

FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO DIFFERENT CORNERS OF THE GLOBE: CHRISTIAN FORMATION AS “PILGRIMAGE”

Part 1: Mark Lesage CICM

Bukal ng Tipan Pastoral Centre
marklesage@yahoo.com

Part 2: Estela Padilla

Bukal ng Tipan Pastoral Centre
padillaestela@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This is the story of how Anselm Prior, OFM, inspired a priest and a lay team from the Parish of St Joseph in Las Piñas, Philippines, who attended the Lumko international course in Lesotho, South Africa in 1992. Concurrently within this narrative lies the birth of Anselm Prior's doctoral dissertation, for Prior “discovered” his thesis while working in the Bamboo Parish in Manila, taking the parish as the subject of his theological study. This parish team later established a pastoral centre—*Bukal ng Tipan*—serving the dioceses of the Philippines, and more widely dioceses in Asia and Europe. Inspired by the travelling, the authors explore the image of pilgrimage in discussing inculturation or contextualised Christian formation. The narrative informs the reader of the international reach of the Lumko Pastoral Institute under Anselm Prior, and how the Lumko template has influenced pastoral renewal throughout the Philippines and much of Asia. It is also a case study of how the turn to systematic reflection on experience during the last half century has decided the direction of theological undertakings in Asia and beyond.

The first part of the article is written by Mark Lesage¹ then parish priest of St Joseph Las Piñas, sharing the beginnings of a mission journey with Anselm Prior of Lumko and the parish. The second part is written by Dr Estela Padilla² sharing how the inspiration of

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- 1 Mark Lesage CICM, former parish priest of Las Piñas and now director of *Bukal ng Tipan*.
 - 2 Estela Padilla, PhD, pastoral worker Las Piñas (1987–2001), and now programme director *Bukal ng Tipan*.



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contextualised Christian formation from Lumko was further developed by *Bukal ng Tipan* and then shared with Asia and Europe.

Keywords: Anselm Prior; Lumko; participatory church; shared vision; Las Piñas Parish; church renewal

PART 1: ANSELM PRIOR ENTERS THE PHILIPPINES AND OUR DREAMS

From Lumko Pastoral Institute to the Parish of St Joseph Las Piñas

“Welcome to our Lumko course, I am happy to welcome a team from the Philippines. I am Fr. Anselm.” These were the first words I heard him speak, and they remained in my heart. We, the authors, could not believe our eyes when we stood in Lesotho before the man we had heard so much about and who, we were praying, might give us some answers to our relentless searching. That was in 1992.

When we travelled to Lumko, we had been searching for models and resources for two decades already, to fulfil our dream of becoming a participatory church in the Parish of Las Piñas, in south Manila. To say the least, those were very challenging years and most of the time a very frustrating journey. Only the vision kept us going as we tried different programmes and approaches. We were introduced to the Lumko materials which I had bought from a bookstore in the Netherlands. We used them for all kinds of formation in the parish and picked just any topic from one of several booklets. While the participants appreciated this new way of formation, we felt something was lacking; that there was much more behind and beyond the use of some topics chosen at random from the Lumko package. We decided to go to Lumko to be trained in the Lumko theological vision.

From the start we were smitten by the approach, the process, the teamwork of Anselm Prior with his local team, his British humour, and his new participatory formation style—perhaps because it resonated deeply with our own joys and dreams as a parish team. Many days were spent on the “Five Stages of Church Growth” which he had developed and which served as his ecclesiology. “Shared Vision” became a by-word; participation was heard many times a day. But it was not only heard. We all experienced it in so many ways, and most especially, we were hooked into it when we were called to demonstrate the formation modules and were evaluated.

While my co-author and I were affirmed in the “what” of our theological-pastoral vision for our parish, we were taught the tools; we were taught the “how”. And just as every day we were enriched by methods through inputs, demonstrations and evaluations, Prior was able to mould and make us gel into a community. If there was something that

we have never forgotten during all these years since, it is this: that it is difficult to talk and teach about community if we ourselves are not a community.

After five weeks of learning, sharing, demonstrating and being evaluated, we were eager to go home with not just a feeling but with an assurance that we could pass on our experience and our learnings to our parishioners. This is because in Lumko we found what we had been looking for: the methodology to facilitate the emergence of neighbourhood communities and how to sustain them. During the closing ceremony, the affirmation about the course and the experience of all the participants were genuine, life-giving and immensely pregnant with dreams and possibilities. I remember how some laypersons expressed their regret that their parish priest was not with them in the training and they said: “How I wish my parish priest were here. When I go back to my parish and try to implement what I have learned here, he might not only disagree; but he might not even allow it because he still lives in Vatican I.” There were also a few priests who came by themselves to the course and said: “I learned a lot, I have to change in so many ways, I have to contextualise these Lumko programmes. But I have no layperson to form a team with, and I have already so many masses to celebrate, so many meetings to attend, so many ...”

We, the authors, were the only ones who finished this five-week long training, as a priest and lay team. That we were a team and worked as a team must have caught the attention of Prior because gradually from a director, he became our good friend. While drinking a beer in the evening we shared with him our journey, our dreams. We were so taken by this new approach and his giftedness that we planned to invite him to the Philippines to give similar training. However, at that time it seemed to be just a dream because South Africa is so far from the Philippines.

THE LUMKO EFFECT IN THE PARISH OF ST JOSEPH IN LAS PIÑAS

Upon our return to the parish, we must have looked a little bit like Moses when he came down from the mountain after meeting Yahweh, or maybe like that person who found the pearl of great price. Finally, the years of searching seemed to belong to the past. We felt equipped with a methodology which would hasten the emerging of neighbourhood communities (Basic Ecclesial Communities or BECs) in our parish. We also realised that even if most of the methods we tried in the past seemed ineffective to us, they had clearly prepared the ground for receiving new seeds.

When we shared the Lumko approach and methodology with the formation team and the parish council, we could hear through their questions, and see on their faces, a new enthusiasm. Training the formation team became the priority in the parish by using the Lumko materials that we brought with us. Very soon the formation team started contextualising the materials not only to a Philippine context, but even to the context of the Las Piñas communities. When they were tried out, positive results were reported

which gave the facilitators and the formation team new enthusiasm and assurance in this new approach. This resulted in making our own training manuals, which we entitled:

1. How to organise a community.
2. The training of facilitators.
3. The formation of elected leaders.

This period of using the contextualised Lumko materials was the springtime of the parish. After all the years of trying, succeeding a bit here, failing a bit there, finally the emerging of small Christian communities became a reality. That reality changed the face and the life of the parish. The small communities became the new structure of the parish, the base of leadership was widened, “maximum participation” became a by-word. No wonder, whenever cardinals or bishops came to visit the Philippines and requested to experience an active parish, Cardinal Sin sent them to our parish in Las Piñas.

Over the following years a culture of participation developed, and the word “communities” rather than “parish” was heard more often in conversation. All areas of church life became participatory— formation, leadership, liturgies—and even financial management of the parish. More importantly, we realised that participation is an attitude, a spirituality, not just an approach or a methodology.

Gradually the word spread that something was happening in the Parish of St Joseph in Las Piñas and so people started to come, ask for interviews, requested to attend our services and formation sessions. Very soon they realised that this was not just a programme, not just something that they could take with them to echo in their own parishes, but that leaders have to be trained; a formation team has to be organised; but most of all that their parish priest has to make a paradigm shift.

ANSELM PRIOR LED TRAINING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The many visitors who came to look at what was growing in the parish community, and the requests for our programmes and materials, caused us to revive the dream of inviting Anselm Prior to give training in the Philippines. While we had already some experience of giving training in the parish, we felt we were not yet ready to give a training course especially to bishops and priests. Since this was before the time of the computer and the internet, our communication was through snail mail and fax.

We knew that inviting Prior to come to the Philippines was a beautiful dream, but realising it was very challenging. We were afraid that he might not have the time to be absent from Lumko for a long time, and we had many questions about our dream. Where will we get the money to finance his trip and his stay? Who are we to invite bishops and priests for a seminar? How are we going to finance the seminar? Where will we find an affordable centre to hold the training?

We were so passionate about this dream that these questions did not seem to bother us. We were just concerned to get a positive answer from Prior. To our surprise, his answer came without any conditions or questions. Instead, he expressed so much joy in being invited to take part in church renewal in the Philippines.

I cannot recall how we were able to finance his trips; I just know that we found a way to do it. I remember how I, an ordinary parish priest, went to visit bishops I had never met before, trying to sell the proposed training. I am still wondering how I was able to get the commitment of some bishops, except that it was God's Spirit moving in me and in them. But I think that the main attraction was that somebody from South Africa would come to give the training.

The first training was given in Tagbilaran, the capital of an Island called Bohol, in the south of the Philippines. Bishop Leo Tumalak and around 20 priests attended the four-day seminar. All the sessions were given by Prior himself, while we were in charge of the logistics. He was modelling to us how to present, how and when to ask the right questions, how to let them participate, how to answer difficult questions. Often we realised that he was training us as well. The results were positive, but were also limited due to lack of time. But it assured us that this training could open even a small window to make our very traditional parishes more participatory.

During the next three years (1993–1996), Prior came back several times to give similar seminars in different parts of the Philippine Archipelago. In the first seminar, he modelled strategies for facilitating, then he gradually shifted to mentoring in successive seminars. What remains with me very intensely is how he prepared for every session as if it were the first time that he was giving the session. He is a gifted trainer; but while he was gifted with a brilliant mind, he dared to share from the heart as well.

THE WRITING OF HIS DOCTORAL THESIS AND A MANUAL

The people in the parish of Las Piñas were getting used to the presence of Prior as he came to the Philippines several times and stayed with us in the parish for some days. He shared in the daily life of the parish, observed some meetings, participated in liturgical celebrations, and so forth. Maybe it was these experiences which made him decide to write his doctoral thesis about the parish and its leadership. For that purpose, Prior stayed with us for a lengthy period, interviewing parish leaders, attending training sessions and community meetings, participating in the liturgical celebrations—especially the Holy Week celebration. I still remember, as he left with all his interviews, observations, experiences and impressions to digest them in South Africa, he thanked me and said: “Mark, thank you very much for this wonderful experience; but you should understand that I also have to be critical about your leadership at the end of my dissertation, because that's part of it.”

During one of his trips, he also co-wrote with Estela Padilla the Lumko manual on *Awareness-Raising*. Because of our parish formation team experience, Padilla was able to contribute practical experiences and approaches to awareness-raising as a method of doing formation (Padilla and Prior 1997).

Looking back I can imagine how his stay in the parish of Las Piñas must have given him so much joy, and maybe even consolation to see and experience that his efforts in running a pastoral centre bore much fruit outside South Africa.

PART 2: PRIOR THE PILGRIM “JOURNEYS” TO OTHER CORNERS OF THE GLOBE

From the Parish of St Joseph to Bukal ng Tipan Pastoral Centre

I will always remember Anselm Prior as a man of passion and purpose. He was very clear about the vision of the church that Lumko dreams of—a participatory church engaged in the world. Such participation is achieved, as championed by Lumko, through small Christian communities—neighbourhood communities of the baptised living in the spirit of family and solidarity. He was passionate about this vision and worked energetically towards this purpose—influencing all those who attended his seminars and, perhaps unknown to him, such inspiration multiplied as participants returned to their own contexts.

Later on this vision of a participatory church engaged in the daily life and challenges of the wider society, became the vision of *Bukal ng Tipan*, a pastoral centre that started from the experience of the Parish of St Joseph in Las Piñas. This section of the article relates Bukal journeys with dioceses in the Philippines, Asia and Europe. This story is also an articulation of how Christian formation shaped and directed by a church vision travelled from Lumko in South Africa to different corners of the globe. Prior entitled his reflections in the different countries he visited and facilitated seminars in, as “Prior, the Pilgrim.” Bukal “joined” Prior’s pilgrimage and brought his inspiration and influence to our formation “pilgrimages” to other parts of the world. Indeed formation is a pilgrimage, in theology and praxis, as it energises engagement in meaning-making and action-taking in the daily life of local Christian communities.

BUKAL NG TIPAN – CICM PASTORAL CENTRE

History, team, programmes

Bukal ng Tipan – CICM³ (hereafter Bukal) started in 2001. It was initially composed of a team of pastoral workers (which includes the author) coming from the Parish of St

3 CICM, Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, founded in Belgium, serving the Philippine church since 1862.

Joseph in Las Piñas, together with Mark Lesage, CICM, who was our parish priest. Even as a parish, St Joseph's was a frequent place for immersion on BECs and participatory Church praxis for Asian and Western pastoral ministers, clergy and lay alike. Even then, we full-time pastoral workers dreamt of setting up a pastoral centre. This dream became a reality when CICM turned over the parish to the diocese in 2000. Lesage called on some of the full-time pastoral workers in the parish (six in total) to concretise this dream. Thus *Bukal ng Tipan* was born. Our first task was to clarify our vision and our mission.

Bukal's mission⁴ is to journey with peoples towards a participatory church in the world. Bukal's main pastoral programmes, tools, methods and processes were designed from its parish experience of two decades (significantly influenced by Lumko), where the pastoral workers became active agents of moving the parish from a priest-centred to a participatory church.⁵

In the first few years, we thought Bukal programmes should be given at the centre, in Taytay Rizal. We invited people from different dioceses for courses in Bukal. As we worked with dioceses, dioceses began to invite us to their places. From these initial visits to dioceses, we learnt the foremost principles of our pastoral centre and our life as pastoral ministers—we needed to be contextualised (not just wait for people to come to the centre and attend a predesigned programme); we needed to build up local teams in the dioceses we work with (instead of them depending on us); we needed to encourage sustaining systems (so that the dioceses themselves are motivated and empowered to design their own processes and programmes based on their own vision and mission). We decided to journey and partner with faith communities and local churches.

After a few years of existence, we moved from the centre to local areas, and in doing so became context-based, responsive to specific needs and thus more mission-oriented. From giving pastoral courses, Bukal changed to facilitating processes of local church development. From pastoral consultants, we became more conscious that we are partners and co-disciples with the different teams we encounter.

To date, *Bukal ng Tipan* has been invited by, and has done or continues to do some pastoral programmes with around 60 dioceses in different parts of the world, with about a third of these from foreign countries. It is working intensely on what we call a journeying programme (in a regular, continuous, systematic way), with 20 dioceses in the Philippines and abroad.

Processes, methods, tools

Bukal has three units—the BEC/Local Church Unit, the Youth Unit and Contemplative Spaces. Most of the programmes of Bukal, like most Lumko programmes, focus on pastoral skills and training on moving towards a participatory Church in the world. The BEC/Local Church Unit has several courses on the following topics: BEC-organising;

4 For the complete framework—vision, mission, philosophy, values, visit www.bukalngtipan.com.

5 See website www.bukalngtipan.com for a longer description of courses, programmes and history.

leaders’ training, designing and facilitating awareness-raising (conscientisation) programmes; designing and facilitating community liturgies; designing and facilitating retreats and recollections; and setting up ministries in neighbourhood settings. The Youth Unit would have parallel courses but appropriated for the youth.

However, because of this fundamental realisation that we cannot simply “give” our programmes, thinking that it is applicable and relevant for all, much of our work now revolves around immersion, culture research, communal articulation of vision and partnering with local teams and a lot of consultancy work for designing localised formation and pastoral programmes and processes. The diagram below explains the macro (e.g. when asked to work on diocesan vision-mission-goals) and micro (when asked to work on a particular pastoral programme, e.g. BEC or Family, etc.) approach to pastoral work with dioceses.



Figure 1: Bukal’s macro and micro approach to pastoral work with dioceses

BUKAL NG TIPAN COMMUNITY JOURNEYING PROCESS

As can be seen from this framework, our work with dioceses always starts with immersion and cultural research before designing any pastoral programme. When a diocese invites us to work with them, or even sometimes simply to give a talk, we first ask that we visit them to get to know their diocese a bit. Even if the immersion time is short, we make sure we encounter both central and periphery places, get a sense of context and culture, and also be exposed to people and programmes. From the very start

we make it clear that we are not there to give a programme but to journey with them as they build up their local churches. Being oriented to and grounded in local contexts, cultures and challenges, helps Bukal to be relevant, responsive and mission-oriented.

We have developed some tools to help us do immersion and culture research together with the local teams who invited us. Even if we are invited as resource persons and pastoral consultants, we do not presume that we have the answers for these dioceses' concerns or challenges. We want to listen to people and we make it a point to listen especially to those who are far away from the church centre, those who are at the periphery and margins, especially the poor. Togetherness is the key word of this working framework. Togetherness necessitates a deep respect for everyone, especially those without a voice in the usual centre-based set-ups⁶ of most dioceses.

Togetherness is also manifested in our community life. Because we promote community/BEC, we in Bukal believe we also need to witness as a community. We strive to live as a community in Bukal and want to build community with the diocesan teams we work with. Most importantly, we want to be together with the people closest to Jesus' heart, the poor, and that is why we want to involve them. We believe that the medium is the message.

Another important step of this journeying process is "experiencing God together." We make it a point that our pastoral work is not just social work or effective implementation of pastoral programmes. We are conscious that we are called to be the family of God following God and extending Jesus' Kingdom-mission. Praying, reflecting on God's word, rituals and different forms of worship are integral parts of this journeying process. Every church activity—liturgy, seminars, conferences, meetings, and even planning meetings—should facilitate an experience of God. Pastoral planning should also be a spiritual experience. Time and again we have received the comment: "We didn't expect to experience God in a planning meeting! Thank you for making us feel God is so near!" If church activities do not facilitate experiences of God, whose dream and whose mission are we promoting?

However, spiritual experiences are not simply activities, but the intention is to facilitate the shifting of paradigms. To be disciples of Jesus and to take part in his Kingdom-mission need a different perspective, a different attitude and a different way of doing things.

Only after listening to people—especially the poor—(first spiral) and listening to God (second spiral), only then can we dream (third spiral). We have seen some dioceses who would start with planning a pastoral programme—sometimes even a five-year pastoral programme!—without going through spiral one and two, and they wonder why they could not implement their programmes. They find it difficult to see that it was *their* (pastoral ministers') programme, their dream, and not the peoples'. If we do not

6 Parishes, cathedrals and diocesan centres are usually located at the centre of economic, social and political life. If consultation only happens at the centre, then most probably we would only be reaching out to the richer, more educated percentage of the population and church membership.

go through spiral one and two, pastoral programmes could be so out of touch with the reality of people's lives, creating the possibility that "church" becomes a separate compartment instead of a core energy in people's daily living.

An important thing about this framework is sustainability (fifth spiral). What does it take to sustain this movement? How are former (and traditional) church structures reshaped so as to serve the common vision? What type of formation can bind and link this journeying together? Sustainability ensures that it is the conviction and the commitment of the faith community—not just its leaders, and definitely not Bukal—who will sustain this journey. Another valuable element here is networking with those outside church structures—local government units, people's organisations, and so forth. The longer the church remains inward-looking, the sooner it will die.

Theologising on the road

Contextualised formation produces people's theologies

As mentioned earlier, we were convinced that Lumko formation programmes would work in the parish because they were contextualised. The first task for us was not to copy their programmes but also to contextualise our parish formation programmes. Following the basic pastoral cycle of see-judge-act, we created our own as Life-Word of Life-Live. We noticed how such a formation format is not just a learning approach but really builds up a local community, especially the BECs where much of the formation programmes were used. The community context of the formation programmes, the participative approach of the sessions, the groundedness in Jesus and his Word, the action-orientation, all helped to build up local faith communities.

When we became a pastoral centre, we soon realise that we had boxed in "formation" as a catechetical or learning session happening in one format and venue—similar to a "classroom discussion", even if it were following the pastoral cycle. When we look back at the way Jesus did "formation" in the Bible, on most occasions He was outside of a room (be it the temple or a synagogue) but more often in the streets, in village centres, in people's homes. Soon we realised that formation is not a session, conference, or seminar, but an event; a continuous event.

The Community Journeying Process framework, illustration above, is one such formation event. As an event, a "pilgrimage", such formation facilitates a theology/theologising from the ground, highlighting the importance of context, community and mission.

Bukal theology: Teolohiyang Bayan⁷ (People's/Local Theology): “mula sa bayan, para sa bayan”—from the community, for the community

Filipino “*bayan*” can mean two things—place and people. But more than a physical place or people, “*bayan*” is the sum-total of a community’s lives, struggles, aspirations and energies to work collectively for their wellbeing (*kaginhawahan at kasaganaan ng bayan*, see Rodriguez-Tatel 2005). “*Bayan*” is also related to “*bayanihan*” or collective effort of neighbours/community to be in solidarity, to work for a common project towards a common good.

All the above meanings of “*bayan*” are reflected in this framework (the Community Journeying Process). Firstly, we at Bukal believe that it is the *bayan*/local community that owns the journey—they wish to journey towards a vision and they will decide every step of the way to pursue this journey or not. Whatever is produced from this journey—pastoral assemblies, statements, programmes, structures—witness to their faith and therefore manifest a local faith community’s theology. We at Bukal call this theology *Teolohiyang Bayan* (People’s Theologies). We at Bukal used to think of theologising as done solely by “experts”, professional theologians. We can see from this framework how the bayan/communities, and not just individuals, are theologising. Such a framework also shows that theologising is “*mula sa bayan*”, rooted in and arising from the actual situations and problems of people living in particular social locations. The role of Bukal is to facilitate this ownership process and to journey with the local community. The local community is the *locus theologicus*.

Teolohiyang bayan is a *bayan* (people/community from a particular place) actively engaging their faith with their specific context (*bayan*) and difficult challenges they are facing. It is indeed a *bayanihan*, a collective effort that binds common goals towards a local faith community’s wellbeing. *Teolohiyang Bayan* is the articulation of faith and witness of the local church.

Bukal Theology: Teolohiyang Bayan (People's/Local Theology): “talastasang tumatalab sa buhay”—processual and missional

“*Talastas*”—“to know” or “to understand”—and “*talastasan*”—a process or a space for understanding—are interesting words to use for theologising. Theology is not a finished product but a process, *in via*; theologising is an experiential and a continuing experience.

“*Tumatalab*” (literally, “effective”) is to feel something in the gut to the point that one is affected, changed and moved to do something. “*Talab*”, as feeling, is related to “*ramdam*”/“*dama*” (to feel/sense). Something is true for the Filipino if they can *ramdam/dama* (feel/sense) it. *Dama/ramdam* points to the primacy of experience in learning/knowing/ understanding something.

7 I first explored this concept of “*teolohiyang bayan*” when I wrote “Contextual Theologizing in the Philippines” as part of an INSECT report in 2012 (see Padilla 2012). Such a concept came from our experience of theologising in Bukal.

Experience—*karanasan*—root word is “*danas*”.⁸ *Danas*, as experience, is to go through something thoroughly, a body-mind-soul event. Another word for experience (*danas*) is “*pinagdaanan*” or what one has gone through or going through at the moment. The root word “*daan*” means “path”, “way”, “road”. What has been “*pinagdaanan*” (experienced; gone through) provides a “*daan*” (way, path) to follow. Learning is by doing; understanding is by experiencing. And experience provides wisdom.

Teolohiyang tumatalab affirms the primary role of experience in theologising. Because theologising arises from a community’s experiences (*karanasan, pinagdaanan*), *teolohiyang tumatalab* is theologising that affects people in way that moves them (*may talab*).

Teolohiyang tumatalab involves people, engages them in a holistic way—not just intellectually, but emotionally, socially, spiritually—as they live out their faith life in their specific settings. *Teolohiyang tumatalab* is a theology that makes sense to people’s lives. It is a theology that is practical, effective and missional; it is not an impotent theology.

CONTEXTUALISED FORMATION BUILDS UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

Local faith communities

The Bukal Community Journeying Process is therefore formation-on-the-go: a local church is being nourished as local faith communities search for God in their cultures and contexts, clarify their vision and goals through authentic consultation with others, design sustainable formation programmes for different groups and sectors of the baptised, and engage in mission as they network with people of goodwill in the wider society.

Even if Vatican II did not clearly describe or define the “local church”, it is interesting to note that the years after Vatican II saw how the theology of the local church developed in its reception in the southern part of the world in Africa, Latin America and Asia. As the author comes from Asia, let us expound on how the Asian Catholic Church has received the concept of the “local church” of Vatican II.

The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), established 10 years after Vatican II, from the very start clarified that its task and focus would be to build up the local church in Asia (Gnanapiragasam and Wilfred 1994, 34). For Asia, inculturation is integral to the growth of the local church: “Inculturation is another word for the local self-realisation of the Church” (Gnanapiragasam and Wilfred 1994, 36). In its task of inculturation as the way of building up the church in Asia, it recognised dialogue as its

8 Jose de Mesa has written comprehensively on the Filipino way of theologising, see: “Buhay, Karanasan, Aral at Turo”, De Mesa 1995; also “Mabathalang Pag-aaral”, De Mesa 2004.

mode of doing evangelisation. It defined evangelisation as dialogue with the poor, with cultures and with religions.⁹

FABC, through its theologians, also expounded quite comprehensively on the theology of the local church. Briefly, it said that: 1) the local church is the people of God in a particular place and time; 2) a local church comes into existence and is built up through a mutually enriching encounter between the Gospel and a people with its particular culture and tradition; and 3) a local church realises itself by effectively responding to new historical forces (Gnanapiragasam and Wilfred 1994, 33–82).

In the recent past, BECs developed in different parts of the world, especially in Africa, Latin America and Asia, and became the lived expression of the “local church.” Lumko formation programmes were designed primarily to build up Christian faith life in BECs. Lumko leaders, extending and sharing its learnings in Asia, did training with Asian church leaders to contextualise Lumko in Asian settings and produced a local formation methodology called AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach).¹⁰ AsIPA under the FABC-Office of the Laity has been popularising BECs in 14 of the 21 countries of Asia over the past 25 years. The author is a founding member of AsIPA. In the Western world, especially in Germany and the German-speaking countries that Bukal has been journeying with, German dioceses have called their church rebuilding processes “Local Church Development” after several immersion and study trips to Asian countries, especially the Philippines.

Body of Christ and Sensus Fidelium

A local church in pilgrimage is very aware of what is happening on the road. The language of a Journeying Programme (illustrated above)—together we see, experience, dream, walk, sustain—is a sensing language. The senses, the body, are totally involved in the formation process. Formation is not a talk, module, seminar or conference. Contextualised formation as pilgrimage is a bodily event. We used to think that Christian formation should be given by experts. Formation seminars in a parish or diocese would usually have a presiding priest, bishop, religious person or theologian. But as we can see from the Lumko formation modules, the baptised are the formators. Bukal Journeying Programme says the baptised learn together and build up Christian wisdom as they see, sense, and act in solidarity guided by their faith. This collective Christian wisdom has

9 Office for Theological Concerns, “The Spirit at Work in Asia Today”, *FABC Papers No. 95*, 1997.

10 See website: www.fabc.org and look for Office of the Laity, AsIPA Desk.

been called *sensus fidelium*.¹¹ In the last decade, in Asia, reflections on BECs and *Sensus Fidelium* have also been strengthened.¹²

The *Sensus Fidelium* has been described as a “collective faith-consciousness” (Seybold 2005, 451); an “instinct”, a “sentiment”; “a phenomenon deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ” (Walgrave 1985, 27). It is both sensing God in our discernments and decisions, but it is also making sense of what is happening to us (Rush 2001, 239). The local faith communities, especially in BECs, strive to sense God’s will in their regular Bible-sharing, prayer and liturgies and social action. They exercise this Spirit-given sense or capacity given to the baptised and to the Christian community that “enables understanding, interpretation and application” of God’s self-revelation (Rush 2001, 244–245).

Discovering how God talks and works in our lives requires attentiveness: what the pastoral cycle “see-judge-act” or Lumko/Bukal’s “Life-Word of Life-Live” wishes to accomplish. As a sense for the divine, *Sensus Fidelium* engages in its search the physical senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing and in-sight as “antennae alert to the divine presence.” This is the intention of Bukal’s Journeying Programme. Contextualised formation as pilgrimage, as formation-on-the-go, builds up the sense of faith of the Body of Christ.

Tradition lives!

Through contextualised formation such as the Bukal’s Journeying Programme or the Lumko and BEC modules in faith communities, the collective faith wisdom of the local church is passed on to the next generation and as such sustains the Christian tradition. Gadamer (*Truth and Method*) says tradition is not the static entity we consent to; rather, it is a living, dynamic activity we participate in—and through that participation,

11 Herbert Vorgrimler, “From *Sensus Fidei* to *Consensus Fidelium*” in “The Teaching Authority of Believers”, *Concilium* 4 (1985): 3–11. For a good theological exposition on *sensus fidei*, see Ormond Rush, “Sensus Fidei: ‘Making Sense’ of Revelation” in *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 231–261. John Burkhard, “*Sensus Fidei*: Theological Reflection Since Vatican II” (I.1965–1984) in *Heythrop Journal* XXXIV (1993a): 41–59; J. Burkhard, “Sensus Fidei: Theological Reflection Since Vatican II” (II.1985–1989) in *Heythrop Journal* XXXIV (1993b): 123–136; J. Burkhard, “*Sensus Fidei*: Theological Reflection Since Vatican II” (1990–2001, Part 1) in *Heythrop Journal* XLVII (2005): 450–475; J. Burkhard, “*Sensus Fidei*: Theological Reflection Since Vatican II” (1990–2001, Part 2) in *Heythrop Journal* XLVII (2006): 38–54.

12 Thomas Vijay of the FABC-AsIPA/BEC Team and Elvic Colaco of Bombay Diocese have presented papers on BECs and *Sensus Fidelium* during the SCC Theological Congress held in Nagpur, India in Aug. 17–19, 2011. Filipino theologian E. de Guzman wrote on “Exploring the Terrain of *Sensus Fidelium* among ‘Root-Crops’ Christians in *MST Review* 6, No. 2 (De Guzman 2004, 1–73). This paper’s author E. Padilla presented a paper entitled “BEC Experiences of Working within the Social Environment of the Philippines” in a Theological Symposium on BECs/Developing the Local Church in Hildesheim, Germany on 10–12 June, 2010 (Padilla 2010). She likewise lectures on “Building up the *Sensus Fidelium* in BECs” for diocesan BEC clergy retreats in the Philippines (Padilla ongoing).

tradition is constantly “happening”, “occurring”, “coming to be.” In other words, it is in the event of interpretation that tradition itself happens. Interpretation is not secondary; rather “tradition is its interpretation and lives in the multiple possibilities of its being.”

Tradition vanishes when it is not interpreted. Active participation of the baptised in contextualised formation interprets the Christian faith in their own time and place. In BECs, which thrive in neighbourhood settings, faith is passed on to children and youth as they observe, if not take part in, the regular Bible sharing, liturgical and social action, activities of their parents, relatives and elders. Experiential learning and lived faith become part of a collective social memory of a local community and help sustain the faith for the next generation.

BUKAL'S VISION, ITS THEOLOGY, TOOLS, METHODS AND PROCESSES UNDERLYING THE JOURNEYING

Process, as shown in the illustration above, directed and shaped the mission of Bukal in different dioceses in different parts of the world, which in turn also affects our diocesan partners' Christian discipleship and mission in their own areas. Although the cultures of South Africa, Asia and Europe are very different from one another, journeying together—pilgrimage—puts us in a common mode of humble listening to others, especially to the poor and marginalised; to the Other who points us to another perspective; and to our plural contexts. Such listening on the way teaches us and urges us towards a mission of social engagement grounded in our experience of Jesus.

Ecclesia semper reformanda. The church, a true pilgrim, is always learning, always trying to be faithful to God in respective cultures, always making an effort to respond courageously to the challenges of the wider society where it belongs. Thank you Anselm Prior and Lumko for journeying to our country: your inspirational energies have multiplied to other corners of the globe. The mission journey continues ...

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