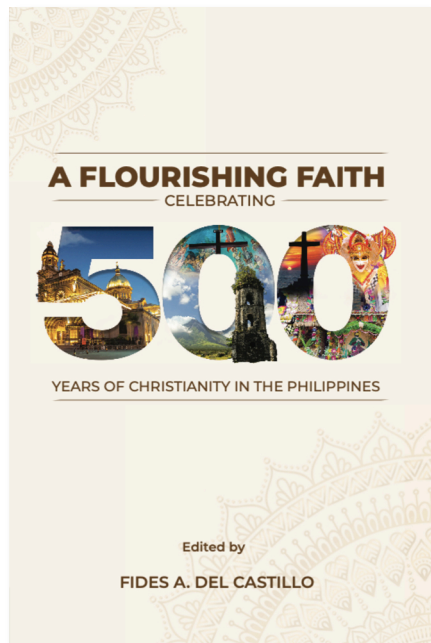


# REVIEW: *A Flourishing Faith: Celebrating 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines* Edited by Fides Del Castillo

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Fides del Castillo's book, *A Flourishing Faith: Celebrating 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines*, takes its inspiration from Matthew 10:8 "Freely you have received; freely give. " This collection of studies aims to illustrate the importance of faith among Filipinos in both culture and society, as well as the significance of religion and spirituality among them. By using the history of how the Christian faith implanted and flourished in the native country as the foundation of the first chapter, Del Castillo illuminated the various perspectives and insights on the Catholic Church in the Philippines. The book is divided into three parts which contain ten chapters of studies about the Filipino Christian faith.

The first part of the book is titled "Mission and Evangelization." It describes how the Christian faith spread through the evangelical efforts of missionaries in the Philippines. The second chapter of the book is titled "Rediscovering of the Christian Story." Rebecca Cacho discusses how the foundation of the Christian faith was handed down from generation to generation, or better known as the handing down of the culture and faith-based on Jesus of Nazareth. As a reminder of who the Filipinos are as part of the growth and development of the Catholic Church, Cacho retraces the best elements of the faith. As the author points out, the faithful are challenged to rediscover the riches of the faith and retell it with zeal and commitment just like the apostles did after the Pentecost. In Chapter 3, Marilou shared her insights on Lukan meals and missions. This reading is positioned within the See-Judge-Act-Evaluate-Celebrate/Ritualize theological-pastoral

spiral. By revealing Jesus from being a guest to being the host and becoming food and drink Himself at the table, her study demonstrates a narrative critical and contextual reading of the Lukan meal stories. In this COVID 19 crisis, the author calls on Christians to embody faith by doing justice for the hungry and needy. This first part of the anthology culminates on the study of Delfino Canceran OP who wrote the *Failure of Evangelization: Perspective from Cognitive Science of Religion*, in which he quotes the statement from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines that "all faithful, especially the pastors, should recognize and admit their own "mea culpas; my faults" and failures to effectively and credibly evangelize and share the Good News of Christ."

The second part is an anthology of Filipino youth and identity and discusses the distinctiveness of Filipino believers at the same time that it discusses how the Church reaches out to young people for dialogue. In Chapter 5 Carolina Dionco discusses the concept of resilience. Defining the Filipino identity as resilient, which is revered and admired around the world, Dionco pointed the historical effect of colonialism on the Filipino identity. However, the author also discusses how religious ideas and symbols could be reclaimed and used for social justice, peace, and freedom; a liberation-centered Christian resilience. In Chapter 6, Donnie Duchin Duya and Carmelo Martinez offered their insights on mission and the youth. Various recent documents of the Church regarding young people are discussed in the article as a way for the Church to engage in dialogue with the youth of today while maintaining a sense of optimism toward them.

The third section of the book explores different experiences and stories of the Church on the move. In their study, Fides del Castillo, Clarence Darro del Castillo, and Maricris Alvarez examine spiritual well-being and its role in the social context of selected novices in the Philippines. Although religion and spirituality are difficult to define and gauge using scientific methods, the researchers hope to contribute to the psychology of religion by knowing and understanding the religious experiences of a few Catholic novices and their spiritual well-being. Furthermore, Reuel Rito Seno's discusses the role of parishes in today's society, not only as local communities of believers, but also as instruments of conversion in the Catholic Church, which is always reforming and changing for the better. Following is the chapter on the "Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: Church of the Poor and Community of Disciples" by Rito Baring, Fides Del Castillo, Raymund Habaradas and Feorillo Demetrio III. The authors discuss the emergence of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) as an outcome of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) that promotes Christian vocation

and proclaims the Gospel to small communities. By living out and continuing the life and mission of Jesus Christ, they serve as the basis of the local Church.

Finally, the editor shares her insights and reflections on God's presence and Christian mission. Del Castillo emphasized the Holy Father Pope Francis' homily at the Mass for the 500th anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines in March 2021, in which he noted that the Church acknowledges the witness of Christian faith Filipinos offer by their discreet and hardworking presence while urging them to persevere more in the work of evangelization.

I highly recommend and encourage Christians and those interested in mission studies to read this book. Specifically, the catechists, religious educators, and members of the academic community will benefit from the studies. This book is an important addition to the missionary resource and beneficial to missiological and educational activities.

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