

INTRODUCTION

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The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) ushered in a new way of thinking about the nature and mission of the church as it engaged the contemporary world. It affirmed the primacy of the grace of baptism and by virtue of it, the missionary character of the entire church. With its emphases on *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*, the Council moved the church away from a Christomonistic understanding of itself to one which rediscovered its mystery, sacramentality and historicity, and from a purely monarchical way of governance to one that is more participative, collegial and accountable.

As our local church's reception of Vatican II, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) regards the church as a communion in which there is unity in diversity and equality of dignity, and participatory in its way of life and mission and in which each member's gifts are recognized and shared for the common good. PCP II calls on the Philippine church to become a Church of the Poor – a church whose leaders have a special love and preference for the poor, who fight for the poor's dignity and rights, and who use the church's resources, including their own, for the poor's needs. It envisions a church leadership that does not hesitate to side with them, even if that would mean alienation and persecution from the rich and powerful and the loss of societal privileges.

It has been almost 60 years since the end of Vatican II, more than 30 years since PCP II and more than 500 years since the arrival of Catholicism in our country. In recent history, we have had exemplary ordained church leaders who were in solidarity with the poor, fought for their dignity and rights and even gave up their

loves for them. We also need to recognize and affirm many of the laity who have occupied positions of leadership in our society in general and in the church in particular. Many who are involved in various church ministries have shown admirable leadership and service in their areas of expertise in spite of the ministerial challenges they face, among which is clericalism in church structures, mindsets and attitudes. In spite of Pope Francis' repeated rejection of it, clericalism remains prevalent among many Catholics. A more worrisome culture, however, within the institutional church is what James Keenan calls "hierarchicalism," the father of clericalism.¹ He argues, "The church, especially the episcopacy, needs to have a greater awareness of the dangers of hierarchicalism, and a recognition of the differences between cultural ways of thinking, judging, and acting that are rooted in the vice of participatory, collective self-aggrandizement and protectionism rather than in the virtue of the sacred call to servant ministry. And this recognition of the culture might lead to further structural changes."² Just like the effort to change unjust social structures, it will not be easy. As we struggle in our efforts to respond to the different issues facing the church and our society, we need to take stock of the kinds of leaders we have formed and have had in our local church and how they have exercised their leadership and ministry within the church and in society.

The articles in this special issue of *Hapag* are the fruits of DaKaTeo's annual conference in 2021, "Not to Be Served but To Serve: Rethinking Leadership and Ministry in the Church beyond 500 Years of Catholicism in the Philippines," and are reflections about the church's leadership and the diverse ways in which it is performed. Dominador Bombongon, Jr. argues that the ecclesiological vision of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* provides a framework for exercising leadership and ministry in the Philippine church, particularly with his emphasis on the missionary

¹ James F. Keenan, SJ, "Hierarchicalism," *Theological Studies* 83 no. 1 (2022): 84-108.

² Keenan, "Hierarchicalism," 100-101.

character of the church and the call of every baptized person to engage in mission. Such an emphasis demands that the church become a truly listening church, which creates participatory processes and mechanisms, practices subsidiarity and collaboration, promotes a culture of encounter and celebration, focuses on the need to encounter the God of mercy, and addresses clericalism and spiritual worldliness. What Bombongan asserts is true for both ordained and lay leaders.

Simply because many of the laity are active within the parish and in church ministries does not necessarily mean that the church has become more consultative and participatory. In his article, Rhoderick Abellanos problematizes the leadership of the laity in parish pastoral councils. For him, their participation reflects a certain ecclesial elitism and a clericalist mentality. Hence, a “politics of communion” is necessary - one that is rooted in a theology of power that is truly liberating. For his part, Anatoly Angelo Aseneta asserts that the Philippine Church is inconsistent in responding to the signs of the times - liberal when it comes to social justice issues but conservative about sexual issues. He thus proposes Cardinal Bernardin’s consistent ethic of life as a means of becoming more comprehensive, consistent and coherent in its outlook. Angeli Rivera in her study considers the papal visits in the Philippines as means by which the Holy See engages in public democracy - a reminder to the Philippine church of its unique vocation in Asia and of promoting peace in the region.

Rebecca Cacho presents the model of household of God as a way to understand the meaning of the church for our time, highlighting the mutual commitment of family members to and for each other’s well-being. Cacho shows how as a household of God, the church shares in the tasks of *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *leitourgia*, *diakonia* and *maturia* in a meaningful manner. Given the apparent conflict that exists between a union and a Catholic university, Levy Lanaria shows how, using Habermas’ communicative rationality, the leadership of such a university can engage a union in genuine dialogue. He further asserts that given the character of a Catholic

university, communicative rationality must be grounded in a contextual spirituality of *loob*.

In his paper, Rowan Rebustillo describes how the changes forced upon the Filipino migrant churches by the COVID-19 pandemic has opened leadership opportunities for the churches in Brussels and Athens. The shift to being a cyberchurch has enabled many Filipino lay migrants, Rebustillo argues, to be accidental missionaries - leaders of their online communities - performing their ministry virtually as they celebrate the liturgy and respond to the needs of their members. In the Philippine context, while the pandemic brought to a halt our ordinary way of being church, and led to isolation and social distancing, it also brought about the collaboration and collective action of ordinary people in response to both the material and spiritual needs of the Christian community. Reflecting on the performance of the people during the pandemic, Jessica Joy Candelario and Estela Padilla explore leadership and ministry in the new normal through the movement of *kapwa*, *bayan*, at *simbahan* cooperating, collaborating, and growing in synergy. Through the metaphor of dance, they highlight three dance forms reflected by pandemic stories of hope and courage and how in contrast, some church practices reflect “dancing out of step.” Proposing new pathways to shared leadership and responsive ministry in the present times, it also brings out new dimensions to understanding the Trinity as a dance in the world today.

Much more could be said about leadership and ministry in the church of today as it responds to contemporary challenges and adapts to ever changing situations. What is certain is that our leaders are constantly called to discern God’s will in history and among God’s people, and to be of service to them. It is a kind of leadership that enables and empowers the baptized to fulfill their own calling and that ultimately brings about the realization of God’s Kingdom. If we are to realize Pope Francis’ dream of a truly synodal church, then we also need synodal leaders - people with whom we journey, engage in dialogue, and dream! We have only started our journey and we hope that with each other’s support, we

will persevere and create for ourselves communities that are more just, compassionate and inclusive.