Ecclesiological Foundation of BECs

History of BEC Development in the Philippines

By:
MOST REV. GEORGE B. RIMANDO, D.D.
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF DAVAO
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“answers to a need to rediscover the Church and, in a sense, to re-enter and renew her from below. Many of our contemporaries find that for them the Church’s machinery, sometimes the very institution, is a barrier obscuring her deep and living mystery, which they can find, or find again, only from below, through little Church cells wherein the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity.”
‘comunidades Eclesiales de Base’
LATIN AMERICA: COMUNIDADES ECLESIALES DE BASE (1950s-1970s)
NORTH AMERICA: RENEW PROGRAM (1980s)
BECs... spread like a wildfire in other continents...

... some theologians interpreted this as a manifestation of the WORKINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH!
Vatican II’s vision of a renewed Church gave rise to the emergence of Basic Ecclesial Communities or BECs in the Philippines. Its early beginnings can be traced in the late 1960s soon after Vatican II.
@ Tagum

Is this safe? Will it get me to Tagum?

P.M.E. FATHERS...
MARYKNOLL MISSIONARIES...
Abp. R. Valles observed that there were lay initiated movements like the *Cursillos de Cristiandad* and the *Barangay Sang Birhen* seminars which are seen as the major renewing and massive catechetical formation programs, changing mindsets on ecclesiology, on the sacraments especially baptism and on the understanding of faith...
Well, I think the best success we have is our Fathers (Maryknoll and diocesan priests) started these small Christian communities in every parish. These are all well organized and can really take care of themselves. It strengthens the people’s faith, because they have their own Services on Sunday and during the week. Usually visiting ministers give them communion. They are quite strong and united; they take care of their own problems. I think that’s the best thing we did. I think we were about one of the first dioceses in the whole Philippines to start those communities…
Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conferences (MSPCs)
• MSPC I 1971
  - Worshipping
  - Teaching
  - Serving

SUB-THEME:
Worshipping,
Teaching
Serving

CHURCH

CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITIES
MSPC II - 1974
(MINDANAO-SULU PASTORAL CONFERENCE)

Theme: SELF-NOURISHING, SELF-SUSTAINING, AND SELF-GOVERNING COMMUNITIES

MSPC III - 1977

Theme: CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES: TOWARDS JUSTICE AND LOVE
MSPC XV @ Zamboanga
October 20-23, 2014

“MSPC XV: Celebrating the Giftedness of the Laity in the Church”
BECs as Church is a gift of the Triune God!
When the work which the Father has given the Son to do on earth (cf. Jn. 17.4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of the Pentecost in order that he might forever sanctify the Church, and thus, all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit.... The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple... By the power of the Gospel He makes the church grow, perpetually renews her and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse.”
BECs
“ A New way of being Church”
Latin America Experience
“a New way of actualizing the same ecclesial community that is the Body of Christ.”

“they offer a new and more varied distribution of the various services and Church ministries (Boff)
PHILIPPINE Experience
“A new way of being a Church not only in terms of active participation of the lay in Church life occasioned by the lack of priests but more on the fact that the BECs are “Church ‘communities’ that grew out of Vatican II ideas and dynamism...” (Claver)
"A SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSION OF ECCLESIAL RENEWAL"

"A New way of being Church"

BEC
Our vision of the Church as communion, participation and mission, about the Church as a priestly, prophetic and kingly people and as a Church of the poor – a Church that is renewed - is today finding expression in one ecclesial movement. This is the movement to foster Basic Ecclesial Communities.
among the dimensions of basic Christian communities, I believe it appropriate to call to your attention that which more profoundly defines them and without which their identity would disappear: ecclesiality... Being ecclesial is their original character and their mode of existing and operating. They are formed in organic communities to better serve the church. And the base to which they refer is of a clearly ecclesial character and not merely sociological or otherwise” Bishop Ivo Lorscheiter gave the document to JP II. The Pope said, “you have to work with the BECs. They are the future of the Church.

(St. John Paul II address to Brazilian Bishops, 1983)
VATICAN II UNDERSTANDING OF CHURCH

Pre-Vatican II
Emphasis:
Church as institution

Vatican II
Emphasis:
Church as communion

Paradigm Shift
Both institution and community are co-essential to the Divine constitution of the church. JPII, 1998

VATICAN II PRINCIPLES/VALUES
- Participation
- Dialogue
- Co-Responsibility

LEADERSHIP STYLE:
Non Participatory, Non Dialogic, Non Co-Responsible

EMPHASIS ON HEIRARCHICAL PYRAMIDAL TOP-BOTTOM STRUCTURE
PEOPLE OF GOD
Lumen Gentium Chapter 2 #s 9 – 17
Church as a “community of love” (Benedict XVI)
“Church as the home and the school of communion” (St. John Paul II)
The Church as a church of mercy.
A poor church for the poor.
Church not a complex organization.

Pope Francis’ explanation of the people of God: People of God means everyone. How to be a member of the People of God? Through baptism which makes the member believe in Jesus Christ as savior.
The mode of living is the LAW OF LOVE understood as self giving.
BECs AS CONTEXT & EXPRESSION OF COMMUNION
BECs as VISION & PROCESS OF CHURCH TOWARDS COMMUNION
VISION
“A RENEWED CHURCH”
PROCESS

A JOURNEY

A PILGRIMAGE
BECs as CONTEXT
AN ENVIRONMENT TO FOSTER COMMUNION
“because the Church is communion, the new ‘basic communities’, if they truly live in unity with the Church, are a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion. They are thus cause for great hope for the life of the Church.”
1. **UNITY IN DIVERSITY**
   Amidst unique personalities and variety of talents / charism

2. **EQUALITY IN DIGNITY**
   - Basis for Human Dignity.
   - Identity as Beloved Children of God
   - It is not so much on our status in society or in the Church that counts.
PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

• If Church is communion, then all her members should be participative!
PARTICIPATORY CHURCH

DIALOGIC COMMUNITY

• Sharing of experiences
• Faith sharing
• Sharing of ideas
• Thinking together, discerning together, praying together

CO-RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY

• Active involvement of workers of renewal – clergy, religious & laity
• Members & leaders in the BECs engage in shared Responsibility

Great challenge – How to inspire and motivate BEC members and leaders!
AD GENTES 2

“The Pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature”
“BECs are not only objects but subjects of evangelization.”
“The community of disciples does not exist for itself or its members. It exists for the world. It is sent on mission to proclaim the good news of Christ and to be instrument of his grace. It exists in order to evangelize....”
“CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF MISSIONARY DISCIPLES”

An evangelizing community gets involved by Word and deed in people’s daily lives.
“BECs are potent force for re-evangelization”
Prophetic (proclaiming & witnessing)

Priestly (worshipping)

Kingly (serving)
• It means a Church that embraces and practices the evangelical spirit of poverty, which combines detachment from possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the sole source of salvation. While the Lord does not want anyone to be materially poor, he wants all of his followers to be ‘poor in spirit’.
• “To become a Church of the poor is to journey and accompany the BECs in our respective parishes and dioceses. Bp. Claver was convinced that BECs, if taken seriously, can be a tremendous force for social transformation as well as renewal in the Philippine Church.”
CONCLUSION:

Our vision of the Church as communion, participation and mission, about the Church as a priestly, prophetic and kingly people and as a Church of the poor-a Church that is renewed- is today finding expression in the ecclesial movement. This is the movement to foster Basic Ecclesial Communities.
Pastoral Conversion

“...the need for constant conversion of our mindsets, attitudes and approaches to pastoral ministry...”
I envision BECs as...

Small, participatory, and co-responsible faith communities of families transformed by the love of the Triune God, witnessing the values of Christian communion and mission to the world, especially to the poor through a renewed integral New Evangelization!