

DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

TOWARDS A REINVENTION
OF THE LOCAL CHURCH: A PROPOSAL

910009

A Thesis
Presented to the
College of Education
DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religious Education

by
Bernardo N. Sepeda

October 1994



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1 THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES.....	1
Review of Related Literatures.....	4
Toward a New Ecclesiology.....	4
Toward a Renewed Church.....	6
Statement of the Problem.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	8
Scope and Delimitations.....	11
Significance of the Study.....	12
2 METHODOLOGY.....	13
Research Method.....	13
Participants.....	14
Sources of Data.....	14
Data Gathering Procedures.....	15
Data Analysis.....	17
3 TWO MODELS OF THE CHURCH.....	18
Leonardo Boff's Model of the Church.....	19
The Ecclesiality of Basic Church Communities.....	21
The Way of Being Church.....	25
Characteristics of the Church "Reinvented" by the Grassroots.....	31



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER	PAGE	
3	The Model of the Church in the Document of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.....	39
	The Church is a Communion.....	40
	Participation.....	42
	A Community-in-Mission.....	43
	A Priestly, Prophetic, and Kingly People.....	44
	The Church of the Poor.....	46
	A Synthesis of The Two Models.....	49
4	THE SILANG EXPERIENCE.....	54
	Historical Background.....	54
	Phase One (1585-1936).....	54
	Phase Two (1936-1978).....	56
	Phase Three (1978-present).....	59
	Silang at Present.....	63
	The Parish Working Group.....	64
	The Lay Workers.....	70
	The Activities and Programs.....	75
	The PCP II Seminars.....	84
	A Summary.....	93
5	A PROPOSAL FOR A MODEL OF THE LOCAL CHURCH....	95
	The Proposed Model.....	96
	The Formation Process.....	100



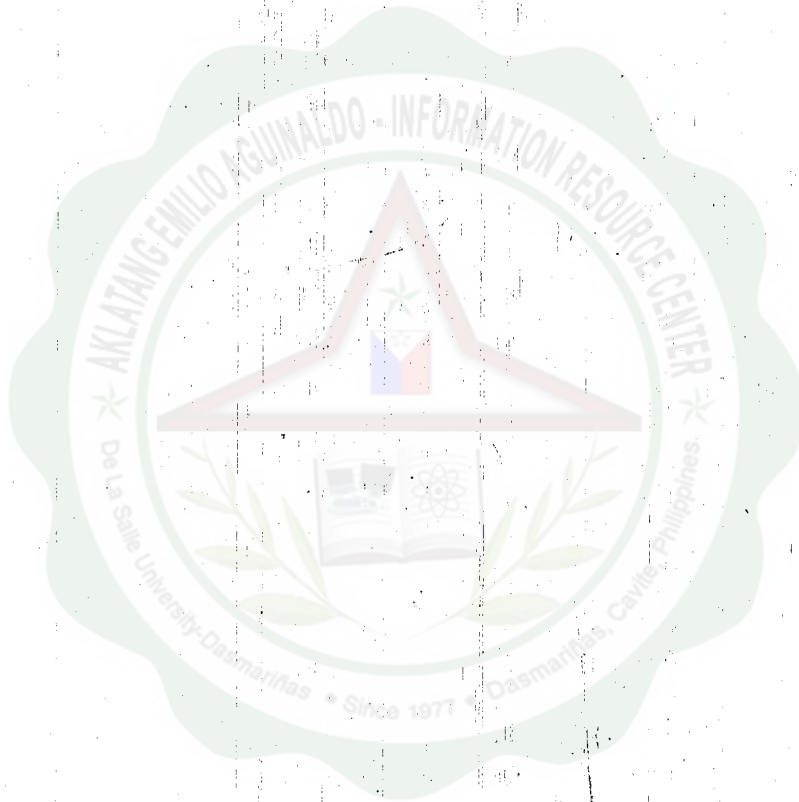
DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER		PAGE
5	Steering Committee.....	100
	Parish Educational and Motivational Program.....	102
	The Organization Process.....	105
	Phase One.....	106
	Phase Two.....	109
	Phase Three.....	110
	The Proposed Structure.....	117
	Membership.....	118
	The Grassroot Communities.....	119
	The Servant-Leader.....	119
	The Barangay/Barrío Coordinator.....	119
	The Secretariat.....	120
	The Commission on Education and Formation.....	121
	The Commission on Liturgy.....	122
	The Commission on Family Life.....	123
	The Commission on Social Action.....	123
	The Commission on Religious, Organization.....	124
	The Executive Board.....	125
6	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	128
	Summary of Findings.....	128



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER	PAGE
6 Recommendations.....	129
REFERENCES.....	133



Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to give new sight to the blind, to free the oppressed..." (cf. Luke 4:18)

In proclaiming His mission, Christ made a very radical option which was never given attention to by the so-called spiritual leaders of his time namely: the Pharisees and the Scribes. It is an option that brought Him to the Calvary. It is a "preferential option for the poor".

This phrase burst into the ecclesiastical scene only two decades ago most notably and explicitly during the Third Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla, Mexico in which the bishops "affirm the need for conversion of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation" (Puebla, sec.1134).

This focal point of evangelization was also stressed by Pope John Paul II (1979) when he said:

I keenly desired this meeting because I feel



solidarity with you and because, being poor, you are entitled to my particular concern.

I tell you the reason at once: the Pope loves you because you are God's favorites. He himself, on founding His family, the church, kept poor and the needy humanity in mind. To redeem it, He sent precisely his son, who was both poor and lived among the poor in order to make us rich with His poverty (2 Cor. 8:9).

An option for the poor, in the sense in which it is intended here, means "a series of choices, personal or communal, made by individuals, by communities, or even by corporate entities such as a religious congregation, a diocese, or a church (as represented by its central administration, and, in varying degrees, by its ordinary members). It is the choice to disentangle themselves from serving the interests of those at the 'top' of society and to begin instead to come in to solidarity with those at or near the bottom. Such solidarity means commitment to working and living within structures and agencies that promote the interests of the less-favoured sectors of society" (Dorr, 1983).

The "poor" referred to here are those who lack or



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

3

are deprived of the necessary means of subsistence - food, clothing, shelter, basic health care, elementary education and work . They are the socio-economically poor who are discriminated against by reason of their race, culture, or sect. The poorest of the poor are often to be found among such groups for they incur the whole gamut of oppressions and discriminations (Boff & Boff). "For this reason alone, the poor merit preferential attention, whatever may be the moral or personal situation in which they find themselves" (Puebla, 1979, sec. 1142).

This option moves many theologians to 'rediscover' and re-interpret our being Church. It is this option also which gives inspiration to many liberation theologians, in particular, Leonardo Boff to advance the cause of the "people at the base" of society especially in the Third World. In the Philippines which is a Third World country, The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines which was concluded two years ago, also made such an option in trying to update and make a vision for the church in our country that responds to "the signs of the times". It is with this option also that the author of this study (to be referred to as the author from hereon) undertook this study of "re-inventing" the local church based on the



"re-invented church" in Leonardo Boff's Ecclesiology, the "church renewed" of PCP II, and the experiences of the Our Lady of Candelaria parish in Silang, Cavite.

This study is one way of making the vision of PCP II realized because here is a concrete manifestation and a structure of what a local church is and it would be a great deal of help for parishes who are still on the process of structuring and restructuring their own for they will have a model from which they can pattern theirs. This study is also one of the very few systematic study on ecclesiology and liberation theology particularly on its proponents and the author hopes to open doors to such similar studies.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

This portion discusses some writings which are pertinent to the study conducted. It is divided into two parts. The first one is an effort to survey writings of theologians who work toward a new ecclesiology and the second part tackles different documents and writings which describe what a "renewed church" is.

Toward a New Ecclesiology

Wostyn (1990) emphasized that theologizing "can



never be insulated from the vicissitudes of life". Citing Gutierrez, he added that theology is a constant circular movement of reflection and commitment. His assertion is somewhat related to what the Boff brothers (1987) said that: "...liberation theology is a prophetic and comradely commitment to the life, cause and struggle of millions of debased and marginalized human beings, a commitment to ending this historical social iniquity". It is "doing theology" (De Mesa and Wostyn, 1982). Likewise, in ecclesiology, it is not just to study ecclesiology but is "doing ecclesiology" (Wostyn, 1990).

Liberation theologians, in the area of ecclesiology, have always been focusing on the mission of the church until recently when they started to raise questions regarding the very "nature" of the church and how it should relate itself to its members. Segundo (cf. McGovern, 1989) for instance, starts to question the church's mission to the world. He believes that the church should reach out not only to its members but most especially to those people outside of itself so that it can truly be a "sign" of God's love to the world. The church must proclaim the active presence of God's salvific act through its life and word if it



wants to be the true sign of God's love (Montiveros, 1992). Sobrino (cf. McGovern, 1989) speaks of the new church in Latin America as representing "a resurrection of the church".

This process toward a new ecclesiology, according to Sanz (1987), is always situated in a particular historical situation or condition and always taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the church at that particular time. In other words, it is historically and culturally based. Olmedo (1987) added that living in a family-community is another way of building a church.

Toward a Renewed Church

Vatican II, in its effort to be more responsive to the "signs of the times", made "aggiornamento" its battle cry. Pope Paul VI even noted in the final session of the council that from now on aggiornamento will signify for us a wisely undertaken quest for a deeper understanding of the spirit of the council and the faithful application of the norms it has happily and prayerfully provided". Thus, in *Lumen Gentium* (LG), Dulles, in his introduction to the document, commented that instead of concentrating on the structure and government of the Church as in Vatican I,



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

7

the council proceeded from the notion that the church is the People of God. This notion is very important because it opened the door for a more inclusive church and for ecumenical dialogues between churches.

Taking inspiration from Vatican II and from a growing need to change and up-date itself, the Philippine church headed by the (CBCP) Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines convoked the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II). In the second part of the conciliar document which is composed of four parts, the delegates asked the question: "How to live as Christians in our present situation". They tried to give flesh into the question by starting with the person of Jesus Christ using the New Testament in "retelling his story" in order to arrive at a church renewed. The council even forwarded the basic concept that the Church is a "community of disciples" or Discipleship in community (PCP II, nos. 87-ff.). The council also affirms the role of BEC as an expression of renewal (PCP II, nos.137-140) as Boff did in his Ecclesiogenesis however, the latter was bolder when he said that BEC is the "reinvention of the Church" (Boff, 1986).

