all peoples across borders in all situations and seasons of life. Mission becomes, in the vision of Pope Francis, about missionary discipleship.

Thus, OFWs' practice of missionary discipleship shows that *missio ad gentes* is also about *encounter* among peoples, especially in multicultural and multireligious contexts. It demonstrates the value of welcome without fear of differences and possible conflicts. This encounter-based *inter gentes* perspective of mission, which is also proposed by Jonathan Tan as a new mission paradigm in the mission theology of Catholic bishops in Asia, sits well with how OFWs mirror the Asian bishops' more positive perception of religious pluralism and their preferred nonconfrontational dialogical approach for dealing with it.[53]

The experience of OFWs demonstrates, as well, that this mission among the nations is about simultaneous sending and receiving, that is, mission is about being sent and being received, or welcomed, at the same time. There is also a nuancing or expansion in the sender and receiver. It is not so much national or regional churches, or religious congregations, that send missionaries to distant lands as has been the common practice and understanding. Rather, it is God's (Filipino) people, who become simultaneously a sending and a receiving church in multiple and interconnected manner, e.g., in the case of individuals and groups with transnational networks. This reflects Francis's vision of a polyhedric mission,[54] whereby the center of mission is Jesus Christ, not a particular place or country.

Conclusion

In Catholic perspectives, the challenge of *missio ad gentes* is permanently valid. The emergence of new missionary situations has created a new awareness that mission belongs not simply to religious leaders and institutions but to God's people. This chapter demonstrates that the interpretation of *missio ad gentes* needs to go beyond geographical boundaries and embrace new human global geographies.

The church that goes forth as a community of missionary disciples is not simply a missiological jargon created to find a new language for the church's mission today. Filipinos in diaspora, particularly OFWs, help us understand

what and how *missio ad gentes* may mean and look like for us today, and what new missionary fluencies are necessary to proclaim Christ to emerging and subaltern frontiers of mission: de-Christianized countries that have become places of mission; global households that have become places that need care and love; and hospitals and care centers that need health workers who value patients as fellow humans in need of empathy, compassion, and tenderness. One could conclude that these incarnational encounters are at the heart of *missio ad gentes* in the context of the Filipino diaspora and that, in the case of OFWs, these encounters could be understood as proclamation through dialogue,[55] making them not only the Philippine's *bagong bayani* (new heroes) but also new missionaries.

Notes

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4 *Missio ad gentes* is, hereafter, used interchangeably with mission to the nations.
5 See Catholic Bishops Conference, "Becoming Jesus' Missionary Disciples: CBCP Pastoral Letter for the 2021 Year of Missio Ad Gentes," *CBCP News*, November 29, 2020, https://cbcpnews.net/cbcpnews/becoming-jesus-missionary-disciples
6 It was in the wake of Ruy Lopez de Villalobos's trip in 1543 that the (Philippine) islands were named *Filipinas* in honor of the sixteenth-century Spanish King Philip II.
7 See Emma Blair and James Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898*, vols 1–52 (Cleveland, OH: Arthur H. Clark, 1903).
8 Antolin V. Uy, "The Events in Cebu: The First Christians in the Philippines," in *Fanning the Flame of Mission*, ed. Andrew Recepcion (Manila: CBCP Commission on Mission, 2016), 91.
9 See Samuel Tan, *A History of the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2009).
10 See, for example, James Alexander Robertson, "Catholicism in the Philippine Islands," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 3 (4) (January 1918): 379–382.
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15 Ueffing, "Missionary Situations," 55.
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17 At the time of the council, there were already about 1,000 Filipino missionaries overseas, and mission congregations were recruiting and sending many of their members overseas. Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, no. 107 (Pasay City: Paulines, 1992).

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33 See Rachel Bundang, "May You Storm Heaven with Your Prayers: Devotions to Mary and Jesus in Filipino-American Catholic Life," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, eds Rita Nakashima Brock et al. (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 2007), 87–105. See also Marisa Roque, "Fil-Canadians Bring *Flores De Mayo* Tradition to Their Local Parish," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 16, 2015, http://globalnation.inquirer.net/122998/fil-canadians-bring-flores-de-mayo-tradition-to-their-local-parish; and Chapter 3 in this volume.
34 See Chapter 1 in this volume.
35 These core values include *kabutihang loob* (innate goodness), *kalinisang loob* (purity of intention, honesty, transparency), *kagandahang loob* (generosity, selflessness, kindness), *kapangyarihan* (power, authority, skill, capacity, talents, resources), and *katahimikan* (peace, harmony, success, comfort, stability).
36 Recepción, "Understanding Filipino International Migration," 104.
37 Bonifacio and Angeles, "Building Communities through Faith," 265–266.
38 Employers of caregivers who live in rural outskirts often give them a ride to the church on Sundays. Bonifacio and Angeles, "Building Communities through Faith," 266.

39 See "Filipino Migrant Workers in Hong Kong," *Asian Migrant*, 7 (1) (January–March 1994): 6–7. Emphasis mine.
40 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences-Office of Human Development, *Pilgrims of Progress? A Primer of Filipino Migrant Workers in Asia* (Manila: FABC-OHD, 1994), 15.
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42 Claver, "Philippine Migrant Labor," 65–66. The story, which is from an executive of Fiat whose marriage, family, and spirituality was transformed partly because of his experience of faith among Filipino migrants, came to light when the executive called the late Cardinal Sin in one of his visits to Rome to tell him the story.
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53 Jonathan Tan, "*Missio Inter Gentes*: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC)," *Mission Studies*, 21 (1) (2004): 65–95.
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55 See Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, "Dialogue and Proclamation," www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html. See also Edmund Kee-Fook Chia, *World Christianity Encounters World Religions* (Collegeville, PA: Liturgical Press, 2018), 141–144.

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