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## The Theology of Interreligious Dialogue as a Foundation for a Proposed IRD - Based Theology Syllabus in a Catholic College in Bukidnon

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**ABSTRACT:** *In its document Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education specifies that “all children and young people must have the same possibilities for arriving at the knowledge of their religion as well as of elements that characterize other religions.” As such, interreligious dialogue is an essential component of Catholic education, thereby necessitating interreligious dialogue education and formation starting from the beginning of school age in academic institutions. From this perspective, the study explores a selection of Catholic Church teachings and Magisterial documents on interreligious dialogue. Using See-Judge-Act as the framework, it aims to outline the essential elements of the theology of interreligious dialogue in education. In doing so, the paper intends to present a model of the interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus. The inquiry is qualitative-descriptive research and employs documentary analysis as a method. The study concluded with the presentation of the proposed syllabus model with its dialogical elements.*

**KEYWORDS:** education, foundation, interreligious dialogue, model, proposal, syllabus, theology

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the world has always been culturally and religiously diverse.<sup>1</sup> Compared with the previous, what is particular to our world today is the current process of globalization forcing the different countries, cultures, and their religions, or non-religions, into an inevitable interaction, within the context of a universal aspiration for peace and human fraternity.<sup>2</sup> The intermingling of

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<sup>1</sup> “Global Religious Diversity.” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (April 4, 2014)  
<https://www.pewforum.org/2014/04/04/global-religious-diversity/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

cultures and religions has created “the pluralistic society,” affecting all social relations, particularly religion and education institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Plurality or diversity is encountered by schools in a variety of ways.<sup>4</sup> In some situations, these encounters occurred in schools with students from other faiths and religious backgrounds and even by those whose parents profess no religious faith.<sup>5</sup> Even the baptized Catholic students manifest a wide diversity of beliefs and practices.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, it is very evident in the classrooms for students come to school with different religious backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> Rito Baring rightly notes that classrooms in the Philippines are becoming more multi-ethnic and multi-religious.<sup>8</sup> He also observes that interfaith dialogue is not considered even within the context of formal religious education in the Philippines. The assumption is that interfaith dialogue takes place outside the classroom.<sup>9</sup> Also, teachers know the diverse religious make-up of their students, yet, nothing much is heard about attempts to expound or address the problem of religious diversity systematically in classroom instruction.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, David Hollenbach exposes that the reality of religious and cultural pluralism has become particularly evident to today’s students due to the shrinking of the globalizing world. This shapes today’s students’ receptivity to the gospel and deserves special consideration. He discloses that students today have become particularly sensitive to the need for dialogue as an expression of respect for others.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, facing such educational contexts of the variety of learners and the pluralism of the education settings is not easy.

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<sup>3</sup> “The Global Religious Landscape.” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (December 18, 2012) <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission. *Welcoming the Other: Guidelines for Interfaith Education in the Schools of the Archdiocese of Melbourne*. Accessed February 3, 2022 from [https://www.multifaitheducation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EIC-Interfaith-Education-Guidelines-2018\\_V9-2.pdf](https://www.multifaitheducation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EIC-Interfaith-Education-Guidelines-2018_V9-2.pdf), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Rito V. Baring, “Plurality in Unity: Challenges in Religious Education in the Philippines,” *Religious Education* 106, no. 5 (2011): 469

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>11</sup> David Hollenbach. “Dialogue and Proclamation in Catholic Universities,” *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 15 March 2018, 59 – 68, Accessed January 5, 2022 from <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/dialogue-and-proclamation-in-catholic-universities>.

Pope Francis challenges this reality as he said “Every Christian is called to go out to encounter others, to dialogue with those who do not think the way we do, and with those who have another faith, or who don’t have faith. To encounter all because we all have in common our having been created in the image and likeness of God. We can go out to encounter everyone without fear.”<sup>12</sup> He reminds everyone to realize that interreligious dialogue is necessary today for everyone, everywhere, and beyond the world. Interreligious dialogue is an attitude of openness in truth and love must characterize the dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions, despite various obstacles and difficulties, especially forms of fundamentalism on both sides. It is a necessary condition for peace in the world, so it is a duty for Christians and other religious communities as Pope Francis further emphasized.<sup>13</sup>

Not long ago, he brings this church teaching to the educational spheres. In an address to the Congregation of Catholic Education at their last plenary session on February 13, 2017, he asserts the position of Catholic schools: “Catholic educational institutes are called, in the front line, to practice the grammar of dialogue that forms to encounter an appreciation of the cultural and religious diversities.”<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, St. John Paul II links interreligious dialogue to a school’s continuous quest for truth through its research and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. Through interreligious dialogue, the school “will assist in discerning the spiritual values present in the different religions.”<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in their instruction on *Educating the Youth for Interreligious Cooperation* enjoined “educational institutions, both private and public, offer opportunities for nurturing interreligious understanding and peaceful coexistence. Catholic schools, as “part of the saving mission of the church,”<sup>16</sup> complement the task of parents in

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<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the plenary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization” on October 14, 2013. Accessed February 1, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131014\\_plenaria-consiglio-nuova-evangelizzazione.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131014_plenaria-consiglio-nuova-evangelizzazione.html), §2.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Vatican website, November 24, 2013. Accessed February 1, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), §250.

<sup>14</sup> Francis. Address to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education (for educational institutions), (13 February 2014), at the Holy See, Accessed from [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/february/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140213\\_congregazione-educazione-cattolica.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/february/documents/papa-francesco_20140213_congregazione-educazione-cattolica.html), §3.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, “*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*,” Vatican website, August 15, 1990. Accessed February 1, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_15081990\\_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html), 30, 43 – 47.

<sup>16</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (1977), 9.

providing education in the Catholic faith.<sup>17</sup> These schools might offer the opportunity, according to the local situation, for attaining a basic knowledge about the beliefs and practices of other religions, thereby facilitating a positive attitude towards people of other religious traditions even outside the classroom.<sup>18</sup>

Called to adhere to the directives, Catholic colleges in Bukidnon<sup>19</sup> like San Isidro College<sup>20</sup> are not exempted from this. San Isidro College is located in the City of Malaybalay,<sup>21</sup> Bukidnon. It is the only Catholic institution of higher learning located in Impalambong Malaybalay City.<sup>22</sup> Founded by Jesuit Missionaries in July 1949, it is duly accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd).<sup>23</sup> It is also a member of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and the Bukidnon Association of Catholic Schools (BUACS), with its motto *Ora et Labora* which means prayer and work, the famous flagship of San Isidro Labrador, the patron saint of Malaybalay City. From its humble beginnings, the school continues to provide quality Catholic Education where students adhere to its philosophy, vision, mission, core values, and graduate attributes.<sup>24</sup> San Isidro College follows the CHED-approved curricula for the School of Education (SED) and School of Arts and Sciences. Also, accrediting bodies like the Philippine Accrediting Association for Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU) ensure monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum offered by the school, as to whether the subjects offered are appropriate or adequate for the graduates of a particular course.<sup>25</sup> There are additional subjects distinct for San Isidro College and these include the IGP (Isidran Guidance Program) and Theology subjects which are inherent in Catholic schools.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, San Isidro College indicated in its Administrative, Faculty and Personnel Manual that their Campus Ministry services include “ecumenical gatherings for interreligious dialogue are organized to provide a venue for interfaith sharing”<sup>27</sup> and the rules and regulations of its Campus Ministry indicate that: “non – Catholics are encouraged to attend the retreats, recollections, and

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<sup>17</sup> Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Dialogue and Truth and Charity, 46-47.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> PhilAtlas, “Bukidnon,” (2020) n.d., Accessed February 10, 2022 from <https://www.philatlas.com/mindanao/r10/bukidnon.html>.

<sup>20</sup> “San Isidro College”, Accessed February 10, 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/sanisidrocollegeofficial/>

<sup>21</sup> PhilAtlas, “City of Malaybalay,” (n.d. 2023). Accessed February 10, 2022 from <https://www.philatlas.com/mindanao/r10/bukidnon/malaybalay.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Garcia, E. and Simbulan, S. (2021). Stakeholders’ Involvement in the Evaluation of the School of Education Curriculum at San Isidro College. *School of Education Research Journal*, 2, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 46 – 47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> San Isidro College’s Administrative, Faculty and Personnel Manual, 68.

Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) sessions of the school.”<sup>28</sup> However, reviewing such Theology courses showed the absence of interreligious dialogue components in the contents of the syllabi.

Thereby, in this perspective, with educational intent, the researcher desired to offer a resource material for the interreligious education and formation of the young – a proposed interreligious dialogue- based Theology syllabus to the Catholic colleges of Bukidnon, particularly San Isidro College.

Given this end, an inquiry into the Catholic theological teachings on inter-religious dialogue, particularly on their essential elements was undertaken to work out the theology of interreligious dialogue in education that served as the foundation of the interreligious dialogue–based Theology syllabus model. The research undertaking articulated above is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the Catholic Church’s teachings on interreligious dialogue? Where does its foundation rest? What makes interreligious dialogue significant today? How do the Second Vatican Council teachings view non – Christians? What is the stance of the Church on the relationship with other religions?
2. What are the teachings of the Catholic Church on education? What is the place of interreligious dialogue in education and what makes them both interrelated? What is Catholic education in the light of interreligious dialogue? What makes education in interreligious dialogue a necessity in Catholic schools, in educational policy, and the curriculum?
3. What elements of the theology of interreligious dialogue are necessary for interreligious dialogue–based Theology syllabus? What can be devised as themes and/ or contents in developing an interreligious dialogue–based Theology syllabus? What should be the form and structure of an IRD – based Theology syllabus model?

The result of the study may provide significant advantages and assistance to the following: a) Catholic educational institutions: this study may assist them to instill a basic understanding of respect for faith, educate and form students to live in a multi-religious society, value interreligious collaboration, and help them prepare for that lifetime of interreligious dialogue; b) Catholic Colleges in Bukidnon: this research project may be an answer to the need of college students of interreligious education and formation and may be useful material for teachers especially those engaged in teaching interreligious dialogue and world religions; c) Catholic and Private School Administrators and Educators: this study may help them understand and enter more deeply into the school communities where God has placed them; to discern and respond to his presence and action by engaging in faithful and effective witness of interreligious dialogue despite the emergence of religious diversity and plurality;<sup>29</sup> d) the inquiry aimed to compel school administrators and non–teaching faculty to include policies and programs about interreligious dialogue education as they face and cater to culturally and religiously diverse students; and e) public school administrators and teachers: the study may inspire them to advance interreligious

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 1.

and multi-religious education among school leaders, teachers, and students who come from culturally and religiously diverse backgrounds by promoting interreligious learning and programs in their school communities.

The scope of the study presented several Catholic Church teachings on interreligious dialogue. In particular, the present study explored the area of interreligious dialogue in education from the Vatican II documents, Papal and Magisterial documents, and the documents of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. Moreover, the treatment of the documents focused on the specific and essential elements of the teachings of interreligious dialogue in education. Utilizing the indicated documents above, this research analyzed representative selections from such documents given identifying the sources of interreligious dialogue in education that runs and flows through its distinct and several parts. Magisterial and doctrinal sources which the textual analysis pointed out and given appropriate consideration. From such inquiry of the documents, the theology of interreligious dialogue in education was drawn.

The study locale is Bukidnon, a province in the Philippines situated in Northern Mindanao. It is a region occupying the northern-central section of Mindanao with the City of Malaybalay as its capital.<sup>30</sup> Religion is a highly important social element in the lives of the people of Bukidnon.<sup>31</sup> Approximately three-fourths (74.5 percent or 1,054,597 persons) of the province's total population in 2015 reported Roman Catholic as their religious affiliation<sup>32</sup>, while those who profess Islam is 16,742.<sup>33</sup> The corresponding figure in 2010 was 76.5 percent (993,364 persons). The subsequent largest religious affiliation in the province was the Seventh Day Adventist, comprising 3.8 percent of the total population. It was followed by those who were affiliated with the Association of Fundamental Baptist Churches in the Philippines (3.2 percent), Evangelicals (Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches) (3.1 percent), and tribal religions (2.5 percent).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> PhilAtlas, "Bukidnon," (2020) n.d., Accessed February 10, 2022 from <https://www.philatlas.com/mindanao/r10/bukidnon.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, *2015 Census of Population, Report No. 2 – Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics Bukidnon*, June 2017, Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/10\\_Bukidnon.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/10_Bukidnon.pdf), 79.

<sup>32</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, *Muslim Population in Mindanao*. June 26, 2017, Accessed February 10, 2022 from <http://rssoarimm.psa.gov.ph/release/54739/factsheet/muslim-population-in-mindanao-%28based-on-popcen-2015%29>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, *2015 Census of Population, Report No. 2 – Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics Bukidnon*, June 2017, Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/10\\_Bukidnon.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/10_Bukidnon.pdf), 79.

The See–Judge–Act or Pastoral Circle<sup>35</sup> is the framework of the study with documentary analysis<sup>36</sup> and library research<sup>37</sup> as methods. The researcher intended to validate the study empirically, but the pandemic reserved it for further study.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative - descriptive research<sup>38</sup> and documentary analysis<sup>39</sup> as a method. The basis of this study is the pastoral circle which originates from liberation theology.<sup>40</sup> It is a tool or framework for analyzing, reflecting, and addressing existing social issues, e.g., poverty, discrimination, environmental destruction, unemployment, etc.<sup>41</sup> This was developed by scholars and social activists Peter Henriot, S.J., and Joe Holland. It has roots in the ‘see, judge, act’ method of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, which Pope John XXIII incorporated into Catholic social teaching’s *Mater et Magistra* in 1961.<sup>42</sup> The encyclical stipulates that “there are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; second, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; third, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act.”<sup>43</sup> Pope John XXIII emphasizes that “it is important for our young people to grasp this method and to practice it. Knowledge acquired in this way does not remain merely abstract, but is seen as something that must be translated into action.”<sup>44</sup> Hence, the researcher employed the Pastoral Circle or See – Judge – Act as the framework of the study.

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<sup>35</sup> Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Sociological Analysis (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 45.

<sup>36</sup> University of Northampton, “Documentary Analysis,” Accessed February 1, 2022, <https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/myriad.northampton.ac.uk/dist/d/6334/files/2018/01/Documentary-analysis-Jan-2018-15utwcq.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Conrad N. Hilton Library. “Library Research Methods: Library Research Basics,” Accessed February 10, 2022. Accessed from <https://library.culinary.edu/research/steps>.

<sup>38</sup> Jose Antonio E. Aureada, *Thesis Writing for Theology Students: A Primer* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009), 36, 40, 42-43.

<sup>39</sup> University of Northampton, “Documentary Analysis,” Accessed February 1, 2022, <https://cpb-eu-w2.wpmucdn.com/myriad.northampton.ac.uk/dist/d/6334/files/2018/01/Documentary-analysis-Jan-2018-15utwcq.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J. *Social Analysis: Tool of Pastoral Action*, 8. <https://www.urbanleaders.org/540UrbanReality/00Readings/HerriotSocial%20Analysis.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>42</sup> Pastoral Circle: “See, Judge, Act.” Accessed February 1, 2022, [https://maryknollogc.org/files/pastoral\\_circle\\_see\\_judge\\_act\\_2pager.pdf](https://maryknollogc.org/files/pastoral_circle_see_judge_act_2pager.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical on the Social Doctrine of the Church *Mater et Magistra*, Vatican website, May 15, 1961. Accessed February 1, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html), § 236.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

Utilizing the See–Judge–Act framework, the researcher examined and analyzed the contents of the selected Church documents on interreligious dialogue (step 1), outlined the essential elements of the theology of interreligious dialogue in education, determined its necessary components (step 2), and proposed an interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus model (step 3).

Moreover, as the researcher examines the content (CHAPTER II - SEE) by studying the documents: the history, audience, time, author, and purpose,<sup>45</sup> the following questions were utilized in the inquiry: a) What are the teachings of the Church in interreligious dialogue? b) What makes the Catholic Church call to involve in dialogue with people of other religious traditions? c) What are the Church’s key documents on interreligious dialogue? What insights and developments on issues of dialogue are made based on the review of the documents? Then, the researcher discussed the interaction between interreligious dialogue and education from the selected Church principles, doctrines, and practices, and other related studies with the aid of these discerning (CHAPTER III – JUDGE) questions: a) What makes interreligious dialogue and education related? b) What is the place of interreligious dialogue in education? c) How do the various forms of dialogue be acted upon in schools and educational institutions? d) What are the necessary elements of interreligious dialogue in education? Which of these elements are rich sources of teaching and can enrich learning? Eventually, drawing from the outcome of the discernment, commitment, and action follow (Chapter IV – ACT). The researcher proposed an interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus model for the growth and progress of interreligious education in the Catholic colleges of Bukidnon.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the information obtained from the analysis and is organized based on the order of the problems in the Statement of the problem.

The sources of the Catholic Church’s teachings on interreligious dialogue specifically from the Second Vatican Council, the post-conciliar documents particularly papal encyclicals and apostolic exhortations, magisterial teachings, and some documents from the Pontifical Commission on Interreligious Dialogue were utilized in this study.

The foundation of interreligious dialogue rests in philosophical, socio-cultural, and theological foundations.<sup>46</sup> Further, there are reasons why the Catholic Church calls upon its members to engage in dialogue with members of other religions or faiths.<sup>47</sup> As indicated in the study these reasons are the unity of the human race; the profession of God the Creator, Jesus Christ, the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.,5.

<sup>46</sup> Patrick Chinedu Mbarah, *Education For Interreligious Dialogue: Towards an Interreligious Directory for the Diocese of Owerri*, (Xlibris: Xlibris Corporation LLC, 2020), 65 – 68, <https://www.xlibris.com/en>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 68 – 77.



Universal Savior, religious plurality and diversity, the saving value of other religions, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in members of other religions.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the perspectives on how the Church manifested her attitudes toward the non – Christian religions were based on the following documents of the Second Vatican Council *Sacrosanctum Concilium*<sup>49</sup>, *Lumen Gentium*,<sup>50</sup> *Nostra Aetate*,<sup>51</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*,<sup>52</sup> *Ad Gentes*,<sup>53</sup> and *Dignitatis Humanae*.<sup>54</sup> The stance of the Catholic Church's relationship towards other religions is, that of ' a loving mother who spread her arms to give a warm embrace to her many dispersed children.'<sup>55</sup> Such stance was provided by the following documents: *Ecclesiam Suam*<sup>56</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,<sup>57</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*,<sup>58</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*.<sup>59</sup> The church in her evangelizing mission makes use of the schools, colleges and universities, institutions, and other structures as her instruments to educate and bring development to all kinds of people from all walks of life.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963. Accessed March 5, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)

<sup>50</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964. Accessed March 5, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

<sup>51</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate*, October 28, 1965. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

<sup>52</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

<sup>53</sup> Sacred Synod of Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, December 7, 1965. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html).

<sup>54</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*, December 7, 1965, Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651207\\_dignitatis-humanae\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html).

<sup>55</sup> Mbarah, "Education For Interreligious Dialogue: Towards an Interreligious Directory for the Diocese of Owerri," 97.

<sup>56</sup> Pope Paul VI. *Ecclesiam Suam*, August 6, 1964. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_06081964\\_ecclesiam.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html).

<sup>57</sup> Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html).

<sup>58</sup> John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*, December 7, 1990. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_07121990\\_redemptoris-missio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html).

<sup>59</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013. Accessed February 10, 2022 from [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

Historically, the church had been involved in education. As such, she has the right to establish and direct schools of any discipline, type, and level.<sup>60</sup> As pointed out by Pope Pius XI, she maintains the three essential features of Christian education: 1) faith in Christ as the foundation; 2) concerns human beings and integrates the elements in the individuals for their good and the good of the society; and 3) empowers the good of the human person as well as his faith.<sup>61</sup> Catholic education is the Church's way of forming the human person's intelligence, competence, and good character. It intends to mold people to interact with the world without compromising and losing their Christian identities. In this field of the church's mission, interreligious dialogue has a place, especially in the religious context of understanding the human person as being with others and in particular teaching the person about the love of God and the love of neighbor. Furthermore, *Nostra Aetate* and other magisterial documents support the interplay of Catholic education and interreligious dialogue by recommending undertaking interreligious dialogue studies with people of other religious faiths and traditions in religious institutes.

Moreover, Catholic educational institutions are places of encounter with the 'other' where the 'grammar of dialogue' is exercised and is expected to be instilled in the students and even in children at an early age. Prominently, schools are always places for the early formation and education of children and students. These are important in the individual process of the development of their faith, morals, and values. In the context of interreligious dialogue, these educational institutions have roles to play: to bear witness to their religion, make its teachings known, and engage in activities that demonstrate the practice of religious tolerance. In short, Christian presence manifests clearly in their way of life. As regards the education of interreligious dialogue in schools, it has to start from the beginning of the school age in both government and private schools.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, it makes students aware of their roots and the elements that characterize them.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, the elements of interreligious dialogue for education particularly the contents of the proposed syllabus were enlightened and inspired by the work of Mbarah<sup>64</sup> and Chris Stackaruk.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Code of Canon Law. "Catholic Education," 800 §1.

<sup>61</sup> Patrick Chinedu Mbarah, *Education For Interreligious Dialogue: Towards an Interreligious Directory for the Diocese of Owerri*, (Xlibris: Xlibris Corporation LLC, 2020), 114, <https://www.xlibris.com/en>.

<sup>62</sup> Mbarah, "Education For Interreligious Dialogue: Towards an Interreligious Directory for the Diocese of Owerri," 160.

<sup>63</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. "Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools Living in Harmony for the Civilization of Love," 18.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick Chinedu Mbarah, *Education For Interreligious Dialogue: Towards an Interreligious Directory for the Diocese of Owerri*, Accessed January 10, 2023 from <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=VekCEAAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PA1>.

<sup>65</sup> Chris Stackaruk. "Syllabus: Interfaith Dialogue and the Church," (n.d). Accessed February 1, 2022 from [https://www.academia.edu/35325079/Syllabus\\_Interfaith\\_Dialogue\\_and\\_the\\_Church](https://www.academia.edu/35325079/Syllabus_Interfaith_Dialogue_and_the_Church).

The contents touched on theological, historical, dialogical, and educational concerns and its emphases were the following:

- a. Recipients of the Interreligious Dialogue-Based Theology Syllabus
- b. Aim and Objective of the Interreligious Dialogue-Based Theology Syllabus
- c. The Significance of Interreligious Dialogue
- d. Interreligious Dialogue and Evangelization
- e. Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue
- f. Principles for the Promotion of Interreligious Dialogue
- g. Paths to Interreligious Dialogue
- h. Partners in Dialogue: Their Rights and Responsibilities
- i. The Necessity of Interreligious Dialogue Education
- j. Interreligious Dialogue Themes

Eleven dialogical themes/ topics were also devised in the proposed interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus. These themes were divided into two parts:

Part 1: The Need for Dialogue: Contextual Motives<sup>66</sup> include these themes:

- A. Religion and Religions
  1. Religious Traditions: What are they?
  2. What constitutes a tradition?
- B. Religious Diversity and Christianity

Part 2: The Need for Dialogue: Theological Precedents<sup>67</sup> comprised the following specific subthemes respectively:

- A. Historical Theologies of Religions
  1. Christianity and the World Religions
  2. Religious Identity, Social Identity, Personal Identity
- B. Toward Theologies of Dialogue
  1. What and Why Interreligious Dialogue?
  2. The History of Interreligious Dialogue
- C. Theological Issues
  1. The Challenges of Interreligious Dialogue
- D. Interreligious Learning
  1. The Church and Other Non – Christians
  2. Comparative Theology and Interreligious Dialogue

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 6 – 7.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Ecumenical efforts

#### E. Friendship and Peacebuilding

##### 1. Interreligious Dialogue and Social Action

#### F. Dialogue Methodologies

##### 1. Conditions for Interreligious Dialogue

#### G. Themes and Topics for Dialogue

##### 1. Using intergroup dialogue to promote social justice and change

##### 2. Art and Interreligious Dialogue

##### 3. Jewish-Christian Dialogue

##### 4. Christian-Muslim Dialogue

##### 5. Hindu-Christian Dialogue

##### 6. Christian-Buddhist Dialogue

#### H. Navigating Tough Issues in Dialogue

##### 1. Inter-Religious Worship

##### 2. Women in Inter-Religious Dialogue

Finally, the proposed Interreligious Dialogue (*IRD*) – Based Theology Syllabus model for San Isidro College has the following components: 1) Course Description; 2) Course Objectives; 3) Course Procedures which include the following: assigned texts, course website and email, assignment submission, assignments and deadlines, grading system, assignment grading scheme, contacting your professor, class format, etiquette, special learning needs or disabilities, class cancellation, visits to places of worship; 4) proposed syllabus/ learning plan; and 5) grading rubrics for assignments.

The challenge is the need to continue the interreligious dialogue. Thereby, this model for an interreligious dialogue-based theology syllabus inclusive of interreligious dialogue themes is offered for the development of interreligious dialogue education for students on the values of respect and good relations with people of other religions.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary:**

Chapter I presented the motivation for the study. It provided an overview of the issue of plurality and diversity in Catholic schools with students coming from different faiths and religious backgrounds. It also included the persistent call of the Ecclesiastical hierarchy and some scholars on schools, teachers, and practitioners to participate in the evangelizing mission of the church in the world. One way of doing it is to exercise and practice the ‘grammar’ of dialogue and integrate

interreligious dialogue into the school program and curriculum. Various church documents underscored the need for the promotion and practice of interreligious dialogue. In response to this demand, an inquiry into the Catholic theological teachings on inter-religious dialogue, particularly on their essential elements had been undertaken to come up with a theology of interreligious dialogue in education that serves as the foundation of interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus model which will be offered to San Isidro College.

Chapter II unfolded the church's teachings on interreligious dialogue. It explored the knowledge and understanding of interreligious dialogue as an evangelizing mission of the church. It explicated the church's doctrines and directives on interreligious dialogue and the importance of this task concerning other religions. It also pointed out the goals of interreligious dialogue to promote dialogue and enhance mutual understanding, harmony, and cooperation among peoples of different faiths. It also specified the documents of the Second Vatican Council concerning the significance of dialogue with other religions. It further considered the attitudes of the church stipulated in the *Ecclesiam Suam* which makes her a staunch advocate of interreligious dialogue.

Chapter III presented the importance of education in light of the Catholic Church's enthusiasm for the promotion of education. It indicated also the interplay of education and interreligious dialogue. Likewise, it exposed the educational doctrines on interreligious dialogue derived from the Magisterial documents pointing to the significance of educating the human person for the good of the individual and of the whole society. Moreover, the chapter explained the place of interreligious dialogue in education and how the various forms of dialogue be acted upon in schools and educational institutions.

Chapter IV demonstrated the prospective proposal for the future interreligious dialogue education at San Isidro College. This chapter included the necessary elements of interreligious dialogue which are part of the entries of the proposal. It suggested ways on advancing the development and education of interreligious dialogue and presented a proposed interreligious dialogue-based Theology Syllabus model for San Isidro College.

## **Conclusion**

Although the exposition was far from extensive, it has been an attempt to affirm the rich Catholic theological teachings on interreligious dialogue. It tried to demonstrate that these doctrines are essential elements of the theology of interreligious dialogue in education.

Undoubtedly, the interreligious dialogue education concerns today are at a universal, local, and educational level. In this study, the essential elements identified for the proposed interreligious dialogue – based Theology syllabus were recipients of the interreligious dialogue, its aim and objective, significance, interreligious dialogue and evangelization, purpose, principles of the promotion, paths, and approaches, dialogue partners: their rights and responsibilities, its necessity to education, themes and the need of educating youth for interreligious cooperation. Other

fundamentals added are cultural values, ecumenical cooperation, and interreligious cooperation in Catholic schools and colleges.

Finally, after the educational elements of interreligious dialogue were identified, as aimed by this paper, the exposition endeavored to offer an interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus model.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following are recommended:

1. Conduct an empirical study on how Catholic educational institutions and schools practice interreligious dialogue, particularly the four forms of dialogue in Bukidnon.
2. Study the impact of the interreligious dialogue-based Theology syllabus when implemented per appropriately designed monitoring and evaluation tools.
3. Offer Ecumenical studies since the subsequent largest religious affiliations in the province are Adventists, followed by Evangelicals and indigenous and tribal religions.

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