

PHILIPPINE THEOLOGY—SELECTED SESSION

- Topic: Philippine Voices on Identity and Difference:
Conversations with Other Theologies
- Convener: Patricia Panganiban-Lambino, Ateneo de Manila University
- Moderator: Christina A. Astorga, University of Portland
- Presenters: Patricia Panganiban-Lambino, Ateneo de Manila University
Karen B. Enriquez, Xavier University, Ohio
Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, Seattle University

This session explored Philippine and Philippine-American theologies as located at the intersections of Asian and Latin@ theologies, focused on the issues of daily life and popular practices, and concerned with relationships among cultures and the place of the institutional Church in theologizing. The three presentations analyzed various aspects of these intersections and offered constructive retrievals of Christianity emerging from the dialogue between faith-as-practiced and Philippine religious and cultural categories.

Patricia Panganiban-Lambino, in “The Devotion to the Black Nazarene of Quiapo as an Epistemology of Suffering,” offered an interpretation of devotees’ faith as “pledge and vow” (*panata*), an act of entrusting that is the devotees’ means to deal with and struggle against suffering. This vow is a response of gratitude (*utang na loob*) to the God who alone has proven faithful and trustworthy. Contrary to the view that devotees are passive objects, even victims, followers of the Nazarene are portrayed as active subjects, whose existential question is not primarily, “What does life mean?” but “Who can we trust?” The presenter concluded by identifying pastoral challenges, primary of which is how to extend the scope of the vow to accommodate more horizontal groupings of “community, nation, humanity, and non-human life on the planet” as a response to the “idolatry” of the small-group and the family.

Karen B. Enriquez, in “Re-Thinking the *Bayani* (Hero): From ‘Hero-Martyr’ to the Community of ‘Hero-Saints’ Working toward *Ginhawa* for All,” began her reflection with her participation in the reconstruction efforts after Typhoon Haiyan, an experience which brought to light the inadequacy of the Filipino notion of “hero” (*bayani*), as a lone hero-martyr who suffers for one’s country. Such a view is supported by and mirrored in christologies that overemphasize Jesus’ martyrdom/suffering. As a response, she proposed to rethink the “hero-martyr” (*bayani*) as applying to the whole “town/nation” (*bayan*), and of *bayanihan* as the creation of the *bayan* as a community of hero-saints. A more communal notion of discipleship is thus highlighted, as is an understanding of Jesus’ *suffering for* the wellbeing (*ginhawa*) of others.

Catherine Punsalan-Manlimos, in “Participating in God’s *Bahala Na* and *Malasakit*: Rendering Visible the Invisible Fil-Am Lay Ministers,” identified the problems of clericalism and colonial mentality as possible explanations for the self-reported undervaluing of Filipin@ lay people’s contributions within the parish of Renton, WA, in the Archdiocese of Seattle. The presenter argued for a more positive view of Fil-Am lay ministers’ participation in parish life as rooted in the following Philippine cultural notions: first, that of *bahala na* (literally, “Let come what may!” or “What the hell!”) as expressive of participation in God’s “calculated risk-taking”

Selected Session: Philippine Theology

and hopefulness; and second, that of *malasakit* (literally, “concern that exerts painful efforts to achieve its purpose”) as indicative of Filipinos’ love for the people of God also flowing from God’s *malasakit*. These cultural categories, seen in a theological light, are gifts and tasks that challenge the Fil-Am community to a greater and more positive awareness of their own identities.

The discussion that ensued centered on naming Filipin@ and Filipin@-American theology’s contribution to the larger context of global Christianity. Among these contributions are a more communal view of the person, and the persistence of faith especially evident among communities of Filipino migrants all over the world. Other issues raised were defining the standpoints from which these theologies are done, and the publics to whom they are addressed.

PATRICIA PANGANIBAN-LAMBINO
Ateneo de Manila University
Philippines