# PREACHING AND LITURGY WITH HIGH CONTEXT CONGREGATIONS IN THE SEA SERVICES

A project by
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CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

This project focuses on preaching and presiding within the sea services,[1] to serve Roman Catholic sailors and marines and their families. It is intended primarily for Roman Catholic priest Navy chaplains who find, as I have found, that preaching and presiding with Roman Catholics in today's military environment presents a cross cultural challenge.

The active duty Navy population on 30 September 2002 was 10% Latino and 4% Filipino.[2] The active duty Marine Corps population on the same date was 13% Latino and 3% Asian/Pacific Islander.[3] The active duty Coast Guard population in March 2002 was 7% Latino and 2% Asian American.[4] These numbers may not seem very high, but Latinos and Filipinos account for a much higher percentage of the *Roman Catholic*

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[1] The sea services are the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard. In addition to providing pastoral care for Navy personnel and their families, Navy chaplains also provide pastoral care for Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel and their families.

[2] In this project, I use the term "Latino" for those of Latin American ancestry in the U.S. or in the U.S. military. While some people prefer the term "Hispanic," I have chosen "Latino" because it is currently preferred in academic circles. I recognize that some Latinos in the U.S. military and their family members are U.S. citizens and some are not. Some are recent immigrants to the U.S., while others can trace their ancestry back many generations in what is today U.S. territory. I use the term "Filipino" to refer to U.S. citizen immigrant sailors and marines from the Philippines and their family members, to those of Filipino ancestry who are natives of the U.S., and to those sailors and marines and their family members of Filipino ancestry who are not (yet) U.S. citizens. Some people prefer the term "Filipino American." I have chosen to use "Filipino," because some U.S. immigrants of Filipino ancestry do not necessarily think of themselves as "Americans." For a source of Navy demographic information, see Bureau of Naval Personnel, "Active Duty Total Force End-Strength, Current Quarter Distribution by Sex and Race/Ethnic Group, Fourth Quarter FY 2002." www.bupers.navy.mil/pers00h/demographics.htm, page 4 of 19; Internet; accessed 7 January 2003.

[3] Marine Corps Manpower Plans & Policies Division (MP), Manpower Equal Opportunity, Marine Corps Demographics. www.defenselink.mil/pubs/almanac/index.html; Internet; accessed 7 January 2003.

[4] Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, "Semiannual Race, Ethnicity, Gender Profile by Service/Rank; Demographics, March 2002." https://www.patrick.af.mil/DEOMI/Observances%20&%20Demographics/Deomographics/Demographics_Index.htm, page 4 of 48; Internet, accessed 5 March 2003.

population than of the sea service population in general. In some duty stations, they outnumber European American[5] Roman Catholics.

For example, at my base chapel in Atsugi, Japan, between 1998 and 2000, the Roman Catholic congregation was approximately 75% Filipino. These Filipino parishioners attended Sunday Mass[6] faithfully, and they were committed to various liturgical ministries. These sailors and their spouses were very supportive of the parish religious education program. However, I did not have confidence that my "European American" style of preaching and presiding connected with them. While they seemed very willing to talk to me about many things, they almost never commented on the preaching or liturgy. On the other hand, my European American parishioners seemed generally satisfied with my preaching and presiding; I normally received a number of appreciative comments from them, and they usually seemed to understand what I was trying to say. The absence of feedback from the Filipino parishioners could be explained partly by a cultural reluctance on their part to comment directly to the preacher, because such a thing could be interpreted as a challenge to authority. Part of the explanation could also be that sermons that are mainly intellectual, abstract, and doctrinal fail to satisfy Filipinos.

I was stationed in USS WASP (LHD-1)[7] from 2000 to 2002. A fair number of the junior sailors and marines were Latino. Many of them did not attend Mass regularly. I would walk around the ship and invite them to come, and a number of them did respond to that and attend a few times. However, once again, I questioned whether the liturgy and

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[5] Some people prefer the term "Anglo American," but in this project I use "European American."
[6] I use the word "Mass" in this project to refer to Eucharistic liturgy.
[7] USS WASP is an amphibious assault ship. The letters "LHD" indicate the class of ship; they are not an acronym. The number "1" means that WASP was the first ship of its class to be commissioned.

preaching satisfied them. Most of them departed afterward without comment, and while they greeted me enthusiastically in their work spaces, most of them didn't mention Mass and didn't attend regularly from Sunday to Sunday. The absence of feedback could be explained in part by the natural reluctance of an enlisted person to criticize a preacher's sermon in a face-to-face conversation (after all, chaplains are officers). However, cultural factors once again seem to emerge as a big part of the explanation, for most of the European American sailors and marines who attended regularly did appear to be satisfied with the experience, and they often thanked me. In fact, some of them would drop by my office later just to ask questions about something I had said in a sermon.

I argue that the "disconnect" I have experienced with Roman Catholics from minority ethnic groups was due in large part to the *cross cultural divide* between me as a European American pastor, and my Latino and Filipino parishioners. If this were the case, preachers must address this critical issue, primarily by employing methods that reach across cultural barriers. Moreover, if this were relevant in today's sea services, it would undoubtedly become a bigger issue in the future; the demographic makeup of the military population will certainly follow the long term shift in U.S. society, away from European American dominant to non-European American dominant in the years and decades ahead.

## Use of the terms *Low Context* and *High Context*

I have chosen to focus my analysis on the Latino and Filipino cultures. This is simply because these two ethnic cultures account for many, if not most, of the Roman

Catholics at a number of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard duty stations today.[8] These two ethnic cultures could be considered examples of *high context* ethnic cultures. The term high context is attributed to the anthropologist Edward T. Hall. High context cultures tend to construct meaning primarily from the *context* of a communicated message, rather than from its *content*. By contrast, the dominant European American culture is a *low context* culture, in which meaning is constructed primarily from the *content* of a communicated message, rather than from its "incarnational" *context*. (I will explore this idea in greater depth in Chapter 2.)

Most Roman Catholic priests in today's sea services are European American and therefore are products of low context culture. Even those who are not European American have probably been formed as priests within low context Church culture. (I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 2.) As a consequence, they express their faith and spirituality in ways that tend to be more intellectual and cerebral rather than affective and emotional. The result is a pastoral challenge of some magnitude: how can priests who are products of a low context European American Church culture proclaim the Gospel more effectively to sailors, marines, and their families who come from high context cultures? These priests cannot afford to continue preaching and presiding in the low context way that is familiar and comfortable for them.

At first, a chaplain might be tempted to brush off the challenge by noting that in the military everyone speaks English, and everyone shares a dominant military culture.

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[8] These two ethnic groups do not account for the majority of *churchgoing* Roman Catholics in every sea service duty station, but their numbers are significant among the *total* Roman Catholic population at any given duty station. Their numbers are also significant among the U.S. Roman Catholic population and the total U.S. population. See pp. 8 and 18.

This assumption is true enough, but cross-cultural issues still lurk like icebergs.[9] Ethnic cultural issues run deeper than mere language barriers. These issues *do* affect the way priests preside and proclaim the word of God, and they *do* affect the way the people receive it. Unless Navy chaplains recognize the reality of this challenge and appreciate the implications that it has for preaching and presiding, they risk communicating the Gospel less and less effectively than they otherwise might, to more and more of the people "in the pews," as the years go by.

## For Whom this Project is Intended

I have written this project with Roman Catholic Navy chaplains in mind as the primary intended audience.[10] However, I am certain that some of the issues discussed here pertain to non-Roman Catholic Christian chaplains and probably also to non-Christian chaplains as well. Also, there can be no doubt that the Army and Air Force populations are also steadily shifting from European American dominant to non-European American dominant. Thus, much of what I say here will pertain to Army and Air Force settings as well as to sea service settings. Therefore, although I write primarily for Roman Catholic Navy chaplains, I optimistically entertain the hope that some elements of my work might be of use to non-Roman Catholic Navy chaplains, as well as to Army and Air Force chaplains.

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[9] Icebergs float on the surface of the ocean, with 10% of their mass visible and 90% invisible beneath the surface.

[10] Most Roman Catholic Navy chaplains today are European American. However, there are also African American, Latino, and Asian American Roman Catholic Navy chaplains. Therefore, while written for European American Roman Catholic Navy chaplains as the primary intended audience, this project is offered to Roman Catholic Navy chaplains of all ethnic backgrounds who do ministry with Latino and Filipino Roman Catholics in the sea services.

## Methodology

In Chapter 1, I will briefly compare the Latino and Filipino cultures, noting some similarities and differences. I will explore why, over time, both cultures have developed strong and distinctive popular religiosity. I will say something about the 20th century history of inferiorization[11] that Filipino sailors have experienced within the U.S. Navy, because this history still plays a part in today's Filipino Navy culture. Finally, I will make an observation on the scope of contextual theology that has been developed to date for the Latino and Filipino cultures.

In Chapter 2, as I mentioned above, I will take a brief look at Edward T. Hall's work on context. He proposes the categories of low context and high context cultures. After reintroducing these terms and defining them, I will apply them first to the military culture itself. Next, I will apply them to the Filipino and Latino cultures, which account for many Roman Catholic parishioners, and to the European American culture, which accounts for most Navy priests today.

In Chapter 3, I will focus briefly on the cross cultural implications of communication patterns and affective expression for those who preach and preside in today's sea services.

In Chapter 4, I will begin with a statement of two important operating principles in preaching and presiding. Then, I will briefly consider the propriety of incorporating elements of popular religion into the liturgy. Finally, I will suggest some concrete ways in which a priest of European American cultural background might intentionally direct

[11] For the sake of consistency, I will use the word "inferiorization" in this project. I chose that word because I have seen it used in contextual theological writing about Filipinos. The words "marginalization" or "discrimination" could be used just as well to describe the cultural experience of Latinos and Filipinos.

his efforts to make his preaching and presiding more "user-friendly" for people from high-context cultures.

In Chapter 5, I will offer an overall conclusion.

The next section will be more practically oriented. For this I arranged to preach and preside at two actual cross cultural liturgies, once with a predominantly Latino congregation and once with a predominantly Filipino congregation. Both events took place at Roman Catholic churches in the Bay Area. In each exercise, a few observers with academic training or pastoral experience attended, in order to offer me critical and constructive feedback. A number of valuable insights can be learned from this practical exercise.

The project will conclude with a selected bibliography.

## CHAPTER 1

### Latino and Filipino Cultures: Some Similarities and Differences

As I noted previously, in this project I have chosen to focus on the Latino and Filipino cultures, because they account for many if not most Roman Catholics in a number of sea service duty stations today.

The Latino and Filipino cultures are very much deserving of special attention, for two reasons. First, the changing demographic situation in the U.S. Church suggests that the majority of U.S. Roman Catholics could be of Latino origin by the year 2020.[12] The Asian American immigrant population is the fastest growing racial group in the U.S., and those of Filipino ancestry account for the second biggest segment of Asian Americans in the U.S.[13] Moreover, the Philippines is the only predominantly Roman Catholic country in Asia; thus, the majority of Filipino U.S. immigrants are Roman Catholic. These ongoing demographic changes in U.S. society will of course be reflected in the military. Second, aside from the long run picture, the immediate spiritual needs of high context parishioners demand that Navy chaplains make some attempt here and now to move beyond a low context liturgy and preaching style. The priest needs to make some attempt to understand their special needs and address them.

Both the Latino and Filipino cultures are products of Spanish colonization dating back to the 16th century. In both cases, the Spanish conquerors forcibly imposed both secular and religious forms of Spanish culture. According to Orlando O. Espín, the

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[12] U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 2000), page 7 of 25. www.usccb.org/mrs/unity.htm; Internet; accessed 29 October 2002.

[13] U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 2001), page 5 of 27. www.usccb.org/mrs/harmony.htm; Internet; accessed 29 October 2002.

Spanish did indeed come to evangelize, but they came first to *conquer*. He says, "The proclamation of the Christian gospel was made possible only because the evangelized had first been conquered, their lands and freedom taken from them, and their cultures invaded."[14] The conquered (or vanquished)[15] ones were evangelized from a perspective of paternalism, intimidation, or even brutality. This unfortunate history continues to influence the Church today.

If the original primary evangelizing context were one of power rather than persuasion, then the evangelized peoples would have been treated as second class citizens and considered unworthy or incapable of forming an intellectual basis for their faith. The principles of the faith were not presented to them primarily in an intellectual and abstract way. Fundamental Christian doctrines, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, originally formulated in terms of Greek and European philosophy and culture, were not readily understandable to the evangelized in Latin America (and the Philippines), because these people were not educated to think in abstract, intellectual ways.[16] Fundamental religious doctrines were presented to the people not in terms of intellectual concepts or abstract discussion, but rather in terms of pictures, art, or stories. Espín provides an historical example of this approach in his work, where he describes how such concrete methods were used to teach the doctrine of the Trinity.[17]

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[14] Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Roman Catholicism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), 22.

[15] Espín seems to use the terms "conquered" and "vanquished" interchangeably. From this point on, I will use "vanquished."

[16] Espín, 57.

[17] Ibid., Chapter 2, "Trinitarian Monotheism and the Birth of Popular Catholicism," 32-62. Espín provides details of how each person of the Blessed Trinity was presented by using the media of "Testerian manuscripts" (Amerindian catechisms), religious art, and popular devotions. He points out that the concept of the Trinity is a mystery that can only begin to be analyzed if abstract philosophical categories are employed. However, the Spanish catechists had to try to teach this doctrine to a people who were not educated to think in this way. They did it by finding concrete ways to present it that in fact did not convey

Espín argues that because the overall experience of the evangelized peoples was one of being *vanquished*, not one of being *persuaded*, their faith and religion were also formed within this same experiential context (of being vanquished).

The Spanish colonial periods in both Latin America and the Philippines lasted until the 19th century. The Latin American republics and the Philippines won independence from Spain in the 19th century, but for Christians this did not necessarily mean the end of their experience of being vanquished. In the case of Mexico, the Church was brutally persecuted in the early decades of the 20th century. In the case of the Philippines, Spanish colonialism gave way in 1898 to U.S. colonialism, which lasted another 50 years, except for a three-year period of subjugation to the Japanese during World War II.

State persecution and U.S. colonialism ended in the Latin American or Filipino homelands in the 20th century.[18] However, Christians who migrated from those lands to the U.S. continued to face persecution, inferiorization, or racism from the dominant European American culture even after their arrival in the U.S. As Espín points out, the social experience of a people *as they have actually lived it* will form the basis for their cultural conceptualization and expression of this experience in symbolic, folkloric, and artistic terms of "religion."[19] This is the source of both Latino and Filipino "popular religion."

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abstract Trinitarian doctrine. However, these concrete ways did become the basis for some elements of popular religion.

[18] Some scholars argue that U.S. colonization of the Philippines did not end with independence in 1946. They point to the presence of U.S. military bases in the Philippines until 1992. Moreover, they argue that the experience of being colonized was internalized in the Filipino cultural psyche and that this internalization, or inferiorization, continues even today.

[19] Espín, 23-24.

Jaime Vidal defines popular religion as the general system employed by common people in their task of constructing meaning about "God" and the ultimate mystery of human life. In other words, popular religion is "the religious attitudes and expressions of the 'popular classes' as distinguished from society as a whole."[20] Popular religion can take many forms. Among these Vidal includes art, music, poetry, ritual, traditional customs, and prayer formulae.[21] I would add to this list folk tales, storytelling, statues, candles, novenas, processions, and devotion to liturgical and nonliturgical saints. These forms would be distinct from the religious attitudes and expressions of the dominant "European American" or "elite" culture, which tend to take the efficient form of abstract intellectual concepts. As Virgilio Elizondo puts it,

> Those (popular) expressions of the faith which are celebrated voluntarily by the majority of the people, transmitted from generation to generation by the people themselves and which go on with the church, without it or even in spite of it, express the *deepest identity of the people*. They are the ultimate foundation of the people's innermost being and the common expression of the collective soul of the people. They are supremely meaningful for the people who celebrate them and meaningless to the outsider. To the people whose very life-source they are, no explanation will ever express or communicate their true and full meaning. Without them, there might be associations of individuals bound together by common interest (e.g., the corporation, the State, etc.), but there will never be the experience of being a people.[22]

Popular religion is simply "a different way of relating to reality and of living the Christian gospel."[23] Members of the dominant European American majority may not be able to understand fully the attraction of popular religion within the Latino or Filipino cultures, for the simple reason that the life experiences of members of the dominant

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[20] Jaime R. Vidal, Ph.D., "Popular Religion Among the Hispanics in the General Area of the Archdiocese of Newark," in *Presencia Nueva: Knowledge For Service and Hope: A Study of Hispanics in the Archdiocese of Newark* (Newark, N.J: Archdiocese of Newark, 1988), 248.
[21] Ibid., 247.
[22] Virgilio Elizondo, "Popular Religion," in *Perspectivas: Hispanic Ministry*, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck, Yolanda Tarango, and Timothy M. Matovina (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 106. Emphasis in the original.
[23] Espín, 144.

culture, in both the secular and religious arenas, have been very different from those of the Latino and Filipino cultures. Members of the dominant culture, whose cultural memory does not include being vanquished, do not conceptualize spiritual realities in a way that lends itself to expression in popular religion; they will instead conceptualize those spiritual realities in a way that is more direct, abstract, and intellectual. The temptation for members of the dominant culture is to see the European American model of spirituality as the only authentic one. However, as Vidal points out, "in order to evangelize the popular classes, it is not necessary to 'convert' them to an elite form of Christianity, but . . . a popular version of the Faith can be just as valid in its own milieu, and much more effective."[24] Clergy and laity from low context backgrounds will sometimes view popular religion with suspicion, seeing it as superstitious or not "pure." However, popular religion is a necessary cultural construct of peoples who for centuries have experienced being vanquished.[25] Popular religion does not *contradict* "official" and "doctrinal" mainstream modes of religion, but it does provide a system for expressing and processing cultural experiences that cannot be adequately expressed or processed through those modes of religion.[26]

Thus, the Latino and Filipino cultures share a common Spanish heritage, a common cultural experience of having been vanquished for centuries, and a common cultural emphasis on popular religious practices and devotions. Popular religion is a necessary way of expressing and processing their lived experience of being vanquished and the hope that God will always sustain them.

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[24] Vidal, 253.
[25] Espín, 22-31.
[26] Ibid., 68.

Another point of similarity between the two cultures is that both Latin America and the Philippines are diverse. Within the European American and African American cultures in the U.S., the terms "Latino" (or "Hispanic"), and "Filipino" are generic and somewhat artificial labels used to describe peoples who are in reality not homogenous but enormously diverse. The diverse characteristics of the Latino and Filipino populations may not be immediately apparent to members of other cultures, but these distinctions remain very important to the Latinos and Filipinos themselves, even after they have immigrated to the U.S.[27]

There are also a number of important *differences* between the Latino and Filipino cultures. First, Latinos can be of any race,[28] but Filipinos are all racially distinct from European American and African American members of the dominant U.S. culture.

A second important difference between the two cultures has to do with the concept of "immigration." With the exception of a few Filipino sailors who arrived in Morro Bay, California, in 1587 and a number of Filipinos who settled in St. Malo's Bay, Louisiana, in 1763,[29] the vast majority of Filipinos in the U.S. today immigrated into a preexisting U.S. in the 20th century, after the Philippines became U.S. territory. By contrast, the ancestors of many of today's U.S. Latinos had been living in Puerto Rico or in what is now the Southwestern U.S. for several centuries before those areas became U.S. territory. As Ada María Isasi-Díaz says, "Great numbers of Mexican Americans

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[27] In regard to the diversity of Latino immigrants, see Kenneth G. Davis, O.F.M., Conv., "Introduction," in *Bridging Boundaries: The Pastoral Care of U.S. Hispanics,* ed. Kenneth G. Davis and Yolanda Tarango (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2000), xiii-xiv. See also U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 2002), page 22 of 26. www.nccbuscc.org/hispanicaffairs/encuentromission.htm; Internet; accessed 15 November 2002. In regard to the diversity of Filipino immigrants, see Rick Bonus, *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 27.

[28] Davis, "Introduction," in *Bridging Boundaries: The Pastoral Care of U.S. Hispanics*, xiv.

[29] Bonus, 191, footnote 5.

never moved to the United States. Instead, the border crossed *them* in 1848 when Mexico had to give up today's Southwest in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (that ended the U.S.-Mexican War)."[30]

A third important difference is that most recent Latino immigrants in the U.S. have had to learn how to live in the dominant U.S. culture and to speak English since immigrating. On the other hand, most Filipino immigrants had already gone far toward making these adjustments before they ever left the Philippines.[31] As one Filipino immigrant has said, "Long before the Filipino immigrant, tourist, or visitor sets foot on the U.S. continent, she—her body and sensibility—has been prepared by the thoroughly Americanized culture of the homeland."[32]

A fourth important difference between the two cultures is that many Filipino immigrants have earned high school diplomas, if not some college education, before they immigrated.[33] By contrast, most Latino immigrants have arrived with relatively little formal education as compared to the U.S. society as a whole.[34]

A fifth difference is that Filipino immigrants have had their own particular history of institutional inferiorization (being "vanquished") *within the U.S. Navy itself.* This is one particular difference between the two cultures that carries special importance for the U.S. Navy chaplain. Culture bears memory, and this relatively recent history continues to lurk like an iceberg beneath the surface of Filipino culture in today's Navy. For this reason, I will now offer a brief summary of this history.

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[30] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Pluralism," in *Perspectivas: Hispanic Ministry*, 23. Emphasis in the original.
[31] Bonus, 33.
[32] E. San Juan Jr., "Configuring the Filipino Diaspora in the United States," *Diaspora* 3, No. 2 (Fall 1994): 117, quoted in Bonus, 25.
[33] Bonus, 53.
[34] Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., *The Second Wave: Hispanic Ministry and the Evangelization of Cultures* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 11.

In 1898, the Philippines became a U.S. territory. From that time until World War II, it was possible for Filipinos to emigrate to the U.S. and then join the U.S. military. The Philippines became an independent nation in 1946. The following year, an international agreement was executed that allowed Filipino citizens to join the U.S. military directly from the Philippines, without having to emigrate first to the U.S. From that point on, the majority of those joining the U.S. military chose the Navy. Many thousands of Filipinos tried to join, because the pay was far more than they could make in the Philippines.[35] In fact, "The salary of a Filipino enlistee often placed him among the top quarter of his country's wage earners."[36] Many of those who applied had college degrees, but they did not admit it, for fear that the Navy would turn them away as being overqualified.[37]

The process of Navy screening and testing took place at Sangley Point in Cavite City and Subic Bay in Olongapo City. Only a tiny minority of Filipinos who applied to the Navy were accepted. In 1973, only 400 out of 200,000 applicants were accepted.[38]

Between 1947 and 1970, the only career designation open to the vast majority of Filipino sailors was the Steward rating. Basically, stewards did only housekeeping work. Their job was to set up for meals, cook and clean up afterwards, shine shoes, and clean living spaces for officers. It was demeaning work.[39] Leo Sicat was a Chemical Engineer who joined the Navy and became a steward. He felt insulted to be working as a

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[35] Yen le Espiritu, "Filipinos in the U.S. Navy," in *Filipino American Lives,* ed. Yen le Espiritu (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 1-16.
[36] Ibid., 15.
[37] Dario Villa, "I Offended Many Filipinos because I was an FOB," in *Filipino American Lives*, 169-170.
[38] Espiritu, 15.
[39] Ibid., 16. See also Matt R. Jardiniano, "Hampton Roads: Filipinos in the U.S. Navy," in *Filipino American National Historical Journal*, Volume 1, 1988, ed. Jesus Dizon, Ph.D. (Originally published under the name *Ala-Ala: Journal of Filipino American History and Culture*), 25-27.

"waitress".[40] Others had the same experience: "Those who excelled in (Steward) school were asked to work for the admirals. Some took the job. Some who know what it was like refused, because an admiral's steward was in essence his personal servant. He cooked for (the) admiral's family, fixed the table, did the dishes, picked up after the kids, walked the dogs, did the laundry, mowed the lawn."[41]

The Navy told them before they enlisted that they would have to become stewards. So, why did they join? According to Sicat, "We felt that the main thing was to join the Navy. Perhaps we thought that we could fight for what we wanted once we were already in the U.S. So we ignored the contract that bound us into not being able to do other work besides stewardship work. We took that gamble."[42]

Mauricio Comia felt insulted to be working as a steward in the 1960's, because the officers would leave their shoes outside their stateroom doors when they went to bed, and Comia had to shine them during the night and have them back in place by morning.[43]

In 1970, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, changed Navy policy and made Filipinos eligible for all ratings in the Navy, except those restricted to U.S. citizens or native born citizens. Many Filipino stewards transferred to other ratings at that time.[44] However, Filipinos continued to feel "inferiorized" for many years, because the dominant European American culture and "European American" food at sea made the culture seem alien to most Filipino sailors. At sea, they would gather together

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[40] Leo Sicat, "I Sacrificed my Five-Year College Education to Become a Steward," in *Filipino American Lives*, 106.
[41] Jardiniano, 27.
[42] Sicat, 106.
[43] Chief Mess Management Specialist Mauricio Comia, interview by author, USS BELLEAU WOOD (LHA-3), San Diego, California, 1982. USS BELLEAU WOOD is an amphibious assault ship. The letters "LHA" indicate the class of ship; they are not an acronym. The number "3" means that BELLEAU WOOD was the third ship of its class to be commissioned.
[44] Sicat, 109.

to speak their languages and cook "Filipino" food, but the rules against using appropriated food stocks for private, unauthorized consumption made this a risky business. Some were disciplined for it. Still, the desire to maintain cultural identity accounted for many taking that risk.

In 1992, when the U.S. bases in the Philippines closed, the international agreement allowing Filipino citizens to join the U.S. military directly from the Philippines was terminated. Today's remaining Filipino immigrant sailors either joined prior to 1992 or thereafter as immigrants. Today, there is a strong cultural identity among Filipino immigrant sailors at most Navy activities. One example would be the Filipino community at Naval Air Facility, Atsugi, Japan, which I mentioned previously. There, they gather frequently for family and cultural celebrations.

This 20th century history of inferiorization of Filipinos, both in U.S. society at large and within the Navy, is relevant because this past history continues even today to have a subliminal cultural impact on the Navy Filipino community. The pastor who works with Filipinos in today's Navy needs to be consciously aware of this history, because it would be all too easy for a European American pastor working with a largely Filipino Navy congregation to consciously or unconsciously assume the role as colonial oppressor. Likewise, it would be all too easy for the Filipino parishioners to assume the role as the colonized. Good ministry demands that we move beyond this, especially within the Church!

A sixth difference between the two immigrant cultures concerns the body of contextual theology that has been developed within the Church during the past 30 years. At present, the Church's body of contextual theology has been much more fully

developed for Latinos than it has been for Filipinos. This is a function of numbers. The 2000 Census recorded 35.3 million persons of Latino ancestry in the U.S., as compared to only 1.85 million persons of Filipino ancestry.[45] Also, there are many doctorate level Latino theologians in the U.S. today. U.S. Latino theology has developed enormously in the past 30 years; Latino theologians have formed their own professional society.[46] By contrast, Filipino U.S. immigrant theology is still in its infancy; today there is only one doctorate level Filipino theologian in the U.S.[47]

To summarize Chapter 1, there are a number of important similarities between the diverse Latino and Filipino cultures, to which many sea service parishioners belong. Both cultures bear the memory of being vanquished and inferiorized. Popular religious devotional expression allows Latinos and Filipinos to "process" their culturally remembered experiences of inferiorization and to continue to live in the hope that God will see them through. There are also a number of important differences between the two cultures.

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[45] Total population of U.S. Latinos: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Brief, May 2001, quoted in U.S. Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, *Demographics* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, 2003). http://www.usccb.org/hispanicaffairs/demo.htm; Internet; accessed 8 January 2003. Total population of U.S. Filipinos: Census 2000, as quoted in U.S. Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*, page 5 of 27.

[46] In 1988, a number of Latino theologians formed the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the U.S. (ACHTUS). For a discussion of ACHTUS and the history of Latino contextual theology in the U.S. since 1972, see Eduardo C. Fernández, *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972-1998)* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), Chapter 2, "The History of U.S. Hispanic Theology: 1972-1998," 35-93.

[47] This theologian is Fr. Tito M. Cruz, S.M., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Education, Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, California.

# CHAPTER 2

## Low Context and High Context Cultures

What does a European American priest need to consider when he is called upon to preach and preside at liturgy with people of different ethnic cultural backgrounds? The U.S. Roman Catholic Church at large has been addressing this challenge in recent decades. A number of parishes have settled for a mere recognition that the congregation is ethnically diverse. However, merely recognizing diversity without also making intentional efforts to accommodate it in the preaching and liturgy is insufficient. In fact, to merely acknowledge diversity can be a liability if it falls into the trap of reducing liturgical inculturation to the realm of lip service. In such a case, the preaching and liturgy will probably be done as if everyone in the pews were members of the dominant European American culture.

Do the members of ethnic minority cultures feel "at home" in the liturgy? In other words, do they feel that their pastor preaches and presides at the liturgy with their culture in mind? Ethnocentrism could produce a European American style liturgy that insulates itself from minority influence by claiming to be "multicultural." Allan Figueroa Deck is critical of this, because it no longer seeks to relate to particular cultures but simply legitimates superficiality; in this situation the needs of minority cultures are not really being met.[48] The U.S. Roman Catholic bishops have also pointed out that this kind of reductionism can sometimes operate on the diocesan level when all ethnic ministries

[48] Allan Figueroa Deck, "Multiculturalism as an Ideology," in *Perspectivas: Hispanic Ministry*, 31-34.

are consolidated into one generic "ethnic ministry" office. U.S. Latinos have expressed the concern that this has the effect of diluting the identity of Latino and other ministries.[49]

Some sort of conceptual categories are needed in order to recognize the practical implications that cultural diversity within the congregation has for preaching and liturgy. I suggest that the models of "low context" and "high context" ethnic cultures can be helpful for this purpose.

Edward T. Hall is an anthropologist known for his work in intercultural communication. He identifies law as a useful example of how different cultures around the world *contextualize* things to a greater or lesser degree.[50] To illustrate, Hall compares the way law operates in the United States to how it operates in France and Japan. In the United States, law has evolved into a *low context* profession. In other words, only the bare facts, stripped of all contextualizing background information, are allowed into U.S. courts as evidence. This is opposed to the way that the French and Japanese legal systems operate. There, the courts actively seek to discover the contextualizing circumstances behind the surface acts that brought these specific people to trial. The French and Japanese courts seek to know what kind of human beings were involved in the acts, not merely what took place.[51] Thus, the practice of law in those two countries is a *high context* profession. By contrast, in the U.S. it is *low context*.

Hall says that the U.S. legal system operates out of a larger low context American culture that attributes more importance to *what* is said than to *how* it is said. His analysis

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[49] U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Encuentro and Mission*, 21.
[50] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981), 105-116.
[51] Ibid., 107-8. Hall says on p. 108 that in French courts, everything is heard—including hearsay and gossip. Such contextualizing data would be considered irrelevant in American courts.

could just as easily be applied to the U.S. military system.[52] The U.S. military is a *low context* culture in many ways. However, it is high context in other ways.

The military is low context because it insists on uniform standards of dress, grooming, technical procedure, and personal behavior. It employs a common language of technical terms, acronyms, and slang that are instantly transportable and operative within any particular situation or geographical location. Efficient use of material, energy, and time are essential to mission accomplishment. Direct communication is valued and demanded. Military members must be always ready at a moment's notice to go anywhere, at any time to carry out a potentially lethal mission. Military members are not encouraged to ponder *why* the mission is necessary or its effects on the individuals who find themselves on either the sending or receiving end of any lethal projection of power. The military institution cannot make such contextual questions its primary concern; military members trust their leaders to consider those things.

Especially in peacetime, the military environment is low context. Service members are trained to do their jobs efficiently, no matter who they are working with, what the working conditions are, or how they feel. Of course, military leaders do their best to make the environment as pleasant as possible, but mission accomplishment doesn't necessarily depend on that.

[52] In fact, Hall specifically mentions the military as a possible object of his analysis: "Any of the basic cultural systems and subsystems can serve as a focus for observation. These include matters such as material culture, business institutions, marriage and the family, social organization, language, even the military (all armies bear the stamp of their culture)." Ibid., 106.

Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennett have pointed out some typical U.S. cultural characteristics.[53] Among others, they identify the following cultural characteristics as quintessentially "American": a tendency to put a higher value on *doing* rather than on *being*--an intellectual framework of *gesellschaft*; [54] a dualistic separation of work from play; a near-future orientation that places great importance on competition, measurable achievement, and efficient use of time; a tendency at least sometimes to value technical skills over people skills; a system that rewards individual effort; and a "referential" communication style that seeks to persuade others by giving them technical information and logical reasoning. Once the facts have been presented clearly, it is assumed that the listener will have to be persuaded by the logic of the argument. All of these characteristics are very much institutionalized in the military culture, and they can be considered low context traits.

In some ways, however, the military could be thought of, in Stewart and Bennett's terms, as a *gemeinschaft* [55] society (what military members might call camaraderie and teamwork). The authors also point out that there is a social motive called *ascription* that acts as an alternative to achievement in some situations. Ascription attributes a person's identity to social status, or playing a role, rather than on achievement. The authors point to rank structure in the military as an example of "ascription."[56] These *gemeinschaft* or

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[53] Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennett, *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Revised Edition (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1991), 7, 70-84, 154.
[54] Ibid., 7-8. According to the authors, *gesellschaft* societies are characterized by rational thought, utilitarian standards, and objective reality.
[55] Ibid., 7. According to the authors, *gemeinschaft* societies are those whose social order is based on common customs, language, and an emphasis on the importance of interpersonal social relations.
[56] Ibid., 77. Although the authors did not specify *clergy* as an example of people who might be the objects of ascription, I suggest that this application could be made, because within U.S. culture, clergy are generally identified and regarded more by status or role than by achievement.

"ascriptive" characteristics, also part of the military culture, can be considered high context traits.

So we see that the military is a complex social institution, in many ways low context and in some ways high context. However, as Hall points out,[57] the military bears the stamp of its larger culture, so it can be said that the U.S. military is *primarily* low context. At any rate, the question is of practical relevance here in terms of doing liturgy within the military. The low context aspects of the military tend to predominate in peacetime and administrative settings, and the high context aspects tend to predominate in operational wartime and deployed settings. Obviously, the chaplain's ministry is especially critical in wartime and on the battlefield, but intentional efforts to enhance the liturgy in order to minister better to minority ethnic populations will be of much wider applicability in peacetime than in wartime. So, normal peacetime and chapel-centered ministry settings can be considered primarily low context.

As every chaplain knows, institutional pressures to make the most efficient use of time, energy, and money are very real, in both operational and chapel settings. Worship services are always limited by time and frequently by space. At sea or in the field, operational schedules demand either short, time-efficient worship services or none at all. Ashore in a base chapel, chaplains are rushed by the need to empty the chapel in time for the next scheduled worship services of another faith denomination. The institutional need for efficiency tends to drive everything associated with the peacetime military into a low context framework, where the primary objective is to get the job done as efficiently as possible without concern for context, and then to move on quickly to the next task. The predictable result is a low context religion, where bare liturgical rubrics and

[57] Hall, 106.

efficiency of the spoken word are emphasized, and the affective/environmental dimension of the worship service is deemphasized.

As already noted, most Navy priests come from Western European backgrounds. Specifically, many come from low context "Northern" cultures, such as Germany, Poland, or Ireland, where meaning tends to be constructed analytically.[58] People from these cultures tend to "say what they mean and mean what they say!" The *content* of what is said is more important to them (and to low context listeners) than the *way* it is said or the *context* in which it is said.[59] This low context "Northern" culture has more or less translated itself into the dominant "European American" culture that has become the norm in the U.S. and in the U.S. Church. Many, if not most, Navy priests were formed in seminaries or religious houses where these low context patterns of faith, thought, and worship were normative. This stands to reason, because most Navy priests come from the U.S. and were formed in U.S. seminaries. However, even those Navy priests who are not European American were probably formed in seminaries where the European American cultural model was dominant.[60] Accordingly, most Navy priests either grew up in or have been formed by low context European American Church culture, so their spirituality tends to be expressed in a low context, intellectual way, rather than in a high context, affective, and emotional way.

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[58] Vidal, 258.

[59] Stewart and Bennett, 154.

[60] Even today, seminaries within the Philippines are deeply influenced by European American culture, as are other Filipino institutions such as government, schools, and universities. This is a result of centuries of colonialism. For background on this, see Nilda Rimonte, "Colonialism's Legacy: The Inferiorizing of the Filipino," in *Filipino Americans: Transformation and Identity,* ed. Maria P. Root (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1997), 39-61. In regard to this same issue, Vidal, whose subject is pastoral care for the Hispanic population in Newark, N.J., speaks about seminaries in general (not specifically about seminaries in the Philippines or any other country) when he says that members of ethnic minorities tend to become assimilated into the dominant Church culture and separated from their own culture once they arrive at the seminary: "The seminary as a 'total institution' is a powerful tool for assimilation. Those who resist assimilation tend to either reject such an institution or be rejected by it." Vidal, 252, footnote 39.

Yet, as we see, today many Roman Catholic sailors and marines are not European American; they are either Latino or Filipino. If they were mostly European American, it would be a relatively simple matter to preach to them. The Latino and Filipino cultures are not low context ethnic cultures; they are high context ethnic cultures that construct religious meaning not primarily from dogma and ethical principles, but from popular religion: art, music, poetry, ritual, statues, candles, novenas, and other popular customs.[61] To put it another way, it can be said that on the one hand, low context cultures tend to construct meaning in a linear way, primarily through the spoken word. On the other hand, high context cultures tend to construct meaning in a more circular, multisensory, extra-verbal, and intuitive way.[62]

To summarize this chapter, the influence of ethnic culture on the Church has drawn more attention in recent years. Substantive discussion of this issue is much more productive than a superficial labeling of the Church as "multicultural." Substantive discussion will reveal that the military culture itself is primarily low context, especially in peacetime chapel settings. The European American culture predominant in U.S. society at large and in the U.S. Church is low context. Most Navy priests today are products of low context Church culture. However, the Latino and Filipino ethnic cultures are high context. These cultural patterns of communication and meaning-making carry implications for preaching and presiding.

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[61] Vidal, 247, where his subject is popular religion of Hispanics. For a comparable analysis of the Filipino culture, see also Wenifredo B. Vergara, *Milkfish in Brackish Water: Filipino Christian Ministry in American Context* (San Jose: Filipino American Ministry Institute, 1992), 25-26.

[62] Raúl Gómez, SDS, "Preaching the Ritual Masses among Latinos," in *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations,* ed. Kenneth G. Davis and Jorge L. Presmanes (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), 104-107. In this article, Gómez introduces a set of vector diagrams created by Dr. Marina Herrera. These diagrams represent how people from different cultures tend to draw conclusions. According to Gómez, Herrera associates both the Romance/Hispanic and Asian/Chinese cultures with an indirect mode of meaning-making, while the Euro-American model of meaning-making is distinctly linear.

# CHAPTER 3

## Crossing Cultural Divides: Communication Patterns and Affective Expression

The sea service priest and his parishioners share a common low context *military* culture that normally emphasizes efficiency and direct communication. But the priest and many of his parishioners do not share a common *ethnic and religious* culture. Generally speaking, his ethnic and religious culture is low context; theirs is high context. Naturally enough, chaplains tend to preach in the way most familiar and comfortable for them. Unfortunately, low context preaching will not effectively reach high context listeners. James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers interviewed a number of preachers who face the challenge of preaching across ethnic cultural differences. The interviewees had experience preaching to "orally sensitive groups" who construct meaning from storytelling rather than from reading. Such "orally sensitive groups" can be considered "high context" for purposes of this discussion. As Nieman and Rogers point out, "In orally sensitive groups, repetition is a valued part of speech because it aids the memory, giving the ears (the only means for reception) more than one chance to hear what is being conveyed. There is a greater expectation on speakers, therefore, to take their time in making points, state them several times over, and delight in the digressions and playfulness of language that make speech memorable. These strategies take time, of course, and may seem inefficient to ethnic groups oriented more toward an economy of spoken words and the use of efficient, written texts."[63]

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[63] James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 37.

The approach described here could perhaps be thought of as preaching to a high context culture. It sacrifices efficiency[64] for a broader kind of effectiveness. It may seem hard for a low context preacher to do this, but the most efficient sermon in the world will not help people who don't absorb it. St. Augustine, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, puts forth principles for effective presentation in preaching. He says, "The careful pursuit of . . . clarity sometimes leads one to neglect elegant vocabulary and consider not what sounds good but what is good for putting over and making clear what one has to say. . . .What is the use of correct speech if it does not meet with the listener's understanding? There is no point in speaking at all if our words are not understood by the people."[65]

Because everyone in the military speaks English, Navy priests will almost always preach to sailors, marines, and families in English.[66] This is one significant way in which military ministry differs from ministry in civilian parishes, where preaching and presiding are often done in Spanish.

However, even if the chaplain always (or almost always) preaches in English, there will still be other significant cultural barriers to cross. Among these is the category of *affective expression*. Stewart and Bennett point out that the Latin American culture is generally more affectively expressive than the European American culture.[67] It is safe to

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[64] "Efficiency" as used in this sentence means communicating ideas in as few words as possible, using as little time as possible. Verbal efficiency tends to be a linguistic characteristic of low context cultures but not of high context cultures. For example, Gómez says on p. 106 that "it often takes more words to say things in Spanish than in English."

[65] St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. and ed. R. P. H. Green, Oxford Early Christian Texts, Gen. ed. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), bk. Four, par. 64, 66, p. 225.

[66] There may be some rare special occasions when a chaplain is called upon to preach and preside in a military context with a Latino congregation in Spanish. Kenneth G. Davis offers some helpful advice in this regard. See Kenneth G. Davis, "Preaching in Spanish as a Second Language," in *Perspectivas: Hispanic Ministry*, 90-93. However, such occasions will be rare. Moreover, chaplains will almost never be called upon to preach or preside in any other language besides English and, very occasionally, Spanish.

[67] Stewart and Bennett, 151.

extend this comparison to the Filipino culture, with the same conclusion.[68] Consequently, affective expression can be identified as an important issue in cross cultural preaching. If a low context speaker is not used to communicating *affectively* when speaking to high context listeners, then he needs to learn to do so. As Vidal points out, "In high context cultures . . . factors of context and feeling are essential to successful communication. The high context person or group will not assimilate the message, or be motivated to act on it, by the strength of the words alone; if they are to be effective, the words must be wrapped in a matrix of tone, emphasis, gesture (facial and bodily), body contact, etc."[69]

Vidal goes on to relate this principle directly to preaching. What he says here of Latinos can be extended to preaching with other high context ethnic cultures:

> The same principles apply also to preaching: a cerebral form of preaching, which relies primarily or exclusively on the verbal element, will leave the Hispanic worshiper cold and unconvinced. Just as important as the content is the context. The preacher must learn to use his face, his arms, his whole body, to convey and reinforce the meaning of his verbal message: he must rediscover the arts of rhetoric, so discredited in current low context circles. Once again this is not to be done in a pretentious or overly theatrical way, but preachers from low context backgrounds must learn to feel comfortable and natural with forms of non-verbal communication which will at first seem to them artificial and embarrassing.
>
> This is not meant to imply that content is of no importance when preaching to Hispanics. It is of course the duty of every priest or deacon to avoid heresy in the content of his homilies, and not only heresy but also triviality and simple-minded moralism, and to preach the profound mystery of the Roman Catholic faith. But when preaching to Hispanics he must realize that this mystery cannot be effectively communicated by a merely verbal explanation; it needs to be expressed also in "body language." Both in preaching and in celebration, "high context" does not mean that content is unimportant, but that meaning is absorbed in a holistic way, not only or even mainly from <u>words</u>, but from the total event. It may be that the ultimate meaning of the statement that Hispanics are a "high context" people is that they are able to perceive when our body language and our way of incarnating a message deny the very words we are uttering, and when

[68] See Vergara, 9-10, 23-27.
[69] Vidal, 258.

> these things demonstrate our unconscious, and thus most real, commitment to the content of our message. (Vidal, 260-261. Emphasis in the original.)

To summarize this chapter, the cross cultural divide between the low context preacher and his largely high context congregation carries important implications for preaching and presiding, even if English is the only language ever used. The nonverbal element is important in preaching and presiding, as is employing an appropriate degree of affective expression. Another implication for both preaching and presiding would be the need to introduce elements of a culture's popular religion. That topic will be explored in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### Some Concrete Ways to Move Toward High Context Preaching and Liturgy

All priests, including Navy priests, should be concerned with two important operating principles in preaching and presiding.

The first is the importance of presenting authoritative teaching of the Church's Magisterium. Today, many parishioners have little, if any, knowledge of the basic doctrines of the faith. The reality of the pastoral situation today is that the Sunday sermon is probably the only chance priests have to teach any doctrine to the majority of the people. Sometimes, priests will need to present certain magisterial teachings that people will never hear otherwise, including the "controversial" magisterial teachings against contraception and homosexual activity. It is quite possible that most adult parishioners, who may have attended Sunday Mass all their lives, have never once heard these teachings explained or advocated in any forum whatsoever. The world and its people need to hear them presented in a fresh and convincing--and high context--way.

One good example of a fresh way to present magisterial teaching is Pope John Paul II's work *The Theology of the Body*,[70] which unpacks and presents the Church's doctrine on human sexuality in a new, refreshing, and positive way. Instead of presenting this doctrine in a negative way, *The Theology of the Body* shows how the human person is body and soul, and how self-giving sex between spouses is body language that ratifies "in the flesh" the complete personal donation called for by sacramental marriage. This theology builds on the principle of the fundamental unity between body and soul.

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[70] Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997), 63-64.

This particular example is relevant to this project, because the Latino and Filipino cultures within the U.S. Church are in a strong position to absorb and teach the revealed truth about sexuality and the human person to a contemporary dominant U.S. culture that sees sex in terms of a dualistic separation between body and soul. Eduardo C. Fernández points out that several Latino theologians have said that the U.S. Latino Church culture acts, and will act, as a prophetic presence within the U.S. Roman Catholic Church at large. This is precisely because the Latino component of the U.S. Church is not afflicted with the spiritual secularism and individualism prevalent in the dominant U.S. culture.[71]

I would carry this valuable insight further, to argue that the Latino culture takes a more holistic view of the human person than the dominant European American culture does. The sex-saturated culture in the U.S. operates out of a Eurocentric, secular, and dualistic thought process, but the Latino culture has not (yet) been "converted" to it. Consequently, the Latino culture can act as a prophetic witness, to teach the dominant European American culture that the body and soul are integrated and not dualistically separated. Thus, we may soon hear the first "popular" advocacy of magisterial teachings in this important area from Latino theologians. It could also be that such advocacy will soon come from Filipino or other Asian American theologians. As Vergara points out, Filipino culture and Asian American culture emphasize holistic ("embracive") unity of the human person, while contemporary European American dominant U.S. culture is generally dualistic.[72] Peter C. Phan has said that "sacred texts and ethical and spiritual practices of Asian religions . . . have nourished and shaped the spirituality of Asian people for thousands of years before the coming of Christianity to their lands and

[71] Fernández, 31-33.
[72] Vergara, 9.

continue to do so . . . . The sacred texts, together with innumerable commentaries upon them, serve as an inexhaustible fountain of wisdom for Christian theology. In addition, the ethical and spiritual practices prescribed by these religions can enrich the moral teachings as well as the spiritual practices of Christianity."[73]

Therefore, a fresh, new, and positive presentation of the Church's ancient magisterial teachings could very well find better soil among today's high context hearers than among today's low context hearers. The long-term result could be a wonderful witness to the U.S. Church at large, coming through the holistic spirituality of the high context Latino and Filipino cultures.

A second important operating principle in presiding is that it is neither necessary nor desirable to take inappropriate liberties with the Mass rubrics. The liturgy does not belong to the presider or to the local community; it belongs to the universal Church. The liturgy must faithfully follow the rubrics of the Roman ritual as approved and promulgated by *The Roman Missal*.[74] However, the local pastor does have the latitude to adapt the liturgy in appropriate ways.

At this point, it is important to recognize first that there are many opportunities *outside* the liturgy to honor the popular religious devotions of high context people. For example, the priest can encourage the people to pray novenas before or after Mass; to pray to saints, to the Blessed Mother, or to Jesus in the homes of the people; to organize

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[73] Peter C. Phan, "Introduction," in *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective*, ed. Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1999), xvii.

[74] "The priest must remember that he is the servant of the sacred Liturgy, and that he himself is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, remove, or to change anything in the celebration of the Mass." *The Roman Missal: Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, 2000), par. 24, p. 7. See also Vatican Council II, "No other person whatsoever, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on their own authority." *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, in *The Sixteen Basic Documents: Vatican II Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations,* ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), par. 22, p. 127.

outdoor processions; and to incorporate popular devotions in social events. These popular devotions are not necessarily superstitious, and there seems to be no good reason for a pastor to try to suppress them. In fact, they can offer good starting points for further teaching, preaching, and evangelizing.

However, two things must be remembered. First, the popular devotions of the people are valuable in themselves, apart from any catechesis that may be developed from them. As discussed in Chapter 1, popular religion offers a privileged medium for high context people to express their cultural religious experience and their hopes for the future. Second, there is also a place *within* the liturgy for popular devotions, even within the Sunday liturgy.

The Vatican II document *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* appears to encourage cultural adaptation of the liturgy: "The Christian people's devotions, provided they conform to the laws and norms of the church, are to be highly recommended, especially when they are authorized by the Apostolic See. Devotions authorized by bishops in particular churches according to lawfully approved customs or books are also held in special esteem. But such devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it, and lead the people to it, since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them."[75] The Council goes on to say, "Even in the liturgy the church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not affect the faith or the well-being of the entire community. Rather does it cultivate and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations. Anything in people's way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error the church studies with sympathy, and, if possible,

[75] Vatican Council II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, par. 13, p. 123-124.

preserves intact. It sometimes even admits such things into the liturgy itself, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit."[76]

Arturo Pérez, interpreting the intention of the Council fathers in this matter, says, "Since the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy . . . has called us not only to adapt a few externals of the rite, but to strive to truly inculturate the worship into the various cultures of the world, we may have to rethink the nature of this rite's genius. Perhaps at the present time the Roman liturgy is recognizable as a human being, but an unnamed human being best understood as a kind of skeleton which is without a specific identity. It is not until it takes on the flesh and blood of a living culture that this rite comes to life and effectively calls us to life in Christ."[77]

Anscar Chupungco says that one of the liturgist's jobs is to figure out how to incorporate elements of popular religious practices appropriately into the liturgy in local church communities where popular religion thrives vigorously.[78] He argues elsewhere that, while prudence is obviously needed in cultural adaptation of the liturgy, such adaptation has been part of the Church's tradition from her beginnings.[79] In fact, he says, "Liturgical adaptation is a theological imperative arising from the event of the incarnation."[80]

If the reader accepts the argument made in Chapter 1 that popular religion is not necessarily superstitious, we can turn now to other possible objections to incorporating popular religious devotions into the liturgy.

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[76] Ibid., par. 37, p. 131.
[77] Arturo Pérez, *Popular Catholicism: A Hispanic Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988), 20.
[78] Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religion, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 119.
[79] Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 3-41.
[80] Ibid., 87.

One objection might be that popular devotions of a specific culture are helpful only for people of that particular culture. In other words, the concern might be that worshippers from different cultures will feel left out. One possible answer might be that incorporating elements of one culture's popular devotions into the common liturgy might be a wonderful opportunity to propose the devotion(s) as something helpful for everyone, not only for people of that particular culture. For example, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, has been put on the liturgical calendar for all countries in the Americas, as she is the patroness of all America (and also of the Philippines). This is an example of a "Mexican" feast day that has been deemed by the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops to be of significant importance for everyone, not just for Mexicans. The same rationale could be applied on a local level to some other Latino popular devotions, as well as to some Filipino popular devotions.

Another possible objection might be that including popular devotions within the liturgy requires too much time. However, the use of art, environment, sacred images, special music, or other forms of popular religion would not necessarily make the liturgy longer. It may even be possible to use some of these things in a worship space shared with other denominations.

Another possible objection might be that the priest or even the lay people themselves do not fully understand the background and meaning of the devotions, therefore they cannot be that important. However, while it may be true enough that the priest or the people themselves do not fully understand the background and meaning of the devotions, they are still of tremendous importance to the people on an intuitive level.

The priest should always work with the laity to identify those popular devotions that are deemed important enough to incorporate into the liturgy. Once the most important devotions have been identified, a committee of lay people could work with the priest to research the history and meaning of the devotion in order to present it beforehand to the congregation at large. Extra work will be required, but as Chupungco says, "We need to give credibility and respectability to the efforts of liturgical pluralism by invoking serious methodology. Multiethnic liturgies are not a child's play."[81]

As already stated, it is neither necessary nor desirable to take inappropriate liberties with the Mass rubrics. The appropriate places to incorporate elements of popular religion into the Mass would be the opening procession, after the greeting, in the sermon, during the offertory, after the Prayer after Communion, and the recessional. Liturgical music also can be well used in the service of popular religion. However, the priest or some other qualified person needs to explain any liturgical adaptations made to the liturgy. The explanation should be offered the week before, outside of the sermon. Again, lay involvement is essential, both to identify and to research the selected devotions, and to plan the liturgy.

While it is true that military chapel facilities are shared by all faith groups and thus cannot permanently accommodate large statues or other works of Roman Catholic art, it still may be possible to carry in or set up small works of art that can be used for a single Roman Catholic Mass and then removed afterward. Such art makes *visual preaching* possible.[82] High context cultures will respond well to visual preaching,

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[81] Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, *Worship: Progress and Tradition* (Beltsville, MD: The Pastoral Press, 1995), 171.

[82] See Jaime Lara, "Visual Preaching: The Witness of Our Latin Eyes," in *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations*, 75-92.

because it is multisensory. Many base chapels today have the capability to project Powerpoint or photo images onto a screen for use during Mass.

Another possibility is to use ordinary, nonreligious objects as "props" to illustrate a point. Even if the object is not sacred, it can still offer an opportunity for visual preaching that can be quite effective. One example from my experience is the use of large stones in the sanctuary on the First Sunday of Lent, to call to mind the desert setting of Jesus' fasting.

Juan Sosa points out that *saints* are very important in popular religion: "In popular religion or piety, the stories of the saints embody the living gospel of the Lord in ways that poorly celebrated liturgies, official as they are, do not. . . . After all, it is this communion of saints that we mention in our Creed and in which we, the church on its way to eternity, rejoice and find meaning and hope for the journey."[83]

In the same article, Sosa points out that Roman liturgy already offers very rich and multisensory *sacramentals*, such as the blessing of candles on the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus (February 2), the blessing of throats on the feast day of St. Blase (February 3), ashes on Ash Wednesday, and palms on Palm Sunday. These sacramentals are multisensory, and they lend themselves very powerfully to effective preaching with a high context audience.[84] I would add to this list the use of holy water whenever appropriate, advent wreaths, and the Christmas crèche. Any visual or multisensory element in the liturgy can provide a concrete point of reference for effective cross-cultural preaching to a high context congregation.

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[83] Juan J. Sosa, "Preaching and Popular Religion," in *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations*, 100.
[84] Ibid., 98.

I interviewed three Roman Catholic clergymen from the Bay Area who regularly preach to predominantly Filipino congregations.[85] All three agreed that the majority of Filipinos in their pews are largely uncatechized; most have very limited theological or catechetical knowledge of the Roman Catholic faith. However, my interviewees agreed that it is possible for a low context preacher to successfully preach to Filipinos. Successful preaching with this ethnic group should have certain general characteristics:

1) It should be concrete.[86]
2) It should touch on their cultural sense of pain and suffering.
3) It should support strong family values.
4) It should respect and incorporate popular Filipino devotions.
5) It should preach to the heart, not just to the head.
6) It should make reference to the Blessed Mother and other saints.
7) It should display an authentic sense of humor.
8) It should offer hope.
9) It should offer some amount of substantive catechesis, but not too much for the people to handle at one sitting.
10) It should use personal illustrations or stories from the preacher's life.
11) It might incorporate "props".

These same "high context" characteristics can be extended to preaching with Latino congregations.

Chupungco has pointed out another option for incorporating popular religion into the liturgy. This is the principle of *dynamic equivalence*. Dynamic equivalence, Chupungco says, "operates through the assimilation of the characteristic traits, not the forms, of popular religion."[87] Instead of adding elements into the liturgy or replacing certain elements of the Mass with completely different elements of popular religion (e.g.,

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[85] Fr. Geoffrey Baraan, interview by author, Antioch, California, 16 October 2002; Msgr. Fred Bitanga, interview by author, San Francisco, California, 17 October 2002; Deacon Steven Budnik, interview by author, Fremont, California, 23 October 2002.

[86] Concrete subjects are real people, places, events, or things. By contrast, abstract subjects are generally intellectual principles or doctrines.

[87] Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religion, and Catechesis,* 122.

substituting novena prayers for the intercessions at Mass), the principle of dynamic equivalence tries to imbue the liturgy with the *spirit* of popular religion, with the goal to make the liturgy less rigid, warmer, more human, and more dynamic.[88] Chupungco provides the example of the Opening Prayer for the Christmas Mass during the day. He rightly points out that this prayer as provided in the *Sacramentary* is too bland for the major feast day of Christmas, because it does not even allude to the birth of Christ.[89] Chupungco proposes substituting an *equivalent* prayer from Lovasik's *Treasury of Novenas.*[90]

The appendix of this project contains photos and brief descriptions of some popular Latino and Filipino religious devotions.

When preaching to a high context congregation, the priest must know the lived reality of his people and preach to it. High context listeners have little capacity to absorb abstract sermons that are not evidently relevant to their lived experience. One good way to ensure that the sermon speaks to the lived experience of the listeners is to solicit *lay involvement* in its formation. This is not a new idea. Twenty years ago, the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops recommended use of a homily preparation group involving lay

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[88] Ibid., 121-131.

[89] "Lord God, we praise you for creating man, and still more for restoring him in Christ. Your Son shared our weakness: may we share his glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever." *The Sacramentary* (New York: Roman Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1985), 44.

[90] "In Your Crib I see the most wondrous love that ever was—the love of God humbling Himself so low to beg the love of our hearts. Give me the grace to love You in return with a deep, true, personal love. . . . May I come eagerly and often to unite myself closely to You in Your Sacrament of Love. The Church shall be my Bethlehem; the altar, the crib; the sacred species of bread and wine, the swaddling clothes by which I can recognize You as my God, and under which I can, as Mary and Joseph and the shepherds did, take You into my arms; yes, even receive You into my heart—a grace which even the Angels envy me. Jesus, from the crib You teach the world the true dignity of humility. Poverty, suffering, and humiliation stand by Your cross and by Your crib." Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D., *Treasury of Novenas* (New Jersey: Roman Catholic Book Publishing Co., 2000), 34.

parishioners.[91] Fr. Kenneth G. Davis has found this method indispensable in preaching to the hearts of his high context listeners.[92] María Luisa Iglesias, SC, agrees that small groups offer valuable opportunities for homilists to learn from their people how the word of God concretely impacts their lives.[93] It would be quite possible to do this on a ship, in the field, or in a base chapel setting. Bible sharing and bible study sessions are always popular with sailors and marines (and families). It would not be hard to attract at least a few people, especially if the Chaplain were to reveal that he needs their help in deciding on a topic for the following Sunday's sermon. A chaplain who invites his people to sit down with him and reflect on the upcoming Sunday scriptures, even if only for an hour a week, is likely to hear things from them that he would never have considered on his own.

Davis offers another valuable insight about cross-cultural preaching to a high context audience. He introduces the concepts of *incongruity* and *suspended meaning*, saying that high context congregations need to hear the word of God reflected in their own life stories. Davis says that incongruity is inherent in the human condition. Low context people, who are typically better educated and thus more affluent, normally have the social resources to anesthetize themselves to life's incongruity. Therefore, they do not necessarily need to hear incongruity addressed in the sermon. On the other hand, high context people, who are typically not as educated and thus generally less affluent, normally do not have the social means to anesthetize themselves to life's incongruity.

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[91] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1982), 36-39.
[92] Kenneth G. Davis, OFM Conv, "Preaching in Spanish as a Second Language," in *Perspectivas: Hispanic Ministry*, 90-93.
[93] María Luisa Iglesias, SC, "Participative Preaching: Laity as Co-Authors of the Homily," in *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations*, 62-74.

Thus, they need to hear their lived experience addressed in the sermon.[94] A Navy chaplain might see how this principle translates into the rank structure of military life. Many low context listeners are people senior in rank, who enjoy the social means to anesthetize themselves (at least somewhat) to the incongruities of daily life.[95] On the other hand, most high context listeners are people of lower rank, who do not enjoy the social means necessary to anesthetize themselves at all to life's incongruities. They need to see and hear their own hardships and their own world view echoed in the word of God.

According to Davis, once the incongruity has first been established, the preacher goes on to an analysis of what lies beneath it. The analysis, rooted in prayer and spirituality, exposes the failed ideologies of the world and identifies what can and cannot be done about the incongruity. Finally, the preacher resolves the incongruity in light of Christian revelation.[96]

Such a framework seems to offer real possibilities for preaching to high context sailors and marines. Examples of incongruity are abundant in the military setting. Two examples might be the incongruities between the ideals of youth and the reality of the human condition, and those between the letter of the law and the way things really get done. Analysis of incongruity does not have to be highly intellectual. With preparation, it can be presented concretely and simply. And to what better sources of revelation can the chaplain look for resolution of the incongruity, than to sacred scripture and the sacraments of the Church?

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[94] Kenneth G. Davis, OFM Conv, "Cross-Cultural Preaching," in *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations*, 58.

[95] In operational settings, senior people normally have a little more privacy and comfort in messing and berthing. Their government quarters are also more comfortable. In general, senior people make more money, so they can afford to pay for a higher standard of living.

[96] Davis, "Cross-Cultural Preaching," 59-60. This pattern of preaching was introduced in 1980 by Eugene L. Lowry. See *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, exp. ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

Thus, popular religion does not necessarily mean long or involved commitment to complex forms of drama, dance, or procession. It can simply mean a commitment to a few realistic things: an honest recognition that most Navy preachers are low context people while many or most Roman Catholic listeners are high context; a recognition of the power of multisensory communication in the sermon; an openness to incorporating selected elements of popular religion appropriately into the liturgy; a new appreciation of the power of the Communion of Saints and sacramentals that are already employed in the liturgy; an openness to the possibility of lay involvement in the selection of the sermon topic; and a willingness to address the incongruity in people's lives directly and concretely.

To summarize this chapter, there are a number of ways to bring the popular religious life of the people into parish life, into the preaching, and into the liturgy as presider, without taking inappropriate liberties with the Mass rubrics. The result will surely be a good product—parish ministry and liturgy that honor the high context sensibilities and popular devotions of the people in appropriate and beneficial ways.

# CHAPTER 5

## Conclusion

In his own personal identity, the Navy priest is a bridge between cultures. He has one foot in his own culture and one foot in the culture of his people. The chaplain lives with the officers but shares the lives of the crew. To the officers, he represents the enlisted. To the enlisted, he represents the officers. To the sailor, he speaks for Mom and Dad. To the sailor's Mom and Dad, he speaks for the military. To the Church, he represents the military. To the military, he represents the church. When he speaks to his people, he speaks for God. When he speaks to God, he speaks for his people.

The chaplain has been called by God to reach across cultures in a unique way. The sailors and marines who come from high context cultures have to carry the burden of adapting themselves to the low context military environment in which they live and work. However, as Kenneth Davis points out, high context people should not have to carry that burden when they come to worship services and listen to a sermon preached by their pastor. The responsibility for bridging the culture gap in church belongs to the preacher.[97]

St. Augustine says that preaching has three purposes: to instruct, to delight, and to move.[98] He says, "The first of these three, the need to instruct, relates to the subject-matter of our discourse, the other two to the style we use. A speaker wishing to instruct should not think that he has communicated what he wishes to communicate to the person he wishes to instruct until he is understood. Even if he has said what he himself

[97] Kenneth G. Davis, OFM Conv, "Still Gringo After All These Years," in *Bridging Boundaries: The Pastoral Care of U.S. Hispanics*, 108-109.
[98] St. Augustine, bk. Four, par. 74, p. 229.

understands, he should not yet think that he has communicated with the person who fails to understand him; but if he has been understood, then, no matter how he has spoken, he has communicated."[99]

According to Canon Law, the pastor's first responsibility is to instruct his people in the truths of the faith, especially through the homily.[100] To be sure, the people in the pews are under-catechized at best and uncatechized at worst. At the same time, however, their capacity to absorb intellectual concepts is limited. Priests do need to teach in Sunday sermons, but the teaching needs to be concrete and understandable, and it needs to be presented in a way that high context listeners can absorb. It's safe to say that the most important thing low context priests can do to bridge the culture gap in order to reach high context congregations is to preach and preside on the level of the peoples' faith, rather than on the level of abstract theology or doctrine.

Priests carry as much responsibility for the *context* of sermons as for their *content*, and they must put as much effort into preparation for effective delivery as they do for content. Therefore, in order to preach and preside most effectively to the majority of the Roman Catholic sailors and marines within the culture of today's military, the Navy priest must be able to transcend the military culture in a very profound and personally challenging way. Of course sermons must have sound doctrine and good content, but they must also be delivered, and the Mass must be celebrated, with appropriate affective expression. Moreover, they must incorporate high context communication techniques and appropriate elements of the peoples' popular religion. What will be the result? The

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[99] Ibid.

[100] *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary,* ed. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, and Donald E. Heintschel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), Canon 528, p. 426.

preaching and presiding will not be as "efficient" as they would be for a congregation comprised of only low context people.

The prevailing culture of the military--perhaps the very culture that was critical to the construction of a preacher's personal identity before he became a priest--does not encourage affective expression, and it certainly does not encourage any form of "inefficiency." However, the use of affective expression, high context communication techniques, and elements of popular religion is *essential* if the priest is to preach the gospel effectively. High context listeners (and, one suspects, many low context listeners as well) want and need sermons and liturgies that engage feelings, emotions, and cultural memory, as well as the intellect. Priests are called to incorporate the affect, to preach and preside nonverbally as well as verbally, emotionally as well as intellectually—to preach and preside contextually—if sermons and liturgies are to be relevant to the people.

Is high context preaching and presiding easy? Absolutely not! It will take extra work in its preparation and execution. Moreover, the priest can probably expect to alienate a few of his low context listeners by committing the "sin" of inefficient use of time in liturgy. To complicate matters, those low context listeners are likely to include some high ranking and powerful officers. In fact, one of them may even be responsible for writing the priest's annual fitness report! Still, the call is there to take the risk by preaching and presiding in a high context way. Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, will send the Holy Spirit to those who ask, in order to supply them with what they need to shepherd the flock entrusted to them. The grace of ordination is there to assist a low context priest who struggles to preach in a high context way. As St. Paul says, "My

message and my proclamation were not with persuasive [words of] wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power."[101]

This project has so far presented a theoretical discussion of the issues involved when a low context priest preaches and presides with high context congregations. The next section will take the reader beyond the theoretical into the practical, to provide the reader an opportunity to see how the ideas heretofore considered can apply "on the deck plates" of actual preaching and presiding.

[101] 1 Cor. 2:4 NAB

## PRACTICAL PREACHING AND PRESIDING EXERCISE

This section will take the reader through a practical exercise. For this I arranged two cross-cultural liturgies. I preached and presided once to a predominantly Latino congregation and once to a predominantly Filipino congregation. Both Masses were in English. In each exercise, a small group of observers attended, in order to offer me critical and constructive feedback.[102] A pastoral theologian, a liturgist, and a priest with 40 years pastoral experience attended the Mass with the Latino congregation. A different pastoral theologian, the same liturgist, the same priest with 40 years pastoral experience, and the Director for the Filipino Apostolate for the Archdiocese of San Francisco attended the Mass with the Filipino congregation. While it was not possible to do these events in a military setting, the civilian parish settings chosen were very good representatives of Latino and Filipino culture, respectively.

Of course, every Navy priest does cross cultural preaching and presiding every week in his duty station, but the practical exercise as analyzed here was designed to reveal several aspects of the process that may not normally be analyzed. These include the process of researching ("exegeting") the congregations, developing the sermon, intentionally incorporating techniques designed to appeal to high context congregations, developing a feedback form to give to the observers, and reviewing the comments I received from them.

It will be helpful for the reader to remember that the challenge facing a low context preacher and presider in a high context situation is to communicate the gospel message on a nonverbal, affective level as well as on a verbal level. This involves much

[102] The feedback comments were discussed later outside the liturgy at formal sessions.

more than adapting the *content* of the sermon; adjustments will need to be made in the preacher's way of communicating himself. Adjustments in these personal areas take time, because they involve the unconscious realm of the preacher's personality. I am a low context person; this exercise was very valuable in pointing out my unconscious tendencies to preach and preside in a low context way. This chapter could help other low context preachers who want to find concrete ways to work toward more effective preaching and presiding with high context congregations.

This exercise will reveal that I made a few basic errors in my interpretation of Roman Catholic theology or homiletic or liturgical praxis that supercede categories of context. (Of course, such errors are to be corrected promptly and avoided in the future when preaching or presiding with *any* congregation.) While I have included them in my analysis, having made no attempt to hide them from the reader, I ask the reader to remember that attention to this kind of error is not the purpose of this project.

Rather, the purpose of this project is to analyze error or weakness of *context*. This kind of error or weakness is less glaringly obvious and may actually seem very minor. However, nonverbal communication is of critical importance when working with high context congregations. These weaknesses of context cannot, of course, be "corrected" after only two preaching and presiding events, because they involve the unconscious realm of the personality. For a priest from a low context background, progress in these areas can only be made over time. Still, a priest's growth in these important areas is worth his best efforts, because this is truly the work of evangelization.

## Latino Congregation

On March 16, 2003,[103] I preached and presided with a predominantly Latino congregation at Mary Help of Christians Church in Oakland, California, a mission church of St. Elizabeth's Parish in Oakland. In order to research (or "exegete") the congregation at Mary Help of Christians, I attended Mass there on the Sunday three weeks before I was scheduled to preach. I observed the congregation of approximately 120 people, and I noted that nearly all of the people were Latino. The people were of all ages, from newborn babies to elderly. Discussion with the Pastor revealed that the people were mostly working class; many are construction workers, carpenters, or janitors. Most of the people were there with their families. I concelebrated Mass there on the Sunday before I was scheduled to preside, and the presiding priest introduced me to the congregation. I stayed for refreshments after Mass in order to meet some of the people.

I tried to preach in a *concrete* way.[104] The focus of the sermon was that Jesus' glory, normally hidden but briefly revealed at the Transfiguration, is present but hidden in the Eucharist. The function of the sermon was to encourage the people to receive the Eucharist frequently, with faith, reverence, and trust. The sermon included a narrative element, where I played the part of St. James at the Transfiguration; using a "pie plate" size communion host as a visual aid; and reading one page out of the autobiography of

[103] March 16, 2003, was the Second Sunday in Lent, Year B. Lectionary readings were Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18 (The sacrifice of Abraham); Psalm 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19 (I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living); Romans 8: 31b-34 (God did not spare his own Son); Mark 9:2-10 (Transfiguration of Jesus).

[104] Concrete subjects are real people, places, events, or things. By contrast, abstract subjects are generally intellectual principles or doctrines.

Vietnamese Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, who was imprisoned in a Vietnamese government prison camp for 13 years.

*Sermon*

Today's gospel passage tells us
that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain with him,
and he was transfigured before their eyes.
We can't really imagine what that must have been like,
but we have St. James here with us today, and I'd like to invite him to tell us about his experience.

("St. James" speaks from the sanctuary step)

Thank you, Fr. Bill.
Jesus had called us to follow him by the Sea of Galilee,
and we followed him,
and we got to know him (we thought).
We saw him heal the sick and cast out demons,
he even fed five thousand people on a few loaves and fishes.
So, we knew he was not an ordinary man,
but nothing prepared us for that day when
Jesus took the three of us up a high mountain,
and he completely changed!
All of a sudden, he was glorious!
He didn't look like a normal man anymore!
His clothes became so white!
His face shone like the sun!
We thought we knew him before,
but we didn't.
Those few minutes on the mountain
showed us the power and the glory of Jesus
that he normally kept hidden beneath the humble appearance of an ordinary man.
We've seen him as he really is now,
and we won't forget it... ever!
Our lives will never be the same now.

(Fr. Bill speaks from pulpit)

Thank you, St. James.

(To people:)
In those days, Jesus concealed his true power and glory
behind the appearance of a regular man,
just a plain old carpenter from Nazareth.
But on that mountain,
James saw for a few minutes who he really was.
He revealed his true glory.

Today, Jesus will also be present in our midst--
and this time I'm not kidding!--
and he will conceal his true power and glory
behind the humble appearance of ordinary bread and wine.
But behind that appearance is a real person of awesome glory and power!

(Hold up large communion host)

This is ordinary bread.
But in a few minutes,
after the Eucharistic prayer,
it will become the Body of Christ.

The Eucharist doesn't look like anything special.
It just looks like ordinary bread and wine.
And it tastes like ordinary bread and wine.
In fact, if we didn't know better, we would say for sure that
the Eucharist is bread and wine.
But we know better.
We have faith that it isn't bread and wine anymore.
Our faith is that a miracle happens at the Mass,
Before it's consecrated, it is ordinary bread and wine.
But after consecration, it isn't bread and wine anymore;
it's the Body and Blood of Christ.

The glory of Jesus Christ,
the same glory that was normally concealed from James,
under the appearance of an ordinary man,
that was made visible for an instant on the mountain,
that same glory is here in the consecrated host,
although it's hidden under the appearance of ordinary bread.
But don't let it fool you... it's the most powerful thing on earth.

Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận
who died just last year,
was a Vietnamese Cardinal in the Church.
He was the Archbishop of Saigon, South Vietnam,
when the Communists took over the country in 1975.

He was locked up in a government prison for 13 years.
He recounts his experiences in his book
*Testimony of Hope*.[105]

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[105] Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, *Testimony of Hope: The Spiritual Exercises of John Paul II*, trans. Julia Mary Darrenkamp, FSP and Anne Eileen Heffernan, FSP (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2000), 132-133.

In this book, he talks about his experience with the Eucharist in the prison camp.
Here is what he says:

(read excerpts from book, telling the story of Cardinal Văn Thuận
secretly celebrating Mass in his bunk in prison camp.
The Eucharistic presence was very powerful in the prison camp.)

Of course, our situation here is very different from the Cardinal's situation.
Here, we are not in prison.
We have free access to church and to the Mass.
Jesus does not want us to carry the Eucharist around in our shirt pocket.
He wants us to receive the Eucharist and eat.

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ.
His glory was once concealed under the appearance of an ordinary man,
and it was only revealed once on earth, for a few brief seconds on the mountain,
in the presence of James and two other disciples.

The Eucharist continues his presence on earth.
It conceals his power and glory.
It appears to be just ordinary bread and wine,
but it is really the glorious Jesus Christ!

I encourage you to receive the Eucharist frequently.
and to receive it in faith that it really is the Body and Blood of Jesus,
and to receive it in respect, and love, and in trust.
Let's remember how powerful The Eucharist really is,
and let's entrust ourselves and our problems and struggles to him.
Let's allow the power of Jesus in the Eucharist
to set us free from our sins and transform our lives.

*Feedback Requested*

I prepared a preaching feedback form that asked selected listeners to answer the following questions about the sermon:

Did you understand the point the preacher tried to make? If so, please state his point:

Did you understand what the sermon asked you to do? If so, what was it?

Did you find the sermon relevant to your own situation?

Did the preacher seem to understand the congregation? Did he speak above or below their level?

Did this sermon seem helpful for a Latino congregation? Why or why not?

Were the illustrations and examples helpful? Why or why not?

Did the preacher speak too fast?

Did he use appropriate body language, gestures, and facial expressions?

Did the preacher speak in a monotone, or did he vary the tone of his voice?

Was the style conversational? Did the preacher seem to "talk with" the congregation?

Please make a few general comments: What was good about the preaching? What should the preacher keep doing? What could he do to improve?

*Feedback Received*

Rather than reproduce the various comments here, I will summarize the comments that I received in either verbal or written form from my observers.

My observers generally agreed that my style was energetic and conversational. They appreciated the creativity and playfulness of acting out the part of St. James. They also agreed that I succeeded in discussing the abstract principles of transfiguration and transubstantiation in a way that was concrete and understandable to the congregation.

However, my observers agreed that I did certain things that compromised my attempts to preach in a high context way. The observers said that, in spite of my efforts, it was, for the most part, a low context sermon and liturgy.

My gestures were "low context." When I used certain gestures, such as blessing the gospel reader, bowing to the altar, blessing the bread and wine in the Eucharistic Prayer, and the breaking of the Communion host, I made the gestures too small to be seen and performed them too quickly. These gave the impression that the gestures were not important or that I was just trying to "get them over with."[106] Slower, more deliberate, and more expansive gestures would have set a better tone for the liturgical celebration. When I invited the people to pray with the words, "Let us pray," my arms were extended

[106] Vidal's insights are helpful here. He says on p. 259-260, "The Hispanic character does not make that opposition between formality and ritual on the one hand, and sincerity, ease, and spontaneity on the other, which is prevalent among Americans especially since the 1960's. In fact, Hispanics are quite comfortable with formality and ritual, as long as they are not dry and empty, but rather a receptacle and vehicle for deep emotions. It would be a mistake to think that Hispanics will be attracted by a liturgical style of poverty and simplicity, especially when 'poverty and simplicity' become code words for ritual laziness and for cheap tawdriness—in fact, justifications for imposing low context style on high context communities, for the greater comfort of the celebrant. Incense, candles, beautiful vestments, images, music, and an attitude which combines deep and visible reverence—including things like deep bows, kissing the altar, etc.—with an unpretentious ease in the house of our Father (which is also, of course, the throne room of the King of the Universe) will help to create a context which will make Hispanics feel that our assemblies are true celebrations which celebrate things worth celebrating, and not burdensome obligations to be gotten over with as quickly and painlessly as possible."

in the *orans* position. This was inappropriate, because the *orans* position is used when praying to God. My gestures to the people when inviting them to pray should have been more naturally directed to them. Also, I offered the invitation to pray the Collect before getting the *Sacramentary* ready. That should have been done first before the invitation, so that I as the priest was actually praying silently with the people until the prayer.

I often smiled at the congregation. This might have been a problem, especially at the beginning of the Mass. In this situation, the organ music playing before the Mass was solemn, and the people were not in an "informal" mood when the Mass began. My smile may have seemed inappropriate to them. As one of my observers said, when working with a high context congregation, the priest needs to take his cues from the people. If they are in a solemn mood, then the priest needs to adopt that. On the other hand, if they seem to be in a relaxed and informal mood, then the priest naturally needs to adopt that.

When I said in my sermon that Jesus would be present in the church in just a few minutes, I meant his presence in the Eucharistic species. I failed to say that Jesus was already present in the church according to his fourfold presence in every Mass: in the person of the priest, in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the scriptures are proclaimed, in the worshipping assembly, and most of all in the Eucharist.[107] This unfortunate lacuna in my thought process may have caused those who, for some reason, could not receive the Eucharist to feel that they did not encounter Jesus that day at Mass.

[107] Vatican Council II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, par. 7, p. 120-121.

This kind of error is especially dangerous when working with a high context congregation, many of whom already feel inferiorized within the U.S. Church.[108]

When I held up the unconsecrated host during the sermon, I did so in a casual, "teaching" way. When I was finished making my point, I put it back on the pulpit shelf. Although the host was not yet consecrated, my image-oriented high context congregation was not used to seeing a Communion host treated in such a casual way. They may have been shocked and disturbed by that.

When I encouraged everyone to receive the Eucharist frequently, I did so because Latinos sometimes are reluctant to receive the Eucharist. This is a Latino cultural characteristic that reflects their great respect for the Eucharist and their cultural feelings of unworthiness.[109] However, as mentioned above, I should have somehow addressed concrete reasons why some do not receive, such as irregular marriage situations. I might have made reference to that issue and offered some kind of concrete help for those who needed it. For example, I might have announced a time when a priest would be available for help with initiating a marriage case. One way of offering hope to those who could not receive Communion that day might have been to invite the people to sit in silence for a moment after Communion and to pray silently to Jesus, who was present to each member of his Church gathered in the assembly, and whom members of the congregation may have encountered in the Word of God or in service to the community in liturgical or other parish ministries.

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[108] See Chapter 1 for discussion of 20th century inferiorization of Latinos and Filipinos in the U.S. Roman Catholic Church.

[109] My past experience with Latinos led me to suspect this. On 13 April 2003 I received an e-mail from Fr. Eduardo C. Fernández, S.J., Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry at Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, in which he confirmed my suspicion.

The portrayal of St. James was a good, creative idea. However, my "St. James" just repeated what the congregation already heard in the day's Gospel reading; he needed to tell them something new. Moreover, I did not need to repeat what "St. James" had already said.

The story of Cardinal Văn Thuận was also good, but having both St. James and the Cardinal speaking in the same sermon was too much and became confusing. The recommendation was made that I do one or the other, but not both. I should not have read to the congregation from Cardinal Văn Thuận's book. The reading was only one page, but it was too long. The presence of a book in my hand and the act of reading broke the connection between me and the congregation. My observers agreed that I knew the story well enough that I could have simply told the highlights of the story, without reading from the book. (Another possible option might have been to have "St. James" speak about the Cardinal's experiences with the Eucharist in prison camp.) Also, I told some parts of the Cardinal's story before I read it from the book. This was repetitious.

Some exegetical reference to the presence of Moses and Elijah on the mountain with Jesus would have been helpful. The suggestion was made that "St. James" could have spoken about them.

My reference to the "powerful presence of Jesus" was too abstract and needed concretization. The same comment was made about my statement that the Eucharistic presence of Jesus will transform our lives. Concrete examples of this were needed.

One observer commented that I preached with energy, but the energy seemed to be coming only from my voice and upper body. The preacher's energy needs to come

from his whole body, particularly when working with high context congregations, who look for nonverbal confirmation that the preacher's verbal message is believable.

In summary, the practical exercise with the Latino congregation was helpful in pointing out a number of unconscious tendencies on my part to preach and preside in a low context way, to identify particular points of pastoral sensitivity with Latino congregations, and to identify some concrete ways to serve Latino congregations better in the future.

## Filipino Congregation

On March 7, 2003,[110] I preached and presided with a predominantly Filipino congregation at St. Andrew's Parish in Daly City, California. In order to research (or "exegete") the congregation at St. Andrew's, I spoke to the Pastor about the congregation, and I also attended Mass there on the Sunday three weeks before I was scheduled to preach. I observed the congregation of approximately 300 people, and I noted that nearly all of the people were Filipino. The people were of all ages, from newborn babies to elderly, but there were more children and young adults than elderly people. Discussion with the Pastor revealed that the people are mostly middle class. Most of the people were there with their families.

The First Friday Mass was preceded by Stations of the Cross and followed by Holy Hour with Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction. I presided at all of these devotional events, as well as at the Mass.

I tried to preach in a concrete way by using visual aids, images of Mt. Rushmore and Sts. Perpetua and Felicity that I had downloaded from the internet and projected onto the church wall with an overhead projector. This was the first time I had ever used an overhead projector in preaching. I also tried to preach to the Filipino cultural sensitivity to Christ crucified and their sharing in the Cross, especially in family difficulties.

I preached in free space at the step of the sanctuary.

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[110] March 7, 2003, was Friday after Ash Wednesday and the First Friday in the month. Lectionary readings were Isaiah 58:1-9a (The manner of fasting God wishes); Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19 (A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn); Matthew 9:14-15 (When the Bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast).

I used the Opening Prayer for the feast day of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity. For the Prayer over the Gifts I used a Lenten prayer from *Magnificat* magazine. For the Prayer after Communion I adapted a prayer found in John Paul II's *Scriptural Stations of the Cross*. These substitutions were made for the rather bland prayers given for the day in the Sacramentary. The principle used here was dynamic equivalence, discussed in Chapter 4 of this project.

*Sermon*

Back in the 1930's, during the Great Depression in the United States,
an American sculptor named Gutzon Borglum was put in charge of a gigantic public works project in the Black Hills of South Dakota.
The project involved carving the faces of four famous American presidents into the mountain.
That mountain was Mt. Rushmore, and here is a photo of it that I got from the National Park Service website.

(Show photo of Mt. Rushmore to congregation.[111])

Mr. Borglum didn't do that alone.
He had 400 workers helping him.
These workers had to put up with a lot.
The pay was not very good,
and they did not have much job security.
They were laid off every winter because they couldn't work on the mountain in the wintertime.
And they didn't know from one year to the next if they would be rehired, because funding was uncertain.
It was dangerous work, because they had to hang over the faces on ropes as they did their work of carving the features into the mountain.
And Mr. Borglum got so emotionally involved in the project that he had a tendency to yell and scream at them.

But they kept coming back every spring for 14 years to work on the mountain.

Why did they always come back?

Not for the sake of the money, and not for the sake of job security, and not for the sake of the working conditions.

They came back because they felt loyalty to Mr. Borglum.
He inspired them and made them believe that they were involved with something great, something that future generations would admire and appreciate.
Ultimately, they came back for the sake of the relationship they had with Mr. Borglum.

This is the same principle that Jesus applies in today's Gospel passage.
The disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus why His disciples don't fast.
Jesus says that his disciples do not fast just for the sake of fasting.
There would be no point in that.

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[111] National Park Service, Mt. Rushmore website http://www.nps.gov/moru/ Internet; accessed 4 March 2003.

Rather, he says, he expects them to fast when he is *taken away* from them.
He said that his disciples fast for the sake of relationship: we fast when we have become disconnected from him.

On the other hand,
he also said that He expects us to feast and celebrate when He is with us,
when we have become reconnected with him.

So, we don't fast just for the sake of fasting;
we fast when we have somehow become disconnected from Jesus.
And we don't feast just for the sake of feasting;
we feast when we have become reconnected with him.
So fasting and feasting are done in *relationship* to Jesus.

We all have many opportunities to fast.
We have the Church's official days of fasting and abstinence during Lent.
And, I imagine that most of us also will choose to do our own personal penance during Lent.
And, there are always plenty of chances to carry the Cross.
For example, the Cross just comes into our lives unexpectedly sometimes,
when we suffer health problems, or relationship problems with our family members, or friends, or co-workers.

But, no matter what kind of fasting, or penance we might do, or no matter what form the Cross might come to us in our life,
Every form of fasting, or penance, or the Cross
contains a feast of eternal life.
Eternal life is to be connected with Jesus in the midst of our fasting, our penance, and our crosses.

We can feast on eternal life
as we fast, as we do penance, as we carry the Cross,
because eternal life is to be connected with Jesus,
to share his life, his Cross, his death, his resurrection.
We can feast on eternal life in the midst of all these things,
and Jesus calls us to do just that!

Today is the feast day of Saints Perpetua and Felicity.
Both were young women in their early twenties,
who lived in Carthage (North Africa) about the year 200 A.D.
Perpetua had a baby, and Felicity was pregnant.
Here's an image of them that I got from the Roman Catholic Forum website.

(show picture of Saints Perpetua and Felicity to congregation.[112])

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[112] Roman Catholic Forum website http://www.Roman Catholic-forum.com/saints/saintp14.htm Internet; accessed 4 March 2003.

1,800 years ago today, on March 7, 203 A.D., in Carthage, North Africa,
they were martyred by the Emperor of Rome, for the crime of being Christians.
They were killed by being thrown to wild animals in a public amphitheater.
A wild animal attacked both of them at once and knocked them off their feet,
and Perpetua was injured, but Felicity was not.
Perpetua stood up and asked, "when are we going to be thrown to the beasts?"
She did not even realize that the animal had already attacked and injured her,
because she was in ecstatic prayer to Jesus.
Perpetua was already feasting on eternal life,
even as she was embracing the cross of martyrdom.
She was so intimately united with Jesus,
that she was feasting on eternal life in the midst of the sufferings of martyrdom.

My friends, this opportunity to feast on the eternal life
of the companionship of Jesus Christ
is open to each one of us.
Look for the feast of eternal life to be found in every act of fasting, penance, and carrying the Cross.
The feast is in there—if we look for it, we will find it
and we won't be disappointed!

*Dynamic Equivalence Prayers*

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father,
Your love gave the saints Perpetua and Felicity
Courage to suffer a cruel martyrdom.
By their prayers, help us to grow in love of you.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever. Amen.[113]

Prayer over the Gifts:

Father of mercies and God of all consolations, you sent your only Son to give your people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of our sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the daybreak from on high will visit us, to shine on us who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Deliver us from the darkness that blinds us; free us from the sins that bind us; fill us with the joy of your forgiveness through the death and resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.[114]

Prayer After Communion:

Heavenly Father, you have fed us with food from heaven on this feast day of the martyrs Sts. Perpetua and Felicity. Help us to realize that Jesus dreaded his death, just as we dread the sacrifices and crosses in our everyday lives. Be with us as we recommit ourselves to embrace in our lives the crosses of fasting, penance, and suffering, and with your power, to pass through them to new and eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.[115]

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[113] *Sacramentary*, 617.
[114] *Come Back to Me: The Magnificat 2003 Lenten Companion* (France: Maulde & Renou, 2003), 93.
[115] Adapted from: *The New Scriptural Way of the Cross, Based on the Stations Led by Pope John Paul II* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1993), 5.

*Feedback Requested*

I prepared a preaching feedback form that asked selected listeners to answer the following questions about the sermon:

Did you understand the point the preacher tried to make? If so, please state his point:

Did you understand what the sermon asked you to do? If so, what was it?

Did you find the sermon relevant to your own situation?

Did the preacher seem to understand the congregation? Did he speak above or below their level?

Did this sermon seem helpful for a Filipino congregation? Why or why not?

Were the illustrations and visual aids helpful? Why or why not?

Did the preacher speak too fast?

Did he use appropriate body language, gestures, and facial expressions?

Did the preacher speak in a monotone, or did he vary the tone of his voice?

Was the style conversational? Did the preacher seem to "talk with" the congregation?

Please make a few general comments on the back: What was good about the preaching? What should the preacher keep doing? What could he do to improve?

*Feedback Received*

Rather than reproduce the various comments here, I will summarize the comments that I received in either verbal or written form from my observers.

My observers agreed that I conveyed a gentle and warm authority to the congregation. My tone of voice and smile were effective in establishing a conversational tone and a personal connection. However, my observers pointed out several things in the sermon that compromised my attempts to preach in a high context way. One observer said that, in spite of my efforts, it was a low context sermon.

I carried an 8½" by 11" file folder in with me in the procession. I also carried this folder with me to the sanctuary step when I began my sermon. The presence of that folder in my hands communicated a nonverbal signal to the high context congregation that I was relating to them as an instructor, not as a pastor. When I stopped and pulled out the transparency images of Mt. Rushmore and Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, and put them on the projector, that action had the effect of interrupting the connection that I had established with the congregation. It also communicated nonverbally that I was giving a lesson or presentation, while the purpose of preaching is to be in personal conversation with the people. It would have helped if I had arranged for someone else to display the transparencies for me. By doing it myself, I separated myself from the congregation and broke the relationship I had established with them. Once broken, it could not really be established again, because the people didn't know when I might break off the conversation again and start doing more things at the projector.

The observers agreed that preaching in free space is a good technique when working with high context congregations. However, when preaching in free space, a

preacher should not have any notes. If notes are used, then the preacher should stay in the pulpit. Halfway through the sermon, I put the folder down and preached from a 5" by 7" index card. The presence even of that card in my hands, like the presence of the file folder, became a barrier to preaching because it signaled nonverbally that I was giving a business brief or presentation, while I was trying to preach as a shepherd.

My arm gestures were too reserved. I did not open my arms all the way when I extended them, either at the altar or when preaching. In the *orans* position, I bent my arms at the elbows, and that projected a nonverbal message that the shepherd did not entirely embrace his flock in love. When I pointed to the images projected on the wall of the church, I used one finger; I should have used my whole arm.

The image of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity was good, because it presented two women with dark skin as models of heroic faith. Moreover, one observer commented that the fact that Felicity was a slave of Perpetua suggests that Christ blesses His people with a unity that overcomes all of the social barriers that separate them. However, the same observer commented that I should have slowed down when I identified them in the image; I might have pointed out some of the visible details in the image, for example, that Felicity was wearing white, and Perpetua was embracing Felicity. Absorbing such concrete details in the image would have given the people more time to draw mental conclusions of which I was not aware. As it was, I went much too quickly to the story of their martyrdom, while the congregation was still trying to absorb the image. To be sure, it was good to use that image, but I should have asked someone else to be in charge of putting it on the projector, I should have described it in more detail, and I should have let the congregation linger over it for a few more seconds.

Despite my best efforts, the sermon was too complicated and too abstract. I could have eliminated any reference to Mt. Rushmore without losing the theme that I was trying to communicate, that there is a feast of eternal life within the trials of fasting, penance, and the Cross. In fact, the photo of Mt. Rushmore was actually a liability, because it presented a strong visible image of European American, male, dominant, U.S. power figures (all literally set in stone), which probably triggered cultural memories of Filipino cultural inferiorization at the hands of the dominant European American culture.[116] I might have found a better example of the potentiality for relationship to be found within concrete things. My observers suggested that I could have said that in Filipino culture, the social importance of food is a wonderful example of a link between concrete things and relationship. Relationship is an abstract concept, but food is a concrete reality in the life of everyone in the congregation. Thus, food would have been a much better example than Mt. Rushmore.

This exercise is helpful in pointing out that, while visual aids can sometimes be used effectively, a commitment to using "concrete images" does not necessarily mean that actual visual images necessarily have to be used (e.g., photos of Mt. Rushmore). A more nuanced kind of "concreteness" (e.g., mentioning food) can sometimes be more helpful.

One observer said that fasting was a wonderful thing to preach about, especially on the first Friday in Lent, and by itself it would have been enough for the congregation to absorb in one sermon; I didn't need to talk about penance and the Cross. The focus of my sermon was that fasting, penance, and the Cross offer us a feast of eternal life by

[116] See Chapter 1 for discussion of 20th century inferiorization of Latinos and Filipinos in the U.S. Roman Catholic Church.

uniting us to Jesus through a sharing in his fasting, in his penance, in his Cross. When I included penance and the Cross, that made the concept of "the feast of eternal life" too complicated and abstract. In effect, I had expected too much of the congregation when I required them to fill in the gaps in an abstract train of thought.

When I mentioned concrete examples of the Cross in peoples' lives (poor health, family relationship problems, and grief) I "listed" them too quickly, and it came across as possibly flippant or unfeeling. This happened because I was trying to say too many abstract things. A few concrete things needed to be said at a slower, more deliberate pace that could have been more affectively engaging. In that way, I might have allowed the people to contextually and affectively *experience* hope, even as they were digesting the content of my *message* of hope.

In summary, the practical exercise with the Filipino congregation was helpful in pointing out a number of unconscious tendencies on my part to preach and preside in a low context way, to experiment with using visual aids, to understand better what it means to use "concrete" illustrations effectively, to point out the Filipino cultural sensitivity to inferiorization, and to identify some practical ways to serve Filipino congregations better in the future.

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[117] *Filipino Americans* video is available from Filipino American National Historical Society, http://www.fanhs-national.org/Video.html; Internet; accessed 2 April 2003.

[118] *Soul of the City* video shows how popular religion is incorporated into liturgy, particularly during Holy Week, at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Texas. The video is available from JM Communications, 1402 Banks Street, Houston, Texas 77006, (713) 524-1628, http://www.jmcommunications.com; Internet; accessed 2 April 2003.

# APPENDIX

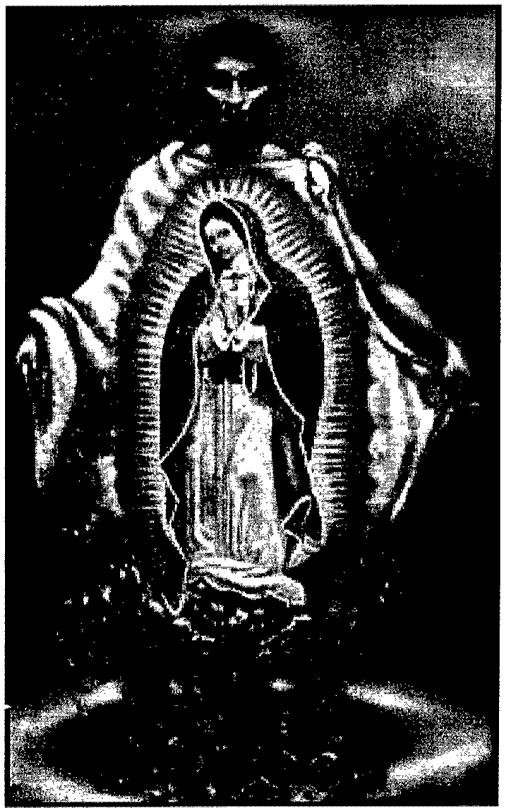
# SOME POPULAR LATINO RELIGIOUS DEVOTIONS

(Sources are listed on back pages.)

# OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Mary, the mother of God, appeared to Juan Diego, a poor Aztec Indian, four times during the period Dec. 9-12, 1531, on Mt. Tepeyac, a rocky desert hill about 10 miles north of central Mexico City. She asked him to tell the Bishop of Mexico City that she wanted him to build a chapel on the hilltop. The bishop demanded proof. At the Lady's direction, Juan Diego picked red roses blooming on the hilltop, and he carried them in his *tilma* (cape) to the bishop. The image of the Lady had miraculously appeared on Juan Diego's *tilma*. The shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City is one of the most beloved pilgrimage sites in the world. The feast is celebrated on December 12.

# ST. JUAN DIEGO



St. Juan Diego is the Aztec Indian who had visions of Our Lady of Guadalupe in December, 1531.

He was canonized by Pope John Paul II in Mexico City on July 26, 2002.

# LAS POSADAS

This term is Spanish for "the inns." It is a traditional Mexican festival that reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for room at the inn in Bethlehem. Each Advent season from December 16-24, a procession walks through the community streets. The procession carries a doll representing the Christ Child, along with images of Joseph and Mary riding a burro. The procession stops at a previously selected home and asks for lodging for the night. The people are invited in to read scriptures and sing Christmas carols called *alguinaldos*. Refreshments are provided by the hosts. The doll is left at the chosen home and picked up on the next night when the procession begins again. This continues for eight more nights in commemoration of the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

# Quince Años

Quince Años is the "coming of age" rite for a girl on her 15th birthday. It is a public celebration to acknowledge her transition from childhood to adulthood. The rite is normally done in church, and it usually involves giving the girl gifts of a ring, rosary, candle, and Bible. In addition, there is a blessing given by her parents. In recent years, the practice has occasionally been extended to boys who turn 15.

# SOME POPULAR FILIPINO RELIGIOUS DEVOTIONS

(Sources are listed on back pages.)

# CHRIST CRUCIFIED

- It's easy for Filipinos to identify with suffering Christ as victim.
- Christ is seen as human.
- This image has been used by colonial masters to encourage passive acceptance of status quo.
- Catholic churches have Christ on the cross; most Protestant churches have just the cross.

# Santo Niño

- Santo Niño is a popular symbol of the island of Cebu. On April 14, 1521 Magellan gave the image to Queen Juana as a baptismal gift. On April 27,1565 Miguel Lopez de Legaspi arrived and found the local people hostile. Legaspi besieged the settlement and set the village on fire. Juan Camus, a soldier, found the image of Santo Niño unharmed in one of the burnt houses . Since then, the miraculous image has been venerated by the Cebuanos. At present, the miraculous image is kept in the parish convent, and a replica, adorned with gold and precious stones and enshrined in glass, is housed in a side altar inside the Basilica Minor del Santo Niño. The feast is usually celebrated on the second Sunday in January.

# SIMBANG GABI

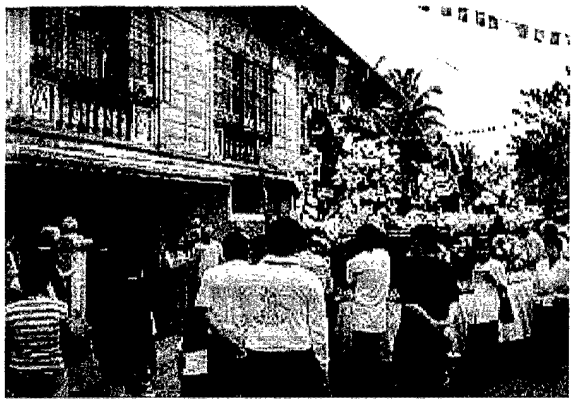
- The dawn mass or *Simbang Gabi* is one of the cherished traditions of Filipinos at Christmas time. Also called *misa de gallo* after the rooster that crows in the early morning hours to rouse people to their daily labors, it actually means going to church before sunrise or break of day. Traditionally, the mass is held for nine consecutive dawns, with food afterwards. The culmination is the *misa de aguinaldo* or midnight mass on Christmas eve itself.

# PASYON

- The Pasyon refers to the verse narrative on the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ. The pasyon text may be written in Tagalog or in other major Philippine languages, including Pampango, Ilocano, Pangasinan, Bicol, Ilongo, Cebuano, and Waray. Continuous singing of this length is not practiced in the Spanish and Mexican lenten traditions. It relates to the Philippine cultural practice connected with epic singing during important celebrations of the community. The pasyon may also be chanted, though rarely now, during wakes and death anniversaries, as well as during the reenactment of Christ's Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening. There are various melodies and musical styles in the rendering of the pasyon.

# EASTER SALUBONG

The Easter Salubong is a Resurrection celebration in which the people reenact the joyful meeting of Jesus and His sorrowful mother on Easter morning. Statues of Christ and Mary are carried in procession through the streets, and the meeting takes place in front of the church. The veils covering the statues are removed by a girl dressed as an angel and singing *Regina coeli*.



# OUR LADY OF ANTIPOLO

- In 1603 the building of a new church in Antipolo began. The final edifice as it stands today was finally completed in 1726, more than a hundred years later. But in between there were intermediate churches, and one of them, completed in 1633, became the shrine of a little brown image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It had been brought by Governor Niño de Tabora from Acapulco in 1626. This statue was to become known as Our Lady of Antipolo.

- When later the statue was borne across the Pacific by the galleons as their tutelary patroness, it became known as Our Lady of Peace and Happy Voyage – Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje. In 1950 Antipolo was proclaimed the national shrine of Our Lady by the bishops of the country.

# FLORES DE MAYO/ SANTACRUZAN

- May is considered a flower festival month in honor of the Virgin Mary. Children of varying ages, as well as adults, offer flowers to the Virgin Mary every afternoon. Flores de Mayo starts with gospel-reading and sharing. Little children dressed in angelic costumes carry sticks with letters forming AVE MARIA.

- As the offering ends, bread and candies are distributed. The end of May marks the end of Flores de Mayo. This is highlighted by a Santacruzan festival, a procession commemorating St. Helena's finding of the True Cross. St. Helena was the mother of Constantine the Great. The celebration is preceded by a 9-day novena in honor of the Holy Cross. On the ninth day, usually on a weekend, the Santacruzan is held. The procession features biblical characters and saintly virtues.

# DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION

- In 1931, Our Lord appeared to an uneducated Polish nun, Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905 - 1938) in a vision. She saw Jesus clothed in a white garment, with His right hand raised in blessing. His left hand was touching His garment in the area of the heart, from whence came two large rays, one red and the other pale. The message and devotion to Jesus as The Divine Mercy is based on her writings. In obedience to her spiritual director, she wrote a diary of about 600 pages that records the revelations she received about God's mercy. The feast is celebrated on Second Sunday of Easter.

# ST. LORENZO RUIZ

St. Lorenzo was born around 1600 in Manila. He had a Chinese father and a Filipino mother, both Christians. He was a married layman and the father of two sons and a daughter.

For unknown reasons, Lorenzo was accused of murder. He sought asylum on board ship with three Dominican priests and other missionaries. Only when they were at sea did he learn that they were going to Japan during a time of intense Christian persecution.

Lorenzo could have gone to Formosa (modern Taiwan), but he feared the Spaniards there, so he stayed with the missionaries as they landed at Okinawa. The group was soon exposed as Christian, arrested, and taken to Nagasaki. They were tortured and killed. He died 29-30 Sept 1637 at Nagasaki, Japan by being crushed over a period of three days while hanging upside down. His body was burned and the ashes thrown into the Pacific Ocean. He was beatified 18 Feb 1981 and canonized 18 Oct 1987 by Pope John Paul II. St. Lorenzo is the first canonized Filipino martyr. His feast day is 28 September.

# OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

- This devotion originated in the 15th century. The image depicts Our Lady comforting the Baby Jesus, who had had a frightening dream in which angels showed Him the instruments of His execution.
- The original painting is housed in the church of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori in Rome.
- The devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Help is popular among Filipinos. Often the Novena prayers are combined with Mass on Wednesday evenings.

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