

CATECHESIS/RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE SPIRIT OF PCP II

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INTRODUCTION

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines constituted a national, ecclesial response to the need for New Evangelization — one that will *revitalize* the Faith of Catholic Filipinos and *renew* the Catholic Church in the Philippines. In his homily delivered at the Eucharistic celebration opening the Council, Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., the President of the Council, deftly sketched the specific characteristics of PCP II: *its focus is Christ, in pastoral orientation toward the spirit of new evangelization, within the context of Filipino culture.*¹ All four characteristics play dominant roles in the Council's approach to catechesis and religious education.

The Council represents an extraordinary pastoral effort at revitalization and renewal, contextualized within the "Lights and Shadows" of the present-day Philippines. The Council's final document presents this renewal in three parts: (1) Envisioning a Church Renewed; (2) A Renewed Integral Evangelization; and (3) the Workers of Renewal: the Community of Disciples. The final part presents the Decrees of the Council in the form of 132 Articles.

1. See *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* 20 January — 17 February 1991 (Manila: Secretariat, Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1992). Hereafter cited as *Acts and Decrees*. Numbers in parentheses in the text refer to the marginal numbers of the Conciliar Document. Decrees are referred to by the number of the article.

It is important from the outset to emphasize this PASTORAL nature of PCP II. Hence precise academic discussions about catechesis and/or Religious Education (RE) or detailed proposals for novel methodologies, etc. are *not* to be looked for. Rather PCP II takes up catechesis/RE as an integral part of a "Renewed Integral Evangelization." Its thrust is to reflect critically and prayerfully on the total present catechetical situation, both "lights and shadows," and sketch in broad strokes the path toward renewal ahead.

Renewed evangelization is developed in terms of a twofold message: a Message of *Salvation*, and a Message of *Liberation*. Catechesis/RE is presented under the first, the Message of Salvation. The social apostolate, on the other hand, is treated in both this section as well as constituting almost the whole of the "Message of Liberation." This is a clear indication of the Council's predominant interest in Social Apostolate towards Transformation. Thus beyond its general *pastoral* orientation, it is within this second, more limited context of "*social concern*," that the Council's treatment of catechesis/RE must be located.²

TERMINOLOGY

Before entering into direct discussion of catechesis/RE in the Council's document, some clarification of terminology is called for. First, there is the long-disputed question concerning the more apt term: *catechesis* or *religious education*. The first, *catechesis*, has pre-eminence in terms of its long history in Catholic tradition, its contemporary Philippine use in the National Catechetical Year of 1989-90, and its universal ecclesial adaptation in the revised "Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults" (RCIA). On the other hand, "*religious education*," while restricted mainly to schools and adult education, is more attuned to current terminology. Few

2. The predominance of the "social concern" is manifested most clearly in the number of different topics approached from a distinctive social perspective, ranging from "Our Socio-cultural, Economic and Political Context," to "Jesus' Mission of Preference for the Poor," "Church of the Poor," "A Renewed Social Apostolate," "Social Apostolate towards Transformation," "A Spirituality of Social Transformation," etc., as well as the specific section on "The Social Doctrine of the Church."

religion teachers, for example, in both Catholic and public schools, would accept being called "catechists" by their fellow teachers or students.

But in the Philippines, as far as the Church ministry is concerned, both terms refer to pastoral activities which are so intertwined that, although distinct, they are for all practical purposes inseparable. Any appreciable advance in religious education would immediately be co-opted by catechists, while catechetical progress has clarified both the values and built-in limitations of school-based "religious education," and especially of the discipline called "religious studies." Hence this modest study uses both "catechesis" and "religious education" to cover the practical area of "education in the Faith."³

Secondly, there is the confusion of terms: *catechism*, *catechetics* and *catechesis*. For clarity's sake, we shall assume that "*catechism*" refers to a book of religious instruction.⁴ For the other two terms, we shall follow the National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines (NCDP) which defines *catechetics* as "the science or study of catechesis through the centuries . . . catechetics studies *how* to do catechesis — how it has been and is being done — and the norms for evaluating it."⁵ The same document quotes John Paul II in defining *catechesis* as "education in the faith . . . especially the teaching of Christian doctrine . . . imparted in an organic and systematic way with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life."⁶ Its basic aim is to "put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ."⁷ This descriptive definition conforms perfectly with PCP II's focus on Christ, and its stress on "systematic."

This brief study of "Catechesis/RE in the Spirit of PCP II" will first focus on the top priority awarded it by the Council, and

3. This follows the basic approach of the National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines, *Maturing in Christian Faith* (Pasay: St. Paul Publications, 1985), which draws on John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (Vatican, 1979) no. 18. These two sources are cited as *NCDP* and *CT*.

4. The final text has corrected two slips found in the original text, art. 18 #3 and art. 106 #1, where "catechism" was used in place of "catechetical" or "catechesis."

5. *NCDP* no. 70.

6. *Ibid.* no. 71.

7. *CT* no. 5.

the general approach to catechesis/RE adopted by the Council. The second long section is then developed in three main subsections: the first sketches the Council's notion of *Faith*, which grounds the renewed catechesis toward renewed evangelization. The following subsection takes up "*education in the faith*," including its major *characteristics, inculturation, and role* in fostering "loving knowledge." The third subsection focuses on the *educational institutions* involved, specifically *Catholic schools*, their contribution, deficiencies and needed reforms, as well as the educational agents and their formation — the teachers and catechists. The study concludes with some final observations regarding the outstanding emphases of PCP II relative to catechesis/RE.

I. CATECHESIS/RE: FIRST PRIORITY

Three specific "renewals" are proposed under the "Message of Salvation": a "*Renewed Catechesis*," a "*Renewed Social Apostolate*," and a "*Renewed Worship*." Beyond presenting this practical break-down of the Church's most essential pastoral ministries — perhaps influenced by the NCDP's division of Doctrine, Morals, and Worship — the Council document takes pains to inter-relate the three renewals, stressing that

no true renewal can happen in one area (e.g. in catechesis) in isolation from the other areas. Any genuine renewal must affect all three areas in their inter-relationship (no. 182).

This balance is spelled out in detail with the warning that a *catechesis* without the social apostolate would lack the power of Christian witness and transformation, while without worship it would become indoctrination. Likewise, a *social apostolate* without worship would lack its source of strength, while *worship* without the social apostolate would divorce itself from real life.

Nevertheless within this balanced inter-relation of catechesis, social apostolate and worship, the document clearly asserts the relative priority of catechesis: "*a renewed catechesis is thus the first element of a renewed evangelization*" (no. 156). This is further elaborated as follows:

the most basic area of renewal, and the one that must receive first priority is catechesis. Without education towards maturity in the faith, the social apostolate will become activism and will fall prey to the temptations of unchristian ideologies. Without catechesis, worship will degenerate into formalism and will slide into superstition and a magical mentality (no. 183).

The Council sums up this position in one of its Decrees: "Catechetical re-evangelization should be given the first priority in renewal, a priority which should be reflected in the allocation of personnel and resources" (art. 13).

Catechetical Priority Re-Confirmed. This resolution of the Council confirms the priority of catechesis that was already vigorously proposed by the *NCDP* ten years ago: "the basic problem of the Church in the Philippines is the problem of catechesis, not of initial proclamation."⁸ What is new is the recognition that unless this priority is translated in terms of allocating personnel and financial support, it is meaningless. Support of catechists has perennially been a major problem in the dioceses and parishes throughout the whole country. The common practical solution up to now has been to rely heavily on volunteer catechists who serve without compensation, to supplement the few professional catechists for whom most parishes are able to offer some VERY modest support. In its resolution, the Council seems to recognize that more needs to be done. More practical, concrete support in terms of both available personnel and funds is urgently needed. No easy magical solution is offered — only the critical, clearer recognition that catechesis, as the top pastoral priority, must get top *practical* support.

Certain efforts at renewal have already been initiated particularly in regard to the formation of professional catechists.⁹ But the national catechetical need is really of a wholly different scale than most catechetical leaders have realized thus far.¹⁰ For

8. *NCDP* no. 64.

9. See *Docete* 14, no. 65 (April/June 1991) for the proceedings of the First National Convention of Formators of Catechists, held at the Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), April 3-5, 1991.

10. Surprisingly, few catechetical leaders seemed to have been alert early on to the radical change that would occur in the Philippines' catechetical ministry by the actual implementation of the new Constitution's provision for religious instruction during class hours in public schools (Art. 114, Section 3, par. 3).

example, the Council contrasts our present professional catechists numbering about 3,000 with the estimated 24,000 needed to offer the public elementary and high school students a weekly 90 minute catechesis.¹¹ Given such statistics, it rightly concludes that even with every conceivable effort to recruit and train more professional catechists, there will still be an indispensable, major place for recruiting and organizing many more volunteer catechists, who work on a part-time basis.

Catechesis/RE in Public Schools. The Council's eminently practical approach to this nation-wide problem also shows how closely catechesis is connected with religious education. Its basically pastoral vision offers a salutary balance to certain "experts" who are often tempted to overstress the differences between catechesis and religious education. Once the public school system was opened to religious instruction, the Church could not ignore its unique potential for "instructing in the Faith." With all its limitations — which are real and considerable — there is nevertheless nothing that can quite take the place of school-based catechesis/religious education. The two are far more intimately connected than is usually recognized by the "experts" in their respective fields. This can be shown by briefly considering the mutual influences each has worked on the other.

On the one hand, the challenge of public school-based catechesis has forced a much more "professional" approach to catechesis and catechist-formation. The school structure, with its built-in continuity from one grade/class level to the next, has rudely crushed the illusion of the adequacy of a catechesis that consists simply of favorite "Bible stories." Catechetical coordinators have learned the basic need for worked-out, well-planned programs, Scope and Sequence charts, course syllabi, lesson plans, formulating precise objectives, testing, etc.

On the other hand, the fuller spiritual depths of a vibrant faith-inspired catechesis has uncovered the basic inadequacy of a merely social science, behaviorist approach in schools to both religion and human values.¹² For example, the academic subject

11. See *Acts and Decrees* no. 647. These figures are modified from the original, startling presentation of Fr. Cornelio Lagerwey, M.S.C., of CFA.

12. The dangers of sliding into a completely horizontal, secularist position

known as "religious studies," which explicitly and consciously avoids all faith-commitment and the question of the truth of religious claims, is obviously woefully inadequate for "educating in living Faith," i.e., for bringing someone into "intimacy with Jesus Christ." Maturing in the Faith demands much more than a mass of data and information to be memorized.

Both catechetical leaders and the *periti* in religious education, therefore, could profit from serious, critical reflection on the Council's practical problematic: how to create an effective catechesis/RE for elementary and high school pupils in both public and private schools.¹³

To sum up, therefore, the Council clearly proposes catechesis/RE as enjoying top priority in responding to the challenge of a "Renewed Integral Evangelization." But it is a concept of catechesis/RE that goes far beyond simply "teaching catechism" to little children. Its position of top priority among the other means for evangelization is based directly on its essential place in renewing not only knowledge of the faith (doctrine) but the Church's social apostolate and worship as well.

UPDATED CATECHESIS/RE APPROACH

Before embarking on an exposition of what the Council proposed about *faith* and the characteristics, new methods and inculturation of *education in the faith*, it may be worthwhile to note the general approach consciously chosen by the Council. At the beginning of Part II, "Envisioning a Church Renewed," the Council asks the question: "how can we live as Christians? as Filipino Catholics?" Its response is: by coming "to know, to love, to follow Christ in the Church which he founded. This is why we need to contemplate the face — and the heart of Christ."

are outlined in my "Value Education/Moral Recovery and Catholic Education," *Landas* 3/2 (July 1989) 175-85.

13. The need is not only for professionally-trained religion teachers/catechists, but also for suitable and creatively-inculturated RE materials, which implement well worked-out and concretely-tested RE programs and syllabi for both elementary and secondary levels.

This response, of course, is simply the concrete expression of the Council's declared focus on Christ. But then it adds:

We have to *retell his story* to ourselves, that we may, more credibly, more authoritatively, tell it to others. This is our belief (no. 36).

The Council document then proceeds to give a 20 page summary of "The Way of Jesus."

With this apparently unassuming beginning, the Council is actually adapting major aspects of the post-Vatican II renewal in catechesis/RE. The Biblical and experiential emphases, the approach to Scripture as narrative or story, the co-relating of the "little stories" of our own personal lives with the "Big Story" of salvation history — these are all readily recognizable in the Council's deliberate manner of beginning its exposition. To its credit, the development that follows lives up to this auspicious start.

II. EDUCATION IN THE FAITH

Since "education in the Faith" is such a broad topic, our modest study shall first focus on its object, "*Faith*," then on "*education in the Faith*," and finally on the primary institutions involved, namely, schools, and their principal *agents*, the catechists and religion teachers.

A. FAITH

Both catechesis and RE are directly concerned with educating, instructing, and helping persons to mature in the CHRISTIAN FAITH. The Council's notion of Faith can best be grasped by consulting two sources: the section on Faith in the position paper on "Religious Concerns" prepared for the Council, and secondly, the Council's document's description of Faith as "Responding to Jesus' Call Today."

The position paper's presentation of Faith began by taking up the "deficiencies of the Faith of Filipinos" under four headings. "*Ignorance of the doctrines of the faith*" headed the list, a weakness that has become alarmingly evident because of the

current wide-spread Fundamentalist challenge. "*Insufficiently personal and social*" were the two following deficiencies put forward — both of which could be traced, at least in part, to lack of adequate catechesis for the great majority of the faithful. "*Not sufficiently missionary*" was noted as a fourth defect, referring to the tendency to relegate Christian "mission" to a select few, especially priests and religious. But the paper's concluding remark is perhaps the most revealing:

there is good reason to believe that the faith of Filipinos manifests these deficiencies because it has *not been sufficiently inculturated*.

The need for greater efforts at authentic inculturation of the faith became one of the central themes of the Council.¹⁴

The position paper then presented "The Faith that We Need" as *personal, informed, inculturated, social and missionary*. In the Council's document, these qualities were set forth in two doublets: an "*informed and communitarian Faith*" and a "*missionary and maturing Faith*." This was supplemented by two characteristics: a "*loving Faith*," and an "*inculturated Faith*." In addition, a section on "Living the Faith" was added, focusing on "*Praying and Worshipping*" and "*Witnessing and Loving Service*."

B. EDUCATION IN THE FAITH

These qualities of "The Faith We Need" actually say much about the desired catechesis/RE. For the same basic qualities appear in the Council's perception of the goals, methods and characteristics of education, and in its critique of Catholic schools. This rather remarkable consistency confirms the existential validity and value of the individual insights. We shall relate the Council's "qualities of faith" to specific dimensions of the faith education (catechesis/RE) which it presents, and finally to its critique of Catholic schools.

1. "*An informed and communitarian Faith*" demands an education in the faith that is truly *integrated*, that takes seriously

14. See esp. *Acts and Decrees* nos. 202-211, and notes 20 f. below.

"knowledge of the doctrines of the Faith" together with its morals and worship. The Council takes a strong stand on the need for adequate knowledge of the faith, particularly in terms of *apologetics*. "We need not apologize for apologetic catechesis. . . . Apologetics has always been part of the pastoral and theological tradition of the Church. . . . we need to equip the faithful so that they can defend their faith" (no. 222). Thus the Council resolved that the "lay faithful and particularly lay leaders should acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to defend and explain the faith to others" (art. 44 #3).

Such education is obviously not for the private comfort and satisfaction of the individuals, but is essentially *communitarian*, that is, precisely for members within the Christian community. The *NCDP* had laid stress on "integration" and "community-forming" as two essential and necessary characteristics of authentic catechetical methodology.¹⁵ The Council uses the term "integrated" leading to an integral Christian development.

1a. The "content" of this education is further developed by the Council's adoption of the National Catechetical Year's (NCY's) proclamation which characterized catechesis/RE as "*Christo-centric, Rooted in the Word of God and Authentically Filipino.*"¹⁶ This focuses sharply the needed "education in the faith" precisely in terms of current concrete felt-needs. Against all Fundamentalist charges that Mary and the Saints have displaced Christ as the center of Catholic Faith, explicit focus on Jesus as our unique Lord and Savior is called for, and especially through a thoroughly *Catholic* handling of the Bible, God's living Word. The Council rightfully added the quality of "*systematic*" in view of the many catechetical/RE efforts that unfortunately remain disorganized, lacking in any continuity and in effective relationships with other catechetical efforts. Thus such catechesis remains partial, haphazard, and scattered.¹⁷

15. *NCDP* nos. 414-18, 434-41.

16. *Acts and Decrees* nos. 157-162. For the NCY Pastoral Letter, see *Docete* 12, no. 60 (Jan./March 1990) 55-56.

17. The *NCDP*, drawing on John Paul's *CT* no. 21, explains systematic as: (1) programmed for a definite goal; (2) focusing on the essentials of the Faith; (3) utilizing currently attractive means of communication; (4) sufficiently complete, and (5) integrating all the major dimensions of the Faith. *NCDP* nos. 74-75.

2. "A missionary and maturing Faith" signifies an education that is *out-going*, essentially a *process* rather than a static possession. The Council develops this type of education briefly in speaking of the need to pursue new evangelization by *new methods*. What actually is proposed are not so much new methods as new emphases, beginning with the over-riding importance of *witnessing*, and insisting on a PARTICIPATIVE approach to both teaching (the team approach) and the learning process. Such a participative approach is possible only if "new fervor" — inspired ultimately by the Holy Spirit — is aroused in all the Church's members to take an active part in the mission of re-evangelization.¹⁸ The controlling idea behind this is the insight into faith as *transforming*, involving a real *con-version* of heart, a *metanoia*, that is "alive" and active, a real, living process that is constantly changing as the faithful respond to ever new situations and challenges.¹⁹

INCULTURATION

Both these two complex clusters of Faith and education qualities (1. & 2.) are radically modified by the Council's insistence on "*inculturation*." The NCDP and the National Catechetical Year (NCY) both had stressed the "authentically Filipino" in communicating the Christian message, but the Council has gone the further step in explicitly recognizing the *long slow journey* involved in true inculturation. Following John Paul II, the Council describes inculturation as "the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity, and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (no. 202).²⁰ The basic attitude is one of RESPECT for the people's culture. Thus in concrete fashion, the Council adds: "the Church has to become Filipino to the Filipinos."

The Council relates to one theological basis for inculturation in again quoting John Paul II, who links inculturation with the

18. See *Acts and Decrees* nos. 193-198.

19. *Ibid.* nos. 257-275.

20. *Ibid.* no. 202, quoting John Paul II, "Redemptoris Missio: Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate" (Vatican, 1990) no. 52.

sensus fidelium (the faithful's sense of the faith), while warning that the whole people of God must be involved, not just a few experts (no. 211).²¹ But more specifically, the Council relates inculturation with "*Popular Religiosity*" and the integration of *Filipino values* and *Gospel values*. This is an extremely salutary and needed step, since both popular religiosity and value education have engendered more heat than light in many recent discussions among "experts." The Council's eminently practical resolution states that the potential of popular religiosity should be studied, "purified and enriched by the Word of God and transformed into a vehicle for effectively proclaiming the Good News and incarnating it in the lives of our people" (art. 18 #1). The Council calls for "a truly incarnate spirituality . . . attuned to Filipino culture . . . synthesizing that [which] is initially even if imperfectly found in our popular religiosity" (art. 17 ##2-3).

But the Council's position on inculturation is not in any way clouded by romantic fantasy. This is clearly shown in the sober evaluation of the "Lights and Shadows" of our world, the Philippines, in the opening section of the Council's document. Here in regard to the specific issue of inculturation, the Council manifests its sense of realism in two practical ways. It lays stress on precisely the "practical" aspects of Filipino culture, "focusing adequately on Filipino social and moral values such as *pagsasarili* (self-reliance), *pakakaisa* (working together), and *pagkamakabayan* (patriotism, nationalism)" (art. 17 #4). The second sharp "realistic" note is its warning that "devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints should be Christ-oriented. Catechetical programs must ensure that popular religious practices be true expressions of our faith, and that novenas have the Word of God as an integral part" (art. 18 #3).

INTEGRATED 'LOVING KNOWLEDGE'

Two additional notes on Faith that directly affect faith-education are added by the Council. The first, "*A Loving Faith*," touches a key factor in catechesis/RE. The common practice of playing

21. Ibid. no. 211, quoting "Redemptoris Missio", no. 54.

off orthodoxy against orthopraxis, or "content-oriented" vs. "experiential" catechetical approaches, is often based on a serious misunderstanding of both.²² The actual problem is taking Christian doctrine as so much cold, impersonal, abstract "information," rather than as "loving knowledge" such as we experience in our interpersonal relationships in family and with friends. If communicated properly, Christian doctrine is recognized and experienced as "saving, liberating knowledge."²³ But such communication demands a spiritual depth in the religion teacher that is often missing due to lack of adequate formation.

The second note in "Living the Faith" combines "*praying and worshipping*" with "*witnessing and loving service.*" This combination is perhaps the most urgently needed reform within Filipino catechesis/RE. The Council recognizes this. In its original form it qualified education for effective lay participation as "holistic" and "existential, i.e., founded on one's life situation." Unfortunately, this was modified to read "integrated, related to one's life situation and based on the teachings of the Church" (art. 44 #1). (Apparently there was fear that terms like "holistic" and "existential," and absence of explicit mention of "based on the teaching of the Church," might lead the laity astray in some way, pace Vatican II.) But fortunately, the rest of the Council's original decree remains: that "special efforts are to be made at sanctifying people in their places of work (offices, schools, factories, etc.);" (art. 44 #2).

The Council makes clear that "the integration of prayer and action should be a paramount concern" (art. 36). This is further developed in the resolution that "formation in a work ethic characterized by commitment, diligence, rigorous honesty and Christian love should be recognized as an essential element of an integrated Christian spirituality" (art. 37 #1). This ideal poses a real challenge to catechesis/RE wherein the teaching of the sacraments on the one hand, and of the Church's social doctrine on the other, often fails to effectively bring out the essential interrelationships of both.

22. See *Acts and Decrees* nos. 69-71, and John Paul II, *CT* no. 22.

23. See *NCDP* no. 179.

C. CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

We now come to the institutions involved in catechesis/RE, specifically, Catholic educational institutions or schools. Nowhere is the Council's properly *pastoral orientation* more evident than here. For the Council chose to view Catholic schools within the limited perspective of their role as instruments for evangelization. This is clear from the statement that "evangelization is supposed to be the primary concern of Catholic education" (no. 628). It is important to keep this explicitly in mind when interpreting the Council's evaluation and proposed reforms of Catholic schools.

That the Council does NOT propose this position as a comprehensive, definitive description of the full nature of Catholic educational institutions can be culled from the highly significant quotation from John Paul II with which it opens its treatment of this topic (no. 622).²⁴ In the passage quoted the Pope delineates the "distinct and important *secular contribution*" which Catholic schools, colleges and universities make, besides their religious task. This shows that the Council recognizes the wider cultural goals and complex nature of educational institutions, including *Catholic* schools. But it consciously chose to stick to its much more limited focus while obviously not wishing to reduce Catholic schools to merely one other "means of evangelization," a position which would run counter to the Church's consistent teaching on the nature of education and of Catholic schools.²⁵

This pastoral focus of the Council is clearly the basis for its evaluation of our Catholic schools today. We shall briefly present the Council's position together with some comments on its possible implementation.

1. *Commendations for Schools.* The Council's first praises our schools as "among the most necessary and potent means of evangelization" (no. 623). Secondly, they are commended for

24. The quotation is from John Paul II, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae: Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities" (Vatican, 1990) no. 32. See *Acts and Decrees* no. 622.

25. See Vatican II's "Declaration on Christian Education," and the three post-Vatican II documents published by the Congregation for Catholic Education: *The Catholic School* (1977); *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982); and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988).

their holistic view of the dynamics of the Christian person, and participation in the *living tradition* of the Catholic Church. Christian life is characterized in the Catholic tradition by its *communitarian* quality on a variety of levels: domestic Church [family] → BEC → parish → diocese → local → universal Church (no. 625). Finally, the schools, as “distinct from the other workers [*sic*] of evangelization,” are praised because they “can offer a systematic understanding of the link between faith and life. . . . providing the venue for a systematic reflection of one’s experience of being evangelized by others, such as family and parish” (no. 626).²⁶

2. *School Deficiencies.* Using evangelization as the proximate norm for evaluation, the Council finds certain deficiencies. It begins by noting that

religion, which should be the *integrating factor*, has not been treated as a *core course* in many schools. Relegated as simply one of the many courses, . . . other courses may even promote values contradictory to the Catholic vision. This situation may lead to a dichotomized perception of faith and life, and the lack of appreciation (by both educators and students) of the significance of faith in life (no. 628).

Implementation. The Council’s sharp grasp of the often alarmingly deficient “product” of much current Catholic education — unChristian values, dichotomized perception of faith and life, etc. — poses a major challenge for Catholic educators. But perhaps their *first task* is a serious, critical re-consideration of what precisely religion as “the integrating factor in the very structure of the school curriculum” can legitimately mean in contemporary education. This would involve invoking the broader, deeper, and more comprehensive goals of education — goals that actually form the necessary ground and justification for the Council’s more limited, partial view of evangelization as the “primary

26. Ibid. no. 626. The last section of this quote, focusing on the individual’s experience of being evangelized, shows the built-in limitation of the Council’s sharply *pastoral* focus on Catholic educational institutions, especially when compared to the passage from John Paul II quoted in the preceding page, which speaks of “research activities” that “seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions.”

concern" of Catholic education.

The Council rightly criticizes the end-result of many Catholic schools. But the task to improve the schools may well begin with a more critical understanding and precise articulation of both the GOALS sought and the MEANS/METHODS for creatively pursuing them. The Council's pastoral perspective and evaluation are very concrete and practical. But there is also the realization there can be no automatic, 100 percent effective means for evangelization. Other concrete factors like human freedom and sin enter in, which limit the effectivity of all pastoral instruments, without exception. The history of the disciples of Jesus Christ, from the original chosen twelve up to the present, convincingly exemplifies this fundamental truth.

Further deficiency. The Council takes note of the lack of sufficiently trained teachers in theology and religious education. But without dwelling on this primary need, it swings immediately into the question of the individual teachers' personal witness to the Faith in terms of their "vocation" from God, and of the school itself as providing sufficient opportunities for celebrating the faith (nos. 629-630).

Implementation. The positive challenge contained in this critique is very helpful for giving general direction for renewal. But by shifting the focus to the teachers' and the school's individual witness, there is danger of leaving untouched the all-but-overwhelming task: how to increase the present number of professionally trained religion teachers/catechists eight to ten-fold? This involves not only a radical increase in the teacher training institutes and programs, but also the financial means for providing adequate competitive compensation for the teachers. Our society's "prevailing *consumerism*" is not the only cause for fewer applicants for the teaching profession. As the Council well explains in its section on "The Value of Human Work," and the Gospel affirms, the "laborer deserves his wages" (Lk 10:7).

2a. Causes for Deficiencies. The Council goes a further step by examining a number of causes for the noted deficiencies of Catholic schools relative to evangelization. The first cause noted is the existing trend towards *competition* among different Catholic schools, including pirating faculty members from one another. To this are added the cultural fixation towards *elitism*,

and the prevailing *consumerism* in our society. The first is simply the result of the "market value" of the few-and-far-between adequately trained religion teachers (nos. 632-634).²⁷ The other two are dimensions or consequences of today's growing secularist Filipino culture which in many respects runs counter to the "Good News" of Jesus Christ, and therefore counter to the nature and function of the Catholic school.

In this context the Council stresses the Catholic school's role of fostering CRITICAL assimilation of culture, and a thorough integration of faith and life. Such emphasis is fundamental to Catholic education.

Implementation. To this faith and life integration in the school the Council adds: "with Christ at the center, serving as the *supreme value* and *example*, and the *criterion* against which all other values must be evaluated and ranked." The problem here is one of *translating* this Faith Vision into something operative within the school's educational system. Put bluntly, as a matter of fact such "translation" for the ordinary religion teacher, coordinator, chairperson, Dean, etc., simply DOES NOT EXIST.²⁸ And since there are no operational plans on how to make Christ the supreme value of the school's various disciplines — for example, biology, physics, history, Pilipino, mathematics — the unfortunate end-effect of such Faith proclamations is often the direct opposite of what was intended. No one can work effectively toward implementing an ideal that remains in great part simply a pious wish.

The Council expresses well the ideal of the Catholic school as a Christian community, a truly Catholic environment composed of Filipinos who are *makaDiyos* (God-centered), *makatao* (person-oriented), *at makabayan* (patriotic), and NOT *makasarili*

27. The problem of competition in recruiting faculty arises from two sources: the dearth of professionally trained religion teachers, and the poor pay-scale of teachers in general. Thus the problem of "personnel piracy" is really only an incidental offshot of the much more radical problem of LACK of trained religion teachers and the scandalously low salary scale offered them.

28. A beginning of some "translation" would start with explicit recognition of the "legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences," as proclaimed in Vatican II's "Church in the Modern World," no. 59. This is applied, with the additional note of academic freedom, directly to the Catholic University by John Paul II in his "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", no. 29.

(self-centered) (no. 636). The reasoned, planned and persevering pursuit of these fundamental Christian values in a school setting, and by the means which are constitutive of an educational institution, would go far to help "translate" "Jesus as Supreme Value" into reality.

3. *Some Needed Reforms.* The Council gathers together its various constructive directives and suggestions for renewal into four areas.

3a. *Religious Education.* The first covers the basics in religious education. Three specific proposals are made:

- i) religious education as the *core subject*, binding together all other disciplines, while giving due respect to autonomy;
- ii) religion teachers must be *professionally trained* in theology and RE, fostering a missionary zeal in the students and preparing them to integrate faith and life by developing an inter-disciplinary approach;
- iii) students *formed holistically* should realize their graduation is a mission-sending, following a period of discipleship (nos. 639-640).

Implementation. The challenge is again how to translate this composite ideal into realistic, effective operations and actions. "Education" today is a highly complex social science and art, embracing the general direction of the curriculum's many individual disciplines, each working according to its own proper methodology and toward its proper goals. How religion, taken as the "core subject," can "bind together" such objectively disparate disciplines needs a very detailed, worked out explanation if it is to be anything more than an empty claim. The unity desired in education must be based not only on the desired goal — the ideal student GRADUATE envisioned — but to an equal extent on the specific objective natures and methodologies of the disciplines constituting the school's formative means, its curriculum.²⁹

3b. *On-going Spiritual Formation.* The Council emphasizes an on-going spiritual formation for administrators, faculty and staff,

29. Faith's role in bringing about the unity proper to educational institutions is taken up in *The Catholic School*, nos. 33-52, and in "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", nos. 12-20. It is also discussed in my "Theology in a Filipino Catholic University," *Philippine Studies* 33 (1985) 50, 52.

as well as for the students, with the Eucharist as center of their community. Great strides have already been made in this area in recent years with the development in most Catholic schools of "Campus Ministry," faculty and student retreats and days of recollection, etc.

3c. *Exposure to the Poor and the Needy.* The Council advises periodic and systematic exposure of administrators, faculty, staff and students to the context of the poor and the needy. It terms this a process of "contextualization" which will help engender the development of a love of preference for the poor and a missionary spirit in the school. Teachers can use this process to lead their students "towards a CRITICAL assimilation of culture and comprehensive synthesis of faith and life" (no. 642). This "reform" is particularly needed in our country, marked by such a stark contrast between rich and poor. Implementation, however, will demand a more developed plan as to how the Catholic school, as school, can best contribute to the promotion of justice and service of the poor. More is needed than "contextualization."³⁰

3d. *School's Vision-Mission Statement.* The Council proposes a "vision-mission" statement leading to an articulation of values. Scholarship programs, progressive tuition fees, cross-subsidy of rich and poor schools, etc. are offered as concrete examples. This manifests a sensitivity to the serious financial problems besetting many Catholic schools which "find it difficult simply to survive." It ends the section with a word of gratitude to all who, often at great personal sacrifice, have been faithfully serving our Catholic educational institutions.

AGENTS OF CATECHESIS/RE

The Council takes up the agents of catechesis/RE in a number of places. The first is the section on the "Four Aspects of the Laity's Role and Life," which includes being "called to Christian Presence," to "Service and Evangelization," and to "Social Transformation" (nos. 423-438). Similar directives are proposed in the sections on Religious and the Ordained Ministry. More

30. For example, see "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", nos. 34-37.

specifically, it addresses catechists directly, praising them as "among the most faithful servants of the Lord and of the Church in the Philippines, . . . among the most hard-working despite the minimal monetary compensation that they receive" (no. 647).

The recruitment and training of many more professional and volunteer catechists/religion teachers, as well as their on-going formation, are squarely faced as the primary need. Finally, the financial burden entailed in this nation-wide endeavor is also recognized, with the Christian community singled out as the basic source for support. Special collections, a definite percentage of the parish income assigned to catechesis, a system of centralized funding for all the catechists of a diocese, richer parishes helping poorer ones — these are some of the concrete proposals offered.

Regarding *implementation*, one particular aspect deserves further comment. The original text of Articles 15 and 49 #1 of the Council's decrees mentioned "Value clarification and formation" in regard to the "Formation of Catholics of the Philippines," and in school-family cooperation.³¹ As a confirmation of a far more experiential — and thus possibly more Biblical — catechesis/RE, these terms certainly convey a very positive gain. Furthermore, this position is also substantially elaborated in the Council's repeated insistence on inculturation. All this is experienced first hand in the *pastoral* ministry, on all levels.

But what may not be equally clear is the tendency of today's social/behaviorist science approach to unsuspectingly take over the dominance of the whole value field. This is particularly true in educational circles, wherein most Filipino "value experts" have received their professional training abroad in secular universities. This "professional knowledge" often has unfortunately little or no point of contact with the professor's personal Catholic faith, or with any grounding in Catholic philosophy or theology. Hence there is little chance for any — much less "comprehensive" — integration of faith and life.

31. As reviewed by the Congregation for Bishops, the formulation of both articles has been changed for the better. "Value clarification," for example, as commonly used to refer to a particular approach to values, has already proven radically inadequate in terms of religious education, and even for the broader humanistic study of values.

This concern is well answered by the revised text which in place of "Value clarification" substitutes "Catholic moral formation . . . with emphasis given to the values of justice and charity, . . ." (art. 15) and instead of simply "value formation" substitutes "formation in Christian values" (art. 49 #1).

CONCLUSION

A brief summary of the main points made in this study will conclude this essay. First, PCP II has made catechesis/RE the *number one priority* for re-evangelization. Secondly, the Council focused on its primary needs: (1) greatly *increased number of*, (2) *professionally trained* catechists and religion teachers, and (3) their *adequate compensation*. Responding to this agenda must involve the whole Catholic community: all have the responsibility of doing their part in the new evangelization, with renewed fervor and zeal.

Catholic schools are called upon to re-study their proper role in evangelization, and courageously undertake any and all reforms that may be needed to more effectively serve the Church. As unique Christian communities in their own right, Catholic educational institutions are called to provide their unique, specific educational and formative contribution to the growth and integration of Faith and culture in the Church, as well as in the larger community of the Philippines of today.

Finally, what is most striking in this vision of catechesis/RE is the *energetic optimism* that pervades the Council's document. It seems that the Holy Spirit's presence and inspiration, felt sharply by many during the Council's long, tedious deliberations have permeated its final testimony. Hopefully, Filipino Catholics throughout the land will experience the same uplifting inspiration and persevering power for the hard work of implementation that lies ahead.