

Synthesis of Catholic Contribution and Theological Reflection in Mindanaw Peace Building Initiatives

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Introduction: We have covered so much yesterday that we have to simplify.

A. This group – multi-cultural and multi-national

- all involved in some form of peace ministry whether is the local church work, academe or agencies and offices, or in grassroots (field) work

B The focus of our discussion as of this conference are the peace building initiatives in Mindanao (Mindanao is multi-cultural ... tri-people), meaning we are reflecting on actual experiences and actual work (praxis). Therefore the first question we are trying to clarify is “What is happening?” Yesterday and this morning, we have listened to many answers. It is a big task to further synthesize the different syntheses.

C. After seeing what is happening, we wish to understand and have more insights into what is happening. Repeatedly the question was asked: “What is distinctively Catholic in our peace involvements?” When we ask that question, it leads us to more areas of inquiry. We become engaged in theological reflection and we reflect on our experiences in the light of our faith in Jesus Christ.

D. Finally, hopefully today and tomorrow, we will look into the implications of our theological reflections, especially in terms of our continued involvement in peacebuilding. Are we on the right track? Do we have to shift directions? Are there some other things we ought to do?

E. The action part, its implementation, and further reflection, continues the process we start here.

I will only deal into the first two questions:

1. What is happening?
2. What does our faith (being Catholic) say about what is happening?

A. What is happening

A.1. To Mindanao?

- Land of promise – Indigenous peoples and Muslims and Migrants
 - We Catholics are mostly children of migrants who came here as farmers, soldiers, teachers, etc
- Land of Conflict – especially in the 1970's – 2000's
 - Sources of Conflict
 - i. Land? Economic?
 - ii. Political Power?
 - iii. Religion?

iv. Cultural? (Clash of culture / civilization)

- Land of Peace Talks / Negotiations (Peace Under Repair)
(GRP with MNLF, GRP with MILF, GRP with NDF)
- Land of Peace initiatives (heard from yesterday and this morning – Advocacy, Peace Agenda)

A.2. To the Catholic Church?

- from traditional ministries to emerging / new ministries (Indigenous Peoples, Inter-religious dialogue)
- from traditional structure to BEC (Basic Ecclesial Communities)
- from being apolitical to political involvement
- from liturgical, to developmental, to liberational (structural)

To schools? To agencies (more or less connected with Church)?

To CRS? From Relief and rehab to development work to peace work

A.3. What are the faces of peacebuilding? Many good things are happening.

- Relief and Rehabilitation – Pikit’s “sporadic peace”
- Trauma Healing and Rebuilding Trust
- Peace education together with children, parents, grassroots communities, school
- Policy advocacy, lobbying for peace (E.g. Stop the movements of rebel groups , can you stop the military troops’ movement?)
- Life-saving intervention between forces
- Dialogue in its many forms – Interreligious, Ecumenical
- Grassroots peacebuilding (Zones of Peace)
- Research and Fact Finding
- Solidarity Work (for issues affecting people)
- Promotion of the Culture of Peace
- Cultural Sensitivity

Therefore: Our peace initiatives evolved

- from mere remediation of victims to empowering the victims (widows/women)
- from victims to advocates
- from R&R to going to root causes (cultural, religious economic and political)

This was not an easy job, in Marawi as told yesterday, Mgr Desmond, Fr. Michel, and Fr. Rufus, were all kidnapped. They were courageous to do ministry in these places--without bodyguards. Given all these initiatives, the question was asked “What makes them Catholic?” Do we have to baptize all these efforts to make them Catholic?



What gives a person, a thing or an institution its identity?

1. Its origins – I am my father’s son. If the egg comes from a duck, it must be a duck. If it is initiated by a Catholic agency, it must be Catholic.
 2. Its actions “Agere sequitur ese.” Action follows being. If it acts Catholic, it must be Catholic. If it acts like a duck, quacks like a duck, waddles like a duck, it must be a duck
 3. Its purposes or ends – The hammer’s purpose is to drive down a nail. If the organization’s purpose is in line with the Catholic Church, it must be Catholic.
- B. And this brings us to the deeper theological question – a question of PURPOSE. Why do we do what we do? For whom or for what are we doing what we are doing? What gives meaning to our actions?

It is our faith that gives a Catholic meaning to our actions. This faith is not just conventional faith but convictional. I have faith convictions about the person of Jesus and His message.

We therefore have to begin with our faith in Jesus Christ, if we are looking for meaning about what we are doing. We have to answer the questions about “Who is Jesus? What is His mission? What is the Church? What is its mission?”

Who is Jesus Christ? “I and the Father are ONE.”

What is His mission? “I come that they may have life and have it in its fullness.” (Jn 10:10)

What is the Church? “The pilgrim people of God to whom all people are in some way related.” (Lumen Gentium 16)

What is the Church’s mission?

1. “To be the sacrament of the inner union of the human person with God.” (Catholic Catechism 775)
2. To be the sacrament of the unity of the human race. (CC 775)

Ecclesia in Asia (refer to powerpoint presentation)

Church’s mission of evangelization

1. Proclamation
2. Dialogue

Cf. Poerpoint Presentation of Ecclesia in Asia