

Launch Out Letter (LOL)

July 2020

Made in God's Image

By Bernadette Patelesio



Simon and Brooks Patelesio with their children Johnston and Lemi

I grew up in Petone during the 70s and 80s. My family were active parishioners in Sacred Heart Parish, which at that time had a large Pasifika population, mostly Samoan and Tokelauan. Many Tokelauan families settled in Petone then, as the church had provided housing for them upon their migration here. My father used to collect the rent on behalf of the church, and I was his shadow, accompanying him each week as he did the rounds, chatting with and getting to know the families.

I am married to Peter who is from Nukunonu, Tokelau. I have raised my family in Wainuiomata where the population is 17 % Maori, 8% Pasifika and 75% Other ethnicities. Our church Community is largely Pacific and Asian. I have been with St Patrick's Church Community for almost 30 years. In the early years there, the NZ European parishioners were the majority. Maori and NZ European whanau are perhaps the minority groups now.

How can we care pastorally for our parishioners and create a sense of belonging for them - what helps and what hinders this? What are we getting right, and what are we still failing to grasp?

Papa Francis acknowledges some of the cultural challenges we are facing in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

61. We should recognise how in a culture where each person wants to be bearer of his or her own subjective truth, it becomes difficult for citizens to devise a common plan which transcends individual gain and personal ambitions.

Put simply, New Zealand's population is tangata whenua, (the people of this the land) and tauwi (everyone else). Maori culture and spirituality have ancient roots. Within tauwi there are many cultures that also have a rich heritage. How do we first honour the treaty, and secondly be inclusive of all cultures, in how we come together, worship, and make decisions as a community?

Our culture is part of who we are, it is much deeper than the clothes that we wear or the food we eat. It is as if it is imprinted on our souls.

So too, being Catholic (or Jewish or Muslim) is much more than the building we choose to worship at, or the denomination on our Baptismal Certificate. Even those that have rejected their faith in daily life, when asked what their Religion is, may still say I am Catholic.

We know that God reveals something of himself through each of us. God gazes on us and sees a reflection of Godself.

And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. [1 Corinthians 15:49](#)

We can also participate in this revelation of God by being able to 'see' ourselves and each other in our parish activities, in our liturgies at Mass and in our Churches.

We already do this as Catholics. Within the practice of our Faith there is rich imagery, symbolism, rites and traditions. We can see a reflection of ourselves as Catholics. But let's extend that.

To see ethnic or indigenous carvings or sacred images in our buildings or in their design; or hear our own cultural values acknowledged from the lectern on a regular basis; or hear some of the Mass responses in our native tongue, not just on Church Feast Days, but every week; or experience singing with, not to, the congregation in our own language, every week. These are ways God can be revealed to us and to each other. They are reflections of ourselves. We are made in God's image.

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Our faith can be enriched just by seeing, hearing and doing, what is uniquely us. We should be careful that these efforts are not token gestures, and that they are in such a way that we can all participate.

When we truly embrace our diversity, and it becomes entrenched in our parishes and second nature, we may also notice that our councils and committees are a remnant of our colonial heritage, that is no longer serving us well.

63. We must recognize that if part of our baptised people lack a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach...(Evangelii Gaudium)



Bernadette and Peter with their children Sophie, Juliana, Niko, Daniel and Simon

We must first honour the Treaty and learn to say, do, see and hear (reflect) things from a Te Ao Maori perspective or Maori world view. It can be carefully woven into everything we do.

Secondly, tauwi -- our Pacific, Asian and All our brothers and sisters in Christ could be invited to do the same and we would weave the most beautiful tapestry that is the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

How well is your faith community doing this? How beautiful would God's reflection be then?

Inculturation- A Samoan Perspective

By Mikaela Teofilo, Lay Pastoral Leader for the ADW Samoan Chaplaincy

The Adoremus Bulletin in its October Volume 1996 issue, defines inculturation as "The creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture". In 1993 Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u, the Archbishop of Samoa explained that, "inculturation facilitates not only the integration of Cultural values but also the purification of these elements which are not in keeping with the demands of the Gospel". He used Faith and Patriotism as the two pillars of life for him as a Samoan. Faith, a gift from God and a heavenly power justifies whatever we do for the Kingdom. Patriotism is a human, nationalistic power by which we do anything for the betterment of our country. Patriotism can be inculturated by using that power in the name of Christ.



Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u. Copied from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pio_Taofinu%CA%BBu

The description of the interaction between indigenous and Christian traditions will hopefully not depict a condemnation of the missionaries. The spread of Christianity to Polynesia, and to Samoa, in general, is associated with European colonialism. Christianity was one of the effective tools of colonization. It was a way of controlling and taming the natives. The establishment of Christian missions, which involved the building of churches, campaigning for membership, and winning of souls followed the same pattern as the formation of business interests, which involved the acquisition of land, the recruitment of economy, the establishment of government stations and the imposition of authority over the bewildered natives, challenging the established traditional leadership to the extent that the local leadership became subservient and inferior to the colonial government.

From a cultural viewpoint, Christianity is part of the white person's way of life. Hence, as the natives are urged, forced, and enticed into accepting culture's money, goods, songs, way of life, and political systems, so are they expected to adopt Christianity as part and parcel of the European Package. The natives' perception of success and of a worthwhile value system were undermined and replaced by the colonizers. This includes adopting the Christian religion. Christianity in both colonial and post-colonial situations, therefore, cannot be separated from the Europeans. The dichotomy between tradition and Christianity was made so clear as to suggest that there had to be movement away from the people's former way of life (tradition) to European ways (Christianity); in order to be successful and to be considered "cultured".

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In many Christian churches, becoming a Christian has involved many dos and don'ts. A Christian must forgo much of their culture and adopt a new one-Christian way or *Fa'akerisiano*- which has been identified with the new laws and values brought by the whites. The old ways are often talked about "*aso ole pouliuli*" while the new ways as "*aso ole malamalama*". The Bible is studied, versus memorized, songs composed and sung, books written and read, films were made, and preaching used like propaganda to make Christianity assume the central place in one's thinking and life.

This is done so that Samoans can sift through traditional and cultural experience to keep what is acceptably biblical or Christian and remove what is not. The Christian tradition is presented as the "truth" as if there can be no other "truth". The results were practices and rituals of Christianity which reflects the home countries of the white missionaries and not those of local significance to most of our people.

The Samoan Catholic Church is in the journey of inculturation by rediscovering and valuing our own cultural identity. We are in a journey of healing from our colonial past but are also moving onwards in communion with the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church in the work of evangelisation. We learned as a people, that when we invite peoples to share in the life of Jesus, it needs to be led and shaped not by power and coercion, but only by love. That is how, and the only way, the Good News must be spread.

Note: "*Aso ole pouliuli*" here was referred to in times from a European perspective as uncivilized and un-Christian and "*aso o le malamalama*" refers to when the people were colonized and converted



Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Apia, Samoa. Copied from <https://www.samoa.travel/discover/our-culture/church/>

Happy Birthday!

Birthday blessings to *Chris Walkerdine* on 8 July



Parade.com

In God's Mercy and Grace - Filipino Spirituality

By Lyra Manalo, Novice, Mercy Sisters

(She is a former parishioner of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, until her entry to the religious life this January. Please include her vocation in your prayers)



Filipino Marian devotion, one of the trademarks of Filipino Catholicism from <http://cbcponlineradio.com/?p=20593>

Filipinos are said to have a deep spirituality. Everywhere I go, I witness the vibrancy of faith of Filipinos in the parishes they serve. They not only give their time for service, but also their hospitality and care, especially to those who are new to the place or are most in need, regardless of time and place. They bring to heart Jesus' saying, "whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me". Some call it "good karma".

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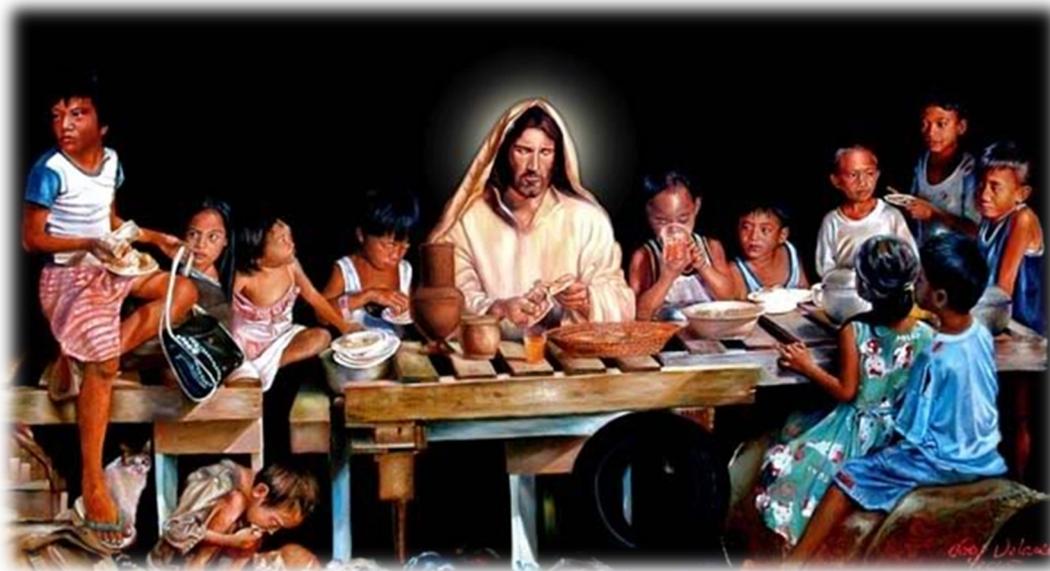
Living in a country where poverty and injustice are prevalent, the only source of strength and courage, especially to an ordinary, hand-to-mouth living Filipino, is the grace that comes from a Supreme Being. Therefore many Filipinos are drawn to believe in “*himala*” (miracle) or supernatural occurrences. Knowing that there is a God who mercifully sustains beyond one’s capacity is enough to stir a daring act towards what seems to be impossible. When I was younger, one of the common expressions I would hear from our elders was “*May awa ang Diyos*” (God is merciful). In any difficulty, we know that God will carry us through.

This connectedness with God is also reinforced by devotions to saints and to Mary. Filipino Catholics believe that the Church includes the community of saints of both the living and the dead. This is one of the traditions imparted to us by almost four centuries of Spanish colonization. While it is true that religion targeted our weakness to easily conquer our land, it is also one of the most important heritage that we Filipinos hold dear in our hearts and are most grateful for. We Filipinos believe in praying with and for one another, that is why we ask for intercessions from Mary and the saints through the rosary and novena. Novena is a nine-day prayer petition, trusting that at the end of nine days, something favourable will happen. Not that we are using other paths for petition to God, but rather, we believe in perseverance and community prayer, just as in the Parable of the Persistent Widow.

Along with the petitions, we also express our gratitude, animated, during the feasts of Mary or a patron saint. The feast usually culminates in a religious procession and celebration of the Mass. Some families may have “*panata*” (devotional promise) to attend the annual procession or take part in manually carrying the life-size image of the saint on their shoulders, sometimes walking barefoot. The procession starts and ends in the church. A celebration with the barangay or a small community shows that this reciprocity is not only contained within a “me and my God” personal relationship. It must be shared with the community, thus the vibrancy of faith.

Filipinos love to celebrate, or more so, we love sharing at table, just like in the Eucharist. There is no celebration without food, for body and soul. We take the Mass not only as a spiritual nourishment through the Word and the Body and Blood of Christ, but also as fellowship with family and friends. On any occasion that calls for thanksgiving, there is always a Mass intention offered. In my family, one’s birthday is not completely celebrated without the Mass. For those who do not frequent the church, there can be four important occasions to find them there: Christmas, New Year’s Day, Easter Sunday, and one’s birthday. We all have different reasons for coming to Mass, just like any other culture. Again, the primacy of this is our connectedness with God.

These are some of the ways Filipino spirituality is exemplified. Different regions have their own forms. However different, they all depict our lived relationship with God. We believe that in God’s mercy and grace, we can do all things according to God’s will. In that trust, comes “*utang na loob*” (debt of gratitude). Our sense of gratitude is so great, that our expressions are varied and colorful, but the most common of all - we are brought down to our knees in reverence and thanksgiving.



Hapag ng Pag-asa (Table of Hope) by Joey Velasco from <https://www.philippinesbasiceducation.us/2013/03/hapag-ng-pag-asa-table-of-hope.html>

Updates

- Full-steam ahead for our Annual Retreat to be held at the Home of Compassion, 31 July-02 August with Mary Jackson Kay. Itinerary and other details to follow via email
- Pastoral Project plans for this year are all in and laid out. Thanks to everyone. Continue working with Mentors
- Pencil these dates:
 - Doing Theological Reflection by Anne Powell, 22 August, Pa Maria, Hobson St (changed)
 - 2nd Prayer Day for the Year by Regina Daly PBVM, 10 October (same)
 - Project Presentation, 21 November (same)
 - Christmas Gathering, 12 December (same)
- Cardinal John has read your project proposals and gives his approval and blessings. He thanks all of you—Candidates and Mentors, for pushing through with your Pastoral Projects despite the lockdown, and for in fact, exploring ways to address concerns of your parishes with regards to the lockdown. He appreciates the Collaborative Ministry that is going on with you, the LPLs and the Parish Priests, along with the Parish Pastoral Council.



Condolences:

Patricia's father, Michael, passed away this June. Let us include him and her family in our prayers.

Ko Fakafiefia! (It is a happy story!)

By Bridget Taumoepeau



Bridget and husband, Maka

As you may realise from my name, my husband is Tongan. The first 12 years of my marriage were spent in Tonga, in an extended family situation, except for a couple of years in New Zealand, for financial reasons.

My children grew up in a bilingual setting with their grandmother in our home, and a great uncle next door. Later four cousins came to stay, as well as an uncle, and when in New Zealand a close relative came with us to care for the children, although they were more like older sisters than nannies.

From an early age the children were familiar with Tongan customs and language. They were accepted into the extended family, as was I. My education and training were respected and so I worked full time at the hospital, and the children were cared for by 'Granny Tonga!' She was a matriarch in her own right, and they learnt much from her about family, traditions, the strength of community and the role of church and God in their lives.

When the time came to move more permanently to New Zealand there was much grief at the parting, but mercifully the connections with Tonga remained and have continued to this day. It is interesting to see the different relationships that I and each child have with the culture – some are fluent in Tongan, some are not; some visit frequently and with ease, some not so much so; some integrate their two cultures better than others.

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But all have grown up with the nature and nurture of those cultures and have benefited from both. They have experienced both nuclear and extended family settings; they have been relatively poor in a material sense, while rich in love and support. Their early childhood was simple, making them even more appreciative of the opportunities there were for them in New Zealand, and for their own children; their eyes have been opened about different ways of doing things.

And as for me – life was often very difficult; expectations of family members at different life stages were not what I had grown up with; alcohol was a scourge in society; the clash of individualism versus what could have been seen as the ‘common good’ was often present; the expectation to contribute to wider family could be a burden; the political system was foreign and corruption at many levels took some getting used to; there was often hypocrisy in the churches; and illness, especially mental illness, was often poorly understood.

However, the good outweighed the difficulties – a British cousin once asked me how I dealt with being ‘different’. He could not be convinced that that had never been an issue; I never experienced racism; as the only Catholic in the family there was no problem or disapproval – the statue of Mary in the house and the recitation of the Rosary didn’t seem to worry anyone – vastly different from the religious intolerance I had experienced in the UK. And I often wondered how we would have fared if we had lived in Scotland instead of Tonga – we would definitely have felt ‘different’ there.

We all learnt that there are many ways of doing things – all with their strengths and weaknesses, and that being exposed to diversity in this way opens one’s mind and heart to the importance of the real values in life, exposing the futility of what could be seen as superficial.

The acceptance of me personally and others in similar positions, echoed the Gospel idea that we are all God’s children; Galatians 3:28 seemed to ring true – neither Greek nor Jew, neither slave nor free. The church, as in so many places, greeted people from many countries, united in the liturgy and in the sense of God’s love; a place of welcome and hospitality. I owe a special gratitude to the Sisters who took me under their wing and helped me integrate. Again, from Galatians (6:2) - they helped to bear any burdens I had. So - I learnt that living in another culture is a blessing and the Church has a wonderful opportunity to promote that. *Deo gratias.*



Bridget’s lovely family



When he had finished eating, he said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch”.

Luke 5: 4