

Wisdom from the Mountains: When Students and Indigenous People Engage in the Dialogue of Life

Roberto O. Guevara
Ateneo de Manila University Philippines

Ateneo de Manila University



A Filipino, Catholic, Jesuit University

A Theology of the Catholic Social Vision Course

■ Objectives

- To educate students towards a more mature awareness of the Philippine situation in the light of Christian Faith
- To develop in students a more active and responsible participation in witnessing to a "faith that does justice"
- To deepen a "spirituality of social transformation" grounded on prayer and participation in the liturgy/sacraments

A Theology of the Catholic Social Vision Course

I. The Church's
Mission of Integral
Evangelization

II. Social Analysis

- Analytical tools for reading the Philippine situation

III. Theological
Reflection

IV. Reflected Action

- Responses to Phil. dev't. issues

I. Experience of
Poverty

- 2½-day immersions

II. Social Analysis

- Synchronic and diachronic analyses of community issues

III. Theological
Reflection

IV. Reflected Action

- Pastoral response to a community need

The Dumagats



An
indigenous
community
living along
the Sierra
Madre
Mountain
range of
eastern Luzon



Live in single-pole make-shift nipa huts
along river banks



- Live the life of hunters and rattan gatherers
- Also live by fishing with hooks, traps, and spears

Wisdom from the Mountains: The Story of a Journey





9 7 2001



2 2 2002









We ate from the sheet – rice coupled with a few grains of salt. Here, for the first time, I came face to face with the reality of rice and salt. It was all I had for several meals.



Nighttime was a nightmare. The hut was so small our legs were exposed to the sky. Sometimes I would dream of my own bed and wake up to find myself on the ground.



The immersion gave poverty a face for me. I asked a little boy what he wanted to be when he grew up – Do you want to be a doctor or a policeman? He didn't understand the question. He didn't understand that there was a world outside of the mountain. That he could be anything he wanted to be. He said, "Rattan-gathering is all that I can do."



When our group arrived, the community was in mourning. A child had just died. Diarrhea. In one of our classes, we read about how poverty kills. I sat in front of death that whole weekend. The dead child was placed on top of a table. The parents had no money for a coffin. The father and mother whisked flies that hovered around the child's stiffening body. I think about how easy it should have been to keep that child alive.



The Dumagats are, in a very real way, Christ. These are the least of my brothers and sisters. They are the hungry, the thirsty, the poor, the oppressed. If Christ were here, this is where I would find him – with the least, the last, the lowest.



We would call them "backward" ... but the Dumagats are the kindest people I have ever met. Like the widow in Matthew's gospel, they give from their most treasured possessions. They served us food they themselves would be hard put to obtain and they gave up the warmth of their home to accommodate us. They shared without asking for anything in return.



My experience with the Dumagats has taught me one of the greatest lessons I could ever learn – how to be truly human. To be truly human is to uphold every individual's dignity. To be truly human is to be generous. To be truly human is to inspire others to be human.



I am a journalist now, but the life and love I found across that river still shines in the midst of the many experiences in my line of work. By their simple life, I learned dignity. It is in their hands that I learned to be human. And they are the fire that keeps me safeguarding the rights of our people now.

In Solidarity: **Searching for a Response**





3 26 2006

Reforestation Program



Visioning/Planning Workshop



The Typhoons of December 2004 and Relief Efforts





ATENEO
TASK FORCE NOAH
Relief Operations



ATENED TASK FORCE NOAH
RELIEF OPERATIONS





Rebuilding Community











29 3:03PM







Santa Maria
Quebec









Lessons from the Journey

Lessons from the Journey

- The need to believe in our students' capacity for generosity – to tap into their idealism and to inspire them to dream dreams beyond themselves

Lessons from the Journey

- The importance of serving as a bridge between the world of our students & the world of the poor
 - ❖ linking community needs with the students' areas of expertise
 - ❖ tapping alumni/ae and facilitating networking between them and students

Lessons from the Journey

- The need to ascertain that interventions lead to the development and empowerment of those being served by our students

Lessons from the Journey

- The importance of being available to students to serve as a companion in their personal journeys

