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Naindayawan-A-Rambak-Ti-Gimong: An Inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to elevate the discourse on the imperative of Liturgical Inculturation and propose general suggestions on how to shape a more relevant and meaningful Ilocano celebration of the Eucharist. It emphasizes Vatican II's liturgical reform while maintaining fidelity to the nature of the culture – the Ilocano culture. The study was conducted with the parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF) in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya, shedding light on the inquiry: “Is the liturgical rite prescribed by the Catholic Church still meaningful and relevant among Ilocanos at present, particularly the parishioners of OLF?”

The results of the study revealed that the Eucharist holds an ambivalent significance for many Ilocanos, particularly the parishioners of OLF. Undoubtedly, Ilocanos regard the Eucharist as the center – the source and summit – of their Christian life. However, the Ilocano Catholics of OLF lack a proper understanding of how the Eucharist operates or

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functions in their lives. Furthermore, many Ilocanos display ignorance or a lack of proper understanding about the Eucharist. Additionally, many Ilocano Catholics tend to separate the Eucharist from their daily lives. Given these alarming situations, liturgical inculturation becomes relevant at this juncture. The full, conscious, active, and fruitful participation of Ilocanos in the Eucharist can be achieved through a mutual integration of the rite prescribed by the Church and their native culture. This approach respects the process of integration, allowing both the Eucharist and Ilocano culture to evolve through mutual insertion and absorption while preserving their identities. Thus, the Eucharist, ritually expressed in a Roman form, is assimilated and reformulated in a language and form that Ilocanos can understand and actively participate in. It is here that genuine integration takes place.

Keywords: *inculturation, contextualization, dynamic equivalence, worship, liturgy, Ilocanos, Catholic liturgy*

1. Introduction

The sixteenth century was a time of tremendous reform. Martin Luther criticized the Church's use of indulgences, the exaggerated cult of saints, and a liturgical practice that had become pompous and removed from the people. His treatises exposed three aspects of the Church's slavery: the denial of the chalice of the laity, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the doctrine of the sacrificial character of the Mass. As Power explained, during the Middle Ages, theological reflections on the Eucharist did not increase people's participation. People were still reluctant to receive communion, and Mass gradually became a celebration dominated by the priest. Private Masses abounded, celebrated for intentions paid for by the people, and it was common to find several Masses going on at the same time at different altars in one church. This was the situation that greeted Martin Luther.

He saw the way Mass was celebrated as superstition and attacked the practice of Mass stipends and private Masses (Power 1987).

Moreover, Luther called for a vernacular liturgy and emphasized the priesthood of the baptized, hence giving rise to the prominence of public theology and worship. The absence of one of the pillars – ritual and action (experience and context) – had caused serious problems in Catholics’ understanding and experience of the Eucharist. In fact, the world now is declaring the “liturgical disinterestedness” (Power 1987). This “liturgical phenomenon” was brought by liturgical estrangement/alienation, elitism/exclusivity, and idealism.

The Second Vatican Council called the Eucharist as the “true center of the Sacred Liturgy and indeed of the whole Christian life” (Flannery 1975). Indeed, it is a beautiful statement but has many challenges. It can be justified theologically, but the facts of the matter are quite otherwise. Most of the Christian world – and the Catholic world as well – does not internally display the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life. Christians do not celebrate the Eucharist regularly and do not see it as providing much direction for understanding their lives. Some Church leaders indict those who do not celebrate regularly as having little fervor. More likely, they simply demonstrate that the celebration provides no essential link between Liturgy and their lives. Their faith and belief in Christ is such that the Eucharistic celebration plays but a minor role (Bernier 1993). It should be noted that on another level, official Church policy itself does not give primary emphasis to making the Eucharist accessible. More importance is placed on maintaining an elite, all-male priesthood than on ordaining a sufficient number of people to remain a Eucharistic Church.

Whatever their agenda for the Eucharistic sacrifice, Ilocano Catholics still highly regard the Eucharist – a crest and crowning glory of their faith. Churches are still crowded on Sundays and holy days of obligations, as well as on some days of Lent, particularly during Holy Week. However, despite the solemn statements about the Eucharist, this has not been demonstrated in the life and practice of Filipino Christian Catholics. Looking at the life of the Catholics, even those

who regularly attend the weekly Mass lack a proper understanding of the Eucharist. Some participate only as spectators, merely watching the priest, commentators, and readers doing their own thing. Others are solitary worshippers, unmindful of anything besides their private practice of devotion. Catholics are often quite vague or confused about the Mass. The Eucharist itself became another devotion.

With this pressing problem, the researcher wishes to address the primary question: *Is the Liturgical rite of the Eucharist prescribed by the Catholic Church still meaningful and relevant among Ilocanos?* This research highlights the possibility of realizing the Second Vatican Council's agenda of liturgical reform yet maintaining fidelity to a native culture – the Ilocano. The historical hermeneutical method is a basic tool to arrive at the findings and desired conclusions. This method is based on descriptive and expository analysis of data, which is suitable to rediscover Vatican II's liturgical agenda and can be a promising and powerful approach as we try to reflect on how Ilocano people can have a full, conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the Eucharist.

2. Findings and Discussion

2.1. The Ilocanos and the Eucharist

This section wishes to pay attention to the Ilocanos' understanding and practice of the Eucharist – What is the Eucharist for the Ilocanos? This is vital for the realization of the objectives of this study – to reappropriate the Eucharist in the life of the Ilocanos at the present.

Ilocano Christianity, like any other lowland Filipino Christianity has been influenced greatly by the friar colonizers. Agoncillo (1990) testifies:

The friars control all the fundamental forces of society in the Philippines. They control the educational system, for they own the University of Sto. Tomas, and are the local inspectors of every primary school. They control the minds

of the people because in a dominantly catholic country, the parish sectors can utilize the pulpit and confessionals to publicly or secretly influence the people.

This situation in the Philippines during the Spanish regime is called *la soberania monacal* (monastic supremacy) or *freilocracia* (friarocracy) because the Spanish friars or monastic orders ruled supreme. Filipino Christianity received its doctrines, teachings, and even beliefs from these colonizers. As the friar colonizers implanted and embarked the seed of Christianity in the Filipinos’ mind with their guarantee of holiness, Filipinos also experienced a growing cultural identity crisis. Filipinos were asked to embrace a foreign culture and turn away from their native culture. This is called the Westernization of the Filipinos. As a result, this Westernization of the Filipinos had also influenced the Filipinos’ “know-what” and “know-how” of the Eucharist.

To support these claims as a case in point, the tables below will show a better view of the Ilocano understanding of the Eucharist, especially the parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya.²

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Regarding the Meaning of the Eucharist/Mass Among the Ilocano Catholics in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya.

What is for you the Eucharist/Mass?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
a. It is a meal in memory of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection.	93	84.54%	3.5

² Details of this discussion particularly the empirical data were taken from the results of floating questionnaires from the community of the researcher – Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya. It was administered among 50 parishioners of our Lady of Fatima Parish, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya and 150 third- and fourth-year high school students of our Lady of Fatima High School last December of 2019. The researcher personally administered the data gathering and results were interpreted by a statistician from Saint Louis University.

b. It is an opportunity to celebrate as a family.	79	71.81%	6
c. It is a great moment to ask God forgiveness and blessings.	97	88.18%	1
d. It is a great sacrifice of thanksgiving.	95	86.36%	2
e. It is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared by Christ to those who love Him.	90	81.82%	5
f. It is the central celebration of the Church meant to build the Body of Christ.	93	84.54%	3.5

The Holy Mass is treated among the Ilocanos of Villaverde as the most popular and significant celebration of their faith. The majority of them treat the Eucharist as the primary source of strength and energy to face the daily challenges. Given their poverty and struggles as people, the masses become their stronghold and inspiration. Indeed, it is the summit and source of their Christian life. Further, the Eucharist becomes an opportunity to be with God. Since most of the Ilocanos in Villaverde are untiring field/farm workers, they see the celebration of the Eucharist as an occasion to find rest in the source of their strength – God, whereby being with God becomes a relief with them in their day-to-day routine. Hence, without this occasion, many of them feel emptiness in life. For a better understanding of the importance of the Eucharist to the Ilocanos, see Table 2 below:

Table 2. Frequency Distribution Regarding the Importance of the Eucharist/Mass in the Life of the Respondents in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya as a Student and a Catholic

What is the importance of the Eucharist to your life as a student and a Catholic?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
a. I feel empty if I did not celebrate the Eucharist.	88	80.0 %	3
b. It is my primary source of strength and energy to face the daily challenges in life.	102	92.73%	1

c. My week will not be complete if I miss participating in at least one celebration.	75	68.18%	5
d. Through the Mass, I am receiving the favors I am asking from God.	87	79.09%	4
e. It provides me an opportunity to enter in a communion with God.	94	85.45%	2

Although there are many beautiful and sweet words that the Ilocano Catholics in Villaverde claim about the Eucharist, some alarming realities that affect their full and active participation in the Eucharist must also be considered. In the table below, an intriguing revelation was displayed. While it is true that they consider the Eucharist as the source of their Christian life, they do not know the primary factors affecting their significant experience with the Eucharist. While a significant number of people claim that participating in the celebration is meaningful either because it is done in their native dialect, they are involved in the event, or they find inspiration in the priest’s homily, the majority simply respond with “No comment.” Analyzing this powerful statement, this can mean, “I do not know.”

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Significant Experiences by the Respondents with the Ilocano Eucharist.

What are some of the significant experiences?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Clear understanding and active participation of the celebration because it is done in our native dialect or language.	23	20.91%	2
2. Participation to the celebration through involvement in Church’s ministry.	19	17.27%	3

3. When the priest has a good homily.	17	15.45%	4
4. It helps me to become better.	12	10.91%	5
5. Unity of the Christians.	11	10.00%	6
6. Fidelity and sincerity as a Christian is manifested.	2	1.82 %	7
7. No comment	26	23.64%	1
TOTAL	110	100%	

These prevalent problems in the Ilocano understanding of the Eucharist can be possible for the following reasons: First, until this time, many Ilocanos display ignorance or lack of proper understanding about the Eucharist. On one hand, this may be due to the disinterestedness of many of the youth in their native or local dialect. Many opt to give importance to the medium of instruction (Tagalog and English). Even in Ilocano text communication, Tagalog is always the medium. That’s why many would complain that they cannot understand Ilocano; thus, it affects their participation. And since the Mass is often crowded due to the lack of priests, church workers,³ and facilities, the crowd will eventually not participate in the celebration. Thus, many become spectators or merely watch the priest, commentators, and readers doing their thing. Others are solitary worshippers, unaware of anything besides their own private devotions (saying the novena and praying the rosary while the Mass is going on).

On the other hand, the practice of reductionism⁴ can also be a reason for this lack of proper understanding. For instance, in the Eucharist, many Ilocano churchgoers think that God, in Christ, is encountered only during the consecration. This is why many Ilocanos find it acceptable to arrive late as long as they can participate in the

³ In my local community alone, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya, there are approximately close to 10,000 Catholics who are being catered by one priest and few volunteers.

⁴ *Reductionism* is the tendency to reduce ideas into things that can represent them, often in a limited way. In the Eucharist, it is a tendency to give importance to one part or symbol whereby it becomes the totality of the Eucharist.

consecration. Furthermore, they feel comfortable leaving the church early, specifically after the communion. In that manner, God among the Ilocanos is met through an isolated element – the host. However, one must remember that the test of the fruitfulness of the Eucharistic celebration lies in what happens after the celebration. Bishop Bacani insisted, “Do the people who have acted as Church during the celebration still act as one Church outside the church building? The Second Vatican Council insists that the Eucharistic celebration to be full and sincere ought to lead, on the one hand, to the various works of charity and mutual help and, on the other hand, to missionary activity and various forms of Christian witness” (Bacani 1987). The table below gives insight into these problems:

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Problems/Difficulties Encountered in Understanding & Celebration of the Ilocano Eucharist.

Problems/Difficulties Encountered in understanding and celebrating the Ilocano Eucharist?	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1. Deep Ilocano words.	32	29.09%	1
2. Poor participation and concentration because I can hardly understand.	30	27.27%	2
3. Our Church cannot accommodate all parishioners.	25	22.73%	3
4. Poor understanding of the words because the priest is a foreigner.	18	16.36%	4
5. Ilocano and English are used at the same time leading to confusion of people.	10	9.09%	5
6. Ilocano Mass is not usually conducted.	4	3.64%	6
7. Boredom.	1	0.91%	7

Second, many Ilocano Catholic Christians still lack a sufficient understanding of how the Eucharist operates. Some attend merely out of a sense of obligation to avoid mortal sin or to comply with parental wishes. Others attend out of habit, social conformity, to be with their circle of friends, or even to showcase their new clothes. Many Ilocanos, hence, perceive the Eucharist as a dispenser of divine goods or products that can be delivered as soon as one requests it. Tad Guzie

claims that the sacraments (inclusive of the Eucharist) are rhythms that make life human (Wostyn 2004). Guzie proposes that it is not enough to go about our daily and routine celebrations. If one desires to be human, he/she must reflect on those actions and celebrations. Bishop Teodoro Bacani claims, “When we strive to make the Eucharist the summit of our Christian life, we will experience it as the source of that life. When we open our lives generously to the Lord in self-giving, the incomparable grace of self-giving will fill us” (Bacani 1987).

Third, just like many Filipino Catholics, Ilocano Catholics separate the Mass from their daily lives. This is the most serious Eucharist problem that Ilocanos should consider. There is always a gap between the faith we profess in the celebration and the life we proclaim outside the celebration. Many Filipinos (including the Ilocanos), hence, see the Eucharist as a celebration without or with little impact on their daily moral activities, especially any form of social action for poor people with low incomes (ECCCE 365). The Eucharist is a celebration of life.

As such, it is not to be detached from life, especially from the life of the people – the Church. Bishop Bacani beautifully remarks:

And if indeed the Eucharist is seen as divorced and isolated from the rest of our week and our everyday lives, it is impossible to experience it as the apex of our Christian lives. However, if it is regarded as being all of one piece with the rest of our lives – our joys, sufferings, toil and recreation, successes and failures, etc. – and as an expression of our longing to meet the Lord and to offer Him our whole lives, then despite its simplicity and ordinariness it can be perceived meaningfully as the summit of our lives as Christians. (Bacani 1987)

2.2. Ilocano Inculturation of the Eucharist

With these alarming situations about the Ilocano Eucharist, an attempt must be made to translate the demand of incarnating the Church’s worship in Ilocano. This is so to allow the Eucharist to be transparent to the worshipping community. It aims to answer the need among Ilocanos not only for cultural identity but also for the

promotion of traditional religious values that have kindled the faith of the Ilocanos. It tries to capture the message of the Eucharistic celebration in the ritual and language of the native people – the Ilocanos.

Inculturation during the last few years has gained remarkable popularity. It has become a byword in Theology, Missiology, Christology, and Liturgical Studies (Antonio 1995, 10). The importance of this paradigm is that it brings integration between the two poles of theology: the Judaeo-Christian tradition and human cultural experiences. One cannot do Theology with just one pole without considering the other (De Mesa 1987). Resultantly, gospel message become meaningful, and at the same time, they challenge and affirm a certain cultural experience. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, in its fidelity to the renewal process of the Second Vatican Council, conceived that the heart of Liturgical Renewal is the restoration of people’s appreciation of the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life.

The Fourth National Eucharistic Congress in 1987 urged the faithful to return the Eucharist to its rightful place – “at the center of our private, ecclesial and societal lives and not at its fringes, where it is considered as a mere personal devotion or obligation or merely as means of gaining favor” (ECCCE 365). In doing so, the Church cannot ignore the cultural traditions of the people who constitute it. It has to respect the indigenous cultures of people lest they be alienated from it. For the Church, as the social prolongation of Christ in space and time, it has to bind itself to the social and cultural conditions of the people, Antonio stresses. This means that the local Church has to transform her language, structures and rituals according to the ways of the people who make it up as a contribution to the wider ecclesial communion. For faith becomes universal only when it is assimilated and expressed in the particular symbols, thought and language patterns of the peoples (Chupungco 1976).

2.2.1. The Imperatives of Culture in Inculturation

In the task of liturgical inculturation of the Eucharist, the principle that has been firmly established is the necessity of taking

seriously the culture of every local Church. Among others, it is important to consider the issues of worldview, cultural identity (values and language) and the struggle for communal liberation. Indeed, these dimensions constitute the most essential aspects of being a person or community.

Earlier, we took note that Ilocanos, even before the coming of Christianity, had been enjoying already a so-called Ilocano religiosity. Pre-colonial Ilocanos had already believed in a Supreme Being. This Supreme Being, whom they call *Kabunian* is seen as the creator of the universe. Though the name given to Him remains controversial, to an Ilocano mind, this Supreme Being is all-wise and reigns supreme in His kingdom, “*Langit*” in the sky above. The early Ilocanos positively believed in the life hereafter. They may not have the essence of the Christian concept, but they also entertain ideas of heaven. “*Langit*” is from the beginning an exclusive term for the sky before it came to mean heaven. Furthermore, Ilocanos believed that under this Supreme Being are lesser or inferior spirits or gods (*anitos or saan-nga-katataoan*), who had also power over nature and humanity (Andres 2003). Through these realities, it is proven undoubtedly that Ilocanos are known and marked by their deep religiosity. Hence, this religious belief and view of the Ilocanos must be taken into account in the inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano. Through the Eucharist, Ilocanos are given the opportunity to have a joyful encounter of God in the community through the memory of Jesus. Indeed, the Eucharist becomes an avenue for the Ilocanos to bring God back to His rightful place – the core of every Ilocano heart. In this manner, the Eucharist is a celebration that restores an Ilocano community centered in God.

What makes the Eucharist a holy celebration is not the ritual neither the day when it is celebrated or the presider but, the coming together of people commemorating the love of God to His people through Jesus’ body and blood. Hence, in the inculturation of the Eucharist in Ilocano, the basics⁵ of the Eucharist must be given

⁵ I take the word *basics* to mean the primary reason or essence of a reality. In the Eucharist it is taken to mean as the primary reason why people come together and celebrate.

emphasis – that people gather together because of God Himself (*naindiosan*).

In inculturating the Eucharist in Ilocano, special attention must be given also to the Ilocano language – the first stage of inculturation. Iloco is a flamboyant language. It makes use of a lot of metaphors and is often very ornate. Circumlocutions and elaborate poesy are not uncommon. Even in casual conversation, the Ilocano ordinarily uses the third person or the more polite second person plural. When he/she communicates, he/she prefers the “indirect style” as a sign of respect. Further, a careful study of Iloco language reveals structures and expressions that can reveal the social characteristics of a people. In view of this, inculturation of the Eucharist in Iloco must capitalize the richness of Ilocano language. Thus, the inculturation of the Eucharist in Iloco must therefore consider the flamboyancy of the Ilocano language (poetic expressions and metaphors must be considered) (Nydegger and Nydegger 1966). Further, the Ilocano polite expression of using the second person plural must replace the usual first person plural expression in the Ilocano Eucharistic rite, especially in the Lord’s Prayer and Eucharistic prayer. Ilocano style of communication is subtle, rich, and effective. The Eucharist, hence, becomes a way for the Ilocanos to express the genuineness of their “*nakem*” (*loob*). This is the heart and essence of Ilocano communication. In Ilocano communication, it is a way of expressing his/her own being. This is an aspect which could be an important and unique contribution of the Ilocano in inculturating the Eucharist. Honed and developed, it could give a new depth to the Ilocano Eucharist.

After having understood the Ilocano worldview and language, it is essential to attend to the Ilocano’s concept of “*nakem*” (inner self). “*Nakem*” is what makes the person who he/she is; it is the core of his or her personhood and it is where the true worth of the person lies. “*Nakem*” is a relational concept. When one does something good to another, he is referred to as having a *naimbag-a-nakem* (good willed, but it may also mean kindness, generosity, benevolence or helpfulness). The recipient is understood to have *utang-a-naimbag-a-nakem*, which, as far as the Ilocano is concerned, can never be repaid. Given the richness of the term, it should be possible to take this as a point of departure in re-expressing, shaping, or creating a new Ilocano

rite of the Eucharist. The Eucharist may be expressed as the anamnesis of Jesus, the exemplar of God's *naimbag-a-nakem*. Further, recognizing the Ilocanos' *utang-a-naimbag-a-nakem* to God, through the Eucharistic celebration, they are being empowered (epiclesis) by Jesus as the exemplar of God's *naimbag-a-nakem* to reach out to their fellow persons – to be agents of God's graciousness and goodness. When Christ is remembered as the exemplar of this quality, it is enriched by the culture itself. Hence, it is proposed that the Ilocano Eucharist must incorporate the Ilocano value on *naimbag a nakem*, *dayaw* and *bain* in the penitential rite and Eucharistic prayer.

In the process of inculturating the Eucharist in Ilocano, it is also important to consider the prevailing situation of poverty, oppression, sin, inequality, graft and corruption, and the need to liberate the Ilocanos from their colonial mentality and other negative attitudes. In this problem, the method of contextualization as a serious consideration can be a promising approach. Henceforth, the Eucharist in its over-all implication must embody this Ilocano craving for human liberation.

Contextualization of the Eucharist would require a study of the people's fundamental symbolic modes of perceiving and experiencing reality as first step. In this process, attention should be given to bodily expressions, keywords, images, stories, and myths because they are constitutive of the people's identity and world of meaning. These are the elements of culture which need to be considered in the dialogue and should be transformed by the Gospel message in order to merit integration into the Eucharist. Moreover, we also need to consider the Ilocano struggle for liberation from the oppressive human situation which is wedded to their search for true identity as Christian Filipino Ilocanos. The Ilocano of today is still suffering from the stigma of the colonial experience. Colonization had led, among other things, to the depreciation of the Ilocano native culture and consequently of the people's dignity. A contextualized liturgy of the Eucharist should facilitate the Ilocanos' retrieval of their "*dayaw*" or *tan-ok* (dignity) as human beings and hasten the process of liberation from the captivity of low self-esteem and of the colonial mentality (anything that is native or local is considered inferior to what is foreign).

Taking culture seriously does not, however, mean that we absolutize culture so that everything in it is arbitrarily accepted as good. Certainly, there are elements which need to be purified, or modified as the Ilocano culture dialogues with the Gospel. In contextualization, the Gospel challenges, enriches, and transforms the culture from within. We consider here, for instance, the Ilocano value of *bain* (shame), which is closely connected with personal *dayaw* (dignity). In its encounter with the Gospel message, it can be transformed in a way that the Ilocano experiences *bain* because of his/her sins. Hence, the celebration of the Eucharist as joyful encounter with God in the memory of Jesus becomes an opportunity for the Ilocano to restore the dignity that had been lost due to sinfulness (*naindayawan-a-gimong*) – an opportunity to restore one’s *dayaw* as a child of God.

With the abovementioned findings, one can argue therefore, that the Eucharist becomes meaningful and relevant in and through the Ilocano “world of meanings.” In and through the Ilocano culture, the Eucharist is situated in its context and mediated by it. It is in this situation that the Ilocano culture contributes to the meaningfulness of the Eucharist. The next section, hence, tries to apply this mutual interaction between the Ilocano culture and the Eucharist.

2.2.2. *Ilocano Inculturation of the Eucharist*

Liturgical inculturation is a theological and pastoral imperative arising from the principle of incarnation. If the word of God became a Jew, the Church in the Philippines must become Filipino. This is the principle that must underlie theological reflection, catechesis, and sacramental life of the Church in the Philippines. The refusal for inculturation results in the denial of the universality of salvation (Chupungco 1976).

But liturgical inculturation also has its imperatives or principles. Some of these require absolute fidelity because of their relation to the basic content of divine revelation. Others have a certain fluidity and tentativeness. The Church, like humans and their culture, is never static; the Church is forever in the process of transition from one phase of existence to another. That is why attempts at liturgical

renewal in general and inculturation in particular can never be final. One must take them for what they are – attempts.

2.3. Dynamic Equivalence Model

It is in this challenge that the study wishes to capture the message of the Eucharistic celebration in the ritual and language of the Ilocanos. It is clear in the earlier discussions on the Eucharist that it is a celebration in memory of Christ's Passover. Hence, the community gather together to celebrate that commemoration. Among the Ilocanos, the Eucharist is treated as the epitome of their Christian life. If there is a heart and crowning glory of the Ilocano Christians' faith, that is the Eucharist. The popularity of the Eucharist can be seen in the Ilocanos' way of living. However, the Ilocanos until this time still do not have a clear perception, celebration, and practice of the Eucharist. This situation had motivated the researcher to make an attempt to propose for the dynamic equivalence of the Eucharistic celebration into Ilocano. Of course, "*Misa a Sangkagimongan*" (Ilocano Mass) already exists. But the "*Misa a Sangkagimongan*" is a faithful translation of the Roman Eucharistic rite. The word "*misa*" (a Spanish word) as defined by Fr. George Gelade, CICM, in his *Ilokano-English Dictionary* strictly means a ritual, or simply, a celebration. Hence, faithfulness to the "*Misa*" as a foreign word for the Ilocanos does not bring a full grasp of what Eucharist means and, at the same time, it continues to alienate the Ilocanos from their native culture. Furthermore, though in the existing Ilocano Eucharistic rite, the word "*gimong*" (community) is already mentioned, a problem can be seen. The word "*gimong*" is connected with the prefix "*sangka*" (always, often, entire, or whole). Hence, saying that the Eucharist is "*sangkagimongan*" is tantamount to saying it is a celebration of all people. Thus, it goes back once more into the monolithic and uniform celebration – the universal Church through uniformity.

This attempt for the inculturation of the Eucharistic celebration into Ilocano will maintain the true spirit of the Eucharistic Liturgy, that is, a communal celebration in memorial of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. At the same time, it also acknowledges the locus of liturgical renewal that is the native culture of the Ilocanos.

“*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” (Celebration of the people) is an attempt to find an equivalence of the “*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*” in the Iloco context. “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” can be described as a methodological adaptation of Chupungco’s “*Misa*.” It translates the meaning of the Eucharistic celebration conveyed by Anscar Chupungco in his “*Misa*” into Ilocano dialect and expressions. Hence, the basic structures, forms, and principles of the “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” were adapted from the “*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*.” In fact, Anscar Chupungco had been encouraging other Filipino Christians to translate the “*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*” in their native culture: “Although written in Pilipino for Tagalog, it can be easily translated into other Philippine languages because of their affinity to one another” (Chupungco 1976). The principal aim of “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” is to offer to the Ilocanos a form of worship or celebration, which reflects their native culture and which they can identify as their own. “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” must not be treated as a corruption of the “*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*,” but rather it reflects what the Eucharist exactly means to the Ilocanos. “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” is a combination of three positive Ilocano elements – “*naindayawan*,” “*rambak*,” and “*gimong*.”

The word “*naindayawan*” (venerable, laudable) captures how important and how special the Eucharist is among Ilocanos. “*Naindayawan*” is a combination of three dynamic Ilocano words – “*na*,” “*in*” and “*dayaw*.” “*Na*” is an Ilocano prefix which means full of being. This prefix “*na*” hence, manifests a dimension of totality and wholeness. “*In*” is an Ilocano infix meaning “to go.” Hence, the infix “*in*” depicts movement; it is an active word. “*Dayaw*” literally means honor or glory. However, “*dayaw*” is not a mere appreciation of the person but it entails the recognition of the person’s good reputation. There is respect (appreciation) because the person possesses an honor or reputation that is worth respecting. Thus “*dayaw*” means honor, reputation primarily and the appreciation that goes with it secondarily (Ramos 1995, 29). In recent developments, Ilocano Catholic Christians adopted the term “*dayaw*” as a word of praise to God – “*Madaydayaw ka O Apo*” (Glory to you O Lord). However, the usage of the term can also be synonymous with the term “*raem*” (to glorify, to praise).

The word “*naindayawan*” in relation to the Eucharist means a meaningful or significant event or occasion; hence, reputable, venerable or laudable. What makes the Eucharist meaningful or significant is because it is a time or event to give praise and glory to God (*Padayawan ti Apo*). In the Eucharistic celebration, the Ilocanos see the opportunity as a time to honor or glorify God because of the wonders He had done for the people. In fact, God deserves the entire honor and praise because the Ilocanos believe that through the Eucharist they can repay the “*utang a naimbag a nakem*” (debt of gratitude or good self) they owe from Him. The successes in life, strong family, being healthy, prosperity and productiveness are all attributed as “*utang a naimbag a nakem*” from God. As a consequence, those who go to the Eucharistic celebration also attain a degree of “*dayaw*” – “*Madaydayaw da nga annak ti Apo*” (Honorable children of God.)

“*Rambak*” is also a word to consider in the Ilocano reappropriation of the Eucharist. In fact, Ilocanos are known to be festive people. They are faithful in celebrating the cycle of their life as people – birth, adolescence, marriage, and death. Fiestas, Christmas, and Lenten Season must also be included in the Ilocano celebrations. Every key moment in Ilocano life is accompanied by rituals which are often complimented by songs and chants. One good example of this is the Ilocano celebration of a birthday. For the Ilocanos, birthdays are happy occasions wherein the “*Padapadakam a Siraragsak*” (We are Full of Joy) is sung. This is a song in which stanzas denote acts to be done by those present, to show their love and affection, like the laying of a crown of ferns and flowers on the celebrant’s head and the offering of a bouquet and palm branches. Then, handful of rice grains, also referred to as “*gracia*” (blessing, grace), are showered on the celebrant, symbolizing wishes for more grace-filled years ahead (Antonio 1995).

Since the Eucharist is also seen as festivity, the Ilocano “*rambak*” (feast, festival, festivity, celebration, ceremony, merry-making, and solemnity) becomes a vital element of the Eucharist. For the Ilocanos, the Eucharist as a “*rambak*” connotes dual function. First, it is a way of making believers feel the presence of the sacred and remember his acts for the human person. Second, it allows the

believers to express what their feeling of the sacred means for their life in the world. In other words, the Eucharist as “*rambak*” fosters religious experience and the expression of religious beliefs. For traditional Ilocanos, “*rambak*,” which they understand to be participated in by God, is a part of their everyday activities, such as planting, harvesting, fishing, and hunting. In the Ilocos regions, Ilocano “shamans” play an important role. Aside from acting as medium, healing, and guiding the dead to the afterworld, they play the role of keeping myths and rituals in the community alive. Among these rituals, rites of passage have a special place. Rites of passages are the ceremonies of the life-cycle. They are religious dramas for birth, puberty, marriage, and death.

The Ilocano deep reverence for their celebrations and ceremonies made the Eucharist as their crowning celebration (*naindayawan a rambak*). Indeed, it is a time to celebrate through the ritual of the cycle of their Christian life – that is, the experience of the love of God through Jesus. In this way, the Ilocano “*rambak*” becomes an anamnesis of Jesus – a remembrance of Jesus’ salvific acts through his passion, death and resurrection.

Second, the Ilocanos are known for their social trait as *mannakikadua* (companion-oriented); that an Ilocano is “*nalaing a mannakikadua*” (can easily go with). This value denotes their characteristics as social beings. The word “*kadua*” (companion), like “*kabagis*” (brother/sister), connotes a “being with” and ‘being-a-part-of-a-whole.’ Ilocanos do not feel secure nor complete without the “*kakadua*” (companions). They always seek the members of their families (*kapamilya*), a “*kapada/gayyem*” (peer/friend), and a “*gimong*” (community). Ilocanos do not suffer or celebrate their successes alone. A concrete example of this trait is the Ilocano “*tagnawa*.” “*Tagnawa*” is an invitation to work in the spirit of togetherness and to eat and drink at discretion. Hence, it is a symbol of the self-motivation of the Ilocanos. The “*tagnawa*” often favors the less privilege for they can have their farm planted and harvested gratis or their house built as long as they provide the materials.

It is not, however, a one way alley. It is instead a two-way traffic. Herein lies the beauty. For when by the same token, there arises

a need for help by those who rendered the same, the “*tagnawa*” recipient is duty bound to return the favor by joining other volunteers. In short, “*tagnawa*” is “all in the spirit of camaraderie” (Anima 1976).

Summing it up, *Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong* is a situation of fellowship among Ilocanos. The Eucharist is essentially the “sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal Banquet,” whereby, through the Eucharist, all become one in God.

2.4. Contextualization Model

After making an attempt to propose for the dynamic equivalence of the Eucharist in Ilocano, it is also necessary to consider how “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” will address the Ilocano concerns and issues. Indeed, “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” must affect the life of the Ilocanos to be become relevant and meaningful.

It was earlier claimed in the background of this study that Filipinos (included are the Ilocanos) today have been experiencing “*kahirapan*” (*kinarigat*), suffering. The reason for this experience of meaninglessness is because of the prevalent problem of graft and corruption, a continuous weakening of economy, the increasing rate of criminality, the booming population, the corruption of morality and spirituality, and the many cases of injustice and oppression. These experiences are unequivocal; they are factual and real. But we cannot be silent about it – we need to take a stand and shout, “*tama na, sobra-sobra na.*” We need to stop the beast, to rise and recover. We need to dream; dream for a new seed of hope to be implanted in a new soil that will make the sprouting of a new plant – “a new world, a new Philippines” possible.

It is in this challenge that the researcher wishes to apply the method of contextualization (the blending of the Eucharist and the Ilocano experiences) as a hope in the Ilocano “meaning-search.” Indeed, the Eucharist as a summit and source of the Ilocano Christian life offers hope for recovery and transformation. To cite a few cases:

2.4.1. “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” Restores the “*Naindiosan a Gimong*”

Teodoro Bacani had called this age as the “generation of absence” and the “grab generation.” Grab generation refers to the person’s desire to accumulate wealth as much as he/she can. Hence, now this becomes a reason for the rampant graft and corruption in many offices of the government, much cheating and unfair practices in business, and frequent robberies. Furthermore, he defined the generation of absence as the non-presence or absence of the people who matter most to us in the moments and situations when we need their presence the most (Bacani 1987). Ilocanos had also witnessed the dawning of these generations. Many of them are even involved either as victims or victimizers. In the eyes of the Ilocanos, these experiences are meaningless (*awan kaeseskanna*) and shameful (*nakababain*). How can the Eucharist then bring back the meaning and sense in the life of the Ilocanos? It was affirmed earlier that the Eucharist is a celebration of presence – the presence of Jesus. In the Eucharist, Christ who loves us, and whom we should love even more than our very selves, make himself present, really present to us, in at least four ways. He is present when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist. He is present in his Word since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are proclaimed in the Church. He is also present in the person of his minister who acts with the Person of Christ. He is present finally in a most excellent way, in his own body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine, after the consecration (Bacani 1987).

Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong as presence, hence, offers God’s gift of presence in the life/presence of Jesus to the Ilocanos. Jesus embodies the presence of God – a gift of compassion. Compassion is not simply the will of God, but the very quality of God. God’s compassion is life-giving, nourishing, embracing: God feeds the birds, clothes the lilies, makes the sun rise on the just as well as the unjust, and sends rain on the righteous and the wicked (Wostyn 2004). Adopting God’s compassion in the context of the Ilocanos would mean that Ilocanos will no longer be divided people. The categories of attractive and unattractive, successful, and unsuccessful, deserving and undeserving, interesting and uninteresting, good and bad would no longer be the primary reason for differences. Compassion and empathy

for the Ilocanos allows them to go beyond these conventions and see people in the wider picture of an interconnected web of life which is sustained by a loving and compassionate God.

In summary, “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” restores the glory and dignity of the Ilocano communities. Indeed, the Ilocano “*gimong*” (community) becomes “*madaydayaw*” (dignified, laudable) because of God’s presence. At the end, Ilocanos will be called “*madaydayaw nga annak ti Apo*” (honorable children of God) because they are “*naindiosan a gimong*” (God-centered community/people).

2.4.2. “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” Commemorates/ Recalls God’s “*Naimbag a Nakem*”

First, it is essential to attend to the Ilocano concept of “*nakem*” (inner self). “*Nakem*” is what makes the person who he/she is, the core of his/her personhood and it is where the true worth of the person lies. It is the ultimate, organizing center of reality, the substratum of ideas, feelings, and behaviors. “*Nakem*” is a relational concept. When one does something good to another, he/she referred to as having a “*naimbag a nakem*” (literally, good will, but also means kindness, generosity, benevolence, and helpfulness). The recipient is understood to have “*utang a naimbag a nakem*” (debt of good self or simply, debt of gratitude), which, as far as the Ilocano is concerned, can never be repaid (De Mesa 1987). “*Nakem*” reflects the internalized capability of recognizing and actualizing what is socially, morally, and ethically good and proper to becoming human; “*naimbag a nakem*” is a “*nakem*” that harnesses its positive and creative power. “*Naimbag a nakem*” reflects good heart, behavior, words, and deeds. Hence, “*naimbag a nakem*” is a value-laden concept manifested in generosity, forgiveness, understanding, love, kindness, respect, fidelity, and mercy. Such are the qualities of “*nadiosan a panagnaknakem*” (God-oriented heart) (Valdez 2001). Thus, “*naimbag a nakem*” is “*maka-dios*” (pro-God), “*maka-gimong*” (pro-community), and “*maka-familia*” (pro-family).

“*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” is a celebration (*rambak*) recalling God’s “*naimbag-a-nakem*.” In fact, if the Eucharist is a memorial of Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection, it is indeed, a

memorial of God's "*naimbag-a-nakem*." Jesus is seen as a revealer of God's "*naimbag-a-nakem*" (*kagandahang-loob*). Consequently, he himself possesses this "*nakem*" (*loob*). For his life is the greatest manifestation, an outflow of God's "*kagandahang-loob*." Jesus had given himself to the people so that the people may have life – a selfless dedication of his life for others. The sacrifice he made on Calvary presents signs in our midst so that we may also offer Him to the Father and ourselves together with Him. He makes his sacrifice present in the Eucharist so that it may become our sacrifice (Bacani 1987). The Eucharist, hence, becomes the school of self-giving.

The "*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*" as a celebration (*rambak*) commemorating, through the life of Jesus, God's "*naimbag a nakem*." It becomes a great invitation for the Ilocanos to take...give thanks...break... and give. It is therefore proper that in the "*rambak*" (celebration), Ilocanos must take a look into their lives and count the many blessings that God has given them. Then, they thank God for all the blessings that he has given them. But God is not out there in the distance or locked up in the Church. God is in the marketplace, in the streets, in the fields and everywhere, among the poor, the deprived, and the oppressed. He is among the many who have little or nothing to eat. With these realities, the Eucharist – a memory of Jesus' sacrifice – motivates Ilocanos to break themselves in selflessness and compassion. Selflessness allows them to give or share their time, talents, and treasures with others; to give their lives, in memory of Jesus, who lived his life selflessly, to bring God's message of well-being to people. The Eucharist is not just a ritual that a worshipping community offers to God. It is the selfless life of Christ that God offers to His people – Jesus as bread broken and shared among people. This vision, hence, of the Eucharist as a remembrance of God's "*naimbag-a-nakem*" (*ginhawa*) among the Filipinos. Indeed, if this can be done from Monday to Saturday, then the Sunday Mass among Ilocanos will be worth celebrating. It becomes the center of their lives – personal, ecclesial, and societal – a worth remembering celebration (*naindayawan a rambak*).

2.4.3. “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” Gives Meaning to Communion

Bacani calls this age as a split generation. By split generation, he means the different Filipino experiences of divisions seen in the various aspects of existence – politically, economically, socially, and even in the context of the family (Bacani 1987). In this time of divisiveness, how can the “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” restore the harmony in the Filipino communities, especially the Ilocano communities? It is clear in the earlier discussion, that the Eucharist is an encounter with God, not as individual or crowd of individuals but as a united people. The Eucharist emits an irresistible drive towards communion. The conviction is increasingly shared, not only among Christians but among people in general, that amid numerous contradictions, the highest good a human person can attain is to coexist in sincere mutual respect, and even better, to be united in friendship (Persico and O’Riordan 1975). Equally, it is also important to note that Ilocanos are known for their social trait as “*mannakikadua*” (companion-oriented); that an Ilocano is “*nalaing a mannakikaddua*” (can easily go with). This value denotes their characteristics as social individuals.

Hence, with these characteristics of the Eucharist and the Ilocanos, a certain common denominator is drawn – “*naingimongan*” (community centered). “*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*,” therefore, brings back to the surface the fundamental need of every Ilocano today to emerge from his/her individuality (*managimbubukod*) and open himself/herself in a real way to every person (*makagimong*). This drive towards openness goes beyond person-to-person relationship. It aims at creating a Christian community and through this to the formation of an entire community of humankind.

“*Naindayawan-a-Rambak-ti-Gimong*” is, therefore, a communal act in which people commit themselves to the inclusion of all human persons in the homage of the total Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church, to God the Father. This implies that the most effective way to preach Christ today lies not in the witness of isolated Christians but in Christian communities living by the Lord’s Spirit,

manifesting this in brotherly communion, and showing loving regard for companions in the faith, as well as for every human being.

3. Concluding Words

Authentic inculturation cannot occur without a thorough study of the culture. Failure in this regard leads to estrangement, where people participate in Eucharistic celebrations with elements considered alien, resulting in a diminished impact. With this principle in mind, an attempt was made to reappropriate the Eucharist in Ilocano culture. The application of two models – dynamic equivalence and contextualization – helped us discover possibilities for a meaningful and relevant Eucharist. For us Ilocanos, an authentic Eucharist must be rooted in our culture and should pay particular attention to issues of cultural identity and liberation.

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