

Integral Eucharist: a way to bring about Environmental Awareness

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Abstract

In one of the news that I culled dated January 05, 2015 from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, there was this column entitled “Black Nazarene devotees told: Respect environment.” Particularly, the news urged twelve million devotees of the Black Nazarene to remember the adage “Cleanliness is next to Godliness” when they join the traditional procession of the historic image. The report also made mention how this saying been taught from grade school, but oftentimes being neglected. In a similar report the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority said it collected a total of 28 truckloads or about 336 tons of garbage, mainly plastic food wrappers, during last year’s procession of the Black Nazarene. “The awe-inspiring expression of religious fervor in honor of the Black Nazarene is tarnished year after year by the brazen disrespect for the environment as demonstrated by the unchecked disposal of trash on the streets, especially in the environs of Quiapo,” commented by one official. She also noted how this adage ties in with the advocacy of Pope Francis for the protection of the environment. The pontiff had urged the faithful to “be protectors of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment” during his inaugural Mass at St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City in March 2013.

“One of the gravest errors of our time” according to *Gaudium et Spes*, “is the dichotomy between the faith that many professes and the practice of their daily lives” [G.S. 43] In proposing a response to Pope’s appeal in *Laudato Si*, especially in the aspect of his concept on integral ecology, the proponent would like to propose an inquiry, using a descriptive study, on **how the celebration of the Eucharist direct Filipino Catholics as stewards of the Environment.**

Keywords: Integral Ecology, Symbols, Stewards, Feast of Nazareno, Environmental Awareness

Introduction

“What is happening to our common home?” Our common home says Pope Francis now looks like an “immense pile of filth” [Laudato Si:21] and much of this pollution is a consequence of our “throwaway culture.” A great visibility of pollution in the atmosphere, soil, and water which if not given attention to would undermine the health of millions of people. The “lungs of our planet” [LS:90] due to massive emission of carbon dioxide, diminishes its capacity to absorb carbon dioxide. Continuous growing of industrial and agricultural expansion have encroached on forests and wood-lands, bringing loss of species diversification.

“What do the great biblical narratives say about the relationship of human beings with the world?” [LS:65]. Have humans literally interpret the biblical account in Gen. 1:28 to take “dominion,” an “unbridled exploitation of nature?” [LS:67]. Why does humans seem to “behave with absolute dominion,” [LS:117] setting up upon himself/herself up as God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature? [LS:117]. The Philippines is not spared with such condition of exploitation. Our environment suffered from massive environmental degradation which causes tremendous disasters and loss of lives in our country. It is said that the Philippines ranks number two in the world for being a country most at risk to climate-related disasters (World Risk Index 2014).

Pope Francis introduces what appears to be a new concept: that of “integral ecology” [LS:137]. It begins with the usual definition of “ecology:” a scientific study of the relations of organisms to one another and to their surroundings [LS:138]. But because “everything is interconnected,” this scientific study “necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of [human] society” [LS 138]. It is a short step from this view to the bold assertion, quoted from Caritas in Veritate (Benedict XVI 2009:51), that “every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment” [CV:116]. The term integral ecology is never defined, though a certain length in an article written by Ryszard F. Sadowski about this concept present some essential elements and various versions of ideas, which has direct and indirect influence to the thought of Pope Francis.

One which has ‘indirect impact’ to the thought of Pope Francis is Jacques Maritain, a French philosopher. It is said by many scholars that his thought about the integral character of the christian mission in the world had been developed and confirmed by the council. This ‘integral character’ speaks primarily on the inseparability of the spiritual and material spheres of human life. [2016:23] Another idea which did not provide a direct inspiration to Pope Francis is the renowned Ken Wilber. Based on his AQAL (all

quadrant, all level) model which is transferred in the explicitly ecological grounding in a very theoretical nature by two scholars, Sean Esbjorn-Hargens and Michael Zimmerman. Pope Francis teaching however, is practical and aimed at stirring the public opinion in the world in order to stimulate responsible concern for all creation. [2016: 25]

On the other hand, an author with possible influence to the thought of Pope Francis is Leonardo Boff. Although Pope Francis did not refer directly to Boff's work there are some congruities between their ideas. A trace of Boff's thoughts can be found in the text of the encyclical where in paragraph 49 the Pope uses an expression 'cry of the earth and cry of the poor' which is the characteristic element of the title of several publication by Boff. [2016:26]

There are various concepts used by previous Popes that are a basis of 'Integral Ecology' of Pope Francis, one of which is Pope John Paul II's 'human ecology' which referred 37 times in Pope Francis encyclical. According to Michał Wyrostkiewicz the concept on human ecology indicates from "anthropology, and is based on the assumptions of natural science, philosophy and theology. It emphasizes that man must be viewed in personalistic terms and in relationship with nature." [2016:29] Pope Benedict XI however uses the term 'ecology of man' which is referred 31 times in Pope Francis teaching. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict emphasizes a close relationship between the development of civilization as human responsibility towards nature. [2016:32]

For Pope Francis, the concept 'integral ecology' is clarified by Cardinal Turkson in his lecture entitled –Integral Ecology and the Horizon of Hope: Concern for the Poor and for Creation in the Ministry of Pope Francis. The Pope's idea of integral ecology is the "key to the proper presentation of such issues as human ecology, development, and natural environment," the Cardinal says. He sums up the message of integral ecology in the statement that "all people are called to care for nature and for man, since those two concerns cannot be separated if we want to achieve authentic and sustainable human development." [Turkson:2015]

Analyzing the common ideas of many authors as to what 'integral ecology' really meant, though the term is still referred to as an "open concept," I think the Eucharist can play a major role in making it "integral." Integral is a concept that envision a "connection," a connection that the faith that we all profess will not detached from daily practice. This is the task that I would like to explore specifically in the use of powerful symbols and prayer which will bring toward this goal.

Integral Ecology is integral to Jesus and the humanity

Fr. Anscar Chupungco narrated a very interesting experience during his first visit to the Holy Land [2004]. As his plane circled around Tel Aviv, he got a panoramic view of the city and its environs. The thought that sprang in his mind was, “He had been here.” During the first day, he visited the holy sepulcher and had the rare privilege to kneel by the tomb. He repeated the same words, “He had been here.” Upon his visit to the sea of Tiberias and walked by the lake while reading the gospels, it seemed to him that their stories began to jump out of the pages! All along in his thought was: “He preached here; He took the boat here, He walked on the water here, He calmed the storm here.” Once more, in his mind he told himself, “He had been here.” But then, he woke up to reality, when a Palestinian woman approached him and asked for one of the cigars he was smoking [Manabat:171].

Christians always used space as our meeting place with God [Manabat:172]. The space that we used is in itself ‘sacred.’ In Quiapo during the Feast of Nazareno, it was an overwhelming sight to see people cramping in space (di mahulugang karayum) in order to touch the Holy Nazarene, or just to get hold of the long rope used to pull the Nazareno. Holding the rope at many instances is good enough for some devotees considering the great struggle one has to face in order to touch or throw a handkerchief to wipe the Poon. That sacred space is a place where we meet and experience God and brings into our consciousness that “Jesus is there.” Christ dwells in that sacred space because people goes there to worship and experience God. By being conscious of God’s presence in a sacred space is always helpful to ‘remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’ [Exodus 3:5, NAB]. Christians at most instances pay such great respect upon knowing that the place is sacred. In approaching a sanctuary and an altar for example, we move silently and in a very respectful manner, we genuflect to show our respect and keep our silence as much as possible. We make it clean because we know that Jesus dwells there!

The primal task of the Eucharist through liturgical symbols will help us to bring that consciousness and awareness. Liturgical symbols in many respects aids us to be conscious of showing respect in every sacred space. Sacred space is where God dwells and it is not confined to just a particular place. Every sacred space is a living space and they are found in our surroundings too: houses, streets, hilltops, field, desert places, lakesides, etc. Christ dwells there too! Jesus is indeed present in the people who go there to worship, but our Jesus is also in a sacred space of the school gymnasium, an open park, a space in a shopping mall, in an airport, in our rivers, trees, etc.

Integral Eucharist?

Pope Francis devotes the whole paragraph 236 in *Laudato Si* to the topic of Eucharist in which he says that “it is in the Eucharist that all has been created finds its greatest exaltation” and that “the Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation.” It is in the same paragraph that Pope Francis mentions that the “Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.” How can the Eucharist, through the use of liturgical symbols, can help direct the humanity to be stewards of all creation?

In the opening chapter of Pope Francis in Chapter four, the Pope highlights “the call for vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis.” [LS:137] The Pope suggests that people “consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions. [LS:137] In order to bring out the role of Eucharist in the service of environmental consciousness, this portion will delve into the primary role of symbol(s) as with regards to the Pope vision of integral ecology. One basic symbol is the importance played by the liturgical colors, specifically on how colors could help to convey in affecting the consciousness of people in caring the environment.

First of all, it is a common knowledge among people how green color has ought to symbolize. According to one definition in the encyclopedia, Green color “symbolizes the renewal of vegetation and generally of living things and the promise of new life.” [Colors, 2017] Particularly, in liturgy, it is used for the Season of Epiphany between Transfiguration Sunday and the beginning of Lent, and for Ordinary Time between Trinity Sunday (first Sunday after Pentecost and the beginning of Advent.)

It is not just in liturgy that color can be used as a symbol, but in some research studies published in the *New York Times*, colors is said to “have a powerful effect on behavior” and could “cure sicknesses” based on what is called “color therapy.” [Gruson, 1982] Though there are a number of skepticism on this kind of claim, there are some scientists who says that colors even has a “significant impact on how appealing or unappealing a food” to a person; that just “seeing food cause all sorts of reactions” in a body [Hartel, 2017]. No wonder, why some famous foodchains employ shades of color in their establishments to boost their customer’s appetites and to “build customer loyalty and retentions” [The Chef, 2017]. As a researcher, I wonder how the dominant color of maroon or white embroidered in gold in which the

devotees of the Black Nazarene usually wear, could have an effect on some people's behavior? It is noted that colors in various combinations can produce "sensations" depending on the "different wavelengths of light added together." [Colors, 2017] If colors can make a difference to people's consciousness, why not make it as a tool to create consciousness to people as well?

Integral Use of Symbols: God is Green?

Color has long been used to represent affiliations and loyalties (e.g., school or regimental colors) and as a symbol of various moods (e.g., red with rage) and qualities (e.g., worthy of a blue ribbon). A well-known use of the symbolism of color is in the liturgical colors of the Western Church, according to which the color of the vestments varies through the ecclesiastical calendar; e.g., purple (i.e., violet) is the color of Advent and Lent; white, of Easter; and red, of the feasts of the martyrs.

In the book "God is Green" [Shore-Goss, 2016] tries to expand the idea of color making it the color of God. Though I consider this statement a very radical claim, but I think it has to be understood based on seeing the interconnectedness of God and the world. According to the its authors: "There is no such thing as 'human community' without the earth and the soil and the air and the water and all the living forms. Without these, humans do not exist. In my view, the human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single sacred community as we will both perish in the desert..." [2016:8] This statement coincides with what Hildegard Craine who says that, "to be green was to be more receptive to the Divine Presence in humanity and in creation."

Green is a powerful symbol in order to bring consciousness to people of the task to take care of God's creations. Green represents human's interrelatedness with God's creation and our worship does not veer us away from it, but rather help us to find connection with the 'green web of life.' Shore-Goss explains further, "the greening power of God interrelates with our lives and all fleshly life, and we become connected to the green web of life. It reveals something of the mothering nature of God. In whose image we are made green. It taps the reservoir of greening power within ourselves, for when we engage it, we are, in turn, changed and find ourselves in love with God and all life. There is a birthing of this greening life and fecundity within the "wombs" of our lives. And it spills out into awareness and interrelatedness. (2016:8)

Green in many respects also applies to the color of the grace of God.

God's grace is green for it gives off "healing that comes to us when we enjoy rich bonds with other people, plants and animals, and the Earth. It is a kind of grace celebrated by ecofeminists, native peoples, deep ecologists, and sacramentalists. It is green because as the green color suggests, it engenders within us healing and wholeness, a freshness and renewal that lead us into the very fullness of life...in a world torn asunder by violence, forgiveness is a most precious form of green grace." [2016:8]

How about the color of the cross? "The cross is green. It is green because Jesus' witness on the cross is to a planet where all of God's children are bearers of life-giving Spirit. It is green because the goodness of creation is God's here-and-now dwelling place where everyday life is charged with sacred presence and power. [2016:9] Though it is true that Black Nazarene's cross is black, in many respects, we can use the green color in varied ways of the liturgy: starting from decorating the altars with green color, the carriage of the Nazareno embroidered with green, some posts tied with green ribbons, etc.

Liturgy has a beautiful role to play especially in the aspect of the popular piety of people. Sacrosactum Concilium clearly emphasizes the relationship between the Liturgy and popular piety seeking a harmonious relationship between both of these expressions of piety, in which popular piety is objectively subordinated to, and directed towards, the Liturgy (S.C.:42). Liturgy therefore, played a great role in order to bring out such relationship. In many respects, creative symbols in liturgy are very useful to aid in bringing consciousness to people especially in the aspect of environmental consciousness.

Application for integral popular devotion: Green Lectio Divina for the Black Nazarene

Lectio Divina is powerful prayer that would convey a meditative use of Scriptural passages, which would tackle a dominant theme on the environment and combined with meditative music and songs. Shore-Goss defines it as "a contemplative tradition to engage scripture, is equally applicable to listening and learning from nature. Listening to nature is a sacred and different experience from ordinary listening and engaging nature, for it is unlike listening to human speech. It is a silent, untranslatable language of encounter and appreciative attentiveness to surrounding life and noises. The language of nature is entered into with silence, to experience the plants and the beauty of a nature and the community of life, and experience the network of interconnected life. [2016:11]

There is a wide tradition among millions of participants, most of them are young people who would gather in Rizal Park for a vigil in anticipation for the procession. The vigil usually happens on January 8. Many devotees would line up at the grandstand for a 'pahalik' or 'kiss.' Devotees take this opportunity to wipe the cross with cloth which they will keep and rub on themselves as well. The touch of the cloth is said to bring physical healing. During the vigil, devotees would preoccupy themselves with singing, dancing and stage plays. During this time, some members of the clergy and bishops give inspirational talks encouraging people to turn away from their bad habits and vices such as smoking, drugs, drinking, premarital sex and instead become ardent followers of Christ. In addition, most young people are urged to join in any apostolic-religious work like studying, preaching, feeding street people, and teaching the gospel. Participants in these activities sing religious and inspirational songs, dance all night long, perform and watch stage plays until the wee hours of the morning. [Fortunato:2016]

The prayer activity that I would like to propose can actually be incorporated as one of the present activities during the vigil night. Other than incorporating the theme about 'integral ecology,' an integral prayer activity such as *Lectio Divina* can also be used during the vigil night. Members of this prayer activity are in designated small group units, composed of not less than fifteen members. Prayer leader will identify seven designated places for the *Lectio*. The identified areas are places that may need to be given attention to, most likely places that are being neglected. The designated leader will be the assigned person to give a reflection from a passage or a phrase being chosen to be read during a particular day. It is also important that first of all, the members will be wearing green shirts with printing of the Poon in the front, and at the back could be a particular passage of the Scripture like for example: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." [1 Corinthians 10:26]

Michel de Verteuil suggests a flow of the *Lectio* which can be adapted in this activity. First of all, *Lectio Divina* according to him is a Latin expression which means sacred reading. It is advised to be done in three stages: Reading, Meditation and Prayer. In Reading, a passage is read slowly and reverentially, allowing the words to sink in the consciousness. During the Meditation part, the passage is allowed to stir up memories within, so that the participants will recognize their experience. For the last part, the meditation leads the members to prayer-thanksgiving, humility and petition. [2004:7]

The suggested Scriptural passage mainly comes from Genesis. Based on this scriptural text, a reflection will be made by the assigned leader.

Before reading it, it is advised that a song will be sung. It is advised to sing liturgical songs that has a theme on the care of the environment. The following are the lists of Scriptural passages are to be read and meditated upon:

Day 1. Genesis 1:1-5: 'God's gift of the light' In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came, and morning followed - the first day. Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other." In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2The earth was Or a waste and emptinessformless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was Or hoveringmoving over the surface of the waters. 3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

Day 2. Genesis 1:6-8: 'The Gift of Water' 6Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7God made the Or firmament expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 8God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Day 3. Genesis 1:9-13: 'God's gift of plants and fruit trees' 9Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. 11Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. 12The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. 13There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Day 4. Genesis 1:14-19: 'God's gift of night and day' 14Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days

and years; 15and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. 16God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. 17God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. 19There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

Day 5. Genesis 1:20-23: 'God's gift of seas' 20Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." 21God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. 22God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

Day 6. Genesis 1:19-25: 'God's gift of living creatures' 24Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. 25God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Day 7. Genesis 1:26-31: 'God's gift of humanity' 26Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food"; and it was so. 31God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

CONCLUSION

Liturgy is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 11; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324). Daily human activities, i.e. care for the environment is never detached from the role of liturgy. Liturgical celebration is synonymous with the liturgy of life, and it is imperative to make that healthy interaction. Worship service presupposes a healthy interaction with the world. The Eucharist ought to consider the environment in which partakers are living, and in that sense, an ecological consciousness may enhance worship. Integral Eucharist addresses this important task, a fundamental support to fill the gap raised by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*.

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