

Bottom line at the top:

1. Mindanao peacebuilding is powerfully Catholic.

To understand Catholicism in its full range of historical and contemporary expressions is to recognize that we have no problem in naming what Mindanao peacebuilders do as Catholic; almost everything peacebuilders do has some resonance or locus in Catholic experience and tradition.

2. As an eschatological sign of the Kingdom, MP points to and deepens God's presence among us.

To claim MP as Catholic is not an exclusive or triumphal statement, as if Catholics alone have anticipated, evoked or performed the disclosive practices of peacebuilding. There are no Roman Catholics in heaven—nor Jews, Greeks, etc.

Yet the Church is THE sacrament. Its special and distinctive, if not unique, mission is to lift up, celebrate and bring to dizzying material, institutional and, yes, bureaucratic expression the dimensions of divine compassion, mercy, sovereignty embedded in human agency and indeed in all of creation.

At its most self-confident and humble (say, December 8, 1965), the Church knows this about itself. The Church, that is, knows that Catholics are unfaithful to their special mission to the world whenever they exclude others. They falter whenever they fail to perceive and celebrate the unity of the present moment and their own previous multiplicity of graced experiences; and whenever they ignore or relegate to secondary position the graced experiences of others.

And Catholics are *true* to this mission whenever they strive to frame [set in proper theological context] and name [proclaim the depth dimensions of] these disparate experiences. The Church claims them [incorporates them] into the truly ecumenical, inter-religious, religious-secular, nonreligious “Body of Christ.” Jesus did not come to make Roman Catholics but to re-member alienated humanity.

3. MP, like authentic peacebuilding elsewhere, offers an invitation and challenge to the institutional Church.

The real question is not whether peacebuilding is Catholic, but whether the Church will claim these peacebuilding practices *as* Catholic Christian and recognize them as privileged and necessary expressions of contemporary Catholic identity.

The CPN must become an advocate for this recognition. The development of a theology of a just peace, attentive to local particularities but encompassing them all, is one means of doing so.

In short, the Catholic faith tradition must accept the invitation of the peacebuilding community to dive deeper into revelation, to plumb its own experience of and wisdom regarding graced humanity, and thereby to evolve toward a fuller, timelier incarnation of the Spirit of Christ.

{And the peacebuilding community must realize that it is offering this invitation, even when the invitation comes in the form of a sign of contradiction, a challenge to ecclesial complacency or opacity.}

I.

Question: What is distinctively Catholic about Catholic peacebuilding?

Answer: Virtually everything, and nothing.

How so?

Like any academic worth his salt, I begin by deconstructing the question.

“Distinctive” could convey “exclusively” Catholic; but there is very little, if anything, that is exclusively Catholic-- little, if anything, associated with Catholicism that is not always already constitutive of the human experience and found manifested in a million different ways in the history of humankind.

Indeed, with apologies to the bishops among us (whose job it is to protect orthodoxy and ferret out heresy), it would be, and has been, heretical to suggest that there is something of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic tradition—“the Great Tradition,” which Roman Catholicism claims direct continuity with and faithful expression of-- that is not also always and already of the world.

That is to say, Christian revelation is not a special gnosis, but a series of redemptive insights into what is finally and fully true about humanity.

The gift that Catholicism as a global faith tradition has offered and offers to the world is found, therefore, not so much in adding something to the mix—in making “a distinctive contribution”-- as in pointing to and “clarifying” what is going on already, always and everywhere, as God seeks communion (communio), relationship (relatio) with those whom God has called into being by breathing forth his Word.

The analogical imagination of Catholics; the sacramental sensibility is a marker of this charism.

It is expressed succinctly in Lumen Gentium's famous formulation: The Church takes nothing away from the cultures of the world, but rather elevates and purifies those cultural elements which already partake in the mystery of God's presence in the world.

Hence the irreducible, inescapable pluralism of Catholicism.

When Protestants fight. . .

Which Catholicism? The contemplative presence of the Desert Fathers? Ignatian spiritual militance? The Devotio Moderna or Catholic Action? The Dark Night of the Soul or the Theology of Liberation? The vertical faith of the preconiliar ghetto {baptizing the baby} or the horizontal faith of Justice in the World { heading up the Parliamentary office to influence public policy}?

If Catholicism brings to light what is partly hidden or embedded in our experience of the world, this is a service of clarification; but how does one "clarify" Mystery?

By signing, embodying, incarnating. "The symbolic and therefore the real."

This, then, is the distinctive contribution, if we must name one: gesturing toward the depth dimension of human freedom in its unpredictable and mysterious unfolding. {OK, then, arise and walk.}

What has this to do with peacebuilding as it emerges fresh in our time?

The signs are everywhere (not least among Lumad, Christian settler and Moro practices and sensibilities) and the challenge to the Church is to keep up with them—to frame, name and claim them, as it were.

The signs we have considered include:

- **the development of peace education programs at every level, designed to inculcate the virtues of tolerance, respect for human dignity, nonviolence as a way of life;**
- **the formation of coalitions for justice across tribal and religious boundaries;**
- **the establishment of zones of peace-- "sacred spaces," where people strive to observe the minimum social requirements of the Kingdom;**
- **the fostering of communal rituals of re-remembering (e.g., the week of peace);**
- **solidarity with the poor through innumerable acts of compassion and collaboration;**
- **the crazy quilt of organizations that betoken a commitment to social change through structural as well as personal transformation.**

Are such practices not hallowed in the Catholic tradition? In the past some have been named differently { “corporal works of mercy” . . . “Mystical Body of Christ” . . . “solidarity in pursuit of the common good” . . . preferential option for the poor} while others seek to be named afresh {accompaniment? the ascetics of dialogue as spirituality?}.

Yes, and many of these practices are also hallowed in the Islamic and/or indigenous and/or Protestant and/or human rights communities and traditions, etc. Again, Catholicism seeks to name them and claim them as paths of sanctification not for the Church alone but for all humankind.

The genius of Catholicism—its animating spirit, its signal contribution to the world—is a purification, but not abandonment, of the folk/pagan/indigenous sensibility that all is grace. A relocation, recontextualizing of the instincts, ceremonies, rituals, acts of those well beyond the visible boundaries of the institutional Church.

Thought exercise: Is this aspiration and mission inherently arrogant, triumphalist, hegemonic, imperialistic, patriarchal, and so on?

Luther si, Erasmus, no.
All up to the Institution.
“Sinner ever in need of purification.”

Did John Paul kiss the soil to claim it or name it or frame it?

Hindu nationalists in India would say: All of the above. But so would right-minded Catholics, though with different connotations in mind.

II.

Like any academic worth his salt: having deconstructed the original question, ignore it and pose one more congenial to your thesis.

So, here is the more interesting and relevant question posed by MP (in two parts):

1. What must we re-member, re-assimilate from our own past that is missing in the present practice, or in our way of theorizing, interpreting, understanding—naming—the present practice?

What we have forgotten or let lie fallow, or willfully eclipsed?

What is available to us today, but not yet applied to peacebuilding?

{From the New Testament: Eschatological tension.
Archbishop Capalla: Not here merely to feed the poor but to form friendships.}

{From our own religious communities: spiritual resources for peacebuilding***}**

2. Same questions with respect to our Muslim, Protestant, Jewish, indigenous, and secular friends?

{ From the Christian peace churches: Nonviolence as an imperative.}

**{From the Protestant tradition:
the complexifying persistence of sin.}**

{From Islam: a return to catholic supernaturalism –“immersion”.}

{From secular humanism: a check on uncritical supernaturalism.}

2. How can Catholic peacebuilding contribute to the self-understanding and thus evolution of the Great Tradition? What is God disclosing in the present moment that reveals to us aspects of the mystery of Christ that have remained hidden but are now revealed in, for example, the oppression of the Moro peoples?

{Silsilah: Dialogue as a way of life}

{Again, the inevitability of the Laity}

{Formation: Sister power}

**Embracing the other as a way of affirming the Catholic genius that there is no other.
{anti- Muslim prejudice}**