

A POOR CHURCH FOR THE POOR: AN EMERGING IMAGE OF THE CHURCH IN THE MIND OF POPE FRANCIS

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Abstract

This qualitative study intends to determine the most dominant image of the Church in the mind of the present pontiff--- Pope Francis. It seeks to name, describe, and define that image from where it emerged and where it was articulated. The following were the pre-determined data sources: Aparecida Document, Pastoral Letters addressed to the faithful in Buenos Aires issued by Cardinal Bergoglio, his homilies during the first year of his papacy, General Audiences in his first year as pope and the Evangelii Gaudium.

Findings show that the emerging dominant image of the Church is "A Poor Church for the Poor." The other images that surfaced are the Church as Communion and Dialogue, the Church as Disciple and Missionary sent to the peripheries of life, the Church as a Merciful Mother to the Poor, and a Renewed Church.

Pope Francis' vision of a Church is clearly defined as A Poor Church for the Poor that 1) promotes communion and dialogue where there is solidarity in working together to uplift the life of the poor; 2) advocates discipleship and missionary who learns from the poverty of Christ and is willing to go out to the peripheries of life; 3) exercises merciful motherhood in her preferential love for the poor in the person of the last, the least and the lost; and 4) a renewed Church formed by the poor through her constant dialogue in the lives of the poor.

In this Year of the Poor, Pope Francis' Poor Church for the Poor is an image that significantly calls all, whether rich or poor, to live the poverty and humility of Christ and exercise Christian preference for the poor.

Key words: Church, image, poor

INTRODUCTION

Each papacy has its unique way of developing a specific image or images of the Church relevant and seen according to the signs of that particular time. "Image of the Church" as used in this study to mean how people could grasp the mystery of the Church. Image, as a word, is widespread in people's daily conversations. An image is seen by the eye and could stir the mind to formulate descriptions. Image, from Latin "imago," can be used in a broader sense of any two-dimensional figure: map, graph, pie chart, or painting. An image can be developed by combinations of methods. It is essential to keep in mind that an image is a result of a process that went through stages of development. It is even more important to think that no image is considered final, it is always possible to have it more developed, whether for deterioration or improvement (Dulles, 1987).

Preference of the term "image" rather than "model," "aspect," or "dimension" is an attempt to manifest a conviction that the Church, as discussed in the pages of *Lumen Gentium* is a mystery (*Lumen Gentium* #4). A mystery, according to Cardinal Dulles, is a reality of which one cannot speak directly about (Dulles, 1987). Drawing an image could be of help to be able to talk about a mystery and a great help in people's grasp of the Church's mystery. It is also a term that can be lightly considered by students being introduced into ecclesiological studies. John Fuellenbach, too presented the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II by using the term "Images of the Church in Vatican II."

Moreover, for Fuellenbach, the function of "images" is to "adequately describe the essence and function of the Church" (Fuellenbach, p.4, 2001). Nevertheless, to get a better understanding of the Church, the most effective way is to be involved and enter deeply into the life of the Church. Avery Dulles (1987) often uses the words images, notion, and type in lieu of the term "model" in discussing his models of the Church.

Previous Popes and their Ecclesiology

During the time of Pope Benedict XVI, two themes stood at the center of his ecclesiology: the Church is fundamentally Eucharistic and the Church as communion. This was manifested in his frequent reference of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and profoundly reiterated its relationship to Christian love, toward God and others which according to him, "The Eucharist is thus found at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion" (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 15).

Pope John Paul II has advocated solidarity and constant renewal. These were the values that guided his ecclesiology. Constant renewal and updating is an ecclesiology he inherited from John XXIII. Solidarity is the image of the Church he saw in Paul VI. The choice of his name, John Paul II, manifests his strong desire to continue what his predecessors started. Pope John Paul II saw the need to strengthen Solidarity. This aspiration was

expressed in his constant call for communion and dialogue within and among the hierarchy and the laity that is extended outside the Church. He advocated a communion and dialogue that is rooted in the principle of collegiality. This image of the Church was the most relevant during that particular time when changes brought about by Vatican II are on the way.

Pope John Paul II's program on a constant renewal is a principle he appreciated in the papacy of Pope John XXIII. He saw the seriousness of John XXIII in his advocacy for transformation in the Church in the convocation of Vatican II. Advocacy he supported in his capacity as a bishop of a Church in Poland. He was an active participant of the Vatican II and an avid supporter of the current pontiff's endeavors. These attitudes were observed by Paul VI, from which he created him a cardinal. His dedication to the council's concerns led him to the throne of Peter.

Pope John Paul II put these two advocacies together and anchored his pastoral programs on them. He left the Vatican most of the time and traveled to remote places to be with the people. This is his best expression of his solidarity. He convened synods and conferences of bishops to encourage communion and dialogue among churches. He initiated interfaith meetings to establish a dialogue with those outside the fold. These were his ways of projecting his image of the Church: A Church of Solidarity and Constant Renewal.

Pope John XXIII envisioned a Church that is continuously updated and renewed, as expressed in his *Aggiornamento* and implemented in the convocation of the Second Vatican Council. The convocation of Vatican II is sufficient proof of John XXIII's Church of renewal.

The Life and Experiences of Pope Francis Influencing his Vision for the Church

Looking back at the lives of these great men and others who had loved the Church, this research realized that their love for the Church has developed and matured because of the experiences they have had in this Church. This truth pushed this research to look into how the newly elected pope envisions the Church and how he is going to lead this Church. It is very significant then to investigate on the life story of the Pope to see if his visions on the Church that he manifests in his Petrine ministry has roots from his pasts, like during his younger days, at the start of his priesthood, in his life as a Jesuit and his life as an Archbishop of Buenos Aires. In its investigation on the life of Bergoglio, this research must not neglect to look into his religious experiences and his prominent virtues and find how they contributed to the development of his image of the Church.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born eldest of four children on December 17, 1936, from parents who were active members of the Church. He was born in their apartment in Flores Barrio, in the central west zone of Buenos Aires. One of his treasured childhood memories is playing card games with his father, Mario Giuseppe Francesco, during the afternoon of

Saturdays while they listen with his mother, Regina Maria Sivori, to lyric operas. The young Bergoglio played football and also tried basketball. He was an active member of his parish in San Jose de Flores, where he went to mass every Sunday. He had many friends and a girlfriend whom he danced with tango and milonga gracefully. He first felt his vocation to the priesthood when he was 17 years old during a confession with a priest. Before considering his priestly vocation, he had a chance to work in a laboratory doing food analysis.

This healthy childhood and young adult experiences for Jorge are very vital to his religious and spiritual formation and helped him a lot in his undertaking as leader of the Church of Buenos Aires and later, as the leader of the universal Church. A tremendous preparation God did for him for He destined him to be his vicar in this era. Tremendous preparation with a tremendous result for Bergoglio. Saverio Gaeta (2013) quoted Bergoglio when he proclaimed: "I want to believe in God the Father who loves me as a son and, in Jesus the Lord, who has infused into my life his Spirit to make me smile and to lead me thus to the eternal kingdom of life. I believe in my history, which has been penetrated by the loving glance of God who, on the first day of spring, September 21st, came to meet me and invite me to follow him. I believe in my sorrows, unfruitful on account of my egoism in which I take refuge. I believe in the misery of my soul, which seeks to suck up without giving out without giving. I believe in religious life. I believe that I want to love more. I believe in daily death, a burning from which I flee but which smiles at me, inviting me to accept her. I believe in the patience of God, welcoming as good as a summer night. I believe that my father is in heaven, together with the Lord. I also believe that Father Duarte is there and intercedes for my priesthood. I believe in Mary, my mother, who loves me and will never leave me alone. Furthermore, I await the surprise of each day, in which will be manifested the love, the strength, the betrayal and the sin, which will accompany me until the definitive meeting with this marvelous face which I don't know what it is, from which I continuously flee, but which I want to know and to love. Amen" (Saverio Gaeta, 2013).

After 17 years of his ordination to the priesthood, Fr. Bergoglio completed his thesis for a doctorate in 1986, centering on the Church, exploring on the ideas of the Roman Catholic philosopher Romano Guardini who expressed in his writings that, "The Church is not an institution devised and built at table, but a living reality. She lives along the course of time by transforming Herself, like any living being, yet Her nature remains the same. At her heart is Christ, whom the Church reawakens in souls" (Saverio Gaeta, 2013). It should be noted that this was the same statement Benedict XVI cited when he announced his intention to relinquish the throne of Peter in February 2013. Interpreting this idea could derive four concepts from describing the Church: 1) The Church is the People of God that swims through the course of human history, therefore, ever-changing; 2) The Church is the Body of Christ. Therefore, she remains to be human and divine; 3) The Church is the Bride of Christ; therefore, she loves Christ and makes Him the center of her life because Christ also loves her so much; and 4) The Church is a missionary disciple; therefore, she goes forth to joyfully bring Christ to the changing world by facilitating faith and hope especially to the poor. If Fr. Bergoglio had explored these ideas for his doctorate thesis, the four concepts of the Church that derived

from it then could have manifested in his management style and pastoral strategies as pastor of the faithful in Buenos Aires.

Bergoglio became the Archbishop of Buenos Aires on January 28, 1998, replacing Cardinal Quarrancino, who died of a heart attack. As bishop of Buenos Aires, he had special attention for the poor and so made his priests visible in the slums area. A pastoral strategy that is both effective and risky for him as the local ordinary in a country where dictatorship is the prevailing form of governance. He could be suspected of initiating ideologies contrary to that of the government. Nevertheless, at the same time, it could be an effective strategy to win and uplift the spirit of the people toward that hope integral to the mystery of Christ, the Risen One. Pope Francis' images of the Church, therefore, are more easily described than defined because of these, his public life's experiences. Like Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, to which Pope Francis is a member, who was greatly influenced with the romantic novels he had read when he was young on his ideas about doing chivalrous deeds in God's army (Ronald Modras, 2005), the Pope is also influenced with all these accumulated experiences he has and they significantly affect his management style for the universal Church which reflects his ardent love and devotion to this Church. Due to these experiences, the right man in Pope Francis to reflect the compassionate Jesus was developed, that even a non-Catholic who has just seen him on television could be attracted, like how St. Francis Xavier when sent to India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan attracted people to him because of his charming personality, even when people could not fully understand him.

The articulation of a clear vision for the Church in the pronouncements of Cardinal Bergoglio when he delivered his three to four minutes speech during that sacred moment of 'intervention' before the conclave made the cardinal electors chose him as the successor of the resigned Benedict XVI. Pope Francis clearly articulated what the Church should be in the next pontificate: the Church that goes forth to the peripheries of places and life, an image of the Church that is opposite to a self-referential Church who does not want to go out, who chooses to lock Jesus within and does not want this Jesus to be experienced by others and many (Interview, 2013). That is the first side of the coin why the cardinal-electors chose Bergoglio. The other side of the coin is his way of life. One cardinal elector revealed that when Cardinal Bergoglio was stepping forward to deposit his ballot, his eyes were fixed to the cross of Christ intensely praying. His exemplary humility and simple living also attracted them. Like St. Clare of Assisi in the early 13th century, as William J. Short writes, though opposed violently by members of her family, he still decided to follow that new and particular Gospel way of life being initiated by St. Francis of Assisi (Short, 1999). What surprised the contemporaries of St. Francis of Assisi as a novelty lifestyle of austerity and self-discipline is as old as the Gospels that embody a proper way of life for a disciple. This is the discipline and way of life Cardinal Bergoglio had lived, which to some, is shocking to note for a Cardinal, who is considered to be a prince of the Church.

Pope Francis' Virtues of Humility, Solidarity and Ardent Love for the Poor Helped Nurture His Image of the Church

In the life-story of the Pope, the virtues of humility, solidarity, and his ardent love for the poor are the dominating features that attract people to him. Were they not the same virtues that the first disciples saw in Jesus that attracted them to him? To count years in the life of Francis, he was 32 years old when the Bishops of Latin America (CELAM) gathered in Medellin, Colombia, for their Second Conference. By the time the bishops were gathering in their Second Conference, Bergoglio was already in deep and serious thinking, trying to consider his vocation to the priesthood, because in a few months he would then be ordained on December 13, 1969. One thing for sure, he must have read the documents produced after the conference of the CELAM. He must have understood that the modern world in his Latin American continent is a different modern world perceived by the Second Vatican Council, which has just closed three years ago in 1965.

The modern world perceived by the Council Fathers of Vatican II is a world of technology and science. In contrast, the modern world of Latin America, as perceived by the bishops of the Second Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellin, Colombia, is "massive poverty and oppression." Bergoglio, at a young age of 32, preparing for ordination to a very dignified status in the Church, must have been full of ideas on how to carry out his priestly function, as another Christ, commissioned to continue the work of Christ of bringing salvation to humanity. Could it be that the young Bergoglio, to sit and to think and reflect on his life as a future priest, set aside matters concerning the poor, while it is now a topic that the Latin American Church, with the Conference in Medellin, is discussing every day during its liturgies, meetings, convocations, and even in university classes? If Pope Paul VI, who was with the Latin American Bishops in Medellin to inaugurate the conference was greatly and positively affected by the contents of the documents released by the bishops after their gathering, how could it be that a young man preparing himself to embrace the Latin American Church as a priest could not be influenced (Sanks, 1992)? He must have resolved to become a poor priest for the poor. So looking at him as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he lived understandable poverty in accord to Christ's Gospel and prioritized his pastoral program for the poor in accord to the Gospel proclaimed by Christ. He must have understood then that to be a priest is to become another Christ who will break and stop institutionalized violence as a result of structural injustice. He must have also understood that as a priest, he would work hard enough to animate a Poor Church. He must also have understood that as a priest, he would become another Christ who liberates people and make people become liberators of others also.

It might also be that even before his ordination to the priesthood, Bergoglio had already realized that God hears the cry of the poor. That in his conscience, the voice of God is already telling him that the people are crying for liberation. That his mind and heart are already aligned to the resolutions made by the bishops in Medellin to promote a poor Church

that lives in material poverty and lives as one and among the poor and the oppressed in their quest for liberation.

True enough, that when looking at his management style in carrying his pastoral programs, these three virtues of humility, solidarity, and service with and to the poor had become the guiding principles throughout his years in the priesthood and his episcopacy. The pope's humility, solidarity, and ardent love for the poor are his virtues already integral to him because of their natural manifestations in his person.

Pope Francis' Virtue of Humility

Humility is a virtue that started to form in the person of Pope Francis when he was a young boy. The paralysis experienced by his mother when she gave birth to her fourth child provided the young Bergoglio a chance to practice submitting his will to his parents. Jorge had to help in the household chores upon arriving from school. At the age of 13, after his elementary, he was encouraged by his father to work in a textile factory as a bookkeeper and earned his own money. Together with his work as a bookkeeper, he also helped as a janitor. He then studied a vocational course that prepared him to work in a laboratory doing food analysis.

This training helped cultivate in his person the precious virtue of humility. They trained him to accept jobs to serve others readily. They trained him to be under the authority of others. That is why during the conclave of 2005 that elected the successor of Pope John Paul II, it was discovered that Cardinals Ratzinger and Bergoglio were contenders. During the first voting, Ratzinger got 47 while Bergoglio got 10. The second vote recorded 65 for Ratzinger and 35 for Bergoglio. Before the third voting, at lunch break, Bergoglio appealed to those who voted for him to give their votes to Ratzinger. It was done that Ratzinger had reached the three-third votes of 72 and 40 for Bergoglio. His humility conditioned him not to seek a high position in the Church. His biographer wrote that Bergoglio purchased a back and forth plane ticket before going to Rome for the conclave for him to be back soon for the Palm Sunday of 2013 (Gaeta, 2013). These were manifestations of his humility.

His intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is also a factor in the formation of his humility as a virtue that became innate in him. Mary, as testified by the New Testament writings, is the model of humility. His first activity as a pope outside the walls of the Vatican was an offering of a bouquet to the Virgin at the Pauline Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore. This act manifests his strong desire to kneel before Nuestra Senora de Lujan, Patroness of Argentina, and the Virgin of Guadalupe, the guardian of Latin America. The pope must have learned a lot from the witnessing of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To best understand why he has such humility as this, his declaration on the ten principal thoughts could be of help. The Pope was asked one time to give his ten principal thoughts. One of these ten he mentioned is humility. On humility, the Pope declared: "The great leaders of the people of God were men who left room for doubt. Moses was the most humble man that there was on earth. Before God, nothing counts but humility, and this requires of religious leaders to give space to God, to have something to do with the interior experience of obscurity, not to know what to do. One of the characteristics of a bad leader is to be excessively authoritarian on account of the security that he attributes to himself" (Gaeta, 2013). This declaration made by the Pope could explain well why he has that strong desire to have a Poor Church for the Poor. His humility led him to his readiness to embrace poverty and his readiness to serve the poor.

Even his papal coat of arms, which bears the motto "miserando atque eligendo" manifests his humility. Pope Francis took this motto from the homily of venerable Bede delivered during the feast of St. Matthew which reads: "vidit ergo Jesus publicanum, et quia miserando atque eligendo vidit, ait illi, 'Sequere me,'" when translated in English: "Jesus, therefore, saw the publican, and because he saw by having mercy and by choosing, he said to him, 'Follow me!' (The Coat of Arms of Pope Francis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana). This homily became so significant to the Pope because God used it as an instrument in allowing the 17-year old Jorge to experience the love and mercy of God profoundly. The motto expresses his humility in sensing the mercy and love of God.

Pope Francis' Virtue of Solidarity

Solidarity is a force that pushes Bergoglio, now as a pope, to a persevering determination to bring the People of God together to work concretely for the liberation of the poor and the common good. It is an attitude coupled with the principle to seek and desire the well-being of others. This is a mighty instrument that he uses to realize the goal of the proclamation of the Gospel, which is to establish the kingdom of God. It is a very effective means at his disposal to satisfy the deepest longing of every individual, the union with God. At the same time, the best avenue the Pope could establish where the world can experience the presence of God. Solidarity is a virtue for communion and dialogue.

Pope Francis' Ardent Love for the Poor

The third prominent virtue of Pope Francis is his ardent love and concern for the poor. His choice of the name speaks powerfully about his love for the poor. He is named after the poor man who lived in Assisi during the early part of the 13th century. This was the man who preferred to live a life of a poor to be able to conform himself to his master, the poor Jesus, the lover of the poor. There is a saying attributed to this man: "I preach the Gospel at all times, and sometimes I use words" (Gaeta, 2013). Pope Francis does not only love the poor, but he loves to be one and among them. Reflecting on the meaning of Christmas, he called on the

faithful gathered to celebrate with him the Eucharist for the Christmas Mass "not to place ourselves above others, but rather lower ourselves, place ourselves at the service of the poor, and make ourselves small and poor with them" (Catholic News Service/USCCB, 2014). He is becoming one and among the poor as well as extending loving concern for the poor are not abstract things of Christianity. They are Christianity in the true sense of the word. Very concrete Christianity: "To love God and neighbor is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete; it means seeing in every person the face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. Furthermore, you are dear brothers and sisters, in the face of Jesus." (Pope Francis, Address during his visit at the Homeless Shelter "Dona Di Maria," May 21, 2013).

These three virtues of humility, solidarity, and love for the poor are virtues that are of God. It is so because they characterize God, and they are for God. God humbled himself, became man in Jesus, the Emmanuel (God is with us), to be with the people whom he loved, the poor people and the needy, to bring his mercy to them. Virtue from the Latin term "virtus" is in the literal sense of the word is a "power" (Mcbrien, 1994). These three virtues of the Pope are his powers. Every papacy brings its unique gifts into the Church. These God-given virtues are his immediate force to continue the spread of the Kingdom of God here on earth. Francis' humility, solidarity, and his ardent love for the poor are his gifts to the Church. They are his means of putting on Christ in his life and the Church.

The Prophet Micah exemplifies the integration of these virtues: "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). Francis, in addressing the faithful gathered at the St. Peter's Square, those who eagerly and patiently waited for the white smoke of the conclave which was heard by millions of people watching him on television that night: "And now, we take up this journey: bishop and people. This is the journey of the Church of Rome, which presides in charity over all the Churches" (Speech after the Conclave, 2013). These words from the Pope are his clear admission that his papacy is a journey with the people of God and with God. Moreover, as the Prophet Micah, who used his eloquence in condemning the rich and powerful, who exploited the poor during his time (8th century BC), admonished the people of Israel to put on humility and righteousness.

Pope Francis, being the new Moses leading the new people of God, must walk this journey together with the people of God, humbly in bringing the mercy of God with and to the poor. To love the poor, he is required to discover his route of love in communion and solidarity with his brothers and sisters committed to the same journey. To walk humbly with God, the people of God, the Church must walk the way of reverence nourished by the deep sense of piety and a renewed and transformed life of poverty. This active participation and involvement in this Christian journey is an immersion into the Church, which is of God.

The Church, with the Pope as its leader, whom tradition gave him the title "Supreme Pontiff" (Gaeta, 2013), which connotes "build bridges" (Gaeta, 2013), must be one in defining

the proper relevant, and compelling images at present times. With the popularity he is enjoying right now, this is the right time for Francis to invigorate and maximize all the energies of the Church to live its vision, which is her way of revealing her inner nature to the world.

In his first year as the Bishop of Rome, the Pope has uttered pronouncements that made people think and speculate. It is very timely then, not too early anyway, to see in-depth what the Pope has envisioned the Church to be. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the Pope is only able to unfold over time proper images of the Church if he remains faithful to the truth that the Church is a reality after the resurrection and came to be during Pentecost with its roots from the Son of Man from Nazareth, the Jesus of History. Meditating on these truths would invite the Holy Spirit to empower the Pope to visualize images of the Church that appear the same with the Jesus of History. Jesus, the Nazorean loved the poor, loved peace, compassionate to sinners, critical to authority that creates poverty, loved the Father and the Holy Spirit, recognized his roots from Abraham, and centered his praxis in the Kingdom of God.

"I Want a Poor Church for the Poor"

The conception of this study started with a simple curiosity on the words uttered by the newly elected pontiff when he replied to a query during his first interview as a pope: "I want a Poor Church for the Poor" (Interview, 2013). Could this be the image of the Church he wants to build in his papacy? As the newly elected pope, his words and actions are watched and scrutinized with curiosity. Take, for example, the preference of his pectoral cross as archbishop over that of the golden one prepared during the conclave. The world also witnessed the Pope's preference of the most humble papal attire over that which resembles pageantry and triumphalism. The people were surprised when the Pope decided to re-organize the Roman Curia. Many speculated when they heard his statements on delicate issues on homosexuality as an example. These unfolding events in the life of the Church inspired the researcher to conduct a study. It was for this reason that this research was conceptualized.

The Main Objective of the Study

This study seeks to determine what could be the prevailing image of the Church in the mind of Pope Francis as the present leader of the Catholic Church based on his life, words, and works. The main concern is to define the emerging image of the Church in the mind of Pope Francis as it unfolds over during his first year in the papacy.

To achieve its main objective, this study seeks to analyze the Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, his Pastoral Letters, his homilies, his General Audiences as well as first Apostolic Exhortation, the *Evangelii Gaudium*.

This study aims to contribute to the teaching ministry of theology instructors who teach Ecclesiology and Catholic Social Teaching by helping them understand Pope Francis' perspective on the Church.

METHOD

To achieve its purpose, this qualitative study used content analysis of purposively selected documents. As Uwe Flick pointed out, content analysis is focused on addressing issues (Flick, 2011). In using the content analysis method, this research aimed to get a better understanding through accurate quotations and analysis of actual pronouncements and declarations made by the Pope in the articulations of his vision of the Church. This method was instrumental in deriving meaning from the endeavors, pastoral activities, and even the special ministries of the Pope in the past as reflected in relevant documents, and how their meaning influence the development of the image of the Church.

Content Analysis: Explicating and Summarizing

Content analysis is a classical procedure for analyzing text material. It is a proven and tested means for deriving concepts, ideas, and thoughts of an individual from a text material (Flick, 2011). As suggested in Flick, qualitative content analysis employs two techniques: summarizing content analysis and explicative content analysis. Summarizing content analysis is skipping less relevant passages, while explicative content analysis is clarifying vague and complicated passages by using contextualization. These techniques were essential in analyzing the texts in their depths and underlying meanings, which led to the discovery of the most dominant image of the Church that is articulated by the Pope in the documents analyzed.

In applying this method, the possible documents to be analyzed were initially listed down. The documents searched were those under the following classifications: **1) Church Documents from Latin America:** (1.1) The Concluding Document of the Third Conference of the Latin American and the Caribbean Bishops held in Medellin, Colombia in 1968 (Medellin Document); (1.2) The Concluding Document of the Fourth Conference of the Latin American Bishops and the Caribbean held in Puebla, Mexico in 1977 (Puebla Document); (1.3) The Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference of the Bishops of the Latin America and the Caribbean held in Aparecida, Brazil in 2007 (Aparecida Document); **2) Pastoral Letters:** (2.1) Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith; (2.2) Pastoral Letter on Lent; **3) Homilies delivered by Pope Francis during the first year of his papacy:** (3.1) the homily during the Episcopal Ordination of Msgr. Jean-Marie Speich and Msgr. Giampiero Gloder held on October 24, 2013; (3.2) the homily during the Misa Pro Ecclesia with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel on March 14, 2013; (3.3) the homily during the Imposition of Pallium and Bestowal of Fisherman's Ring for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome on March 19, 2013; (3.4) the homily during the Rite of the Washing of the Feet in Casal Del Marmo in Rome on Holy Thursday, 2013; (3.5) the homily during the Easter Vigil celebrations at the

Vatican Basilica on March 30, 2013; (3.6) the homily during the Profession of Faith with the Italian Bishops on May 23, 2013; (3.7) the homily during the Imposition of Pallium on Metropolitan Archbishops which coincided with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul on June 29, 2013; **4) Pronouncements made by Pope Francis during General Audiences held in his first year as pope on the following dates:** (4.1) the General Audience, March 27, 2013; (4.2) the General Audience, April 3, 2013; (4.3) the General Audience, April 24, 2013; (4.4) the General Audience, May 22, 2013; (4.5) the General Audience, May 29, 2013; (4.6) the General Audience, October 23, 2013; (4.7) the General Audience, October 30, 2013; (4.8) the General Audience, November 6, 2013; (4.9) the General Audience, December 8, 2013; (4.10) the General Audience, February 29, 2014; **5) Apostolic Exhortation:** the *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel); **and 6) Papal Encyclical:** the *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith).

The Final List of Documents Analyzed

The next concern of this research was to decide which among the listed documents were to be considered for content analysis. All the documents were read and scrutinized before this research was able to finally choose the following: *Aparecida* Document, Pastoral Letters, Homilies, General Audiences, and *Evangelii Gaudium*. The decision not to include the *Medellin*, *Puebla* and the *Lumen Fidei* Documents were based on the following considerations: first, *Medellin* and *Puebla* documents (1968 and 1977 respectively) were the results of the conferences held by the Church of Latin America in a far earlier time than that of the Conference held in *Aparecida*, Brazil (2007) which was held during a time when Cardinal Bergoglio was already the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, a position that gave him the privilege to be looked at as the most distinguished prelate of the Church's Hierarchy in Argentina; second reason, Cardinal Bergoglio played a very significant role during the Fifth Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops. He was one of the Conference Presidents, and he was appointed unanimously by the bishops who participated in this conference to head an essential committee with a vital role to play to draft the Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference; third, *Lumen Fidei*'s exclusion from the number of documents for content analysis was since it was not the actual creation of Pope Francis because it is believed to be an encyclical written by Benedict XVI only that he was not able to publish it before he stepped down from the papal throne. The significance of ecclesiology of these documents is acknowledged by this study, but they may be reserved for future endeavors because, for now, the focus is Pope Francis' image of the Church.

In the choice of Pastoral Letters, this research has chosen the two most recent from among all the Pastoral Letters issued by the then Cardinal Bergoglio: His Pastoral Letters on the Year of Faith (October 1, 2012) and on Lent (February 13, 2013). These two letters were issued within the span of more or less six months away from the 2013 Conclave. The Letter on the Year of Faith was issued during a time when the Church was not eyeing on a Conclave, while the Letter on Lent was issued during a time when the Church was already preparing to elect the successor of the resigned Benedict. The present study is concerned about how the

newly elected pope perceived the Church during those significant moments of the Universal Church.

Also, this research considered the 41 homilies delivered by Pope Francis during his first year in the papacy. The count starts with the homily delivered on March 14, 2013, during the Mass with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel. His homily during the Ash Wednesday celebration on March 5, 2014, serves as the last of the documented homilies. These homilies were originally delivered in Italian. However, English translations were made available for public reading in the Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Findings were gathered based on the seven homilies, where themes about the Church were vibrant or emphasized. The seven homilies were as follows: 1) the homily during the Episcopal Ordination of Msgr. Speich and Msgr. Gloder held on October 24, 2013; 2) the homily during the Misa Pro Ecclesia with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel on March 14, 2013; 3) the homily during the Imposition of Pallium and Bestowal of Fisherman's Ring for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome on March 19, 2013; 4) the homily during the Rite of the Washing of the Feet in Casal Del Marmo in Rome on Holy Thursday, 2013; 5) the homily during the Easter Vigil celebrations at the Vatican Basilica on March 30, 2013; 6) the homily during the Profession of Faith with the Italian Bishops on May 23, 2013; and 7) the homily during the Imposition of Pallium on Metropolitan Archbishops which coincided with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul on June 29, 2013.

After gathering themes about the Church from the homilies, this research proceeded to the analysis of the pronouncements of Pope Francis during his weekly General Audiences in the Vatican. A total of 39 General Audiences in English translations are available in the Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Only those General Audiences that directly articulate the Pope's visions of the Church were selected for analysis. These were: 1) General Audience, March 27, 2013; 2) General Audience, April 3, 2013; 3) General Audience, April 24, 2013; 4) General Audience, May 24, 2013; 5) General Audience, May 29, 2013; 6) General Audience, October 23, 2013; 7) General Audience, October 30, 2013; 8) General Audience, November 6, 2013; 9) General Audience, December 8, 2013; and 10) General Audience, February 29, 2014.

The Pope envisioned the Church in his two Pastoral Letters addressed to the faithful of Buenos Aires in his capacity as their Local Pastor, in his homilies, and his General Audiences. The interest of this study is to see how Pope Francis would envision the Church in the context of its universality. This research presumed that the first major document of Francis as Pope, the *Evangelii Gaudium* has this. Thus the *Evangelii Gaudium*, the first apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, was the next document analyzed. This research expected to derive significant articulations on images of the Church made by the Pope.

FINDINGS

Part 1: The Image of the Church Discovered from the Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean

"A Poor Church for the Poor" is the summary of the four-minute speech of Cardinal Bergoglio from Argentina during that sacred moment of "Intervention" before the conclave. In that speech, Cardinal Bergoglio pronounced words that touched the hearts of the Cardinal-electors who chose him as the successor of the resigned Benedict XVI. He clearly articulated what the Church should be in the next pontificate: "... the Church that goes forth to the peripheries of places and life" (Interview of Pope Francis, 2013). It is an image of the Church that is the opposite of a self-referential church.

Pronouncing the words "I want a Poor Church for the Poor," Pope Francis is re-echoing to the whole world what he dreamt the Church to be when he was still the archbishop of Buenos Aires. The image of the Church Pope Francis wanted for the Universal Church is the image manifested in the Aparecida Document. He must have reflected deeply on the words of Pope Benedict XVI when he delivered his address to the bishops during the inaugural sessions of the fifth conference where he described the Eucharist as the very significant source of love that will lead to the immersion on the life of others, especially in their concerns and hardships. In the same address, Benedict also enumerated five popular religiosities true to all the parts of the continent of Latin America. Among these five religiosities is the deep faith and conviction of the people that God is genuinely in love with the poor and the suffering. He also mentioned that despite the development and progress happening in Latin America, there is also an increase in the oppression brought about by immense poverty and their deprivation from their natural resources. More importantly, Benedict articulated in this address that missionary discipleship is a life that is deeply rooted in the life of Christ. A profound articulation on the Church was also offered by Benedict when he mentioned her as a promoter of justice and welfare of the poor (Pope Benedict XVI, Inaugural Address, 2007).

Missionary-Discipleships in Aparecida Document

The Latin American bishops solemnly committed themselves with the Lady of the Immaculate Conception as their witness to renew their pastoral enthusiasm. Deeply reflecting the passage from Acts (1:8): "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (AD 17), they declared themselves in permanent mission. Keeping in mind the Poor Church for the Poor, the bishops declared themselves missionaries and invited all to participate in the proclamation of the kingdom with creativity and boldness, especially in "the different or forgotten environment and beyond their borders" (AD 17). They accepted their calling to reflect deeply and profoundly of the mission of the Church in Latin America in the circumstances of their continent (AD 22). Accepting that call is facing the most basic challenge: "... to show the Church's capacity to promote and form disciples and missionaries who respond to the calling received and to communicate

everywhere, in outpouring gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ" (AD 24).

Communities of Love

The participants of the fifth conference in Aparecida boldly declared their adherence to the principle preferential option for the poor in their pastoral service, a principle that ultimately will form their local Churches as "communities of love" (AD 18). This preferential option for the poor led the participants of the Aparecida Conference towards that particular experience of discipleship and communion with all the baptized nourished with the Bread of God's Word and Christ's body in the Eucharist (AD 62). The proclamation of the Word of God reminds the Church of her mission to be of service to the poorest of the poor. Jesus came to bring glad tidings to the poor. Living and growing in God's word and Christ's body is living and growing in the awareness of the needs of all.

Merciful Church like a Mother

Aside from being a Poor Church for the Poor that promotes Communion and Dialogue and a Poor Church for the Poor that advocates missionary-discipleship among her members, this research also discovered in the pages of the Aparecida Document that the bishops articulated a Poor Church for the Poor who portrays herself as a merciful Church who acts like a mother to her children through her deep and profound reflection on the mercy of God as revealed in Jesus' Parables of The Prodigal Son and The Good Samaritan (AD 29).

On page 17, the Aparecida Document tells of how the Latin American Church would transform her life to be able to live her poverty to serve the poor. The bishops declared a straightforward way to go about that would bring out authentic renewal: "A Poor Church is a Church who learns to pray and who teaches to pray" (AD 17). The bishops believed that a "prayer that springs from their life and heart, and which is the starting point for lively and participative celebrations which animate and nourish the faith," could bring transformation (AD 17). The bishops, keeping in mind of a principle in ecclesiology: "Ecclesia Semper Reformanda" "the Church is always to be reformed" (Pastoral Letter of Bishop Walker Nickless, 2009), are convinced that for the Poor Church for the Poor to be able to promote communion and dialogue, to act like a merciful mother to her children, to advocate awareness among its members their missionary-discipleship, she must adhere to constant renewal. She must stand as a renewed Church for the poor who proclaims and build the kingdom of God.

Significant Findings From the Aparecida Document

At this juncture, this study categorically presents its significant findings from the Aparecida document: First, The Fifth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean commenced, carried, and culminated with the participation of the particular Churches. Their participation was so eminent during preparatory stages where they pooled

their concerns that served as the point of reference throughout the conference. They also participated in the liturgical celebrations manifesting their status as a people of God.

Second, this significant gathering of the bishops in Latin America and the Caribbean articulated some ecclesiological guidelines for the whole continent to consider for a transformation and renewal they desire that will bring about a Church with a continental mission: One, form missionary disciples willing to journey with God "today." These missionary disciples are guided by the principle that to become a disciple, and a missionary is answering a call and at the same time responding to an invitation given by God to men and women of today to be sent out to the peripheries of lives that the people of today have especially to the poor and outcast. This is bringing the Good News to the people with the realities of their lives today. This principle shall aid the Church in becoming compatible with a modern society that demands uncompromising missionary discipleship rooted in the message brought by Christ; two, promote the Church as an institution that does not put herself at the center acting like manager and director but instead a Church who lives the lives of her poor children, true to her status as the bride faithful to Christ her groom, a loving and merciful mother devoted to the well-being of her children, and an evangelizer who values and facilitates faith among those whom she encounters; three, communion and dialogue, a guideline that is deeply rooted in the truth Sacred Scripture has to offer. God made himself known through entering into the history of His people. He made himself known and made his presence felt by going out and meeting His people as evidently manifested in both Old and New Testaments. This guideline is directing the Church to immerse herself into the lives of the people. The Church then is very near to the people letting them experience an encounter that will ultimately create the culture of communion and dialogue and ultimately experience the nearness of God; third, necessary characteristics of the shepherds as pastors of their flock. They must be pastors who have the odor of their sheep. They must be pastors Committed to spending more time to anyone, to lend ears to them, celebrate with them, mourn with them, and be concerned with their needs. That is letting everyone feel essential and experience the Church as their abode of security and stability (Aparecida, page 16).

Third, Cardinal Bergoglio, the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires, was the chief drafter of the Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference of the Latin American and the Caribbean Bishops. This particular finding made the researcher believe that the ecclesiology of Pope Francis is rooted in this document; thus, his preferential and evangelical option for the poor came forth, which hatched further more into Poor Church for the Poor. In this ecclesiology, poverty is becoming a theological question, not just a social question. This must also have been what the cardinal electors saw in Cardinal Bergoglio. They saw in him a pastoral insight that puts the preferential love for the poor that the Church needs today as a way to confirm her missionary discipleship to that of Christ's mission. They must have seen in him the fidelity of a disciple dedicated to the cause of the poor as re-echoed by Benedict XVI in his Address during the Inaugural Session of the conference when he quoted his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* "Love of God and love of neighbor have become one; in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus, we find God" (*Encyclical Letter Deus Caritas Est*, 15). They

perceived in Pope Francis' person his deep and matured faith in God, which often expressed in charities he initiated in his particular Church of Buenos Aires that inspired solidarity with the poor and the marginalized.

Fourth, this document used the pastoral and theological methods of see, judge, and act. This document has manifested on its pages that the Church of Latin America and the Caribbean had come to her realizations of the value of her existence in the society and her role to play in the lives of the people in the whole continent. Upon the realization of her identity and mission, she brought herself to God and asked for mercy and compassion to grant her transformation that will help her hold on to the faith and bring herself into dialogue with everyone as she confronts the challenges of today's world.

Part 2: A Poor Church for the Poor Derived from the Pastoral Letters of Cardinal Bergoglio

This study has chosen to analyze the pastoral letters of Cardinal Bergoglio on the "Year of Faith" issued on October 1, 2012, and on "Lent of 2013" issued on February 13, 2013. Both letters are excellent references for the discovery of an image of a Poor Church for the Poor that manifests the mercy and compassion of God.

Cardinal Bergoglio issued his Pastoral Letter on the "Year of Faith" on October 1, 2012, to the Catholic Faithful of Buenos Aires, Argentina. On February 13, 2013--- Ash Wednesday, he again issued another pastoral letter on Lent. From these letters derived the image of a Poor Church for the Poor that manifests the mercy and compassion of God, profoundly experienced in its life of communion and dialogue through discovering a new way of thinking, of communicating with one another, of looking at others, of respecting one another, of being in the family together, of planning futures, of living out love and vocation (Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith, October 1, 2012). From these letters, discovered a Poor Church for the Poor who goes out as a missionary by "opening its doors, not just to receive but fundamentally to go out and fill the streets and the people of these times with the Good News" (Pastoral Letter of Bergoglio on the Year of Faith, 2012). The same pastoral letters articulated a "Poor Church for the Poor" who desires renewal and transformation by "crossing the threshold of faith that brings the desire for everyone the same sentiments that Christ had (Phil. 2-5)--- a renewal that is focused to Jesus Christ who calls at the door of hearts: "Look, I am at the door, calling; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I shall enter his house and dine with him and him with me (Rev. 3:20)" (Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith, Oct. 1, 2012).

Findings from the Two Pastoral Letters

Putting together the two letters is a single and clear message of Bergoglio. The message is also the discovered image of the Church that is derived from the two letters: A Poor Church for the Poor who proclaims forgiveness and reconciliation as an integral part of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom so that many shall be forgiven and experience the advent

of mercy that is lived in the reality of communion and dialogue brought about by the commitment made by the Church called to missionary-discipleship founded on her desire to love the savior, Jesus Christ who alone can give the gift of renewal and transformation.

Part 3: A Poor Church for the Poor as Discovered from the Homilies of Pope Francis

There are around 41 documented homilies available for public reading at the Libreria Editrice Vaticana delivered by Pope Francis during Eucharistic celebrations held on different essential occasions within the first year of his papacy. This research picked out seven from among these homilies and included them in the number of documents as materials for the analysis.

The First Homily: Articulated Preferential Option for the Poor

The first homily included in the analysis is Pope Francis' homily during the Episcopal Ordination of Msgr. Speich and Msgr. Gloder held on October 24, 2013, at the Vatican Basilica. The Liturgy of the Word included a reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans chapter 6 verses 19-23, Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4,6, and Luke 12: 49-53. The theme of the Gospel reading is about Jesus as a cause of division.

In this homily, the image of the Church that is discovered is a Church that has a preferential option for the poor which is particularly articulated by the pope: "Remember that in the Catholic Church, made one by the bond of Charity, you are incorporated into the College of Bishops, and you must have a constant concern for all the churches and gladly come to the aid and support of those who are most in need" (Homily of Pope Francis, 2013).

In this same homily, Pope Francis expounded on the role of a bishop in the Local Church. The homily centers on a fundamental instruction given to the ordinandi: "Pay great attention to those who do not yet belong to the one fold of Christ; they too are commended to you in the Lord. Pray much for them (Homily, Oct. 24, 2013). The instruction is indicating Pope Francis' Poor Church for the Poor. They live by the Gospel values it proclaims from a situation of identification with the poor to effectively convene a Church in solidarity with the popular masses in the local churches, in solidarity with their aspirations, with their struggles, and their desire to have a place in history. This is going out to the peripheries of life.

The study's finding on this particular homily is that Pope Francis desires that every particular Church headed by its bishop should commit herself to anchor her pastoral and spiritual programs on the preferential option for the poor. As the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines cited an excerpt from John Paul II's message, he delivered to the farmers of sugar plantations in Bacolod on February 21, 1981, that "The preference for the poor is the Christian preference" (PCP II, 1991).

The Second Homily: Articulated the Mercy of God that Led her in her Deep Solidarity with the Poor

The next homily of Pope Francis considered for content analysis is the one delivered during the *Missa Pro Ecclesia* with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel on March 14, 2013. The readings included in the Liturgy of the Word were taken from Exodus 32:7-14, Psalms 106:19-20, 21-22, 23, and from the Gospel of John 5:31-47. Based on this homily, the image of a Church that is in solidarity with the poor was derived. This image of the Church was carefully taken out from the words of the Pope as he expounded on the three readings with a single word: "Movement, which is common among the three readings. Movement of journeying, building, and professing, which are dynamic words that are usually acted upon with others" (Homily, 2013). They express solidarity with others. The Pope stressed that "things are not so straight forward, because in journeying, building and professing, there can sometimes be jolts, movements that are not properly part of the journey: movements that pull us back" (Homily of Pope Francis, 2013). The three words: journeying, building, and professing, are dynamic words that usually acted upon with others. They express solidarity with others.

The study's finding on this homily is that Pope Francis profoundly articulated a Church that had experienced the mercy of God that led her in her deep solidarity with the poor.

The Third Homily: Articulated a Church as Protector of the Poor

The third homily is the homily the Pope delivered during the Imposition of the Pallium and Bestowal of the Fisherman's Ring for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome, held on March 19, 2013, which coincided with the Feast of St. Joseph, held at the St. Peter's Square, The Liturgy of the Word was composed of readings from 2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16; Psalms 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22 and Luke 2:41-51.

The Pope delivered a homily that expounded on the role of Joseph as "Protector" (Homily of Pope Francis, 2013). A role the Church must assume for the poor – "because she is all the more sensitive to the persons entrusted to her safekeeping. She can look at things realistically. She is in touch with the surroundings. This is a Church who can truly make wise decisions" (Homily of Pope Francis, March 19, 2013). A Poor Church for the Poor must adhere to what *Populorum Progressio* professes: "The luxury of the few becomes an insult to the wretched poverty of the masses" (Pope Paul VI, 1967). A Poor Church for the Poor, who assumes the role of a protector of the poor, protects the poor by taking the side of the poor and condemning as anti-evangelical the extreme poverty that affects an extremely large segment of the global population" (Gutierrez, 1985). This is the way a Poor Church for the Poor exercises her role as protector, who, like St. Joseph, "discreetly, humbly, and silently, but with an unflinching presence and utter fidelity, even she finds it hard to understand" (Homily of Pope Francis, March 19, 2013). A Poor Church for the Poor is always there for everybody.

She is not afraid to be there, especially during difficult times. The pope himself had shown this when he visited the Philippines with the utmost intention to be with the victims of the recent calamities that struck the country.

This study's finding from this particular homily is that the Church responds to her calling to be the protector of the poor by 1) being always attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans and not merely to her own; and 2) her humble and silent unfailing presence and fidelity to the poor.

The Fourth Homily: Articulated a Church Willing to Live with the Poor

The fourth homily analyzed was the one delivered by Pope Francis when he celebrated his first Holy Thursday as Bishop of Rome with the inmates of the Casal del Marmo, a prison for minors in Rome. Here he washed the feet of 12 inmates, which included a Serbian Muslim woman and an Italian Catholic woman. During the Liturgy of the Word, the readings from Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14, Psalms 116: 12-13, 1 Cor. 11:23-26 and Jn. 13:1-15 were proclaimed.

During this occasion, Francis delivered his first Holy Thursday homily as pope. It was a very short homily of 357 words that explained the meaning of a great symbol. The washing of the feet is the symbol for service: "All of us must help each other" (Homily of Pope Francis, 2013). Who needs help? The needy, the poor: young children, young people, peasants, laborers, marginalized and overcrowded urban dwellers, and the older people. To help one another is to enter into the world of the exploited social class, with its values and its cultural categories. To help one another means entering into solidarity with the needy and the poor with their interests and struggles.

This study derived from the homily an image of a Poor Church that is willing to enter into solidarity with the Poor.

The Fifth Homily: Articulated a Poor Church Empowered by the Resurrection of Jesus

The fifth homily analyzed is the homily delivered during the Easter Vigil celebrations at the Vatican Basilica on March 30, 2013. This homily articulated the image of a Poor Church who becomes rich and empowered through the message of the resurrection. Empty tomb and fear were the causes of the helplessness of the women disciples who went to visit the tomb of Jesus. However, when the message of resurrection was proclaimed to them, they experienced an encounter of the newness of God. Their encounter with the newness of God made them remember all his words, deeds, actions, and his life in Galilee. The message of the resurrection is the message that the Church would like to proclaim in her theology of liberation. To proclaim the message of resurrection is to invite everyone to remember what God has done and continues to do to humanity, to remember the roadmen and women have traveled. This is the one that opens the hearts of men and women to hope for the future.

This research derived from this particular homily of Pope Francis that the life of the disciples after the death of Jesus became unstable; it went back to a state of broken existence. Their life went back to a life of fear and hopelessness. They feared for their life because of what the authorities might do to them. Their hope for liberation that a Messiah would bring has died down. The Jesus who took upon himself the misery of their life is already dead.

In between the lines of this homily, this research discovered that Pope Francis perceived the event of the Resurrection of Jesus as a proclamation of newness. "Jesus is the everlasting today of God" (Homily, 2013). The Church then is a Church that experiences misery of life but, at the same time, experiences empowerment by the Resurrection of Jesus to proclaim the newness of life among those experiencing the misery of life today. This Poor Church becomes its power.

The Sixth Homily: Articulated a Church Totally In-Love with the Poor

The sixth homily analyzed is the homily of Pope Francis delivered to the Italian Bishops during a Mass celebrated at the Vatican Basilica on May 23, 2013, on the occasion of their Profession of Faith. This research discovered from this homily an image of a Church totally in love with the poor manifested in her willingness to go beyond by living poor like the poor and in her readiness to lay down her life for them, the poor.

The Seventh Homily: Articulated a Poor Church for the Poor as Sign of God's Presence

What comes as the last is the research's finding from Pope Francis' homily on June 29, 2013, at the Vatican Basilica during the occasion of the Imposition of the Pallium on Metropolitan Archbishops which coincided with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul. The research discovered from this homily a Poor Church for the Poor as the sign of God's presence that attracts communion and dialogue.

Part 4: A Poor Church for the Poor Derived from the General Audiences of Pope Francis

As a pope, Francis started to hold his weekly General Audiences at the balcony of the third floor of the apostolic palace overlooking the St. Peter's Square on March 27, 2013, the third Wednesday of his pontificate. The first year of his papacy has listed 39 General Audiences. The reviewed documents completed the said number with the one on March 5, 2014– Ash Wednesday. These series of pronouncements of Pope Francis during his General Audiences are excellent sources of articulations from the mind of the Pope clearly defining his images of the Church.

The First Three General Audiences: "Come Out of Ourselves"

On March 27, 2013, Pope Francis held his first General Audience where he admonished those present at the St. Peter's Square, "Be sure to remember: coming out of

ourselves; just as God came out of himself in Jesus and Jesus came out of himself for all of us" (General Audience, March 27, 2013). Then, again, on April 3, 2013, his second General Audience, he called on everybody: "Let us have the courage to come out of ourselves to take this joy and this light to all the places of our life! The Resurrection of Christ is our greatest certainty; He is our most precious treasure! How can we not share this treasure, this certainty with others? It is not only for us. It is to be passed on, to be shared with others. Our testimony is precisely this" (General Audience, April 3, 2013). For the third time, on April 24, 2013, the Pope reiterated: "... it is important not to turn in on ourselves, burying our own talent, our spiritual, intellectual, and material riches, everything that the Lord has given us, but, rather open ourselves, to be supportive, to be attentive to others" (General Audience, April 24, 2013). March 27, April 3, and April 24 of 2013 are the first three Wednesdays the Pope addressed the pilgrims gathered at the St. Peter's Square with his General Audience's pronouncements.

Understanding the message of the Pope from these three addresses, he was talking about one thing: "Come out of ourselves" (General Audience, 2013). Coming out from oneself is the correct attitude of a real disciple of Christ. This is what the Church must do: "to come out" and abandon the "self-referential" Church. Coming out is to go to the people, be among them, one with them, and to have solidarity with them. Then turning her eyes to the master, the Church will realize that Jesus went to the people: to the poor, the needy. Preferential option for the poor then as theology, is making the Church recognize more her discipleship, her mission, which is to be in solidarity with the poor. This is the only proper way of the Church to manifest her understanding of this theology, the Preferential Option for the Poor.

The words of the Pope in these three addresses are clearly telling everybody that to talk on communion and dialogue, mercy and renewal, mission and discipleship is to discuss Jesus' preferential love for the poor and the marginalized. Like a good teacher, the Pope, in his first three General Audiences, was trying to lay down the foundation of his images of the Church: The Church that goes out to the people. This foundation would bring about the Church that is poor and for the poor. A Poor Church for the Poor. God came out of himself – became man to reach out to humanity. This is becoming poor. God wanted to reveal who he was – he had to become a man in order to do that. God wanted to let humankind live his divine life – he had to become a man in order to achieve that. For Pope Francis, God is someone who goes out to the people. God was only able to do that when he became a poor man like anyone else in this world. He became Jesus, and the Word made flesh. He, the source of richness, became poor. This was his way, his becoming poor, that God was able to establish communion with humankind.

A Poor Church for the Poor: An Apostolic Church Sent to the Peripheries of Life

In his General Audience of December 18, 2013, the third day of Christmas novena, the Pope expounded more on living out unity in the Church by being Poor Church for the Poor as a way of living the mystery of Christmas: "The first is that, if God in the Christmas mystery, reveals himself not as one who remains on high and dominates the universe, but as the one

who bends down, descends to the little and poor earth, it means that to be like him, we should not put ourselves above others, but indeed lower ourselves, place ourselves at the service of others, become small with the small and poor with the poor" (General Audience, December 18, 2013).

A Poor Church for the Poor is an Apostolic Church sent to bring the Gospel to all the world: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Mt. 28: 19-20)" (General Audience, October 16, 2013). As an Apostolic Church, its roots are in the teaching of the apostles. Pope Francis said: "The Church is apostolic because we pray – our first duty – and because we proclaim the Gospel by our life and by our words" (General Audience, October 23, 2013). As a Church sent to bring the Gospel – the Good News, she does not bring herself. "The Church brings Jesus: This is the center of the Church, to carry Jesus... The Church must bring Jesus, the love of Jesus, the charity of Jesus" (General Audience, October 23, 2013). Bringing Jesus to the world is to let the world experience the mercy of God by acting like the innkeeper in the story of the Good Samaritan--- "to whom each day the Lord entrusts those who are afflicted in body and spirit so that we might lavish all of his mercy and salvation upon them without measure" (General Audience, February 29, 2014). Bringing the mercy of God to people, a Poor Church for the Poor acting like a true mother who seeks her children's rights, especially of those who are furthest away and are afflicted until she finds its fullness in the glorious body of Christ with all its members.

Part 5: The Emerging Image of a Poor Church for the Poor as Discovered from the *Evangelii Gaudium*, the First Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis

Evangelii Gaudium, "The Joy of the Gospel" (Pope Francis, 2013) is the first Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis issued on November 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Christ the King at St. Peter's Square in Rome. Like any of the other Apostolic Exhortations, this papal document exhorts people to implement a particular aspect of the Church's life and teaching. It does not teach new doctrine, but it suggests Church teachings and practices that can be profitably applied today. In tradition, Apostolic Exhortation is more critical than Wednesday's audience and homily, but lower in rank than the encyclical and Apostolic Constitution. Ordinarily, a pope writes an Apostolic Exhortation after a meeting of the Synods of Bishops but not necessarily. This first Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis is composed of five chapters discussing essential topics: The Church's Missionary Transformation, Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment, and Proclamation of the Gospel, The Social Dimension of Evangelization, and Spirit-Filled Evangelizers.

The Missionary Transformation of the Church

At the very start of the exhortation, Pope Francis expressed concern for the poor. It is fascinating to note that when he speaks of the others, he means the poor. Francis presents his introduction by laying the Biblical foundation of the Gospel that brings joy. Its Old Testament and New Testament background are carefully laid. In doing so, the Pope could not help but declare: "I can say that the most beautiful and natural expressions of joy which I have seen in my life were in poor people who had little to hold on to. I also think of the real joy shown by others who, even amidst pressing professional obligations, were able to preserve, in detachment and simplicity, a heart full of faith. In their own way, all these instances of joy from the infinite love of God, who has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ" (Evangelii Gaudium, 7).

The first chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* speaks of the Church's missionary transformation. A transformation resulting from the constant challenge brought about by the Word of God: "Go, I send you" (Ex. 3:10); "To all whom I send you, you shall go" (Jer. 1:7); "Go and make disciples" (Mt. 28). The Church is called to take part in this new trend of mission: "Going forth." It is a call to "go out to the peripheries of life." This is a call to "go forth from our own comfort zone" (*Evangelii Gaudium* #20). In speaking about the Church's missionary transformation, Francis describes the Church as "a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, He has loved us first (Jn. 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast" (*Evangelii Gaudium* #24).

Together with this transformation is the challenge for the Church to become a community of missionary-disciples that would bring and show mercy to the people especially to the poor and needy, "the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy" (*Evangelii Gaudium* #24). "St. Thomas explains that, as far as external works are concerned, mercy is the greatest of all virtues: 'In itself, mercy is the greatest of the virtues since all the others revolve around it and more than this, it makes up for their deficiencies. This is particular to the superior virtue, and as such, it is proper to God to have mercy, through which his omnipotence is manifested to the greatest degree'" (*Evangelii Gaudium* #37).

The Church is challenged to become an evangelizing community by living the lives of the people, uniting them, taking their human life as her life, and wearing in its flesh the suffering of Christ in others. She is challenged to prioritize evangelization than her self-preservation. She is challenged to formulate pastoral programs that are more inclusive and open. She is challenged to focus all these transformations in her mandate of reaching out to everyone. The challenge to prioritize evangelization than Church's self-preservation is summoning the Church to open its door. The Church has to go forth to everyone without exception: But to

whom should she go first? – To the poor and the sick, to the usually despised and overlooked, to those who cannot repay" (Lk. 14:14).

In concluding Chapter 1, Francis declared the Church as a Poor Church for the Poor: "Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something is rightly disturbing us and troubling our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light, and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which gives us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat' (Mk. 6:37)" (Evangelii Gaudium #49). This is the most concrete articulation of a poor Church for the poor discovered from *Evangelii Gaudium* as an emerging image from the mind of Pope Francis.

A Poor Church for the Poor in the Context of Poverty and Oppression

The second chapter of the *Evangelii Gaudium* expensively presented some of the many factors causing poverty and oppression to the majority of peoples: Economy of exclusion, the idolatry of money, financial system which rules rather than serves, and inequality. These are some of the problematic situations humanity is experiencing in these times. In this context, these are the people who need evangelization – salvation. Who then can bring evangelization to these people? The Pope stated in paragraph 89 of *Evangelii Gaudium*: "Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God" (*Evangelii Gaudium* No. 89). This statement of the Pope, to create an impact, he exhorted the Church to develop a "committed relationship with God which at the same time commits us to serve others" (*Evangelii Gaudium* par. 91). Desiring to make his statement clear, Francis is summoning the Church to learn more how to become a Poor Church for the Poor by "finding Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices and in their pleas. Learning to become a poor Church is "learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity" (*Evangelii Gaudium* # 91).

Pope Francis recalled how St. John Paul II correctly recognized the issues affecting the Church in Asia: "John Paul II told them that if the Church is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority (Ecclesia in Asia, 1999)” (Evangelii Gaudium #110). After quoting this statement, Pope Francis declared: “These words hold true for all of us” (Evangelii Gaudium # 110). As discovered from the second chapter of this exhortation, Pope Francis deliberately presented that the goal of evangelization is salvation. This salvation brought by evangelization is for those people who are excluded, slaves of money, oppressed by a financial system which rules rather than serves, and those victims of inequality. The Church, being the evangelizer, is bringing salvation to them.

A Poor Church for the Poor who Brings Salvation to the Poor

In the third chapter, Pope Francis declared: “this salvation which God offers to humanity is the work of his mercy” (Evangelii Gaudium, 112). “The Church is sent by Jesus Christ as the sacrament of the salvation offered by God” (Evangelii Gaudium # 112). If salvation is the work of God’s mercy, then it is intended for humanity that is in need of mercy. Humanity is in need of mercy?--- the humanity that is poor, oppressed, and marginalized. The Church is sent to bring salvation. Pope Francis declares: “Being Church means being God’s people, in accordance with the great plan of his Fatherly love. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (Evangelii Gaudium # 114). For her to become a place of mercy, and so that those who are in need of mercy will go to her, and believe her, she herself must be seen as someone who is also in need of mercy. God himself did this. He willed that mankind is saved. He himself became human. The Church, therefore, as a people of God, must be a Poor Church who brings salvation to the poor. “In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the people of God have become missionary disciples. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey” (Evangelii Gaudium #115).

The further insistence on the role of the Church as Poor Church bringing salvation which is the working of the mercy of God to the poor, Pope Francis reminded everybody that “The Church is a mother, and that she preaches in the same way that a mother speaks to her child, knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for his or her benefit, for children know that they are loved. Moreover, the Church, as a good mother, can recognize everything that God is bringing about in her children; she listens to their concerns and learns from them” (Evangelii Gaudium # 139).

Bringing salvation is bringing Christ. To bring Christ to people requires knowledge of Him. “Yet if he does not take time to hear God’s Word with an open heart, if he does not allow it to touch his life to challenge him, to impel him, and if he does not devote time to pray with that Word, then, he will indeed be a false prophet, a fraud, a shallow impostor. By acknowledging his poverty and desiring to grow in his commitment, he will always be able to abandon himself to Christ, saying in the words of Peter: ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I have, I give you’ (Acts 3:6)” (Evangelii Gaudium #151).

Pope Francis exhorts everyone to become joyful evangelizers. The Church must be a joyful evangelizer because what she proclaims is the Good News. Hand in hand with the proclamation of the Good News “is an invitation to others to let themselves be healed, take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel” (Evangelii Gaudium # 172). Is it paradoxical? Joyful evangelization with the invitation to suffer? The Church cannot evangelize unless she always lets herself be evangelized. Again, evangelization is salvation. Salvation is the work of the mercy of God. The Church could not proclaim God’s mercy if she herself did not experience the mercy of God. The Church could not proclaim God’s love if she herself did not experience God’s love. For her to experience the mercy and love of God, she had to be in need – a poor Church in want of God’s mercy and love. Receiving God’s mercy and love is receiving a mandate to become missionary disciples to gather people in communion and dialogue about the mercy and love of God – and so proclaim the glory of God.

Evangelii Gaudium discusses the social dimension of evangelization. In this exhortation, Francis is trying to articulate that baptism’s immediate effect is communion and dialogue – this is the fruit of one’s being integrated into the mystery of the Divine Trinity into which one is baptized.

The Church, being an evangelized community of missionary-disciples, must hold on to the truth that the Word of God teaches that the “others,” i.e., the poor and the needy, are integral to the mystery of the Word becoming Flesh for each everyone. “As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me” (Mt. 25:40); the measure you give is the measure you get (Mt. 7:2); be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Lk. 6:36-38)”. With these passages from the New Testament, Francis declared there is a need to go out towards others “For this reason, the service of charity is also a constitutive element of the Church’s mission and an indispensable expression of her very being and renewal” (Evangelii Gaudium # 179). Being an evangelized community, the Church’s faith in Christ, ‘who has even nowhere to rest his head’ (Lk. 9:58), is always the basis for her continued desire for the well-being of the poor and the marginalized, since every person is called to self-fulfillment.

This study’s finding from its analysis of the Evangelii Gaudium is the answer to today’s situation. There are poverty and suffering to most of people. God is hearing the cry of the people. Evangelii Gaudium is proclaiming the call of God. God is calling the new Moses, the Church, to hear the cry of the people. The Church carries the burden of God, hearing the cry of the poor. The Church, as an authentic disciple of Christ, must live like her master, who hears the poor, and who came to liberate the poor.

DISCUSSION

Part 1: Aparecida Document

Findings show that the ecclesiology of Pope Francis is rooted in the Fifth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean; thus, his preferential and evangelical option for the poor came forth, which hatched further more into Poor Church for the Poor. In this ecclesiology, poverty is becoming a theological question, not just a social question. This must also have been what the cardinal electors saw in Cardinal Bergoglio.

“How I would like a “Poor Church for the Poor” (Interview of Pope Francis, 2014). These were the exact words of Pope Francis before a group of reporters during his first media audience, the Friday after his election to the papacy. These words came out from the lips of Francis as a part of his answer to the question of why he had chosen the name Francis. The Pope said: “The man who gives us the Spirit of Peace, the poor man,” and he added, “How I would like to have a Poor Church for the Poor” (Interview of Pope Francis, 2014). The statement may sound personal, but it tells us directly what exactly Pope Francis envisions the Church to be.

Did this vision of a Poor Church for the Poor just come out from the mind of the Pope because the color of his zucchetto, that small, hemispherical, form-fitting skullcap on his head, had turned white from red? Or, this vision of Poor Church for the Poor had been the picture carefully placed in a beautiful frame and hanging on a prime spot in the apartment he occupied as bishop back in Buenos Aires?

The bishops of the Latin America and the Caribbean, together with Pope Benedict XVI gathered in the National Shrine of the Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Aparecida, Brazil on May 13 to 31, 2007 for a conference, to pray, reflect, and discuss among themselves as pastors of the Particular Churches in the Latin America and the Caribbean on how they could proceed to the transformation initiated by the Second Vatican Council and the four earlier conferences they held in the past such as in Rio De Janeiro in 1955; Medellin in 1968; Puebla in 1979; and at Sto. Domingo in 1992.

The Conference adopted the theme: “The Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ, So That Our Peoples May Have Life in Him,” “I Am the Way, and The Truth, and the Life” (Aparecida, p. 1). With the strong spirit of communion, solidarity and prayerful attitude of each one, the bishops were able to conclude their conference with their resolution to integrate into their pastoral programs the renewal of their particular Churches as they try to bring together all their brothers and sisters to journey and carry with them their mission in their continent of reaching everyone. To properly end the conference, the bishops gathered as one must come up with a concluding document where they could officially state what they thought and discussed during the conference, and what they intend to do after the conference. The bishops created a committee to draft and prepare the concluding document. To head the committee tasked to draft and prepare the document, the bishops of the whole continent

unanimously chose Cardinal Bergoglio of Buenos Aires. Being the head of this committee, Cardinal Bergoglio then was responsible in the organization and formulation of the ideas presented during the conference and could have influenced how the ideas are blended and screened, and worded in the 190 pages document, which was divided into ten important parts and titles.

A Poor Church for the Poor Defined

The Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference of the Bishops of the Latin America and the Caribbean (popularly known as the 'Aparecida Document') which was drafted and organized by a committee headed by Cardinal Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, after it carefully described the life situations and the cultures of the peoples in Latin America interestingly defined the image of "A Poor Church for the Poor that promotes Communion and Dialogue, advocates Missionary-Discipleship sent out to the peripheries of the lives of the poor and the needy, acting like a mother who is merciful to her children, and in constant renewal to conform her nature to that of her savior, to become a sign of the kingdom as envisioned by the Lord Jesus Christ. This image of the Church, Poor Church for the Poor discovered from this document represented the resolution of the Church of Latin America and the Caribbean as her manner of existence to be able to continue journeying the path of a renewed and made the blameless bride of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

When the Concluding Document of the Fifth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean was made public, it automatically became an official document of the Roman Catholic Church. Like all other Church documents, it is a creation of many hands and has undergone much editing and many revisions before a final version is approved and released to the public. The said document was, of course, submitted to the Holy See for approval before it went public. The point here is that since its approval the content of this document became a contribution of the Latin American Church in the theological thought of the Catholic Church especially in the gradual composition of the new ecclesiological thinking of making dynamic the Christological faith of the Church by recognizing the humanity of Christ in the humanity of the poor and the marginalized.

The Church of Latin America and the Caribbean had reaffirmed her Christological faith through her commitment to the Catholic Social Teaching, the preferential option for the Poor. In this commitment, the Latin American Church is proclaiming her faith in Jesus, who made himself poor and friend of the poor. In this commitment, the Church in Latin America expressed her willingness to work for social and economic policies of integral promotion to change the situations of many who are poor. This is also the expression of her discipleship and missionary spirit of spending time with Jesus and being sent by him to the poor and the neglected.

In the Aparecida Document, the bishops provided in their message a part where they expressed their desire that the Church's prophetic task and the civil government's jobs be carried according to the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Aparecida, p.16). The

bishops thus, not only demonstrate their commitment to solidarity with advocacy for the poor but also taking radical steps toward the liberation of the poor: first, to have a dialogue of life with the poor to come to know their concerns and what causes their sufferings and poverty; second, after knowing their concerns, identify the causes of their suffering and poverty. As shepherds of their particular Churches, they could stand as leaders in confronting any sector of the society that causes the suffering that bound them; third, it is very important that they, as shepherds and leaders of the poor must condition the minds and attitudes of the poor to participate in every endeavor that will lead them to their liberation from their present suffering and poverty.

Pope Paul VI and the Medellin Conference

This study had taken notice of Pope Paul VI's statement in his *Populorum Progressio*, where he related his experiences when he traveled to Latin America in 1960. He witnessed the poverty of the people (*Populorum Progressio*, 4). Tracing the line of events from that experience of Paul VI as the then Archbishop of Milan, when he became the pope, he made a significant order addressed to the pastors of Latin America to gather for a Conference and reflect together how the Church in Latin America could address the aggravating situation of poverty in their region. That is why in 1968, where the bishops are still fresh from the recently concluded Vatican Council II enthusiastically gathered in Medellin, Colombia. In this Second Conference of the Latin American Bishops, the theology of the preferential option for the poor is given due attention. This line of thought paved the way for the transformation of the Church from a Church that is hierarchical and allied with the rich into a Church of the Poor.

Thirty-Nine Years Later: Aparecida Conference

After 39 years, as the bishops gathered in Aparecida, they were determined to take another turn, which is more radical than the turn they made in 1968. From a Church of the Poor, they wanted to become A Poor Church for the Poor. They believed that this is the only way their Christological faith would become congruent to their actions as disciples-missionaries of Christ in their present lives for this present age. As part of their resolution, the bishops articulated their definition of poverty is a lack of goods of this world necessary to live worthily as men, and condemned and denounced it evil and contrary to the will of God; therefore, it must be eradicated to liberate the people. This is what the Church should do and concerned about, to become poor and be with the poor.

At this point, it must be noted that an important member of the committee tasked to draft the Concluding Document of the CELAM's Fifth Conference was the Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga. It must also be noted that the Chilean Cardinal Francisco Javier Errazuriz was the co-president of the conference during that time. There is something significant in mentioning these two big names from the CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference). These two cardinals were appointed by Pope Francis to be part of the eight-member committee that will advise the Pope on running the Universal Church. The first tasks delegated to the eight cardinals were to review the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* and

the policies in the Roman Curia, which is the central government of the Church. The significance these two cardinals, Maradiaga and Errazuriz could make in the Universal Church is to help the Pope work hard enough to let his “Poor Church for the Poor” be discovered, experienced, and lived by all who responded to the call of discipleship, and those who are touched by this Church.

Francis’ Papacy: Show-Case of Latin American Church

Putting in a broader context, it may, or it may not be that the election of Bergoglio to the papacy is a recognition by the Universal Church of the Latin American Poor Church after the Second Vatican Council. This claim could be supported by a story personally related to the reporters by the Pope: “During the election, I was sitting next to the Archbishop Emeritus of Sao Paulo and Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy, Cardinal Claudio Hummes, a good friend. When things started to move in a dangerous direction, he comforted me. When the votes reached the two thirds, there was the usual applause, because I had been elected. Then, he hugged, kissed, and told me: “Do not forget the poor!” That word made an impact on me: the poor, the poor. Immediately, I thought of Francis of Assisi in relation to the poor” (Interview of Pope Francis, 2013).

“Do not forget the poor!” These were five short, simple words, but they mean great things. Pope Francis interpreted it as advice from a brother bishop. However, reading between the lines, Cardinal Hummes was reminding Bergoglio of the Aparecida Document. Remember that Cardinal Hummes was the Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Brazil, during the Fifth Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean. Sao Paulo is Brazil’s largest and most industrial city, where Sacadura Cabral, a densely crowded slum which homes thousands of poor people. The Cardinal –Electors must have read and understood what CELAM has painted in Latin America, as clearly articulated in the Aparecida Document. They must have convinced themselves that the Latin American “Poor Church for the Poor” is a new way of fulfilling its mission by following the footsteps of Jesus and adopting his attitudes (Mt. 9:35-36). Though he was rich, he chose to be poor for everybody (2 Cor. 8:9). They must have read these golden words on page 29 of the Aparecida Document: “The Church must fulfill its mission by following the footsteps of Jesus and adopting his attitudes (cf. Mat 9:35-36). Though He was Lord, He made himself a servant and obedient even to death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:8); though He was rich, he chose to be poor for us (cf. 2 Cor 8:9), showing us the path of our calling as disciples and missionaries. In the Gospel we learned the sublime lesson of being poor following Jesus, Himself poor (cf. Lk 6:20; 9:58), and that of proclaiming the Gospel of peace with no purse or staff, placing our trust neither in money nor the power of this world (cf. Lk 1:4 ff). God’s generosity is manifested in the generosity of missionaries; the gratuitous character of the gospel is shown in the gratuitousness of apostles” (Aparecida, p.29). On page 123 of the Aparecida Document, the Latin American bishops admitted that one of the distinguishing features of their Local Church is the “Preferential Option for the Poor.” For them, this is their way of conversion to the Gospel that taught them the lesson of being poor following Jesus, Himself poor.

“A Poor Church for the Poor.” Pope Francis is not only pronouncing these words but is trying to live them. He lived as a poor archbishop in Buenos Aires. The world came to know his mode of transportation, riding on a bus. There is that beautiful story about his down to earth manner of relating to his priests and how he valued each one of them to the extent of putting up a telephone in his apartment exclusively for priests who call him up in times of need. Mentioning these words in these lines is assuring one thing, that in Latin America, Cardinal Bergoglio is not the only pastor in that continent who lived the Latin American theological reflection: “Preferential option for the poor is implicit in the theological faith in God who became poor for humanity, to enrich mankind with his poverty (2 Cor. 8, 9)”. For sure, many of their bishops have heeded and lived to the call of God to Shepherd, a “Poor Church for the Poor” (AD, p. 89).

The duration from September 2007 to March 2013 is five and a half years. The point here is that Archbishop Bergoglio had five and a half years effectively working on his episcopacy using the Aparecida Document as his guide hand in hand with the Vatican II documents. Take note, Bergoglio was elected to the papacy on March 13, 2013. It must also be noted that Bergoglio had been the Archbishop of Buenos Aires for 15 years before his papacy. Furthermore, reviewing his life as a pastor, it is discovered that in his pastoral activities, his love for the poor was on top of his agenda. He was always humble and available. He was an archbishop who personally assisted his priests when they are gravely ill. He was a constant visitor to the parishes offering words of encouragement to priests and parishioners. These must have been what he meant when he said: “... The church that goes out to the existential peripheries...” (Intervention of Cardinal Bergoglio before the Conclave, 2013).

A more significant point here is that A Poor Church for the Poor in Latin America is now the Poor Church for the Poor in the whole world. This has become so imminently manifested by the pope here in the Philippines during his Pastoral and State visits on January 15 to 19, 2015. The Filipino people gladly welcomed the Pope and lovingly accommodated him because of his vocal pronouncements on his preferential love for the poor. Not only that, the people saw in him the authenticity of his pronouncements on the love of the poor because he lives the life of a poor. His actions speak louder than his words. For the first time, people saw a pope carrying his small luggage while getting down from the plane upon his arrival here and boarding the plane when he was leaving after his five days stay. It was a very touching scene to see a pope who is so humble to carry his luggage instead of letting his assistant carry it for him.

Preferential Option for the Poor is “dedicating more time to each person, to listen to them, to be with them in the important events of their lives, and with them, to help to seek the solutions for their needs” (AD 16). This beautiful principle of the Latin American Bishops’ pastoral service would bring about a sense of belongingness in their local Churches, or more concretely, it would result in an experience of the Church as everybody’s place of safety and happiness (AD 16).

In a Poor Church for the Poor, the proclamation of the Word of God to the faithful is a significant endeavor for men and women in the faith to experience Jesus Christ and for an authentic renewal of communion and dialogue. This is the top priority of the Church in Latin America for her to achieve her goal she set in the Aparecida Document, which is to bring her members into their awareness of their call to become disciples and missionaries of Jesus (AD 20). Making it their top priority, the proclamation of the Word of God would bring about a clearer picture of this Poor Church for the Poor which has its roots from the formation of a community of missionary-disciples by Jesus when he started his mission in Galilee which was the commencement of the kingdom (AD 17). The community Jesus formed was an integral part of his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The Church, being a community of disciples, exists within the society, which has to manifest communion and dialogue within and outside the community (Jn. 13:35). Therefore, the Church in Latin America is a church committed to living in poverty with the flame of the Paraclete that will consume the whole continent with love: "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)" (AD 17).

Going-out to the peripheries of life is making the mercy of God dynamic in the Church. Going-out into the existential of life is making humankind experience the mercy of God. In a Poor Church for the Poor, people would tend to feel at ease and home, and it is easier for them to experience the nearness of God who live with them even in their tribulations, and who, constantly make them aware of God's saving and liberating deeds as the Aparecida Document puts it, "We Christians are bearers of Good News for humankind, not prophets of doom" (AD 29).

Part 2: Pastoral Letters

After presenting the discussion on the Aparecida Document's Poor Church for the Poor, this research now embarks on the discussion on Cardinal Bergoglio's Poor Church for the Poor as articulated in his Pastoral Letters on the Year of the Faith and Lent.

Findings show that Cardinal Bergoglio's Pastoral Letters on the Year of Faith and Lent articulated A Poor Church for the Poor. A Church who proclaims forgiveness and reconciliation as an integral part of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. This will result in the forgiveness of many, and they will experience the advent of mercy. The forgiveness and mercy lived in the reality of communion and dialogue brought about by the commitment made by the Church called to missionary-discipleship founded on her desire to love the savior, Jesus Christ, who alone can give the gift of renewal and transformation.

The Pastoral Letters on the Year of Faith and Lent issued by Cardinal Bergoglio were Pastoral Letters of Significance. These were his last two pastoral letters before his election to the papacy. These were issued on October 1, 2012, and February 13, 2013, respectively, barely five months before the conclave. The first one, on the Year of Faith, was written and issued without any hint that there is a conclave to happen soon, while the second one, on the

Lent of 2013, was written and issued with Pope Benedict XVI already have announced a “Sede Vacante” by February 28, 2013. (The Latin terms “sede vacante,” translated in English as “the seat being vacant” is an expression heard from Church’s authorities when Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation from the papacy.) These letters are significant because their messages are the same messages echoed by Cardinal Bergoglio when he delivered his “Intervention” before the conclave. The articulation of a Poor Church for the Poor in them was modified and simplified in these lines taken from the more than three minutes speech of Cardinal Bergoglio: “... Church to go out to the existential peripheries of life ...” These existential peripheries of life were enumerated by Cardinal Bergoglio in his Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith: “the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance, of indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery” (Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith, 2012).

Four months before he announced his resignation from the papacy, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI declared December 1, 2012, First Sunday of Advent to November 24, 2013, Solemnity of Christ, the King of the Universe as the ‘Year of Faith.’ This is one of the two major undertakings, his encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, being the other that the former bishop of Rome launched but did not see its culmination while still in the Petrine Ministry. Pastoral initiatives such as the ‘Year of Faith’ by the Supreme Pontiff are traditionally affirmed and conferred by the college of bishops through the issuance of a Pastoral Letter admonishing the faithful in their particular Churches to participate and equally gain the corresponding grace attached to it. This is also another dramatic way of a bishop in a particular Church showing his unity with the bishop of Rome of what he liturgically expresses every day in the Holy Mass particularly in the ‘comingling’ part where the celebrant breaks the tip part of the half of the bread and drops it in the chalice to mix with the wine and also that part where the celebrant prays for the well-being of the Pope. Pastoral Letters are also issued as part of carrying his ministry as bishop and teacher in his local Church. Traditionally, Pastoral Letters are read simultaneously during Eucharistic Celebrations on Sundays and other important days to communities gathered within the local Church. As a practice, Pastoral Letters contain instructions and reminders, catechesis, and admonitions, but not limited to these.

Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith: Crossing the Threshold of Faith Defined

Cardinal Bergoglio issued his Pastoral Letter on the ‘Year of Faith’ on October 1, 2012, to the Catholic Faithful of Buenos Aires of Argentina. In this letter, he called on to the faithful of Buenos Aires to enter into the depths of their faith by “Crossing the threshold of faith” (Bergoglio, 2012). In declaring this call to the faithful, he elaborated what Pope Benedict XVI meant by the words: “Crossing the threshold of faith” (Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Bergoglio on the Year of Faith, 2012). He gave 13 definitions to this “Crossing of the Threshold”: 1) Crossing the threshold of faith is to hope that change is still possible to make things better; 2) It is having a heart of a child who believes everything is possible; 3) It is Communion; 4) It is becoming a “new leaven of justice and holiness”; 5) It is caring for those who are most in need; 6) It is a journey towards the Kingdom; 7) To walk humbly with God; 8) To be transformed in Christ; 9) To be forgiving; 10) To celebrate life in the table of the Eucharist; 11)

To be the people of God that brings the Good News to all the peripheries of life; 12) To be a disciple with a missionary orientation; and 13) to become a sign of new life (Bergoglio, 2012).

Cardinal Bergoglio's definition of "Crossing the Threshold of Faith: "is to hope that change is still possible to make things better" (Bergoglio, 2012). This definition was lengthily elaborated in his *Evangelii Gaudium* when he discussed on the social dimension of the Gospel: "To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds: "The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, even the most complex and inscrutable" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #178). Change is inevitable because of the power of the Holy Spirit. In the process of change that is brought by the power of the Holy Spirit, everyone is a part. What is needed is a constant reflection and discernment. This is what Bishop Francisco Claver, SJ has said: "The discerning-from-faith character of a participative Church" (Kroeger, 2011, p. 12). With these statements, Bergoglio is calling on the faithful of Buenos Aires to trust that amid their misery, change is still creeping pushed by the Gospel.

One of the achievements of the Vatican II Council is that the Church started to accept that the Gospel is not only to revolve within the spiritual sphere but to embrace all the aspects of a life of a person (Kroeger, 2011). The Good News of salvation contains explicit articulations on how the Church must treat the totality of the person as a social being. The core of evangelization is a communal life, a life with others with charity as its nucleus.

Participatory Church is being advocated by this first definition given by Bergoglio on the "Crossing of the Threshold of Faith." How can the Church become a participatory Church? To become a participatory Church, she must be formed and trained to act on her role. In her formation and training in the faith, first, the Church should familiarize herself with how Jesus acted while he was performing the ministry of the proclamation of the kingdom; second, the Social Doctrine of the Church must become an integral part of her learning process; and the third, the 16 documents of the Second Vatican Council must become, as Pope John Paul II declared during the opening of the Synod of Bishops he convened in 1985: "the constant reference point of every pastoral action" (Kroeger, 2011, p. 43).

In the presentation of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church written by the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino states that "transforming social realities with the power of the Gospel, to which witness is borne by women and men faithful to Jesus Christ, has always been a challenge, and it remains so today at the beginning of the third millennium of the Christian era.

The proclamation of Jesus Christ, the Good News of salvation, love, justice, and peace, is not readily received in today's world, devastated as it is by wars, poverty, and injustices. "For this very reason, the men and women of our day have a greater need than ever of the Gospel: of the faith that saves, of the hope that enlightens, of the charity that loves" (Martino, 2004, p. xxi). It is imperative that the Church, being the community of the missionary-

disciples of Christ, adhere to the power of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is the Gospel. The Gospel is the power of the Church to transform societies. The Church, therefore, must be familiar with this Gospel--- Jesus Christ. This is discipleship in the most real sense of the word. Because to be able to live the life of Jesus is to become the human person God wills for every individual. The human person who is fully alive as the image and likeness of God, who, according to a Great Church father of the 3rd century: “Gloria Dei Vivens Homo” (“The Glory of God is man fully alive”) (Irenaeus, 202).

The greatest challenge confronting humanity today is to answer the question: “who is man?” The Church is summoned by God to minister to the world, and her basic responsibility is to give meaning to that question of truth. The meaning of human existence and the anchor of the world’s trek in history are greatly dependent on how the Church would present the truth as an answer to the basic question of who a man is. Responding to that call of God to give meaning to human existence, the Church, through her magisterial power propagate, promote and proclaim the Social Teaching of the Church. The Social Teaching of the Church is a great instrument the Church has for her moral and pastoral maneuvering of all those who are committed for the good of humanity. It is the instrument the Church could utilize to bring into reality the requirements needed for justice and peace: “This doctrine has its own profound unity, which flows from faith in a whole and complete salvation, from hope in the fullness of justice, and from the love which makes all mankind truly brothers and sisters in Christ” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2011, p. 4).

The third consideration for a participatory Church is to make the 16 documents of the Second Vatican Council the reference point of every pastoral plans and action. The Second Vatican Council (Vat. II for short) was an ecumenical council convened and opened by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962, in the Vatican. Pope John XXIII summoned the bishops from all over the world to gather in a council when he issued his Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*.

Pope John XXIII’s “aggiornamento,” an Italian word that when translated in English it would mean “bringing up to date” (Pope John XXIII, 1962) would explain in brief what was in the mind of the Pope in convening the Second Vatican Council. It is the re-echo of the Latin phrase “*Ecclesia semper reformanda*,” “the Church must always be reforming” (Pope John XXIII, 1962). Although he did not live long to witness the closing of this ecumenical council that he convened because he died eight months after he opened it, that is on June 3, 1963, at the age of 78, the agenda he laid down at its beginning for the council to achieve was carried on up to the closing because Pope Paul VI who succeeded him was determined to pursue what his predecessor had started which he had expressed in his address during the opening of the second session on September 29, 1963.

It may be a very costly project initiated by the Vatican because it spent \$7,250,000.00 (Kroeger, 2011, p.4); this council was able to produce its fruits, which are considered valuable gifts for the Church in this contemporary times. These 16 documents of the Vatican Council II has become the instruments that revealed the inner nature and inner desire of the Church. In

its four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations, the council articulated how the Church can live to her calling of ministering to the poor as integral to her participatory life. The question now is: Where is the Church, as the people of God leading forth? Has she traveled her journey faithful to the 16 documents of the Second Vatican Council?

Another definition is given by Bergoglio on Pope Benedict XVI's *Crossing the Threshold of Faith*: "It is having a heart of a child who believes everything is possible" (Pastoral Letter on the Year of Faith, 2012). God is the God who takes the sides of the poor who grants his blessings on those who are willing to take the role, which is similar to that of Moses, who confronted those who oppressed the Israelites. The early chapters of the Book of Exodus narrated how Moses trusted God and accepted the mission he was called to perform. His mission was to let the poor people of Israel feel and experience the mercy of God. God heard their cry. He came down to rescue them. He decided to liberate them. He needed someone to perform the mission on his behalf. Moses was called for that. It is narrated that Moses at first was hesitant to go to Egypt, citing his reasons, the Pharaoh might not believe him, the Israelites might not accept him, and of course, his lowliness. God gave him all the assurances needed. Moreover, Moses, with the heart of a child, he believed everything is possible. Crossing the threshold of faith is trusting in God, especially in the performance of duties towards the poor.

Moses' trusting attitude came only after the elaborative instructions and assurances of God's Word. Devotion to the Word of God will lead the Church, the leaders, and the faithful into crossing the threshold of faith. This will guide the poor Church to devote her ministry to the poor. *Dei Verbum* put back Scripture to its proper place in the Church as the Word of God in the words of men divinely inspired by the Spirit (DV 9). *Dei Verbum* paragraph no. 21 states: "For in the Sacred Books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power of the Word of God are so great that it remains the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her children, the food for the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life" (*Dei Verbum*, 9).

Cardinal Bergoglio's definition of "Crossing the threshold of faith": "It is communion." This is a manifestation of Pope Francis' familiarity with Vatican II's ecclesiology. The model of the Church as "Community," which was popularized by Avery Dulles, is an image that came out during the council to neutralize the "Institutional Model," which presents the Church as a "hierarchically structured society." The Church as a community is a Church described by Dulles as "Community of Equals" (Fuellenback, 2001).

BEC: A Consideration in the Poor Church for the Poor

Anyone can ask this question: How can the majority of Catholics who have the taste of a Church only an hour a week can come together and feel they belong to a community of equals? Asking this question comes another deeper question in nature: How to make the Church an everyday reality, not only a Sunday reality? Answers to these questions are found in the lives of the many Basic Ecclesial Communities. The Church as a People of God is

called to a life of holiness and a life of mission. How can the Church realize all of these if she exists only on Sundays? The Pope, for sure, has these considerations in his mind. So his experience of the Church in Latin America could be the answer to these questions. The Comunidades de base of Latin America is an experience that could help bring Catholics together in communion.

“Comunidades de base” is the term the Church in Latin America uses for the Small Christian Communities in its Medellin documents of 1986. Then in its Puebla documents, less than a decade later changed the term to “Comunidades ecclesiales de base” because of the relevant changes in the manner the people perceived these small communities. The Small Christian Communities, when they were called Comunidades de base, as Joselito Henson quoted Azevedo: “the emphasis was placed more on its sociological aspect and scope as a community within the parish or in contrast to the latter” (Henson, 1995). The “Comunidades ecclesiales de base” of the Puebla Conference, again as Henson cited Azevedos’ concepts on BEC’s has four important points to consider on the relevance of the change of name: first is their faith in Jesus Christ which they profess; second, their apparent adherence to the teaching authority of the Church; third, the communion these communities has among themselves and with the hierarchy; and fourth, their service among themselves and towards others manifest the Church in their places and during their times.

To understand the word “base” or “basic,” there is a need to refer to the statement borrowed by Henson from Azevedo: “The community is said to be of the base in so far as it is made up of poor, simple people, marginalized by the organization of society and made part of the society as a production force and labor force, but without voice and viable options” (Henson, 1995, p. 341).

Understanding Fr. Joselito Henson’s position on Basic Ecclesial Communities is that its creation, formation, and promotion is the only way the Church could realize her Missionary-Discipleship. To fulfill her mission, the Church must always be taking the sides of the poor and the marginalized. To borrow the exact words of Fr. Henson: “If taking the side of the marginalized authenticates the Church’s fidelity to its mission, then the Church can only be called Church if it is not cut off from the base. Only if it is formed in the base will the Church be transformed and be transformative. Furthermore, for Fr. Henson, the Basic Ecclesial Communities are the Church’s vehicle for her pastoral endeavor of becoming a “Communicative Community.” They are “communicative communities.” “They exist as concretizations of and in communion with the universal Church united in faith and guided by a specifically Christian tradition” (Henson, 1995, p.348).

Trying to define Basic Ecclesial Communities is to describe what they can do to the Church. Small communities’ way is the new way of the Church to strengthen the faith of the people and animate the love that she has received. It is helping the people of God to be who they are better. It is instilling to the people reverence to God and care for each other. They fulfill the duties of the Universal Church: Worship, formation, and service. In the Basic

Ecclesial Communities, there is hope to become a Church of “WE” not “they” and of “EVERYDAY” not “only Sunday,” which is the desire of Vatican II.

Pastoral Letter on Lent: A Church Who Proclaims Forgiveness and Reconciliation

In his Pastoral Letter on Lent of 2013, Cardinal Bergoglio centered on conversion that is guided on the principle of commitment for the good of others: “No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually if you do no good to others, you do nothing great (Saint John Chrysostom)” (Pastoral Letter on Lent, 2013). These words of the Pope, though borrowed from St. John Chrysostom, are true words to describe a proper relationship with God. This underlying principle of spirituality is what many men and women followed in their pursuit of a happy life. In their constant transformation to conform themselves into the life of Jesus is a program of how to achieve up to the summit of discipleship, which is a genuine love of God and neighbors. The theologian Richard McBrien clearly described the kind of person a Christian is called to become: “A Christian is a person who has moved to a different level of human consciousness in response to the call of Jesus Christ. The Christian is one who accepts Jesus’ call to discipleship and whose life is shaped by that call. The process by which the human person moves to Christian conversion since conversion to God is an invitation and a possibility for every human being” (McBrien, 1994, p.923). Real conversion to Christ is to live the life of Christ. A Christian who lives the life of Christ allows Christ to act in his/her life (Romans 8:10). The ultimate criterion for a Christian who has been converted to Christ is his/her natural manifestation of love for the neighbor: “Those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also” (1 John 4:20-21).

The Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Bergoglio on Lent of 2013 is calling the faithful of Buenos Aires to live in poverty to be able to learn how to love. Living in poverty is not pretty, but to be a poor person is nice because, in that way, human persons learn to help one another. To give and to take is part of being human. To help and to be helped, therefore, is to be human. The acts of giving and receiving help are the basic manifestations of the sense of belongingness. The sense of belongingness affirms an individual’s humanity. It also creates trust and reciprocity. “Rend your hearts to be able to love with the love with which we are loved, to console with the consolation that consoles us, and to share what we have received. The liturgical time that the Church begins today is not only for us but also for the transformation of our families, our communities, our Church, our homeland, of the whole world. They are 40 days to be converted to the very holiness of God; to become collaborators who receive grace and the possibility to reconstruct human life so that every man will experience the salvation that Christ won for us with his death and resurrection” (Pastoral Letter on Lent, 2013). Every spiritual activity manifests its positive results in Christian love for others. This Christian love for others becomes the best criterion to gauge the authenticity of one’s spirituality.

Pope Francis' Poor Church for the Poor is a Church that rejects "self-referential Church." A self-referential Church is a Church that is closed and does not want to go out and be dirty. This Church chooses to lock Jesus within and does not want this Jesus to be experienced by others and many. It is a Church that is unconsciously in preference for her self-preservation. It is a Church that is against the principle of a preferential option for the poor. A Church that is lacking in spiritual gifts as fruits of her renewal attained through her fervent prayer, acts of fasting and charity directed towards the poor specifically learned during the season of Lent.

Part 3: Homilies

What comes next is the study's discussion on Pope Francis' homilies as great sources of articulations on the image of the Church. These images of the Church derived from these homilies are a vivid outpouring of the mind of the Pope on what he wishes the Church would have as her picture. Following the blend and waves of his pronouncements, his homilies also articulate the same image of the Church derived from the Aparecida Document and his pastoral letters.

First Homily: Preferential Option for the Poor

In his homily during the episcopal ordination of Msgr. Speich and of Msgr. Gloder, on October 24, 2013, Pope Francis' strong words: "... pay great attention to those outsiders and gladly come to the aid and support of those in most need" (Homily, 2013) is his words that are trying to re-echo what the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace had written in their Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church "In Him, it is always possible to recognize the living sign of that measureless and transcendent love of God-with-us, who takes on the infirmities of his people, walks with them, saves them and makes them one" (Compendium of Catholic Social Doctrine, # 196).

The instructions given by Pope Francis to the two bishops whom he ordained were clear articulations of a Poor Church for the Poor. His words might have come as instructions, but they can also be received as fraternal reminders that they, the two bishops, as pastors of their particular churches to be, must lead a welcoming Church that accommodates everybody without exception.

A welcoming Church accepts everybody: sinners, poor, rich, persons with disabilities, the vulnerable, even those who look at the church as their enemy. The instructions also reminded the two bishops that the Kingdom of God was manifested by the Savior Himself as a community of lepers, disabled, poor, tax collectors and publicans. Therefore, the Church, being composed of human beings, is a community of saints mixed with corrupt, greedy, selfish, and indifferent individuals that may even include clerics and laypeople who are given responsibilities in the Church. These are the kinds of people the Church welcomes and readily accepts in the name of Jesus Christ, the head of this Church.

The homily comprises ten paragraphs. It is from the sixth to the ninth paragraphs where his articulations on his Poor Church for the Poor are done. Sixth paragraph: "Prioritizing the needs of the lowly is not to be neglected as well as the spread of the Good News and precious moments of prayer." Seventh paragraph: He called the *ordinandi* "faithful guardians and dispensers of the mysteries of Christ (Homily, 2014) in the local Church entrusted to them. As such, they have to imitate the poor Christ who loves his flock by laying his life for them. Eighth paragraph: He exhorted the two *ordinandi* to "love the priests and deacons, the poor and the defenseless, those who need to be welcomed and assisted" (Homily, 2014). Ninth paragraph: and he strongly admonished the two *ordinandi* to "pay great attention to those outsiders, and gladly come to the aid and support of those in most need" (Homily of Pope Francis, October 22, 2014).

With these four significant articulations of a Poor Church for the Poor in this particular homily, Pope Francis, once more, is manifesting that he made the Preferential Option for the Poor central to his theology and on top of his pastoral concern as the shepherd of the Universal Church. These four significant articulations of a Poor Church for the Poor are just a few of the many manifestations that Francis is an author of a refined version of liberation theology. Liberation theology as Gustavo Gutierrez puts it in his book, "is committed to making a critical reflection on the lived experience of the poor--- an existential stance regarding the dignity of marginalized human beings in their real historical circumstances, rather than abstract reasoning towards supposedly timeless truths" (Gutierrez, 1985).

To end that same homily, Pope Francis uttered these words: "And watch lovingly over the whole flock, among which the Holy Spirit appoints you to govern the Church of God. Keep watch in the name of the Father, whose image you make present; in the name of Jesus Christ, his Son, by whom you have been constituted teachers, priests, and shepherds; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church and sustains us in our weakness" (Homily, 2013).

To watch lovingly over the whole flock is to put on that characteristic of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who "was moved with pity for them" (Mk 6:34). According to Fr. Ruben Villote, "the Hebrew word for pity is *chesedh* which refers to intestines, but when used in relation to God's goodness and mercy, *chesedh* refers to the womb" (Villote, 1996). This etymological undertaking is leading us to the Prophet Isaiah's words: "Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, and feel no pity for the child of her womb? Even should a mother forget, I shall not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). Jesus is the revelation of God. In His ministry, he manifested what God ought to do. In the case of the poor, whom God should show mercy, Jesus is the one showing them. Now, every particular Church, with a bishop as her head, is a disciple-missionary mandated to continue the mission of Christ, which is to bring the mercy of God to the whole of humanity. In the mercy and compassion that every particular Church is going to manifest is a proclamation of the prophetic words of Isaiah about that promise of God of not forgetting anyone among His children.

The words of Isaiah are God's promise of mercy. This is what Pope Francis is reminding the two bishops who were being ordained on that day. Carlos H. Abesamis has something to say about Ruben Villote's etymological undertaking in the preceding paragraph: "Isaiah's writings could very well have been Jesus' favorite bedtime reading. Isaiah's words and images tend to reappear in Jesus' language" (Abesamis, p. 27, 2000).

Salvation is the fruit of the mercy and compassion of God. God sent His Son to bring His mercy and compassion to His children that were seen as salvation. Jesus, the only Son of God, through his obedience to the Father, is the savior. Nevertheless, how did this Savior preach about salvation? Jesus preached salvation by proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is at hand. "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15). If these words are paraphrased, Jesus could have said: Salvation has come; the Kingdom of my Father has started. Transform your lives. Believe in me and follow me.

Going back to the Prophet Isaiah, this prophet whom Jesus loved to quote set criteria on how to determine the presence of the Kingdom of God: "Here comes with power the Lord God! Who rules by his strong arm; here is his reward with him, his recompense before him. Like a shepherd, he feeds his flock; in his arms, he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care" (40:10-11). The Kingdom of God is a shepherd feeding the flock. The kingdom of God is a shepherd gathering the lambs. The Kingdom of God is a shepherd protecting the flock. If Jesus preached salvation by proclaiming the Kingdom of God and this Kingdom's presence is felt through the criteria set by Isaiah, then, in a Church where the flock is fed, lambs are gathered and protected is felt the presence of God and the Kingdom of God is experienced. This study is making it clear that the Church is not the kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God can be felt and experienced in the Church (Fuellenbach, 1987).

Pope Francis must have wanted to remind the two bishops that the Church is mandated by Jesus Christ to continue his mission of salvation. He might have wanted to remind them also that salvation is not "souls going up to heaven, but rather, salvation is a bonanza of vivid human boons and blessings" (Abesamis, 2000). So in this homily, Pope Francis was trying to articulate to his listeners a Church that is committed to the well-being of the flock by loving them, feeding them, protecting them, and gathering them. A Church where people could feel the presence of God and experience His Kingdom.

The Second Homily: Solidarity with the Poor

The second homily that was considered for analysis was the homily of Pope Francis he delivered during his first Holy Mass as Pope, which was concelebrated with the Cardinal Electors on March 14, 2013, a day after his election to the papacy at the Sistine Chapel.

The keyword for the Pope's articulation of the image of the Church in this particular homily is "movement," which is common among the three readings. "Movement of journeying,

building and professing” (Homily, 2013). As mentioned in the findings part, the words used by the Pope are powerful words that are acted upon with others. Journeying, building, and professing are potent words that cannot be acted upon alone. These are words best understood in the context of a community.

Reviewing the letters of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament addressed to different Churches, one can discover that divisions and factions were already happening in the Church even during the earliest Christian era that still had the smell of the resurrection phenomenon. The great apostle to the Gentiles wrote to the Church in Corinth: “I beg of you, brothers, in the name of Christ Jesus, to agree among yourselves and do away with divisions; please be perfectly united, with one mind and one judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Yes, these realities happen up to this day. Many in the Church cannot agree to what they say. Some even go beyond disagreement. They even go as far as cutting off relationships. Nevertheless, everybody should be optimistic. Being one in the Church is getting into the process of being absorbed into the mystery of unity that is revealed by people going out into the peripheries to serve one another.

Journeying, building, and professing alone is lonely and boring. However, bringing these acts in the context of the community is a colorful and meaningful unfolding of events in the communal life of the Church. The Compendium of the Catholic Social Doctrine has beautifully put it that: “It is therefore necessary to stress that community is a natural characteristic that distinguishes man from the rest of earthly creatures” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, #149, 2004). Life in the community, therefore, is the determinant of men’s and women’s valuable characteristics and nature. Life in the community will bring the best in every Christian because it is the only instrument that can bring about the practice of the so-called kingdom values of justice, peace, and joy. If journeying, building, and professing are the movement of men and women in the community, they will yield a collective desire to adhere to the principle of the common good, which always seeks the welfare of the poor as the priority.

In the movement of journeying, the value of justice becomes the symptom of the kingdom of God. How? The movement of journeying when done in a communal context, people in that journey see to it that everybody has the necessities to go on to this journey. They see to it that no one goes hungry and thirsty along the way. They see to it that no one is unprotected along the way. Encouragement is also given to strengthen the spirit of those in the journey. Moreover, the most basic of all in a journey is the sense of solidarity among the pilgrims, solidarity that can give more than being present but is willing to carry other’s burdens when they are already tired and exhausted. A journey that flowers justice is a taste of the kingdom of God.

In the movement of the building, the value of peace becomes the symptom of the kingdom of God. How? The movement of the building when done in a communal context, the stress of peace is needed in order to put up something, or to organize something, or to create something. The Hebrew word “shalom” does not only mean peace, but it could also be

translated as “reconciliation” (Wostyn & De Mesa, 1999). Reconciliation is best achieved when there is a commitment by everybody to desire only what is good for all because when all desires and energies are directed towards the common good, then hearts will rejoice. Liberation is celebrated. Peace as a value in the kingdom of God is an experience of liberation.

The third value is joy. As Wostyn and De Mesa worded it in their Christology book, joy is the expression of fullness, happiness, and life (Wostyn & De Mesa, 1999). In the movement of professing as done in the context of community, joy becomes a proclamation. Joy speaks of fulfillment, happiness, and vitality. It may even become the expression of thanksgiving. The experience of community, therefore, becomes an experience of the kingdom of God.

Pope Francis, who enjoys so much being with other people, asserts solidarity in the Church. It is not only enjoyment that there is in solidarity, but there is so much learning derived from it. The Church, in solidarity, especially with the poor, would then discover that the poor could become the power of the Church to evangelize societies. The poor who are just dependent on the mercy and compassion of God, once they experience the mercy and compassion of God, could become a powerful and effective herald of this mercy and compassion of God. Their proclamation is authentic because their message is in their veins; the experience that had become a part of their lives now becomes the best articulation of their good news. The Psalmist had expressed this in his prayers: “O rescue me, God, my helper, and my tongue shall ring out your goodness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise” (Ps 51:16-17). The Psalmist is bringing out something true in a life that is founded in the mercy of God that, after experiencing this mercy, this life becomes the image of this experience.

The life of Pope Francis is marked by the mercy of God. As a young boy, for sure, he was informed by his parents that they migrated to Latin America from Europe to seek a better way of life. He was born and grew in Buenos Aires, where he witnessed poor lives on the outskirts of the city. He saw how God has sustained their lives and have interpreted it as the mercy of God. So he came to know God as a God who is merciful to the poor. This was also the experience of Moses; God revealed himself to him as a God who was concerned with the slaves in Egypt. So Moses carried out his mission as a merciful liberator of the Jews. The Pope, too, marked his life with mercy as a way of fulfilling his mission. In this homily, Pope Francis is envisioning a journeying Church, a building Church, and a professing Church. Only a Church that has understood and experienced the mercy of God because of her poverty can journey, build, and profess with and among the poor.

It is worth mentioning here also of a particular experience of a saintly man who lived his life here in this world during the latter part of the 19th-century and early part of the twentieth century, Blessed James Alberione. As a young seminarian, on that particular night between the last day of 1900 and the first day of 1901, inside the cathedral of Alba, he encountered a tremendous religious experience where he felt the Holy Spirit inspiring him to commit his entire being to a vital mission. He received inspiration from the Holy Spirit to accomplish something

for the Lord and the people during his time. Because of this religious experience, he oriented himself toward the offering of his life to be spent in pioneering modern evangelization (Perez, 2013). It was a religious experience that might be different from that of the Pope and that of Moses, but it has a similar implication and outcome. A commitment to a mission. A mission to bring the mercy of God to the people.

The Third Homily: Protector of the Poor

The third homily of Pope Francis that this study considered for analysis is the one he delivered during the occasion of the Imposition of the Pallium, and the Bestowal of the Fisherman's Ring for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome held on March 19, 2013. In this homily, the image of a Church protecting the poor is derived. Francis based his articulations from the role of St. Joseph as the protector of the Holy Family and as the Patron Saint of the Universal Church. The Pope articulated how the Church responds to her calling to be the protector of the poor by: (1.) being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of His presence and receptive to His plans and not merely to her own; (2.) her humble and silent unfailing presence and fidelity to the poor.

Jesus' life was centered on obedience to the will of His Father. The life of a Christian, too, must be revolving around the spirituality of obeying the will of God at all times. This kind of spirituality must also be the spirituality of the Church for her to be genuinely disciple-missionary of Jesus Christ. Christianity is discipleship in Christ. The Church, being the community of Christians, is a follower of Christ. Her constant obedience is being required for her to remain as the disciple of Christ. She is only able to develop satisfactory obedience when she had learned to become always attentive to God. The Church, therefore, must learn how to open herself to the power of prayer. Prayer is opening up the mind to God. Prayer will help the Church understand her human experiences in a religious aspect and transcend everything into the level of the divine. She will be inspired to new ways of understanding her relationship with God. Through prayer, the humanity of the Church is touched by the divinity of God, and this touch will bring power to the Church to live the truth: That Jesus is God who became man, a poor man, to enrich humanity by giving them the abundance of life.

The psalmist has something to say about truth. For him, "Love and Truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss. The truth will spring from the earth, and justice will look down from heaven. The Lord will surely grant abundance; our land will yield its increase. Prosperity will march before the Lord, and good fortune will follow behind" (Ps 85:11-14). "The Hebrew word for truth, *emet*, comes from the Semitic root 'aman.' The Hebrew scripture used this term to affirm the constancy, dependability, fidelity, and reliability of God and human beings" (De Mesa, 2003). To live, the truth is to love. Truth and love will bring about equality, abundance, prosperity, and stability. In short, truth and love will result in justice and peace. Where there is truth, love, justice, and peace, there is joy, fulfillment, and security. When you find these values, then you experience the kingdom of God. If you find these values in the Church, then the Church becomes a symbol of the kingdom of God. Then she is properly responding to the

call of God as the protector of the poor. Her discipleship is then carried by her obedience, which is manifested in playing her role as protector of the poor in truth and charity.

Solidarity with the poor and fidelity to them is the second way the Church could respond to the call of God as the protector of the poor. This is her concrete response done in a very concrete manner. Audrey Gibson and Kieran Kneaves discussed in their book: *Praying with Louise Marillac* that “Louise taught that we are called to treat poor people exactly as we would treat Jesus: with competence, gentleness, compassion, and generosity. She understood that our manner of service is almost as important as the service itself” (Gibson & Kneaves, 1986). Pope Francis seemed to have summarized this thesis by putting all these virtues mentioned by Louise Marillac together into two values: Solidarity and fidelity with and to the poor. These are two values that reveal the relation of human persons with God. The human person is a true image of God and the true disciple of Christ when he/she is committed and faithful to other’s well-being (De Mesa, 2003). To be faithful to the poor is to do something to liberate them. Doing something for their well-being is being one with them. Solidarity with the poor can be described as experiencing their sufferings and their joys, dreaming with them, and helping them realize their aspirations.

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conference called solidarity as “dialogue of life” in one of their documents released in Taipei, Taiwan on April 27, 1974 (FABC, 1974): “Dialogue of life involves a genuine experience and understanding of the poverty of the people, their deprivation and oppression. It demands working not for them but with them, to learn from them their real needs and aspirations, as they are enabled to identify and articulate these, and to strive for their fulfillment, by transforming those structures and situations which keep them in that deprivation and powerlessness” (FABC, 1974). This is the unfailing presence of the Church with the poor. This is also the unfailing fidelity of the Church. The Church’s unfailing presence and fidelity to the poor is her way of projecting her image as a poor Church protecting the poor.

The Fourth Homily: A Poor Church for the Poor Which Seeks Communion and Dialogue

The fourth homily considered for analysis is the homily delivered by Pope Francis during the Rite of the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday, 2013 held in Casal del Marmo, a prison for minors in Rome. The 12 inmates whom Pope Francis washed their feet included a Serbian Muslim woman and an Italian Catholic woman. Inmates in this prison are mostly young delinquents who are undergoing rehabilitation processes before they could be released to their families.

The rite of the washing of the feet is a critical reminder for everybody that one must help anyone who is in need. Anyone who is in need is a neighbor whom Jesus said we should love as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). Anyone who does this is a disciple of Christ (John 13:31). Therefore, the Church, if she is truly a community of disciples, must be the first to love

anyone and everyone. The Church cannot just remain a disciple. Discipleship is best understood in the mission. The Church's mission is to tell the world of his love. As a disciple, the Church must imitate her master. Jesus, the master, showed the love of God to the world by performing it on the cross. The Church, as a disciple, must tell the world of his love by loving.

The homily delivered by Pope Francis to the young inmates of Casal del Marmo was a brief and unscripted one. He told his listeners that everyone, including him, had to be in the service of others.

Earlier that day during the Chrism Mass in the Vatican, Pope Francis admonished the Catholic priests to dedicate themselves to helping the poor and suffering instead of making themselves busy with their careers as managers and administrators of the Church.

Bringing the rite of the washing of the feet to a youth prison was a first of its kind in the history of the Church. The rite, being a component of the Holy Thursday celebrations, and led by a pope as such, has its proper place in St. Peter's Basilica or the Basilica of St. John Lateran, which is the pope's cathedral in his capacity as the Bishop of Rome. During Holy Thursdays, basilicas, cathedrals, parish churches and chapels are called "upper rooms." Many must have been surprised why the new pope brought the rite of the washing of the feet in the prison. More so that among those 12 inmates whom the pope washed their feet were two women. Tradition says that Jesus washed the feet of the 12 apostles who were men. What surprised the world, even more, is the inclusion of a Muslim woman in a rite that is founded in Christianity and a purely Catholic as such.

With all of these as considerations in judging whether what the pope had done is under Catholic traditions, for sure, the Holy Father has only this to say: "We need to go out, then, in order to experience our own anointing as priests... to the outskirts where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters" (Homily, 2013). What the Pope had done is very much Catholic and Christian in the truest sense. Christ desires that love is to be given to all at all times and all places.

The very beginning of this homily insinuates an explanation of bringing this rite to the prison. It also insinuates answers to many questions people might have surrounding the circumstances of this action. It also offers affirmations to those clerics who had initiated familiar actions. The Pope said: "Jesus, washing the feet of his disciples. Peter didn't understand it at all; he refused. But Jesus explained it to him. Jesus – God did this! He himself explains to his disciples: Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you. (Jn. 13:12-15)" (Homily, 2013). For those who seek an explanation for this action of the Pope, the message is unmistakable: The Church must go out to those in need.

The homily was short. The English translation of it can be delivered in three minutes, but the words are as if they were the words of Jesus' lips. The Pope's action combined with the words of his homily is the very articulations of a Poor Church for the Poor who goes out to seek communion and dialogue, to serve those in need, to have the odor of her sheep, to tell the suffering people that she is ready to carry their burdens. The Church does this in all her humility, which is the articulation of her life of poverty. The Church does this in all her humility, which is also the articulation of her being the "sacrament of salvation, embedded within the flesh of humanity" as the Philippine Bishops worded it and quoted by Villote (Villote, p. 45, 1996).

At this point, this research now embarks on its discussion on the fifth homily that was considered for analysis where it was able to derive an image of a Poor Church for the Poor that experiences misery of life but at the same time experiences empowerment by the Resurrection of Jesus to proclaim the newness of life among those experiencing the misery of life and this poor Church becomes their power.

The Fifth Homily: A Poor Church Empowered by the Resurrection

The fifth homily was delivered by Pope Francis during the Easter Vigil of 2013. He started his homily on the circumstances of the women who went to the tomb of that early Sunday. These women, whom Mathew named Mary Magdalene and another Mary (Mt 28: 1), were described by the pope as compassionate, affectionate, and loving. They were among the first women-disciples. They became followers of Jesus because they saw in Jesus the attitude of someone willing to accompany them in the misery of their life as well as valuing their dignity as human beings. These they saw in Jesus that attracted them to him, and so they followed him to the end of his life.

However, this Jesus whom they looked up to as their liberator died. "Life would now go on as before" (Homily, 2013). What made their anguish deeper was the empty tomb, which led to many questions. Their questions were not left unanswered for two men appeared to them dressed in dazzling white who gave them the answers to all their questions and instructed them what their attitude must be: "Do not be afraid!" (Mt. 28:5). After telling them not to be afraid, they announced to them the good news: "He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said." (Mt 28:6). These words seem so similar to the words read from Luke 2: 10, where the angels announced to the shepherds the birth of Jesus. The angels played the same role of announcing good news to human beings. Both are events of the proclamation of the good news. Both are moments of "newness" of God's surprises to which humanity should not fear but to accept with joy in their hearts.

The women, though afraid, felt joy in their hearts because of the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Receiving the proclamation from the angels of Jesus' resurrection is receiving a newness of life. Their fear is being dominated by the newness of life that the resurrection of Jesus brought to them.

This research thought of inquiring about the relevance of women in humanity's Christianity. Given the fact that Jesus was born by a woman. Furthermore, now, here again, women were the first to receive the news of the resurrection, and they became instrumental to the spread of this new and great phenomenon. Will this manifest God's consistency? God's way of working out His mercy is the humble way. Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, is a woman. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who first knew of Jesus' resurrection were women. They and the other women of their time were considered lower in social status. Nevertheless, they were chosen to perform the work of God's mercy. This is always the way of God in bringing something great He uses the most humble way.

With all of these reading in between the lines of the homily of Pope Francis, the image of a humble Church is being brought to light. As the light becomes brighter, the image of a humble Church becomes an image of a Poor Church that brings out the mercy and compassion of God to those who require mercy and compassion. People who need mercy and compassion always long for the newness of life. The resurrection of Jesus is a power that brings newness of life, a newness that expressed in hope, peace, and joy.

As this research fully convinced that the resurrection of Jesus is a power that brings newness of life, it also appreciates the power of the resurrection of Jesus to re-gather the scattered disciples to form themselves into one again. This research also is not getting out of its way of putting aside the role of the most humble way that was used in re-gathering the scattered disciples: the women bringing the good news of resurrection that made them re-gather again and put their feet together towards Galilee where Jesus desired them to go. There in Galilee, Jesus re-taught them for 40 days, and before his ascension, to heaven, he commissioned them to continue the work of salvation, which is the working of God's mercy and compassion.

The Church, being founded on the Apostles whom Christ commissioned to continue His work of liberation, is also commissioned to continue the work of the Apostles, which is to bring liberation to humanity in crisis. In the fulfillment of her mission, the Church must always be aware of the ways employed by God in the course of salvation history, the most humble way. Keeping in mind of God's most humble way, the Church will remain humble and lowly always remembering that it is the most effective way of making the mercy of God felt and experienced by those in need of the mercy of God. Remaining humble and lowly is remaining poor. Most poor and needy tend to go to those who also look poor and needy not for help, maybe but for solidarity. Once the poor are united, then they become powerful and can work out for their liberation. A poor Church, therefore, is a Church that brings Jesus' liberating power to humanity in crisis.

In Assisi, St. Francis was summoned by Christ to rebuild His Church. What qualified St. Francis to perform such a great job? It was his lowliness. He was chosen by Christ to

rebuild his Church in San Damiano because he was poor (Maximiano, 2014). Keep in mind always of God's most humble way.

The Sixth Homily: A Poor Church Willing to Live with the Poor

Now, this research shall indulge in discussing what it discovered from the homily of Pope Francis delivered to the Italian Bishops during a Mass concelebrated at the Vatican Basilica on May 23, 2013, on the occasion of the Profession of Faith with the Bishops. As mentioned in the findings, this research discovered from this homily an image of a Church totally in love with the poor manifested in her willingness to go beyond by living poor like the poor and in her readiness to lay down her life for them, the poor.

The Church, envisioned by the Second Vatican Council as the New People of God must learn much from the experience of the Old People of God, the Israelites. The Pentateuch is a part of the Sacred Scriptures that tell us about the rich experiences of the Israelites, particularly on their experiences as a people gathered by God with whom he had contracted a covenant. The Israelites, being the chosen people of God, was led by Moses, a prince of Egypt, a man chosen from among the rich called to serve God among the poor People of God. Upon answering the call and acceptance of the mission God gave to Moses, he immediately left everything he had, his family, his comfort, and even his own life. He was focused and obsessed with that desire to liberate the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt.

God called Moses to the mission of leading the Israelites towards their liberation. The God who called Moses is the same God who calls the bishops to lead their particular churches to the fulfillment of that same mission of liberation, but not of the Israelites but the new People of God, the Poor Church. Jesus, the perfect revelation of God, asked the apostle Peter: "Do you love me? The answer to Peter to that question was positive. He expressed his deep love for Jesus (John 21). However, the Lord was quick in directing Peter's love for the sheep – the people of God. Pope Francis saw the message: "...the consequence of loving the Lord is giving everything — truly everything, even our life — for him"(Homily, 2013).

The Church, as the New People of God today, is led by the bishops, "having been appointed by the Holy Spirit to succeed the apostles in their ministry as pastors of souls" (Christus Dominus, #2). As leaders of their particular churches, Vatican II is constantly reminding the bishops to lead in holiness and love through a humble, simple, and lowly life (Christus Dominus, 15). "As pastors, they should pay special attention to youth and adolescents. They should devote themselves to paternal love for the poor and the sick. They should have a particular concern for workingmen. Finally, they should encourage the faithful to assist in the works of the apostolate" (Christus Dominus, 30). "Pastors and members of the Church will courageously defend and vindicate the rights of the poor and the oppressed, even when doing so will mean alienation or persecution from the rich and powerful" (PCP-II Acts, par. 131).

The Church, as a People of God who continually evaluates her ways, whether they are the ways of the Holy Spirit, is a Church that seeks to find the reason for her existence in Christ and Christ. If this is the principle that guides the Church in her spiritual journey, then her spirituality must always be grounded on the desire always to seek the welfare of those weak and needy because this has always been the desire of Christ, who is her reason for existence.

The Church is called to make her own the dream of God, whose house knows no exclusion of people or peoples, as Isaiah prophetically foretold in the First Reading (cf. Is 2:2-5)" (Homily, 2013). Pope Francis is trying to articulate the criteria the Church may use in evaluating her ways, whether they are of the ways of the Holy Spirit. This articulation by the pope may lead his listeners once more to that significant declaration made by Jesus inside of a synagogue in Nazareth after reading to those who have gathered for the Sabbath Services a particular passage from the scroll written by the Prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord". After reading the text, Jesus declared: "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21).

The Pope's listeners to this homily, the Italian bishops were then invited by the pontiff to renew their response to the call of Jesus: "Follow me!" (Homily, 2013). A renewal of commitment to follow Jesus by devotedly caring, protecting, and loving the flock. In turn, the bishops will lead their flocks in their particular churches to renew their commitment to caring, protecting, and loving each one among them, especially those who are weak and needy. The Church then becomes the anointed one of the Holy Spirit to continue the work of the Apostles entrusted to them by Christ as the Pope has always pointed out to that path of attraction, of contagion, the path for the growth of the Church, the path of the new evangelization (Letter of Pope Francis to Consecrated Men and Women, 2014). The Church can become the path of attraction and the sign of renewal if she opts to become a Poor Church willing and ready to live with the poor and ready to lay down her life for the poor.

As the homily ends, the Pope uttered a prayer to Mary, where he asked the Mother of God to "Take us back to the freshness of the origins, for a prayerful, penitent Church. Let us discover the joy of a humble, brotherly, serving Church. Mother, we shall be the People of God, pilgrims bound for the Kingdom" (Homily, 2013).

The Seventh Homily: Solidarity

What comes next is the research's discussion on a Poor Church for the Poor as a discovered image of the Church from Pope Francis' homily on June 29, 2013, at the Vatican Basilica during the occasion of the Imposition of the Pallium on Metropolitan Archbishops which coincided with the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

The Imposition of the pallium is a very significant liturgical rite in the Roman Catholic Church that started as early as the fourth century. The pallium is a liturgical vestment woven in pure wool worn by the pope and metropolitan bishops on their shoulders that is symbolizing the yoke of Christ.

Yoke, in layman's term, is a piece of wood especially carved and formed to fit to bound to the necks of a pair of oxen, carabaos, horses, and even cows. The use of yoke is very traditional in agricultural places. The word yoke is believed to derive from Proto-Indo-European *yugom* (yoke) from verb *yeug* (join, unite). This wooden beam is normally used between a pair of working animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs.

The pallium, as what it symbolizes suggests, is the yoke of Christ. It symbolizes the burden of Christ to which Pope Benedict XVI explained in his homily during the Imposition of the Pallium upon him on April 24, 2005: "Christ's yoke is God's will, which we accept. This will do not weigh down on us, oppressing us and taking away our freedom" (Homily of Pope Benedict XVI, 2005).

The imposition of the Pallium then is a liturgical rite symbolizing unity among the pastors in carrying out the will of God. As defined by Pope Francis, the pallium is a symbol of communion among the metropolitan archbishops with the successor of Peter (Homily, 2013). In giving his definition of the pallium, the Pope quoted a line from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "The holders of office, who are vested with sacred power, are, dedicated to promoting the interest of their brethren, so that all who belong to the people of God and are consequently endowed with true Christian dignity, may, through their free and well-ordered efforts towards a common goal, attain to salvation" (Lumen Gentium, 18). As successors of the apostles, the bishops are named the shepherds of the Church, and their unity was ensured by Christ in putting Peter at the head (LG, 18). The Pope, as the successor of Peter, is the Supreme Pontiff, builder of bridges, the foundation of unity in the Church. This unity that emanates from the Pope's position as the successor of Peter is founded on the common goal of all the shepherds, which is the salvation of all. This unity shall make the Church the real evangelizer of the poor and in solidarity with them. This is the will of God that all might be saved. Jesus came that all might have life, abundant life (Jn 10:10). At this point, this research reminds everyone of Isaiah's idea of salvation as an abundance of life and blessings, not as individuals being taken up to heaven (Abesamis, 2000).

The pallium is a cloth woven in pure wool. For Benedict XVI, "the lamb's wool is meant to represent the lost, sick or weak sheep which the shepherd places on his shoulders and carries to the waters of life" (Homily of Pope Benedict XVI, 2005). Pope Francis must have read and reflected on these words of his predecessor, which he delivered on the same occasion. It was a beautiful analogy made by Benedict on the Church and the lamb's wool. According to Benedict, the Church is the sheep lost because she does not know the way already (Benedict, 2005). The Church as a lost sheep is a Poor Church. She had lost her

identity. Her being lost needs redemption—salvation. The Church needs her Lord to redeem her lost identity. The pallium serves as a reminder to the Church of her sacred identity as the people of God who constantly needs the redeeming love of God.

The wool used to weave the pallium will always remind the Church of the way chosen by God to bring his salvation for everyone. It was customary for Ancient Near East kings to call themselves as shepherds of their people with the notion that as shepherds, they can do whatever they want to their people. It was an image for their power. When God fulfilled his promised salvation, he became the lamb. It was his way of becoming one with those lowly and weak. This was his way of revealing himself as the Good Shepherd – being one with the sheep (Benedict, 2005). This is what the pallium would continuously remind the Church to become a lowly and weak servant in the name of charity and communion. The pallium reminds the Church that she, as a servant, is bound to material poverty, which, in effect, a very relevant and constant factor in the work of salvation.

Part 4: General Audiences

The General Audiences of Pope Francis are proclamations of series of catechesis, which he prepared. Findings show that these proclamations derived the images of the Church that are consistent with the earlier documents reviewed, such as his homilies, his pastoral letters, and the Aparecida Document.

By tradition, Papal Audiences are held on Wednesdays if the Holy Father is in the Vatican. The purpose of this papal activity is to give pilgrims and visitors the chance to see the pope and receive the Papal Blessing or Apostolic Blessing from the successor of Peter during their visit.

During the Audience, the Pope gives small teachings and reading in Italian but also in English, French, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, and sometimes other languages depending on groups visiting. Before the Audience ends, the Pope will pray together with those attending the Audience, the Our Father in Latin, which is normally printed on the back of the Papal Audience Ticket followed by the imparting of his Apostolic Blessing. The Papal Audience is scheduled to start at 10:30 am. In summer, the Audience is usually held in St. Peter's Square to accommodate the large crowds.

The research analyzed 39 pronouncements of Pope Francis delivered during his weekly General Audiences. These pronouncements represent the General Audiences of the pope during his first year in the papacy. The date of each document runs from March 27, 2013, which is the first General Audience of Pope Francis to March 5, 2014 – Ash Wednesday.

In his General Audience on February 19, 2014, Francis said: “Jesus, in fact, taught his disciples to have the same preferential love that he did for the sick and suffering, and he transmitted to them the ability and duty to continue providing, in his name and after his own

heart, relief, and peace through the special grace of this Sacrament.” (General Audience, February 19, 2014). During this Papal Audience, the Pope elaborated on the mercy of God being experienced during the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Pope expressed here his conviction that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a sacrament where the Church dispenses in the name of Jesus the charity he has for those sick and suffering. He profoundly elaborated here that in approaching a priest to confess, sin is a wonderful gesture of brotherhood, a beautiful gesture of humbly accepting weakness and limitations. It is, even more, a beautiful gesture that a brother in the Church is ready to express forgiveness. A lovely and concrete gesture of unfolding the mercy of God that brings renewal and transformation into the life of real discipleship coupled with the missionary zeal to serve others, the poor, and the needy. In this articulation, the Pope is reminding everybody that the Church must be a community where disciples are preoccupied with celebrating the mercy of God through their preferential love for the sick and suffering. The mercy of God is a mystery that is manifested in the liberating deeds of the Church through the granting of relief and peace that the Sacrament of Reconciliation brings.

God’s liberating and saving action is celebrated only through acts, in being one with those who need liberation, and in liberating them. The prophet Isaiah was pointing this specific mission of Jesus when he said: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord, and a day of vindication by our God, to comfort all who mourn; to place on those who mourn in Zion a diadem instead of ashes, to give them the oil of gladness in place of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit. They will be called oaks of justice, planted by the Lord to show his glory” (61:1-3). In these words of Isaiah, he was prophesying a Christ who will take sides with the poor: the lowly, the brokenhearted, the captives, the prisoners, the mourners, the powerless, the hungry, the deprived, the molested, the sinners, the widow, unemployed, the outcast, the children, the youth, the elderly, the list is endless of the poor. When the Good News is proclaimed in their contexts, a Poor Church for the Poor is convoked. The Gospel gathers the Church from among the poor and the marginalized. The Good News, when it is proclaimed by the poor, becomes a real liberation. The voice of the poor will gather the Church, the *ek-klesia*, the gathering of those set apart and called in a unique and new way.

Communion was defined by Pope Francis as “Common union,” a great family, where every member is helped and sustained by the others” (General Audiences, October 30, 2013). In this same address, the Pope expressed his anthropology: “Who among us has not experienced insecurity, confusion and even doubt on our journey of faith? We have all experienced this, as well. It is part of the journey of faith; it is part of our life. None of these should surprise us, because we are human beings, marked by fragility and limitations. We are all fragile and have limitations.” (General Audience, October 30, 2013). In recognizing the fragility of humankind, the Pope quickly admitted that humanity needed to depend on God through: “Childlike prayer and at the same time, it is important to find the courage and the

humility to open up to others, to ask for help, to ask for a helping hand!” Only when a man/woman humbly recognizes himself or herself that he or she is in need when he/she finds the courage to seek help from others and dependency on God. Humanity’s recognition of being poor, of being needy, will bring out communion, a communion that goes beyond earthly life, beyond death and endures forever. “This union among us goes beyond and continues in the next life; it is spiritual communion born in baptism and not broken by death, but thanks to the risen Christ, is destined to find its fullness in eternal life. There is a deep and indissoluble bond between those who are still pilgrims in this world – us – and those who have crossed the threshold of death and entered eternity. All baptized persons here on earth, the souls in purgatory, and all the blessed who are already in paradise made our great family. This communion between earth and heaven is realized, especially in intercessory prayer” (General Audience, October 30, 2013).

The Pope said: “The language of the Gospel is the language of communion which invites us to get the better of closed-ness and indifference, division, and antagonism” (General Audience, May 22, 2013). If the ultimate end of the proclamation of the Gospel is to establish the Kingdom of God, and if the language of the Gospel is communion, then living in poverty is the only way to establish the Kingdom of God. The truth is, poverty is community sharing, because Christian life, biblically speaking, “is a shared life, that is total dependence on each other, and others depend on us (Acts 4: 32-35)” (John Fuellenbach, 1988). To be poor will make one depend on others. Dependency on others will make one need others and commune with others. As the Pope defined the word “Church,” from the Greek *ekklesia* as convocation, he proclaims that “God impels us to come out of our individualism, from our tendency to close ourselves into ourselves, and he calls us to belong to his family” (General Audience, May 29, 2013). For Francis, “the Church is born from God’s wish to call all people to communion with him, to friendship with him, to share in his own divine life as his sons and daughters” (General Audience, May 29, 2013). However, for the Church to be able to respond to the call, she has to live poor. Responding to the call through living poor is a transformation, the abandonment of sin. The most dangerous result of sin is the desire to accumulate wealth, the feeling that to have more is stability, to get others behind, and to excel in competition, as if, in this world, only the strong and rich will survive. Therefore, to live out unity in the Church and communion in charity means not seeking one’s interests but sharing the suffering and joy of one’s brothers (cf. 1 Cor. 12:26), ready to carry the weight of the poorest and the weakest. “This fraternal solidarity is not a figure of speech, a saying, but an integral part of the communion among Christians” (General Audience, November 6, 2013).

The Pope’s pronouncements during his General Audience on April 24, 2014: “This tells us that the expectation of the Lord’s return is the time of action — we are in the time of action — the time in which we should bring God’s gifts to fruition, not for ourselves but for him, for the Church, for others. The time to seek to increase goodness in the world always; and in particular, in this period of crisis, today, it is important not to turn in on ourselves, burying our own talent, our spiritual, intellectual, and material riches, everything that the Lord has given us, but, rather open ourselves, to be supportive, to be attentive to others” (General Audiences,

April 24, 2013 #6). Pope Francis' idea of the expectation of the Lord's return is that the Church, being the anointed People of God, "sent to bring the good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners" (Is. 61:1) must be vigilant and actively wait for the return of the Lord through her concrete actions of living the life of poverty among the people and for the People of God. Her joy for the coming of the Lord is her theological declaration that she has not replaced Jesus; instead, Jesus is her Good News and her source of joy. Nevertheless, this joy has much to tell the Church. Joyful expectation of the Lord's return requires active participation in the mission and life of the Church. "What then should we do?" (Lk. 3:10), the crowds asked the Baptist.

John's quick reply: "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none... and whoever has should do likewise." Tax collectors also asked him: "Teacher, what should we do?" "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." He also told the soldiers: "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages" (John 3). To summarize what John is telling the Church to do while joyfully awaits the return of the Lord: Live poor to be able to share. Doing this will bring joy and will lead the believer to look up to whom he is waiting for.

This is the Pope admonishing the faithful to realize their calling to gather as a Church, to proclaim the Gospel handed on by the apostles: "The Church's roots are in the teaching of the Apostles, the authentic witnesses of Christ, but she looks to the future, she has the firm consciousness of being sent — sent by Jesus — of being a missionary, bearing the name of Jesus by her prayer, proclaiming it and testifying to it. A Church that is closed in on herself and in the past, a Church that only sees the little rules of behavior, of attitude, is a Church that betrays her own identity; a closed Church betrays her own identity! Then, let us rediscover today all the beauty and responsibility of being the Apostolic Church!... Remember this: the Church is apostolic because we pray — our first duty — and because we proclaim the Gospel by our life and by our words" (General Audiences, October 23, 2013). The *Deus Caritas Est* of Pope Benedict XVI explicitly declared that the Church's most profound nature is expressed in the proclamation of the Word, celebration of the sacraments, and in her ministry of charity (Benedict XVI, 2011).

To conclude this part four (4) is a quote from *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "And may the world of our time, which is searching with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News, not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have received the joy of Christ" (Paul VI, 1975, par. 80). The Church is called to live poor in order to appreciate her being dependent on others and God. The Poor Church is apostolic, sent as a missionary to form disciples who will follow Christ in the service of the poor. The poor apostolic Church brings the Gospel with joy to those afflicted, hungry, rejected, and lonely for them to experience the mercy of God by acting like a merciful mother to her children. This Church is called continuously to renewal, which has the most necessary task: pray and serve the poor and the needy.

Part 5: Evangelii Gaudium

After discussing the Aparecida Document, Pastoral Letters, Homilies and General Audiences, this study is now ready to elaborate Pope Francis' Poor Church for the Poor as articulated in the Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel, the first Apostolic Exhortation of the newly elected pope to Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World.

Evangelii Gaudium is a document of five chapters, discussing the Church's concerns from the missionary, communal, and social dimensions of evangelization. This document is a great material from where we derive the images of the Church that sprang up from the deep thoughts of the Holy Father. The images of the Church that emerged from the one 188 pages of the Evangelii Gaudium are a true reservoir of the pictures of the Church from which anyone who is in search of an authentic encounter with the Historical Jesus and the Christ of faith could pattern. The exhaustive review of the pages of the Evangelii Gaudium resulted in the discovery of a Poor Church for the Poor, which affirms those discovered from Aparecida Document, homilies, general audiences, and the two pastoral letters reviewed.

The goal of Evangelization is salvation. It is to bring Christ to those who have never experienced him and to those who have not fully experienced him yet. It is to bring life – abundant life (Jn. 10:10). In contemporary Filipino understanding of salvation, such term is translated as “*kaginhawaan*.” A Filipino term with its root word “*ginhawa*,” which could mean freedom from anything oppressive, hard, and suffering. This is the goal of evangelization – to bring abundant life, “*maginhawang buhay*” (De Mesa, 2003). Who needs *kaginhawaan*? Who needs salvation? Who is need of the Good News? Those who need salvation are those who are not whole, those who are lacking – the poor. De Mesa and Wostyn pointed out that God as God of salvation desires human well-being, integrity and joy. They argued that God could not be the provider of suffering (De Mesa & Wostyn, 1993). God wills abundant life (Jn. 10:10). Abundant life is a life far from suffering.

Salvation came to us from the “YES” uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire (Lk. 1:38). The savior was born in a manger (Lk. 2:12). He was presented in the temple along with two turtledoves the offering made by those who cannot afford a lamb (Lk. 2:23). He was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own (Lk. 2:51-52). The redemption of humankind as a story of God's mercy and compassion is marked by the presence of the poor. The Biblical texts above are the same texts quoted by Pope Francis in articulating his Evangelii Gaudium. This apostolic exhortation, worded in utmost simplicity, can be grasped easily. The research, therefore, immediately understood that the Pope wanted to exhort the faithful of the universal Church to be loyal to the Sacred Scripture in living out their Christianity. Being faithful to the Sacred Scripture is Christianity that is recognizing the mercy and compassion of God, as revealed in the Bible.

Pope Francis, through the Evangelii Gaudium, exhorts the faithful to live out their calling as Poor Church for the Poor: “For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a

theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one” (Evangelii Gaudium, 197). Option for the poor is a constitutive element of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the essence of the Good News proclaimed to the poor, that they are given the hope of liberation from poverty. To side with the poor and help them attain their liberation is a theological category rather than cultural when Moses opted for the Hebrew and not the Egyptian, the weak and not the strong. Moses had to flee the comforts of Egypt and go to live in the deserts of Midian. The empowerment of the poor is a theological category rather than sociological because the poor are not taken only as recipients and objects of salvation but as agents and subjects of evangelization. Poor Church for the Poor is a theological category rather than philosophical and political because the Church learns to be poor from the poor, and it is poor, which leads the Church and shows her way how to be poor (Pabillo, 2005).

Francis said: “This is why I want a Poor Church for the Poor” (Evangelii Gaudium, 199). The words are very exact. The pope is very exact and direct. “The Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness” (Evangelii Gaudium, 198). Will these words weaken or compromise the values of universality and unity that characterize the preaching of the Gospel? Not at all. The Gospel is for everyone. All the faithful, as a community of disciples, must understand in this context that to be a real follower of Christ is to imitate Christ. Christ lived in poverty and opted for the poor. The rich people must understand that this poor Church for the poor of Pope Francis is a call for them to unite themselves with the poor and work with them for their liberation. Donal Dorr’s (2011) quotation from O’Boyle “the functional community depends on charity or caring to meet the needs of the poor, gratuitousness that makes possible social justice that combines commutative, distributive, and contributive justice.” Pope Francis is trying to tell everyone that communion is best manifested in self-giving, merciful-attitude, and solidarity with the down-trodden.

The very first apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, the Joy of the Gospel, is an expression of his own salvation experience. For him, to receive the good news is to be liberated from the bondage of sin, which causes life’s nothingness and meaninglessness. Sin destroys the inner purity of the human person and becomes preoccupied with its interests and concerns that gradually becomes a human person who does not recognize others anymore. The Evangelii Gaudium is the invitation of the Pope for everybody to tirelessly seek the mercy of God to be truly happy and experience the joy that the Good News of salvation brings. It is an invitation for renewal and transformation.

Together with this transformation is the challenge for the Church to become a community of missionary-disciples that would bring and show mercy to the people especially to the poor and needy, “the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy” (Evangelii Gaudium #24). “St. Thomas explains that, as far as external works are concerned, mercy is the greatest of all virtues: ‘In itself, mercy is the greatest of the virtues, since all the others revolve around it and more than this, it makes up for their deficiencies.

This is particular to the superior virtue, and as such, it is proper to God to have mercy, through which his omnipotence is manifested to the greatest degree” (Evangelii Gaudium #37).

The Church is challenged to become an evangelizing community by living the lives of the people, uniting them, taking their human life as her life, and wearing in its flesh the suffering of Christ in others. She is challenged to prioritize evangelization than her self-preservation. She is challenged to formulate pastoral programs that are more inclusive and open. She is challenged to focus all these transformations in her mandate of reaching out to everyone. The challenge to prioritize evangelization than Church’s self-preservation is summoning the Church to open its door. The Church has to go forth to everyone without exception: But to whom should she go first?– To the poor and the sick, to the usually despised and overlooked, to those who cannot repay” (Lk. 14:14).

Conclusion

In His proclamation of the Kingdom of God, Jesus often spoke with great concern for the poor: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.” (Luke 6: 20-22) The text implies that the poor are the qualified heir of the kingdom of God before anybody else. Maybe, the most surprising statement made by Jesus with the poor is the text from the Gospel of Matthew: “I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill, and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Mt. 25:35-36). These texts are profoundly making clear to everybody that Jesus’ mysterious presence is in the poor: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt. 25: 40). It is very pleasing, then, to Jesus for the Church to desire to become poor to be able to serve the poor.

Pope Francis’ declaration: “I want a Poor Church for the Poor” (Gaeta, 2013) is a call for all the people of God to re-examine the root causes and re-ordering of values and priorities. The Church today, therefore, as the people gathered by God, must seriously re-examine and re-order her values by going back to the basics. It is to be immersed into the experiences of Israel of the Old Testament and the early Christians of the New Testament. Being immersed in their lives shall lead the Church in the realization that poverty is not in accord with God’s plan, as seen in many parts of the Sacred Scriptures. Israel, as promised by God, shall enjoy wealth and prosperity. Israel shall be accorded a land of flowing milk and honey. The Church, as a community of disciples, must imitate Jesus to be at the forefront in the fight against poverty because poverty has no place in the kingdom of God.

The life of the early Christians was marked by how they were one and loved each other. Learning from their life as provided in the Book of Acts, the Church would realize that their way of life is the only way out of poverty. To live as a poor Church is to live in solidarity

with the poor. To live among the poor is an opportunity to empower the poor to work out together their liberation from poverty.

The Church as a Mystery is a Poor Church for the poor revealing Jesus' preferential option for the poor. A poor Church manifests Jesus' poverty. The mysterious presence of Jesus is in the poor.

The success of the Church's mission will always depend on always remembering that the end of her mission is not the Church itself but Christ and the salvation of the world. Again, there is a need to re-emphasize here that salvation is integral human development or integral human promotion.

Just as Christ carried out the work of salvation, he was sent to fulfill in poverty and suffering, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to proclaim the fruits of salvation to men. Salvation is the working of the mercy of God. The Church's discipleship requires her to live the poverty of her master for her to have the power to bring men and women together to a life of communion. The poverty of the members of the Church teaches them to recognize they need each other. Their need for each other brings them closer together as one. Their poverty also teaches them to depend on God. Their dependency on God brings them nearer to God. Their nearness to God will lead to their nearness to each other. The poverty of the Church is also her power to evangelize. The poor, when they receive the Good News, they do not possess it. They want it shared with others. A poor Church who depends solely on the mercy of God is an effective missionary who will tell the world of God's mercy and love. Her manner shall be like a merciful mother who had internalized the mercy of God so she could effectively tell others about this mercy so that the poor will also tell others about this mercy. This will be the transformed life of the Church. A poor Church for the poor is Church transformed in the life of Jesus.

Closing Statement: Reiterating the Definition of a "Poor Church for the Poor"

As a closing statement, this research would reiterate its formulated definition of a Poor Church for the Poor as discovered from this study: a Church that promotes communion and dialogue, advocates Missionary-Discipleship, acting like a merciful mother to her children and in constant renewal to conform her nature to that of the savior, and become a sign of the kingdom as envisioned by the Lord Jesus Christ.

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