

Back to Basics: Retrieving Some Lessons from Christian Tradition

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Abstract: This article explores the Christian tradition's handed down heritage being encapsulated in the basic theological virtues: transforming faith, undying hope, and agapeic love as proclaimed by Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth. This life-giving tradition continues to be robust and a reliable source of living the faith and building up the Church in the midst of challenges that threaten both the legacy of faith and the integrity of cultural values in Philippine society. It is argued that the basic virtues are helpful and relevant to Filipino Christians whose present experiences beckon them to go back to the basics.

Keywords: Tradition • Christian • Tradition • Theological Virtues • Faith • Hope • Love

Introduction

The popular belief of remaining traditional is often equated to being conservative or outdated and as such may connote the inability to adapt to the changing times or innovate in order to be *at par* with current trends or contemporary standards of living. Others may even describe tradition as old customs or ancient beliefs that

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are irrelevant to the present context. This seems to contradict the dynamic meaning of tradition that is understood as the passing on of a legacy from one generation to the next. A movement is involved in this process which presupposes activity between transmitters and receivers. Something deep is involved in this dynamic exchange because of “the continual presence of a spirit and of a moral attitude, the continuity of an *ethos*.”¹ Tradition, therefore, is a handing on of life, a point which Vatican II has already underlined when the Council proclaimed the importance of the Christian legacy in the building up of the church: “Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.”² The Christian Tradition developed because of faith in Jesus as the Christ by the disciples who continued his legacy through their own cultures; thereby, forming local faith communities not only among their fellow Jews but also across Gentile territories composed of people belonging to different cultural traditions.³ In that process of development, we can thus observe the continuous dynamic handing down of the Christian Faith via a regulated progressive amalgamation of life-giving elements.

Despite the complicated process of syncretistic evolution of the Christian Faith across cultures, we may be able to identify its development as constantly bearing the mark of the most valued and basic theological virtues

¹ Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, Translated by A.N. Woodrow (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 15.

² *Dei Verbum*, 8

³ Jose de Mesa and Rebecca Cacho, *In love with God* (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, Inc., 2017), 17.

of faith, hope, and love proclaimed by Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth. These classical values underscore their rootedness in human strivings to forge meaningful relationships and assume a more positive attitude about life. The present study will deal with those basic virtues and, through a reflective survey, spell out their significance to Filipino Christians whose present experiences could beckon them to go back to the basics.

An Overview of Tradition

Tradition indicates “a process of handing on or the living heritage that is handed on.”⁴ It may be both a process of transmission [*tradere*] and the actual content or legacy [*tradita*] being communicated for the next generation. This “implies a spontaneous assimilation of the past in understanding the present.”⁵ Without tradition, people would be at a loss in their present journey because the past provides lessons learned from cultural repositories as well as experiences which are bequeathed to the next generation not just for posterity’s sake but more importantly to serve as a guide which may be likened to a *walking stick* that provides balance in every step taken. Tradition does not exist for itself but is at the service of the community because it serves as model and lifeline of people’s identity, values, norms, or ways of living together as human beings.

Tradition ensures the preservation of a community’s identity and roots its ethos or spirituality in a more stable principle. It could also highlight the best of the past – an ancestral legacy which is gratefully preserved and creatively lived out. Every tradition then is like an

⁴ Gerald O’Collins and Edward Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (Quezon City Philippines: Claretians Publications, 2010), 270.

⁵ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 15.

heirloom which is protected, developed further, and bestowed to the next generation. Different languages may also provide some clues on how Tradition is commonly understood yet distinctly expressive of the uniqueness of people’s cultures.

Culture	Language	Meaning
Latin	<i>Tradere</i>	active and dynamic handing over of customs; bequeath, surrender or hand over ⁶
Greek	<i>Paradidomi</i>	to give (turn) over; hand over from; yield up, entrust, transmit, bring forth, deliver up, recommend ⁷
German	<i>Überlieferung</i>	to hand down customs or traditional practices and beliefs ⁸
English	Tradition	a <u>belief</u> , <u>principle</u> , or way of <u>acting</u> that <u>people</u> in a <u>particular society</u> or <u>group</u> have <u>continued</u> to <u>follow</u> for a <u>long time</u> , or all of these <u>beliefs</u> , etc. in a <u>particular society</u> or <u>group</u> ⁹
Filipino	<i>Kaugalian</i>	<i>kalakarang matagal ng kinikilala at may lakas ng batas; gawi o kasanayan ng isang pangkat ng lipunan, karaniwang namamana ng bawat henerasyon sa sinundang</i>

⁶ Siebren Miedema and Bert Roeben, “Culture and Tradition: Two Contested Concepts in Religious Education,” p. 4. Retrieved at <https://old.religiouseducation.net/Resources/Proceedings/33REA2007MiedemaandRoebbenrtf.pdf>, on 24 July 2022. See also <http://latin-dictionary.net>

⁷ J. Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 2007), 1656.

⁸ Robin Sawyers, ed., *The Wordsworth English-German, German-English Dictionary* (Great Britain: Harrap Limited, 1995), 519.

⁹ *Cambridge Dictionary*, “Tradition,” retrieved at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>, on 3 May 2022.

		<i>henerasyon</i> ¹⁰ (age-old customs long recognized and quasi-obligatory; habits or practices of a social group, usually inherited by every generation from the previous generation)
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The different cultural perspectives render “Tradition” as both the act of bestowing and as a heritage which the past generations pass on to their descendants. In particular, Filipinos often refer to it as *kaugalian* which is associated with customs, beliefs, practices, values, norms, lessons, principles, stories, celebrations, and other socio-cultural expressions of a community, which are transmitted from one generation to the other. It may also be identified with the people’s legacy which ensures continuity, solidarity and posterity because it reminds people that the past is replete with wisdom. *Kaugalian* may also be understood as *sali’t-saling aral*¹¹ (a lesson learned and handed down to the next generation). Lessons learned from customs or real life experiences have greater impact compared with those simply read from books or received through instructions provided by teachers, parents or other authorities in charge of education. Since tradition is something habitual and is part of the daily grind of life, people become accustomed to it, assuming it spontaneously or even effortlessly.¹² For example, Filipino tradition always highlights the relational orientation where central to achieving a good life is the ability to establish and nurture good relations

¹⁰ Virgilio Almario, ed., *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino* (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2001), 438.

¹¹ Jose C. Abriol, “Sali’t Saling Aral, Tradisyon,” in *Ang Banal na Biblia, Natatanging Edisyon, Jubileo A.D.* (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2000), 1732.

¹² Jose de Mesa, *Mga Aral sa Daan: Dulog at Paraang Kultural sa Kristolohiya* (Manila Philippines: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2004), 4-5.

with fellow human beings (*marunong makipag-kapwatao*) Thus, hospitality (*magiliw na pagtanggap at pag-asikaso sa mga bisita o estranghero*), compassion (*malasakit*), and solidarity (*pakikiisa o bayanihan*) are given much weight in bringing up good Filipinos.

Additionally, tradition is not monolithic because it has many forms and expressions. First, tradition is like a “conscience” which serves as an innate principle or standard that guides the decisions and moral beliefs of a community. Without tradition, people’s cultures may be endangered, and their identity may be compromised or eroded by a dominant culture. Second, tradition suggests “continuity” not just for the sake of conserving or preserving the past but also in allowing the richness of the past to be re-lived in the present context. This does not mean a simple repetition of what was good but a re-appropriation of what is positive in the former so that the present generation may derive wisdom from their ancestors. Third, tradition is a “remembrance” which points to a memory that enriches experiences. According to Congar, “If we remembered nothing, it would be impossible to advance; the same would be true if we were bound to a slavish imitation of the past. True tradition is not servility but fidelity.”¹³ The legacy of the past is continued because people are intimately connected to each other and not because there is no choice but to fulfill what was passed on. Fourth, tradition is learning from the wisdom of the past. As Blaise Pascal once said, “the entire succession of [people], throughout so many centuries, should be thought of as one and the same [person], ever present and learning continually.”¹⁴ This does not imply docility in terms of enforced or blind imitation of the great men and women in the past but that of being edified by these wisdom figures, which gives

¹³ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 16.

¹⁴ As quoted in Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 17.

birth to new ways of being and becoming human in the light of the original spirit of ancestors.

A Word on Christian Tradition

For Christians, “tradition is something unwritten, a living transmission of a doctrine, not only by words, but also by attitudes and modes of action.”¹⁵ This faith legacy, along with Jewish roots, was passed on by the Christians who testified to their faith in Jesus as the Christ. Thus, it is not merely “a collection of doctrines but is a life of faith that is renewed everyday... consolidated with the years developed with time, deepened with age.”¹⁶ In John’s letter, it was reiterated that this Tradition was born out of the experiences of the first disciples which are shared with those who accepted the Christian Faith: “we proclaim to you, what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Admittedly, there is a strong awareness that the church hands on her totality which consists of communal living, thinking, and doing. “Tradition, which is an extremely rich resource for guidance and inspiration accumulated through many centuries, enables us to see our present-day experiences through a different perspective.”¹⁸ Christians are led to discover that the religious Tradition is a credible and dependable authority or norm to reckon with.

In recent times, however, it may seem that it has been taken for granted in the efforts of the church to move

¹⁵ Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 18.

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis* (Pasay City Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2020), 26.

¹⁷ See 1 John 1:3.

¹⁸ Jose de Mesa, *Following the Way of the Disciples* (Quezon City: EAPI Pastoral Resources, 1996), 33.

forward and work for renewal despite the reminder from the Council about the indispensability of Tradition in the life and mission of the church. To wit:

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts¹⁹

Charles Péguy, who coined the word *ressourcement* (literally, a return to sources)²⁰ describes this effort as “the introspection that retraces its steps through human history.”²¹ He posits that genuine reforms stem from in-depth study of the original source (i.e., the Scripture and Tradition) in dialogue with the historical context or present engagements of the believing community. This may suggest that “the fruitfulness of any *ressourcement* depends on a faithful holding fast to God’s Incarnate Word, the living source of Christian thought and life.”²² There is in fact an ongoing process where new ways of understanding the faith emerge and a new lifestyle is introduced to the Christian community. However, the Council is quick to remind the faithful that this Tradition “develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit,” and “that there is growth in the understanding of the realities which have been handed down.”²³

¹⁹ *Dei Verbum*, 8.

²⁰ Robert J. Kaslyn, “Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology,” in *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 73/1 (2013): 306-309.

²¹ As quoted in Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, 20.

²² Nicholas J. Healy Jr. “Evangelical Ressourcement,” in *First Things* (May 2011), retrieved at <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2011/05/evangelical-ressourcement>, on 26 April 2022.

²³ *Dei Verbum*, 8.

The Church maintains that the Rule of Faith could not be fully found in the sacred writings alone because much of the Church's Tradition is passed on by word of mouth or through the letters sent by the apostles to the Churches in the early period of our history.²⁴ The evangelist John reminded the believers that not everything which Jesus did were written but this does not mean they were not part of the Faith Heritage. Those written were primarily constructed to convince people to believe and put their trust in Jesus, as the Christ.²⁵ Hence, the handing on of this Tradition to the next generation of Christians involves the whole church, not just the bishops, priests, pastors or leaders of Faith communities. All believers are part of the people of God and are called upon "to pass on its memory, experience, expression, and interpretation of the foundational self-revelation of God that was completed with Christ and the New Testament community."²⁶

Back to Basics

The Christian Tradition did not just drop from heaven but was culled from the wisdom acquired by the ancestors of faith who have experienced life with its ups and downs. Most of the lessons they learned or codes established were carefully thought of and celebrated in their way of life so that they could forge for the next generation of Christians an integrated body of principles and exemplary practices that will guide and inspire them to better live the Faith. Sometimes because of the desire to offer fresh perspectives and timely interpretation of the Christian Faith, basic lessons from the Tradition may be

²⁴ See 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

²⁵ See John 20:30-31.

²⁶ Gerard O'Collins and Edward Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2010), 270.

overlooked or set aside to accommodate the popular cultures of the time. The Filipino proverb, *Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan*, (those who refuse to look back to where they came from, will not reach their goals/destination in life)²⁷ indicates how considering the past is an important ingredient to move forward and not to lose sight of what is essentially pursued. As part of the Church, the call to effectively proclaim the Gospel necessitates renewal (*aggiornamento*) or updating and a going back to the sources (Latin, *ad fontes*).²⁸ This will serve as guiding posts in the reflection that follows. Thus, the retrospection and reappropriation to be done will focus on the three virtues initially articulated by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, namely, faith, hope and love²⁹ which eventually evolved in the Church's Tradition as theological virtues that are essential to becoming better disciples.³⁰

According to Paul, these three should be pursued by every follower of Christ because without them the vision of the kingdom will be sidetracked. In fact, these have been repeatedly mentioned in Paul's letters which suggest how significant they were in the efforts of the church to remain faithful to the Gospel message.³¹ While the three virtues were mentioned toward the end of chapter 13, it reiterates that instead of other spiritual gifts (i.e., gift of tongues, angelic language, martyrdom, good works, etc.), which were favored by the church in

²⁷ Translation is mine.

²⁸ de Mesa and Cacho, *In love with God*, 11.

²⁹ See 1 Corinthians 13:13.

³⁰ See *Gaudium et Spes*, 21; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1812-1813; O'Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 286.

³¹ G. Campbell Morgan, "1 Corinthians 13 –Agape Love," in *Enduring Word*, retrieved from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-corinthians-13/> on 01 June 2022.

Corinth at that time, Paul urged the believers to turn their gaze to the more important values that should abide in their lives and the primacy of love that must permeate their community as disciples of Christ.³² This is also reiterated in Peter's letter where he pointed to the indispensable role of these virtues in becoming faithful to Christ.³³

The Church has maintained the foundational role of faith, hope, and love in her "Christian moral activity" such that these are considered "theological virtues" which "dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity."³⁴ In pursuit of authentic Christian witness, the theological virtues have been taught from one generation to the next; a legacy which was handed on since the early Church.³⁵ Christians are challenged to fix their eyes on the pursuit of faith, hope and love because seeking other gifts may thwart fellowship with God and communion with fellow believers. What does each of these virtues teach in terms of lessons that are relevant and meaningful especially to young believers in our time?

A Tradition of Transforming Faith

Christian faith is traditionally defined as "personal adherence to God and assent to his truth."³⁶ It suggests entrusting one's life and person freely and totally to God who is believed to be dependable and reliable. This is reiterated by the *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary*

³² Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer and Roland Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1990), 810-811.

³³ See 1 Peter 1:21-22.

³⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1812-1813.

³⁵ Paul's references to these virtues are found in his letters to Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8; Galatians 5:5-6; Colossians 1:4-5; and 2 Timothy 1:12-13, to cite a few.

³⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 150.

Council of the Philippines when it described faith as “a personal acceptance of the person of Jesus Christ... a person’s ‘please come in!’ to Christ who stands at a door and knocks.”³⁷ Both statements affirm the relational and response-oriented character of faith if it has to be authentic and transforming. The divine initiative is highlighted as the beginning of the God-human relationship which has always been kept as an important part of the Christian Tradition. What is emphasized here is the gratuitousness of God’s invitation toward a life of grace. Blessings are not perceived as merits earned through a life of righteousness but as unconditional manifestations of God’s pure kindness to humanity and the whole of creation. Such has always been part of the Tradition maintained by the Church as could be gleaned from faith narratives of those who were converted or transformed because of their positive response to God’s invitation exemplified in obedience of faith.³⁸

One example would be Abraham because the Church has always acknowledged him as “the father of all who believe.”³⁹ He was also described as “both a man of great spiritual depth and strength and a person with common human weaknesses and needs.”⁴⁰ While he was featured to be a man of faith, compassion, and peace, he was also overcome by his fear of being put in compromising situation such as when he had to lie to the Pharaoh about his wife to save his life.⁴¹ Despite some contentions on the historicity of this man’s story, the tradition kept and revered by Christians, Jewish, and Moslems continue to

³⁷ *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1992), #64; henceforth, *Acts and Decrees*.

³⁸ See *Catechism of Catholic Church*, #144.

³⁹ *Ibid*, #146.

⁴⁰ Andre Parrot, *Abraham: Hebrew Patriarch*. Retrieved from www.britanica.com, on 21 October 2017.

⁴¹ See Gen. 12:10-20.

inspire in their members a sense of rootedness and continuity with the ancient past which engenders a faith inspired by his story of total trust in God despite uncertainties. This manner of believing according to the letter to the Hebrews may be defined as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”⁴²

Another example of transforming faith may be found in the narrative of the “burning bush”⁴³ which was the turning point in Moses’ life. Scholars believe that this was a common symbol for all stories of conversion which marked the great saints, leaders or role models belonging to most religious traditions.⁴⁴ In this story, Moses experienced in a unique way the Holy One who revealed a God whose power delivers the oppressed and acts on behalf of those who suffer. The personal name Yahweh (Hebrew, *ehyeh ašer ehyeh*) which is best understood as “the God who is always present (to Israel),”⁴⁵ points to a God who makes things better thereby putting order into chaos and creating a new nation out of runaway slaves. Moses, a person who struggled to stay faithful to God amidst challenges became a hero for Israel who inspired people to faith in God’s providence. This, then became the foundation of their nation’s story, celebrated and remembered through the Passover meal, sustained by living up to the decalogue or the ten commandments, and strengthened by their committed trust in Yahweh.⁴⁶ They are no longer slaves but free people; they are no longer squatters but have been given “a land flowing with milk

⁴² Hebrews 11:1.

⁴³ cf. Ex. 3:1-22.

⁴⁴ “Burning Bush,” in *New World Encyclopedia*. Retrieved, May 5, 2022 at https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Burning_Bush; see also Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament* (Makati: St. Paul’s Publications, 1993).

⁴⁵ Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, 166.

⁴⁶ Richard Hays, “Learning Leadership from Moses: A Biblical Model for Church Today,” in *Divinity* 12/1 (Fall 2012): 5-9.

and honey.”⁴⁷ Their faith in Yahweh made them a people chosen to be witnesses of God’s benevolent love for the exploited and the oppressed.

For ordinary Filipinos, faith in God has always been a source of hope and strength to weather difficulties in life. This resilient character seems to derive its grounding from religious faith where belief in a God of benevolent kindness ascertains a better tomorrow.⁴⁸ But for faith to thrive, it must be rooted in real experiences of the divine. This proclivity to “felt experience” among Filipino Christians, finds resonance in the theology of faith which John Henry Newman brought to the fore. For him, faith is “not an acceptance of revealed doctrine, not an act of intellect, but a feeling, an emotion, an affection, an appetency.”⁴⁹ Such gripping experience moves a person to conversion and commitment to remain steadfast amidst uncertainties and difficult situations. Similarly, Schleiermacher suggested the paramount value of feelings (*gefühl*) as fundamental to faith in God thereby referring to religion as “feeling and intuition of the universe” and Christianity as “the feeling of dependence on God.”⁵⁰ To be sensitive then to the “feelings” evoked by our experiences of God’s revelation is encouraged and endeavored. *Pandama* or integrative

⁴⁷ See Exodus 3:8.

⁴⁸ Religious behavior and faith in divine being have been pivotal to coping with hardships. Filipino youth articulations of these experiences may be gleaned from the study conducted by Rebecca Cacho and Fides Del Castillo, “God’s Benevolent Love in the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic: Articulations and Experiences of Select Filipino Youth,” *Religions* 13/162 (2022): 1-12.

⁴⁹ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1982), 21.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, English translation of German edition, ed., H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 77.

sensing⁵¹ is valued in the cultural context of Filipinos because without it, meaningful relationships could not be forged, including faith in God who is initially encountered in one's *kalooban* (literally, the inner depths of being or conscience in religious language) that inspires a conversion. By feeling God's immediacy, Filipinos are reassured that everything will be better no matter how bleak the situation they face at the moment. In fact, it could be argued that when they utter the words, *bahala na*, "translated as let come what may, ... or it's up to God,"⁵² they are expressing a trusting faith in God's providence and dependability. While at first glance the phrase suggests a fatalistic attitude, on a closer scrutiny, however it "speaks of responsibility, concern, management and trust," which reinforce "a refusal to be defeated by discouraging situations."⁵³ Is this not what Jesus expected of Peter when he summoned him to walk with him on the water?⁵⁴

Not to forget would be the example of Mary's steadfast faith and dedication to follow God's will. In the tradition of the church, Mary is hailed as "model of discipleship" and "exemplar in faith and charity" because of her unwavering faith characterized by her trusting obedience to God's mandate.⁵⁵ Once she accepted Jesus in her life, she embarked on a journey of faith where her mere presence reassured the frightened disciples, brought joy and hope where needed, and opened the hearts of people to the mighty works of God for all specially to the marginalized.⁵⁶ Despite the unimaginable

⁵¹ Jose de Mesa, *Why Theology is Never Far from Home* (Manila: De La Salle University Press), 2003.

⁵² Jose de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1991), 147.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁴ See Matthew 14:22-33.

⁵⁵ See *Acts and Decrees*, 145 and *Lumen Gentium*, 53.

⁵⁶ See *Acts and Decrees*, 149.

pain of seeing her son beaten, shamed and crucified, she stood at the foot of the cross,⁵⁷ manifesting an unperturbed faith in God's plan for the salvation of the world. "The power of her intercession in Cana and the strength with which she stands under the cross is a great light on the path of faith."⁵⁸ Through Elizabeth the early church proclaimed her as "blessed among women"⁵⁹ which recognizes her faith that shines to give light to the faith of those around her. Her example of obedience to God's will was hailed by the "holy Fathers" as pivotal to God's offer of life and love. In fact, in their preaching, they argued that "the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith."⁶⁰ Mary as a woman of faith teaches us to be open to the divine promptings no matter how difficult or impossible, they may be. She reminds us not to give in to fear or mistrust and to stay committed to the end despite tribulations because our first act of faith is a total trust in God who is faithful forever.

A tradition of undying hope

Confronted with death-dealing situations and miserable conditions of life, one may easily succumb to despair or lose one's heart such that others' mental health could be compromised in the process. Recent studies show that the pandemic caused by Covid 19, has generated fear, hopelessness, depression, stress, and anxiety. There were even reports of suicidal ideation

⁵⁷ See John 19:25-27.

⁵⁸ Marek Kluz, "Mary is a Model of Faith and Moral Life," *The Person and the Challenges* 8/1 (2018): 157.

⁵⁹ See Luke 1:42.

⁶⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

involved in those who lack supportive family or friends.⁶¹ But where do people derive hope or muster the courage to cope with setbacks? For Christians, hope is looking forward to a better condition of life derived from one's trust in a dependable God who will make things new and wipe away sufferings.⁶² It may be likened to an anchor that helps people to be strong in tribulations, patient in hardships, and joyful even when trials test their fortitude.⁶³ In a sense it is the fruit of faith in the promise of heaven or eternal bliss when the kingdom of God is realized here and now.⁶⁴ Besides the signs of the kingdom made possible in Jesus' ministry (i.e., healing, reconciliation, exorcism, table fellowship), the certainty of this promise is fulfilled in his resurrection. Central to our faith tradition is the guarantee that all the faithful will share in Jesus' resurrection at the end of time.⁶⁵ What sustains this undying hope is the message of resurrection; indicating that the God of life, not death has the last word. "Jesus has overcome evil with good; and life not death is victorious in his person."⁶⁶ This is

⁶¹ See the studies made by Franziska Knolle, Lisa Ronan & Graham Murray. "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: a comparison between Germany and the UK," *BMC Psychology* 9, article 60 (2021), <https://bmcpyschology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-021-00565-y> [accessed 23 July 2022]; Bilal, Javed, et. al., "The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic's impact on mental health," in *Wiley Public Health Emergency Collection*, (June 22, 2020); Ayesha Al Dhaheri, et. al., "Impact of COVID-19 on mental health and quality of life: Is there any effect? A cross-sectional study of the MENA region," in *Social Psychiatry*, (March 25, 2021). Retrieved June 9, 2022, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0249107>.

⁶² See Revelation 21:4

⁶³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1820.

⁶⁴ See Luke 4: 18-19 and Isaiah 61:1-5

⁶⁵ See Romans 6:4-5 and Lumen Gentium, 7.

⁶⁶ Jose de Mesa and Rebecca Cacho, *Jesus: God's Way of Friendship* (Quezon City: C&E Publishing, Inc., 2017), 39.

foundational to understanding the source of hope that empowers Christians to find meaning in their daily struggles. The apostle Peter is also quick to remind us that we are blessed because “...by his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”⁶⁷ Jesus’ resurrection is the greatest source of hope among Christians because it reveals how evil is overcome by good; how life prevails over death; and how Jesus’ good works are vindicated.⁶⁸

In moments of fear, anxiety, and darkness, it is easy to allow despair to bring out the worst in people, but for Christians, however, faith in God, provides grounding and stability despite the ambiguities of life. Jesus’ reassuring words, “so do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today,”⁶⁹ may provide strength and hopeful risks when troubles weaken the person’s resolve to look forward to a better tomorrow. Narratives in the gospels also point to the hope-filled encounter with Jesus who brought them healing and a new beginning; restoring them to their dignity and sending them back to the community.⁷⁰ In a study recently conducted, it was noted that select Filipino youth were able to cope with the sufferings caused by Covid19 because of their faith in a loving God. Hope was derived from total trust in a loving God who was experienced as merciful, providential, and bent on helping those in need. Such experiences provided them fortitude to weather the storms of life and not yield

⁶⁷ See 1 Peter 1:3

⁶⁸ de Mesa and Cacho, *Jesus: God’s Way of Friendship*, 39.

⁶⁹ See Matthew 6:34

⁷⁰ Some examples of hope-filled encounters with Jesus are: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 9:37-43; John 5:1-9.

to despair despite debilitating situations caused by the pandemic.⁷¹

This positive regard for life and the spirit of optimism exemplify ordinary Filipinos' take on what brings hope. *Pag-asa* (translated as hope) is derived from the root word, *asa* (Filipino, *pakiramdam na posible ang ninanais at magiging maayos ang lahat*)⁷² which denotes a sense of hope that what one wishes will be realized and that everything will work out in the end; and the prefix *pag* (Filipino, *nagsasaad ng pagganap ng gawaing tinutukoy ng salitang ugat*)⁷³ which implies fulfillment of what the root word describes to be accomplished. This term has a number of cognates, namely, *umasa* (to expect), *asahan* (to rely on someone or something) and *iasa* (to entrust).⁷⁴ All these words reveal that to hope for something better and desirous has always been part of the traditional values in the country. A study conducted among young Filipinos, showed that “hope significantly predicts general happiness, overall personal well-being, and resilience” among the respondents.⁷⁵ This suggests that resilience and happy disposition displayed despite pitiful circumstances of many in society could be attributed to the undying hope inherent in the people. This cultural value is nurtured and sustained by faith in a God who is believed to be magnanimous, dependable, and merciful. Consider the popular religious traditions continually celebrated among local communities and one will

⁷¹ Rebecca Cacho and Fides Del Castillo, “God’s Benevolent Love in the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic: Articulations and Experiences of Select Filipino Youth,” *Religions* 13/162 (2022): 1-12.

⁷² Almario, *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, 58.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 628.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 58.

⁷⁵ Nephtaly Joel Botor. “Hope Predicts Happiness with Life, Personal Well-Being, and Resilience Among Selected School-going Filipino Adolescents,” *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research* 42/2 (2019): 125.

recognize the hope-filled attitude and resilient character of Filipinos such that popular religiosity is described as “festive and dramatic, spontaneous and creative, personal yet communitarian, otherworldly yet profoundly human, symbolic yet immediate.”⁷⁶

It is often easy for people to forget their heritage when a more comfortable condition or self-enriching opportunities come their way. Sometimes, there is a strong pull toward what is self-gratifying thereby leaving behind an age-old belief carved from a difficult past. Within the biblical tradition, summons to sustain hope for liberation and a promise of homecoming from being exiled may be retrieved from the narratives of the Old Testament prophets. While they were known to offer critical analysis of socio-political situation in their time to point out the context by which people suffer, their prophecies were also replete with hopeful anticipation of God’s salvation. Some may mistake the prophecies, they spoke of as foretelling future events, but in reality, they were used as a means to interpret the present situation rather than to predict future phenomenon.⁷⁷ The prophets challenged the people to look back and remember who they were and what they were called to become – God’s chosen people. Being chosen does not mean they are better than others. Rather, it connotes “being set apart” to be witnesses to the world. They were supposed to be models of righteous living, preferring what is in harmony with God’s will.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 112.

⁷⁷ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2012), 42.

⁷⁸ “Chosen People,” in *Britannica*, retrieved at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/chosen-people>, on 05 May 2022.

Most prophets proclaimed “damnation” not because of the impending “doom” but primarily because they warned people that unless they repent and turn back to God, they themselves will bring disaster into their own lives.⁷⁹ In the book of Isaiah, the term “salvation” was mentioned around 26 times but a few times only in other prophetic books. This is probably the reason why he was considered “the evangelical prophet” since he prophesied extensively about the salvific acts of the promised Messiah which people could hope for and rely upon.⁸⁰ The fundamental message of this prophet was, God’s redemption is a gratuitous gift which will be given to Israel not because of her efforts but because of the grace of God. Tradition maintains that just like most prophets, he was mocked and scoffed at for reminding them of their infidelity to Yahweh and dependence on human rulers instead of putting their trust in God who is always faithful to them. “Isaiah’s mission was not only to admonish the people to keep them on the right path. He also instilled fervent faith and undying hope in God in the hearts of his flock, and he brought them courage and fortitude at a time when they were suffering mortal fear from the threat of the new Assyrian Empire.”⁸¹ From his prophecies, people derived hope amidst despair and sufferings they experienced from the hands of their captors.

Although there were warnings on catastrophes that people will suffer from, his prophecies were more centered on the reliable promises of God’s salvation

⁷⁹ See 1 Kings. 21:20-27.

⁸⁰ Bible.org. “The Major Prophets,” in *Concise Old Testament Survey*, retrieved at <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-major-prophets> , on 04 May 2022.

⁸¹ Jacob Isaacs, “Isaiah, the Prophet,” in *Chabad.org and Kehot Publication Society*, retrieved at http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/464019/jewish/The-Prophet-Isaiah.htm, on 04 May 2022.

which the Messiah will make possible.⁸² It suggests that there is hope for a better future because God will make this possible despite the desperate condition of people and their seeming faithlessness. Because of this, his message was not forgotten but became the foundation of Israel's reflections on the future hope for the coming Messiah who will wipe away the sufferings they encounter. "His words contained that rare mix of ethical insight, realistic warning of disaster, and long range of hopefulness that mark his as the most profound vision of the Old Testament."⁸³

The prophecies of Jeremiah, highlighted a God who was unable to stay "angry forever" and as such extended the hand of compassion, in order to draw them back to the "home" they abandoned but wished they could return to. Note a message of hope spoken of by this prophet as could be gleaned from several plans that God promised, if Israel will turn away from sin and return to God.⁸⁴ First, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple by some remnants who shall go back from their exile in Babylon.⁸⁵ Second, a descendant of David will be raised up to guide and protect Israel from any catastrophe so that they can live in peace.⁸⁶ Third, the northern and southern kingdom will be made one solid kingdom under God's rule.⁸⁷ Fourth, God would bring healing to people to free them from the wounds of unfaithfulness and restore their covenant relationship once again.⁸⁸

⁸² See Isaiah. 58:1—66:24.

⁸³ Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, 333.

⁸⁴ Philip Hyatt, "Jeremiah: Hebrew Prophet," in *Britannica*, retrieved at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jeremiah-Hebrew-prophet>, on 05 May 2022.

⁸⁵ See Jeremiah 29: 10-14; 30: 2-3.

⁸⁶ See Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-17.

⁸⁷ See Jeremiah 3:18; 16:14-15; 23:7-8.

⁸⁸ See Jeremiah 30:12-17; 31:27-28, 31-34; 32:38-41.

Similarly, the prophet Ezekiel whose name means “God will strengthen”⁸⁹ boldly called for a new heart and a new spirit, as a condition for the restoration of Israel.⁹⁰ His personal experience of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile with his fellow Israelites opened his eyes to the gravity of sin committed against God. Their being chosen as God’s people did not spare them from the evil effects of their disregard to their covenant with God. In his prophecies, the sovereignty of God has been the central theme. From the very start, God asserts power that re-creates a new spirit for the remnants of Israel. To put a new heart in them, the old must be destroyed and cast away.⁹¹

Being sent to prophesy to a small exiled community which was uprooted from their land and sent to a foreign country, Ezekiel may have witnessed how disoriented and confused were his fellow Jews. It may not have been easy to let them realize that what they went through were not punishments from God but were consequences of their own sinfulness. Their spirits may have been deflated and their hearts troubled by their uncertain future in the hands of their captors. To teach them the lessons they should learn from this experience, Ezekiel made use of metaphors and symbols to illustrate the message which he conveyed. Some of these are, man in linen, son of man, and the good shepherd. Such metaphors illustrated the holiness of God and his efforts to reach out to people, renewing them in Spirit and reviving them with greater fervor to start anew.⁹²

⁸⁹ “Ezekiel,” in *Behind the Name*, retrieved at <https://www.behindthename.com/name/ezekiel>, on 05 May 2022.

⁹⁰ See Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 36:26.

⁹¹ “Summary of the Book of Ezekiel,” in *Bible Study Tools*, retrieved at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/ezekiel/> on 05 May 2022.

⁹² Jeanne-Pierre Isbouts, “In Exile, Hebrews Found Hope in Prophet Ezekiel’s Visions,” *National Geographic* (January 18, 2019),

According to Ezekiel God would “revive His people once more, shepherd them with compassion, cleanse them of all their defilement, reconstitute them as a perfect expression of his kingdom under the hand of David (34:23–24).”⁹³ To be restored, the people are led to assume responsibility to allow the rule of God to prevail in their lives. It is in this way that they will be accorded a new heart and a new spirit as they come home to the land of their ancestors.

Today’s Church continues to echo this tradition of becoming a beacon of hope, such that one of the Vatican II documents even bears the name “hope”⁹⁴ which signifies the premium accorded to this virtue in the life and mission of the community of disciples. From some examples cited above, “hope responds to God’s promises communicated through the history of the OT and NT... and the gift of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁵ It is a dynamic anticipation of the fullness of life or the coming of the kingdom where the liberating power of God and the initiatives of people to build a just and humane society will come to pass. This tradition of undying hope urges Christians to look beyond the imperfect world and look toward God’s promise of a fuller life.⁹⁶ If hope is sustained in a person’s life, it generates strength in tribulations, courage in difficulties, joyful expectation of a better future, purity in intentions, and patience in suffering.⁹⁷ Passing this on to the younger generations of Christians is part of the mandate of the Church specially when the present context seems to exacerbate the tendency of people to succumb to despair and loneliness due to lack

retrieved at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/ezekiel-prophet-israel-old-testament>, on 05 May 2022.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See *Gaudium et Spes*, literally translated as “joys and hopes”.

⁹⁵ O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 110.

⁹⁶ See John 10:10.

⁹⁷ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1818-1820.

of supportive relationships they could depend on. As a Church that proclaims the salvific promise of God in Jesus, there is a need to retrieve this tradition of undying hope in response to the growing distance among people.

Despite the proliferation of social media, virtual and digitally powered interactions have not truly connected people in genuine love and friendship. With renewed hope, the believing community “can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up, to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile.”⁹⁸ Now more than ever, the church is challenged to proclaim a message of hope amidst dark moments and crisis situations that dampen human spirit. Allowing pathways of hope to emerge will provide the present generation to follow the way of Jesus which brings salvation.

A Tradition of Agapeic Love

“It is neither accidental nor incidental that the distinctive quality identifying the followers of Jesus Christ is one of love.”⁹⁹ Note that at the heart of our Christian Tradition is love because the God of Jesus is love!¹⁰⁰ It was believed that 1 John 4:6-21 was originally intended for the first century Christians to address the conflicts in theology, preaching, and practices which severed fellowship among believers. Such issue was to be resolved by considering *the Tradition that God is love* which was personified by Jesus.¹⁰¹ One may ask, “What

⁹⁸ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* (Makati, Philippines: Word and Life Publications, 2020), 35.

⁹⁹ De Mesa and Cacho, *In Love with God*, 60.

¹⁰⁰ See 1 John 4:16.

¹⁰¹ Jones, Judith. “Commentary on 1 John 4:7-21,” in *Working Preacher*, retrieved at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/>

kind of love may have been displayed by Jesus?” for Steve Cole, “Love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment which, in obedience to Jesus, shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.”¹⁰² In the bible, God’s love is expressed in Greek with the word *agape* or unconditional love. This means that it is an act of graciousness and pure kindness directed to the subject of one’s affection; where self-seeking motives have no place in. It is that kind of love that is extended freely without counting the cost or expecting any return of favor from the beloved. Jesus’ witness to this way of love was assumed by his disciples despite many difficulties they experienced. The tradition of loving, which is the very core of their identity as Christians continue to challenge them across time, age, race, and generations.¹⁰³

In 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13, Paul alludes to the charisms bestowed on the church as nothing if there is no love because “only by loving does the Christian exist authentically.”¹⁰⁴ Instead of defining love, he used 15 verbs that point to virtues neglected by the Church in Corinth. References to the characters of persons were chosen as could be gleaned from the personifications used: “the strong were not patient and kind. The sexual ascetics tended to exist on their own way. The community rejoiced at wrong.”¹⁰⁵ These were considered signs of immaturity which Paul hoped the Corinthians would outgrow so that their childish ways will be done away with. Likewise, the passage was “a way to introduce into the community an ethic that is necessary if they are to

commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/fifth-sunday-of-easter-2/commentary-on-1-john-47-21-4, on 06 May 2022.

¹⁰² S. Cole, “Lesson 74: Loving as Jesus Loved,” retrieved at <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-74-loving-jesus-loved-john-1331-38>, on 06 May 2022.

¹⁰³ See John 13:35.

¹⁰⁴ *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 811.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

survive the muddy waters of difference and disagreement produced in interpersonal relationships.”¹⁰⁶ The church community was fragmented due to diversity and social contrasts but Paul proposed love as key to overcoming barriers and solidifying fellowship among believers. Without love even the greatest gifts and most difficult sacrifices are without merits. Genuine love could transcend borders and extend one’s reach to embrace others because when we love one another, it “moves us to seek the best for their lives. Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all”¹⁰⁷

In the same manner that Jesus’ way of love overcome all boundaries, so also the disciples are reminded to represent this Godlike manner of loving in their relationships with one another. Through the Incarnation of God in Jesus, they were given a clear manifestation of the kind of God they believed in. Instead of the common basis for loving another known to most people, the unconditional and selfless love (*agape*) which Jesus witnessed to and handed on to his disciples was emphasized. “Jesus ignored the limits that religious communities imposed. He ate and talked with people whom the religious leaders had rejected as heretics, as sinful, as filthy and despicable. He touched people who were considered untouchable and welcomed people whom everyone else had kicked out. His harshest words were reserved not for the impure, but for unloving, self-righteous people who saw some of God’s children as beneath their attention and certainly as unworthy of

¹⁰⁶ Shively Smith, “Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13:1-13,” *Working Preacher*, retrieved at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/faith-hope-and-love/commentary-on-1-corinthians-131-13>, on 16 June 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 94.

their love.”¹⁰⁸ There are three important points emphasized in this letter of John: God is love and the source of all love; God shows what genuine love is in Jesus; and God reminds us to love one another. It is noticeable that the writer kept what was in their tradition when he made use of the words, *agape* (love) and *agapan* (act of loving) which were attributed to Jesus.¹⁰⁹ This suggests that ‘knowing God’ was understood as experiencing a gratuitous love which transforms persons into the likeness of Christ. Instead of division, fear, and doubt, our Tradition reminds us of love which makes everything perfect, overcomes all our fears and moves us beyond frontiers.¹¹⁰ God’s love is undeserved, unmerited and freely given to us, but the consequence of being loved by God is to love one another.¹¹¹

The practice of mutual love is a testimony of how divine love is actualized in human love. God’s initiative in loving us is the force and norm of how we keep this Christian Tradition constant and intact. No less than the early believers in Jerusalem witnessed to this love in their community as could be read in Acts 2: 42-47. Here, we are amazed at how the core of our Tradition was passed on to the believers in the most ordinary cycle of daily life. Oneness, generous sharing, fellowship, real acts of love, and being faithful to the spirit of Jesus kept them in tune with the Spirit of love that permeates the community of disciples. God’s unparalleled love throughout Judeo-Christian Tradition and beyond has become a shared memory among the disciples. In the bible, this beautiful experience is re-told in narratives,

¹⁰⁸ Judith Jones, “Commentary on 1 John 4:7-21,” *Working Preacher*, retrieved at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/fifth-sunday-of-easter-2/commentary-on-1-john-47-21-4>, on 06 May 2022.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ See 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

¹¹¹ See John 13:34.

poems, songs, epics, laws, ordinances, and many other literary genres. Indeed, a validation of the rich experience which was articulated in many forms in their attempt to describe something mysterious and unfathomable. They tried to express their profound experience of God according to what was culturally intelligible and meaningful. One effective way of describing and passing on this belief in God which our Tradition has resorted to is by way of metaphors. Although such may not fully articulate the “mystery” (or hiddenness) of God, such analogies depict some likeness in what/who it symbolizes. When simple words are unable to capture or justify a very deep and momentous experience, people make use of metaphors. Such images that try to resemble this loving God though tentative and initial, reflect people’s desire to make sense of their experience of God.¹¹²

For the great theologians of the Church, the belief in a God who is love remained constant in their theologies. St. Paul reiterated in his writings the primacy of love among the Christian virtues¹¹³ in his desire to remind the believers about the centrality of love in being true followers of Christ. One striking metaphor which St. Augustine used to describe God’s love is the tenderness of a mother to her child.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Julian of Norwich wrote and preached about a God whose love is always available to us. She did not perceive God as punitive or angry but made use of “motherhood” as a metaphor for

¹¹² Bernard Lee, *Jesus and the Metaphors of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

¹¹³ See 1 Cor. 13.

¹¹⁴ As quoted by Haddad Mimi, “God’s Attributes in Mothers,” *CBE International*, retrieved at <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/mutuality-blog-magazine/gods-attributes-mothers>, on 06 May 2022.

Jesus' love that embraces and nurtures.¹¹⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez asserts that it is the gratuitous love of God which impels Christians to transform the face of the earth. It is the very leaven that helps them in their struggle to bring about justice in society and take the side of the poor.¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Johnson's metaphor of God as *Sophia* or wisdom whose love brings forth life to the world prompts us to passed on this life-giving love to the next generations of Christians.¹¹⁷

How can we keep this tradition of agapeic love exemplified in and through Jesus? The popular post-resurrection narrative in the gospel of Luke 24:13-35 may help. The story begins with a sad note, Jesus who was known as "mighty in words and deeds" is gone. It seemed that their hope has come to pass with the death of a man they thought would be the "messiah" (the anointed one who shall make things better for Israel). The scene was presented on "the road" which is often a metaphor for our life journey. It is in their walk to Emmaus that they encountered the risen Christ who was not initially recognized by the disciples despite walking and speaking with them. It was in the *breaking of the bread* that he was eventually seen. "It was in Jesus' characteristic behavior of giving, of feeding, of caring for people and distributing of bread that they knew him."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Juliana Norwich, "A revelation of Divine Love," *God is Our Mother*, retrieved at https://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010807_giuliana-norwich_en.html, on 06 May 2022.

¹¹⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, revised ed. (New York: Orbis books, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992).

¹¹⁸ Sarah Henrich, "Commentary on Luke 24:13-35," *Working Preacher*, retrieved at https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=933, on 06 May 2022.

Words or thorough knowledge of God may often be meaningless for people to preserve and sustain their faith. We are not even aware that we have resigned from the possibility of God's grace happening in our midst but one thing that we may want to learn from this story is the truth that "Jesus walks with us" in our journeys.¹¹⁹ Just like the disciples, God provides us with glimpses of this *God-with-us and for us*, we just need to be more sensitive and mindful of these "moments" which God provides. Notice that one important aspect of this story reminds us that God's presence in Jesus is real but even the disciples may sometimes become short sighted because of their fear, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction.¹²⁰ Jesus personally drew to himself his followers to make their conversation meaningful, to turn their sadness into joy, their expectations into reality, and their journey driven toward the coming of the kingdom. This may only come about if their hearts are burning to re-tell the story of Jesus not just in words but more so in the way they lived their lives so that Jesus' way of loving thrives and leaves on.¹²¹

In our time, the Church teaches us to permeate the world with love that does justice; love that reaches out to the most vulnerable and neglected; a love that heals those who suffer, a love that welcomes with open arms those who have no one to turn to; a love that breaks barriers and establishes meaningful relationships. The *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* places love at the heart of achieving justice in

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Jessica Brodie, "What is the Significance of the Road to Emmaus?," *Christianity.com*, retrieved at <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-is-the-significance-of-the-road-to-emmaus.html>, on 06 May 2022.

¹²¹ Sarah Henrich, "Commentary on Luke 24:13-35," *Working Preacher*, retrieved at https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=933, on 06 May 2022.

society, “justice attains its inner fullness only in love. For in justice, the other person can remain another, an alien. In love the other is a friend, even a brother or a sister in Christ.”¹²² Consequently, it implies that love can surpass what justice requires as it inspires initiatives geared toward quality life for all. The family which is a domestic church or the church in the home is the best school for this kind of love to flourish.¹²³ With its witness of self-sacrificing love, other-centered efforts and mutual sharing among the members, Christ’s love is born anew. “The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church.”¹²⁴ Through families, the agapeic love which is at the core of the Christian Tradition becomes alive and real. Modelling the exigencies of loving relationships, Families hand on a legacy of love to the next generations of Christians which exemplifies the gratuitous love of God in Jesus through the Spirit.

Conclusion

Lessons about life for life have been retrieved specifically from the Christian Tradition where the three virtues of faith, hope, and love, guided this reflection. This rendered timeless insights which beckon every disciple of Jesus to re-trace and retell through their lives. The first is *a tradition of transforming faith*, where examples shown from the narratives in the bible emphasized how a leap of faith transforms people and provides them the courage to change for the better. Second is *a tradition of undying hope*, where God’s faithfulness and benevolent kindness became the sturdy foundation of joyful anticipation for a better tomorrow

¹²² *Acts and Decrees*, 305.

¹²³ See *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

¹²⁴ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 87.

specifically for those in despair due to sufferings or tribulations. Lastly, *a tradition of agapeic love*, where it was reiterated that at the heart of the Christian Tradition is unconditional and inclusive love especially for the rejected, neglected and destitute in society. In fact, this manner of loving becomes the mark of true followers of Jesus.¹²⁵ Each of these primary lessons highlight the best in our Christian heritage which summons us not just to review but to witness to it in our daily strivings to becoming better Christians. The Faith Legacy passed on to us points us back to Jesus who is the incarnation of the benevolent God that offers us a life of love and a life in its fullness.¹²⁶ The challenge we now face is how to honor, revere and continue this Christian Tradition in our time and context.

¹²⁵ See John 13:35.

¹²⁶ See John 10:10.

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