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The God of Process – the Interconnectedness of the World The Process Theology as a Frame for a Glocal Spirituality

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Abstract Drawing inspiration from the process theology, this article aims to develop a glocal spirituality in view of fostering an alternative perspective on the dynamics of globalization. While globalization has traditionally been understood and experienced as the homogenization of world cultures, leading to the diminishment of local cultures, I argue that it can also be perceived and lived as an opportunity for local cultures to express themselves on a global stage. Consequently, rather than being diminished, local cultures are enriched through their engagement in the dynamics of globalization through their encounter and interaction with other cultural traditions. This interaction not only enriches local cultures but also makes the global reality more pluralistic due to the contributions of diverse local cultures. In this context, globalization manifests as glocalization, an interaction between global and local contexts. However, this interaction requires a specific spirituality to sustain it. In this article, I further argue that process theology, inspired by the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, could provide a framework for developing the spirituality necessary to support such glocalization dynamics.

Keywords: the God of process; process theology; interconnectedness; glocal spirituality

Introduction

With its almost 6000 members, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) is the sixth largest male congregation in the Catholic Church; it is the number one *ad gentes* congregation in terms of membership.¹ At the beginning of 2024, 1683 members of the SVD are from Indonesia, 510 of who are living and working in countries other than Indonesia. Of the 50 countries where the Indonesian Divine Word missionaries are, Brazil hosts the highest number (64), followed by the Philippines (38). These men, borne, and grown up in their own local cultures and trained mainly in their national context, go international, and become globalized and globalizing people, both for their people back home as well as for the people they serve.

It can be argued that Christian missionaries are among the first agents of globalization. Being missionary means crossing the borders of countries, cultures, and ethnic and linguistic groups in order to be with people. Their presence among other people is a presence of a different country, culture, and

¹ Reworked from my article published in Lazar T. Stanislaus and van Than Nguyen (eds), *Missionary Discipleship in Glocal Context*, Siegburg: Franz Schmitt Verlag, 2018, pp. 181-194.

oftentimes also a different religion to the people whom they live with. Their maintained connection with the people back home makes them share their own experiences with the strange and oftentimes “exotic” people in their mission areas. In the period when the mission was dominantly a movement from the culturally, politically, religiously, and economically strong North to the South, it was understood and practiced as westernization. In the name of evangelization and humanization, the educational system and standard as well as the health care system of the North was implemented to the South.² As a result, mission cannot escape from the suspicion of being one of the protagonists for the extinction or at least diminution of local cultures.

Profit-based economic system and expanding political interest, supported by the invention of transport and communication means, have brought the world to a global village and the villages to a miniature of the world. Exchange of natural and fabricated products together with the increased mobility of people due to diverse reasons present an opportunity and challenge for the local cultures to interact with the influence from outside. These dynamics, however, raise questions: Will the globalization bring the local communities to a total silence because everything will be dictated by the main agents from outside? Does globalization necessarily mean homogenization?³ Or does the globalization provide new opportunities to the local communities to make their contribution to the whole world? At stake here is the survival of the local communities on the one hand and impoverishment of the world on the other hand. The survival of the local communities would mean the enrichment of the world; meanwhile, their extinction, on the contrary, would mean the impoverishment.

In this context, mission experiences a shift in its practice. It is no longer a means of westernization, but a defender of the local communities. This perspective resonates with, and is thus well supported by an ecclesiology that gives more importance to the local churches than it was in the past as well as with the insistence on the stronger participation of the people from the South in the mission.

Against this background and inspired by process theology, this article aims to examine the spirituality necessary to ground an alternative perspective on globalization. This alternative perspective does not view globalization exclusively as a threat to local communities. Instead, it encourages ways to strengthen local communities, enabling them to creatively participate in the globalization process. The goal is to envision a form of globalization that does not promote uniformity, but rather provides opportunities for local communities to enrich the dynamics of the globalization process. This article will proceed in four steps. First, I will present an overview of process philosophy and theology. Second, I will examine the concept of God within process theology. Third, I will discuss the vision of an interconnected world inherent in process theology. Finally, based on the discussions in the first three sections, I will outline key elements of the spirit of glocalization that support an alternative vision of globalization and examine the role of the Eucharist in cultivating such spirituality.

1. The Process Philosophy and Theology: An Overview

² Yahya Wijaya, “Economic Globalization and Asian Contextual Theology”, in *Theological Studies*, 69/2008, pp. 309-320 here 310-311.

³ Vincent J. Miller, “Where is the Church? Globalization and Catholicity”, in *Theological Studies* 69/2008, pp. 412-432, here p. 413-415.

Process theology is inspired by the process philosophy or philosophy of organism, which was launched by Alfred North Whitehead, a British-American philosopher of the 20th century. Whitehead, formerly a mathematician, developed his philosophical thoughts in the late stage of his intellectual journey, first in Britain, then in the USA. Like Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, Whitehead sees reality as composed of small particles. What we come across as an intact thing is in reality a composition of many particles. But unlike Leibnitz, who considers the particles as the monads which are closed in themselves without “windows”, Whitehead calls these particles “occasions” or “actual entities” or “events” which come out from a process of becoming and contributes to further processes.⁴ To be, therefore, means to be in the process. The process is not something secondary to the identity of an actual entity.

Such a process of becoming an actual entity goes through four stages.⁵ The first stage is called the initial stage. In this stage, the emerging actual entity exists in the mode of influence of the environment. The multitude as chaos has the potentiality to give birth to a new entity.⁶ This initial stage indicates that the environment, the past or the history, contains in itself the possibility of moving forward. In the second stage the becoming actual entity receives its initial aim from God. This is the vision of God for the new entity. In God, the vision is present as eternal objects. The vision should be understood as the free space and time provided to a new entity to become itself in the middle of chaos of the multitude. The new entity contained as potentiality in the history is not determined to just be a repetition. Something new is possible.

The third stage is when with the initial aim, the new entity starts to react to the multitude as its environment. From this initial aim, the actual entity defines its subjective aim: what it wants to be in the given context. According to this subjective aim, it incorporates or excludes the information it receives from its world.⁷ At this stage, an actual entity achieves its own identity. The vision it receives from God is interpreted in the concrete circumstances.⁸ The potentiality becomes actuality in a real context. It carries in itself the vision of God as well as the positive and negative influences of its environment. The more an actual entity orients itself according to the subjective aim, the higher is the newness it brings. On the contrary, it will contain less newness if it lets itself too strongly dominated by its past. The last stage is called transformation, when a saturated entity gives itself as information to its world.⁹ It becomes part of the environment or the past of an emerging actual entity. Whitehead calls this potentiality of being part of the information in the process of becoming of the following actual entities ‘objective immortality’. It is no longer an independent entity, but it distinctively contributes and makes a difference in the process of the others. The individual becomes part of the environment or history which influences the process of becoming of other individuals. What an actual entity is lies in its contribution for the future. In other words, an individual does not give to the future something else than itself. Therefore, the vision of the future influences the becoming of an actual entity. What the

⁴ When the terms *individual*, *person*, or *everyone* are used here in this article, they must be understood as an analogy and not in strict sense of those terms because actual entity is not an individual thing or human person. An individual or a person, according to the process philosophy, is a complex of actual entities with a certain common identity.

⁵ Paul Budi Kleden, “Agama Yang Menjadi – Agama Yang Kontekstual – Agama Yang Dialogal”, in: Philipus Tule (ed.), *Allah Akbar – Allah Akrab, Pembinaan Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama Yang Berbasis Konteks NTT*, Maumere: Penerbit Ledalero, 2003, hlm. 25-40.

⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, The Macmillan Company, 1929, p. 34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

future should be and what an individual wants to be remembered shape the real identity of the individual in question. We can derive here the idea of responsibility for the future. Every individual is not only responsible for itself but also for others because they flow from what an individual has become.¹⁰

Because the whole process of becoming means reaching a unique and concrete identity out of the multitude, Whitehead also names the process the *concrecence*.¹¹ A concrete entity is always a composition of the vision and the reality, the gift of the Divine and what the environment offers, the subjective plan and the determination of the past, the eagerness to the newness and the bond with the tradition. The identity is reached as the response of an individual to the others, and the response to others is influenced by the vision of oneself or the subjective aim. In an analogical sense we can say together with Dean R. Flower that “how a person responds to others determines who the person is. It is equally true to say that who a person is determines how the person responds to others.”¹²

God, according to Whitehead, is not exempted from the process.¹³ God is an actual entity who is in the process of becoming and is accompanying the concretion of every actual entity. God has a primordial and consequent nature. The primordial nature refers to the vision of God of himself and of the universe.¹⁴ But God is not only his vision. The vision pushes to a realization.¹⁵ However, the realization of vision depends not only on God, but also on the universe. God’s contact with the universe takes place by first providing the subjective aim for the individuals at the beginning of the process of their becoming. It is the primordial nature of God that enters into the process with the vision of a new entity to become. At the end of the process, the consequent nature receives the completed actual entity as information to Godself.¹⁶ In this sense, God affects and is being affected, influences and being influenced, by the world. Therefore, God is in the process as long as the universe exists.

This whole process is driven by creativity.¹⁷ Creativity itself is not an actual entity; it is not God either, as God himself is in the process of becoming. Moreover, it is only there in the creativity that the actual entities are. Whitehead describes creativity as the principle of novelty, a dynamic power in the universe that enables a continuing process of changes.¹⁸ Nothing can stay static as long as the creativity is there.

Whitehead’s process philosophy has two intentions. The first is to demonstrate that there is an interconnectedness of all in the universe, including God. Nothing exists for itself and from itself. A total isolation from others means death. The interconnectedness brings with itself the responsibility. An actual entity is responsible for itself because what it becomes is the result of its decision, but at the same time it is the responsibility of all others as they form the environment and the past of a new entity.¹⁹ Something exists as far as it opens itself to the others, and it has its values insofar as it contributes out of its unique identity to the well-being and flourishing of others. In the new actual entity, the quality of the past is demonstrated. Meanwhile, the future depends on how the individuals perform themselves

¹⁰ Dean R. Flower, A Process Theology of Interdependence, in *Theological Studies*, 44-58, here p. 54; Paulus Budi Kleden, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the modern world*, New York: The Free Press 1967, p. 197.

¹² Dean R. Flower, *op. cit.*, p. 55

¹³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, The Macmillan Company, 1938, p. 151.

today. Therefore, no environment can wash their hands from being co-responsible for what something has become. All bear the responsibility to the universe because all are interconnected.²⁰ As Flower says, individuals “do not have relationships; they are their relationships”.²¹ The relation is not external to the being of the individuals but constitutive of the essence of the becoming existent. “The relation is internal to its being.”²² The individual cannot be abstracted from the relations, nor can the relations be abstracted from the individual.

The second intention is to protect the freedom of the subject to define itself. The subject cannot escape from the past, but it is the subject itself that takes the decision.²³ Therefore, process philosophy is also named the philosophy of subject. This philosophy underlines the fact that nothing can be reduced only as an object or can be fully objectified without respecting it also as a subject. However, the subject here is understood not as something that first exists in itself and then relates to others. It is a subject that becomes itself while and because of relating itself to others. The becoming of such a subject brings renewal and transformation in the environment. With every moment of actual entity, the universe is given the chance to be renewed and transformed. A new subject, which is the result of the creative response to its past, is a richness and offers a transformation of the universe.

Already in Whitehead’s lifetime, theologians find his philosophy attractive for developing an alternative to theologies which are based predominantly on Platonic-Aristotelian philosophies. Charles Hartshorne was the first to lay the foundation for a theological interpretation of the process philosophy. He centered his research on the understanding of God and wrote more about it than did Whitehead. In a way different from the scholastic philosophy, Hartshorne stresses the idea that the idea that God is absolute as well as relative, determining and at the same time determined. He paves the way for the development of the process theology.²⁴

The Divinity School of the Chicago University is known as the center of process theology, continuing the work of Hartshorne. In the late 1920s, Henry Nelson Wieman was a leading figure of the process theology. He successfully translated the very speculative language of Whitehead’s philosophy into a more understandable language of theology.²⁵ His efforts were continued by Daniel Day Williams. Schubert M. Ogden, an alumnus of the Divinity School, promotes the process theology when he was teaching at Perkins School of Theology of Southern Methodist University. John B. Cobb, Jr., another Chicago alumnus, has taught mainly at the School of Theology at Claremont, California, and has been very instrumental in developing the process theology.²⁶ Together with David R. Griffin, who has made a name with his work on process Christology, John Cobb in the last 20 years has been working on process theology as a constructive answer to the postmodern situation. Their joined work, *Process Theology – An Introduction*, remains the best overview of process theology. They see in the philosophical ideas of Whitehead a better frame to respond constructively to the problems arose by the modernism such as the question of ecology, the minorities, or plurality of religions. With Griffin as the

²⁰ Paulus Budi Kleden, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

²¹ Dean R. Flower, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

²⁴ David Griffin and John Cobb, *Process Theology, An Introductory Exposition*, Philadelphia: West Minster Press, 1976, pp. 167-169.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179

senior editor, series in constructive postmodern thought have been published. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki expands the process thought to the issues of the interreligious dialogue and spirituality. Besides these “Chicago” theologians, Norman Pittenger is the “foremost popularizer of process thought and an important figure”²⁷. Already in his 1959 book, *The Word Incarnate: A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (1959), he started to address Christian themes with the framework of Whiteheadian philosophy. He wrote about the Holy Spirit, prayer, miracle, and the last things.²⁸

Most of the process theologians are Protestants. Process theology has not found much resonance among the Catholic theologians. There are only very few Catholics among the process theologians. Two names at the forefront are David Tracy and Bernard Lee. David Tracy, for example, focuses on the problems in foundational theology by incorporating a process perspective. Bernard Lee uses Whiteheadian process categories to seek a new understanding of the Church and the sacraments.²⁹

The process theology sees in Jesus the manifestation of the presence of God in the universe. He is the incarnation of Logos.³⁰ This manifestation is not just in a triumphal form, but also in merciful, understanding, and compassionate form. Taking the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus seriously, we will find difficulty with the traditional idea of the immutability and impassibility of God.³¹ What does the cross of Jesus mean to God-self? The process thinking is not satisfied with the statement that Jesus suffers and dies for the world. If we are to be serious that Jesus is the incarnation of the second person of Trinity, we have to take a step further to argue that God who manifests himself in Jesus is affected by the world.³² God is vulnerable without getting lost in his suffering.³³

2. The God of Process

In the process theology, God is understood as a God of process. God is part of the process of all other individuals and who himself is in the process of becoming. With this understanding, the process theology spells out the biblical notion that God is love. This perspective is also central to Jürgen Moltmann. In his *Crucified God*, Moltmann argues that love cannot be understood properly if we exclude the dimension of “passion”, being affected by the beloved. The God of Jesus Christ is the compassionate God, not the Unchanging and passionless Absolute of the Greek philosophy. This God is marked by two main characteristics: responsive love and creative love. In this sense, God is bi-polar, consisting of two aspects or “poles”.

2.1 God as Creative Love

God is love, and love shares itself without being diminished. It is the good that flows over, communicates itself, and gives life, as stated in the classic idea of *bonum diffusivum sui*. Therefore, in the understanding of Christian theology, the triune God as the communion of love is the creative God who, out of love as his nature, creates the universe. However, God continues to be active in the world and present in every moment of history. God does not only give the first kick at the beginning of the

²⁷ J.J. Mueller, Process Theology and The Catholic Theological Community, in *Theological Studies* 47/1987, pp. 412-427, here p 418.

²⁸ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.* pp.180-181.

²⁹ Dean R. Flower, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

³⁰ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 95-110.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³² *Ibid.* p. 47.

³³ It goes beyond the scope of this article to enter the discussion about the Christology and Trinity of the process theology.

universe; he is also the source of the subjective aim for every actual entity in their process of becoming. Every moment is a new creation, containing in itself the vision of God that is good.³⁴ This is the *creatio continua*. The presence of God in the process of every actual entity is love because it opens a new possibility in the midst of chaos. Love does not block the future but points at the new chance to be. To love means to say there is a future.

Because God is present in the world, living in contact with him does not mean escaping from the world. Facing the reality, taking seriously what is happening in the world, is the way to be attached to God. Our efforts in doing good put us in harmony and contact with God.³⁵ And being in contact with God will bring us hope and give us strength to promote the good in the world. Who is really open to God will be inspired by him in transforming the world.

God is present in the world not as controlling power who dictates what has to happen and controls every detail of what is happening in the world. On the contrary, God's presence aims at offering a theoretical vision in a persuasive way.³⁶ God cannot and does not want to force anyone to do what he wishes because the competence to take decision is not with Him. It is up to every actual entity to react to their environment. "This is an impulse, initially felt conformably by the occasion, to actualize the best possibility open to it, given its concrete situation. But this initial aim does not automatically become the subject's own aim. Rather, this 'subjective aim' is a product of its own decision. The subject may choose to actualize the initial aim; but it may also choose from among the other real possibilities open to it, given its context."³⁷ The world does not function as something totally determined by God. "Since actuality is partially self-creative, the future events are not yet determined, so that even perfect knowledge cannot know the future, and God does not wholly control the world".³⁸ The divine creative activity is a risky endeavor. God nevertheless takes this risk. Evil emerges when the actual entity lets itself be determined by the negative influence of its past and not by God's vision.

The purpose of the creative love of God in the world is to promote enjoyment and to support everything to experience such an enjoyment.³⁹ For the humans, we can say that it is the life that the creative love of God aims at. Life does not come to its fullness if there is suppression of human desires under the name of morality. This does not mean that moral norms are not important. Rather, it means seeing life and happiness as God's primary intention for the world and not in assuring that the norms are followed. It is not the first function of God to see to it that the morality is kept faithfully. This has a moral implication because God does not only want the enjoyment of certain actual entities, but that of all. As Jesus says, "I have come that they may life, and may have it in all its fullness" (Jn 10:10). Therefore, everyone has to come to enjoyment and life in such a way that it does not hinder others to enjoy their happiness. The enjoyment is what comes from God and needs to be promoted by those who are closely attached to him.

"God wants our enjoyment to be such as to increase the enjoyments of others. To be moral is to actualize oneself in such a way as to maximize the enjoyments of future actualities, insofar as these future enjoyments can be conditioned by one's present decision. Hence, although the development of moral

³⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

³⁵ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

³⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, New York: The Free Press 1967, p. 277.

attitudes is of extreme importance, it is a derivative concern, secondary to the primary value, which is enjoyment itself."⁴⁰

God enters the world in a persuasive way, without totally determining the end product of an event. Newness and surprise are therefore real moments in history, and this applies also to God himself. What comes out of an event can be completely different from what God envisions. However, it is God, through the initial aim, paves the way to this outcome. God, therefore, is not a Sanctioner of the *status quo* but the principle of newness and transformation. The name of God is not the *status quo*, but the process. God, in his primordial nature, has "the active entertainment of all ideals, with the urge to their finite realization, each in its due season."⁴¹ Not all ideal possibilities can be realized simultaneously. This is why there is a process.⁴² In the same vein, neither can an ideal be repeated indefinitely without its freshness being lost. The Primordial Nature of God is the goal toward novelty in the universe⁴³, stimulating us to realize new possibilities after the old ones are no longer sufficient to give zest to our enjoyment of being actual.⁴⁴ This does not mean that the process must be free from order and discipline. Order is at service of life and enjoyment. For Whitehead, "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."⁴⁵ The aim toward order, which is impersonal, is subservient to the love of individuals, which is personal.⁴⁶ Therefore, types of order are to be rated "according to their success in magnifying the individual actualities, that is to say, in promoting strength of experience."⁴⁷

Within every new moment God brings new opportunity to the world to move forward, to improve and correct, and to bring progress. Every new moment is a chance for conversion and transformation. God's creative love is not a concurrence to the creativity of other actual entities. God works only through the other actual entities. There is no pure intervention of God into the world that bypasses the world. The realization of the good is always the result of the collaboration of God and the world. Creaturely freedom is enabled by God, and in realizing his vision God depends on this freedom. Grace cannot work on its own, as the traditional belief of the Church has it in its saying *gratia supponit naturam ed perficit eam*.

2.2 The Responsive Love

As love, God is not only active and creative but also responsive to the world.⁴⁸ A true love only exists when the beloved takes the space and occupies the time of the lover, when they become part of each other's life. The one who loves is concerned about His/Her beloved. The bond of love exists in the shared joy and sadness. What happens to the One has impact on the other. In the words of the Master of Nazareth: to love means to lose your life for the sake of the beloved (Lk 14: 26-28). Who does not want to lose anything and is not ready to make a space in his heart and mind for others cannot love them truly. In satisfying these requirements, the person empties 'himself' or 'herself' for the sake of the beloved, he/she gives the priority to the good of the beloved. Love means to let the beloved be

⁴⁰ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.* p. 57.

⁴¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, *op. cit.*, p 357.

⁴² Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, *op. cit.*, p 53.

⁴³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴⁴ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.*, p 59.

⁴⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 515.

⁴⁶ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.* p 60.

⁴⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

⁴⁸ David Griffin and John Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 43-48.

himself/herself and to support his/her growth. For Whitehead, this receptive and responsive dimension of God is as important and influential as the active and creative dimension of God.⁴⁹ God's love is only a perfect love if it not only creates and gives from his bounty. God is also affected by what He creates. Whitehead calls it 'the consequent nature of God'. In this dimension God receives the actual entity at the end of their process of becoming. This means that God is not indifferent to what happens to the world. Instead, he takes it seriously as 'information' in the full sense of the word: as something that forms and shapes him. Therefore, this responsiveness is genuine, precisely because it affects God-self.

God enjoys the good with the world and suffers with it in the moments of evil. A compassionate love, a love which shares the suffering of the world, is not a sign of weakness that needs to be kept afar from God. The perfection of love does not consist in having fear, as the writer of the first letter of John says (4:18), but in solidarity. Fear exists in an a-symmetric relationship where only one side, usually the one in a stronger position, matters. Solidarity, on the contrary, presumes an equal position where both sides are affected by what one side thinks, feels, and experiences. The God of the Bible is a God who takes seriously the situation of the creation and His people.

Through his receiving and being affected by the world God actually saves it. In God, the actual entity, after completing their process of concretization, finds their place. Whitehead writes: "The consequent nature of God is the fluent world become 'everlasting' by its objective immortality in God"⁵⁰. Other than the actual entities which evaluate an actual entity from their own perspectives and according to their own interests, God accepts and knows an actual entity in its totality.⁵¹ Because God stands at the beginning of the process by providing His vision and at the end by receiving the result of the process, He knows us entirely with all our possibilities and actualities. He knows what we were supposed to be and the real identity we brought at the end of our process.

However, this is not just a sentimental fluctuation without consequence. What God receives will be transformed into information that He provides for the new actual entity.⁵² The passive, receptive side of God is not a total passivity in enjoyment or depression. On the contrary, God will respond to the actual situation by providing initial aim to newly emerging entities. In this sense, God is in continuous dialogue with the world and paves the way to improve what is going wrong in His persuasive way. God makes use of everything in the world, including what appears to us as ruins and meaningless. He accompanies and knows us, and He therefore understands what we need and how to help us. For Whitehead, God is "the great companion – the fellow-sufferer who understands"⁵³. As a fellow sufferer who understands, God knows that no one is fully evil such that nothing positive can be found in him/her. From everything there is always something good, which can be used to move forward on the way of transformation. God is the ideal companion who grants to those who are suffering the insight and sense to interpret their experience. He is the ideal fellow sufferer who transforms the lost into his very being.⁵⁴ This does not mean that God accepts the evil in a fatalistic manner. He instead accepts it as a chance to initiate improvements by persuading us to fight against the evil. God does not heal by forgetting the

⁴⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁵⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, The Macmillan Company, 1926, p. 148.

wounds and puts aside the suffering, but by taking initiatives for remedy. Whitehead compares God with “the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness”.

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The responsive dimension of God shows that God is not only the guarantor of the big vision, but He/She at the same time also cares for the concrete reality. God cannot be fixed only at the concrete and individual, because He also brings everything to a wider and bigger vision. God looks after the suffering and those who fail, but He continues to open the eyes for the ideal and visionary as well. God is concerned about the future without closing his eyes to see what is here and now. Both belong equally to God: promoting the ideal and tender care for the concrete, which oftentimes fails to realize the ideal. The concrete does not get lost in the ideals, while the ideals will continue to keep their importance in the middle of the concrete realities.

3. The Interconnectedness of the World

God is the guarantor of the interconnectedness of the world. The world is interconnected, not only and not just because of the communication technique which enables the flow and exchange of information from different parts the world in a short time.⁵⁶ For process thought, interconnectedness is the nature of the universe. We are connected synchronically and diachronically. Every event in the universe comes out from the history and contributes to the future; it benefits from and is being affected by its contemporaries. Therefore, we can say, there is no local context which is free from what is going on at the global level, and global happenings are constructed by local events. This is only possible if the importance of every event or every local context is respected and at the same time if it is demonstrated that every event is open to others.

3.1 The importance of being self

The process of the becoming of every actual entity is a self-creation process. Every entity has its own subjective aim, which is the modification of God’s vision in a given context. The subjective aim serves as a criterion and orientation in reacting to the information from outside. What it becomes, therefore, is its own creation. In my view, this concept gives some important points in the discussion about the relationship between the local and global contexts.

First, it is necessary to have a clear vision as orientation. This, however, does not mean that what comes out will be fully in compliance with the ideal or vision. At every moment, to every person, and in every locality, God wants to promote something good and special to the world. The awareness of this call and gift will help us to react to the influence from outside. We can never escape from the outside world because only in the midst of the world that we become who we are, but the way to act and react depends on our own ideal or vision about ourselves. Having such a vision saves a local community from being totally absorbed into the global reality. We live in an era where information is flooding into our life. Without a strong and clear vision of the self, we will be wiped away by this flood and become nothing but a mass of information. I am the agent of myself as well as the product of my situation. I cannot totally blame my past for who I am today, but I cannot be proud only of myself for

⁵⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p 346.

⁵⁶ Hyun-Chul Cho, Interconnectedness and Intrinsic Value as Ecological Principles: An Appropriation of Karl Rahner’s Evolutionary Christology, in *Theological Studies*, 70/2009, pp. 622-637, here p. 625.

what I am either. The same applies to the relationship between local and global contexts. A local community is doing injustice to the global situation if it only puts its finger at globalization as the only cause of the decadences that it experiences.

Second, the vision about the world influences our self-becoming. After achieving its identity, an actual entity will become information for the future world; it influences what comes after it. This also means that the vision of the future world has its impact on the way an actual entity organizes itself in the process of its becoming. In other words, because I want the world to be like this, I need to be in this way. The envisioning of ideal of the world in a local context will determine how the local context will be arranged, what values are to be promoted, what skills are to be trained, what knowledge is to be taught.

Third, everyone has to take the responsibility to be himself/herself. The other side of self-creation is self-responsibility. Because an actual entity creates itself, it bears the responsibility for itself. There is no total determination by the outside world. This does not mean that the self is the only one to bear this responsibility. What is stressed here is that fact that no actual entity can escape from being responsible for what it is and what has become. Even if the world is very strong, it can never fully abolish the freedom and therefore the responsibility of the individual. In such cases, the individuals can give up and follow the dictation of the world, or it resists even though at the end the dominance of the world wins. This is the reason why we encounter people who are defeated without losing their self-esteem, or the poor who keep their dignity as human beings. A local community can level its resistance against the devastating influence of globalization, though with the risk of failing, or of dissolving itself, and of turning into a ruin remembered in the history of humanity.

Fourth, the last stage of the process of becoming is transformation, where an actual entity becomes an input for the environment of a new actual entity. What it is or what has become makes up its contribution to the world. Whitehead writes, "The point to be noticed is that the actual entity, in a state of process during which it is not fully definite, determines its own ultimate definiteness. This is the whole point of moral responsibility"⁵⁷. The more unique an individual is, the more special is its contribution. The courage to have an independent identity, to be different and distinguished from others, is not just for the sake of being different but for promoting the plurality of the world. Having an identity helps a local community from the danger of being absorbed by the global trends, which impose themselves through different media.

3.2 Optimizing interconnectedness

Interconnectedness is the fundamental characteristic of the universe. Nothing exists for itself and from itself. It is the multitude of information that has the potentiality to bring something new. This multitude of information can be confusing, but it contains the chance that something new emerges. The ideal of the world, therefore, is not uniformity, but plurality. No one will benefit from a world where everything functions with the same standard, thinks in the same way, acts, and reacts according to the same norms. Because the multitude is the womb to give birth to a new individual, its quality has an influence on the quality of the new individual. Here we can say that a new individual is a co-creation of the world. A new individual is the creation of itself, of God, and of the world.

⁵⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

In the process of becoming the new individual lives from the information given by the world. Restricting the flow of information for an individual means impoverishing it in its process. Whether or not an individual experiences itself as being restricted to certain types of information depends on how the others influence it. Where force is used to impose the information, what comes out will be just a repetition of the previous situation without any novelty and transformation. However, when God's way, namely persuasion, is followed, the freedom of the individual is more respected and the chance for novelty increases. The outcome of the persuasion depends very much on the world itself as to whether the plurality continues to characterize it or not. Uncontrolled ambition to extend one's own worldview will wipe away the diversity. It is the responsibility of all to create a space for the individuals to articulate themselves. For the process theology, the world is envisioned to be plural. However, every chance for transformation will be useless if the individuals fail to control themselves.

God's love respects each person's freedom and uniqueness. The love for the other must include a concern and care for the rights of the other, beginning with acknowledging the right to have one's identity as a person, including the right to be different, and recognizing the person as being equal as humans. The world is enriched by every individual. Thereafter, the world is the place where we can learn from everything that happened in the past and that is going on at present. To be ourselves, we can learn from the bad as well as the good examples, from the big events that attract the attention of all people of the world as well from a small-scale initiative in a remote place. The information provided by the global world helps the individual to make the best out of its possibilities.

For the realization of the enrichment of the world to take place, two things are required. The first is that the individual is able to articulate itself in a way that its uniqueness can catch the attention of the world. In principle, the influence and enrichment by an individual will be very limited if no special effort is made to make itself attractive. The second is the sensitivity and openness of the world to the individuals. Only if there is a real commitment to relativize "grand narratives" in order to give a space for "little narratives", can the small ones find their ways to the global world. The option to give a space for the "little narratives", to the marginalized ethnic groups or to the arts of creatures which are in danger of extinction, is an act of solidarity. Solidarity can only succeed if it becomes a discipline and not merely an occasional act. Homogenization of the world is an impoverishing reality which must be avoided.

3.3 Living out interculturality⁵⁸

It could be argued that the interconnectedness of the world envisioned by process philosophy/theology finds its real manifestation in the fact known as interculturality. Interculturality can be defined as "real in-depth mutual relationships and exchanges among cultures, on both the individual and communal levels".⁵⁹ Such mutual relationship transforms people, but not into a melting pot, because everyone keeps his/her culture. Only with this identity can they enrich and transform each other. Therefore, interculturality is not a uniformity of cultures, not an act of merging the cultures or living side by side in peace. Unity gives way for the difference, and at the same time the differences reflect the unity. In this sense, cultural diversity should not be seen as a "curse brought about by

⁵⁸ Paulus Budi Kleden, "Trinitarian Spirituality and Interculturality". In L. Stanislaus et al. eds. *Intercultural Living*. Delhi: Steyler Missionswissenschaftliches Institut: ISPC 2015. 15-37.

⁵⁹ Roger Schroeder, Interculturality and Prophetic Dialogue, in *Verbum SVD*, 54 (2013), pp. 8-21, here p. 12.

humanity's arrogance and challenge to God, as implied in the story of the Tower of the Babel (gen 11:1-10),” but rather “as part of God’s plan from all eternity”.⁶⁰

Interculturality is an interaction and dialogue among people from different cultural backgrounds. This interaction, based on difference and unity, is an expression of life. It at the same enriches life. On the one side, it is the expression of life because in situations where there is only uniformity, where one lives out one’s life at the cost of the others’ lives, they build their reign on the shoulders of the others and they will find reason to be joyful in the suffering of others. On the contrary, a genuine interaction is only possible if the others are respected to live out their lives. This interaction at the same time enriches life because it helps avoid repeating everything that has been said and done. The presence of the others challenges and opens new horizons. In this kind of interaction, the local and global contexts come close. The presence of the others, which often becomes the reason for conflicts and headache, could somehow serve as a stimulus to be creative, to find new ways of doing things, either in the form of searching the commonality between the differences or letting the differences be articulated for the sake of growth.

Intercultural living and working together are enriching in two ways. First, the presence of others can enrich us with who they are and what they have. We are enriched when we listen to the stories different to our own, our horizon is broadened by seeing how people from other cultures are practicing their leadership, our experience is getting richer when we can share the ways other people face the loss of their beloved ones. Second, confronted with cultures other than ours, we are facilitated to know more deeply about our own culture. Put it in first-person pronouns, the presence of others helps me to be more myself and us to be more ourselves. What lies in the depth of our culture will come out, be recognized, and be appreciated. The difference leads to a better and deeper recognition of one’s identity.

Furthermore, interculturality is not a living and working together only within one’s own community. The sensitivity toward the plurality of cultures within one’s own community, *ad intra*, always has *ad extra* impacts for others outside of the community, hence to the global reality. In this respect, we will not be only alert to the cultural differences, but also capable of recognizing the differences existing among the people due to the differences in gender or economic situation. The unity cultivated and promoted in the midst of cultural differences encourages us to make the efforts to support the unity in and among groups divided by different factors. Within the context of religious-missionary life, this also implies that an intercultural community is always a missionary community. This model of life is not about searching a guarantee for individual salvation, but about being in solidarity with others.⁶¹

4 Towards a Glocal Spirituality: Rooted in the Locality – Embracing the Universality

Spirituality is the basic attitude of a person or a community which is influenced by certain beliefs or ideology and motivates that person or community in their dealing with the world. Therefore,

⁶⁰ Robert Kisala, Trinitarian Spirituality, in *Verbum SVD*, 54 (2013). p. 29.

⁶¹ C. Mowy LaCugna and M. Downey, “Spiritualità trinitaria” in M Downey, *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità*, Vatican: Libreria editrice Vaticana 2003, p. 941. Further, both authors argue that the separation of action and contemplation, of spiritual life and social involvement, is an expression of a wrong understanding of Trinity, which draws a dividing line between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, as though we were dealing here with two different Trinities (ibid.) This wrong understanding is something to be overcome.

spirituality is not only and not first of all about prayers and spiritual exercises; instead, it is about the spirit that motivates someone or a community and forms the frame for their ideas, values, and deeds.⁶² As Tisa Balasuriya stresses it, “Christian spirituality is foundationally life affirming and life giving.” Its consequence for us is that we are called “to love one another as God has loved us. God is the God of life. Genuine love for the other is the means and the measure of our love for God. Such love must be concerned with the life of the other in all its aspects. ... We are called to be divinized by love and effective concern for one another.”⁶³ When we talk about the Christian spirituality in the glocal context, we refer to the way of Christian life, of ordinary and routine details of everyday life, guided by the Spirit, contributes to ever greater communion and communication with God and with others in global and local situation. Global and local realities are networked. The global reality is woven by the local events, and the local context cannot be free from the global influence.

4.1 Some features of a glocal spirituality

With their more constructive understanding of postmodernism, the process theologians like David Ray Griffin strive to develop what they call ‘postmodern spirituality’, which can also be implemented in this discussion of ours about spirituality in a glocal context. In their analyses, the spirituality in the time of interchanges of global and local contexts has the following features.⁶⁴ The first is its emphasis on the reality of internal relations. We need to realize that “we live in a system in which whatever happens to any part of the system reverberates in small or large ways throughout the whole system.”⁶⁵ This spirituality springs from the deepest conviction of the interrelatedness of all. Relations are not external but internal; it is essential and constitutive to every person and community. The consequence of this feature is the humility to acknowledge the contribution of others in one’s becoming and at the same time the awareness of the importance one has for others. A glocal spirituality calls for creativity to bring the best out of one’s own history and environment as well as the responsibility to use every moment as the moment of grace for oneself and for the world. The glocal context requires a spirituality which sees every place as the sacred place to encounter God and the world. It furthermore regards every moment as the *Khairos* wherein to receive and transmit the blessings of God. At the same time, the spirituality in a glocal context appeals to every person to admit his/her responsibility to what happens to others and promote the solidarity so as to prevent the others from being neglected and abandoned. Martin Luther King, Jr in his Christmas sermon in 1967, said,

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality.... This is the way our universe is structured; this is its interrelated quality. We aren’t going to have peace on Earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of reality.”⁶⁶

To support this feature, we can mention here the image of the Kingdom of God in the proclamation of Jesus. In a very simple way, we can say that the Kingdom of God is a situation where

⁶² Nurya Martinez-Gayol Fernandez, Hans Urs von Balthasar: el pensamiento que se desborda en Teología y Espiritualidad, in *Revista de Espiritualidad*, 282-284/ April-September 2012, pp- 161-189, here p. 168.

⁶³ Tissa Balasuriya, Globalization and Human Solidarity, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-8-globalization-and-spirituality/>.

⁶⁴ David Ray Griffin, Introduction: Postmodern Spirituality and Society, in David Ray Griffin (ed.), *Spirituality and Society: Postmodern Visions. SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought*, State University of New York Press, 1988, pp. 1-32.

⁶⁵ Bernard J. Lee, The Only Survivable World: A Postmodern Systems Approach to a Religious Intuition, in David Ray Griffin, *Sacred Interconnections*, pp. 49-61, here p. 51.

⁶⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr, cited in Daniel G. Groody, Globalizing Solidarity: Christian Anthropology and the Challenge of Human Liberation, in *Theological Studies*, June 2008/69/2/250-268, here: 250-251.

only God is the king, where only his sovereignty is accepted. The kingdom of God is the formula to express God in his relation to the world.⁶⁷ He alone is the one to reign. In this kingdom everything should go according to the will of God. There, God's vision about the world and humanity is acknowledged and serves as orientation for the life of all. This vision inspires how people are thinking, seeing the reality, and drawing their plans. In the parable of the table Jesus points clearly at the core message of the Kingdom of God: to create a new relationship, not based on social status or political power and influence, but on the same hope and expectation of the coming of the Kingdom (Mat 22: 1-14: 18: 1-5).⁶⁸ We are empowered by the Lord to move from the mentality of the imperium (Lk 22: 25-27) to the liberty of the Kingdom (Lk 4: 16-30). In the Kingdom, everything and everyone is interrelated. The God of the Kingdom, as stressed by the process thought, is creative and responsive love, who accompanies everything in their becoming and receives them all. He puts them in the relation to all. Therefore, in the Kingdom of God justice, peace, joy, solidarity, caring for one another, and the promotion of the good of every member are important values.⁶⁹ God in His creative and responsive love is the guarantee that no one in the Kingdom has everything and no one has nothing. However, the Kingdom of God is not a homogeneous kingdom where everything has to be the same. It is the kingdom where "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, stands before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9).

The second feature is being at home in the world with its spatial and temporal dimensions of reality. This spirituality does not make people turn their back on the world but rather to face the world, embracing the opportunities it offers and responding to the challenges of the world. It shares the joy and despairs of the world, in view of realizing the bond with history, but also takes up the challenges of the future. We can only make a difference in the global world if we stand by our past, humbly admitting our enmeshment in the past happenings and proudly demonstrating our historical richness. However, the intention is not to revitalize a kind of traditionalism, but to recover the concern and the respect for the past because every person is its enfoldment of the past and its present reaction thereto. The consequence of this feature is that the glocal spirituality inspires people to conserve the good and values from their own traditions. Conservation of the traditional worldviews, values and practices does not mean being closed to new impulses. It is committed to the tradition without being traditionalist. Griffin calls this a 'transformative traditionalism' and states that a constant discernment is necessary for distinguishing a creative from a destructive novelty.⁷⁰

In his discourse about the end of the time, Jesus talks about the consequence of treating our fellow human-beings for our future with one another and with God (Mt 25). Jesus thus underlines his identification with us and at the same time presents himself as the one binding us together. In him we all are his brothers and sisters, and because of him we have the mutual responsibility for one another. Our love for God cannot be realized without loving the neighbors, and our love for God cannot be realized without taking care of our brothers and sisters (1 Yoh 4: 19-20). We are called and empowered to love our neighbors and God as equally important. To love means to live and to let live. Jesus lives and empowers us to a new relationship among humans that exceeds the demands of both justice and

⁶⁷ John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God. The Message of Jesus Today*, New York: Orbis, 1995, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Daniel G. Groody, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁶⁹ John Fuellenbach, *op. cit.*, p. 155-173.

⁷⁰ David Ray Griffin, *Introduction: Postmodern Spirituality and Society*, p. 19.

mere rationality. It is a commitment to the weak and the neglected, to those who cannot survive without external assistance.

“Such love is more than the natural love of our friends. It is not necessarily according to reason or human rationality. It is not a sort of philosophical or stoic indifference towards others. It is not a keeping away from enemies to avoid further trouble. It is not at all a right that the enemy has over us. It is new relationship of love of the other that has to flow from a conversion of heart and mind, of intellect and will be inspired by the love of God.”⁷¹

Promoting an atmosphere where all local communities keep their respective identities and contributing to enriching the whole is the consequence of such love. This means, no strong culture can legitimize any kind of homogenization using the weaknesses of others. The dignity of every person and every local community must be respected. Being interconnected to one another in God “means that we come to understand what it means to be human within the context of our relationships, which must be grounded in the dignity given by God to humans and all other creatures, and that the source and grounding of all relationships is God”.⁷² Therefore, Jesus was not neutral towards the rich and the poor, powerful and powerless, the dominant and the weak. The Gospel “holds out a constant critique of a society that seeks its redemption through self-fulfillment rather than kenotic self-emptying, through treasures of earth rather than treasures of the Kingdom, through the love of power rather than the power of love”.⁷³

The third feature of this spirituality is its panentheism according to which the world is in God and God in the world. God is distinctive from the world, but cannot be separated from it, as the world is only thinkable in connection with God. This panentheism motivates everyone to seek, acknowledge and praise the presence of God in all others. Spirituality in the glocal context, therefore, does not only aim at fostering ecumenical or interreligious dialogue, but also at promoting the dialogue with everyone and cultivating the culture of encounter with every group of people. Respect for every local community is based on the belief that God is present in it. Furthermore, the work to develop every local community to face the challenges of the globalization flows from the recognition that God’s creative love is at work in it. The glocal spirituality impels us to be creative in the local communities, to find ways and means not just to make them survive, but actively partake in the globalization process. Creativity is the result of a deeply rootedness in God.⁷⁴

God is all in all, as the creator, the sustainer, and redeemer of the world. As created beings we bear within us the “signature” of the Creator, and we human beings are even created to his own likeness (Gen 1:26). We cannot exist without God as the ground of being for He sustains us. Moreover, as the responsive love He is the destination of our pilgrimage. He redeems by bringing everything to be reconciled to himself and to all, as Saint Paul writes in 1 Cor 15: 28: “And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son Himself also be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all”. At the same time, however, we are in Him: “For in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17: 28). This notion that God is in us and we are in Him is the ground for the dignity of every human being and every local community. Of this John B Cobb writes:

⁷¹ Tissa Balasuriya, *Globalization and Human Solidarity*, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-8-globalization-and-spirituality/>.

⁷² Daniel G. Groody, *Globalizing solidarity*, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁷⁴ Matthew Fox, *A Mystical Cosmology: Toward a Postmodern Spirituality*, in: David R. Griffin (ed.), *Sacred Interconnections*, New York: State University New York Press 1990, pp. 15-30, here p. 28.

“God is the life of the world and the world is the body of God. What is done to the least of creatures is done to God; to love God is to love all creatures; to serve God is to participate with God in the enlivening and enrichment of the interconnected world.”⁷⁵

In their article on von Balthasar’s holistic understanding of spirituality, Nurya Martinez and Gayol Fernandez point out three dimensions of every Christian spirituality: unifying dimension – openness to the transcendence as the ultimate value that unifies all dimensions of a person; practical dimension – inclination to the world and the neighbors; passive dimension – being available for God by self-emptying.⁷⁶ These are also dimensions of the glocal spirituality as presented above. The unifying dimension or transcendence is a point of absolute reference in the search for the meaning of life. In the glocal spirituality, this dimension corresponds with the inherent interconnectedness of everything. God in His creative and responsive love is the guarantee of this interconnectedness and the ultimate point of reference in the self-realization of every individual. Such a spirituality drives to the realization of the orientation towards the ultimate in concrete action of service to the reality. This practical or social dimension of spirituality is expressed in the temporal-spatial openness of the glocal spirituality. To be able to focus on the practice that supports the responsibility of everything for everything, it is necessary to leave what is contrary to the spirit of interrelatedness and to embrace the openness to God who is present in everything and at every moment of life. This panentheistic character is central to the glocal spirituality.

4.3. Eucharist as the symbol of the interconnectedness of local and global contexts

The glocal spirituality is not a strange thing for the Catholic Church and its practices. In fact, interconnectedness of local and global contexts is the nature of the church. The church is catholic, and it at the same time manifests itself in a concreteness of diverse local contexts. This dynamic of the Church could be described as the unity in diversity and the diversity in unity. The local church, gathered under the bishop, is the full church, but they are simultaneously part of the *communio* with the whole church. This point is well reflected in *Lumen Gentium*. In article 23 of this document, the Council Fathers state:

“The individual bishops, however, are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their particular churches, fashioned after the model of the universal church, in and from which churches comes into being the one and only Catholic Church. For this reason, the individual bishops represent their own respective churches, but all of them together and with the Pope represent the entire church in the bond of peace, love, and unity”.

Catholicity implies unity as well diversity; it is an integration of plurality.⁷⁷ Catholicity refers to an organic whole, a cohesion, a firm synthesis, “a reality which is not scattered but, on the contrary, turned toward a center which assures its unity, whatever the expanse in area or internal differentiation might be”.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ John B. Cobb, Jr., *From Individualism to Persons in Community: A Postmodern Economic Theory*, in *Sacred Interconnections*, pp. 123-142, here p. 142.

⁷⁶ Nurya Martinez-Gayol Fernandez, Hans Urs von Balthasar: el pensamiento, p. 168.

⁷⁷ Vincent J. Miller, “Where is the Church? Globalization and Catholicity”, in *Theological Studies* 69/2/2008, pp. 412-432, here p. 422.

⁷⁸ William T. Cavanaugh, *The Political Imagination*, London: Bloomsbury 2013, p 113.

The right understanding of catholicity prevents us from simply replacing it with globality and universality.⁷⁹ Catholicity refers to both the fullness of faith as well as geographical universality. The church, therefore, is not only catholic when it becomes a worldwide reality. Even when the community gathered on the Pentecost in Jerusalem was already catholic as in it the fullness of faith and the salvation of humankind were granted.⁸⁰ In the words of William Cavanaugh, “the church gathered in the catacombs, after all, was as catholic as the church that would ride Constantine’s chariot to the ends of the known world.”⁸¹

Vincent J. Miller mentions three complementary meanings of catholicity that are helpful in understanding the interconnectedness of local and global dimensions of the Church. The first, catholicity is breadth. This aspect of the understanding of catholicity points to the geographical extension as well as the true communion of the local churches of the world. The church is catholic as it is present in the whole world in the form of local churches and these local churches are in the *communio* and fraternal communication with each other. The second is communion of difference. Catholicity is not an exclusion of difference, but an inclusion of the diversity. It does not operate with the either/or principle, but with the both/and one. The church is catholic when it promotes dialogue and reconciliation among diverse groups, be they ethnical, racial, religious, economical or gender in nature. Vatican II uses the image of the body to demonstrate this plurality and unity of the one church of Christ. The third is catholicity as depth. Catholicity is not an escape from the local situation, it “is not an abstract allegiance that lifts one from the burdens of a place”.⁸² A commitment to the universal cannot be done without being rooted in the local context. Therefore, “catholicity roots the individual in a community that is enmeshed in a deeper global network of relationship.”⁸³ For the church to be the sacrament of salvation, it has to be realized in the concrete lives of particular communities in their full historical context. The realization of salvation means to challenge the sinfulness of the local context, and to elevate the good elements to the fullness.⁸⁴

The church believes that the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, is “the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is the fount from which all her power flows.”⁸⁵ It is at the same time the most important act of the church. In other words, in the Eucharist the church is constituted and finds its expression. The Eucharist makes the church. In listening to and meditating the word of God and sharing the Lord’s body and Blood, the church manifests itself as catholic in a local community. It is the center that holds the diversity together. However, this center is itself decentered because the Eucharist is “celebrated in the multitude of the local churches scattered throughout the world.”⁸⁶ *Lumen Gentium* expresses this decentered centeredness of the Eucharist by saying:

“This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called churches in the New Testament. For in their locality these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness. In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, that

⁷⁹ Referring to Henry de Lubac William T. Cavanaugh writes: “‘Universal’ suggests ‘spreading out’; ‘catholic’ suggests gathering together.” William T. Cavanaugh, *The Political Imagination*, London: Bloomsbury 2013, p. 113.

⁸⁰ Vincent J. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

⁸¹ William T. Cavanaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁸² Vincent J. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁸⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10.

⁸⁶ William T. Cavanaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

by the food and blood of the Lord's body the whole brotherhood may be joined together. In any community of the altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is exhibited a symbol of that charity and 'unity of the mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation'. In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living in the Diaspora, Christ is present, and in virtue of His presence they are all brought together and united as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. For 'the partaking of the body and blood of Christ does nothing other than make us be transformed into that which we consume'.⁸⁷

The Eucharist as the celebration of the mystery of salvation cannot be celebrated at the cost of any local community. In this celebration, people should find themselves and, at the same time, they are united with the head of the body and connected with the other parts of the body. No homogenization or cultural imposition should take place in the Eucharist. The cultural elements, as suggested by the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 37, should find their ways to the Eucharist, not just as a decoration, but as an expression of the unity in diversity of the body of Christ, as the deepest meaning of the Eucharist. Also in the Eucharist, the globalization needs a glocalization, in that the universal dimension of the adoration is celebrated in the cultural context which is particular and local.⁸⁸

In the Eucharist celebrated locally, the whole body of Christ is present and manifested. The local community is not just part of the whole body and receives its meaning therefrom. It is in itself "a concentration of the whole".⁸⁹ This concentration transcends all natural and social divisions, as Saint Paul says: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). All consume the same body and are absorbed into the same body. Therefore, "If one suffers, all suffers together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1 Cor 12: 26). The commitment to the global is manifested in the care to the local, and the love to the local is a way to express the concern for the global. Cavanaugh maintains that in the Eucharist "one becomes more united to the whole the more tied one becomes to the local".⁹⁰ This unity as a body puts before us the question of whether we implement it in reality. Saint Paul criticizes the Corinthians because of their inconsistency: consuming the body of Christ but at the same time living in division (1 Cor 11). Eucharist is the celebration of true relationships with God, between the people, groups, and communities, in the local and the global context alike.⁹¹

As a celebration of the memory of life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Eucharist brings us to those with whom Jesus had a special affinity, i.e. the poor and the neglected, not only people and groups of people, but also local communities who suffer from the globalization process. Consequently, living the Eucharist shall make every Christian aware of their responsibility for the whole world and of their solidarity with those local communities which are in danger of being oppressed and neglected. Moreover, the Eucharist will serve as the fount of ideas and motivation for taking the initiatives to transform the world to a more just interconnectedness of the communities.⁹² Understanding and living out the Eucharist as described above will help us to develop a spirituality that inspires and strengthens us to commit ourselves to defend the local communities from being swept out by globalization, and to develop the local communities to make them contribute to the progress of the whole humanity.

⁸⁷ *Lumen Gentium* 26.

⁸⁸ Daniel G. Groody, *Globalizacion, Espiritualidad y Justicia*, Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2009, p. 338-339.

⁸⁹ William T. Cavanaugh, *op. cit.*, p 115.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 115.

⁹¹ Daniel G. Groody, *Globalizacion, Espiritualidad y Justicia, op.cit.*, p. 337.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 341.

Eucharist as the sacrament to nurture and live out the glocal spirituality also becomes clear when we reflect on it from the perspective of interculturality.⁹³ Eucharist is the celebration of life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, “to participate in the Eucharist is to participate in the memorial of the passion, death and Resurrection of Christ himself, with all its richness, with all its breadth, with all its significance.”⁹⁴ Eucharist is a gift, because in it we realize and experience the love of God who accepts and unites us with himself and with one another in all our uniqueness. It is a gift to have our cultural context be accepted by the Lord and by others. It is equally a gift to go beyond our cultural shaping to enter one, universal body of Christ. At the same time, the Eucharist, as a commitment into communion with the Eucharistic Christ, is a gift. It is a gift because, empowered by the Spirit, we “unite ourselves freely with His mission and with the full offering of his life to the Father for the life of the world.”⁹⁵ Eucharist is a mission. “We would not be honest, if after offering ourselves with Christ to the Father and renewing our unity with him in Eucharistic communion, we would not want to re-assume his mission”.⁹⁶ As Saint Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth: "The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:16-17). For Paul, it is clear that “through the Eucharist we really become one single body with all the races, tongues, and nations. There is no more division” (Gal 3:28).

The Eucharist enables the experience of interculturality, the experience of being rooted in the local reality while embracing the others from different backgrounds. Maria Elizabeth Klein puts it beautifully by saying,

“The Eucharist has the mission of forming new persons for a new world: persons centered on the life and mission of Christ, persons who cultivate unity, who let themselves be led by the truth about themselves and about others, the truth which concedes to all human beings the value that God himself gave them in Christ. To value each human being with the value given by Christ himself is to feel one with him in Christ: this is to live the Eucharist.”⁹⁷

Conclusion

Process philosophy and theology demonstrate the interconnectedness of everything. In this essential relation, everything bears responsibility for the rest and the rest influences everything. In our globalized world today, such an awareness seems to gain new significance. A spirituality that comes out from this understanding of the world and from the experience of interrelatedness could help us to see that globalization does not necessarily mean imposition of one culture upon the others. It also helps us to see that protecting a local culture is not the same as building a ghetto. We can be positive to globalization in the sense of being open to be enriched and to enrich others while being committed to local community in the sense of exploring and valuing its richness and promoting it for the whole world. In globalization, the local communities are reflected; and in the local communities the global world is present. This model of understanding globalization is best reflected in the Eucharist: the presence of the global context in the local community and the transformation of a local community to be united with the whole.

⁹³ Maria Elizabeth Klein, “Sharing on the Experiences of our Communities in Intercultural Life and Mission” (ms), 2012.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

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