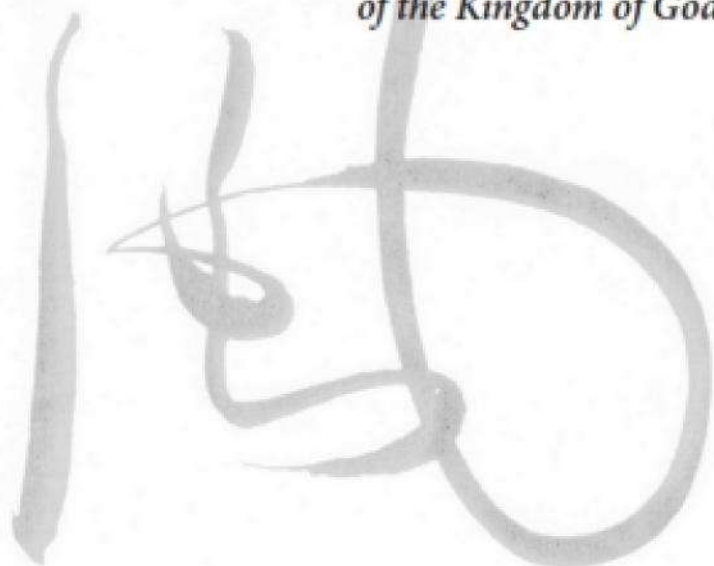


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## **Eucharistic Justice: A Christ-Centered Response to the Bangsamoro Question in the Philippines**

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### **Introduction**

Presently, House Bill No. 4994, known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law, is in the hands of the Philippine Congress. This bill is the culmination of several years of negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)—negotiations that have the primary purpose of securing lasting peace for the *Bangsa Moro* (Moro Nation) of Mindanao. Indeed, from the time of that Spanish conquistadores (with their swords and the Christian cross) landed on Philippine shores almost five centuries ago, peace has eluded the Muslims of Mindanao. Sadly, the Spanish colonizers introduced a type of Christianity via “massive military and religious campaigns to subdue local armed resistance and stamp out indigenous religious beliefs and practices.”<sup>1</sup> It is thus said of the Muslim sons and daughters of Mindanao that, from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century up to the very present, “There is no Moro generation that has not fought or witnessed war in their homeland.”<sup>2</sup> As a consequence of struggling against often vastly superior forces, the Muslims of the Philippines who previously had

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<sup>1</sup>O. D. Corpuz, *The Roots of the Filipino Nation*, vol. 1 (Quezon City, Philippines: AKLAHI, 1989), 46, cited in Abraham Iribani, *Give Peace a Chance: The Story of the GRP-MNLF Peace Talks* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Magbassa Kita, 2006), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Parouk S. Hussin, “Challenge of War and Search for Peace” in Amina Rasul, ed., *The Road to Peace and Reconciliation: Muslim Perspective on the Mindanao Conflict* (Makati City, Philippines: AIM, 2003), 11. The term “Moro” is used interchangeably in the Philippines with the term Muslim or, more specifically, with those Muslims who mostly inhabit islands in Mindanao. It is a Spanish term for the word Moor, which refers to the Muslim people of mixed Arab and Berber descent who occupied Spain in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, the epithet “Moro” as used by the early Spanish colonizers was anchored on their two observations: first, the Moros were savages bent only on plunder as guided by their “false” Islamic religion; second, their savage nature can only be rectified by subjugating them and civilizing them through Christianization. Samuel K. Tan, “Filipino Muslim Perceptions of Their History and Culture as Seen Through Indigenous Written Sources” in U.P. Center for Integrative and Development Studies, *Memories, Visions, Scholarship, and Other Essays* (Quezon City, Philippines: UP, 2001), 93.

dominion over those islands have now become an impoverished minority in their own homeland.<sup>3</sup>

With its significant natural resources and rich historical, social, and cultural heritage, Mindanao has fittingly been called “The Land of Promise.” Alas, due to the persistence of violent conflicts, the Moros Mindanao has become a land of unfulfilled promises and broken dreams. Thus, the quest for peace cannot and must not be severed from the quest for justice. Filipino Muslim scholar Salah Jubair says correctly that, “Peace requires not only the absence of violence, but also the presence of justice.” Moreover, he says, “If there is going to be a healing process, it must begin and end in justice.”<sup>4</sup>

Such narrative, nonetheless, seems to have been lost from Filipino Christians’ memories. But as Christianity is founded upon the veracity of our faith community’s memory,<sup>5</sup> it is essential that Filipino Christians remember the events that have been instrumental in shaping Christianity in the Philippines. One such event has been our dealings with the Bangsamoro people.

In this paper, I am addressing the issue of justice, more specifically, economic justice for the Bangsamoro through a theological-ethical lens. Whereas other approaches reject the resources offered by faith traditions, I believe, as John H. Yoder remarked, that the renewal to which the whole world is called to confess cannot be made independently from the witness of the church community, but, rather, such confession is derived from the church’s witness.<sup>6</sup> It is in this regard that the central practice of the Lord’s Supper, or Eucharist, is relevant. I contend that, far from being a socially abstract ritual, the Eucharist is a crucial resource for a Christian justice and peacemaking

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<sup>3</sup>Al-Gazel Rasul, ed., *Still Chasing the Rainbow: Selected Writings of Jainal D. Rasul, Sr. on Filipino Muslims’ Politics, History, and Law (Shari’ah)* (Quezon City, Philippines: FedPil, 1999), 6.

<sup>4</sup>Salah Jubair, *The Long Road to Peace: Inside the GRP-MILF Peace Process* (Davao City, Philippines: Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, 2007), 7, 9. See also Mark Turner, “Resolving Self-Determination Disputes Through Complex Power-Sharing Arrangements: The Case of Mindanao, Southern Philippines,” in *Settling Self-Determination Disputes: Complex Power-Sharing in Theory and Practice*, ed. Mark Weller and Barbara Metzger (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 192. Turner writes: “Such a peace does not simply mean a cessation of armed hostilities but also entails mutual respect for culture, religion, and locality, the feeling of security in daily lives, the expectation of decent services and ecologically sound development, human dignity, and the capacity to earn a living. When these things are achieved, there will be peace in Mindanao.”

<sup>5</sup>Eduardo Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>John H. Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, Arizona: Herald, 1992), 78.

ethic that bids us to alleviate injustice and to advance the well-being of the oppressed, such as the Bangsamoro people. As Paul Bernier says, in the Eucharist, “We were not challenged simply to repeat his words, or institute a ritual action; we were asked to do as he did, to offer our lives that others might live.”<sup>7</sup>

### **The “Moro Problem:” A Question of Injustice**

The Moro Problem refers to the “historical and systematic marginalization and minorization of the . . . Moros, in their own homeland in the Mindanao islands, first by colonial powers from Spain . . . then the United States . . . and more recently by successor Philippine governments dominated by an elite with a Christian-Western orientation.”<sup>8</sup> While there are several interconnected issues that comprise the Moro Problem (e.g., economic destitution, political marginalization, preservation of Moro identity, religious intolerance), according to the World Bank, which in 2005 performed a Joins Needs Assessment in Mindanao, such issues can be dovetailed into a single root cause—injustice,<sup>9</sup> that is, injustice committed by a largely Christian nation through its governments on a community that it has not sufficiently understood. As Robert McAmis perceptively remarks, the Moro Problem is “primarily the problem of not understanding the Muslim.”<sup>10</sup> *The so-called Moro Problem, when examined open-mindedly, is really about the Christians being the problem of the Moros.* (Emphasis mine)

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Bernier, *Broken Bread and Shared: Broadening Our Vision of the Eucharist* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1981), 86.

<sup>8</sup>Soliman Santos, Jr., “Evolution of the Armed Conflict on the Moro Front,” A Background Paper Submitted for the Philippine Human Development Report 2005. Available from [http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2005\\_PHDR/2005%20Evolution\\_Moro\\_Conflict.pdf](http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2005_PHDR/2005%20Evolution_Moro_Conflict.pdf) (accessed 11 January 2014). The classic definition of the Moro Problem was given by Najeed M. Saleeby in *The Moro Problem: An Academic Discussion of the History and Solution of the Problem of the Government of the Moros of the Philippine Island* (Manila, Philippines: E. C. McCullough, 1913), 16. He writes, “By the Moro problem is meant that method or form of administration by which the Moros and other non-Christians who are living among them, can be governed to their best interest and welfare in the most peaceful way possible, and can at the same time be provided with appropriate measures for their gradual advancement in culture and civilization, so that in the course of a reasonable time they can be admitted into the general government of the Philippine Islands as qualified members. . . .”

<sup>9</sup>Salah Jubair, *The Long Road to Peace: Inside the GRP-MILF Peace Process*, 5-6, citing World Bank Report on Mindanao Joint Needs Assessment Reconstruction and Development Program in a meeting with leaders of the MILF on March 12, 2005, Cotabato City, Philippines.

<sup>10</sup>Robert McAmis, “Muslim Filipinos: 1970-1972,” *Mindanao Journal* III, nos. 3-4 (January-June 1977): 56.

As I mentioned, while the spreading of Catholicism was a key impetus in the Spanish conquest of the Philippines, the economic exploitation of the country was an equally important motivation. Jubair makes this pointed remark: "Spain came to the Philippines not so much for the Cross . . . religion was merely used to justify what otherwise was a satanic lust for worldly gain and glory."<sup>11</sup> Now, key to the Moro's economic destitution is their *ancestral land*, the best parts from which they were driven out as ownership was handed over to Christian Filipinos and foreign-owned corporations. Such policy fundamentally goes against the Moro Islamic belief about property, which upholds that ancestral domain is *waqaf*, or property in trust. Thus, to lose their ancestral domain was debilitating for the Moros, for their social existence directly revolves around those lands.<sup>12</sup> Whereas the Moros had owned most of the land in Mindanao on the eve of American colonization at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by 1981 the Bangsamoro owned less than seventeen percent, most of which was located in remote and barren areas.<sup>13</sup> So central is this issue that the success or failure of peace negotiations hinges on its resolution; indeed, the Bangsamoro's claim to the rights to their ancestral lands must be understood as "the core of the expression of their right to self determination."<sup>14</sup>

Further aggravating Moro poverty is the fact that most development efforts by the Philippine government, which is usually composed of a Christian majority, have been directed to improve primarily the conditions of Christian settlers. Studies done in 1970 showed that regions inhabited by Moros were among those with the highest infant mortality and unemployment rates; they also had the fewest doctors to provide health services and lagged far behind in terms of educational services and other necessities, such as water and power systems.<sup>15</sup> Reports in 2006 and 2009 invariably demonstrated how

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<sup>11</sup>Salah Jubair, *A Nation Under Endless Tyranny*, 3rd ed. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: IQ Marin, 1999), 54.

<sup>12</sup>Lualhati Abreu, "Ancestral Domain—the Core Issue," in *The Moro Reader: History and the Contemporary Struggles of the Bangsamoro People*, ed. Bobby M. Tuazon (Quezon City, Philippines: CenPEG, 2008), 51.

<sup>13</sup>Aijaz Ahmad, "Class and Colony in Mindanao," in *Rebels, Warlords and Ulama*, ed. Eric Gutierrez et al. (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1999), 13. See also Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), "Cycle of Conflict and Neglect: Mindanao's Displacement and Protection Crisis," October 2009, 4; available from [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org) (accessed 31 January 2014).

<sup>14</sup>Myrthena L. Fianza, "Indigenous Patterns of Land Ownership," *Mindanao Focus*, quoted in Abreu, "Ancestral Domain," 48.

<sup>15</sup>Macapado Abaton Muslim, *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines* (Marawi City, Philippines: Mindanao State University, 1994), 89-90.

Mindanao continued to have the highest poverty incidence in the country.<sup>16</sup> The “Land of Promise” certainly became a land of fulfillment for Christianized Filipinos and foreign investors, but not for the Moros.<sup>17</sup>

Such dismal conditions imposed upon the Moros by the majority Christian population and the national government inevitably led to violent conflicts in Mindanao. In the early 1970s, the contemporary Moro struggle broke out. By 1976, some 50,000 people had already perished due to the conflict. By the time the Jakarta Peace Agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was signed in 1996, more than 150,000 persons had died from the armed clashes, 300,000 buildings and houses had been burned, 535 mosques razed, 35 towns completely wiped out, and half of the entire Moro population uprooted.<sup>18</sup> In the year 2000 alone, when the Philippine government launched an all-out offensive, 439,000 persons were displaced, 6,229 houses razed, and some 2,000 people killed.<sup>19</sup> In August and September 2008, immediately after peace talks broke down between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a battle ensued that claimed more than 100 lives and displaced around 600,000 people.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of population, Muslim Filipinos, who in 1913 formed 98 percent of Mindanao’s population, accounted for 40 percent in 1976, and only 19 percent in 1990. In fact, as early as the 1960s, the Moro population had disappeared in many of their long-established areas.<sup>21</sup>

Is it any wonder, then, why the Moros have always felt they are *not* Filipinos?<sup>22</sup> But to Filipino Christians, the Moro historian Alunan

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<sup>16</sup>Institute of Autonomy and Governance, “ARMM Helps: Synergy in Action,” *Autonomy and Peace Review* (April-June 2012): 77-79.

<sup>17</sup>Muslim, *Moro Armed Struggle*, 117-119. A detailed treatment of this subject can be found in Muslim, “The Bangsa Moro: the Highly Neglected People in the Neglected But Rich Mindanao,” *Dansalan Quarterly* 12:1-4 (January-December 1992): 59 ff.

<sup>18</sup>Amina Rasul, *Broken Peace?: Assessing the 1996 GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement* (Makati City, Philippines, 2007), 5.

<sup>19</sup>Eddie Quitariano and Theofeliz Marie Francisco, *Their War, Our Struggle: Stories of Children in Mindanao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Save the Children, UK, 2004), 15.

<sup>20</sup>PCID and KAS, *Voices of Dissent: A Postscript to the MOA-AD Decision* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: PCID and KAS, 2009), iii.

<sup>21</sup>Cesar Adib Majul, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines* (Berkeley, California: Mizan, 1985), 30. See also Policarpo Destura, “A Historical Account of Maranao-Christian Relations, 1935-1972” (M.A. Thesis, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines, 1981), 70. Destura writes that in Lanao Province the Maranaos who formerly occupied the best lands were displaced methodically and driven farther into the interiors by the new Filipino settlers.

<sup>22</sup>See Abdurassad Asani, *Moros Not Filipinos* (Philippines: Bangsamoro Research Center, n.d.); cited in Muslim, *Moro Struggle*, 132-133. Two surveys were mentioned,

Glang poses these crucial questions: “Where is the moral force of Christianity, the force of love and goodwill to make the Muslim Filipinos feel that they also belong to this nation? Is Christianity good only to convert people and deny . . . the love of Christ? These are questions Christians must answer. These answers will determine whether national cohesiveness is possible.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Eucharist as Paradigm for Economic Justice**

In “unpacking” the idea that the Eucharist is a paradigm for economic justice, let me glean from the insights of John H. Yoder and Monika Hellwig.

In his work *Body Politics*,<sup>24</sup> Yoder underlines the social significance of the Lord’s Supper as exemplified in the early Jerusalem church’s practice of bread breaking (Acts 2:46). From the meal table, the sharing was extended to a point wherein no one claimed ownership of his possessions (Acts 4:32). To the disciples who participated with Jesus in those meals, it was a typical occurrence: “The sharing was rather the normal, organic extension from table fellowship . . . it was merely the resumption of the way they had been living together with Jesus.”<sup>25</sup> The story of the manna in the desert, the reference in Luke 8:3 that speaks of how Jesus’ itinerant band was fed through donations, was among the antecedents of the sharing that became normative in the early church’s practice of bread breaking.

Yoder’s view of the Lord’s Supper is basically economic in nature. The early Christians in Jerusalem thus reorganized their leadership pattern to effect a more equitable economic distribution to include non-Palestinian widows (Acts 6). Hence, the Supper is not mere ‘symbol-making’ wherein from the act a different meaning can be derived; nor is it just sacramental that gives the act a divinely-derived meaning, which accentuates the distance between that special meaning and the ordinary meaning of the act.<sup>26</sup> Rather, Yoder emphasizes the economic aspect of the Supper, stating: “It is that bread *is* daily sustenance.

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one in 1970 and another in 1984, both of which reported that a majority of the Muslim respondents preferred not to be called Filipinos. The same observation was made by Saleeby in 1903 that the “Moros do not consider themselves Filipinos.”

<sup>23</sup> Alunan C. Glang, *Muslim Secession or Integration?* (Quezon City, Philippines: Garcia, 1969), 13; quoted in McAmis, “Muslim Filipinos,” 54.

<sup>24</sup> Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, Arizona: Herald, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> John H. Yoder, “Sacrament as Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture,” *Theology Today* 48, no. 1 (April 1991): 38.

Bread eaten together *is* economic sharing. Not merely symbolically, but also in fact.”<sup>27</sup>

The Lord’s Supper is also revolutionary when seen in the light of the Jubilee celebration. Following André Trocmé,<sup>28</sup> Yoder writes that Jesus’ platform proclamation in Luke 4, based on Isaiah 61 (“proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord”), referred to the Mosaic provisions of the Jubilee that involved cancelling debts, redistributing property, and freeing prisoners.<sup>29</sup> This linkage of the Eucharist to the Jubilee is certainly valuable, for “It protects the ‘table fellowship’ witness from being limited to the level of consumption, without attention to productive resources. The Jubilee is justice on the level of productive capital.”<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the redistribution of properties in Leviticus 25 (cf. Deut. 15) points to Jesus’ vision that extended beyond kinship groups. It was an inclusive proclamation that the Messiah will bring about not just spiritual, but also the economic well-being of persons “in whatever form that would need to take in the messianic age.”<sup>31</sup>

Connecting this economic breaking of bread with the Pauline understanding of the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, Yoder maintains: “Eucharist, thus substantially and historically, functionally understood, is the paradigm for every other mode of inviting the outsider and the underdog to the table, whether we call that the epistemological privilege of the oppressed or cooperation or equal opportunity or socialism.”<sup>32</sup>

The breaking of the bread is therefore paradigmatic for the preferential option for the poor—i.e., at the Lord’s Table, those who have are to bring and share bread so that all can be fed. This kind of sharing is “the model for the Christian social vision in all times and

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 37. Yoder, however, does not deny that the *body practices* were not revealed from above or were created from scratch. “Each was created from already existent cultural models . . . yet in the gospels they have taken on new meanings and a new empowerment” (p. 42). Cf. Yoder’s *Body Politics*, 20; *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 44.

<sup>28</sup>André Trocmé, *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution* (Scottsdale, Arizona: Herald, 1974). See chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>29</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 24. Cf. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972; reprint, Eerdmans, 1980) 34-41.

<sup>30</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 24.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>32</sup>Yoder, *For the Nations*, 32.



places.”<sup>33</sup> A similar perspective is held by Monika Hellwig in her work, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*.<sup>34</sup>

There are, says Hellwig, two principal types of hunger: the first concerns *physical sustenance*; the second is hunger for *creative love*. The first type is quite common for us here in the Philippines; everywhere we go, we can see people who are “hungering” for physical sustenance. People who feel this hunger know that it relates to their total experience, which is “brutalizing because it constricts, shortens vision, cuts off the freedom to transcend, which is human.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, they understand more deeply the necessity of human interdependence. They “know that their lives are hostages in others’ hands—not only their sheer survival but the quality of their lives, the extent of their freedom to be human.”<sup>36</sup> However, their drive to be human is often met with frustration, as the persons they need to depend on lack the empathy to help the hungry. The reason for this indifference, Hellwig observes, is not because they lack the material resources to help, but that they themselves are unsatisfied and hungry for authentic, creative love.

Love that is creative is teleological, which means having a person’s good in view. Loving creatively, like the Good Samaritan, means helping a person cross over from an existence defined by childish self-centeredness to a life that is empathic and engaged. Consequently, those whose hunger for creative love is left unfulfilled are the ones who amass and waste so much of the world’s resources and keep so many others on the edge of starvation. Both are starving, both are not free; but the physically hungry can nevertheless be rescued only if the love-starved persons undergo an experience of genuine conversion from being a person or community of apathy to one of compassion.<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, for Hellwig and Yoder, the answer to both kinds of hunger is Jesus, whose person, teachings, and actions are embodied in the Church’s practice of the Eucharist. Hellwig’s view of Jesus as the “Bread of Life” is key to understanding further the economic dimension of the practice. She maintains that, in comparing himself to the manna in the desert (Jn. 6:25 ff.; cf. Exod. 16), Jesus emphasized that what he gives is true sustenance from God, which must be received

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>34</sup>Monika K. Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 13. See also Monika Hellwig, “The Eucharist and World Hunger,” *Word and World* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 65-66. The physically hungry includes people who are grossly underpaid, malnutrition children, the unemployed, and homeless people.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 18. Cf. Hellwig, “The Eucharist,” 65-66.

as a gift. Like manna, God's gift must not be hoarded or taken coercively to enrich oneself and impoverish others. Thus, Hellwig remarks, "We are God's guests, invited to make the most of the divine hospitality and to mediate it to one another and to the rest of creation."<sup>38</sup> Discipleship is here certainly signified. Yoder says on this point that the "newness of the believing community is the promise of newness on the way for the world."<sup>39</sup> For the believers, Jesus is the "food of life" through whom they discover that hunger for creative love is only satiated by living for others.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, the early Christians broke bread and shared with those in need. Furthermore, Hellwig says:

When the eucharistic action is seen not only in the context of the farewell supper but in the light of the whole ministry of Jesus, the exigence becomes sharper. Jesus invited his followers into his own redemptive action—a ministry that was constantly among the poor and outcast, concerned with their spiritual and material needs. To accept his eucharistic hospitality entails solidarity with these concerns, responding to the needs of our time and situation. The very existence of hunger and want in our world coupled with our ability to respond would be call enough to practice in the world what we symbolize in the eucharist.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus' ministry and his (the Lord's) Supper certainly do not deal only with the spiritual dimension of the person; they also involve satisfying concretely the hunger of the poor for physical sustenance. A central idea in the Lord's Supper is responsibility for others; the eucharistic sharing of bread and wine, as Yoder correctly points out, "is both specimen and symbol of responsibility."<sup>42</sup> The Church as responsible receiver and bearer of the new life in Christ must have the penetrating insight that humanity's interdependence entails serving and defending the rights of the needy and oppressed.

Finally, from Yoder and Hellwig we learn that the implicit and explicit witness of the Church must be marked by creativity and love, for the Lord's Supper is a paradigm of compassionate sharing. On this point, Yoder remarks that, "Only local discernment can tell which

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<sup>38</sup>Monika K. Hellwig, *Guests of God: Stewards of Divine Creation* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>39</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 21.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>41</sup>Hellwig, "The Eucharist," 64.

<sup>42</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 22.

angle of attack on economic discrimination is most fitting.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, it is left to the discernment of the Church as it is situated concretely (i.e., in its local context) how it would be able to “touch the lives of the hungry of the world with authentic and generous compassion, drawing on the bread of life that is Jesus, to become themselves bread of life for the needy.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Eucharistic Justice as a Christ-Centered Response to the Bangsamoro Question**

The “Moro Problem,” as we have seen, is a matter of injustice to the Moro people. In presenting the Eucharist as a response to the Bangsamoro question, I am not, of course, inviting our Muslim neighbors to the ecclesial ritual act of bread breaking. Rather, I seek to invite fellow Christians toward a more agonizing reflection on how participating in the Lord’s Supper is a call for us to act justly toward our Muslim neighbors. Hellwig’s view on this point is incisive:

We have sometimes spoken and acted as though the Eucharist had meaning in isolation from the rest of life—as though participation in it guarantees growth in grace independently of the manner in which the participants live their lives in the world. Yet people who participate reverently and frequently in the Eucharist, but drive hard bargains against the weak, taking advantage of the misfortunes of others to enrich themselves . . . are confronted by the prophetic denunciation of both Testaments . . . there is no such thing as growth in grace through participation in the Eucharist where this is isolated from a lifestyle which is a progressive awareness and concern for the suffering of all the oppressed.<sup>45</sup>

As we know, the Moro ancestral land is the crucial element in forging peace in Mindanao. Quite understandably so, for the Philippine government’s past policies of what Michael O. Mastura calls “elimination of minority group by emigration,” if successful, would lead to none other than the utter dissolution of Moro political and economic power in their native homeland.<sup>46</sup> Without land, debilitating

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<sup>43</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 25. Cf. Hellwig, *The Eucharist*, 85-87.

<sup>44</sup>Hellwig, *The Eucharist*, 85.

<sup>45</sup>Hellwig, *Eucharist and Hunger*, 58-59.

<sup>46</sup>Michael O. Mastura, “The Mindanao Crisis and Our Congress” (paper presented at the Second National Islamic Symposium, Marawi City, Philippines, 28 April-1 May, 1972), Gowing Memorial Research Center, Marawi City.

hunger will be the Moro's relentless companion. Some forty years ago, the Filipino Christian statesman Raul S. Manglapus implored the government to stop the waves of Christian settlers from acquiring lands in Mindanao. Muslims, he reasoned, have land ownership traditions that must not be trampled upon despite widely-accepted legal practices.<sup>47</sup> But alas, large tracts of lands were already in the hands of many Filipino Christians by that time.

Regarding justice in the sphere of productive capital,<sup>48</sup> the Jubilee's linkage to the Eucharist is relevant. Although originally intended for the Hebrews, it was not irrelevant to those outside of Israel. Indeed, Jesus' meals with society's poor and marginalized make clear that the concern of Jubilee and Eucharistic justice is the restorative distribution of resources for the "economic and personal well-being" of any needy individual or collective person.<sup>49</sup>

In light of the Jubilee, applying eucharistic sharing to the Moro ancestral land issue places present-day Filipinos in a situation that can be likened to the wealthy Jewish lenders during Jesus' time who frequently made use of the *Prosboul* in order to circumvent justice according to the Jubilee.<sup>50</sup> As followers of Jesus, Filipino Christians are confronted with the situation wherein the Jubilee bids us to support the restoration of Moro land to its rightful owners. Should Filipino Christians, then, continue to use the *Prosboul*, which means placing hurdles to the Bangsamoro claim to their lands and to other rights to which they are entitled? Or should we follow the demands of economic justice as announced in the Jubilee proviso of the Eucharist and support the claims of the Muslim people? While negotiations and the subsequent implementation of the peace agreement rest largely upon the leading authorities of the government and the Bangsamoro, I believe the support of Filipino Christians is necessary for its long-term success. It will not certainly suffice for the Church to issue mere

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<sup>47</sup>Raul S. Manglapus, "Towards a Muslim-Christian Manifesto," in *Christian-Muslim Democracy: Wave of the Future*, ed. Amado Lagdameo (Pasig City, Philippines: Pandan, 1991), 78-79. Manglapus' material was delivered as a speech during a seminar in 1972. See also Hilario Gomez, *The Moro Rebellion and the Search for Peace: A Study on Christian-Muslim Relations in the Philippines* (Zamboanga City, Philippines: Silsilah, 2000), 105-110; 178-181; 185-187.

<sup>48</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 24.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 25. See also Karen Lebacqz, "Justice, Economics, and the Uncomfortable Kingdom: Reflections on Matthew 20:1-16," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1983): 41; Yoder, *Politics*, 64 ff.

<sup>50</sup>Troc  , *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution*, 42-48.; also in Yoder's *Politics*, 66-74. The *Prosboul* was the legal instrument that the rabbi Hillel crafted that allowed the creditor to collect a debt through the use of the court after the debt was abolished by the Jubilee.

statements such as the preferential option for the poor. What matters is *being* concretely a Church for the Muslim poor.<sup>51</sup>

Economic solidarity for and with our Bangsamoro neighbors will inevitably take on various forms. As Yoder and Hellwig assert, the discernment of the local faith community is necessary because deprivation and hunger, too, have different forms and meanings.<sup>52</sup> The Silsilah Dialogue Movement in Zamboanga, to use it as a fine example, therefore cultivates in various ways a “culture of dialogue” among Muslims and Christians through a process of personal and social transformation.<sup>53</sup> Toward this end Silsilah’s various activities, programs, and initiatives are aimed, such as the Harmony Prayer, Peace and Development Services, the Silsilah Forum, and others.<sup>54</sup>

An excellent demonstration of Silsilah’s economic solidarity with the Muslims of Mindanao occurred in the September 2013 siege of Zamboanga City, a month which for many was a “September to remember.”<sup>55</sup> For twenty days in that fateful month (from the 9th to the 28<sup>th</sup>), the Misuari Faction of the MNLF laid siege to Zamboanga City. The rebels razed approximately 10,000 houses, displaced thousands of Muslims, and killed hundreds of Muslims and Christians alike.<sup>56</sup> Silsilah responded in various ways. They fed lactating mothers as well as children and other evacuees;<sup>57</sup> they also provided house materials, helped in redeeming lands, surveyed properties at affordable prices, and built transitory tents and houses for those who do not own land.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Silsilah welcomed in its “Harmony Village” some of the sick from Zamboanga City Medical Center, where they received treatment

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<sup>51</sup>Eliseo R. Mercado, *Southern Philippines Question* (Cotabato City, Philippines: Notre Dame University, 1999), 124-125. See also Jubair, *Endless Tyranny*, 265. Jubair invites the many good-hearted Christians to spread the gospel of love by struggling for Moro justice and not let the greedy among them to get the best of Mindanao at the expense of its native inhabitants.

<sup>52</sup>Yoder, *Body Politics*, 25; Hellwig, *Eucharist and Hunger*, 85-87.

<sup>53</sup>See Sebastiano D’Ambra, *A Path to Peace: Culture of Dialogue as Path to Peace* (Zamboanga City, Philippines: Silsilah, 2014), ix ff.

<sup>54</sup>See Sebastiano D’Ambra, *Call to a Dream: Silsilah Dialogue Movement* (Zamboanga City, Philippines: Silsilah, 2008) 68-94.

<sup>55</sup>This phrase is the title of a book that Silsilah published to commemorate the first year anniversary of the Zamboanga Crisis. Available from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-1h\\_u-O7rWwQzd2MG92T3R6Z1k/view?pli=1](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-1h_u-O7rWwQzd2MG92T3R6Z1k/view?pli=1) (accessed October 20, 2014). This online version does not contain page numbers.

<sup>56</sup>Silsilah, *September to Remember*. The damages to the directly affected areas, particularly the barangays of Sta. Catalina, Sta. Barbara, Rio Hondo and Mariki, can be likened to those in World War II on a smaller scale. Mariki was left only with the sea. Cecil Bernal, “The Last Cup,” in *ibid*.

<sup>57</sup>Bernal, “Last Cup.”

<sup>58</sup>Jirmalyn T. Maad, “Keeping the Faith,” in *ibid*.

by the hospital staff.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, in carrying out such eucharistic initiatives, it is crucial that Christians “enter into their need and find ways to satisfy their hunger”<sup>60</sup> in order to discern the real needs of our hungry and oppressed Bangsamoro neighbors.

### **Conclusion**

“Do this in remembrance of me.” Remembering is certainly central to the Lord’s Supper practice. It is not, of course, just any kind of remembrance that is important, but one that is linked with responsibility. By *responsible remembrance* I mean to underline our readiness to confront memories of oppressions and be responsible for whatever may have been our part in those “remembered situations.”

For us Christian Filipinos, a responsible eucharistic remembrance of Moro-Christian relations means to act based on a truthful interpretation of our own part in the conflict. It means remembering rightly the past and acting justly in the present. “Healing the past” is the foremost challenge, says Antonio Ledesma, which comes not by denying what has happened, but by understanding the root causes of conflict, asserting the equal dignity of every person and community, and redressing injustices whenever possible.<sup>61</sup> For when left unhealed, memories of oppressions will veil persistently the humanity of the other, and so lock both victim and perpetrator into vicious cycles of exclusion and non-reconciliation.<sup>62</sup> Such has mostly been the past narrative of Christians and Muslims in the Philippines. Hence, with the new peace agreement embodied in the Bangsamoro Basic Law that, hopefully, Congress will soon pass into law, we Christians should commit to forging a new narrative with our Moro neighbors that is founded on justice. As Robert Schreiter points out, healing traumatic memories created by conflict cannot be achieved through suppression:

Rather, over time these memories must come to be embedded in new narratives that do not continue to generate negative emotion. This may be done by establishing a pattern of

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<sup>59</sup>Aminda E. Saño, “Padayon! (Move On),” in *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>Hellwig, *Eucharist and Hunger*, 87.

<sup>61</sup>Antonio Ledesma, *Healing the Past, Building the Future: Soundings From Mindanao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Jesuit Communications, 2005), 42.

<sup>62</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1996), 132-133.

meaning in a new narrative whereas in the old one the traumatic event had been the death of meaning.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Robert Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past: The Healing of Memories and Interreligious Encounter," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35, no. 2 (April 2008): 113.