IMAGES OF THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIANS' IMAGINATION IN JAVA

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ABSTRACT

We have reams of ideas about the church. We like to talk about them, amazed by their resourcefullness. But these are ideas. When it is the ideas that are touched upon, the actors on the stage are not the ordinary people. They are intellectuals; indeed, theologians. It is a church-talk. However, when it comes down to the faithful, the church becomes churches. The ideas become images. The talk becomes imagining. For Christians in Java, togetherness in the circles of friends and families has always been an everydayness. And in this togetherness, what is spoken about is not the idea, but first of all the 'image' of a familial community. These people have a lot of time to share how they can live their lives at each moment. They are not very much 'systematic' in their way of sharing experiences, and they do not want to complicate things, for they already think that things have always been complicated enough in life. Their simple hopes and concerns are always oriented towards the harmony of their community life. They imagine, interpret and evaluate many things, so as to find the relatedness of realities in their togetherness. In this sense, this paper wants to capture those marvelous moments driven by the believers' imagination on the

epistemological level of the believers' experience.

Introduction

We might have had our own conceptions on images, church and imagination. Nevertheless, the whereabouts of these ideas in the line of the so-called ecclesiology 'from below' would be an indispensable preparation in order to make a headway in the course of doing 'imagerial theology', doing theology with images. This paper will focus on the Christians as members of the church. For that purpose, I would like to borrow the term 'ecclesiology from below' as suggested by Roger Haight in his article "Ecclesiology from Below: Genesis of the Church".[1] We will look at the descriptions of the related ideas heuristically with the help of some authors so that we can find out some (new) aspects that will be helpful to view the church from the perspective of the believers. Our attentiveness to these authors is not so much to create abstract theories as to aim at figurative apprehensions of the church that may help support the improvement of (catechetical) material about the church in Java. Tracing these apprehensions is the necessary step to explore the possibilities regarding this matter.

The problem is the *gap* between the more *traditional concepts* of the church learned by the believers during the catechetical process and the *concrete images* embedded in their sociocultural realities. In attending to this problem, I would like to mark the relevance of the following discussions to the local context of Java. Given that the catechetical *content* about the church consists of images that are not immediately familiar to the believers in Java, there is a need to explore the believers' culturally embedded images and the hermeneutical mediation of these images and the images of the church in the Scriptures. For example, an explanation about the church to the believers in Java by presenting the image "Mystical Body of Christ" will need to be followed by some 'cultural' images that can help the local believers comprehend the church as illustrated in this 'biblical' image. Presenting a traditional concept about the church without the help of some 'cultural' images may hinder the process of embracing the realities of the church in the encounters and conversations of faith among the believers. The role of the

culturally embedded images is to support the more traditional concepts of the church in relation to the believers' living experiences. In line with this, we can presume that an improvement of the catechetical content about the church with the help of the believers' 'cultural' images and the church images in the Scriptures can help resolve our catechetical problem. This rationale gives rise to the themes of relation between the self and the community and the believers' sharing of experiences as an encounter of faith. Images of the church that may be beneficial to the catechetical process can be traced back to the images showing the believers' relationship with their socio-cultural community. 'How' these 'cultural' images support the catechetical process can be explored through the believers' day-to-day conversations about their faith.

On Images

It is probably more convenient to start discussing the church with the images already known in the Scriptures or those learned by the believers during their catechetical period. In that case we will be immediately provided with a bunch of church images. However, discussing the church with the help of such 'ready-made' images might appear to be more 'instructive' rather than 'explorative' in its character. In that sense images may appear as tools conveyed in the discussions only when they are needed. Now, in faithfulness to an ecclesiology seen from the believers' perspective, we need to reverse our journey in figuring the church starting from their realities, that is, from their images. As stated above, our idea of an image will rule the whole method in figuring the church. It is therefore imperative at this stage to look into some ideas about images which will support our method.

John Henry Newman is our starting point to to explore the images, for his emphasis of the 'realising' function of images in the minds of the believers. Furthermore, it would be expedient to use Newman considering that he also puts the faithful at the focus of discussions about the church.[2] We want to emphasise that his ideas about images can contribute advantageous insights to our discussions about the church images in the minds of the believers. In particular, Newman's ideas can help reveal the hidden characteristics of images which can be useful for our study and the importance of the believers' imagination in the dynamic of their faith as members of the church. Newman's ideas can be complemented with those

of Benedict Anderson in order to get a more socio-cultural understanding of 'image'.[3] It's true that Anderson focuses more on the political aspect of a nation as 'imagined community'. However, he could be helpful for our purpose to emphasise the continued existence of 'images' in the minds of the believers in living their communal life and the important role of imagination in imagining and communicating the meaningful images.

In the light of Newman, *an image* means *an impression left in our memory and made by sensible objects from our experiences*.[4] An image is a result of our apprehension, not simply understanding, of a matter or an experience. It comes from our experiences. As Newman expresses it, "notions come of abstractions, images come of experiences."[5] Thus, images first of all concern sensible objects and experiences. The great advantage to start our research about the church images is that images may last longer in the minds of the believers. As Newman puts it, "the memory of countenances and of places in times past may fade away from the mind; but the vivid image of certain anxieties or deliverances never."[6] It is inevitable that in exploring the believers' images of the church we may be distracted by the believers' subjective interpretations or even by our own interpretations of their images. Images are object of interpretations. However, let us notice that interpretation is always part of the process lived by the imaging subject. Interpretations are affected by images and vice versa especially when it concerns some preferred images. A white house can provoke various impressions and interpretations from those passing the street in front of it. The white house itself does not change, but its images kept in the minds of the passers-by may differ depending on their preferred point of view. Images kept in the mind of the believers are the images we are discussing in this paper.

Images are basically images of things. In this sense, images are 'real' since they are perceived from the real things in experiences, which impressions are left on the minds.[7] "These images," Newman says, "have an influence both on the individual and on society, which mere notions cannot exert."[8] This understanding underlies the importance of images over notions in some particular societies or cultures very much affected by 'imagerial' way of thinking, that is, the way of *apprehending* or *assenting* to the teachings about the church *with the help of* (local, cultural, familiar) *images*. The case will be different if we are discussing the theological assent among the scholars and theologians. The latter might be influenced by notional rather than 'imagerial' ways of thinking in order to come to certain theological understandings.

Nevertheless, the way ordinary believers apprehend and bear on the teachings about the church cannot be restricted to notional reasoning only. The believers need *to image* and at the same time to find the truths of the teachings in their daily lives.[9] While notional reasoning is generally used by theologians, imagining ('real apprehension') are brought into play mainly by ordinary believers. Newman supports this idea when distinguishing the real assents from the notional assents.[10] This distinction is by no means to abandon the functioning of both ways of understanding in the whole process of the believers' apprehension. But considering the influences images may bring on the believers as well as on the society and the church community they belong to, we cannot but acquiesce the believers' images as an important driving force that helps the local church (communities) persist in the globalised world today.[11]

At this point one might consider images as 'instruments', but these are indispensable instruments in the minds of the believers. As essential instruments in the real apprehensions of the believers, images cannot be valued as true or false.[12] They simply assist the believers' minds to assent to certain church teachings. We do not assess images in the same way like we do with ideas. In this sense, images function like the metaphors we live by. Like metaphors, they emerge to help us understand unfamiliar things or ideas.[13] In this line, images must come from our daily lives, from the ordinary, concrete and familiar things, in order to provide their contributions in the process of the believers' real apprehensions.

It is worthwhile to put our attention on the remarks Newman makes with regard to the believers' real assent, since they might help us grab the realising character of images. *First*, Newman states that "in Real [Assents], [the mind] is directed towards things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination."[14] It means that images of concrete things, once left in the believers' minds, remain 'real' to them. An image, as Newman puts it, is an "objectum internum,"[15] regardless the fact that it's made of concrete experiences. Being aware of this, we may construe in what sense images could appear to be real in the minds of the believers. They are *real* in the sense that the believers are able to remotely recall their particular experiences with the help of the imagination. They are not simply some random upshots of fantasy, which can be anything that has no relevance with experiences or even does not exist in this world, but impressions from experiences which, in Newman's word, may 'intensify' the believers' assents. An image of a 'social

person' in the society,[16] for instance, may intensify the believers' comprehension of the church's inclusivity towards the society. In the light of Benedict Anderson, image can be referred to as 'style' in which communities are imagined.[17] He gives an example that "Javanese villagers have always known that they are connected to people they have never seen, but these ties were once imagined particularistically." There is this sense of realness in images even though there also has been a distance separating them from direct experiences.

Second, "Real Assent [then], or Belief, as it may be called, viewed in itself, that is, simply as Assent, does not lead to action; but *the images* in which it lives, representing as they do the concrete, have the power of the concrete upon the affections and passions, and by means of these indirectly become operative."[18] In other words, it is images that can move the believers and evoke their actions. In our further discussions, it will be indicated that some images left in the believers' minds as impressions may stimulate further actions and greater participations. Furthermore, if we consider the presence of meaningful images and collective imagination in certain cultures, images will appear to be more powerful in stirring up communal actions and devotions. We may say further that in the cultural contexts the ordinary believers may not apprehend certain ideas without previously imagining the related images. We will notice also in the later chapters that some contextual and meaningful images will play a significant role in promoting the believers' participations in the church activities and shaping their models of being church contextually. As an example, images like 'family meal' and 'fraternal meeting' can motivate the believers to be faithful and committed in their experiences of togetherness and fellowship in the ecclesial community.

Third, "[real assents] are of a personal character, each individual having his own, and being known by them."[19] This indicates that each real assent or apprehension may have its own related images that will depend on one's personal and concrete experiences. Some images of particular objects are related to a respective experience, and consequently, to a respective apprehension. We may further imply that in the context of cultural experiences, images left in the believers' minds may help them comprehend 'personally', which, in the Newmanian sense, concretely and really, in 'common' images certain aspects of the community they belong to.[20] Thus, in relation to community the 'personal' characters of the believers' assents also obtain their 'communal' character, a character that will be requisite to further

our arguments on the believers' ways of figuring the church and being church contextually. The image of a leader as 'father', for instance, may help the local believers apprehend in their particular ways some aspects of obedience and dependence within the church.

All in all, Newman's idea of an image is not simply a vivid mental picture of an object. What he means by the term 'image', as Terrence Merrigan expresses it, is "a vivid *realisation* of a particular object, a realisation so intense that the object becomes a fact in the imagination."[21] Images are the "form" accessible to the mind,[22] as it were. Here we would highlight the most arresting characteristic of images, viz., that they have the faculty 'to make real' the particular objects they represent in the form our minds can use to apprehend certain notional realities. The objects in this sense become 'real' in our minds. The reality (or the terminology) of the church, as a case in point, might not be something emerging from within some cultures. The people of the local culture would need *to imagine* or *to image* the church within the scope of images familiar to them so as to apprehend what the church 'really' is. In a manner of speaking, they have to make it 'real' to their minds with the help of their imagination. The church, for these people, will not be 'real' without the associating images. It may remain inextricably a notional reality, known simply by its 'name' if it cannot be concretely realised by the local believers. It becomes real only when its images are allowed to intensify its realness in the minds of the believers. This idea will be paramount in our following discussions given that what matters most among the believers is the real apprehension and not in the first place the notional one.

We may now recognise that the *realising* function of images seems to have corrected their commonly presumed 'referential' character. Images turn out to be exceptionally essential since they not only refer to the material things in reality but furthermore 'realise' the matters we experience in reality though not in their material sense. Paul Minear expresses it rightly when stating that "images often serve a quite different function, that is, as a mode for perceiving a given reality, especially where *this* reality is of such a nature *not* to be amenable to objective visibility or measurement."[23] For example, we have our own experiences of what an 'encounter' is in everyday life. Yet, we cannot show the reality of an encounter to other people unless we use some images, like greetings, holding each other hands and smiling to each other, which may describe to the others that an encounter is something real and can be realised. Sometimes we even cannot use only one image, but many, to

figure this encounter. When it concerns people of other cultures or parts of the world, we probably have to use images which are familiar to them and to ourselves so as to describe what kind of 'encounter' we are talking.

One may describe this realising function of images in the sense of 'concretising' so that the things represented become '*imaginable*' to the believers. As our experiences are always concrete and real, thus also images which come of our experiences are real. We may have noticed that in order to press forward our research on the imagerial character of the church we will have to deal with the realness of images in the minds of the believers. Moving farther in this way might bring us to the deepening, or 'intensifying', to use Newman's word, of the believers' faith. This adds another reason for allowing and emphasising the concrete and realistic images to come up in our discussions about the church from the believers' perspective. In short, an *image* is an impression in our minds about concrete object from particular experience.

Understanding images in this perspective doesn't have to lead us to a certain 'realism' that rejects any notional or impractical idea. An 'imagerial' way of perceiving reality is not so much a way around to remove ideas (or conceptions) from our discussions about the church as an effort to enrich our ecclesiological world-views. In fact, we cannot figure the church without in the same breath conceive it conceptually. Church images, noticeably when come up among the faithful, could mirror the 'critiques' lying in their hearts. Our effort to attend to images reclaims an important movement that might have been forgotten in the learning process of the believers: the emancipation of images.

Images of the Church and the Local Churches

We will now elaborate which images that will be beneficial for figuring the church from below. We are aware of the varieties of images of the church, but we want to consider that there are images of the church found in the Scriptures and those imagined by the local believers in their respective culture. For the sake of convenience, images of the church found in the Scriptures will be termed 'biblical images' of the church.

The 'biblical' images of the church can be found for instance in Paul S. Minear's *Images of the Church in the New Testament* [24] and Ralph Martin's *The Family and the Fellowship: New Testament Images of the Church*. [25] These images of

the church are basically images found in and developed from the Scriptures. They are studied and explored in a close relationship with the Scriptures and the related biblical situations. One of the familiar images is the church as the 'People of God', which refers to the great assembly of Israel when they were called out of Egypt to meet with God at Mount Sinai. The church in this image is also called God's 'peculiar' people (1Peter 2:9). Another image in reference to 1Corinthians 12:27 presents the church as the 'Body of Christ'. Sometimes it is also called the 'Mystical Body of Christ' according to the Pauline tradition.

There might be a difficulty in exploring these images, especially if we are not prepared for the profusion of images in the Scriptures, as Paul Minear has discovered in his book mentioned above. We might be overwhelmed by the various images in the Scriptures that we are not sure which images should be taken into account so as to figure the church in the local context. This difficulty might be caused by an attempt to choose some images from the Scriptures that might fit our situations. But this is not what we will do in an 'imagerial' ecclesiology. We do not want simply to snow every culture with the various images from the Scriptures however illuminating they might be. Correlating these images will be much more revealing when we take on the so-called '*synoptic thinking*' in Minear's term.[26] This synoptic thinking implies that we do not want to start from one image figuring the most appropriate model of the church. We do otherwise by starting from the reality itself, which is the church as actually and locally experienced by the faithful, while in the same breath unearthing the images from the Scriptures that will illuminate the reality lived.

Images from the Scriptures would be familiar insofar as one is also familiar with the Scriptures. We have to bear in mind that the images in the Scriptures also emerged from specific contexts and cultures. These images will require a knowledge of the Scriptures in order to comprehend the kinds of church community experienced by the specific people. Without this knowledge, these images cannot function as a vehicle of 'real' apprehension. We will not start our research with these images considering that we want to figure the church from the viewpoint of the local believers. It will remain important, however, to correlate these church images with other images emerging in the course of this study so as to find the biblical basis for the believers' 'cultural' images of the church. The images from the Scripture will play an irreplaceable role, i.e., to assess the other images for the purpose of maintaining the theological aspect of our explorations. These 'biblical'

images are the *assessment criteria* for doing theology with images.

The church 'biblical' images are the basic for ecclesiologies. The church illustrated in this kind of images can be found, for example, in Avery Dulles' *Models of the Church* [27] and Denis M. Doyle's *Communion Ecclesiology.* [28] Images of the church in ecclesiological discussions are generally interpretative images and always refer back to the Scriptures. Here images are interpreted to a greater depth in relation with the current situations of the world. The references of these theological discussions are in the church teachings and the documents of the Councils. We may presume that images of the church interpreted theologically can shape the ways the local churches carry on their ecclesial tasks. The consequence of this scheme is that there will be more focused explanations about the contents of the church reality and towards which ideals the local churches might want to orient themselves. Nevertheless, this scheme will run the risk that the contents delivered to the faithful might be impractical. This, to some extent, is responsible for the 'memorising' and 'reproducing' tendencies in the religious education and catechesis as once also criticised by Johannes van der Ven. [29]

The purpose of images interpreted theologically is 'to explain' what the church is. These images are theologically paraphrased. They are mainly explanatory, bearing with them the duty to account for the church teachings. We can see that these images are found in the Scriptures but then further developed to figure ('from above') the characters of the church in the world. These church images are employed to define the current tasks of the church within the society. Images of the church as a 'Servant' and an 'Exodus Community' are two of the examples. These images, while interpreted in relation to the world, necessitate the presumed theological knowledge and language. Starting to discuss the church based on this sort of images may fade the participation of the ordinary believers who would more readily talk about the concrete and daily images rather than those already interpreted theologically. Arriving at this point, we may have anticipated that the favourable images for the purpose of an ecclesiology 'from below' would be those which emerge from within the local and sociocultural realities. Our theological interpretation of the church images will surface when we correlate them with the 'biblical' images.

The second group of church images, again for the sake of convenience, can be termed as '(socio)cultural' images. This is definitely not to say that church images in the Scriptures are not cultural, since every image

used to figure the church is by all means 'cultural', that is, arising and developing from a specific culture. However, for our purpose, 'cultural' images would be understood as images emerging particularly from the respective culture in this study. They might be called 'contextual' images as well, since they are familiar for the people of the local culture and therefore are claimed to be effective when used to comprehend realities unfamiliar to them. Although they may appear traditional and conventional, 'cultural' images of the church cannot be judged as simply 'social' images or local images about society. These cultural images might consist of social images, but they could play a significant role in the process of catechesis about the church. We may say also that these images are 'catechetical' insofar as they take into account the values of the local cultures in the believers' learning process.

When the cultural images are deliberately used in catechesis, they become a compulsory tools to help the believers apprehend and experience the church from within their own cultures. They are the available paraphernalia within the scope of a specific society, with the help of which the church can find its root in the society and at the same time can be comprehended contextually and concretely by the local believers. We could say that the local believers in one way or another *need* these images in order to find their 'place' in a new society called 'church'. At this point, we may realise the significance and the relevance of *inculturation* in the process of providing material for catechesis. Here, cultural images are like the crossing borders between the cultures and the local churches, a stepping stone for the believers in order to feel "at home" within the church. These images will be our main concern in the discussions.

Anterior to being 'catechetical', cultural images are already 'social' in the sense of popular within their respective cultures. For that reason, we can start our explorations of cultural images with social images in the cultures. Concerning the social images in Indonesia and particularly in Java, we might refer to the writings of Niels Mulder, among other, *Inside Indonesian Society: Cultural Change in Java, Indonesian Images: The Culture of the Public World and Southeast Asian Images: Towards Civil Society*?[30] Mulder explores the Indonesian images covering images from the textbooks in elementary and senior high schools, in the public and political world of Indonesia, conveyed by main and influential figures in Indonesia, and from the popular writers spreading over the country. To mention an example of the social images in Java, the image of '*wong cilik*' (the ordinary populace) is one of the popular ones among the

Javanese.[31] This image illustrates the wisdom of the ordinary people and how they live their lives ordinarily in the everydayness. Unfortunately, these people often turn out to be the victims in the political field in Indonesia. They have no power in the society and do not have the opportunities to voice their opinions, let alone to participate in the policy-making activities of the government. To tell the truth, '*wong cilik*' represents those who are expected just to do their jobs and to live their lives as they are.

In our further explorations on the cultural images concerning the church, we can learn from Mulder that social images may also take the forms of 'norms', 'principles' as well as 'unclear and indistinct words'. These might sound strange compared to our preceding descriptions of the 'concrete' character of images. In this case, we can refer to the existence of social images which take these forms, like '*kekeluargaan*' (Ind. 'familialism') and '*persatuan dan kesatuan*' (Ind. 'unity and integrity').[32] However, it remains true that some indistinct words may come up repeatedly in the common discussions that people do not care anymore about the concrete meaning of such terms, except that they know what 'ambiance' and images these terms evoke. These terms may turn into nonfigurative 'social' images because of the ambiance-related images. One good example of these images is '*rakyat*' (Ind. 'the people').[33] This word actually means the people, but when mentioned too frequently in the conversations, its meaning falls down compared to its function and can lead people to refer to people's power and people's voices. As Mulder expresses it, "the People appear as a faceless, undifferentiated, mythical whole, as the hidden force of Independence…" In these examples, we can see that even a word can function 'imagerial' in that it evokes several other related and more concrete images presumed by the speaker. The images are often taken for granted. Images, as it were, are condensations of some particular social principles which connect people as individuals within the society. If we consider this correlation in the context of the believers' way in figuring the church, the same analogy can virtually affect the relation of the believers and the church as their 'society'. It means that when discussing the believers' cultural images of the church, we may yet have to speak about their *relationships* with the ecclesial community and *how* they *situate* themselves within the church. This argument brings us to the conviction that there is another significant role of these cultural images, viz., to shape the *identity* of the local churches.

When considering the believers as the main subject of our

discussion, we soon find out that they are the important actors who make the local churches alive. It means that we have to take into account the interpreting (imagining) process among the believers concerning their relationships with the church. This interpreting process, from the believers' perspective, can be seen in the *inculturation* as an interpretation of their identity and the functioning of *imagination* in shaping their praxis of faith. I would understand *culture* in the way the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences (FABC) illustrates it, namely, whatever truly belongs to a people, "its meanings and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs and its artistry – even its frailties and failings it assumes."[34] In short, its life-realities that concern not only the customs and traditions, but the "identity and legitimate self-hood of the people."[35]

Now we can come to the conviction that the believers' cultural images are the starting point of an ecclesiology 'from below'. Therefore it should be obvious that the local churches are the immediate scene of our explorations given that these churches are actually the centre of encounters for the believers. The effectiveness of 'cultural' images lies in the relationships maintained between the believers as persons and the church as a community. In other words, it lies in the identity the believers would proclaim as a church community. Identity is the subject matter when we discourse about relationship. And when speaking about our relationships, we address deliberately the context in which we stand. In light of this, it is obvious that cultural images will always be contextual, respective to the culture being referred to and to the local church under observation.

I would like to draw the basis for this contextualisation from Robert Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies*.[36] Schreiter's examination of the three areas (context, procedure, history)[37] is important to discuss the questions concerning Christian identity. Studying church images in Java may result in a sort of contextual ecclesiology. When our discussion about church images is situated within a country in which Christianity is a minority, the question of identity will surface shortly.[38] That is why there will be a need to examine the (changing) context that has shaped the local communities' images of the church. Inculturation is part of this contextual theology, particularly in its continuing effort to interpret the gospel message and the church teachings within the current situations. The role of catechesis in the course of this inculturation is by no means ignored, since catechesis is practically our main context on this grass'-roots' level of the church.

Schreiter points to the contextual models because these models take into account the cultural context in which Christianity takes root and receives expressions.[39] We could say that the local believers, who at the same time are the cultural subjects, are the members of a community on the base of which we will initiate our ecclesiology from below. We can find the advantage of the 'ethnographic approach' of contextual model, as Schreiter puts it, "to reconstruct an identity that has been denied or considered inferior,"[40] The term 'local' of the local church refers to the respective culture in which the church finds its ground to exist. Thus, the 'local' church is the church as imagined by the believers with the help of their sociocultural images. Let us recall Newman's emphasis on the 'realising' function of images. The members of the local church need to continually interpret and imagine their relationships with the church using the available 'cultural' images. They are making the church 'real', as it were, by incessantly imagining the church from their own viewpoints. In this way, they reconstruct their identity as a local church with their particular ways of being church. The process of re-imagining one's relationship with the church with the help of cultural images can be called an 'imagerial' way of being church. This approach begins with the believers' preferences in their concrete sociocultural realities, and from here moves to the biblical and theological traditions. *Inculturation* in this sense is a process of (re-)interpreting the gospel from within the concrete sociocultural realities of the members of the local church.

There is a *dynamic* character on the culture as a relentlessly unfolding reality, while at the same time it sharpens our understanding of a local church. A local church, in this sense, is by no means a static reality. As a consequence, it is inevitable that recontextualisation becomes an unending task of the leaders as well as the ordinary believers in the local churches. A document from FABC, Paper No. 60, entitled "Theses on the Local Church: A Theological Reflection in the Asian Context" says that "inculturation in Asia, as elsewhere, demands that the local church grows by listening, perceiving and responding to the evolution of culture" (emphasis ours).[41] By bearing in mind the *listening* character of inculturation, our explorations of the images must also attend to the changes and challenges in the society that might affect the *preferences* of the believers in employing particular images in their conversations. These 'preferred images' may influence their responses towards certain situations and participations in the church activities. We can presume that the believers' participations in the ecclesial activities might be

determined to large extent by the willingness to listen to their hopes and to attend to their preferred images. Generalising approach in this listening process will only result in indifference or even refusal to participate. Communal partnership between the leaders and the members of the local church can be a good example to measure this listening process. Here lies another advantage of the 'imagerial' approach, i.e., to support a 'cultural' way of listening to the believers' social realities. Again, images are not to be judged as true or false; they are present in the realities, in the believers' minds, simply to help the believers comprehend the cultural aspects of the church.

The Believers' Imagination

Imagination is the faculty to image, or to imagine. The amazing vigours of the believers' imagination are its (1) "*evocative* power that is able to arouse in the subject the feelings and affections associated with the object of experience" and its (2) "*synthetic* power that is able to construct, out of the data of experience, an 'image' of the object of experience."[42] One can figure out that imagination, when consciously considered in relation with the dimensions of the church, will be helpful to promote unity and at the same time serve as a necessary faculty to perceive the richness of the church images. We will see how these functions of imagination may add to the dynamic of being church as experienced by the believers in the local churches. Our intention to explore the following functions of imagination in the light of Newman is based on the conviction of its importance for the believers in Java to imagine the catechetical contents about the church.

1. The evocative function of imagination. This function is very much connected with the 'realising' function of images discussed above.[43] It's not too hard to find out that the believers in Java might have been accustomed with the outcomes of this function, although not always familiar with the process. When expressing and sharing their connectedness to each other as church members, they could recall the existing local stories and spiritualities that are familiar to them so as to interpret the multidimensionality of the church. The dynamic of living together and loving each other as a church can be illustrated in various images and experienced in many ways thanks to their tendency towards 'appropriateness' of language levels and social behaviours. This tendency is inherently pluralistic without being capriciously permissive. For example, the Catholics' love for pilgrimage and communal prayer with

people of other religions in Cigugur, and the favour of devotional prayer and silent meditation before the 'Holy Heart of Jesus' shrine in Ganjuran, are some interpretations of how being church for them has never been a definition but is a real experience involving their feelings and affections as Christians. We can imagine that these believers will not cease from exploring the many facets of being church in their society. Their attention to each other's 'rasa' ('internal sensitivity'), when connected to the image of the church as pilgrim People of God, can lead to an appreciation of each other's way of imagining God's presence in the community. This attitude is 'historical' in the sense that it concerns the real feelings of the believers through their journey of faith. It is also 'social' in the sense that it stirs up solidarity with other people whose 'rasa' also has to be given attention. Newman's view of an 'evocative' imagination becomes important in our study when the believers' 'rasa' working in their daily conversations is seriously taken into account. As Merrigan says it, "Newman is aware that even the presence of vivid images in the mind does not insure action."[44] It is the believers' imagination that may 'intensify'[45] assent in relation to the judicial function of "rasa".[46]

But how could the local churches be an agent fostering the multidimentionality of the church by nurturing the believers' imagination? Three issues will be noted. *First*, the local church, as the closest home for the believers, needs to attend to and capture the concrete and the tangible, i.e., the 'real' in all their feelings and affections associated with the Divine. This can be seen, for instance, in the procession of over thirty Legio Mariae's *presidia* with colourful banners vowing their loyalty to St. Mary in Cigugur, or in the miscellaneous fruits and land products carried on the shoulders of the believers from various groups during the Eucharist celebration in Ganjuran. *Second,* the local church is supposed to offer creative sociocultural interpretations of the church through the images that reflect the actual situations, drawing upon the bible and the church documents. What matters most for the believers is the living character of the Word, and by 'living' we mean the relevance and the 'functioning' of images from the Scriptures in the real life of the believers. By presenting the real and concrete situations in the meetings, the local church opens the space for the imagination to work in the faith discussions and move the believers towards concrete acts of faith.[47] *Third,* the believers' imagination working in the common prayers is the 'locus' for the local church to trace and to observe the realities of faith. Symbols,

stories, and images that are predominant among the believers are in fact the believers' ways in faith to cope with realities. These do not surface without reason. They exist and are imagined by the faithful as a response to problems and difficulties. It is the Spirit which moves the believers from within to express their faith with particular images. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26).[48] Imagination, when allowed to articulate the common prayers of the local church in images, can hold the tensions which were unbearable, bearable.

2. The synthetic function of imagination. Merrigan distinguishes this function as in Newman's 'prehending' imagination. It is a function that enables the faithful to reconcile conflicting descriptions contained in a particular image.[49] Imagination, seen in this function, helps the faithful in the local churches to sense the unity with the universal Church. This faculty creates the feeling of inclusivity albeit the variety of images it, too, can spur. Through their experience of togetherness in community and above all in the sharing of the same Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, the believers can sense their participation in the universal Church. The outlines of this function of imagination appear in the inclusive characters of Christian faith. This inclusivity is what Dennis M. Doyle refers to in his illustration of the notion "catholicity."[50] At the same time, imagination considered in the light of its synthetic function also yields transformations through what George Newlands indicates as participation, reciprocity and dialogue.[51] In view of the latter, the believers' imagination plays an important role in correlating the different faith expressions and bringing them towards a unifying process. Imagination, in this sense, is connecting, correcting, and transforming what formerly appeared as local expressions into an expression of the larger church community.

Inclusivity. Because of the tensions in the local communities, imagination can surprisingly bring the faithful towards a unity in a larger community. When differences and various interpretations occur among the faithful, the spirit of solidarity and togetherness through the church activities and prayers seems never fail to unite them. Such is also the focus of 'communion ecclesiology,' which emphasises "relationships, whether among the persons of the Trinity, among human beings and God, among the members of the Communion of Saints, among members of a parish, or among the bishops dispersed throughout the world."[52] Imagination relates

those which were unrelated, puts in conversation those which were separated, and gives room for dialogues to those which weren't able to communicate due to many reasons. This inclusive imagination is probably best expressed in what Peter C. Phan points out as "dialogical imagination."[53] This imagination is at work whenever Christians, guided by the spirit of God, seek to create community, insofar as this is unforced community of the divine love.[54] The local church therefore appears as the right place to foster the believers' dialogical imagination. This inclusive faculty creatively helps communities of believers on the local level to find the unifying symbols, stories and images so as to recognise and affirms Christian truth wherever it may be found. We can imagine that among these communities, the preferrable image of the church is the one that illustrates openness towards differences. The Catholics in Cigugur as well as in Ganjuran have their monthly Eucharist celebration organised every Thursday night before the day called '*Jumat Kliwon*', which is 'the sacred Friday according to the Javanese calendar'. This Eucharist in both parishes has turned out to be a special event attended by so many faithful from other cities and it's organised in the Marian pilgrimage complex in Cisantana, near Cigugur, and in the complex of the shrine of the Holy Heart of Jesus in Ganjuran. Even today the believers in Java still appreciate special events involving many people like this, which help them experience their fellowship with the members of the larger church community. It has been known among the believers in Java that these events in fact have attracted people of different cultures and religions, too. We can see that here the 'synthetic' function of imagination may open the possibility of unity in divergency.

    Transformation. The inclusive function of imagination in turn can change the believers from within. As the believers' tendency to keep on communicating with each other creates an atmosphere of relatedness, their imagination goes further in opening space for a change. In light of this, imagination listens to the voice of the Spirit. It helps the believers to be open to the active transforming presence of God but at the same time makes them critical about the kind of harmony it also yields.[55] When it comes down to faith, the transformative thrust of imagination sustains the believers' faith in ways that merely reason cannot. Even in difficult times and ambiguous situations, the believers may find strength and illuminations with the help of the imagination. The transformative process manifests in the spirit of togetherness to endure the difficulties. If at one time the imagination brings

the believers to emphasise the image 'family', for example, then it's also an invitation to deepen their faith as a family especially in that particular situation. Imagination, here, intenfisies the feeling of being related as a family by connecting it to the faith of being God's family. It is transformative to the believers as well as to their own image of 'family'. An example of this transformative spirit can be found in one of the '*kampung*' in Ganjuran, Bantul, Central Java, Indonesia, after the earthquake shattering the area in 2006. There have been initatives from the local believers to organise cultural events especially for children to comfort and heal them from the traumatic experience. The believers felt themselves moved and they took care of these children regardless their religions. Those were moments of change in the real times of crisis. This transformative function of imagination is significant to the local churches, since the latter are the closest reality and the 'real world' of the faithful, as it were, to start entering the unity with the universal Church as a 'larger' family connected to the world. Gerard Loughlin was right when noting that, in reference to Newman, "the religious imagining of the world can take hold of mind and body, transforming us into the family of Jesus Christ."[56] It's true, because faith can't be faith if it's not transforming. The believers' faith is intensified by their imagination, develops through their expressions as a local church, and will lead them towards further transformations. The local church needs to be aware of the believers' dynamic in expressing their faith by way of cultural images, since through this process it will be able to guide them towards the transformations.

Conclusion

Two tentative outlooks can be stated here. *First*, the emphasis on images rather than ideas in sharing the Christian faith and figuring the church will bring about more realistic conversations among the believers. There has been a temptation in the believers' meetings that the discussions tend to focus on the concepts and the theories of common life. References to the bible and to the church teachings are often made but with the risk that the conversations do not touch on the believers' real life. The implication of emphasising images over concepts is that the meetings will now give more room for concrete and everyday matters of living the faith. Our efforts in this paper have tried to show the advantages of such 'imagerial' talk about faith and about being church, and those have to be carried on in relation to the

'biblical' images. The believers will be freed from the attitude that accentuates too much the 'notional' aspects of faith. The freedom to share and express the Christian faith using images can noticeably promote a 'liberating' character of catechetical meetings and of the church itself.

Second, the changing sociocultural situations of the local church bring the implication that there need to be models of the church re-imagined occasionally so that the believers' ways of being church remain contextual and meaningful. The complementarity of cultural images suggests that there will be different emphases on the different models according to the believers' assessment of their situation. The same attentiveness to the concrete 'cultural' images should be applied in the re-imagining process of the models, so that the believers may find the appropriate answers to their hopes. If we relate this process to the popular 'local spiritualities' lived by the believers, we will realise that the models of the church are characterised by these spiritualities reflecting the work of the believers' imagination. We can witness the fruitfulness of the models when these not only bring the believers through the changing and challenging socio cultural realities, but moreover when these promote the transformations within the community and in the society.

End Notes:

[1] Roger Haight, "Ecclesiology from Below: Genesis of the Church," *Theology Digest* 48:4 (2001): 319-328. Haight contrasts this method with the method called 'ecclesiology from above' that takes the New Testament as a book of doctrine, a book that was used uncritically in the past to prove things. He persuades to figure the church from the distinctive imaginative frameworks of the believers. These imaginative frameworks might have been written in the ordinary language as well as the sensible images of the believers.

[2] Cf. John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. John Coulson (London: Chapman, 1961).

[3] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1983; revised edition, 1991); hereafter quoted as *Imagined Communities*.

[4] See John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), 20-23, 27-28; henceforth, quoted as *GA*.

[5] *GA*, 28.

6   *GA*, 21.

7   By images "[Newman] does not mean a clearly defined visual representation but an awareness of the reality of the object," says David Pailin, as quoted by Merrigan; Terrence Merrigan, *Clear Heads and Holy Hearts: The Religious and Theological Ideal of John Henry Newman* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1991), 48.

8   *GA*, 57.

9   See Hadrianus Tedjoworo, "Understanding through the Eyes: A Dialogue with Sallie McFague on the Role of Images and Metaphors in Current Theological Epistemology" (Master of Theology thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2002)

10   Cf. GA, 29.

11   Cf. Newman when saying, "It is in human nature to be more affected by the concrete than by the abstract; it may be the reverse with other beings. The apprehension, then, may be as fairly said to possess the force which acts upon us, as the object apprehended;" GA, 30.

12   Cf. GA, 58.

13   Cf. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson when stating that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another;" George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 5.

14   GA, 57.

15   GA, 62.

16   In the minds of the people in Java, the term 'social' when attributed to a person has a particular meaning. It gives rise to an image of a person who is actively involved in various social activities in the society. In Niels Mulder's analysis, being 'social' in Indonesia means being ordered in one's life to achieve 'harmony' (Ind. 'keselarasan'), that is, a harmony with the society (against individualism); Indonesian Images: The Culture of the Public World (Yogyakarta: Kanisius Publishing House, 2000), 92.

17   Imagined Communities, 6.

18   GA, 68.

19   GA, 63.

20   "[Images] which are possessed in common, with their apprehensions and assents, may nevertheless be personal characteristics. . . And . . . the belief of so many thousands in His Divinity, is not therefore notional, because it is common, but may be a real and personal belief, being produced in different individual minds by various experiences and disposing causes, variously combined; . . . In each case the image in the mind, with the experiences out of which it is formed, would be a personal result. . ." GA, 66.

21   Merrigan, Clear Heads and Holy Hearts, op. cit., 48-49.

22   Ibid.

23   Paul S. Minear, Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 23; emphases ours.

24   Ibid.

25   Ralph. P. Martin, The Family and the Fellowship: New Testament Images of the Church (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1979).

26   Minear, op. cit., 222.

27   Avery Dulles, Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Its Aspects (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974).

28   Denis M. Doyle, Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions (New York: Orbis Books, 2000).

29   Johannes van der Ven, Kritische Godsdienstdidaktiek (Kampen: Kok, 1982), 368 and further.

30   Niels Mulder, Inside Indonesian Society: Cultural Change in Java (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2005; first published by Duang Kamol, Bangkok, 1994), Indonesian Images: The Culture of the Public World (Yogyakarta: Kanisius Publishing House, 2000), Southeast Asian Images: Towards Civil Society? (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2005; first published by Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2003).

31   Mulder, Indonesian Images, 206.

32   Ibid., 52-53.

33   Ibid., 50.

34   Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences (FABC), "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" (Taipei, 1974), in For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991 Vol. 1, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arévalo (Manila: Claretian Publications, 1997), 14.

35   C. G. Arévalo, "…The Time of the Heirs," in Rosales and Arévalo (eds.), ibid., xxvi.

36   Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies (London: SCM Press, 1985).

37   `Ibid., 3.

38   Ibid., 2.

39   Ibid., 12.

40   Ibid., 13.

41   The Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Theses on the Local Church: A Theological Reflection in the Asian Context", 1991, 23.

42   Terrence Merrigan's exploration of the believers' imagination, drawing upon John Henry Newman's ascription of its functions; Terrence Merrigan, "Newman on Faith in the Trinity," in Ian Ker & Terrence Merrigan, Newman and Faith (Louvain, Paris, Dudley: Peeters Press, 2004), 97.

43   In making distinction of Newman's 'realising' and 'prehending' imagination, Merrigan says that "in the case of realizing imagination, attention is focused on the fact as grasped or apprehended (imaged). Viewed in this respect, imagination is primarily an evocative power"; Merrigan, Clear Heads and Holy Hearts, op. cit., 51-52.

44   Ibid., 186.

45   See ibid., 187

46   I would relate this 'rasa' to Newman's 'illative sense' in order to describe that this 'rasa' might not simply be a subjective sensitivity of a believing person, but a sensitivity that always entangles the senses of other believers and the larger community which is the church itself. Cf. Thomas K. Carr's explanation: "Newman claims the illative sense is a 'sense' like any other, parallel in function to 'good sense' or 'common sense' or one's 'sense of beauty'. It thus stands in relation to our 'being', our 'mind and body', in such a way that all things on which it passes judgment are "of necessity referred to it [our total

being] and not it to other things." It should follow from this, therefore, that the illative sense is also a communal sense, for one only has one's personal 'being' by relation to other 'beings' with whom we live in community;" Thomas K. Carr, Newman and Gadamer: Toward a Hermeneutics of Religious Knowledge (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1996), 139.

[47]   Cf. Newman's conviction as indicated by Merrigan in Merrigan, ibid., 109.

[48]   It's striking that the letter to the Romans uses the Greek word avla,lhtoj ('alaletos') which means "not to be uttered" or "not expressed in words."

[49]   See Merrigan, Clear Heads and Holy Hearts, op. cit., 63.

[50]   Doyle, Communion Ecclesiology, 173-174.

[51]   George Newlands, Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theology (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 12.

[52]   Doyle, Communion Ecclesiology, 12.

[53]   Peter C. Phan, In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 197.

[54]   Newlands, Transformative Imagination, 179.

[55]   Ibid., 181.

[56]   Gerard Loughlin, "'To Live and Die Upon Dogma': Newman and Post/Modern Faith" in Ian Ker & Terrence Merrigan, Newman and Faith (Louvain, Paris, Dudley MA: Peeters Press, 2004), 51.

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