

The Crucified People in the Writings of Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría: its Relevance for the Mission of the Ecclesial Communities in Asia Particularly in the Context of Timor-Leste

Calisto Seco¹

Abstract: The theologians, Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría make a similar assertion that “the crucified people” should occupy a privileged place in the mission of the church. The poor are at the heart of the theological interpretation of these two theologians. They are convinced that the social setting of the poor is the reference point of the church of the poor, which means that the poor is the point of departure for any theological reflection. The church of the poor has its roots in the scripture particular in the life of the historical Jesus and the early Christians communities. Hence the privileged place of the poor in the church is an invitation or a call for the wider communities of the church to be mindful of the responsibilities to answer the call of our fellow human being in our midst. Inspired by the Scriptures, Sobrino and Ellacuría ground their theological reflections in the context of Latin America. Final inquiry will include a creating of a space for Sobrino and Ellacuría to speak to the church in Asia particularly in the context of Timor Leste.

Keywords: Sobrino and Ellacuría. Crucified people. Poor. Historical Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church, with its established teachings and traditions, faces constant challenging realities as it strives to be relevant to the rapid changes of the world today. The contribution of the Catholic theologians is crucial in making the Church adapt to the fast-growing economic, social and political situations, which creates inequality, injustice and marginalization of the majority of the population of the world. This short study strives to make comparative theological reflections on the ecclesial contexts of El Salvador and Timor-Leste.

The first part of this inquiry revisits the theological reflections of Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría on “the crucified people” in order to renovate the mission of the Church according to ‘the signs of the times’ of our world today. Living and reflecting on the context of El Salvador, Sobrino and Ellacuría are convinced that the social setting of the poor is the reference point of the church of the poor, which means that the poor is the point of departure for any theological reflection. Hence the privileged place of the poor in the church is an invitation for the wider communities of the church to be mindful of the responsibilities to answer the call to take care of our fellow human being in our midst.

1 Calisto Seco has a bachelor’s degree in theology from FAJE and was a CNPq Scientific Initiation scholarship holder between 2020 and 2021, under the guidance of Professor Francisco das Chagas de Albuquerque, as part of the research project Theological and pastoral perspectives of Christianity in Latin America: trajectories, diagnoses, horizons.

The second part is about the relation between the crucified people and the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. Inspired by the scriptures, Sobrino and Ellacuría ground their theological reflections in the context of Latin America. The Suffering Servant in the book of Isaiah and the historical Jesus in the gospels are the basis of their theological reflection on the crucified people. The church of the poor has its roots in the scripture particular in the life and mission of the historical Jesus.

The third part talks about the crucified people in Timor-Leste. The long years of threat, torture and trauma have left wounds and scars in the heart of every Timorese. There is a need of the process of healing and growth as persons and believers of God. Psycho-spiritual healing is greatly needed there in Timor-Leste.

The final part is an invitation for the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste to integrate the *Principio Misericórdia* in its reaching out to the crucified people. The reflection of Sobrino and Ellacuría offers opportunities for the Church in Timor-Leste to enter into greater solidarity with the poor in its prophetic mission.

1 THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CHURCH IN THE REALITIES OF THE PEOPLE

One of the milestones in the history of the Catholic Church is the event of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican in 1962-1965, where the church entered into dialogue with the ever-changing and challenging world. In one of the Vatican II documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Catholic Church acknowledged the challenges to reflect, discern and respond with a mature faith towards the unfolding realities of the present world. The realities or events of the modern world did not only bring challenges but also new energy, new spirit and new creativity to the Catholic Church. Hence the fathers in the council came to a conclusion that the Catholic Church needs to “read the signs of the times” in order to be relevant in living its faith and teachings with the different and diverse realities emerging in our world today:

The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions, which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often-dramatic characteristics (GS, n. 4).

Through the spirit of “reading the signs of the times” – the Catholic Church started to invite all the faithful especially pastoral workers to actively involve in a profound and critical examination of the Christian faith based on the realities or contexts of each ecclesial community. Hence many Catholic theologians and philosophers began to search for mature, creative and relevant ways of expressing Christian faith according to the demands of the unfolding events in each circumstance. This brought about the birth of contextual theology,

where Christians strive to find the presence and action or revelation of God within their midst through the encounters with other cultures, religions and traditions.

1.1 THE REALITY OF EL SALVADOR AS A REFLECTION OF THE SITUATION OF LATIN AMERICA

The slogan of “reading the signs of the times” led Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino to elaborate a contextual theology in the social, political and economic context of El Salvador. The main context of this inquiry is on the reality of the poor, who find themselves living in a reality of oppression, marginalization and denial of the basic needs of life. Sobrino challenges us to open our eyes to see the reality of the poor and let that reality to disturb and awaken us not only as believers in the Risen Lord but more fundamentally as fellow human beings, as he stated that we need to “despertar para a realidade de um mundo oprimido e subjugado, e fazer de sua libertação a tarefa fundamental de todo ser humano para que, deste modo, este possa se tornar humana” (SOBRINO, 1994, p. 12). It is through this awakening to see the reality of the poor of the millions in the world; whose voice of misery leaves us with metaphysical unease that transformation can gradually occur.

In El Salvador, there was political upheaval and unrest, where oligarchy and military controlled all the resources of the country. The inequality, corruption and exploitation were so rampantly practice by the ruling class, leaving the great majority of the population to live in inhumane situation of poverty. The military would kidnap, torture and murder anyone, who worked for justice including teachers, leaders of peasants, nuns, priests and even bishops (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 10). These are significant events that narrated the live of the poor and suffering of the people in El Salvador and its neighboring countries. The important events that shaped their theology: 1). In December 10 – 11, 1981, there was a massacre in the village El Mozote, Morazan, El Salvador. The soldiers systematically killed around 200 peoples (women, children, and men). 2). The death of many religious (priests, brothers and nuns) who fought to establish justice and equality. 3). The continuous struggles of living in poverty of the majority of the people in El Salvador and in other Latin American countries. 4). Finally the death of Rutílio Grande, Óscar Romero and the Jesuits in Universidad Centro Americana Jose Simeon Cañas (UCA) in 1989.

1.2 THE REALITY OF THE POOR AS BEARERS OF SALVATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The historical fact of poverty in Latin America has been undeniable since the times of the colonization. It is a “relational poverty”, which refers to the ever-increasing gap between the rich and poor or ‘the have and the have not’ (SOBRINO, 2008, p. 25). Sobrino stated that the poor are those, who are denied to live a dignified life as human beings. Hence the main cause of their suffering or poverty is the presence of a system, which encourages a small group of individuals to accumulate wealth and letting the majority to live in an inhumane conditions. It is this kind of system that continues to maintain the poor in our society to depend on the minority for their basic rights and needs.

It is a sad reality that in spite of the advances in politics, social and technology, the poor are still the majority, who live in total misery, who seem to have lost the meaning of their existence especially losing their future. In a certain degree, the economic poverty is emphasized here by Sobrino, which has a direct relationship with the meaning of being human. In term of the privatization of the wealth, the “poor” are the victims of this system of “social injustice” – which denies many people to live a dignified life. For Sobrino, poverty is a cruel reality that eliminates the identity of the whole person. It is poverty, which reduces the dignity of the human being into a situation of meaninglessness of life:

Pobreza, em primeiro lugar, quer dizer a realidade em que vive grandíssima parcela de seres humanos esmagados sob o peso da vida: sobreviver é a sua maior dificuldade e a morte lenta um destino mais próximo. Pobreza é, então, dificuldade grave para subsistir como espécie humana (SOBRINO, 2000, p. 13).

Ignacio Ellacuría uses the expression “the crucified people” in order to describe the victims the social injustice system, which favor only a small percentage of individuals or groups. He illustrated that the “crucified people” is “the vast portion of humankind, which is literally and actually crucified by natural, historical and personal oppressions” (ELLACURÍA, 1982, p. 124-126).

Therefore the victims of the social injustice in Latin America reflect the cruel and inhumane system in the continent, which benefits only a privilege few or the rich. The victims are left with nothing to live a dignified life as they struggle to find the basic necessities of life on the daily basis. They are also deprived of their own culture, which weaken their identity and make them more vulnerable (SOBRINHO, 1993, p. 254).

1.3 IMPORTANT WITNESSING FIGURES OF THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE

In the midst of the social injustice, the call to defend justice and stand with the poor emerges in the life several individuals. In the context of El Salvador, there are several important figures, who identified themselves wholeheartedly with the victims and fought against the social injustices. Among many, they are Rutílio Grande García, Óscar Romero y Galdamez and Ignacio Ellacuría with companions, who offered their lives in the process of defending the dignity and identity of the poor in El Salvador. It is both enriching and inspiring to read the narratives of the process of living out the teachings and values gospels in the lives of the Rutílio Grande and Oscar Romero.

1.3.1 RUTÍLIO GRANDE GARCÍA (1928 – 1977).

Rutílio Grande came from a poor family in El Paisnal, El Salvador. He was the youngest of 7 siblings. His older brother and grandmother raised him since his parents were separated when he was at a young age. He grew up in a family and a community of devout Catholics.

According to O'Malley (1980), Rutílio entered minor seminary at the age of 12 in San Salvador. He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at the age of 17 in Caracas, Venezuela. He completed his philosophical studies in the year 1950 in Ecuador. He spent three year of regency as a professor of the subjects of Church History and History of the Americas in a minor seminary in El Salvador. Then he went to his theological studies in the major seminary of San Jose de la Montana, where Óscar Romero became his fellow theology student. He was ordained a priest in 1959. In 1963, he went to study new approaches of pastoral ministry in Brussels, Belgium (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 11). Returning to El Salvador in 1965, he was appointed as the director of the social action projects at the seminary of San Salvador, where he worked for 9 years. He was also teaching liturgy, pastoral theology and catechesis. As a formator in the seminary, he started pastoral immersion for seminarians to have concrete experiences of living with the people of whom they will serve in the future as pastoral workers. He sought to make equilibrium between the life of study, prayer and pastoral activity (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 11).

In 1973, Rutílio Grande was sent to do pastoral evangelization in Aguilares, El Salvador. Gradually his passion to serve the poor grew as he strived to integrate the teachings of the Vatican II and the implication of theology of liberation in Latin America. He was one of the pioneers of ecclesial base communities in Latin America as he organized farmers to fight for their rights against the oppressive military government. The Parish of Rutílio was a center for the work of justice, which provoked the landowners and the military to kill him. The author of Rutílio's biography, Rodolfo Cardenal described Rutílio as "a witness of faith and defender of justice for the peasants" (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 13). Rutílio spoke against the injustices of government of El Salvador, which marginalized and deprived the farmers and other minority groups (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 14). He inspired farmers to demand for their rights to own a piece of land in order to sustain the needs of their families.

1.3.1.1 THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF RUTÍLIO GRANDE

The milestones of Rutílio Grande include: (1) he stood, with faith and conviction to defend his pastoral work of justice, with the poor from the frequent threats and oppressions from the President Colonel Arturo Molina (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 34-35). (2) He spent his life working against the social system of injustice, which marginalized and victimized the poor and weak. Through his dedication and sacrifices, he was described as "a witness of faith and a defender of justice for the peasant" (O'MALLEY, 1980, p. 13). He is considered as a saint for the clergy and the people of El Salvador.

1.3.2 ÓSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO Y GALDAMEZ (1917 – 1980).

Rafael Domingo wrote "Óscar Romero: Martyr for the Gospel of Social Justice" as the title of the biography of Romero (2020). Óscar Arnulfo Romero was born on the 15th of August of 1917 in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador. He has 5 brothers and 2 sisters. His father was a carpenter, who wanted his children to succeed in life through trade. Óscar Romero

performed really well in school that he was admitted to the minor seminary at the age of thirteen. He went on to the major seminary in San Salvador. He completed his priestly studies at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he graduated with a Cum Laude in 1941. He was ordained to the Holy Orders in 1942 in Rome. While studying, his areas of interests were ascetic theology and Christian perfection, in which he earned a doctoral degree. While still in Rome, his bishop summoned him to go back home to El Salvador. It was not easy to travel at the time since due to political tensions in many different countries around the world. Reaching Cuba, he was detained in prison for several months before getting help from other religious friends.

Óscar Romero was assigned in the parish of San Miguel for 20 years. As a charismatic leader, he started different pastoral groups in order to attend to the different needs of the parish. For instance, he started an alcoholic anonymous group in order to help his parishioners, who were identified to have substance use disorder. Then he was appointed as the rector of the inter-diocesan seminary in San Salvador. In 1966, he was elected as the secretary of the Bishops Conference of El Salvador (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 3-5).

Óscar Romero showed great capacity of leadership in the different positions he assumed in the church. In 1970, he was appointed an auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of San Salvador. Four years later, he was elected as the Bishop of the Diocese of Santiago de Maria, a poor diocese in the rural region of the El Salvador (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 5).

The last position of Óscar Romero was the appointment as the Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977. During that time, the government started a campaign of intimidation, threats and persecution against anyone who was not in favor of the government, particularly the pastoral workers (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 8). The ruling class and the military forces were fully aware that the works of the Catholic Church was empowering the peasants, which posed a threat for them to continue their unjust treatment of the citizens of the El Salvador (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 8). The death of Rutilio Grande was a turning point of Romero as he began to blatantly speak against the government, who plotted the death of his good friend.

1.3.2.1 THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF OSCAR ROMERO

The courageous images of Óscar Romero include: (1) he spoke with firmness and conviction that “the Church is not involved in politics, but when politics touches the altar, the Church defends the altar” as he strived to protect those who sought protection in the Church and the pastoral workers, who work for justice (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 9). (2) He challenged the National Guard and the police:

Brothers: you are of part of our own people. You kill your own campesino brothers and sisters. Before an order to kill that a man may give, God's law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. No one has to fulfill an immoral law. It is time to take back your consciences and to obey your

consciences rather than the orders of sin. The Church, defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such abominations. We want the government to understand seriously that reforms are worth nothing if they are stained with so much blood. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression! (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 12-13).

The paragraph above was his last appeal to those who persecuted the poor and the weak. (3). Romero was a very “patriotic Salvadoran of strong fortitude and high Christian ethical values and ideals [...] who advocated for a Christian humanism based on the Gospel” (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 18-19). He defended the rights of the poor and weak in the midst of rampant practices of injustice, exploitation and corruption. He promoted “a nonviolent defense of justice inspired by love, forgiveness, and social participation. The preferential option for the poor was at the heart of his pastoral mission and action” (DOMINGO, 2020, p. 18-19).

2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE CONTEXT THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE

The reality of the life of the poor in Latin America, particularly in El Salvador, calls for the need of liberation. There is a need to address the inhumane situation of the poor, who are struggling to survive on a daily basis. For instance, the constant movement of the migrants across borders of the different countries in Latin America shows the desire to search for ways of liberations. From the perspective of faith, the urgent question would be ‘what is the basis of this quest for liberation?’ Jon Sobrino’s response is that “Christ has a body that makes him present in history. So we need to ask whether this body is crucified, what element of this is crucified, and if its crucifixion is the present of the crucified Christ in history” (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 254). The crucified people are “those who fill up their flesh what is lacking in Christ’s passion...they are the actual presence of the crucified Christ in history” (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 255). Hence the points of reference in understanding the crucified people is the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who Himself confessed that He is the Christ, the Liberator.

2.1 THE SUFFERING SERVANT IS PRESENT IN THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE

The encounter between Yahweh and His chosen people occurs in history, where Yahweh chooses to reveal Himself through the unfolding events of the reality of the world. In the book of Isaiah, the author speaks of “the election of the Servant. He is a chosen one, a favorite of Yahweh: upon him God has placed his spirit in order to bring forth justice to the nations” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p. 766).

There are similarities between the Suffering Servant and the crucified people as Oscar Romero said that “Jesus Christ, the liberator, is so closely identified with the people that interpreters of scripture cannot tell whether Yahweh’s Suffering Servant proclaimed by Isaiah is

the suffering people or Christ who come to redeem us” (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 255). Ellacuría reaffirmed that:

The crucified people are the historical continuation of Yahweh’s Servant, whom the sin of the world continues to deprive of his human face. The powerful of this world continue to strip them of everything, to snatch everything from them, even their lives, especially their lives” (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 255).

2.1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

There are several main characters of the suffering Servant: (1) he/she is “a figure shattered by the concrete, historical intervention of human beings...who is accustomed to suffering, who is carried off to death in helplessness and injustice” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p. 776). (2) He/she is “regarded as someone who might have leprosy, someone sentenced to death, someone wounded by God, someone brought low and humiliated” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p. 776). (3) He/she is “appears as a sinner – as the fruit of sin and as filled with sins...he has been reckoned among sinners, because he took upon himself the burden of the sin of so many” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p. 776). (4) He/she “suffers sin without having committed it. He has been pierced for our rebellions and crushed for our crimes – wounded for the sins of the people” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p. 766-767). (5) He/she “accepts the fact that it is the weight of sins that is bearing him off to death, although he has not committed them”, in the sense that he/she offers his/her life for the redemption of others. (6) He/she will triumph through the “the sacrifice of his life and in the failure of death” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p. 777). This implies that the sacrifice of his/her life brings about offspring, who will continue to work for the establishment of a just society. (7) He is the Lord Himself, who takes on the characteristics of the suffering Servant since he accepts his destiny to offer his whole person to die for the reason of the sins of human beings.

The characteristics above are quite inclusive in identifying the Suffering Servant with the victims of social injustice, the advocates or the voice of the voiceless, and the Lord Himself, who suffers for the salvations of both the victims of injustices and even those who cause others to live inhumane life. Therefore the Suffering Servant of Yahweh can be anyone who is “unjustly crucified for the sins of human beings, because all of the crucified form a single unit, one sole reality, even though this reality has a head and members with different functions in the unity of expiation” (ELLACURÍA, 1996, p.779).

2.1.2 THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE

Sobrino believes that “the crucified people are Christ’s crucified body in history” (p. 264). He proposes three levels describing the “crucified people”, which include the factual, the historical-ethical and the religious level. 1). The factual level refers to the experience of

poverty and death by the majority of the population around the world. They are “deprived even of their own cultures, in order to subjugate them, weaken their identity and make them more vulnerable” by the ruling class and those in power (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 254). 2). The historical-ethical level refers to the experience of the cross and death through “unjust structure or institutionalized violence” (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 255). This implies that the existing social system gives privileges for the ruling class and victimizes the majority to live in inhumane conditions. 3). The religious level refers to experiences of the cross that “evoke the fundamentals of faith, sin and grace, damnation and salvation (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 255). Hence the crucified people are

Those who fill up in their flesh what is lacking in Christ’s passion
... they are the actual presence of the crucified Christ in history...
Christ acquires a body in history and that the crucified people embody Christ in history as crucified (SOBRINO, 1996, p. 255).

3 THE HISTORY OF THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE OF TIMOR-LESTE

The population of Timor-Leste is about 1.5 million and about 98% is Catholic. Originally the people of Timor-Leste are of mixed descent including Malayo-Polynesian, Papuan-Melanesian, Chinese, Arabic, and European intermarriages particularly Portuguese. There are 22 indigenous languages that differ greatly from each other. The dominant local language or the national language is Tetum. The territory of Timor-Leste was severely affected by ongoing conflict during the Indonesian occupation from 1975 until 1999. During the 25 years of Indonesian’s occupation, violation of human rights was extensive including arbitrary detention, torture, disappearances, and a number of massacres (NEVINS, 2003, p. 681-682). It is estimated that up to 200,000 people, about a quarter of the population at the time, died as a consequence of war and related deprivations, including famine and disease (NEVINS, 1994, p. 281).

In the early months of 1999, the President of Indonesia, B. J. Habibie, agreed to allow the United Nations to sponsor a referendum on independence in Timor-Leste after the fall of the regime of Suharto. The result of the vote showed 78% in favor of independence in September 1999. The result of the vote came as a shock for the Indonesian government, so the Indonesian soldiers and the pro-Indonesia militias initiated a campaign of violence, murder and destruction of the built infrastructure of the country including burning of houses of civilians. The whole country was turned into smokes and ashes – about 80% of the population was displaced from their homes by pro-militias who were backed by the Indonesian soldiers after the UN announced the result of the vote (ZWI, 2002, p.45). The UN Peace Keeping Force was able to restore peace and order from mid of September of 1999 until Timor-Leste achieved its full independence in 2002.

3.1 THE LEGACY OF BRUTALITY BY THE MILITARY OF INDONESIA

During the twenty-five years of Indonesian occupation, every Timorese was either a victim or a witness of torture, assault, physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse by the brutality of Indonesian military men. Many other Timorese were both witnesses and victims of propaganda of Indonesian government. Therefore the experience of trauma is a shared experience among all Timorese. Trauma can be defined as an experience of helplessness or not being able to stand up for one's dignity broke the defenses and boundaries of each Timorese.

Torture was a common method used by Indonesian soldiers to punish any Timorese who did not collaborate with the Indonesian soldiers. Indonesian soldiers deliberately inflicted physical and psychological pain to any Timorese, whom they suspected to be a freedom fighter or working with freedom fighters. Modvig, Lopez, Rodenburg, Salud, Caibigon and Panelo (2000) conducted a survey in Timor-Leste on torture victims with a sample of 1,033 households from different parts of the country. They classified their findings according to several common types of torture: 39% respondents were tortured, 40% respondents were tortured psychologically, 33% respondents experienced being beaten and mauled, and 26% respondents experienced being beaten with helmet. Other forms of torture were submission in water, electric shock, crushing of fingers, rape or sexual abuse. Those who witnessed the murder of a family or friend were composed of 22%. Torture does not only affect the victims themselves, but also families, relatives, friends, significant others, and the whole community (MODVIG *et al*, 2000, p. 1763).

The long years of experiencing threat and torture has its effect on the survivor's mental, behavioral, and emotional well-being. Psychological trauma includes highly stressful episodes caused by politically motivated behaviors and experienced by human collectives (VERTZBERGER, 1997, p. 864). Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be easily diagnosed in people, who live in armed conflict areas like Timor-Leste during the occupation of Indonesia. Herman (2015) identified several symptoms of PTSD such as hyper-arousal – the persistent expectation of danger, intrusion – the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment, and constriction – the numbing response of surrender (p. 75 – 98). The hyper-arousal traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to little provocations and lack of sleep (HERMAN, 2015, p. 78-80). The traumatized person experienced intrusion as he/she continues to remember or relive the past traumatic event at the present moment (HERMAN, 2015, p. 80-90). Intrusion can take the form of nightmares and flashbacks that interrupt the person to perform daily tasking (HERMAN, 2015, p. 90-98). The person's self-defense system can shutdown entirely or the person may turn into substances to defend his/her self. People, who undergo trauma, tend to experience psychological disturbances such as flashbacks, nightmares, hyper-vigilance, and avoidance of stimuli that trigger trauma related memories (WESSELLS & MONTEIRIO, 2004, p. 328-329).

Looking at the bigger picture of the society of Timor-Leste, the past is still threatening the present and its power overwhelms every decision in the present context in the way people

feel, think and behave. The Timorese people are free now in the sense of gaining independence for several years but sadly the psychological well-being of each Timorese is still searching for ways to be fully free and independent. Many people are still using coping mechanisms that were once worked in the past as they live the present life. For example, many young people tend to engage in aggressive behaviors such as fighting, vandalizing, breaking social norms, and many other antisocial behaviors as means to protect the self. The aggressive and destructive force, which have full controlled over the individual's behavior might be attributed to collective and traumatic past experiences as a society.

In terms of coping with experiences of exposure to trauma, there are both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. The adaptive coping strategies include seeking social support, accepting responsibility, confrontative coping, and prayer. Seeking social support refers to the effort to seek comfort in family relation and friends as a way to cope with stress. Accepting responsibility refers to the acknowledgement of the circumstances of the past and striving to put things in order at the present moment. According to Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, Delongis, and Gruen (1986), confrontative coping refers to the intense desire to change the situation (p. 992-997). In the context of Timor-Leste, prayer helped the victims to understand and make sense of the past traumatic experiences. The maladaptive coping strategies include engaging in antisocial behaviors, alcohol use disorder, gambling, caffeine use disorder, and personality disorders. Many of the victims of the past are still engaging in the same behaviors that helped them cope with the psychological disturbances of past experiences. Several defense mechanisms such as denial, suppression, aggression, and displacements are common strategies of coping with the painful past. It will take a lot of courage to reach the quality of openness – the ability to disclose one's self for healing and growth.

3.2 THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF TIMOR-LESTE

The Catholic Church played a significant part as both an oppressor and a liberator. During the colony of the Portuguese, the Catholic Church played a role as a tool of colonization in the sense that the missionaries played double roles as priests and military commanders. Initially the presence of the Catholic Church was categorized as pro-government since many missionaries were assigned to implement government policies to the people in the parishes (LUNDRY, 2000, p. 9-10). Dominican and Jesuit missionaries served as instruments of implementing government policies and spreading the Catholic faith to the people in Timor-Leste. The first formal schools were built by missionaries with its primary purpose was to socialize to the indigenous population the norms of the colonial government of Portugal (LUNDRY, 2000, p. 7-9).

The number of Catholics continued to grow and by 1930s, there were almost 19,000 Catholics and several Catholic schools including one minor seminary in the town of Soibada, Manatuto, Timor-Leste. Gradually the Catholic Church began to stand up for the local people against their colonial masters. The local Catholic Church began to grow as the number of local priests and nuns increased significantly in the year 1970s. The Portuguese revolution

in 1975 ended the formal relationship between Timor-Leste and Portugal. The leaders Timor immediately declared the independence of Timor-Leste in 28th of November 1975. A week later, the Indonesian government invaded Timor with 20,000 troops. A Catholic bishop described the scenes of the Indonesian invasion in these lines “the soldiers who landed started killing everyone they could find. There were many dead bodies on the streets – all we could see were the soldiers killing, killing, killing” (TAYLOR, 1991, p. 1093). The Catholic Church and Fretelin began to work together in their struggle against the occupation of Indonesia. Two important figures of the Catholic Church of Timor-Leste that led the anti-integration movement were Monsignor Lopes and Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo. Bishop Belo, a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1996, declared himself as “a voice for the voiceless” during his speech in Oslo when he received the novel prize.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The active role of the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste was crucial during the occupation of Indonesia. The church used to be a sanctuary for those, who were wanted by the Indonesian soldiers – thousand activists of young men and women hid within the walls of the church. Hence the role of the Catholic Church during the occupation of Indonesia was mainly to provide shelter for any Timorese, who sought physical safety. In the minds of every Timorese, the Catholic Church was a place where one could freely express oneself under the oppression of the Indonesian soldiers. Indeed the Catholic Church contributed greatly to the process of freedom of Timor-Leste as one people and one nation from the occupation of Indonesian government. The chapels and parishes turned into sanctuary for many Timorese who sought refuge in the Church. The Catholic Church stood by and defended its faithful for 24 years of persecution of the military occupation of Indonesia. It's a mission accomplished for the Catholic Church when Timor-Leste gained its independence in 1999. However the faithful are still recovering from the painful, dreadful, and traumatic past experiences. Hence the independence of Timor-Leste challenged the Church to embark in a new mission, which is to accompany the faithful in the process of healing, growth, and transformation to be authentic individuals in the sight of God.

The Catholic Church has been challenged since the independence to continue to care for those, who have been affected badly during the occupation of Indonesian. Today, the Catholic Church is challenged to provide pastoral accompaniment of healing for those who were victimized, traumatized, wounded, and persecuted during the struggle for independence. Spiritual healing and psychological healing are crucial for many Timorese in order to be able to move on toward a better future. Trauma events involved an assault on the victims' identity, self-worth, and beliefs. Therefore healing for trauma victims is essentially a spiritual process or a quest that involves a profound search for the value and meaning in life (BARRET, 1999, p. 135-140). Many traumatized Timorese are dispirited by the brutality and abuses of Indonesian soldiers. It is the mission of the Church to bring together the physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuses into a coherent whole so that a faithful individual may reconcile

with the past, live in the present, and look forward to the future. There is a great need of spiritual healing, renewal and transformation for the trauma victims to recognize again the care and love of God in their lives. In short the faithful are in need of pastoral care.

3.4 THE CALL FOR HEALING AND GROWTH FOR THE CRUCIFIED PEOPLE IN TIMOR-LESTE

Pastoral Care is a healing ministry dedicated to impart biblical understanding of faithful individuals and how she/he grows into a mature Christian. The focal point of Pastoral Care is the dimension of faith in the process of healing and growth of individuals who suffered greatly in the past. The concern for healing refers to the formation of a new condition and a birth of a new creation in order to gain back the identity of being created in the image and likeness of God (PEMBROKE, 2006, p. 69). Hence an individual is not determined by the past, but through the grace of God, an individual can attain the purpose of which he/she is created. It is indeed through the grace of God that trauma victims survived the past. The same grace of God brings conversion, growth, and transformation for individuals who are held back by past events. Furthermore an important aspect that can contribute to the process of healing is the role of the community in the life of trauma-victims. Pastoral care concerns not only with the well-being of disturbed individuals but also the building up of the body of Christ as a community. Pastoral care can take different approaches in its dealing with youth, couples, students, and adults through informal conversations, dialogues, and interactions (PEMBROKE, 2006, p. 43). One of the approaches in pastoral care is psycho-spiritual approach, which emphasizes the psychological and spiritual well-being of individuals who had experiences of trauma.

4 THE PRESENCE OF THE “*PRINCIPIO DE MISERICÓRDIA*” IN EL SALVADOR AND TIMOR-LESTE

Sobrino defines the “*Principio Misericórdia é um amor específico que está na origem de um processo, mas que além disso permanece presente e ativo ao longo dele, dá-lhe direção e configura os diversos elementos dentro do processo*” (Sobrino, 1992, p. 32). In the sense, this principle is present since the beginning of the history of salvation, where God cares for the human person, whom He created in the image and likeness of God. It is this principle of mercy that moves God to bring liberation to the chosen people of Israel “Deus escuta os clamores de um povo sofrido e só por este motivo se decide a empreender a ação libertadora” (SOBRINO, 1992, p. 33). Hence the suffering of the people touched the heart of God, which trigger His merciful love – Misericórdia. The Principio Misericórdia has always been part of the history of salvation and it is still constantly present in the salvific process of the people of God. Therefore the suffering of the ‘crucified people’ in El Salvador and Timor-Leste triggers the “misericórdia de Deus” in order to liberate His people from the unjust systems, which victimize them.

The *Principio Misericórdia* is actualized in the event of Christ, where the life of Jesus shows the meaning of mercy as seen in his life, mission and his destiny at the cross. For instance, the parable of the Good Samaritan shows that the suffering of the wounded man on the road moved the Samaritan to reach out to him. Indeed it is this principle that moved and stirred the hearts of the martyrs like Rutilio and Romero to give up everything including their lives in order to liberate the suffering of others. These two martyrs and many others show the true attitude of being Christians in the midst of the experience of suffering and deprivation.

4.1 THE MANIFESTATION OF THE *PRINCIPIO MISERICÓRDIA* IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus guides Him to discern the Will of God, which is the central of His incarnation. The center of the life and mission of Jesus was the intimate relationship of with God-the Father. Thus Sobrino identifies the manifestation of the *Principio Misericórdia* in the life of Jesus: (1) the spirit of discernment in the life of Jesus allows Him to know the Will of God and moves Him to fulfill it; (2) the spirit of freedom in the life of Jesus makes Him indifferent in front of the existing laws, institutions and religious traditions. He knows that love, justice and mercy are more important, especially for the poor and marginalized. (3). The Spirit of openness in the life of Jesus allows Him to have a total obedience to His Father even until his death on the cross (SOBRINO, 1992, p. 34-37). Therefore the historical person of Jesus was full of the *Principio Misericórdia*, which enabled Him to enter into the reality of his context with the mission entrusted to him by the Father.

4.2 THE *PRINCIPIO MISERICÓRDIA* AS THE BASIS FOR PASTORAL IN THE CHURCH OF TIMOR

This *Principio Misericórdia* allows the Church to have the commitment to bring down the crucified people from the cross. The Catholic Church has a preferential option for “the poor, the marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth”, which has its foundation in Matthew 25:40 – Jesus said “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me” (BOFF, 1984, p. 35). Therefore the call of the church is rooted in the *Principio Misericórdia* as in to look after our fellow human being – “you have received with paying, give with pay” (Mt 10:8), which is a moral imperative, in the world of inequalities, competitions, and individualism. The *Principio Misericórdia* of the church is rooted in the person of Jesus, who chooses to seek for the poor, marginalized and sick in order to reunite them with the society (SOBRINO, 1992, p. 37). Poverty takes on many different forms including food insecurity, lack of access to clean water and basic health care, lack of access to basic education, poor housing, and even homelessness. These forms of poverty inhibit our fellow human beings to grow and develop their full potential in the fulfillment of the purpose of their own lives. Those, who are living in conditions of poverty, are often found themselves to be excluded from the social, political cultural and religious events in a society.

CONCLUSION

This short survey of the rereading of the works of Sobrino and Ellacuría has brought about different food for thoughts. Firstly, it allows us to treasure the existing theological reflections, which can guide us to renew our call to follow the footsteps of Christ, the Suffering Servant, who died for our sake. Secondly, it invites us to honestly examine or reflect on 'the signs of the times' so that the Church may grow in its sensibility and awareness of the experiences of the crucified people in our midst. Thirdly, the Church of Timor needs to draw insight from the spirit of *Principio Misericórdia* as adequate response to reach out to the crucified people. Lastly, it challenges the Church of Timor to search for adequate pastoral approaches in order to preserve its identity in continuing the mission of Christ in our world today.

Thus there is a need to empower local Churches in Timor in the sense of deepening their contextual understanding of the realities of the poor in their midst. The Catholic Church in Timor needs to listen to the clamor of the crucified people, who continue to live in poverty and marginalization. The Catholic Church in Timor needs to recover its prophetic voice in defending the rights and dignity of the majority, who are the victims of the unjust social systems. The spirit of the *Principio Misericórdia* can make the Church in Timor to give hope for the crucified people in Timor-Leste.

REFERENCES

- BARRETT, M. J. Healing from trauma: The quest for spirituality. In F. Walsh (Ed.), *Spiritual resources in family therapy*. New York: Guilford Press, 1999, p. 135–150.
- BOFF, Leonardo. *Do Lugar do Pobre*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1984.
- DOMINGO, Rafael. *Oscar Romero: Martyr for the Gospel of Social Justice*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- ELLACURIA, Ignácio & SOBRINO, Jon. *Systematic Theology: Perspective from Liberation Theology*. Mayknol, New York: 1996.
- HERMAN, Judith L. *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.
- LUNDY, Chris. *From Passivity to Political Resource: The Catholic Church and Nationalism in East Timor*. Manila: Asian Studies, 2002.
- O'MALLEY, William J. *The Voice of Blood: Five Christian Martyrs of Our Time*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980.
- NEVINS, J. Restitution over coffee: truth, reconciliation, and environmental violence in East Timor. *Political Geography*, n. 22, p. 677–701, 2003.
- SOBRINO, Jon. *O Principio de Misericórdia: Descer da Cruz os Povos Crucificados*. Tradução de Jaime A. Clasen. Petrópolis, 1994
- SOBRINO, Jon. *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*. Translated by Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991
- PEMBROKE, Neil. *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006.

TAYLOR, J. *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*. London: Zed, 1991.

VERTZBERGER, Y. The Antimonies of political trauma: A pre-theory. *Political Psychology*, 18, p. 863 – 876, 1997.

WESSELS, M., & MONTEIRO, C. Healing wounds of war in Angola. A Community-based approach to assisting war-affected children. In: *Handbook of culture, therapy, and healing*. London: Lawrence Elbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004.

ZWI, A., & Silove, D. Hearing the voices: mental health services in East Timor. *Lancet*, n. 360 (Suppl): s45–s46, 2002.