

The Bishop Ramento statement : a eucharistic vision for a globalized world

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20. The Bishop Ramento Statement: A Eucharistic Vision for a Globalized World

The Eucharist looks forward to a society in God, a city for all the nations, in which the last are first, the humble lifted high, and the powerful repentant, as grace and peace forgive and unite all humanity. If this is our hope, the supper should be celebrated not as an anaesthetic against the world's injustices but as a shout of joyful defiance and rebellion – a provocation and inspiration to make that rebellion real in love and a song of reinvigorating hope that the future can break through into the present.¹

The third and final meeting of a three-year theological consultation on catholicity and globalization took place August 18–22, 2008, in Manila, the Philippines, hosted by the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and gathering at the Bayview Park Hotel, Manila. Mindful of the life and witness of the martyred Bishop Alberto B. Ramento, representatives of The Episcopal Church, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, joined by an observer from the Church of Sweden, continued to explore the complex interrelations of catholicity and globalization, as catholic churches seeking ways to confront the economic and social issues challenging the world today. On behalf of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the Most Rev. Godofredo J. David, Obispo Maximo of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, welcomed the participants and encouraged them in their work. The Rev. Dr. Franz Segbers brought greetings from the original convener of the consultation, the Most Rev. Dr. Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht and President of the International Bishops' Conference of the Union of Utrecht; the Rt. Rev. Christopher Epting brought greetings from the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, and the Rev. Christofer Lundgren brought greetings from the Most Rev. Anders Wejryd, Archbishop of Uppsala.

The papers that shaped the group's work reinforced participants' sense that as people live in different contexts, they struggle in different ways to understand the variety of their experiences and perspectives on globalization. Seven formal papers developed two principal themes: (1) the con-

¹ Brian Wren, "Justice and Liberation in the Eucharist," *Christian Century* 1 Oct. 1986: 841–42.

crete effects of globalization as experienced within the Philippines and by migrant workers around the world, including eight million Filipinos (approximately 10% of the Filipino population) who are forced by economic pressures to live and work abroad, and (2) ways in which the churches may respond to and transform the world through the power of the Eucharist. Through dialogue the participants worked to understand how Christians may shift their perspective from the search for profit to one grounded in the Eucharist, centered in God's generosity toward all of creation, and seeking in undiminished hope to develop a Christian advocacy for the world's people, so to transform the world's structures of domination and exploitation into those in accord with the reign of God.

The group began its time together with an opening Eucharist at the National Cathedral of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. The deliberations of the first day focused on the Philippine experience of economic globalization. Fr. Rex Reyes, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines, offered an overview of the Filipino situation, using a variety of demographic and economic data to set forth the political, social, and theological context of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Episcopal Church in the Philippines. A radical disparity exists between the economic elite and the rest of the society, he explained. The nation's twenty wealthiest families have a net worth equivalent to the combined annual income of 52 million Filipinos, as 80% of Filipino families subsist well below the poverty line.² The nation's economy and politics are dominated not only by the interests of the wealthy but also by dependence on foreign capital.

Government failure to protect the interests of Philippine farmers and workers, irresponsible deregulation of industries, and privatization of public services have all contributed to the impoverishment of the people. The free trade agreements signed in the past twenty years with the World Trade Organization, the 30% of the annual national budget set aside for debt repayment, and the government's elimination of protective regulations make the country dependent on imported goods at the expense of lo-

² The poverty line for a family of six was estimated in 1988 at 2,709 pesos per month (from US Country Studies, countrystudies.us/philippines/74.htm, acc. 10 Apr. 2010). Fr. Reyes estimated that 80% of Filipino families survive on 284.33 pesos a day (=4.23 euros; 6.84 Swiss francs; US\$ 6.32), while 10% of those have only P90 a day (=1.34 euros; 2.16 Swiss francs; US\$ 2). These figures translate to about 68.2 million Filipinos living on P56.87 a day (=.85 Euros; 1.37 Swiss francs; US\$ 1.26).

cal agriculture, business, and technological development. IFI participants pointed out that these realities, grounded in the colonial history of the Philippines, which first Spain and then the United States occupied, and the continuing foreign (primarily US) domination of the Philippine government and economy, compel their church to fight against the many faces and effects of economic globalization and to urge the churches with which they are in full communion to join them in their struggle.

Building on this introduction to the Philippine context, in the afternoon Renato Reyes, General Secretary of BAYAN, the New Patriotic Alliance, and Rafael Mariano, a Peasants and Workers Party (ANAKPAWIS) member of the Philippine Congress, shared their experiences and insights about the Philippine situation. They emphasized the widespread social effects of the forces of international political and economic domination by such organizations as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Governmental failure to regulate foreign industry has allowed mining and logging companies to destroy arable land and undermine local economies, free trade imports of grain and rice at low prices have rendered home-grown rice unsalable, and government collaboration with the multinational oil companies has supported a dramatic surge in the price of petroleum products in the Philippines.

Wednesday's conversation turned to the search for a eucharistic perspective on and response to the globalized context. Fr. Peter-Ben Smit offered an exegetical commentary on the two parallel feasts in Mark 6, contrasting the two mutually exclusive "ecclesiologies" represented by Herod's chaotic dinner, which was restricted to the administrative and social elite of his realm, and by the meal given by Jesus to the hungry crowd. Fr. Franz Segbers' paper then expanded the context, moving forward from the biblical vision of the eucharistic banquet, where Christ manifests God's generosity to all who hunger, and now offers the churches a eucharistic vision of transformation. Just as in the Eucharist the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, those who eat and drink of that body and blood may themselves be transformed as members of the body of Christ and in their turn called to offer food to the world. The Very Rev. Eleuterio J. Revollido concretized this eucharistic vision with the stories of four martyred priests of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, men who struggled for justice, had compassion on the poor, and courageously fed the hungry: Fr. Jeremias Aquino (1949–1981), Fr. Narciso Pico (1949–1991), Fr. William Tadena (1968–2005), and Bishop Alberto B. Ramento (1936–2006).

The Wednesday-afternoon presentations continued to explore the lived realities of people suffering from the oppression and exploitation of economic globalization. The Rev. Dwight Q. Dela Torre, chaplain to the Filipino congregation in Hong Kong, reported on the conditions of the millions of people around the world forced by economic pressures into service as migrant workers. These people, he showed, are regularly treated as commodities to be exported and exploited as cheap labor, often forced to live in circumstances that deny them human dignity and civil rights, and deprived of their families. They are inherently vulnerable to economic abuse, violence, and arbitrary expulsion or detention. Bishop Warlito P. Baldomero then shared his thoughts on the historical causes of economic globalization and called for the church to respond through prophetic action as the “conscience of the world,” using spiritual gifts “for an alternative economic development that is sustainable and just.”

In the final paper of the consultation, The Rev. Cody Unterseher turned again to the way in which the church’s liturgy may transform those who share in it, as each who receives the body and blood of Christ takes into himself or herself the entire Body of Christ—all those in all places and times who have been incorporated into Christ’s body. As Christians celebrate the Eucharist in their local contexts, that celebration forms them into a common life and understanding.

The members of this consultation recognize the diversity of their contexts and respect the different points of view that result from such divergent experiences and understandings of globalization. However, they stand united against those political and economic structures and policies that contradict the eucharistic vision of a world of peace, justice, and life in abundance for all. The shared week of conversation has led the participants to an enlarged awareness of the ways in which all nations and churches are implicated in and affected by globalization and its many destructive effects, an expanded understanding of the ways in which globalization contributes to and worsens pre-existing and local conditions of inequality and injustice.

Having during these three years of consultation found in the biblical and patristic witness and in the churches’ shared liturgical traditions a mutual understanding of catholicity, the members of this consultation seek a eucharistic response to globalization that will assist God in transforming God’s world. They therefore recommend the following to the churches:

Joint Worship

- To ask our churches to endorse the liturgical commemoration of Bishop Alberto B. Ramento as a martyr
- To expand the idea of the Anglican Communion cycle of prayer that all our churches in full communion may embrace
- To develop shared liturgical resources

Joint Witness

- To publish the papers written for this three-year consultation
- To submit the statements for formal reception by our churches
- To continue in theological conversation through further joint consultations on topics of mutual concern
- To exchange ministers, lecturers, and theological students
- To exchange publications on a systematic basis (i.e., churches' year-books, major theological publications)

Joint Service

- To (re)institute Concordat Council meetings between the partner churches
- To consult jointly on missionary cooperation in areas such as capacity building, respite care, and education
- To establish companion dioceses or synods and linked parish relationships
- To develop migrant chaplaincies
- To support churches' offering sanctuary to migrants and refugees
- To encourage pressure by the churches, the governments, and multinational companies against extrajudicial killings in the Philippines and for peace and justice
- To create a church-based solidarity network to address and respond to issues of globalization
- To develop concrete support of projects of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente through cooperation between the church-based aid agencies of all four churches.

During these three years, the conversation among representatives of the Episcopal Church, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the Union of Utrecht, and the Church of Sweden has moved forward in mutual un-

derstanding of the churches and of the obligations of their catholicity as well as of globalization and its causes and consequences. In speaking and listening to one another we have increasingly recognized the inter-relationship of the members of our churches and of all the people in this globalized world. We have particularly benefited from the opportunity for joint theological reflection, a new experience in the relationships of our four churches.

We must continue to struggle, to be advocates for a Christian perspective on economics, politics, and global society. We must seek to understand, to effect change, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, following our Lord's example. As we receive the body and blood of Christ we become ever more fully members of his body and are joined inextricably with all those whom he loves and feeds. Our mission is thus not only to praise God or to invite others to praise God but to manifest God's love in this world that is our common home.

Manila, 22 August 2008

Professor Marsha L. Dutton (The Episcopal Church in the USA)
The Rev. Christofer Lundgren (Church of Sweden)
The Very Rev. Eleuterio J. Revollido (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
The Rev. Dr. Franz Segbers (Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht)
The Rev. Dr. Peter-Ben Smit (Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht)
The Rev. Canon J. Robert Wright (The Episcopal Church in the USA)

Other participants:

The Rt. Rev. Warlito Baldomero (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
The Most Rev. Godofredo J. David (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
Fr. Dwight Q. Dela Torre (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
The Rt. Rev. C. Christopher Epting (The Episcopal Church in the USA)
The Rt. Rev. Ephraim Fajutagana (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
Fr. Wilfredo Ruazol (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
Mr. Renato Reyes
Fr. Rex Reyes (The Episcopal Church of the Philippines)
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The Most Rev. Ignacio Soliba (The Episcopal Church of the Philippines)
The Rev. Cody Unterseher (The Episcopal Church in the USA)