



GOD’S PLAN

1. MOTIVATION

The relevance of Karl Marx objection to Christianity:

“Religion is the opium of the people.” “Heaven is the pie in the sky.” Karl Marx gave this statement to attack the distorted teaching of the Church’s leaders during his time in Europe when Industrial Revolution was flourishing and was controlled by the capitalists. The social situation at that time was discriminatory and unjust: the workers were given low wages and had no social benefits even with their dangerous and unhealthy labor conditions. The institutional Church at that time seemingly condoned or approved the labor situation as God’s will and if they will endure willingly, they will receive their just rewards in heaven which God had so lovingly prepared for them.

Religion or faith was made into some kind of an anesthesia to deaden the pain and numb the senses as opium usually does to the user.

There are still some of our believers who still believe that God is up there and that everything that happens to us is God’s will even the unjust situations that we are in are shamelessly attributed to God. This can be gleamed from our clichés: **ang mag-antos masantos (one who suffers is holy); badlis sa palad (fate, it is already determined) (kung pobre ka, pobre gyud ka, etc. if you are poor, you are really poor); pagbuot sa Dios mao nga mag-antos na lang (it’s God’s will so just bear with it, just suffer; iampo na lang nato na sa Dios (let us just pray to God); Dios na lay mahibawo, etc. (let God take care of it)**

2. RESPONSE OF OUR CHURCH TODAY

2.1. Reading from PCP2¹ documents (excerpts)

After almost 500 years of Christianity, what has our faith done to the poverty of our people? to the warring factions of our Filipino brothers and sisters? to our own selves?

Our faith made us one in the Eucharist; made us into the Body of Christ, the Church
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The evangelization for renewal seeks to transform the whole fabric of society according to the Kingdom values of God, promote total development, integral liberation and justice and peace.

¹ Plenary Council of the Philippines 2

The content of our faith then, is salvation. Salvation not only from our sins, salvation also from the effects of our sinfulness as manifested in unjust structures and systems, poverty, etc.

2.2. Contextualized God's Plan for creating the persons and the universe

Questions:

What is heaven for you?
How do you imagine heaven?
What is God's Plan for us?
What is your purpose here on earth?

God's plan is for all his people to be united with him, to make our lives a reflection of God's life. We are created, man and woman in God's image and likeness.

What is it in God that is given to us as his image and likeness?

Attributes of God and its implications:

1. God is Trinity

He is a community of three distinct, unique persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each one is entirely different from the other, each one has his own function to fulfill, yet they are intimately united to each other in love and in function.

IMPLICATIONS

We are called to live as one community in communion with others and with God. Unique as we are, we need one another to become a person, to enhance our own giftedness and to supplement our own limitations and deficiencies to make us whole, complete. We are a social being.

(Exhaust all other implications of being a community member, pros and challenges)

2. God is love

God loves us so much and he gave his only son to us that we might live. Jesus was made man because of that love. He was incarnated in the very realities of his own time and place and showed how much God loves us by being with the people and ministering to their needs, liberating them from the distorted notion of a loving God.

The love that Jesus has for the Father freely flows to us that ultimately led to his death – on the cross.

Our Christian faith is teaching us that our God takes the initiative in searching for us not like in the Eastern religion in which it is the person who searches for his God. Our searching God is being likened to a "hound in heaven" who constantly sniffs for a person and when it finds the person, it doesn't destroy the person but embraces the person. As many times as the person gets lost, that is also the number of times God searches for the person.

God's relationship with person is a relationship of love. The person's relationship with God and with his fellow persons is his destiny.

IMPLICATIONS:

1. proclaim God's goodness
2. enjoy his creation (free air, water, etc.)
3. to share God's happiness and share it to others too
4. to love others in words and in deeds
5. preferential option for the poor

3. God is life

Jesus said: "I have come that you may have life, and have it in abundance." The real life and its meaning can only be found in Jesus and experience in Jesus through others. God created the world and gave power and dominion to persons.

IMPLICATIONS:

The life that God shared with us is not exclusively ours. Just as Jesus spent his life for others, so much we who professed to believe and follow him also has to spend our lives for others. This has a strong bearing with the way we treat nature, God's other creation. We are called to be his stewards. Each one has the responsibility to use his gifts in order to discover, manage and dominate nature and to transform the raw materials for the benefit of all, thus, we can all live in abundance. This life is a call to partnership with God to bring creation to its fullness: to enhance life. Life that goes beyond the family towards the building up of Christ's Church – his people.

God entrusted the created world to persons. We are the stewards of God, not absolute owners. Work, labor makes a person a person; it is a part of his dignity.

Whatever is not promoting life, death results.

4. God is peace

God's peace is not the kind that we thought peace should be, that is, an absence of trouble or conflict. God's peace means that when in the midst of conflict, trouble and chaos, we still can allow ourselves to be God's instrument of love that works towards change that promotes life.

IMPLICATIONS:

We are called to be bearers of peace, thus, we are to get involved in situation that call for an intervention so that God will be made present and experienced. We are not to be complacent and be secured in our own little niche in the midst of our people's want and hunger.

5. God is justice

God allows the sun to shine both to the sinners and to the saints. He demanded that those who are most in need be taken care of and exact what is due to him and he showed his justice when he liberated his people from the hands of the Pharaoh, asking the Pharaoh to set the Israelites free and to give them provisions to start a new life in the lands promised to them by God. He has a preferential option for all those who are oppressed and materially poor.

IMPLICATIONS:

1. faith demands justice
2. justice to self is closely intertwined with the administration of justice to others and of the protection of the rights of those who are helpless and powerless
3. co-responsibility that goes beyond the family concerns
4. (other implications from the participants' insights)

6. God is saviour, a redeemer

Since time immemorial, God constantly saves his people. He saves not only from the evils of sin but also from the effects of sin. In the Old Testament, God saved Israel from the slavery of Egypt, from the hunger in the desert, from the tribes around them who wanted to drive them from the promised lands. In the New Testament, we see God in Jesus saving his people from the religious distortions of God's love, his giving of forgiveness to the sinners, his restoration of one's dignity in the Samaritan woman and of the adulterous woman, his giving back the sight and hearing to those who are sick, his giving of himself in being with the outcasts and most especially, his giving of his life that we might be one again with the Father and with each other.

IMPLICATIONS:

1. the persons as co-redeemers of Christ; one with him in creating and in saving
2. all works that are meant for the growth of life of a person (physical, intellectual, material, spiritual) is a saving work of the person
3. (expound for the participants to fully appreciate their partnerships with God in saving others in all aspects that chained us to death)

3. SYNTHESIS

The actual existence:

A person in heaven is a call to partnership with God in the dialogue of life. Heaven is a state of being, thus, it has a bearing to one's relationship with God and with others. We can experience heaven when love reigns and goodness is present among the people that is manifested in justice and in being concerned. **A person then becomes an arrow person: a vertical arrow denoting the person's relationship with God and the horizontal arrow denoting the person's relationship with his fellow persons.**

In reality, sin abounds and this is clearly seen in the three (3) aspects of our life, especially in the national situation of the Philippine: the cultural, economic and political. The two vicious cycles representing this reality: when one is rich he has the

opportunity to be educated because he can afford the high costs of education and it he has the money and the education, he has the power to influence and to run for public office and so the means to enrich himself and on, goes the cycle. On the other hand, when one is poor, he is likely to be educated because he can't afford the costs of education especially when he has to go to a "well known" school and when he is not educated, he doesn't have the facility of language and thinking that can help him influence people rendering him powerless, insecure and even having a low self esteem, thus, his inability to move upward in the economic ladder because the situation and the conditions are not favorable to him making him virtually poor. And so the cycle continues for the poor and for the rich – the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer.

Sin is a refusal to love and the direct consequence is conflict: the person against God, the person against his fellow persons, the person against nature. When the person cuts off this relationship with God, the person becomes a "shell man" – a man in hell: enclosed in the hard shell of selfishness becoming alienated, scattered, cursed and death enters into his life. The person is the one who broke the first his relationship with God and with each other. He was given the freedom and he abused this freedom. Our own selfishness is our greatest enemy and it is the greatest battle of the person which must constantly be waged upon with the power of Jesus Christ in us and around us.

Our society is a situation that reflects sinfulness: a society where there is no equality and justice; a sick society. Sick because others are happy wallowing in their material prosperity and majority of us are suffering from want and poverty.

What is the situation between our situation and our faith? Our situation speaks that we are not living our Christian faith, we are not living as Christians. The possible reason for this is our dichotomy between faith (spiritual life) and life in itself (material and physical life). This concept is rooted in the teachings of the olden times when only the spiritual life was given much emphasis. Faith was not integrated in real life situations, In our own faith life history, the way our faith was handed down to was through the sword and the cross in the spirit of colonization. We were not treated as co partners in Christ salvific actions but as colonized people. People who provided material wealth to the colonizers. The false understanding of material security, the false image of abundant blessings started here!

We have seen and shared that this is not what the Father wants. Now this is happening: the ideal existence versus the actual existence. The ideal is the vision where God wanted us to be and to live with. The actual existence is very far from this desire of the Father and even from our very desire. The challenge therefore, is to work together towards the transformation of this reality to that which we and the Father desire. Together!

4. SCHEMA

VISION : GOD'S PLAN

DREAM FOR OURSELVES, DREAM OF GOD THE FATHER FOR US

	LIFE	FREEDOM RESPONSIBILITY	LOVE COMMUNITY
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A. PERSON (Human Dignity)	Alive & life giving In the FATHER	Free & freeing In CHRIST	Loving and caring In the HOLY SPIRIT
ROOTED IN	The fullness of life	For the freedom of the daughters and sons of God	For wholeness and eternal happiness
B. SOCIETY (Common Good)			
MEANT FOR	Economic Wealth for Sharing	Political Power for Service	Cultural Values for Solidarity
BASED ON	CREATION Genesis 1 & 2	ON EXODUS * Israel's * Christ's life, death and resurrection	ON SALVATION HISTORY * Creation * Redemption * Total Salvation

