

INTRODUCTION

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When the *Damdaming Katoliko sa Teolohiya* (DaKaTeo), the Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines, was conceived in 2001, it was meant to respond to the aspirations of many alumni of the Catholic University of Leuven to form an association of theologians and as a body, hold a symposium on important theological topics. There were past attempts to organize such an organization but due to differences in theological orientations, those efforts failed. Hence, there was a felt-need at that time to form a professional society of theologians. For Manny Ginete, CM, a Leuvenaar and a founding member of DaKaTeo, “an association of Catholic theologians, when they speak in one voice, would be a formidable force in shaping theological reflection in this part of the world, in drawing attention to the real questions that face the Church and our faith, and in evaluating the answers being offered, particularly on theological topics that cry for enlightenment and critical analysis.”¹ The very first symposium of the initial group was held in 2002, and in this gathering were also present the graduates of other theological institutions who were also interested in becoming members of the planned-for organization. That group of like-minded individuals formed what is now known in theological circles nationally and internationally as DaKaTeo. In the following two years, they drafted the group’s constitution and by-laws.

DaKaTeo sees itself not only as a support group among Filipino theologians, particularly in their scholarly pursuits, but also as responsible in developing and crafting theologies that are

¹ Manny Ginete, CM, “Message from the Organizer,” <https://dakateo.webs.com/history.htm> (accessed 18 May 2020).

truly responsive to the needs of the people, particularly the poor and the marginalized, and in the process, contribute to the formation of a just and inclusive church and society. As Agnes Brazal puts it, “DaKaTeo adopts a liberationist and intercultural perspective in its way of doing theology.”² Such an approach offers an alternative to the more common way of doing theology that simply expounds on the meaning of and/or parrots magisterial teaching. However, in a context marked by the poor’s struggles and sufferings, there is a need for a theological enterprise that “is immersed in the actual rough grounds of praxis,”³ as Danny Pilario puts it. Hence, the members of DaKaTeo endeavor to craft theologies that are rooted in people’s struggles, engages with and listens to the poor, and attempts to make real God’s salvific message. In the process of promoting creative and critical theological reflection, DaKaTeo also fosters camaraderie and fellowship among its members.

DaKaTeo has held conferences and symposia on various theological and pastoral concerns: “Fundamentalism and Pluralism in the Church” (2002), “Culture, Praxis and Theology: Interdisciplinary Conversations” (2004), “Theological Conversations in Post-Colonial and Global Contexts” (2005), “Interdisciplinarity in Theology” (2006), “Marginalization, Exclusion and Suffering” (2007), “Sexual Violence against Women” (2008), “Politics and Christian Tradition” (2009), “Reimagining Christianity for a Green World” (2010), “Art and Theology at the Crossroad?” (2011), “Cast Your Net into the Cyber-Sea” (2012), “Vatican II after Fifty Years: The Philippine Experience” (2013), “Doing Filipino Theology in a Globalized World” (2014), “The *Lineamenta* on the Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World” (2015), and “Gender and Ecclesiology” (2016). Most of the papers during those conferences were published in this journal, *Hapag*. The above conferences and the publications that followed are indications of

² Agnes Brazal, “Introduction,” <https://dakateo.webs.com/history.htm> (accessed 18 May 2020).

³ Daniel Franklin Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 451.

the diversity of the interests and concerns of its members, and their commitment to engage pressing theological-pastoral issues.

In 6-7 October 2017, DaKaTeo held its conference, “Seeds Sown and First-Fruits: Contributions of Wisdom Figures of the Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines,” in order to honor its founding members and to celebrate their contributions to the church and to society. Held in St. Vincent School of Theology and De La Salle University, the two-day event celebrated the lives and work of Fr. Jimmy Belita, CM; Fr. Jose Mario Francisco, SJ; Bro. Karl Gaspar, CSsR; Jose de Mesa; Sr. Corazon Manalo, DC; Fr. Manny Ginete, CM; Ton Danenberg; Sr. Amelia Vasquez, RSCJ; and Lode Wostyn, CICM. During the conference, the contributions of each of those founders were presented; after which, each of the “wisdom figures” gave her or his response to the presentation. Indeed, the church in general and DaKaTeo in particular have much to be grateful for what they have done as witnesses to the Gospel and for their theological endeavors as they tried to make sense of the Christian faith in their local contexts. Today’s DaKaTeo members can truly say that they are “standing on the shoulder of giants” and they cannot but be grateful for all their contributions.

The current issue of *Hapag* contains eight of the papers that were delivered during the conference. They present before us the uniqueness of each founding member as she or he has lived her or his calling in her or his own ministry and as she or he has contributed to the task of doing theology – however that theology is understood by each, individually and contextually. They show us the variety and richness of the theological enterprise and their ministries as each founding member grapples with the mystery of the divine in the complexity and vicissitudes of life. They manifest human creativity on the one hand and the finitude of the human mind on the other. While each article does not exhaust the totality of each member’s contribution to the church and society, the essays do provide us with a window, a front row seat, so to speak, to each person’s life and work. The final and short essay of Sr. Amelia Vasquez, RSCJ, an honoree, beautifully captures what theology is and how it is to be done in one’s context. In the end, theology is about life, and life itself, one’s context, serves as the text of one’s

doing of theology. A theology that is divorced from life is existentially meaningless and pastorally irrelevant but a theology that is of and for life contributes to the ushering in of God's reign and the healing of our wounded world.

To the wisdom figures of DaKaTeo, we in the society owe you a debt of gratitude. DaKaTeo will not be where it is at present without your guidance and inspiration. We can only hope that as we harvest the fruits that you have sown, we too will do our part in sowing the seeds for those who will come after us. We have big shoes to fill but with God's grace, we hope to do our part, no matter how unworthy we are in God's vineyard. *Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyong lahat!*

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