

**Monthly reflection to deepen our eco-conversion
The Spark of Environmental Activism**

My ecological conversion did not happen as a single event. It initially emerged in the context of the two crucial events of environmental activism in the Diocese of Malaybalay. The first was in July 1987 when, as a pre-college seminarian, I witnessed the poor parishioners of San Fernando (Bukidnon), staging a picket against logging companies that operated in their watershed. Their protest had successfully pressured the government to put the whole province of Bukidnon under a logging moratorium in 1990 but one of our diocesan priests, Nery Lito Satur, was brutally killed on October 14, 1991 for zealously implementing this order.

The second happened in November 1999, a few months before my presbyteral ordination, when I witnessed a coalition of civil society groups that strategically formed human barricades to block the logging trucks from passing along the highways of Bukidnon. Fortunately, the legal case between the logging company and the civil society barricaders reached the Supreme Court, which finally ruled in favor of the protesters.

With hindsight, I realize that my experience of environmental activism has crucially shaped my vocation and pushed my priestly ministry to embrace an inclusive community: to be a padre cura (i.e., a priest who cares) for the poor and the earth. These events also made me realize that priests are called to care not only for the community of human persons (cura personalis) but also for the larger Earth community (cura terrae).

In the Philippines, there is an ongoing movement not only to re-root our Basic Ecclesial Communities back to the fundamental context of human communities but also to enlarge them by becoming basic ecological communities. It is clear to us that our appropriation of an ecological perspective of community does not seek to abandon the existing struggles for human liberation but rather to complete them.

In the Philippine experience, the holistic struggle for liberation has strategically originated from the rural grassroots whose daily survival entirely depends on the providence of nature. Thus, in the spirit of synodality, it is imperative for theologians to live as close as possible by their side in order to be able “to hear their heartbeat” and to accompany them in their journey towards the fullness of life.

My pastoral engagements with the poor reveal that the grassroots communities from the rural areas have a distinctive closeness to nature, which allows them to have a more developed mystical capacity to hear the “cry of the Earth.” In the context of today’s climate crisis, their cry for ecological justice is their way of amplifying the unheard voices of countless ecological victims. Thus, from an ecological perspective, listening to the cry of the poor and to the groaning of the Earth are logically inseparable.

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On Wednesday afternoon, a number of students offered tech tips and answered questions at the Newman Elders' Group monthly gathering.



Thursday night, 15 candidates were confirmed by Bishop Barber at Newman. Supported by our community and filled with the Holy Spirit the newly confirmed embark now on their faith journey as full members of the Church.

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| 1. Chang-min Kung | 9. Clarisa Consuelo Del Villar |
| 2. Thomas Della Vigna | 10. Clarissa Limon |
| 3. Shane Doherty | 11. Gaberiela Rodriguez Sahagon |
| 4. Adam Vincent Hernandez | 12. Iliana Gonzalez |
| 5. Adrian Portillo | 13. Julian Emilliano Correa |
| 6. Anita B. | 14. Mayra Crystal Lua Reyes |
| 7. Arian De La Torre | 15. Nathalia Morales |
| 8. Avigail Reyes Remias | |