



Lecture E: *Ecuminism, inter-faith, the relationship among the different denominations (Asian Perspective)* – Rev Fr Benigno Beltran STHD, SVD

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Manansala B Hall, Sulo Riviera Hotel
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Lecture Highlights

The Philippines is a predominantly Catholic country yet it promotes respect for other religions and cultures within its multi-ethnic society. In this connection, Rev Fr. Benigno Beltran's presentation on ecumenism, inter faith, the relationship among the different denominations embodies this idea.

As a starting point, Fr. Beltran made a number of comparisons between Westerners and Asians. In his view, the former are more definition and detail-oriented. Westerners are also more prone to create or change situations rather than adapt to these. Third they are very adherents to scientific or rational based logic. Fourth Westerners are more wired for independence and individualism.

On the other hand, he views that Asians might not be as expressive as Westerners but they believe that they understand more than they can know and know more than they can say. Rewards and punishments are given value to improve social relationships. They are likewise fond of using euphemisms. Also, Asians or at least Filipinos have their peculiar logic in application connotes loose association (Pedro and the crocodile can swim so Pedro is a crocodile) and their concept of time is not as punctual as those of Westerners. Lastly, Asians are more fatalistic and prone to the "good enough" attitude.

He then argues that prophetic dialogue is the best way to relate to people of various denominations. The prophetic aspect highlights the missionary task of proclaiming the richness of the gospel everywhere. For its part, the dialogue highlights mutual understanding without being unfaithful to what one believes in or in other words, a civil, frank and principled exchange of views. The adherence to the tenets of prophetic dialogue applies not only between Catholics and Christians from other denominations; it is also ecumenical and applies between Christians and non-Christians alike.

Fr. Beltran then talked about the ecumenism and dialogue in the context of Asia wherein three big issues are being pondered on: Massive poverty, cultural diversity and religious pluralism. In the context of massive poverty, cultural diversity and religious pluralism is carried forward through interacting with the people. It means rejoicing in the goodness we find in the others. Prophetic dialogue is also an exercise in listening. Listening to others is important because we have a different way of looking at things. Furthermore listening to the voice of the other is spiritual exploration. It is part of our individuality.

Father Beltran admits the difficulty of prophetic dialogue between the East and West. One reason is a Western "Immanence and transcendence; an either or thinking." All western philosophy has been divided by Socrates. Second, Very cognitive- understanding of



religion by the westerners based on the individualistic understanding of the Western and Americans.

Nonetheless, Prophetic Dialogue is the best way to clarify and explain the moral values of Christian values, promote international understanding and cooperation, to discuss the social, ethical and moral challenges of the military. For in the end, the goal is to build bridges of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect in accordance with the belief that we are all God's children.

He ends his speech with a myth from the Philippines, the story of Malakas and Maganda. Uttered the first words (or syllables): Ba (For babae or woman), La (For lalake or man), Ha (when they saw the majesty of the world, the universe, short for Bathala). The main point is that one cannot think of human without talking about God.

During the Open Forum, the following questions were posed: 1) How do you think you can stop the evolution of Asia to become Western Europeans? Can Asia be walled-in? 2) Can an Asian a missionary to both Europeans and Americans? On the first question, Father Beltran emphasized that Filipinos and Asians do not want to be separated. We should talk. What Asians just ask is to be given the chance to be heard and contribute in helping improve the world and they would be more satisfied. Thus, listening to each other is the way to learn things from both side of the world thus the Prophetic Dialogue. In response to the second question, he replied that as a missionary, he learned from Westerners but I also told them that they can learn something from Asians. His thinking is that Asians and westerners need to have a dialogue as there is a great danger each adopts a one-sided view without listening to the other.