BECOMING LOCAL CHURCH: HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL ESSAYS
By James H. Kroeger, M.M.
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Reviewed by Francis X. Clark

This author has written extensively on a wide panorama of missiological themes. James H. Kroeger, Maryknoll Missioner, is Professor of Systematic Theology, Missiology, and Islamics at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. He holds Licentiate and Doctorate Degrees in Missiology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. Kroeger has served mission in Asia (Philippines and Bangladesh) since 1970. He is also President of the Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists (PACM), Secretary-Convenor of the Asian Missionary Societies Forum (AMSAL), and consultant to the Asian Bishops' (FABC) Office of Evangelization.

On the basis of that background all readers will have high expectations when beginning this book. They will not be disappointed. It sums up, clearly and forcefully, everything that one wants to know about local Church today. The five chapters of the book, formerly published as articles in various theological and missiological periodicals, have now been thoroughly revised and updated for this volume.

The chapters are treated in this order. Chapter One: “An Emerging Local Church: the Philippine Experience”; this is an inductive foundation for the development to follow. Chapter Two: “Theology of Local Church: FABC Perspectives”; FABC is, of course, the abbreviation for the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, inaugurated and sustained by all the episcopal conferences of each country of Asia. Through the years this Federation has encouraged theological work on Asian Church problems, and published the result of the investigations.
Chapter Three: “A Church Living to Evangelize: Recent Popes and Integral Evangelization”; this section in a special way draws upon Evangelii Nuntiandi of Pope Paul VI and Redemptoris Missio of John Paul II. Chapter Four: “A Church Walking in Dialogue: Interreligious Dialogue Milestones”; this chapter stresses the relation between mission and dialogue, a knotty problem that is not nearly solved.

Chapter Five: “Naming the Conversion We Seek: Mission and Paschal Perspectives”; here the author opens up new vistas for missionaries and mission organizations, expanding the old ideal of converting everyone to the Catholic Church as the goal of mission. That still remains one of the aims, if the Holy Spirit inspires a way to it, but the perspective is much wider and more comprehensive, namely, converting the missionary personally and converting all people to the values of the paschal mystery.

All these chapters include rich, current bibliographies of books and articles on their themes. This book is highly recommended for all libraries and individuals interested in or concerned with the Asian local Churches. It serves not only as an introduction to each topic but as a resource for a full development of the history, theology and missiology surrounding it.