

MISSION, YOUTH AND POWER

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theme 4: Mission and Power (youth transversal)

by Jec Dan Borlado

Good Afternoon. Thank you for giving me the “power” to speak to you.
I recognize that you become vulnerable when you don’t have “the power”...
And so, for your security, I hope not to abuse it in the next five minutes or so... ☺

I am an Asian.

I am a Filipino.

I am a Young Person.

As Asians, our context is that of plurality and diversity...
most of the countries in this region have a colonial past...
we are on the process of nation building, development and modernization...
we want to achieve authentic self & cultural identity in the context of a modern world ...
we are in search of a form of social order beyond the current alternatives...
Asia is home to some of the world’s living and reawakening religions that shape both
culture and consciousness...
and last but not the least, in the Asian context, the Christian community is a minority...

(show first painting)

It was 489 years ago when the first fleet of Spanish ships landed on the shores of my Motherland. And it has been said that they came holding the Cross on one hand, and a Sword on the other.

These forceful waves relay the impacts of their coming...
Yet, the first fleet may have actually landed amidst still-calm waters...

Some 333 years later, Protestant Christianity arrived in the Philippines introduced mostly by American Missionaries at that time. After dividing the country up into 7 parts, so as to delineate the geographical work allotments for each church, **can it be said that, this time around, they came with Bibles and scissors?**

Not all people who do not look like ourselves are savages or uncivilized...
Not all people who don’t understand what we are saying are illiterate and stupid...
It doesn’t mean that in unknown worlds, there are no divinely inspired pre-existing

systems within their practice of community...

This is the “Bantayan.” Bantay in my dialect means, “watcher.”

So, bantayan would mean a “watch tower”; a place to watch from.

The Filipino people (among other races) have a positive characteristic called the Bantay System. We are our brother’s and sister’s keepers!

Theologians, is this theologically sound? You would agree?

This pre-existing reality is very similar to the Prayer on Wisdom from the traditional spiritual teachings of the Elders of the *Omuskagowuk* Nation.

The point is: if only we aren’t so blinded by our sin of pride or the unhealthy passion to always triumph and succeed; if only we could have the right kind of sensitivity – **mission work can become a mutual life-transforming & mutual life-saving endeavor.**

It is unfortunate that we cannot recover the past. However today, as prophets, we are to and can address wrong systems of power such as war, neo-colonialism guised in the form of economic domination, and moreover address demeaning and abusive interpersonal relationship habits influenced by, but not limited to, selfish and individualistic capitalists.

(point to the flying fragments)

The constant collisions through painful clashes and smashes have truly been traumatic. Yet to be optimistic about it, our engagement or exposure to another - reveals our weaknesses, pointing us to opportunities of growth; opportunities where new and better things can emerge.

Our missions have been very divisive, destructive and disempowering!
If not among those we witness to, to those whom we witness with.
The very opposite of what Jesus prayed for.

(stand between the paintings)

Yet today we are here at Edinburgh.

Today, we are at our crossroads as the global church representing our own respective local congregations.

The fullness of God’s time has come to pursue new and fundamentally better participation in God’s Mission in the world.

And so I say, let us **repent** from our ways!

(open second painting)

Essential to this road towards new and better things is the young person;

the young person, being both a recipient and potential agent of The Mission.

As a **young person**, I say:

through the prodding of the Holy Spirit: empower us to be reconciliatory to the divisions we did not start!

through the prodding of the Still Small Voice: empower us to be restorative to the lives we did not destroy!

through the prodding of the Sustainer of our Faith: empower us to re-empower others in reflecting God's will for the whole created world!

All for the Glory of God!

Do so by **retelling**, and retelling the old old story of Christ' love and the old stories of our people.

Consequently, the youth will prophesy;

the young will see visions;

the old will dream again! (Acts 2:17)

Do so by equipping us with facilities to use in paving the way.

In effect, we will turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

(Isa 2:4)

Empower us to pursue new and fundamentally better approaches to the unchanging Mission of God.

Affirm the notion that mission shouldn't be a traditional project understanding;

Instead, affirm that it should be a project of Lifestyle – with a transformative;

restorative; reconciliatory; mutually empowering – disposition.

And by that, let us together witness to Christ today

not through politically strategized means;

but through a naturally compelling practice of a life in Christ – a light that shines in the darkness...

So let us live a life of empowered solidarity;

a life of empowered praise;

a life of empowered faith.

Because the Consequence of an Empowered People...

- in solidarity: is The Beloved Community

- in praise is: God's Inhabitation

- in faith: is God's Mission Incarnated

And on that note, I now relinquish my power.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Douglas Elwood quoting Emerito Nakpil, former Executive director of ATESEA, "Introduction", What

Asian Christians Are Thinking: A Theological Source Book, ed. Douglas Elwood (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1976), xix-xx.