

**Intergenerational Transmission of Ancestral Wisdom:
Indigenous Ways & Kacharan Methods**
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My Lineage

I am Erlinda K. Natocyad, fondly called Arlene. I hail from Cordillera. We are generally called Igorots in the Cordillera. The old understanding of *Igorot* is people from the mountains, now, highlanders (Finin, 2005). As we have become more united as people from the mountains, we have started to value our collective heritage from time immemorial which abounds in ancestral wisdom transmitted by our reputable wo/men elders and imbibed while growing up. Many have accepted the name *Igorot* with pride, although self-ascribed names such as Ifugao, Kalinga, Benguet and Bontoc are preferred.

Both my parents come from two different ethno-linguistic groups in Mountain Province and in Ifugao. Their ancestors migrated and found a home in Kadaclan, Barlig, Mountain Province. As they grew in number in Kadaclan, they eventually formed a new ethnolinguistic group called I-kachakran or Kadaclan for easier pronunciation.

Casiano Natocyad and Benita Kinchasan-Natocyad, my beloved parents decided to search for greener pasture and settled in Balatoc, Itogon, Benguet, a mining community. I was born and raised in Balatoc, Itogon, Benguet. I am the last child of six births, three surviving; my eldest sister just died last year.

Through the Eyes of a Child Filled with Awe and Wonder

Benguet has become my second home where I have grown up with my second cultural roots. My family lived a simple life; yes, our life was simple but so much enriched by nature’s bounty and beauty. We were organically nourished by the produce of Mother Earth which my parents love to till with respect and gratitude. Aside from enjoying nature’s bounty and beauty, I also enjoyed our cultural exchange in the community.

Our community is composed of people coming from the different provinces of the Cordillera. Majority are the natives of Benguet, particularly the Ibalois. Doing rituals were very alive in this milieu where I was born and raised. The Benguet people are well known for their lavish ritual and celebration called *cañao*; this involves animal sacrifice, feasting and dancing. I like participating in the *cañao* because I always bring home *watwat*, my share of meat that I have not consumed after partaking in the meal celebration. As a child I was always amazed with the ways the gong-beaters play the gongs. I liked watching the playing of the gongs and the native dance of the *Ibalois*. Sometimes I join the group, that’s how I learned Benguet dance.

Though my parents left Kadaclan, Kadaclan beliefs and practices were still a part of their being, of their consciousness as manifested in our family life. And I believe that the Kadaclan ancestral wisdom which I learnt from my parents has shaped my consciousness and my worldview. ***Ap-apuy is an occasion where young and older people come together at night to share stories and events about people and the community***; this was practiced at home whenever relatives from Kadaclan to

visit us. Through this *ap-apuy*, my parents were updated about the lives of people and events back home in Kadaclan. As a young child then who sat and slept on the lap of my mother as she enjoyed the *ap-apuy* with these relatives of ours, I was privileged to listen to the stories of these elder people. I did not only experience one or two *ap-apuys*; but there were more *ap-apuys* as I was growing up. These rituals of *ap-apuys* gave me an opportunity to have a virtual journey to my hometown, Kadaclan and experience the beauty of the place and the people. Like for instance through the *ap-apuy*, I learned that rice is harvested twice a year in Kadaclan. And it is during this harvest season people enjoy working and helping each other; we call *ob-obfo* (*bayanihan*). I also came to learn that it's almost rainy season there for the whole year round except for March, April and the first two weeks of May.

Growing up I observed that every time *pinikpikan* is prepared by my father, he has a unique way of dividing the singed chicken in two without chopping it. The whole chicken breast is lifted up and the entrails remain on the other half still neatly wrapped in a thin membrane. Maybe without our knowing he silently prayed as he read the omen that the chicken bile foretold. ***Pinikpikan is a chicken recipe common in the Cordillera and amongst the Igorots***; it is traditionally prepared by beating the wings of the chicken with the use of a stick until it dies, then the big feathers are removed and finally singed, washed and cut into pieces before it is cooked. If my mother happened to make rice wine and it is already fermented, before the rice wine is shared for drinking by those present in the gathering or by those who are with us during the meal celebration, my father or any elder in the group does a short prayer-ritual. Then he pours some rice wine on Mother Earth accompanied by a short prayer of thanksgiving and blessing back to Mother Earth.

There were rituals that I have experienced at home such as when my elder sister got sick; she had been in and out of the hospital but the doctors' findings were inconclusive, so my parents decided to call for a *monfuni*, an indigenous healer, to do a *songa*, a healing ritual, for her. I was then in sixth grade. Another ritual which I have experienced for the first time was when one of my grandfathers, my mother's uncles died in 1976. A *kopukop* was performed in our house after his burial. This *kopukop* is done by butchering chicken and prepared as viand for dinner; the dinner is shared by the close members of the bereaved family before each member goes back to their respective places.

There were also *chuyas* (wedding) celebrations my parents attended and they brought me along with them. It was in these celebrations that I learned our own native dance as I joined the community dances. These rituals and celebrations I have mentioned are just some of the many rituals that I have personally experienced.

As a child full of awe and wonder, I enjoyed listening to the stories of the elders during *ap-apuys*; I love participating in every ritual performed at home and in the community. All these experiences contributed to my learning of ancestral wisdom, appreciation as well as recognition of the importance of rituals; it is a way of invoking the Divine's presence in our human affairs. This Divine's Presence can be invoked from sunrise to sunset, from womb to tomb.

My childhood days went so fast, I cannot hold the hands of time. How I wish I remained a child... but I am glad the gift of childlikeness is offered to those who want to grow... I kept all that I have experienced in my "memory bank". Borrowing the

Biblical text, “pondered” which we usually hear “and Mary pondered all in her heart” (Lk1:29); I too, have pondered all I have experienced in my heart.

Losing the Enchantment of old-age beliefs and practices

In the sharing of Fr. Niphot last Sept. 25, 2021, he mentioned, “The Young when they study, they lost their roots;” this statement brought me back to my younger days. They always say high school life is the most enjoyable stage of one’s life, a lot of physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual changes that are happening. Thank God I survived. But that was the time that I was losing something - I started to look “down” and question at what I used to enjoy in my childhood days, our cultural practices, like our healing and the *cañao* of the Benguet people because I learned the concept of ‘superstitious belief’. Whatever Science and Religion cannot explain is dismissed as superstitions.

In college I was detaching from these rituals performed. I was no longer that child who was very eager to see what will be the next thing that the shaman will do. Are we going to join the dance? Or are we going to eat? The more I was detached when I became a Science teacher. Any paranormal activity, I label it as superstitious and the rituals I used to see and participate when I was younger, I labeled these rituals as ‘pagan’ rituals, and more so, when I took Religious Education as my second degree course. So at that time the more I studied the more I became skeptical to the beliefs and practices, which my own people, my forebears have been holding on since time immemorial. These beliefs and practices had sustained them in their relationship with their fellow human beings, with nature and with the Higher Being whom they recognize as their God. (I am not telling that everything I learned is wrong. I am very much grateful for my past learning. It is just that the paradigm was “myopic” it does not see the whole.)

Questioning but integrating

At the end of May 1985, I was prepared to go back home to Baguio after I finished the summer integration course at Mother of Life, Novaliches, Quezon City; I prepared myself to bring the good news to my parents especially to my father that I successfully finished my second degree in Religious Education. Upon arriving home, I saw my dear father very sick; he had his 2nd stroke and was in bed for almost 2 weeks; he did not want to be brought to the hospital and also did not want a message to be sent to me about what happened to him so that I will not be disturbed because he knew my schooling will end at the end of May. He just waited for me to be back home; after two days that I was with him, he died peacefully; that was June 5, 1985. The death of my father and friend devastated me. I was not prepared for this eventuality.

On the second day of his wake, I experienced high fever that made me stay in bed. I could not sleep; I just closed my eyes. My consciousness could follow what was going on in the wake. I heard the people singing and chanting the life-story of my father. I sensed others coming and going in the room where I was. I heard women praying as if they were talking to my father and asking him to watch over me and help me recover. They were also talking to some spirits – I would guess the spirits of my ancestors. Then I felt lighter and was lulled to sleep until the next morning. I woke up

as if nothing happened, and soon I was on my feet again and felt strong enough until my father was laid to rest. This experience widened my horizons of the spirit-world.

After the burial, in the evening, we did the “kopukop”; the second time that I experienced this “kopukop” ritual. Remember, I mentioned earlier, the first time I experienced “kopukop” was after the burial of my grandfather, the uncle of my mother.

After the 9th day novena; I went back to teach. That week of my resumption of my teaching job was quite busy; I had to do a lot of preparation and catching up because of my 2 months of absence due to the summer integration that I had to undergo. One lunchbreak during that week, while I was in the faculty room, I heard a commotion and came out to ask what happened. While hearing that someone had a leg-cramps, I felt my hands became warm and as if somebody was telling me “Touch him!” I hesitated, I was motionless but I felt a push, so I asked the other students to bring the boy to one of the vacant classrooms. I just did a simple massage and hand grip until he felt at ease and was able to walk. I have never done any massage prior to this incident that is why; I was surprise why I did that.

After that incident, my life was never the same again. My life has been redirected into a path I had never dreamt of before, the sacred path of a healer. The experience of doing healing helped me deepen my Spirituality, a spirituality that is not bound by doctrines but open to growth and to new dimensions. Its path is not linear but spiraling. My co-teachers and some students were my “clients”. One day, to my surprise, I was asked if I can do massage on someone who was from the nearby community near our school. I had second thought, something flashed back it my memory the time when I started questioning the indigenous healing modalities and rituals: “Am I doing something that is superstitious?” The Science and Religion teacher in me were wrestling. This questioning and restlessness were won over by the Compassion I felt in people in need of relief from their pain. In the midst of my questioning and restlessness, I found myself engaging in doing massage; I just tried to feel and follow where my hands were leading me to massage. I was honing this new found gift in healing; it was also my way of coping with my grief as I have not grieved enough. To ground me in the sacred Source of Healing, the Healer of all healers I found myself doing my personal prayer-rituals, sitting meditation then gradually to moving meditation, and enriched by instrumental music and my own singing and chanting. I was confident in my singing and chanting because it was for my own consumption.

To enrich my know-how about doing healing, I found myself attending alternative healing modalities. It was during the late 80’s and early 90’s that alternative healing modalities were becoming popular like Pranic Healing, the first alternative healing modality that I attended for a training workshop which was organized by the Assumption Sisters. It was also during that time, I left teaching and joined in one of the Pastoral Ministries of the then Vicariate of the Mountain Provinces, the Family Life Ministry. (In 1992, the Vicariate of the Mountain Provinces was divided into 3 Vicariates, Vicariate of Baguio-Benguet, Vicariate of Bontoc-Lagawe, and Vicariate of Tabuk. The Vicariate of Baguio-Benguet is now Diocese of Baguio). To erase the of superstitious beliefs in the healing that I do and to put the scientific principle in healing, I had to undergo/attend seminar-workshops on Alternative Healing modalities. Two other healing modalities were added in my

training, Reflexology and Acupressure. It was in the Acupressure training that I felt at home with; I was able to name the massage that I had been doing; it was Acupressure. Undergoing the training-workshop for these 3 healing modalities affirm/confirm instead of negating the indigenous healing modalities I have witnessed and experienced that the power of prayer and the use of sacred energy in healing were important allies in healing. I was happy that we have integrated healing in the program and services of the Family and Life Ministry.

As Science and Religion teacher/Pastoral Worker, I was holding on to two different poles, which have different paradigms. But in my Pastoral Work I found myself letting these two paradigms (Religion and Science) interplay in my Pastoral Work and I felt good about it. But at times I find myself questioning the integration which I was doing; “Is this paradigm I am embarking acceptable?”

Reclaiming my Indigenous Roots the Phenomenological Way

To fast track my storytelling, in 1992 when the Vicariate of the Mountain Provinces was divided into 3 Vicariates, the employees of the then Vicariate of the then Mountain Provinces who were based at the Bishops’ House in Baguio were offered possibilities to stay put at the Bishop’s House. However, they would be serving the Vicariate of Baguio-Benguet or if they like to go to the other new Vicariates especially if their municipality/town belongs within the jurisdiction of the new Vicariate.

At that time, I was given an offer to work with one of the exclusive girls’ schools here in Metro Manila. So, I resigned and accepted this job to be a school registrar of this school. The registrar’s work was very far from Pastoral Work. Thank God, I was allowed to study. After my office work, I had to rush to go to ASI for my graduate study. I enrolled MS Pastoral Sociology. One of the lessons learned which I believe most of the students cannot forget especially if they decide to write their thesis or research study to complete their graduate study, the **phenomenological way**.

Dr. Mina Ramirez, president of the Asian Social Institute is among the first proponents/practitioner of **phenomenology** here in the Philippines. She has a way of explaining these philosophical thoughts of Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger in layman’s term; **“that is specifically a human approach in research because it makes use of first-hand experiences as facts on which to base reflective analysis. It looks at a phenomenon holistically from different points of view and in different profiles and by a process of thematic reflections (phenomenological reduction), attempts to come out with the “core of the truth” or the “essence, the eidos” regarding the phenomenon – the perceived nucleus of truth, the “eidetic insight”** (Ramirez, 2012). I apply phenomenology by gathering the stories (social facts), the Kadaclan Way, through *Ap-apuys*.

From my experience of doing phenomenology, I was able to say, “phenomenologizing” is a way of life - reflecting, living and celebrating - that transforms one’s consciousness of self and milieu that include social, cultural, economic, political, environmental and spiritual; the process of doing phenomenology is transformative. Actually, when I started sharing my story awhile back, I was already re-telling the process. I share with you three of my research studies, 2 using this research tool, Phenomenology and the other one, a Participatory Research. These studies are manifest evidences of my Re-rooting/Reclaiming my Indigenous Roots. I

was happy I have not lost my roots; they were still there deeply rooted, the “soil” needed weeding, cultivation, and watering to refresh and nourish those “roots”!

The first ever research that I did in my life was my Masteral Thesis titled **Indigenous Healing: A Journey back to Our Indigenous Root (A Phenomenological Study)**

To enrich my personal experience, my “I account”, I had to do some validation. To validate my experience in healing, I had to look for co-researchers. I had to spend time and money to traverse the Cordillera to look for indigenous healers as my **co-researchers**. I observed the research ethics, Free Prior Inform Consent (FPIC). I was able to find 7 indigenous healers, one from Buguias, Benguet (hilot), 2 from Ifugao (Mumbaki), 2 from Mountain Province (Mansip-ok; Munfuni), and 2 from Kalinga (Mandadawak; hilot with the use of particular herbs/plants dictated to her by a voice).

Due to time and financial limitations, Apayao and Abra were not represented. Most of these healers were in their late 60’s. My research instrument was Storytelling. *“Story-telling remains one of the most powerful ways of giving cultures and peoples a sense of history, identify and destiny. It is from these stories that different generations meet each other in the transfer of cultural wealth, given and received in special contexts and situations. Stories keep us connected with those that had gone before us and would just surely link us with those who will come after us (Tondo, 1995: 338–339, ASI).”*

I asked these indigenous healers to share their stories; how did they become healers, what were the joys and challenges in doing their healing. My story and their stories became OUR STORY. This process has undergone series of reflections. The fruit of our story are these following themes:

1. The indigenous healers were called from the most unexpected events and times of their life through their dreams and adversities in life, particularly in times of illness. **(The Call and Response)**
2. The indigenous healers have a very clear **belief in one God**.

This Supreme Being is perceived as a Great Spirit living in heaven, but concerned about human beings on earth. In fact, it is this Transcendent Mighty One, not human but Divine that created the universe (John Paul II L’Osservatore Romano, 26 Jan. 1994, p.5).

Worship of God and cult of the ancestors by the indigenous peoples are true expressions, however vague, of a divine human aspect of the revealed Christian religion (Tribal Forum, Jan.-Feb. 1998).

This way of worshipping is the sustaining factor of these indigenous healers is their commitment, which is strengthened by their

“indigenous” prayer life; a prayer life which may appear crude in the eyes of modern men/women. They remained acknowledging the greatness of Kabunian, the god whom they recognize as the creator of all the seen and unseen, the One higher than themselves.

*They recognized **Kabunian** as the source of all healing powers, they as healers are the medium/conduit of **Kabunian’s** (God) gift of healing. This shows that their method is based on faith, but when their methods do not work, they never hesitate to send the sick person to a hospital. They employ whatever works best for the person.*

3. The indigenous healers add **another dimension of what a community is, the spirit world.**

Community is more than just a living member of their tribe. It includes the spirit world, their ancestors, the rest of creation with which they are in communion. The belief in a close and harmonious relationship among humans, nature, and the cosmos is part of our indigenous culture, which we need to reclaim for a truly holistic approach to life and community.

They have befriended nature to be their ally in their healing ministry and most especially a constant communion with God.

4. The healing ministry of the indigenous healers has made them **become men and women for others, always ready to be of service to others.**
5. Indigenous healing includes the **healing of the body, mind and spirit.**

*There is a connection of spirit on the part of both patient and healer that are involved in the total healing process. Indigenous healing then invites the parties involved to **TRUST the sacred healing process because God, the Great Spirit is one with the process. All parties – the Spiritual Source, the family, the community, the patient and the healer are participants of the healing process.** The holistic approach of this traditional/indigenous healing leads us to a better understanding of the Christian healing ministry, which our Lord Jesus Christ has exemplified. Jesus was a holistic healer.*

6. Our forebears were deeply rooted with their god-self in their indigenous healing modalities. **Indigenous healing brings us home to our indigenous roots as well as to the ROOT of all life form, God, Kabunian.**

Possibilities:

1. **These indigenous healing practices that have survived the test of time are a key to comprehending the present.** The results of this study point to **the need for further studies.** Such as
 - a) Study the contribution that the reputable shamans/indigenous healers make to healing by sharing in the suffering of the sick and responding to calls for help.
 - b) Explore the part that faith plays in the healing process and

encourage pastors and church members to visit the sick and to pray for them.

- c) Studies are done on the mechanisms and conditions by which the indigenous sector and those in the medical field come to

terms and accommodate each other for the common good. (Just like with this pandemic.)

2. In Christology/Theology

Christian healing is a teamwork which includes all the gifts and facets of healing (holistic). Healing Mother Earth is also a part of the healing ministry of the Church.

Therefore:

- a) A shift to the New Paradigm in Theology is a challenge. In PCP II (Plenary Council of the Philippines), the New Integral Evangelization can be a tool to “purify” the creed, code, cult of our indigenous healing practices and *vice versa*. This paradigm shift does not only include the “mindset” but also the “heartset.”
- b) Basic Ecclesial Communities be provided opportunities for contextualized and inculturated catechesis for the different ministries that might evolve in the course of time (e.g. healing ministry) liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations.

3. In Cosmology

- a) To retrieve the positive aspects of our cosmic religious /indigenous traditions; affirm the sacredness of nature; stress the plurality of beings rather than the hierarchy; emphasize oneness with nature than domination over nature.
- b) To resurface the Asian Spirit and the soul of the Filipinos that is “Maka-Diyos, Maka-tao and Maka-Kalikasan” (Love of God, Love of the people, Love of nature to form a deeper bond with the rest of Asia.

4. In Anthropology/Sociology

- a) To work towards an integrated view of humanity (not Anthropocentric), that is, the corporal with the spiritual, the individual with society and to the whole cosmos.
- b) Establish a practice that is more in consonance with gospel norms.

5. In Spirituality

To be open to what Creation Spirituality offers a spirituality that knows no boundaries.

Creation Spirituality is the oldest tradition in this land for it is the basic heritage of native peoples everywhere. All these peoples had cosmology as the basis of their worship, prayer, economics, politics and morality. All expected the divine to burst out of anyplace at anytime (Matthew Fox, 1991).

Living this spirituality brings about COMPASSION. A compassion that works for integrity of creation, justice, and peace and not to forget

knows how to celebrate. A celebration that nourishes the sacred space of individuals then it creates a flow of sacred energy in the community. The community spirit is strengthened and deepened.

6. In theological language, symbol and rituals

- a) For us Christians, that we be consciously inclusive in our religious symbols and language.
- b) Rituals allow us to attach ourselves to the sacred, God; thus we are encouraged to retrieve the liberating symbols and rituals of the indigenous peoples, particularly the liberating symbols and rituals of indigenous healing and communion with nature, the spirit world and the cosmos.

To validate my experience in living and doing creative rituals, I did a research study for my doctoral entitled *Re-enchantment of Every Day Rituals*. In this study, my co-researchers were selected elders in Kadaclan who shared about some major rituals in Kadaclan. I re-rooted back home again; scheduled at least 2 or 3 “*ap-apyys*” with the elders as I cannot listen to their stories about some of our major rituals in one sitting. For my ASI co-researchers, I also selected some staff in ASI who shared their experience in participating in the creative rituals I facilitated during institutional activities/events in ASI.

The other research study that I conducted was entitled *Cultural Heritage: Oral and Material Culture of Kadaclan, Barlig, Mountain Province*. In as much as I did not grow up in my hometown; I wanted to know more about our Cultural Heritage that is why I listened, gathered and learnt personally the stories of our myths, legends, folktales from the wisdom keepers, the elders. I had this research published as a legacy to the younger generations of my tribe that they become proud of our culture that respects and conserves Mother Earth.

From these 2 researches, I chose common highlights:

- The stories from our Cultural Heritage reveal that as individuals, families and as communities, they feel and actually experience their intimate connections and relationships with one another, with their immediate natural environment, to their connection and appreciation of the vast universe, of the sacred in the seen and the unseen worlds. This ultimately brings people to a realization of Someone Higher than themselves, a Creator.

84 of *Laudato Si* validates it: *The entire material universe speaks of God's love, God's boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God... going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves.*

All the more, I was affirmed with the social relevance of doing rituals with this encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*.

- Ritual is one of our Rich Cultural Heritage. Families/communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities are encouraged to perform again the rituals that enrich their community life as well as the interrelatedness of all beings, without necessarily making it so lavish. We can recreate a ritual meaningful to our present context. This ritual need not only be limited as a performance during fiesta but really form a part of the Life of the Christian community.

- It is important for us to realize that our present religious rituals cannot claim to be superior or more holy/sacred than the tribal ones that we are fast leaving behind. Our rituals as indigenous peoples, before we became Christians, show that God was already present in the affairs of our ancestors. Thus, the challenge is how to let the good in our “indigenous” rituals enrich the good in our Christian Rituals and vice versa. This can be through inculturated liturgy or paraliturgy and indigenous practices.

“Our culture is but the soil which gives support and nourishment to the seeds of our Faith. Our Church has been enriched over centuries, through inculturation, from the diverse cultures of its believers, and the “test of true inculturation is whether people become more committed to their Christian faith because they perceive it more clearly with the eyes of their own culture” (John Paul II, in Ecclesia in Asia, 23).

Ursula King in her book, *Spirit of Fire* (1996), quoted Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, a theologian, mystic and renowned scientist, “After close to two centuries of passionate struggles, neither **science** nor **faith** has succeeded in discrediting its adversary. On the contrary, it becomes obvious that neither can develop normally without the other, and the reason is simple: the same life animates both”. That was what I experienced as a Science and Religion teacher; I did not experience **Science and Faith/Religion** as mutually opposing; they were complementing each other; there is the marriage of “sense and soul” as Ken Wilber would describe.

I add a third aspect/element in this enriching interplay which was mentioned by Pope Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia*, which is none other than **culture**. Faith and religion are expressed within the milieu of people who carry within them their cultural heritage. Therefore, to enrich a given ritual, **the interplay** of these three - **culture, religion/faith, and science**, has to be considered for a more meaningful encounter with the self, family, community, environment and the rest of creation.

The following are some possibilities to be considered in an ever-widening spiral doing rituals.

1. For the Elders and Teachers

For the elders, parents and teachers to have a closer look of the rich cultural heritage of their sacred rituals, using the eyes of the mystics of this time and bring these rituals back to life (Education-formation) to strengthen their community life and a means to let the young generation root themselves in their cultures amidst the lure of modernity that may uproot them.

They perform again the sacred rituals that beautify the cycle of life (Birth, wedding, death) without making it so lavish. Recreate a ritual that will awaken the community spirit again. Make it a community affair so that the members of the community share whatever they can contribute for the ritual and see the “multiplication of bread” comes to life. Not only as a performance during fiesta but really a part of the community life in communion with the Creator-Spirit, ancestral-nature spirits and the cosmos.

Our Primal Religion is a dimension of Creation Spirituality. Thus, in no way does it go against whatever religious beliefs we follow at present. In fact, there is a great need for us to have an education-formation in the ways we look at our own cultural heritage particularly the sacred rituals that our religious rituals are not in any way superior or more holy **because before we became Christians, God was already present in the affairs of our ancestors. Thus the challenge is how to let the good in our “old” rituals enrich the good in our “new” rituals in Christianity or whatever faith persuasions.**

As observed and experienced by my co-researchers in Kadaclan, they said that since most of the sacred rituals were no longer practiced, the community life has weakened, their activities have become to each her/his own. Thus, we need to renew and make our rituals alive with the richness of the old and fervor of the young to heal the divides in Kadaclan, especially the religious divide. I believe this will strengthen community life again.

The elders, teachers, students and the people in the community regularly come together not only on feast days in making the cycles of life and rice rituals, the community will come alive again. Celebrating the sacred rituals (in dance, song/chant, poem/stories, drawing/painting, and food) is one way of preserving the rich cultural heritage and the ancestral wisdom of the religiocultural communities.

2. For the Catholic Church

Since I became more conscious of doing the sacred rituals, I have a “transformed” way of looking and experiencing the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic celebration is a whole length of ritual where the individual who joins the celebration brings with her/him own story. The people come together and celebrate their common story, their salvation story; their love story with the God of Life and Love who was, is and will be with them till the end, their connectedness with the Earth and the cosmos.

Strong appropriate images of faith can bring a new energy to the gospel in our time. Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1976 (EN) **spoke of evangelization as the “essential mission of the church.”** He called for new methods and new approaches to make Jesus known as “good news,” He rightly observed: **“Man (sic) has passed beyond the civilization of the word... today he lives in the civilization of the image.” (#42) People’s imaginations need to be engaged to open up new ways of living together in the world. Consumerism does it. Why not Catholicism? (Collins, 1992)**

For the Catholic church to go beyond her rules and rubrics in worship and discover once again the beauty of her tradition of worship, a ritual tradition, an aesthetic tradition. May she continue to find effective and beautiful forms of imagination which embody the presence of the sacred Mystery.

May the Church become more open in looking at the mythic truth of dogmas – way to honor the sacred wisdom that lies at the heart of religious mystery. For the ritual expression of mystery is an expression of our most fundamental human condition, our universal resonance, our archetype. In

my experience of joining in the sacred rituals of groups of different faith persuasions, there are rituals that I easily flow with it and I can be in that flow of energy for long, others it is short-lived. You know and you feel what ritual you are at home with. Thus, **the openness of the Church is to create more avenues to share sacred rituals in chapels, in BECs, in the forests, in the paddy fields, mountain tops, embraced by the sky and the cosmos.**

3. For other Christians and other Faith Persuasions

More sacred rituals for interfaith activities, as I have personally experienced as very enriching. I have participated in different interfaith gatherings where interfaith rituals unite everyone without exclusion in the group. We hope to see the openness of the different Churches/Faith Persuasions spreading outward to create more avenues to share rituals that are related to the Healing of the Earth, our Common Home and the cosmos.

4. For the Cultural, Environment, and Development workers

This study opens possibilities of integrating sacred rituals in cultural, development and environment works as a way of deepening one's spirituality in the work one is involved in which is not necessarily a religious activity. This spirituality recognizes the Creative Living Presence in one's culture. We may embrace any religious persuasion but that doesn't erase our ancestral cultures. Instead, Egbulen (1996) believes, cultures are built on grace. Likewise, environment and development works become sustainable and liberating when enhanced with creative rituals.

5. For Families/Filipino Families

Sustaining family and community rituals as they reflect a value system which is passed from one generation to the other. It is in ritual that the community heals itself, sacralizes and enlightens itself, brings forth gifts from everyone to celebrate and let go (Fox, Creation Spirituality).

A friend of mine shared that there is a finding that one of the reasons of juvenile delinquencies is due the fact that family meals are no longer observed as one of the family rituals. **Thus bringing back the meal celebration at home will eliminate slowly the distractions of our modern time such as putting off the TV/computer/mp gadgets while eating.**

Bring back our sacred acts of blessing our family members in their comings and goings each day as exemplified by the *mano po* which is specially needed by the children of today who have not been raised with or introduced to this ritual.

6. For All

Create your own rituals. Do not think that rituals need to be formal or serious. You may have your own already and think of them as "the way we do things." A ritual can be as simple as looking out the same window every morning and saying hello to the birds or to the dogs. Simply connect and be present with the God of Life and Love. Even for moment, it will mean a lot.

7. For all artists and educators and thinkers

Brian Swimme says, “Until the creative artists and educators, and thinkers attend to this challenge we will continue to lose ourselves and the future generations to consumerism. Daring and bold initiatives are necessary in this endeavour. There are not experts here, and we must be happy in that, since the time calls not for experts but genius” (1999).

Conclusion

My dear genius indigenous listeners and fellow earth-sojourners, I hope I have contributed some wisdom to Asian School of Wisdom that can inspire all of us to learn and teach our ancestral wisdom to the upcoming generations. Only personal immersion in the experiences of our immemorial ritual celebrations can our generation of wisdom-keepers teach the ancestral wisdom that all lifeforms and the earth are sacred because our common home is spirited by the presence of the Creator-Spirit, ancestral spirits and nature spirits. This ancestral wisdom, once embodied and personified by our religiocultural communities, will become inner power to respond to the healing of the Earth, Our Common Home.

“Amchan hen Saramat ko.”

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