



Journey Towards a Family Lay Spirituality: A Memoir

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ABSTRACT

My spiritual journey started with my maternal grandmother, Lola Tesang. She trained me to pray the rosary, go to confession on a Saturday and attend mass on a Sunday. Her devotion to the Holy Family motivated me to be a good grandson to qualify as Boy Jesus on the Feast of St. Joseph. My Lasallian spirituality was formed in my years of education with the brothers from Grade School, High School, college up to my doctoral degree; I was immersed in Lasallian spirituality for 17 years as a La Salle Brother. I gained a parish-based spirituality as a lay minister and Vice President of Our Lady of the Assumption Pastoral Council. I had a faith renewal experience as member of a Charismatic Bukas Loob sa Diyos Movement, where I received a gift of healing. My doctoral dissertation led me to explore quantum healing and quantum theology, which provided me an expansive understanding of humanity in three dimensions: physical, metaphysical and spiritual life. My encounter with Elsie Rabago inspired me to make a full spiritual circle from an anthropocentric God (Father, Son and Holy) to a quantum God of Pure Energy and a return to a human relationship with God in the Person of Jesus, the Beloved and the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mama Mary.

Keywords: *Family Lay Spirituality, Anthropocentric God, Quantum God, Charismatic Movement, Lasallian Spirituality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

I have written a journal article titled: Spirituality in the Workplace: Quo Vadis (2014), which explored the Human Church that encompasses Catholic mainstream spirituality, Progressive Newstream spirituality and Integral Upstream spirituality. A second article on the Elements of a Spiritually-driven Management in a Catholic Business School (2015) discussed the Maharlikan Spirituality, Devotional Spirituality, and Global Spirituality in the Philippines. A third article, with co-author Dr. Michelangelo Battung, is an imperial study on the 21st century spiritual practices of BPO managers in Manila. The findings revealed that their worship is anchored on devotional spirituality (Catholic religious practices), their morality is based on global spirituality (non-Catholic ethical standard) and their dogma is linked with global concepts (non-traditional beliefs on who God is). This narrative was inspired by Elsie Rabago, a former co-faculty at De La Salle Lipa in the 70s; we had a spiritual encounter when I was asked to give a eulogy for her husband in 2021. A spiritual bond was established, knowing her brother is Archbishop Arguelles whom I met in Rome in 1974, her daughter Sr. Lisette is a member of a religious order and she herself is a devout practicing Catholic; together, they form a family of intercessors for many of my prayer requests.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This discourse is a qualitative narrative (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) on family lay spirituality; it is a case study on one's personal spiritual experience (Yin, 2018); the narrative is based on key documents that provide an understanding of the practice of lay spirituality in the Philippines, which celebrated its Christian tradition for 500 years (1521-2021). It is heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) because it provides the audience and readers the opportunity to discover for themselves that spiritual life of the is driven by priests and religious in a world predominantly caged by global materialism and commercialism. It makes sense of the past experiences of one's traditional religious practices (Smith, 2015; Sela-Smith, 2002) towards a personal journey to a spiritual experience in the 21st century (Hudtohan, 2005; Gonzalez, Luz, & Tirol, 1984). The methodology of this study is multi-valuate (Richardson, 2015) because it deals with various disciplines related to economic, social, cultural and metaphysical dimensions of spirituality This is an

exploratory discourse (Stebbins, 2011) that studies, examines, analyzes and investigates the importance of family lay spirituality in the 21st century.

III. DISCUSSION

3.1 The Context Of Spirituality

According to Geil Browning (2005) in her book *Emergenetics*, we are a product of nature and nurture. The context of Browning's nature in the Agency paradigm of Priestly, Biesta and Robinson (2013) is our cultural DNA which is the very fiber of our existence sourced from divine origin nurtured by institutions like the family, schools, government and business institutions. The nurture context includes the iterative elements of Priestly et al, which consists of our life history and professional history.

Kagandang Loob. The core of Filipino cultural DNA is *kagandang loob* which is the internal driving force of one's external behavior as an enlightened Filipino citizen. Joey Ayala (2009) in Figure 11 shows the cycle of *pasalooob* (contemplation), *pagsalinaw* (articulation) and *pagsaganap* (operation) where *kagandang loob* is made manifest. He says:

Pagsaloob: from *salo*, to catch, and *loob*, inside/within. The taking in of *kaganapan* (reality), contemplating it, processing it, imagining better versions, deciding how to apply one's self... Exercising *pagsaloob* produces *kagandang-loob*. *Pagsalinaw*: articulating one's *kalooban* and *saloobin* (intent, purpose, desire, inner being, vision) clearly using a variety of mediums (not just words!) for self-management, self-programming, and for purposeful interaction with other people... *pagsalinaw* produces *pakikipag-kapwa*. *Pagsaganap*: Manifesting, unfolding *kalooban* into competent action and improved *kaganapan*... Exercising *pagsaganap* produces *pagkukusa*. *Pagsaloob*, *pagsalinaw* and *pagsaganap* powers are usually absorbed from one's *kaganapan* or reality, which includes the home, school, electronic-media and other social environments, more than from the exercise of some consciously-designed method (Ayala, 2009, p.2).



Figure 12. Joey Ayala's Loob paradigm

Dyck and Neubert (2012) include spirituality as one of the nine dimensions of wellbeing. The nine elements are: 1. Aesthetic: beauty, art, poetry. 2. Ecological: natural environment, minimal pollution. 3. Emotional: satisfaction, positive feelings, hope, joy. 4. Individual: personal convenience, one's own interests. 5. Intellectual: ideas, clear rationale, theory, concepts. 6. Material: finances, productivity, tangible goods, efficiency. 7. Physical: health, safety, security. 8. Social: community-mindedness, justice, helping others. 9. Spiritual: meaning, interconnectedness, transcendence. (Dyck & Neubert, 2012).

3.2 Spiritual Development

Lola Tesang's Spirituality. My early spiritual formation was shaped by my maternal grandmother, Lola Tesang, she was widowed during World War II when my grandfather, Emiliano Torrecarion, died of asthma at Isabela, Negros Occidental, where he was an accountant of a sugar planter. Lola Tesang named me Emiliano, being the first male among her grandchildren. I was born on November 10, 1944 during WWII. Bacolod City was then occupied by the Japanese forces on May 21, 1942. As news of the arrival of the occupation spread, my parents together with other Negrenses evacuated to the mountains for safety (Hofilena, 2021.). The American forces liberated Negros on May 29, 1945. As a wartime baby, I am emotionally sensitive to noise, mass movements and military activities. My nickname Buckshot was given by an American G.I. when I was 6 months old. I remember Lola Tesang's love and care in my childhood days, giving me comfort and security as she who never failed to provide us with meals three times a day. But she was a strict disciplinarian. We had to be home by *oracion* time for prayers and dinner.

The 6.00 PM church bell was a signal to go home. She would wait for us by the gate with a rosary in one hand and a guava twig on the other. If we were late, we would get some lashing until we were inside the house. After showers, all of six would kneel in front of the statue of Jesus and Mary positioned on top of her *aparador*. We pray the rosary in English and recite the litany of the Saints was in Latin.

Her routine was going to the church on Saturday. I carried her prayer book and she would confess to a Spanish Augustinian priest, who wore a white soutane with a black belt. I followed her confession ritual. Sunday morning, I would join her to go to mass in a chapel inside the compound of Talisay-Silay Milling Co. Sunday was special for me. I would dress up in a newly pressed polo shirt and khaki pants. Again, I carried her prayer book and attended mass and received holy communion.

On a Sunday afternoon, we were required to take siesta until 2.00 PM. After that I was assigned to call her *panguingue* (Spanish cared game) playmates. This was always a welcome event because the *tong* of the game was set aside to buy merienda and the six grandchildren partook of this wondrous afternoon treat.

I remember on the Feast of St. Joseph; she would hold a special breakfast for a venerable old man of the community acting as St. Joseph. My elder sister or a young fair teenager was chosen as the Blessed Virgin and I was chosen many times as Boy Jesus because good behavior compared to my younger brother named Jesus. The sumptuous breakfast would be served for us, representing the Holy Family. Thereafter, relatives and neighbors would reverently kiss us and offer their tithes, which was divided among St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin Mary and Boy Jesus. This annual ceremony was a great motivation for me and my two brothers to behave well throughout the year.

This was in the 1950s, after World War II, food supply was scarce. Following the H Club introduced by the Americans for food sufficiency, we had a small tilapia pond, a poultry for Rhode Island and While Leg Horn chickens, and we raised a pig for our food supply. Our home was fenced with cassava stalks laced with ube vines. We had *saba* banana plant. There were two coconut trees, a guyabano tree and a breadfruit tree at the corner of our lot. On a rainy stormy day when no vendor would come around, my grandmother would tell us to catch one of the chickens. If your pet chicken was chosen, then it was sorry for you. It would be our viand for 12 persons: 6 children, Mamang and Papang, 2 uncles, 1 helper and my Lola – a total of 12 mouths to feed. To have extenders Lola Tesang would tell me to cut down the *saba* banana tree and get the “*ubod*”. Also, he would ask my uncle Tito Junior (Emiliano, Jr) to harvest some breadfruit. These would be part of the chicken viand good for lunch and dinner.

The Holy Rosary was a source of family security for our daily meal and protection from physical threats and danger. We prayed the rosary before dinner, reminding us of our “daily bread” when we recite the Our Father. The rosary was a source of comfort from my traumatic fear brought about by the Special Police of Governor Rafael Lacson (noted for his crime against Moises Padilla) that attempted to forcefully enter the sugar central compound. A war tank was positioned to bulldoze the gate and the death of a sugar central security personnel, who was killed by an intruder who was shot earlier for a drunken misconduct. The Holy Rosary, when I look back, was an assurance for daily meal and physical protection safety and security.

It was Lola Tesang who encouraged me to join the brothers in 1961 after I graduated from La Salle Bacolod High School. Br. Francis Cody, FSC, La Salle Bacolod president, had 6 aspirants to be Brothers during the Golden Jubilee of the De La Salle Brothers in the Philippines. Rolando Dizon, Cecilio Hojilla, Ricardo Pijuan, Felipe Belzunce, Emmanuel Hilado, and Crisanto Moreno.

3.3 Lasallian Spirituality

Spirituality of St. La Salle. Br. Felix Masson FSC, when I was Grade VII at La Salle Bacolod, would take our class to pick up scrap papers on campus. We did it for the love of Jesus. In high school, Br. Francis Cody FSC made it a rule that every Tuesday was a Mission Day; a collection box was passed around for donation. I learned to give up my 10 centavos liver spread sandwich for the education of the poor at Sr. Joseph High School and for the Hacienda School project of La Salle Bacolod (Hojilla, Personal Communication, 2004).

My Lasallian spirituality was formally developed when I joined the De La Salle Brothers in May 1961 at La Salle Greenhills Novitiate. The first step was as a novice I changed my name to Br. Emiliano Hilario FSC after I pronounced my temporary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. This signified that I denounced my old worldly self and I embraced a new life as a member of the Institute of the brothers of the Christian Schools.

The basics of the religious life followed the routine of daily meditation for 30 minutes, followed holy mass and then breakfast. On weekdays we had classes interspersed with lectures and spiritual readings. We used the breviary for Divine Office to recite Matins (morning prayer), Sext (noon prayer), Vespers (afternoon prayer) and compline (evening prayer). After night prayer we practiced the Great Silence where no more conversation after lights off until breakfast time.

I learned Gregorian Chant from Br. Ignacio Javellana FSC as our choir master. I learned basic French from our Sub-Director Br. Albinus Peter FSC, former president of De La Salle (1920-1923). I could not get my supply of toothpaste, for example, unless I wrote it in French. “Cher frère Peter puis-je avoir du dentifrice.” This was an introduction to my lessons in French in order to read the original writings of St. John Baptiste de la Salle.

I was introduced to Our Lady of Star. The Mother House Greenhills Chapel had the crucified of Jesus at the center and to His left was St. Joseph and to His right was Our Lady of the Star. St. La Salle had a special devotion to Our Lady and named her Lady of Star because one of the pillars of the Institute is the Spirit of Faith aptly represented as the Star of Faith. He says: We must look upon everything with the eyes of Faith. At his deathbed he said: I adore in all things the guidance of God in my regard.

The De La Salle Brothers have a six-decade rosary. The sixth decade is for the intention of the Holy Father, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and for world peace.

Spirituality of the De La Salle Brothers. As a Scholastic, I lived at the 6th floor of St. Joseph Bldg. of De La Salle University from 1962 to 1967, taking an AB-BSE double degree and graduated magna cum laude. I paid a great price at the beginning of the first semester because I was physically exhausted and was confined for 6 months to recuperate from tuberculosis of the lungs. I exerted too much physicality in sports and spent a lot of energy on my studies. My five years at the campus of De La Salle University provided me ample information on the spiritual activism of the professed Brothers residing at the 4th floor of St. La Salle Bldg. on Taft Ave. As a student Brother I learned that the Brothers not only teach and manage the university but they had social action apostolates. They belonged to an active religious order (unlike the Carmelite contemplatives) and are engaged in practical engagement with worldly affairs.

Br. Hycinth Gabriel's FSC during his term as president had social program for the community. De La Salle College (COSCA) had a free school at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish (2nd fl.) of OLAS; Health Center in coordination with Dr. Legaspi; Parish cooperative remains at the residence of Brgy. Chair Ramos; a typing class inside campus of DLS College; classroom for prayer group of St. Christine Tan. Br. Richard Duerr FSC during his term as president gave special attention to the disabled and handicapped. Thus, there were catechism class for the deaf; and at William Hall (Ground Floor, St. La Salle Canteen) there was a Sunday school for street children. (Hojilla, personal communication, 2004)

Br. Manuel Castillo, FSC established the De La Salle professional catechists to teach in public schools. The public school were the target of social involvement of the brothers through teaching religion. Part of religion class in the De La Salle educational system then was to teach religious (a kind of practicum for the students). After graduation, first or last session classes were teaching catechism in public schools, but this was not obligatory. William Hall was a classroom for free school. BAMCREF was established to bring catechism outside the campus for greater number of coverages. One catechist meets 200 students. Going out to teach catechism for 20-30 minutes had a multiplier effect. (Hojilla, personal communication, 2004)

Br. Vernon Poore FSC had an apostolate at the Muntinlupa National Penitentiary. He translated the Apostle's Creed and the parables in "stick drawing". These became his content visual aids. He trained those who spoke English and who knew Ilonggo and other dialects. The stick drawings became part of the master teacher's tool to teach the prisoners. The 'mayor' prisoners became a network for teaching. He also regularly brought the poor kids of Leon Guinto St. and Taft Ave. to De La Salle Br. Athanasius gym to watch weekend movies with the brothers. However, they have to wear slippers, a form of discipline. This was direct contact with the poor of Taft. The apostolate of Br. Vernon was continued by Br. Cornelius Luke FSC, who lent the presence of the brother among the desperados, the abandoned and the disowned (Hojilla, personal communication, 2004).

Spiritual Challenges at De La Salle La Salle Schools. After graduation in 1967 I was assigned at De La Salle Lipa with Br. Augustine Boquer FSC and our director was Br. Frederick Bronowicz. From him I learned financial management and money accountability I also learned how to administer the paddle, aptly called the "board of education." Misdemeanor and failing grades would warrant a smack on the behind. At De La Salle Lipa, I met Elsie Arguelles in the high school department in 1969. My sister, Tessie, the guidance counsellor and Elsie became her close friend. As a novice teacher, Class 69 was a good ground for classroom management. Their gregarious behavior would make me stand by the door with stern countenance and simply stare at errant students before entering the class. For this, Augusto Laraya called me "Tiger Look". I taught them religion and I would play basketball with them after class. The school became a new ground for spiritual activism. I was delighted to moderate the school paper and enjoyed directing stage plays and mini-concerts. With Br. Gus we managed the students' catechists of De La Salle Lipa boys and Our Lady of the Rosary Academy (OLRA) girls. With Br. Augustine Boquer FSC, we held Junior Cursillo retreats at La Salle Greenhills.

I met a major challenge when I was the high school moderator of La Salle Greenhills. The age of student activism was brewing and the De La Salle Taft students staged the first national walkout which triggered the First Quarter Storm of Martial Law era. The high school students of Greenhills followed suit. I remember their protest was accompanied by firecracker explosions in St. Benilde Bldg. As they walked out, I boldly stood in their midst to shepherd them back to the classroom. My attempt to stop them failed. I was devastated and overwhelmed, having lost control of the situation. An anti-depressant (Tensinil) was medically prescribed to help me manage the trauma that shattered my self-esteem.

Thereafter, my assignment as Director-Principal of De La Salle Lipa was therapeutic. I felt at home with my sister who was a guidance counselor, the friendly students and faculty, and the bucolic air of the country side soothed my nervous energy. When my sister returned to Bacolod City because when my father had severe arthritis, I lost my moral support. By then, her friend Elsie had gotten married to our history teacher Pablo Rabago. Br. Benildo Feliciano FSC, Brother Provincial, advised me to open the school for girl students. Their presence made me decide to forego the use of the paddle to prevent inflicting scars on their legs. Their presence also made campus was less rowdy; the boys were well behaved in the presence of the girls.

In 1973, he sent me to Sangre de Cristo, New Mexico, USA to attend a renewal program. This was a welcome respite. There, Br. James Ebner FSC became my new theology professor. His book, *Mystery as God Present*, advocating that Jesus was not necessary to reach God the Father. He opened my mind to the views of Vatican Council II, which called for the Church to open its windows to the modern world, update the liturgy, and give

a larger role to laypeople in evangelization. The Charismatic Movement was gaining ground in establishing a new relationship God.

After the 3-month study and renewal program I was given another 3 months to tour America and Europe. I visited my relatives in Washington, DC, Chicago and Connecticut and some of the institutions of the brothers in Philadelphia, Minnesota and New York. My former high school student, Melchor Abaya toured me to Staten Island and I was able to enter the base of the Statue of Liberty and climbed all the way up to the torch.

From New York I flew to Spain touring Madrid and Sevilla; it was fascinating to see that the plaza and the church were positioned like those in the Philippines. Then, I passed by Paris, where I met my 13-year-old pen pal who was teaching me French and I in return I taught her English; I stayed with her family for 5 days. I moved to Munich, Germany and the sister of a former scholastic Marin Martinez arranged my accommodation at a Franciscan home and toured at a palace outside Munich. In Rome, I stayed at the Mother House of the brothers at Via Aurelia. Next door was Pontificio Collegio Filippino seminary, where I met Fr. Ramon Arguelles, the brother of Elsie Arguelles Rabago, my faculty at De La Salle Lipa. I came home via Greece, Thailand, and Singapore. In Singapore, I met Br. Crisanto Moreno, FSC, my confrere in 1961 when we joined the brothers as postulants.

My stint at De La Salle Lipa brought me challenges that contributed to my decision to eventually leave the brothers. There were two graduation cases that were critical to my administrative leadership. First, the Tan Torres - Lipat Case and then the Marella Case. The practice of distributing the final issue of Bulik school paper printed Lipat as Valedictorian and Tan Torres as Salutatorian. Mrs. Tan Torres, wife of the general of Philippine Air Base in Lipa City, called for a recount of the final grades. It turned out that Br. Jess Hechanova FSC, biology teacher, used averaging for four quarterly grades; De La Salle Lipa grading system was cumulative. The outcome was that Tan Torres had higher final grade. The Lipat family brought the case to the Division superintendent of schools. I was summoned to her office. The option was to apologize to the public during graduation or face a lawsuit. I opted for public apology. Second, the case on the following year was another issue on who was valedictorian and salutatorian. To break the tie it was decided to use character and conduct grades. The son of Dr. Marella came out as valedictorian but the family of the salutatorian objected to the tie-breaker. These cases were like needles that broke my spiritual resilience.

My assignment at La Salle Iligan moved me farther away from Manila, the epicenter of progressive education exemplified by De La Salle University. Iligan gave me time to reflect on my vocation. The Greenhills student mass walk-out and the two Lipa graduation issues reignited my childhood anxiety and insecurity brought about by armed and the murder incident at the sugar central compound in my childhood days. With troubled mind accompanied by an emotional discomfort, I felt I was no longer anchored to my commitment to serve La Salle schools; I was seeing the possibility of a life outside the religious life; my theological mind was reminding me of Vatican II changes, my personal acquaintance with Pearl and the exodus of the brothers leaving the Institute, locally and globally – these galvanized my decision to leave the brothers. I knew being a lay person is also a calling from God. I received my dispensation from the vow of poverty, obedience and chastity from Superior General Br. John Johnston on May 30, 1978.

By the time I got married on September 20, 1978, I was already employed as Assistant Project Manager of USAID for Bicol River Basin Development Program. I was emersed in a new world outside the sheltered life of a religious. My education background was thinly liked with the training component of the development project; this was a solace for me, knowing that I continued to have a connection with my profession as an educator. Dr. Josephine Caluag, my co-faculty at De La Salle Taft Grade School, who also left the academe, became the HR Manager of Malayan Insurance; she got me hired as Director of Training and Development. I was reconnected to my profession as an educator. Then, I was hired as Consultant for Training and Development of Metrobank (1991- 2002) fully emersed in corporate management education.

3.4 Diocesan Spirituality

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish Spirituality. After I left the brothers, I lived at Fidel A. Reyes St., near De La Salle University. I belonged to Our Lady of the Assumption Parish (OLAP). Pearl and I used to go to Sunday mass at Harrison Plaza Chapel and Fr. Edgardo Merin Edgardo Merin (1990-1994) recruited me to become a lay minister. Sanny de Claro (1994-2001) Pearl and I underwent the Parish Renewal Experience (PREX) and I became the Vice President of OLAP Pastoral Council. I chaired the Golden Jubilee souvenir publication of OLAP in 2001. The projects of Fr. Sanny de Claro and the Parish Pastoral Council included the Sto. Nino side chapel, the adoration chapel, the baptistery, choir left and the tabernacle. He also established the Kapatiran Kay Kristo (KKK) and as Chair of the OLAP Education Committee I partnered with Dr. Divina Edralin, External Affairs Office of De La Salle University, for a seminar on pastoral management of KKK prayer leaders. The KKK had 14 Kubol prayer groups but only 2 remained functional in holding prayer meetings and my prayer group was one of them. The main reason for disbandment were issues extraneous to the prayer meeting. They included financial and personal concerns. As an elder of my prayer group, I insisted that our meeting agenda be followed and the sharing of gospel experience should not include money and personal matters. At the time of Fr. Constantino Conti (2001-2003), I was doing healing ministry at the Harrison Plaza Chapel after Sunday mass service. In 2001, I moved my residence to the Manila Grand Tower, Vito Cruz and that ended my pastoral involvement with OLAP.

3.5 Charismatic Spirituality

Bukas Loob sa Diyos. Bukas Loob sa Diyos Covenant Community (BLD) is a charismatic community of the lay faithful. Its purpose is to empower the lay faithful in the task of evangelization by promoting the values of the Kingdom of God among individuals, couples, and families, through its various encounter and renewal programs. Pearl

and I attended the Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS), Marriage Encounter (ME) and Family Encounter (FE). We were with FE Class 43 with Tony and Penny Sison as Family Shepherd and the members were: Sid and Nini Adriano, Danny and Lorn Cabalde, Boying and Emma Cosio, Jimmy and Lou Corpin, Rolly and Baby de Castro, Matt and Josie Dimaculangan, Tony and Marissa Lavina, Fred and Nancy Lim, Vito Orcullo, Jun and Lerrie Roque, and Junior and Toyang Santos. The FE renewal was at St. Michael's Center, Antipolo.

The LSS was designed to implement the community objective of restoring and strengthening the personal bond of love between an individual and Christ through, between husband wife with Christ in the center of the marriage through ME, and between family members and Christ through FE. The BLD experience reinforced my personal mission, my commitment to Pearl and my love for Julie. It awakened my realization that the family is the first university and the parents are the original teachers empowered by God to fulfill His divine plan. And recently, it has been revealed to me that my family is a microcosm of God's Kingdom, a little church; and Pearl and I are God's minister. My personal encounter (PE) with Elsie established in me a human church where Jesus is my Beloved and the Blessed Virgin is my Mama Mary.

Connection with the Divine. My regular attendance at the BLD prayer meetings held at San Augustine campus Makati, Philippine International Convention Center, Roxas Blvd, and San Antonio Church, Forbes Park Makati were frequent sites of BLD venues. I experienced intense personal, pious moments in these meetings, envisioning God's grace a light and energy.

Significantly I realized that when I do fervent prayer requests God does respond to my call. The first case: Pearl and I went to see a movie at Greenbelt, Makati. Our Toyota was parked at lot near AIM but we extended our stay in the movie house to watch some exciting scenes of the film. We came out of the theater at 11.00 PM and by then the parking lot was already closed. I pulled out a Yale key from my pocket. In my heart and mind, I was asking God to help me get the car out; lo and behold I twisted the key and the lock opened. After I drove the car out of the parking lot, I set the lock and tried to open it again. The key did not work this time. Not convinced at this incident, I returned to the same parking lot a week later but I wouldn't open it. I had an inkling that my thought became real the first time I did it in the Presence of God.

The second case: I was flying to Cebu to conduct a Metrobank training. I was awakened by the church bells of OLAP at 6.00 AM for the morning mass that day. I said, how can this be; my domestic flight was at 6.30 AM for Cebu. In a hurry, I got my bag and ran from our apartment at Fidel Reyes St. to the corner of Quirino Ave. and hailed a taxi. It was around 6.10 AM. My heart was pounding with anxiety but I prayed that I be able to catch my plane. The taxi had to make a U turn at the intersection of Quirino-Taft to go to Roxas Blvd. and as we approached Taft Ave. the traffic light turned green with arrow sign. Approaching Quirino-Leveriza St. the red light turned green. My prayer was: "Lord, by the power of Your Resurrection please get me to that plane; there are 20 Metrobankers waiting for me there". And so, the lights were turning green along Roxas Blvd. and Pasay streets until I reach Manila domestic airport. By then, it was 6.25 AM. The check-in counter for Cebu was already closed. I negotiated with the ground manager and he allowed me to board. In my relief, I thank the Lord for getting me board. Perspiring and with tears in my eyes I thanked the Lord. And there was a time bonus. The pilot announced that we would be delayed because Pres. Ramos was on the runway for a priority take off. We were airborne at 7.00 AM. Indeed, He answers generously: I asked and I received my prayer request.

The third case: Pearl struggled with her loss of voice and depression in 1996. There were medical interventions like psychiatric treatment and prescription of Dormicom to put her to sleep, taking as much as one and a half tablets to knock her down. She had a session with Fr. Corsie, a healing priest, for spiritual and psychological healing. I used to bring her monthly to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Lipa City once a month for a prayerful intercession of Our Lady. She had spiritual counselling sessions with Sr. Mary Grace Rillo, DC, prioress. She gave us a twig from the vine where Our Lady of Mediatrix supposed to have appeared and I planted this at a potted garden at our apartment at Fidel Reyes St. When the third twig survived and lived, Pearl's voice returned. It also coincided when we opened the Holy Bible at the entrance of our apartment. My spiritual insight was that the Word of God literally jumped out of the door and gave life to the twig which was blessed by Mama Mary. Thereafter, Pearl joined the Assumption College European Tour in 1998. At Lourdes, she was immersed in chilly water but she felt the warmth that comforted her aching body; at the Garden of Olives in Holy Land she felt a joy and wellbeing. When Pearl was asked by Dr. Ruel Malata what will ease her worries and anxiety said foreign travel. She wrote on a page of her spiritual reading book that we travel as a family and this materialized. I began to understand that our thoughts become things (TOT) metaphysical formula and God's answer to heal her. When distressed Pearl is united with the dead relatives and friends; I consider this practice as our union with the living and the dead. Our family toured China, Australia, and Singapore. I realized that it was better to spend our savings travelling and stay in hotels than spending our cash in the hospital to address her sickness.

Divine Energy. My study of quantum physics (Ray, 2006) introduced me to God as Pure Energy; in the words of James Ray (2006) God and energy are the same, "Always was and always has been, never can be created or destroyed, all that ever was, always will be, always moving into form and out of form... You are a spiritual being. You're an energy field operating in a larger energy field" (p. 159). Teilhard the Chardin, SJ declared that we are spiritual beings with human activities. Dispenza (2017) also said that we 99.999 percent energy and only .001 percent matter. He said that we have to step outside our physical reality and into the quantum field of infinite possibilities (Dispenza, 2017). Gonzales said, "Indeed, the 21st century is an exciting period for theologians and scientists to go from the God of quantum Mechanics to the God of Informatics and to enrich the quest for the divinity in the future." (Gonzalez, 2002).

Yuval Noah Harari (2015; 2016) has declared mankind, a homo sapiens and has evolved into a homo deus being in touch with artificial intelligence in the Age of Digital Technology.

I eventually veered away from an anthropocentric God in human form and from a Thomistic theological concept of God as All True, All Good and All Beautiful (Hudtohan, 2014) to a quantum God (Gonzalez, 2002, 2006; Ray, 2006; Dispenza, 2017). The Bukas Loob sa Diyos (BLD) introduced me to a healing God, whose power brings about healing through pray over sessions.

My understanding of the Divine Presence was radically changed when I got sunburned praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, as a prayer warrior for the participants of a Marriage Encounter at the Canossa Retreat House in Tagaytay City. Thereafter, I realized that my psalm emitted heat (energy) and in pray over sessions among Metrobank seminar attendees in the 1990s reported of pregnancies after I prayed over them. Last June 3, 2022 I met retired Metrobanker Isabel Segovia; reminded me she became pregnant after I prayed over her. She was married at age 40 and gave birth at age 41. Sam, her daughter has graduated recently from college. In my dissertation proposal (Hudtohan, 2003), I cited the case Metro banker Bernadette Navallo who got married at age 25; with many failed attempts to have a child, they decided to adopt a baby; at age 38 she gave birth. Another healing intervention was the case of Borjal, an Ateneo college student who had two “leaks” in her heart; after 3 sessions of healing pray over at the Harrison Plaza Chapel, it was no longer necessary to undergo surgery (Hudtohan, 2003, p. 38.)

3.6 Family Lay Spirituality

Reborn the Second Time. When I was baptized as a baby, I was born into God’s family. When I attended LSS as an adult I was borne again in a new Christian community in the 1990s. Today, I in my seniors’ years born again the second time in the Presence of our Beloved. After more than 50 years, I got in touch with Elsie Arguelles Rabago through prayer requests for the health concerns of Pearl, Julie and mine. Our health issues were: Pearl’s physical therapy being unable to walk and she has to use a wheel chair, her eye cataract, stomachache, and high blood pressure; Julie’s mammogram tests for CA and her high anxiety for frequent air travel and I had kidney stones, diabetes, high blood pressure and swollen feet.

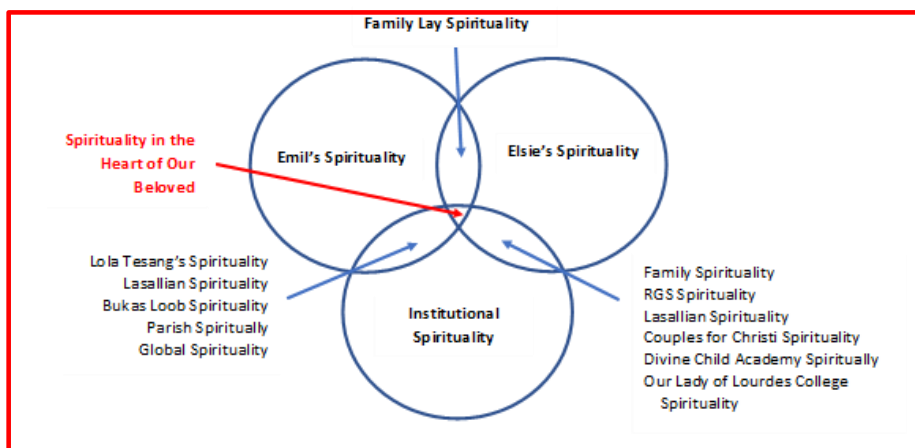
I realized how intimately related Elsie is with God whom she calls the Beloved and Mother Mary as Mama Mary. Our conversation in Face Book Messenger provides many evidence of her personal relationship with the divine. She says, Pearl and Julie and you are in the Beloved’s attention and care in a special way today. Find indescribable joy and peace in the Love abounding in His Heart. Our Beloved continues to carry all our burdens for us. Just pass on everything to Him and stay calm and relaxed. Not at all good for us to allow stress to overtake us.

I have made a full circle of spiritual relationship with the Divine. From impersonal anthropocentric relationship with God to a metaphysical God of Energy and Power; and now I am back to an anthropocentric image of the Divine having a personal relationship exemplified by Elsie as our Beloved together with Mama Mary.

Family Lay Spirituality Within the Divine Milieu

Figure 1. Venn Diagram of Elsie Rabago and Emil Hudtohan’s Spirituality (2022)

Geil Browning’s Emergenetics Theory: We are a product of Nature (DNA) and Nurture (Institutions)



Family Lay Spirituality. The Venn diagram shown in Figure 1 above shows two families who are engaged in a spiritual relationship as. The relationship is within the domain of the Divine Milieu (de Chardin, 1957). Chardin believed that man is evolving, mentally and socially, toward a final spiritual unity. Blending science and Christianity, he declared that the human epic resembles “nothing so much as a way of the Cross.” He saw the process of organic evolution as a sequence of progressive syntheses whose ultimate convergence point is that of God, the Omega Point.

The convergence of Hudtohan Family and Rabago Family within a Divine Milieu is a Family Lay Spirituality. The Age of the Laity has been declared by the Catholic Church and therefore the primary role of the parents as head of the family is of prime importance in pursuing a spiritual life. Thus, I believe that the family is the first university for values and spiritual formation and the parents are the original teachers; the family is a microcosm of God’s Kingdom; thus, the family is a Little Church and the parents are the ministers.

The Catholic Church declared that “the laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and wonderfully prepared so that ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them” (Lumen Gentium, 1964). The Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) declared that “(The) lay spirituality will take its particular character from the circumstances of one’s state in life, from one’s state of health and from one’s professional and social activity. Whatever the circumstances, each one has received suitable talents and these should be cultivated, as should also be personal gifts he has from the Holy Spirit” (p;151).

The Second Provincial Council of Manila (1996) declared that “It is the dream of the laity to be a Church where the laity are active under the leadership of the clergy, who can be likened to a conductor of an orchestra composed of laity with a variety of instruments – talents, charisma, formation – all united in playing a symphony for the glory of God.” (p 93).

Neale Donald Walsch (2022) says, “When the experience of “family” is a good one, it is the experience of being loved without condition, protected in every situation, and never really feeling alone. What life invites us to experience is an even grander version of that. We are invited to extend that joy and love and safety and wonder to all those whose lives we touch.”

Hudtohan Family. Emil is the head of the Hudtohan family. His spiritual development has been shaped by his grandmother Lola Tesang in his early childhood, the La Salle Brothers as a member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools anchored him to the Spirit of Faith and Zeal for the service of the Community and as an educator shaped by the educational philosophy of St. La Salle’s advocacy for the education of the youth. He served as lay minister, Vice President of the Pastoral Council and Education Committee of OLAP. His formation a member of the Bukas Loob sa Diyos charismatic community revealed his gift of healing. His academic research on metaphysics and quantum physics led him to discover the three dimensions of life: the physical, metaphysical and spiritual life. The three are intertwined in a web of energy where he participates in the divine mission of God.

Pearl has been an Assumption girl throughout her life: grade school, high school, and college were at the Assumption College Iloilo. After she graduate with a BSE degree, she immediately taught English in the high school department of Assumption College; Assumption campus became her second residence. For this reason, with the Sisters, she was attending daily mass and prayed the Divine Office, being seated with them at the chapel. She was assigned as a regular substitute for any Sister who could not be present at the adoration chapel during hour. At the faculty retreat, Fr. Reuter, SJ in the confessional box told her that she and all the faculty members have a vocation to serve God. Her uncles told her mom that she should be a nun; however, this was not her inclination. But she and her neighbor playmate, Bella Arnaldo, were taught to pray: San Antonio dame novio. She was a high school principal when I met and eventually, we got married on September 20, 1978.

Today, I am back to praying the Holy Rosary as in the days of Lola Tesang, with the sixth decade I learned from the De La Salle Brothers. I do morning prayer (Matins), noon prayer (Noon) and evening prayer (Compline), just like when I was with the Brothers, and like Pearl who joined noon prayer with the Assumption Sisters. I do my healing ministry to Pearl whenever she feels pain and discomfort. I used the Healing Protocol I composed in 2011 to cover her with White Light (God’s healing energy). When I read to her the Father of Healing Prayer of Arch. Arguelles, she said that prays the St. Padre Pio Healing Prayer in Facebook. She also narrated that Dr. Dennis Cruz, retina specialist of Makati Medical Center, after examining her eye said, “There is no need for operation because you have a very tiny vein that burst; it is very risky to operate. Let us hope and pray that it will eventually heal over a period of time.” Pearl was grateful because her prayer was answered: No operation. When Dr. Jamie Narciso, her neurologist/ophthalmologist, heard this; she simply smiled and laughed. We knew she believes in prayers as an Assumption girl; a crucifix hangs in her office at the Makati Medical Center. Dr. Tony Leachon of Manila Doctors Hospital, cardiologist of Pearl says, “Prayer is the best medicine.” (Personal communication, November 27, 2022).

Rabago Family. Elsie’s family is spiritually rooted and anchored in the service of the Church. She is Vice President and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Divine Child Academy. Her brother is Archbishop Ramon Arguelles. He was ordained bishop on Jan. 6, 1994 and on May 14, 2004, he was appointed Archbishop of Lipa and on February 2, 2017 he voluntarily retired. Elsie’s daughter Sr. Lisette belongs to a religious order and she is assigned to run a school in Calamba. Elsie has been a member of Couples for Christ in the Archdiocese of Lipa and they were doing formation programs for married couples in the Archdiocese up until the death of Pablito in 2021. Both of them taught at Our Lady of Lourdes College Seminary and were faculty members of of De La Salle Lipa.

In the 1970s, I accompanied Elsie to the Convent of the Medical Missions which was a new congregation then here in Maraouy, Lipa, because she wanted to be a nun. However, a sister said that their sisters are only those in the medical field. Her reflection was: “That was fine. I really was interested in the religious life; but then it just wasn’t God’s design for me. He made sure that I won’t have any regrets naman - and that’s one of my many experiences of His Love.” (Sept. 8, 2022, FB Messenger).

Family Concerns. The family, schools, and religious organizations of Emil and Elsie were on parallel lines. In fact, we were co-faculty at De La Salle Lipa in the 1970s. Our spiritual path met again when Pablito passed away. De La Salle Lipa Class 70 through Mario Mamon and Dante Lantin requested me to deliver a eulogy at a virtual memorial service on April 17, 2021 for Pablito who was also my co-faculty at De La Salle Lipa. This is the message I delivered.

Mr. Pablito Rabago, we are gathered here tonight to pay our respects and to honor you as husband of Mrs. Elsie Arguelles Rabago, as father of the five siblings, as faculty of De La Salle Lipa, and as a fellow Christian.

As my co-faculty member at De La Salle Lipa in 1967 I remember you as an energetic person, with a neat and sleek pair of pants with always well-pressed shirt. On a weekend on campus, I would see your glowing face like a Spanish tisoy. (Ibulong ko na lang. It was not cologne for the face) it was from a manly drink. I remember you with your friend Mr. Rene Salazar, geometry teacher, and you frequently conversed with your co-Ilocano Br. Gregory Refuerzo, FSC. And because of you I remember coach and PE teacher Mr. Gardoce, Ms. Glo Lacay, math teacher and guidance counselor, Ms. Rosemarie, best friend of Elsie, Ms. Luz Morada, Ms. Juliet Obilo, Ms. de los Reyes, Ms. Orona, Mr. Platon, Mr. Hidalgo, Mr. Amado Mia, Mr. and Mrs. Magtibay. The others, my senior mind, cannot recall their names, even if I see their faces. You and the other faculty members remind me of my life as a teacher in the 60s. and later as Principal-Director in the 70s.

As a father I congratulate you and Elsie for raising so well your children: Bayani "Bong", Sr. Ma. Lisette "Chette", Charina "Nini, Paolo "Don" and Joseph Rensis "Echin". I believe that the home is the first school and the parents are the first teachers. The values that drive your children to success are anchored from their most significant formation at home. I viewed the virtual mass for you and one of your kids was managing the affair. I am sure you children did not only love and learn history from you and English communication from Elsie; they were formed beyond academic skills. They imbibed your work ethics and personal life skills. You and Elsie schooled them to face life; such that today without you, I am confident that they will take excellent care of Elsie and help each other. You know, our children become greater than us, parents.

I had a Black Saturday Zoom class on April 3, organized by Mario Mamon, owner and CEO of Enchanted Kingdom; Dante Lantin, former LFTRB chair for three generations of Philippine Presidents; Gerry Panopio, Energy Management Engineer, Nestor Cuartero, journalist, Rustico Recto and others of Batch 70. Nestor said about you: "Everything falls off from his head. No notes. Nothing. Wala pang PowerPoint in 60s. But he could circumnavigate the globe with just his memory and understanding of world events. Past or present. What a big loss to the academe." Mr. Rabago, the students you taught with talent and skills as their teacher. Now, I consider them greater than you and me in their field of expertise.

The last time we met was in the mid-90s along the sidewalk of a street in Lipa leading to the Carmelite Church, where I regularly brough Pearl, my wife for healing. I got out of the car to go to a nearby store, we crossed paths; our eyes met but no chance for even a brief hello. Today we meet again and you are now pure spirit. Ms. Makalinao, our physics and science teacher, knows this: Energy equals matter times speed of light squared; $E=MC^2$. Your body will disappear but your Spirit continues to live on, Sr. Chette can attest to this and like Jesus, you are now Pure Light and Energy. I assure Elsie and your children, and those who are here that you are around although we cannot see you. At times you will manifest your presence and we will feel your Energy and we will see your Light, because now you are truly the Image and Likeness of God. He lives in your Heart and you live in His heart.

I close with Lasallian prayer: Live Jesus in Our Hearts. Forever. Mr. Pablito Rabago, you reached your final heavenly destination. Amen. (Hudtohan, 2021).

The death of Pablito reunited me with Elsie and Arch. Ramon. I was a De La Salle Brother (1961-1978) when I met Elsie in 1969 at De La Salle Lipa and Arch. Ramon in 1973 at the Filipino seminary in Rome. We all virtually met each other in 2021 (Elsie after 62 years and Ramon after 48 year) at the virtual wake of Pablito. I found out Ramon was born November 12, 1944; I was born November 10, 1914. I told Elsie his elder brother Ramon and I might as well be brothers. In a Filipino familial fashion, Elsie addresses me now Kuya (elder brother) Emil. What a wonderful transition from a De La Salle Brother to a Kuya in a Family Lay Spirituality. In 2009 Arch. Ramon composed a Healing Prayer to the father; in 2011 I wrote a White Light Healing Protocol. Joey Ayala's (2009) kagandahang loob is made manifest in this new relationship focused on family healing.

Elsie's family had medical concerns for her niece who underwent surgery for breast cancer. My daughter Julie for two years now has cysts in her breast and she was gravely anxious about this growth. There were three lumps in 2021 and two lumps in 2022. Elsie's family and mine were united in praying for Julie's wellness. Julie's mammogram showed the lumps were benign; Elsie's niece underwent CA breast operation. Pearl has retina and cataract issues and I have cataract too; Elsie and her brother Ramon also have cataract.

Again, we were united in praying for Our Beloved's love and kindness to take care of our eyes. Elsie upon knowing the eye condition of Pearl said, "If you have a stampita of Fr. Pio Petriercina which has his relic hold it on her defective eye. Fr. Pio is my favorite channel of the Beloved's healing grace. (Face Book, Nov. 7, 2022). This year I had kidney stones and swollen feet. I asked the family of Elsie to include me in their prayer's intentions. Dr. Julianio Panganiban placed a stent bypass for my stones until they disappeared. My cardiologist Dr. Louie Tan of Chinese General Hospital changed my medicine for diabetes from Micardis, Jardiance and Amlodipine with Venoright and Ebitan and Renalog. My swollen feet returned to normal after a stent procedure my urinary system is also back to normal.

The Rabago and Hudtohan medical family concerns became an opportunity for a spiritual relationship in the Presence of Our Beloved and the Blessed Virgin, Mama Mary. Arch. Arguelles very active apostolic services after retiring as the Archbishop of Lipa in spite of his impaired eyesight is a manifestation of God's grace and energy. I believe it is fueled by his firm belief in a prayer he composed on his birthday: Prayer to the Father of Healing.

Family Healing Prayers. Archbishop Arguelles composed a Prayer to the Father of Healing, Emil Hudtohan composed a Healing Protocol and Pearl's St. Pio Healing Prayer.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. My leadership challenges at La Salle Greenhills and De La Salle Lipa reignited my childhood trauma as WWII baby, being sensitive to noise and mass movement. This was compounded by the terror I experienced of an armed conflict with the Special Force of Gov. Lacson and the murder of a sugar security guard at Talisay-Silay Mill. Co. in the 1950s.
2. My world travel, the Vatican II call for renewal and change in religious life, and my disappointment to study abroad fueled a restlessness in me to find my true self and real purpose in life.
3. The most compelling reason for my departure was my Vow of Chastity after I met Pearl at a PAASCU accreditation workshop at Taal Lakeview Hotel, at Sacred Heart High School in Cebu City; I was chair and she was member of the accreditation team; and at Assumption Iloilo when she invited me to prepare her faculty for a PAASCU visitation.
4. Lola Tesang's religious devotion together with my Lasallian formation, OLAP pastoral services, and BLD charismatic renewal helped me discover that I am divine made to God's image and likeness.
5. My prayer encounter with Elsie Arguelles Rabago led me to a spiritual rebirth in Jesus as my Beloved and the Blessed Virgin as my Mama Mary. I was born a Christian through my baptism. I was reborn by my baptism in the Holy Spirit (BLD LSS).
6. This rebirth was a full spiritual journey from my anthropocentric God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) to a metaphysical a God of Quantum Energy. Finally, I reverted to an anthropocentric God with Jesus as my Beloved.
7. I now advocate and promote the family as the first University and the parents are the first and original teachers.
8. The healing of the Hudtohan and Rabago Family has created a spiritual bond in a Divine Milieu under Jesus our Beloved with Mama Mary, our mother.
9. Finally, my ultimate spiritual prospect is to make the family existing in a Divine Milieu a microcosm of the Kingdom of God, a Little Church, where the parents are God's ministers This is Family Lay Spirituality.

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