

# PREFACE

In 2019, I received an invitation from the *Institute of Preaching* to facilitate a *Graduate Seminar on Preaching*. Without hesitation, I said “Yes” as I see this invitation as another academic opportunity to share my sociological practice of doing systematic research and documentation. More importantly, this provided me with another pastoral space to serve our Catholic Church. It was the most opportune time for *research sharing* as I was amidst the implementation of the international research grant project as Principal Investigator of *The National Catechetical Study (NCS) 2021: Pastoral Action Research and Intervention (PARI) Project*, a research partnership between the *Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education (ECCCE)* and the *UST Research Center for Social Sciences and Education (RCSSED)*. I kept my expectations high as I dealt with graduate students trained in the sacred sciences who were continuously being trained (a) to understand the logic and process of “preaching” as a salient dimension of missionary work and (b) to become good “preachers” of our Catholic faith. Our course was aptly entitled, *Preaching from the Ground: Exploring Research and Social Realities in the Philippines*.

My research journey with the six friars and a nun, all Order of Preachers (OP) students, was filled with a combination of fascination and tension. The fascination seems to have come from my sharing of our NCS research-based observations about the observed relative lack of knowledge on what I call the *Sociology of Filipino Catholicism*. On the other hand, the tensions appear to spring from their limited knowledge of the social sciences and their apparent lack of research skills in conducting social research. I immediately observed their struggles and, thus, employed the best technique for learning research. That is designing a series of activities and workshops that will allow them to appreciate the research process by conducting actual research themselves. Thus, learning research by doing and doing research to learn.

Our course explored the concept of “preaching” in the context of doing social research using particular ‘social realities’ as investigative focuses. It introduced the nature, science, logic, and ethics of social research. This included doing a review of relevant literature, designing research tools and techniques, developing data-gathering procedures and analyses, and writing research reports. Our one simple learning goal was to equip students with basic research skills in dealing with fundamental social realities relative to their role as “preachers” in

our contemporary world, particularly in the lives of the Catholic faithful they will engage with.

Our weekly research workshops from August – November 2019 led to one research project called, *The Study on Preaching (SoP)*. We agreed to interrogate the core concept of our course – “preaching” – relative to the specific research interests of each student.

Conceptually, given the limited time, our class drew inspiration from the research tools designed by the NCS (Batan, 2021). By choosing some relevant general NCS questions on Catholic religious life, our class was able to design an online-based survey questionnaire, and interview questions (see Appendix B) divided into five dimensions, namely:

- a) Religious Experiences,
- b) Catechesis and Catholic Education,
- c) Liturgy,
- d) Preaching Experiences, and
- e) The Practice of Catholic Faith.



*Visual Strip 1. Photos taken during research workshops held at San Pio V Bldg., Santo Domingo Church Compound, Quezon City and the NCS Office, Tan Yan Kee Student Center, University of Santo Tomas, September to November 2019.*

Figure 1 below presents the conceptual framework reported in this collection of research articles. As illustrated, the heart of this social research inquiry is the concept of “preaching,” represented by the symbol of fire in a torch illuminating the six themes examined in this study, namely, ecumenism, catechesis, Catholic religious education, liturgy, homiletics, and mystagogy. These various forms of preaching are perceived as intricately woven in the prayer, *A Dominican Blessing*, reflecting the spiritual charism of the Dominican Order. The fire torch is being held by two open hands representing the various persons where specific forms of preaching are expressed. These are the Catholic faithful, lectors, homilists, catechists, Theology teachers, and in the spirit of ecumenism, the non-Catholics.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study on Preaching

Methodologically, at the time of the study, all research students were connected to two Catholic Schools where they served as religious workers such as school administrators, formators, and/or catechists. Thus, given this social network, the survey was employed to student respondents from these schools currently enrolled during the 1<sup>st</sup> Term, Academic Year 2019 – 2020. Official permission and consent were sought from school authorities and survey respondents. On the other hand, the interviews were conducted with persons representing specific research realms, such as the selected students, lectors, catechists, and Theology teachers.

The *Study on Preaching (SoP)* was employed using Google Forms prepared by the student researchers composed of 46 main questions (see Appendix B.1). MS Excel data generated were cross-checked following a code book, recoded (if need be), numerized, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically with means, frequencies, and percentages (see Appendix A). The *interview data* were analyzed using content analysis. Data representations utilized in this study were tables, charts, infographics, and quotations. Selected photos arranged in visual strips, mainly from the NCS, were also presented to portray research and religious activities being discussed in this study.

Sociologically, this conceptual exploration examines “preaching” as a social process. In so doing, this collection communicates the relevance of the distinct spiritual charism of the Dominican order – “preaching.” Correspondingly, this collection may be regarded as a modest attempt to describe the concept of “preaching” from a sample of student respondents from two Catholic schools and select interview respondents in dialogue with a group of Dominican students. With a specific interest in seeing the results of merging social research with Catholic religious experiences, this collection should be seen as only preliminary to the expected complex dynamics of “preaching.” Despite this limitation, the research articles presented here provide obvious yet taken-for-granted findings and insights that inform our fundamental knowledge and practice of Filipino Catholicism.

All six research articles utilized the shared *SoP survey findings* divided by special thematic focuses. The first article focuses on understanding “preaching” from a multi-religious lens. Br. Aloysius Luis Kung, OP, Sr. Nora G. Pineda, OP, and Prof. Clarence M. Batan, PhD present the full socio-demographic profile of student respondents to provide the general context of data that will be presented in the succeeding articles. Particularly, this article describes the general religious experiences of non-Catholics studying in two Catholic schools. It examines the concept of “preaching” from the perspectives of non-Catholic student respondents. Analyzed with ecumenical spirit, this article describes the religious engagements of non-Catholic student respondents and argues about shared prayers as a form of preaching in Catholic schools with non-Catholic students. This article contributes to understanding the concept of “preaching” occurring in a shared space of multi-faith and dialogue.

The realms of Catholic Education and catechesis are given attention in the second and third articles. The former, written by Bro. Alexander Constantine N. Seño, OP, examines the experiences of student respondents relative to their Theology courses. It offers insights into the relative influence of Theology teachers on their students and argues about the salient role of “preaching” in this Catholic education task. The latter, written by Bro. Jaymar D. Godalle, OP, interrogates the perceptions of “catechesis” of student respondents as a form of preaching. It argues about the integration of catechetical activities in the ongoing pastoral efforts of schools, particularly those with Dominican charism, as reflective of early missionary engagements of the Order of Preachers.

The last three articles seek an understanding of the concept of “preaching” from Catholic religious practices, namely liturgy, homiletics, and mystagogy. By focusing on the specific ministry of Lectors, Bro. Sandy C. Alerta, OP, explores

the role of lectors as agents of preaching ministry in our Catholic Church. He argues about the shared space of the lectors in the proclamation of the Word of God as a form of preaching. Another interesting dimension of preaching explored in the realm of the Holy Mass is the perception of student respondents about “homilies.” Bro. Agus Hermawan, OP, examines preaching in the context of homiletics and argues about the persisting salience and role of homilies as a liturgical form of preaching that matters to the Catholic faithful. The sixth and last article by Bro. Jeffrey M. Pagaduan, OP, is an exploration of the role of mystagogical preaching in the faith formation of select student respondents. He argues about the critical link between preaching and human experience and describes what these relations bring into the process of deepening the Catholic faith experience.



*Visual Strip 2. Photos of IP students with Prof. Batan, PhD, in various course sessions, August to December 2019.*

From 2019 until 2023, the implementation of this project was made more meaningful with the research assistance provided by Sociology students at the University of Santo Tomas. They rendered support from the conceptualization and design of research tools and data encoding until preliminary data analysis. Thank you, Ma. Danielle Villena, my first research assistant who helped our IP class in the development and employment of online survey, and Jaycar P. Espinosa, who assisted us in the encoding and analysis of survey data. Another batch of research assistants – Ayessa Verga, Louis Victor Igoy, Kristine Kyle Canlas, and Faustina Talita Dizon who served as proofreaders are also appreciated. Special gratitude goes to the Sociology research assistants – Keith Aaron T. Joven, Vincent Reuben E. Valientes, Marie Hannah Nichol M. Narag, Jayson U. Dela Cruz, who provided technical, and visual assistance towards the full completion of this collection.

My utmost gratitude as well to the *Philippine Dominican Center of Institutional Studies & Institute of Preaching* through the kindness of Fr. Clarence Victor C. Marquez, OP, SThD (IP Director), Fr. Romulo V. Rodriguez, OP, JCD (Moderator of PDCIS), Bro. Vince Stanley B. Iñigo, OP (Associate Editor, *Colloquia Manilana*), and Mr. Reynante R. Cinco (PDCIS Administrative Staff) for bringing this project to fruition.

In a general sense, these articles accomplish what our graduate course is set to achieve. Any research work given a space for a publication like in this journal, *Colloquia Manilana*, is truly a grace of recognition and affirmation. Worth noting is the technical format employed in this collection composed of study context; research focus; conceptual lens and methods; results and discussion; and concluding insights, which combined with infographics and visual strips aim to make each article more readable and pleasing to read. Thus, I consider this gesture as an academic and motivating gift, especially to young preachers, such as my students, who I trained to be research scholars and with whom I entrusted understanding our Catholic Church and Catholicism with doing good social research (Portus et al., 2018).

I end inspired by the multifaceted ideas engraved in the language of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century *Dominican Blessing* prayer. As a social researcher, I sense that this prayer truly captured the meaning and complexities of “preaching as a social process,” which directs attention to many more research potentials this current conceptual engagement of “preaching” entails. I pray for more research projects of this kind, especially if this academic exercise would lead to a better understanding of our Philippine Catholic Church.

*A Dominican Blessing*

*May God the Father bless us.  
 May God the Son heal us.  
 May God the Holy Spirit enlighten us,  
 and give us  
 eyes to see with,  
 ears to hear with,  
 hands to do the work of God with,  
 feet to walk with,  
 a mouth to preach the word of salvation with,  
 and the angel of peace to watch over us  
 and lead us at last,  
 by our Lord's gift,  
 to the Kingdom.  
 Amen.*

***Prof. Clarence M. Batan, PhD<sup>1</sup>***

## NOTES

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