# *Sambahayan ng Diyos* and the Four Creedal Attributes

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**Abstract:** The local concept of *sambahayan* will be examined and developed for its "appropriateness" to convey the Christian ecclesia as *sambahayan ng Diyos* (family household of God). This locally-generated understanding will also serve as a model for explaining the nature of the Christian ecclesia itself. Thus, this adoption of the local category of *sambahayan* serves to encapsulate and contextualize the Catholic Church's four creedal attributes of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. Without this move of contextualization-appropriation, the creedal attributes lack moorings and relevance in Filipino culture and society.

**Keywords**: *Sambahayan ng Diyos* • Household of God • Creedal Attributes • Unity • Holiness • Catholicity • Apostolicity

## Introduction

An ecclesiological model that resonates with the family-oriented Filipino culture-bearers is the Church as the Family of God.[1] The model is biblically grounded, affirmed by Vatican II, and endorsed by post-Vatican II

[1] The Philippine social organization is essentially familial (F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization: Traditional Kinship and Family Organization*. Anthropology of the Filipino People III (Metro Manila: PUNLAD Research House, 1998), 62; Francis Gustilo, "Towards the Inculturation of the Salesian Family Spirit in the Filipino Context" (Ph.D. diss., Rome 1989), 65. A local sociologist identifies the Filipino family with "familism." He defines the term as "a sociological phenomenon in which the extended family is the most central and dominant institution in the life of all individuals" (Luis Q. Lacar, "Familism Among Muslims and Christians in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 43 (1995): 42, 43).

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documents.[2] It cuts across Catholic cultural settings as it is "understandable to laity…has a lay dynamic in it…calls for spirituality relevant to lay life…portrays sufficiently the life and mission of laity…(and) integrates the role of laity into the whole life of the Church."[3] In the survey of biblical images that Vatican II presented in *Lumen gentium*, Aloys Grillmeier considers the image 'family of God'…as "the most expressive" as it derives "from the highest forms of human fellowship and society."[4] The familial model has a symbolic character potent enough to evoke attitudes and courses of action while possessing clarity toward a deeper reflective understanding of the Church. It is something that is "not

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[2] See Herman Hendrickx, *The Household of God* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology/Claretian Publications, 1992); *Lumen gentium* 11. Notable is the formal adoption of the *Church as Family of God* model by the African bishops for the African Church in 1994 (see Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Leadership and Ministry in the Church-as-Family," https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1541&context=theo_fac, [accessed December 18, 2023]). Of more recent memory is the Eighth Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC VIII) held on August 17-23, 2004 at the Daejeon Catholic University & St. J. Hasang Education Center, Daejeon, Korea. The assembly produced a document entitled *The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*. See also John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* (1981); *Acts of the International Theological-Pastoral Congress, The Christian Family: Good News for the Third Millennium* (Fourth World Meeting of Families, Manila, January 22-24, 2003).

[3] Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church: Theology & Spirituality* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Winston Press, 1984), 64.

[4] Aloys Grillmeier, "The Mystery of the Church," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. Vol. I, gen. ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 143.

abstract…but rather challenges all laity to appreciate that their everyday experience, knowledge, and skills qualify them to be the family of the Church."[5] Also, the model finds support in official Catholic Church documents in the country. They describe the Christian family as "the basic unit of Christian life," "subject and object of evangelization," "the primary community of Christ's disciples," "the church of the home," or "the church in the home," and "agent of renewal."[6]

The term 'family' is usually translated both in written and oral communications into "pamilya" which is a transliteration of the Spanish *familia.* A vernacular rendition is *sambahayan*, a concept that is neither discrete nor separable from the family. Local dictionaries not only render it in English as "household" but also as "whole family."[7] The root word of *sambahayan* is *bahay* (house; home). When the root word *bahay* is modified by the affixes *sam-* and *–an,* the resulting composite term *sambahayan* refers now to *isang buong kabahayan* (one entire household to include all the members of the family living under one roof). The prefix *sam-* is a shortened form of *isa* (one). A synonymous word is

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[5] Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church,* xii.

[6] See Arturo M. Bastes, "Focus is on the Family for National Bible Week Celebration," in *The CBCP Monitor* VI, no. 1 (January 13, 2002): 6; *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1992) #48; Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Save the Family and Live*, in *Pastoral Letters 1945-1995,* comp. and ed. Pedro C. Quitorio III (Manila: CBCP; printed by Peimon Press, Metro Manila, 1996), 801. See also Chapter Three (on the ecclesia as God's household) of Wes Howard-Brook, *The Church Before Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

[7] See Leo James English, *Tagalog-English Dictionary,* s.v. "sambahayan."

*magkakasambahay* whose rootword is likewise *bahay*.[8] The prefix *magkakasam-* is a compound of *magkaka-* which denotes relationships and *sam-* (again referring to "one"). *Magkakasambahay,* thus, literally means "fellows living together in the same house," which is what *sambahayan* means as well. Persons belonging to the same household, particularly the non-kin, are simply called *kasambahay*. The word is a combination of *kasama* (companion) shortened and *bahay* (house). In rural communities a non-kin farmhand or house-help living with a family until old age is virtually treated as a "real" member of the unit.[9] In the country, *kasambahay* has assumed a technical usage that refers to a house-help or domestic helper.

In this paper, I will use the word *sambahayan* as it embraces everyone in the household: parents/guardians, children, and *mga kasambahay***.** Beyond the household is the extended orientation of the traditional Filipino family.

This adoption of the local category of *sambahayan* will serve to encapsulate and contextualize the Catholic Church's four creedal attributes of unity, holiness,

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[8] F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization: Traditional Kinship and Family Organization* (Anthropology of the Filipino People III. Metro Manila: PUNLAD Research House, 1998), 61.

[9] Paz Mendez and F. Landa Jocano, *The Filipino Family in its Rural and Urban Orientation: Two Case Studies* (Manila: Research and Development Center, Centro Escolar University, 1974),43; Jocano, *Filipino Social Organization,* 72. A locally-based non-governmental organization in partnership with the International Labor Organization campaigned for the use of the term *kasambahay* to refer to house helpers instead of the pejorative-sounding *katulong* or *alalay* that casts them as of lower status. See Susan V. Ople, "Kasambahay," *Philippine Panorama Sunday* (October 16, 2005): 20.

catholicity, and apostolicity. Without this move of contextualization-appropriation, the creedal attributes lack moorings and relevance in Filipino culture and society.

## Creedal Attributes

The *sambahayan ng Diyos* (family household of God) as an ecclesiological model appropriated in the Filipino cultural context puts the family, in line with the thinking of the Asian bishops, as the most basic expression of ecclesial reality.[10] As such the church in/of the home is validated by its ecclesial elements that constitute its church-ness. The set of creedal attributes, a veritable heritage of the Church's venerable 2,000-year ecclesial history, can be considered as authentication of the domestic church's fidelity to the spirit of the Gospel message. These attributes are assumed to have arisen out of the data of New Testament revelation and have become consistent themes in the ecclesiological discourse and reflections in and about the Church.[11]

The creedal attributes called unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Catholic Church

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[10] "The family is the . . . fundamental ecclesial community, the Church that is the home" (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Eighth Assembly, *The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life* (Daejeon, Korea, 2004), n. 15). Centuries earlier, the Protestant reformer Luther considered the house as "actually a school and a church, and the head of the household is a bishop and priest in his house" (quoted in Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, In History, and In your Home* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 30).

[11] See for example Lode Wostyn, *Doing Ecclesiology* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990) where the author illustrates different ways of interpreting the creedal attributes according to how one views the Church.

occupy a prominent and permanent place in ecclesiological tradition. They originally belonged to the corpus of theological tradition which Lode Wostyn prefers to call "truth of Christianity."[12] These attributes are referred to officially as 'creedal' because they form part of the Apostles' Creed formulated in the Council of Nicaea-Constantinople and reaffirmed at Ephesus and Chalcedon: "We believe . . . (in) the *one*, *holy*, *catholic,* and *apostolic* Church [εἰς μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν]."[13] They were again taken up in Vatican II which asserts that in particular churches "Christ is present, by whose power the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is gathered together."[14]

Hans Küng, preferring to use the more theologically oriented "dimensions"[15] to refer to them affirms the importance of the signs but not in terms of their formal presence. The essential thing is their "living realization in the life of the Church" that is rooted in their fidelity to the New Testament message.[16] The Church can proclaim itself one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in a meaningful and convincing fashion when the proclamation is done in the spirit of the Gospel. Moreover, they are not simply possessions of the Church but are divinely granted gifts. The signs or dimensions are "characteristics which the Church receives from the activity of Christ in the Spirit

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[12] Ibid.,

[13] Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 263.

[14] *Lumen gentium* 26.

[15] He argues in favor of his preference that theologically the creedal attributes do not originate from and are not owned by the Church. They are dimensions precisely because they come from "the activity of Christ in the Spirit and as such they become signs of the true Church through faith, hope, and action" (Wostyn, *Doing Ecclesiology*, 80-81).

[16] Küng, *The Church*, 268.

and as such they become signs of the true Church through faith, hope, and action."[17]

Apropos the question of the ecclesial signs is the Gospel saying of Jesus "By their fruits you shall know them" (Mt. 7:16). In a manner of speaking, the fruits are authentications of the real nature and the true state of health of the true Church. The 'truth' I have in mind is not 'truth' that is circumscribed by fixed formulae, which can be enslaving, burdensome, or stifling. Truth, in the historical and implicitly practical/intuitive sense of the word, is more congenial to orthopraxis, to relationships operating at different levels founded on the Trinitarian love (1 John 3:18). With nothing against which to validate the theological truthfulness of the Church, the Church is simply reduced to an abstract mystical or transcendent reality that is away or separate from immanent expressions that constitute the ecclesial realities. These expressions by their very nature can make sense when verified in particular realities where the Church exists.

## The Creedal Attributes Appropriated in the Domestic Church

If one employs a model to explain or understand the nature/meaning of the church, the model's features will also have its way of explaining or "hanging together" the creedal attributes or truths about Christianity. If one privileges the Institutional model, or the Dynamic-Historical model, or the Church of the Poor model, there will be corresponding nuances, even substantive differences, in the appropriation or contextualization of the creedal attributes.

The following is an illustration of how the truth of Christianity can be understood and articulated according

[17] Wostyn, *Doing Ecclesiology*, 81.

to a particular ecclesiological model.[18] This is not an exhaustive presentation but may give a fair idea about how different models may pull down toward their specificities which are otherwise generalized and abstract concepts.

| Church models | One | Holy | Catholic | Apostolic |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Church as Institution Model** | United in doctrine, in worship, and in government (under the papal authority) | Attainable through the seven sacraments, religious vows, and priestly celibacy, under the moral guidance of the infallible church magisterium | Spatial, statistical, and geographical with the same creed, the same worship, the same canon law | Linear 'apostolic succession': direct and uninterrupted transmission of the apostolic office from Peter to his subsequent successors represented by the bishops and priests with the Pope as the supreme visible head |

[18] For the elaboration on the Church as Institution Model, see Louis Laravoire Morrow, *Our Catholic Faith: A Manual of Religion* (Manila: Catholic Trade, 1977); on the Historical Model, see Lode Wostyn, *Doing Ecclesiology: Church and Mission Today* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990); and on the Church from the Poor, see Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1985); on the Church *of* the Poor idea, see Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "From Vatican II to PCP II to BEC Too: Progressive Localization of a New State of Mind to a New State of Affairs," in Shaji George Kochuthara, ed, *Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal*, Vol. II, 308-326 (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2015); reprinted in *MST Review* 18, no. 2 (2016): 33-62.

| Church models | One | Holy | Catholic | Apostolic |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dynamic-Historical** | Unity of the local church and the universal church ultimately founded on the unity of the Triune God | Linked to the community of sinners sanctified by God and set apart for His service; responding and being faithful to God's initiative and election by being committed to peace and justice in solidarity with the poor | Catholicity is a gift in and through Christ; bring the good news to all strata of humanity and transforming it from within and making it new; spreading God's inclusive love | Apostolic witnessing and ministry entrusted to the entire Church |
| **Church of the Poor** | Fellowship with a liberating God who expects people to work together in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized and who are at the same time recognized as agents of their own destiny | Being set apart by the empowering grace of the Spirit of Jesus not for personal sanctification but for a mission: acting on behalf of justice and participating in the transformation of the world | Church is directed toward all, but begins from and for the interest of the poor, from their basic needs and desires, and struggles toward liberation. | Presupposes People of God and church-communion; shared *potestas sacra* within the Church; evangelical witnessing in terms of witnessing to the values of compassion, justice, and human rights – values that also represent Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God. |

What follows is an attempt to reflect on the creedal attributes or truth of Christianity through the perspective of the model *Sambahayan ng Diyos*. I assume that the ecclesial character of the Christian family household

in the context of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity is a lifetime task and challenge for the family Church. To be sure this article focuses on the *Filipino sambahayan* model as suggested earlier.[19] It should be noted that this model neither rejects nor invalidates the other models previously mentioned. It should instead be understood as fundamental and complementing the other models.

## ***Sambahayan Ng Diyos* as One**

"At the heart of the Church is the person of Jesus Christ."[20] His life and self-sacrificial love paved the way for the emergence of "a new community, a family of faith born in the Spirit" – the same Spirit whom Jesus 'hands on' to the Church, thus "a new creation, God's 'household'."[21] When one talks about the unity of the Church it neither rests chiefly on the unity of the members among themselves nor on the Church itself "but on the unity of God, which is efficacious through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit."[22] This basic foundation manifested itself in the corporate experience of the early

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[19] In the Philippines, there has been a dearth of journal-published articles dealing directly with the theme of domestic church up until the post-Vatican II times.

[20] Joseph C. Atkinson, "Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory, Legitimacy, and Problems of Appropriation," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 3 (2005): 603.

[21] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences VIII, *The Asian Family toward a Culture of Integral Life*, in *FABC Papers* no. 111 (n.d), n. 60. For a comprehensive treatment of home and family as one of the most authentic and important locations of the faith-community, I highly recommend Florence Caffrey Bourg, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

[22] Küng, *The Church*, 273.

Christian communities of the New Testament. Those who believed had themselves baptized were infused with the Spirit and became part of one Church sharing the same faith. They had one Lord, one Spirit, and one baptism.[23] Concretely they constituted themselves as church when two or three of them gathered in his name for there he was in their midst (Mt. 18:20). As the New Testament data abundantly shows the gatherings normally occurred in the homes.[24]

*Sambahayan ng Diyos* can be religiously described in most fundamental terms as a community of *baptized* and *believing* Christians who are enlivened and bonded by the Spirit to profess one faith and worship one Lord as a new family of believers. The Christian family anchors the ultimate *pagkakakaisa* (unity) of the members not on ethnic, social, or kinship identity but on being *mga anak*

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[23] Küng gives a list of what he considers as well-known classic New Testament texts on the unity of the Church: "1 Cor. 1:10-30 [a warning against divisions and an admonition to be united in Christ, the only foundation]; 1 Cor. 12 [the unity of the spirit in a multiplicity of gifts, one body with many members]; Gal. 3:27f [all are one in Christ]; Acts 2:42 [perseverance in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in prayer]; Acts 4:32 [the company of the believers are of one heart and soul]; Jn. 10:16 [one shepherd and one flock]; Jn 17:20-26 [all are one like the father and the Son] (Küng, *The Church*, 272-273). One can add Eph. 4:1-6 which Küng regards as the "most pertinent summary of what the unity of the Church is according to the New Testament" (Ibid., 273).

[24] This does not necessarily idealize the home—but shows the early communities' lack of public places of worship. In fact, during the first 3 centuries, this was usual except in times of persecution when Christians would worship in secret in catacombs and other hidden places. Cf. house churches because of persecution, like in China or some Islamic countries; also, "born-again" setups.

(children) under the one parenthood *ng Diyos* (of God). The authority-based character of the Filipino family may not totally disappear but relationships between parents/ elders and children/grandchildren are to be purified in the light of Jesus' discipleship of equals. The parents/ elders remain to be respected (*ginagalang*) as they regard the dignity of their children with respect making sure that the latter are guided with patience to become who they can in the spirit of the gospel of love, peace, compassion, and righteousness. *Pagkakaisa* also challenges the hierarchically or patriarchally shaped or conditioned family to progressively move into "a sphere of relative gender equality."[25]

No member exists apart from the rest and what happens to one affects the entire family household. There must be a mutual appreciation of the loving interdependence (*pagkakaisa* as a noble expression of *pakiki-pagkapwa*) that exists among the members. Here the family gives preferential attention and concern to the weak and vulnerable members, be they parents/ guardians or children since *kung ano ang sakit ng kalingkingan ay siya ring sakit ng buong katawan* (what ails the little finger also ails the whole body).

The spirit of unity in the church of the home is experienced by the members where *utang na loob* as a cultural value is elevated into filial gratitude to God the Creator and ultimate Source of all that is good for the gift of life and of presence. Following de Mesa's cultural exegesis of *utang na loob*, which he sees as a "debt of human solidarity," both the parents and the children have *utang na loob* to each other.[26] Shared meals in the

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[25] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 85.

[26] José M. de Mesa, *In Solidarity with the Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting*, Maryhill Studies 4 (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1991), 37-38.

household offer a regular opportunity for the members to partake of the food and drinks, and to commune with one another in the spirit of the Eucharistic unity. The celebration of the Lord's Supper in early Christianity is a meal of unity (1 Cor. 11:18-27). Within the family household meals shared is a most visible expression of family unity. If there is truth to the maxim "the family that prays together stays together", there is likewise truth to the saying "the family that eats together, stays together." The Eucharist in the words of a Filipino lay theologian spells "*bagong ugnayan*"[27] (new relationships).

This brings us to the critical function of the concept of *utang na loob*–solidarity for social or prophetic responsibility. The household-based *pagkakaisa* experiences of the family members deeply rooted in God and celebrated in the spirit of the Eucharist cannot but create a deep sense of connection with neighbors (especially those who have no food), the community, the society, and the entire cosmos. Pope Francis' vision articulated in *Fratelli tutti* covers the Filipino family household and its members: "Each particular group becomes part of the fabric of universal communion and there discovers its own beauty. All individuals, whatever their origin, know that they are part of the greater human family, without which they will not be able to understand themselves fully" (149).

The unity *ad intra* must open up toward unity *ad extra*.

### ***Sambahayan Ng Diyos*** **as Holy**

The word 'holy' is a modern English rendition of the Hebrew bible word *kadash* which denotes the idea of

[27] Ibid., 210-223.

separation or being set apart or cut off.[28] The notion refers "to an election for the service of the holy God."[29] What matters, however, in the biblical concept is not human activity itself but the sanctifying will and word of God. The holiness of God manifests itself in varied ways:[30] the coming of God's kingdom to people through God even as God's name is hallowed in people;[31] God as the logical subject of sanctification;[32] and justification and sanctification of people as God's work[33] realized in Christ.[34] In Pauline writings, the concept of sanctification is usually couched in passive terms. The "saints" are believers who are "sanctified."[35] This is a corrective of the Filipino *magpapakabanal* (to work to become holy) which tends to gloss over the divine initiative and action (despite Corinthians 13, James 2:14-26, and Galatians 5:6).

Hans Küng has observed that in the New Testament account, in contrast to the Old Testament, there is no reference to holy places or objects, even celebrations like the Eucharist and baptism, set apart for God's purpose. This means that material elements or human actions "do not of themselves create holiness in a magic or automatic way, but are dependent on a holy God on the one hand and the human response of faith on the other."[36] This

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[28] Wostyn, *Doing Ecclesiology,* 88.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Küng, *The Church,* 324-325.

[31] Cf. Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:2.

[32] Cf. Ez. 36:23; 20:41; 28:22; Is. 5:16.

[33] Rom. 8:33; II Thess. 2:13; cf. Eph. 1:4.; I Thess. 5:23.

[34] 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Rom. 1:4.

[35] 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7; cf. 1:6; 1Cor. 1:24; Phil. 1:1; Col. 3:12. See also 1 Pet. 1:15f; cf. Lev. 11:44: "Only through divine sanctification can men actively become holy – holy in the ethical sense. . . ." (Küng, *The Church*, 325).

[36] Ibid.

theological axiom places the Filipino homes' penchant for altars and sacred objects or praying together in a proper place. Objects and human actions themselves do not make the family holy.

Much closer to the spirit of Jesus, the call to *kadash* means showing compassion to people, especially the marginalized ones.[37] God's call sets us apart in the world to be in solidarity with the suffering humanity. So, to be holy in the New Testament perspective is not primarily cultic.[38]

The image of *bahay* can serve as a metaphor to express the notion of holiness. The sense of being together in an enclosed space and living together under one roof symbolically points to the biblical notion of an elect people set apart for divine purpose. But while the choice to live in the same house separate from other households is a human cultural act, the choice to live as a *holy* people "*sa isang sambahayan ng Diyos*" is a faith-response to the divine call. Lest the image being conjured is that of an exclusive group, it must be reiterated that faith-response to the divine call to be holy entails working for unity that breaks down artificial barriers of division

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[37] The cultic view of holiness was institutionalized in the purity system of the Jewish social world of old. The system sharply structured the ancient society according to those who considered themselves 'pure' and those who were considered 'impure.' The criterion for determining purity was based on birth, behavior, health or well-being, wealth, gender, and nationality. Jesus attacked the purity system "that created a world with sharp social boundaries between pure and impure, righteous and sinner, whole and not whole, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile" and preached "a community shaped not by the ethos and politics of purity, but the ethos and politics of compassion" (Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* [San Francisco: Harper, 1994], 53-61).

[38] Ibid., 50-52, 53-58.

and builds bridges of goodwill and respect inside and outside the domestic church. The holiness of the *sambahayan ng Diyos* presupposes the gracious and gratuitous action of God who calls, forms, and transforms. The familial spirituality emerges from and is sustained within the fabric of family life itself where faith in the Trinitarian God lies at the core of the spirituality.

The profound acknowledgment of the Trinitarian dimension and the celebration of the Eucharistic spirit in the home is a celebration of *mga magkakapatid* (brothers and sisters; family members) who share the same vision of Jesus about living life to its fullness. If the *sambahayan ng Diyos* "draws her life from the Eucharist"[39] then its members must learn how to treat the least, the lost, and the last with deep respect befitting their dignity while participating within its resources and means in alleviating the sufferings of the poor. For this purpose, the church in/of the home supports advocacies for social structural changes—mindful that action in the name of justice and participation in changing the world is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel.[40]

Michael Amalodoss offers an unsettling Eucharistic reflection that challenges us to go beyond the dole-out approach:

> …a community that does nothing to share its goods with the poor has no right to celebrate the Eucharist. Its Eucharist will have no meaning. (However)…it is not enough that Christians share what they have. They also have to get involved in movements that seek to promote more just economic, commercial, and political structures… I do not think that without a sense of community and solidarity, we can move towards a more

[39] John Paul II, *Ecclesia de eucharistia* 1 (2003).
[40] Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971), 6.

> just world. The Eucharist must give Christians this sense of community and solidarity….[41]

Evangelical poverty, described by Doohan as just relationship with earthly goods, advocated for all brothers and sisters of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is an indispensable requirement to be part of his new family.[42] A holy *sambahayan* is "essentially a poor Church, that is, a Church that has visibly and palpably renounced mammon's rule for the sake of God's Reign."[43] Happy are the churches of the home that live a life of simplicity free from inordinate desires of earthly possessions and complemented by a culture of sharing for theirs is the kingdom of God. This is one of the most difficult evangelical counsels to observe by the family members. It is because they are strongly conditioned even within the Christian movement to presume that it is perfectly fine to accumulate material possessions—an accepted social pursuit—since the members are not ordained presbyters or without the religious vow of poverty. It does not help that there abound preachers of the gospel of prosperity.[44]

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[41] Michael Amalodoss, "The Eucharist and the Christian Community." http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr005/amalodoss.htm (accessed July 4, 2009).

[42] Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church,* 117.

[43] Aloysius Pieres, "I Believe in the Holy Spirit: Ecumenism in the Churches and the Unfinished Agenda of the Holy Spirit." http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr005/pieris1.htm (accessed July 4, 2009).

[44] See Erron Medina and Jayeel Cornelio, "The Prosperity Ethic: Neoliberal Christianity and the Rise of the New Prosperity Gospel in the Philippines." *Pneuma* 43 (2021): 72–93.

Prosperity, however, may be read via the way of Jesus: "When Jesus of Nazareth went around preaching and healing, he was often seen or associated with the poor; he was there in

## *Sambahayan Ng Diyos* as Catholic

In its etymological provenance, the term "catholic" (Gr. χαθολιχός; Lat. *catholicus* or *universalis*) refers to or is directed toward the whole or what is general.[45] In classical Greek, the word has something to do with general statements (universals as distinct from individuals) or with universal or world history.[46] Informed Catholics know that the word "catholic" *as applied to the Church* is not found both in the Old and the New Testament.[47] Ignatius of Antioch (died *circa* 110) was the first one to use the word to refer to the Church in New Testament times in his famous words: "Wherever the bishop is, there his people should be, just as, where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."[48] In this context, Küng explains that "'Catholic Church' means quite straightforwardly the whole Church, the complete Church, in contrast to the local Episcopal Churches."[49] Theologically the catholicity of the Church is based on its all-embracing identity that is not inward-oriented but

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solidarity with them as he dined with outcasts and forgave their sins. He brought prosperity to the poor, that is, by making them 'feel well' (*prosperus* in Latin) again" (Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "Culture as Enabler for SDGs: Learning from Jesus of Nazareth's Vision/Mission," *Journal of Dharma* 46, 3 [July-September 2021]: 350).

[45] See Küng, *The Church*, 296, footnote 15.

[46] It even refers to the whole body affected by dropsy (Ibid., 297).

[47] The word appears in the New Testament only once and in adverbial form at that rendered as "thoroughly" or "completely" or "totally" [Acts 4:18], without ecclesial referent (idem., *The Church*, 297).

[48] Ibid., 297.

[49] Ibid.

essentially linked with the universal message of Jesus.[50] Its prerequisites are faith, *metanoia,* and the doing of the will of God. "(F)rom its very origins and by its very nature, the Church is world-wide, thinking and acting with reference to the world, the whole inhabited earth, the *oikumene*,"[51] The mission of the Church is oriented toward making the whole inhabited earth truly become the household of God.

The catholicity of *sambahayan* calls for moving out of ethnic parochialism or social individualism[52] to be able to connect with others differently situated through the language of love, of hope, of healing, of unity—all grounded on the saving truths of the Gospel. Today, partaking of the Church's universal mission of salvation is more and more expressed in terms of prophetic dialogue. The church in/of the home stands firm on the fundamental tenets of the Christian teachings based on the Judeo-Christian scriptures but its proclamation of the gospel is expressed in terms of dialogue at different levels of human and religious relationships.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has

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[50] "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" [Mk. 16:15], to "all nations" [Mt. 28:19], "until the end of the world" [Mt. 28:20], as "witnesses . . . to the end of the earth" [Acts 1:8].

[51] Küng, *The Church*, 303. The catholicity or universality of the Church in its theological sense must not be primarily seen in terms of spatial extensity, numerical quantity, cultural and social variety, and temporal continuity (Ibid., 300-304), although these realities admittedly form part of the 'visible-ness' of the Catholic Church.

[52] "Social individualism" is a term coined by Mina Ramirez to describe the reality of extreme family-centeredness in the Philippines (Mina M. Ramirez, *Understanding Philippine Social Realities through the Filipino Family: A Phenomenological Approach* [Malate, Manila: Asian Social Institute, 1984], 50).

given the *sambahayan ng Diyos* a clue: "(t)he Church becomes truly catholic when she is transformed by entering into dialogue with the cultures and religions of Asia and transforms them with the power of the Spirit who makes everything new."[53] According to *Ecclesia in Asia* the "desire for dialogue... is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples; it is an essential part of the Church's mission..., a veritable vocation for the Church."[54] Sharing the same missionary attitude and orientation, the members of the domestic church approach persons and groups with respect while proclaiming the gospel of salvation less through words and more through their acts of goodness (Mt. 5:14-16). This is called the dialogue of life which presupposes that "(l)ife in all its forms is connected with the Source of life …(and) to "recognize (Him)…requires that we live together and appreciate our humanity; we live together and recognize our need for one another to protect and sustain life."[55]

This demands nothing less than the spirit of humility and an attitude of listening. As *Ecclesia in Asia* puts it: "Proclamation is prompted not by sectarian impulse nor the spirit of proselytism nor any sense of superiority" (*EA* 20; cf. 4, 31, 46).

## ***Sambahayan Ng Diyos* as Apostolic**

The word 'apostle' etymologically comes from the Greek word απόστολος, which means "somebody sent" or

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[53] Jacob Parappaly, **"**Church's Dialogue with Cultures and Religions." http://www.idcrdialogue.com/seminars.php (accessed July 4, 2009).

[54] John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), n. 29.

[55] Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2012), 152-153.

"ambassador."[56] In the New Testament, it has various shades of meaning: it can refer to the twelve,[57] to the ambassadors of the Church,[58] to the authorized messenger or messengers of the churches,[59] to missionaries,[60] or to Christ himself.[61] The Pauline writings suggest a twofold meaning of the word: (1) those who are witnesses of the risen Lord, to whom the crucified Lord has revealed himself as living; (b) those who have been commissioned by the Lord for missionary preaching.[62]

The adjective 'apostolic,' like 'catholic' does not appear in the Bible; it was the Fathers of the Church who used it frequently.[63] In its original and most general meaning, it is "having a direct link with the apostles of Christ."[64] Despite its non-occurrence in the Bible, the notion serves as the crucial criterion in determining the truthfulness of the ecclesial attributes: "The Church can only be truly one, holy, and catholic if it is in all things an *apostolic* Church."[65] The apostles, actual witnesses of Jesus'

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[56] Gerald O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, rev. and exp. version (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2001), s.v. "apostle." Cf. Küng, *The Church*, 346. The concept of apostle was derived from the Hebrew "schaliach" [e.g. 1 Kg. 14:6, where a prophet appears as God's messenger], which during the post-exilic period technically referred to the envoys of Jewish authorities.

[57] Mt. 10:2; Mk. 6:30; Gal. 1:17.

[58] Acts 14:4; cf. 13:3.

[59] Jn. 13:16; II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25.

[60] 1 Cor. 12:28; 15:7; II Cor. 11:5; Rev. 2:2.

[61] Heb. 3:1.

[62] See II Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25. Cf. the first verses of I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Romans; cf. also Ephesians, Colossians, I and II Timothy, Titus.

[63] Like in Ignatius of Antioch's writings and in the "Martyrdom of Polycarp" (Küng, *The Church*, 345).

[64] Küng, *The Church,* 345.

[65] Ibid., 344.

ministry, passion, and resurrection, occupied a unique irreplaceable role in the living tradition of Christianity. Being actual witnesses that they were and constituting the original group of Jesus' followers, their teachings based on the sayings and deeds of the Teacher and the Prophet guaranteed ecclesial fidelity to the truth of the gospels. The apostolicity of the Church, then, refers to its identity in Christian faith and practice with the church of the apostles.[66]

The church of the apostles in its most basic form is incarnated in the *sambahayan ng Diyos* being commissioned and sent by Jesus Christ to proclaim the good news of salvation. The apostolic familial structure and relationships (communion) serve the mission. The mission is precisely to move out of the domestic confines and share Jesus' message of love with everyone above all in and through witnessing. By its very nature the church in/of the home is missionary "since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from "fountain-like love," the love of the Father."[67] Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the Christian family is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is a church because there is a mission. To participate in a mission is to participate in the movement of God's love

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[66] The idea of apostleship is not confined to the twelve, in fact, the function of the twelve [symbolically representing the twelve tribes of Israel in the light of Jesus' eschatological message] was restricted "to the time of the founding of the Church, or perhaps to the evangelization of the Jews" (Ibid., 350). It was Paul who made the notion of apostleship central to his theology, an idea that is linked to the worldwide mission of the Church as an eschatological event (Ibid., 351).

[67] Vatican II, *Ad gentes* 2.

toward people since God is a fountain of sending love.[68] It is even more profound to say that the *sambahayan ng Diyos* does not only have a mission to fulfill, but it also *is* mission, or mission is the very identity.

To belabor the point to proclaim is to be dialogical according to the Asian bishops.[69] The Asian 'both-and' approach makes this a dialectical possibility not only in the theoretical but also in the practical realm. Michael Amalodoss offers a nuanced understanding:

> 'Proclamation' and 'dialogue' are two moments in one conversation or relationship. One cannot proclaim without dialoguing, that is taking into account the other person's experience. One cannot dialogue without proclaiming, that is witnessing to one's faith-convictions. Proclamation is not dialogue. Yet, they can happen together in the same relationship, though they may be in tension with each other. At any given time, one may be more dominant. Abstracting the activities from the concrete relationship impoverishes them and isolates them. They are no longer experiential. Conceptual logic cannot handle this.[70]

For Aloysius Pieris the command to baptize nations and make disciples must be disinfected from the

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[68] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books, 1991), 390.

[69] Thesis 6 of the FABC 1987 document *Theses on Interreligious Dialogue of the FABC Theological Advisory Commission* (now known as the FABC Office of Theological Concerns) cited in Jonathan Yun-Ka Tan, "Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences," FABC Papers No. 109. http://www.idcrdialogue.com/seminars.php (accessed July 4, 2009).

[70] Michael Amalodoss, "Is There an Asian Way of Doing Theology?", http://www.idcrdialogue.com/seminars.php (accessed July 4, 2009).

venomous zeal for proselytism. He brought us back to what Jesus did by criticizing, even ridiculing proselytism or conversion from one religion to another (see Mt. 23:15). Jesus' call was for us to change our ways (*metanoia* in Greek*; shub* in Hebrew) and he was not particularly interested about religious identity. Conversion means negatively outright rejection of excessive dependence on creatures and mammon (= idolatry) and positively living in the freedom that comes from sole dependence on God, our divine parent. Conversion to Jesus' new family is repudiating every form of idolatry and embracing the Kingdom that belongs to the poor and the marginalized. It is in this sense that we can understand the command, "make disciples of nations."

The programmatic Lukan passage (4:18-19) which presents Jesus' mission by the Spirit is vividly oriented toward the liberation of the poor from material deprivation and social exclusion. Hence, the mandate to baptize and make disciples of nations cannot and should not be taken out of this context, namely, the mission of liberation directed clearly to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the outcasts, and the oppressed. They who have been made strangers by a social structure that has created sharp divisions among social classes are *hindi ibang tao* (not strangers; one among us) in God's *sambahayan* but *mga magkakapatid* in faith. The *sambahayan* perspective must have an outreach dimension to ensure that it does not separate itself from the peoples' struggles to build a more just and more humane social order. The task is brought to the fore in bold relief in light of what the PCP II calls as imbalances in the country's economic and political situation.[71]

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[71] The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines has observed that "(t)he poverty and destitution of the great mass of our people are only too evident, contrasting sharply with the wealth and luxury…. Power and control are also elitist,

No functionally Christian family wants its members to be deprived, to suffer, to get sick, to be excluded and treated like a second-class member. Growth and care in the *sambahayan* are geared toward the well-being of the members. This brings us to the cosmic dimension of discipleship. The *sambahayan ng Diyos is challenged* to embrace and consider the whole cosmos as our common home (Francis, *Laudato Si'*) worthy of concern and care.

Pieris offers us an interesting insight into the inherent link between the body and the cosmos: There is an eschatological reason that shows the intimate relationship between our bodies and God's creation.[72] We all confess to the resurrection of the body. The concept of the body should be detached from the Greco-Roman philosophical connection that tends to relegate it to the purely physical as opposed to the spiritual, the latter being superior to the former so that the 'body' is the whole person: "I am my body." When we confess "I believe in the resurrection of the body," we commit ourselves to helping usher in the dawn of a new heaven and a new earth. The phrase "heaven and earth" refers to this world system, for we have no other world where we can go to as to a "heaven." This world has to be transformed through our bodily resurrection into a new creation, which is our future which dawns from God when we with Her Spirit do our part of this humanly impossible task. However, we cannot believe in the resurrection of all creation without believing in our body-liness. The Bible teaches us that it is the Spirit in us that calls each one of us into an individual identity bodily involved in socio-physical solidarity with other humans and with nature. The body

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lopsidedly concentrated on established families that tend to perpetuate themselves in political dynasties." *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1992), n. 24.

[72] Pieris, "I Believe," 20.

is the human person epitomizing as well as linking up the whole of creation. Therefore, we cannot have life everlasting in the Spirit without our bodiliness, i.e., without the whole physical universe being resurrected into a new heaven and a new earth.

We have degraded the earth we are living in and we should restore it to its integrity with the same concern in providing ourselves with healthful dwellings. Poisoning the earth puts our bodies in danger; to hurt nature is to hurt our bodies. Pieris sums up the immediate cosmic agenda of the Church as an attempt to transform the planet into what the Creator envisions in the here and now: the cosmos should be (a) a "Home with One Table, where the gifts of creation are enjoyed together by all its inhabitants, where some do not gorge while others starve (1 Cor. 11. 21); (b) A Temple of Worship and a House of Prayer where mammon is given no chance to turn it into a "Den of Robbers" (Lk 19:46) or an "Open Market" (Jn 2:16); (c) A Garden of Delight where Creation remains the "enjoyable Icon" of the Creator's beauty, which is the desired fruit of *liberating wisdom*, rather than "a monstrous idol" of technocracy which is the forbidden fruit of *power-generating knowledge* (Gen 3:1ff).

That is another major challenge for the *sambahayan ng Diyos* in its becoming. At any rate, this fundamental tenet of faith must not be lost: that the church in/of the home is not the sender but the one sent. The varied ways by which it manifests its apostolicity, then, are ultimately subject and accountable to the vision and the will of the Sender.

## Conclusion

The foregoing reflection is meant to bring to light the theological foundation of the proposed *sambahayan ng Diyos* under the rubric of unity, holiness, catholicity, and

apostolicity and provide guideposts and directions for the ongoing growth of the domestic church. This is a growth that is informed by Christian faith, formed by the gospel teachings, and transformed from within with the faith-inspired collaboration of the members in building up the church and in their social and ecological engagements beyond its domestic confines.

I suppose that my reflections on the creedal attributes in the context of the Filipino church in/of the home are in varying ways and degrees reflected among the Christian families on the ground contingent upon differences in their socio-economic situations. Learning experiences in the light of Jesus' paschal mystery are ongoing. The reality of the domestic church is better viewed, not as 'noun', but as 'verb', that is, the household church is continuously in the process of becoming given its faith in the abiding presence of God's Spirit and its openness to the latter's guidance and promptings. After all, the Filipino Christian family is not merely *bahay* (physical structure) but above all *bagong ugnayan* (relationships).

To be sure the domestic church's performative character is not merely a mimicry of the institutional church in its structure, mere embracing of official teachings, displaying religious objects, or observing liturgical feasts and practices imported from the larger church, however significant they are especially in the Filipino religious culture. It is more than the total of the preceding. In its unique way of being-in-the-world as authentic faith communities, "(what) the members of the family know to be their own experience of the sacred in the particularities of marriage, sexual intimacy, procreation, parenting; the building, sustaining and decay of intimate relationships; the struggles of providing, sheltering, and feeding—this experience is authentic and must be part of the knowledge of the

gathered church."[73]

Domestic churches must learn to drink from their wells as they grow in unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.

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[73] Wendy Wright, *Sacred Dwelling* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 24-25.

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