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CONCH BLOWERS  
INTERPRETIVE BIOGRAPHIES OF THREE  
INDIGENOUS BISHOPS FROM OCEANIA

A Dissertation  
submitted to the Faculty of the  
School of Professional Studies  
of Gonzaga University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Arthur Leger

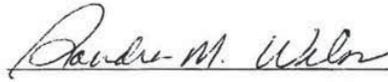
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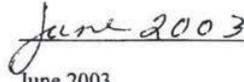
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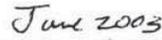


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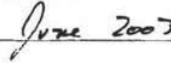


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June 2003

## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to the Leger and Beddoes families for your gift  
of knowledge and the search for the truth.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The biographies we create of other people are part of a common story we wish to communicate about our fundamental values. It is a collaborative effort, involving many people.

I especially want to thank the Archbishop Petero Mataca, Archbishop Anthony Apuron, and Bishop Max Mariu for their trust in me. I am grateful for the conversational interviews, e-mails and the all the materials they passed on to me so that I could tell their stories. I want to thank my dissertation committee chairperson, Sandra Wilson, who patiently went through numerous editions so that I could find my voice in the dissertation. Your desire to gain knowledge of the islands also prompted me to be proud of being an islander and a Jesuit priest. I am appreciative for the wisdom given to me by Roger Haight S.J and other lecturers at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. You gave me the courage to continue with this study at a time when the credibility of the Catholic bishops was questioned. I thank Shann Ferch for being my third member of my committee. Your probing questions allowed me to clarify my thoughts on a number of issues.

I am thankful to my family and friends in the islands, who tolerated the impatience and neurosis of a researcher. A special thank you to Esco Kazuma, Nancy, and Lillian for being “my island family” in Spokane. In your presence, I could relax, laugh, and, eat like an islander. Finally I would like to thank my brother Jesuits at Jesuit House community in Spokane. Your support was subtle but real. Your own academic achievements gave me hope that one could complete the dissertation.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of writing interpretative biographies for Bishop Max Mariu, Archbishop Petero Mataca, and Archbishop Anthony Apuron was to describe how they self-identify both as a bishop and as an indigenous person. The narratives trace how their early formation and pastoral years facilitated the dual identity. Using the progressive-regressive method Denzin (1989), the bishops were able to articulate who they are, how they came to be, and where they are now. The biographies then relate the challenges that the prelates encountered as they have lived out their episcopal mottos within the Fijian, Maori, and Chamorro contexts.

The bishops self-identified as indigenous men who have the responsibility of being authentic witnesses of the Christian faith. They consider themselves progenies of the “first peoples.” They are fluent in the local languages and desire to preserve the unique cultural distinctiveness of their native people. They are not in a double bind, believing they can be authentic advocates for the indigenous people through the promotion of values that recognize the dignity and sacredness of the human person.

With the proclamation of *Ecclesia in Oceania* in 2001, the bishops have had to reflect on how they can add their voices to the indigenous people in Oceania as they try to retain their unique identity. The bishops have adopted the image of a conch blower. The conch blower is both a witness and a raconteur. As storytellers and witnesses, the episcopal leaders assist in the self-identification process of indigenous people by keeping the multiple narratives going, one complimenting the other. As conch blowers, the prelates have developed apostolic faith and humble courage. The former is a faith rooted

in the stories of the first apostles, yet experienced and echoed anew in the local island context. Humble courage is a paradoxical mixture of extreme humility and intense fervent valor experienced in times of change. These leadership traits continue to be refined in the episcopacy as the bishops face the challenge to recreate a self-identity informed by a faith story that includes the real experiences of island history and indigenous culture.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The blowing of the horned helmet conches in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on Sunday November 22, 1998 was an idiosyncratic signal to the eight million Catholics from the "sea of islands" in Pacific Ocean called Oceania. The echoes of conch shells symbolically proclaimed the official opening of the Special Assembly for Oceania of the Synod of Bishops. This convocation of bishops, Curia officials, priests, lay people, consecrated religious, and fraternal delegates from other churches had assembled in Rome to analyze and discuss the present situation of the Church in Oceania. It was hoped that this would allow them to plan more effectively for the future. In a way, the echoes of the conch focused the attention of the universal Church, on the hopes and challenges, the needs and opportunities, the sorrows and joys of the vast human tapestry, which is Oceania (John Paul, 2001, p. 1). To help guide the delegates in the process of self-reflection, the planners of the Synod had carefully selected the theme for the assembly, "Jesus Christ and the Peoples of Oceania: Walking His Way, Telling His Truth and Living His Life." The representatives of the Church in Oceania deliberated on the theme in light of their own historical development and the many cultural, social, political, and economic aspects of Church's present experience.

At the Synod, the bishops for Oceania audaciously showed that the episcopacy could truly become "witnesses of faith" with intent to enrich and deepen the identity of all indigenous peoples. The bishops launched effective expression to this new episcopal challenge at the opening and closing liturgies and at the fifteen congregations. In the

opening liturgy of the Synod, the 82 prelates from the Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and smaller Pacific Islands sanctioned the inclusion of island vernaculars, island dances, traditional rituals, and multiple revered symbols. These, it was judged by Oceanic bishops, expressed an original sense of the sacred deployed in so many indigenous island cultures.

A video tape of this celebration (Centro Televisio Vaticano, 1998) showed three young islanders blowing conches. They were representing the bishops from Oceania. They were humbled yet honored that they had been invited by the Bishop of Rome to commence this period of critical reflection of their faith and worship in their unique Pacific island cultural way. As they waited for the signal, the conch blowers gently stroked the jagged crusts of the *cassis cornuta* conches. They instinctively began expelling air from their diaphragms in preparation for their important mission. As Pope John Paul's entourage appeared on the entrance hall of St Peter's Basilica, the three conch blowers reverently put the deep cream conchs to their lips and squirted air into the little hole at the shell's apex. Evocative and haunting sounds echoed throughout the high renaissance and baroque church. A hushed silence fell among the composite assembly who instinctively read conch blowers' proclamation as an announcement that something profound was about to happen. As the echoic sounds deflected on the gilt, the marble, the stained glass, and priceless paintings, the papal procession made its way towards the main altar. The conch blowers paused for breath, pursed their lips and squirted air into the shells a second time. Three reverberations boomed out, eventually echoing back to them. They were amazed that their synchronized breath had the power to call people to

worship. The conch blowers then slowly put the shells to their ears to hear the music of the ocean waves whooshing onto the white sand. For them, the ambient resonances from the islands reechoed the call of the Spirit to local leadership in the Church. The three island trumpeters were animated for their own bishops would take up this invitation to reecho their faith stories. This summons from the Pope would give the bishops from Oceania an opportunity to show to the world that there was a unique way of being witness to the Spirit of Jesus in the islands.

The conch blowers' thoughts were quickly interrupted as the island chiefs signaled that they were ready for the Gospel procession. Once more the three islanders laid the conchs against their lips, took deep breaths, and blew into the embossed spiral shells. The intoxicating combined melody of the conch shells was a signal to begin the Gospel procession. Four regal island chiefs, barefoot and dressed only in native skirts, began the deliberate and reverential procession to the altar. The presence of the orator-chiefs, with their fly brushes and the orator's staffs, symbolized the dignity, honor, and importance given to the Word of God in the islands. As the echo of nuances of the conchs faded and the procession reached the sanctuary, the island music of guitars and drums intoned the "alleluia," the Latin echo of the Hebrew acclamation, Praise God. The three seminarians joined their voices with the island choir giving praise and glory to God.

At the offertory procession the three conch blowers watched as a young woman from Samoa, dressed in a traditional royal costume, and smiling infectiously, gracefully danced down St. Peter's aisle, in effect arousing the worshippers' attention and calling them actively to participate in the sacred celebration. A male dancer, with a tattooed and

oiled body dressed in a knee-length piece of material worn as a wrap-around skirt, accompanied her to the sanctuary. His masculine, elegant, but strong gestures balanced the femininity of the woman dancer. Other island representatives slowly followed the couple with their gifts. In addition to the wine and the bread, three symbolic gifts typical of Oceania were offered: a canoe, symbolizing the Church; the *kava tanoa* symbolizing the cup of unity and blessing, fraternity and friendship, and the *leis* or garlands of flowers, sign of welcome, friendship, joy, and celebration.

After the liturgical celebration, the three conch blowers wrapped their shell trumpets in bark cloth, hoping that one day they might again use their conches to call people to be witnesses of faith. The sounding of the conch was now passed onto their bishops since they were considered the “master conch blowers.” At the episcopal ordination, the prelates had been singled out from among the people to re-echo the witness of the Spirit in the islands. The triple echoes of the conch shells had significant meaning to the island bishops. Firstly, it reminded them of the sacred sounds coming from their deep past before the coming of the Christian missionaries. Secondly, the conch sounds beckoned these church leaders to courageously dialogue on how the faith of their people would survive in changing times. Finally, the conches were summoning the bishops to unite with their native peoples so they could regain pride in their cultural heritage and history.

For the next three weeks, members of the Synod for Oceania met in congregations or meetings. They had an opportunity to deliver interventions on the eleven topics based on the theme of the Synod. The delegates discussed topics specifically related to islands

like cultural variety, inculturation, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, migration and tourism, urbanization, and industrialization. Other topics included justice and peace and evangelization. All the discussions addressed the fundamental topic of Catholic identity in the islands. After some frank and honest expression of views, the Synod concluded with a liturgy. At 10.30 am, 12 December 1998, in St. Peter's Basilica the sound of the conch shells were again heard as the Holy Father solemnly signaled the conclusion of the Synod for Oceania.

#### Background to the Problem

The echoes of the island conch reverberated again in Rome on 22 November, 2001. But this time the resonances were heard in Sala Clementina, a baroque meeting room in the Vatican. In this room Pope John Paul II presented the 123 page post-synodal apostolic exhortation called *Ecclesia in Oceania*. This recent exhortation forms part of the series of documents, *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995), *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), and *Ecclesia in America* (1999) that arose from the series of special 'continental synod-meetings of bishops held in preparation for the Jubilee Year. Like the Synods in Africa and Asia, a key resonance in this papal document was the topic of inculturation. In *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the Pope outlined how the Gospel should be presented to the peoples of Oceania recognizing the cultural context. The document also addressed fundamental questions pertaining to the indigenous people in Oceania such as: Who are they? What are the distinct cultural features? What are some unique problems they face with modernization and Christianity? This was a very significant inclusion for it was the first time that any papal document had explicitly communicated the Church's stance on

indigenous people and their plight for recognition.

Besides apologizing for the injustices and abuses inflicted on the indigenous people by some members of the Church, the Bishop of Rome offered them hope. In *Ecclesia in Oceania*, he avowed that it was the Church's responsibility to help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their traditions, for they are a unique part of humanity. He assured the indigenous people that the Holy See would continue its advocacy of the 1994 Draft United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The draft declaration consists of 19 preambular paragraphs and 45 articles, and covers rights and freedoms including the preservation and development of ethnic and cultural characteristics and distinct identities.

This UN document represents one of the most important developments in the promotion and protection of the basic rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. The document actualized the vision of Native American Haudenosaunee Chief Deskaheh. In 1923, he traveled to Geneva to speak to the League of Nations and defend the right of his people to live under their own laws, on the own land and under their own faith. He was not allowed to speak and returned home in 1924.

The Pope's bearing witness to the unique rights of indigenous peoples marked a momentous event for the Roman Catholic Church and the indigenous peoples in the world. With *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the Church joined international organizations like the United Nations, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Bank, and other forums in recognizing that the estimated 370 million indigenous peoples in 70 countries have the right to preserve their distinctive identities.

The bishops of Oceania began the process of advocacy during the Synod for Oceania. With the assistance of indigenous leaders and the experience of local native bishops, the Synod fathers generated descriptors for the indigenous people living in Oceania. This began a process that will entail critical reflection on how the prelates can, in reality, recognize and affirm the rights of the indigenous people in their respective dioceses. Initially, this may necessitate that the local ordinaries or their representatives, collaborating with national governments, existing indigenous organizations and other local church leaders. On the local diocesan level, it may require bishops inviting the cultural groups to participate concretely in discussions emanating from the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples. Such critical reflection and discussion are likely to ignite conflict.

Like many national governments, the Vatican may be cautious in its advocacy and endorsement of the above document. Besides dealing with the legal matters of what constitutes distinctive indigenous rights, the Church may be suspicious of freedoms and rights that might endorse syncretism in the Church. Schreiter (1999) describes syncretism as “the mixing of elements of two religious systems to a point where at least one, if not both, of the systems lose basic structure and identity” (p. 144). An example of one such Article that might cause controversy is described below:

Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of ceremonial objects; and

the right to the repatriation of human remains. (Article 13, p.3)

Nevertheless, an honest and informed dialogue on Article 13, as well the other forty four Articles, may initiate further ruminations on issues such as those currently debated in Third World countries: authentic Catholic identity in a pluralistic world, traditional religions and their relationship to missiology and evangelization, Christology and the inculturation of faith, and contextual theologies within the local churches. Multiple interpretations of the Draft Declaration, even amongst bishops and indigenous groups, are bound to occur in this dialogue. Pope John Paul offers a possible approach to those sensitive areas where there may be conflict. The Pope (2001) states,

Church in Oceania needs to study more thoroughly traditional religions of the indigenous populations, in order to enter more effectively into a dialogue which Christian proclamation requires. In order to pursue a fruitful dialogue with these religions, the Church needs experts in philosophy, anthropology, comparative religion, the social sciences, and above all, theology. (p. 22)

Similarly, the celebration of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004) might be an additional dilemma for the island bishops. The UN General Assembly, by its resolution 48/163 of 21 December, 1993, proclaimed the year 1995-2004 as the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. The goal of the Decade is to strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education, and health. Consequently, the prelates in the islands will have to discern if the

implementation of recommendations of *Ecclesia in Oceania* also includes:

The promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous people and their empowerment to make choices which enable them to retain their cultural identity while participating in political, economic and social life, with full respect for their cultural values, languages, traditions and forms of social organization. (Objective No 4 of UN Decade of Indigenous Peoples A/RES/50/157 Annex)

Although the release of the *Ecclesia in Oceania* was a significant historical moment for the church in Oceania, John Paul's exhortation presents a special challenge to bishops who trace their lineage to the original inhabitants of the islands. As witnesses, these bishops will be expected to take up the conch, so to speak, and produce reverberations that will keep alive the struggle for self-identification amongst the original inhabitants in their dioceses. The problem will be a personal one for these local native bishops. They will have to reflect on how they would be models of witnesses of the faith.

#### *Bishop as Witness*

A bishop is the prime witness to the Risen Christ among his people. At every episcopal ordination the ordaining bishop reminds the people that the bishop-elect "has been entrusted with the task of witnessing to the truth of the Gospel." In 1965, the Vatican II decree on the pastoral office of bishops *Christus Dominus* reaffirmed this doctrine by reminding bishops that they "should dedicate themselves to their apostolic office of witnesses of Christ to all." In doing this they were fulfilling the instructions of the Lord to be His witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria,

and indeed to the earth's remotest ends (Acts 1:8).

Pope John Paul II self-identifies as witness. He advanced this image in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1995, by stating that he came "as a witness: a witness to human dignity, a witness of hope, a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all nations lies in the hands of a merciful Providence." In several instances he repeatedly recalls how his predecessor, Pope Paul VI, has "noted that in our time people pay more attention to witnesses than to teachers; that they listen to teachers if they are at the same time witnesses"(John Paul, 1995, paragraph 17).

During the X Ordinary General Assembly of Synod of Bishops in 2001, the bishops deliberately mandated that they reflect on the witnessing aspect of the episcopal leadership ministry. They self-identified with the first apostles who "became unique witnesses of the mystery of the Word Incarnate, crucified and risen upon the departure of the apostles from this life, the bishops became heirs of their mission until the Lord comes"(Lineamenta 1998 p.16). In the working document (*instrumentum laboris*) of the Synod, bishops were called to be witnesses of hope, witnesses of truth, and witnesses of God's charity. This mission to be witnesses has gained credence in the last thirty years since it underlies the exercise of the triple episcopal *muna* or duties of prophet-priest-king.

Carlo Molari (1972), an Italian theologian, reflects on the how a bishop might be considered a witness of faith in his diocese. Molari asserts,

If the Gospel is effectively proclaimed by a community living in freedom, the bishop is a witness of the faith in so far as he himself is an echo of that living experience to those believers who in a particular place receive the gift of the Spirit. A witness can only exist if he is in relation to a community living out its faith and give effective expression in the conditions of its own culture. If faith comes to life in a community the bishop can only be a witness to it if he reflects it faithfully. (p. 21)

The bishops from Oceania embraced this regenerated episcopal image of bishop as witness by boldly echoing the experiences of the Spirit in their indigenous peoples. They did this through the inculturated liturgies and through their frank discussions on the plight of the indigenous peoples in Oceania. In allowing the blowing of conch shells, the use of variety of linguistic expressions, the regal procession with the Gospel Book, the procession of the offertory gifts, accompanied by ritual gestures from the Samoan tradition, the Oceanic bishops were being witnesses of a faith experience of island peoples. Like all witnesses, they took a risk but at the same time they empowered the island priests and laity to give expression to their experiences of the Spirit through island sounds and music, island pageant and dance, and island symbols and gifts. The president-delegate of the Synod, Archbishop Williams of Wellington, New Zealand eloquently affirmed that this opening Eucharistic liturgy echoed the distinct faith experiences of the different cultures from Oceania. He explains that,

Eucharistic Liturgy proved beyond all doubt that our specific identity as peoples of Oceania was recognized and respected. We heard the joyful

bells of St. Peter's ring out, but we heard also the booming sound of our conch shells. We celebrated the liturgy of the Roman Rite, but we were proud to have incorporated within it the songs and dances of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. We prayed in the Latin of the Early Church and in the French and English of our first missionaries, but we rejoiced in the use of the tongues of our own indigenous peoples: Samoan and Tongan, Marean and Maori. To have our Oceanian identity so affirmed at the very beginning of our three Synod weeks brought home to us. . . The Holy See honors and embraces all cultures. (Synod for Oceania. Fifteenth General Congregation. Friday, 11 December, 1998)

By emphasizing this role of witnesses of faith, indigenous bishops do not have to become martyrs. Nonetheless, in this century several bishops have been assassinated for their courageous witness of faith. The most notable example is Archbishop Romero of San Salvador. In 1980 while celebrating Mass, he was shot and died instantly. As witness he challenged the corrupt government of his country that violently eliminated people who questioned their policies. He spoke passionately about the unjust treatment of the poor and landless. Sadly, he also had problems with the Church hierarchy. His crime was that he interpreted the Gospel values from within his social, cultural, and political context. He was consistently in a double bind. He was asked to preach by gospel but not to criticize the government.

Like people who experience double bind in organizations, the indigenous bishops as a group will have discern the real meaning of the Pope's statements on the indigenous

peoples, their rights and the Roman Catholic Church. In places like Fiji, Guam, and New Zealand, where there have been indigenous nationalist movements for more equal dignity and rights, the bishops may find it complicated to discriminate accurately what sort of message is to be communicated to these nationalist groups. The indigenous bishops may get locked in ambiguity and send out mixed messages about the rights of indigenous people that contradict fundamental Christian values, like the sacredness of human dignity. These challenges are real. But the bishop has values and structures within his cultural context that may help him be unambiguous in his effort to be a genuine witness of faith in his culture.

The indigenous bishop has his cultural community. In their synodal discussions the bishops went beyond the external cultural elements and took into account the context, history, and relationships that explain faith experiences of their people. In order to do this, the Episcopal leaders have listened to the faith stories of their people, especially narratives that spoke of the close relationship between the church and culture. More so, the bishops got involved with one another's biography. In other words, they self-identified with their people since the value most prized in the island is the relationships in the community. The person is not an individual in the Western sense of the term; rather the person is a locus of shared biographies. The personal histories of people's relationships with other people and things like land and the transcendent. The relationships define the person and not vice versa (Lieber, 1990, p. 73).

#### *Local Bishops in Oceania*

There are 15 local bishops in dioceses in Oceania who might identify themselves

as indigenous. They are normally referred to as local bishops. The term “local” used in this context refer those that have a historical continuity with the original inhabitants of the land. In the parlance of the colonial administration in the island, the term used was native. They make up about 20% of the episcopacy in the region. The reason for this minuscule percentage is that in Australia, all thirty-seven bishops trace their lineage to the English or other European races who arrived at a later date. There is no Aboriginal bishop. In New Zealand, there is only one Maori bishop. Papua New Guinea has six indigenous bishops. The smaller islands in Oceania have their own local bishops with the exception of the Marshall Islands, the Cook Islands, Tahiti, and New Caledonia. A breakdown of indigenous bishops according to the broad ethnographic categories is as follows: the smaller islands of Micronesia have four, Polynesia has four, and Melanesia has one. Of the 15 indigenous bishops in Oceania, three are diocesan bishops while the rest belong to religious groups such as the Marists (SM), the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) and the Capuchins (OFM).

Though the number of native local bishops is small, the rise in indigenous consciousness has been evident in the inculturation of faith in the islands. The use of the original music, dance, rituals, celebration, and languages in the opening liturgy of the Synod is a positive public sign of the efforts by the bishops to emphasize the importance of inculturation. Stafford (2001) explains,

In this respect, the importance of inculturation for an authentic Christian life in Oceania was emphasized. Authentic inculturation of the Christian faith is grounded in the mystery of the Incarnation; it is born out of respect

for both the Gospel and the culture in which it is proclaimed and welcomed. While remaining wholly faithful to the spirit of *communio*, local Churches seek to express the faith and life of the Church in legitimate forms appropriate to indigenous cultures. Oceania offers many examples of unique cultural expressions in the areas of theology, liturgy and the use of religious symbols. The Synod Fathers saw further inculturation of the Christian faith as the way leading to the fullness of ecclesial *communio*. (p. 1)

These liturgical reforms, allowing the local language, dance, and native symbols as expressed in the opening liturgy of the Synod, reflect the bishops' recognition of the cultural distinctiveness of their faithful. However, in light of *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the bishops' challenge now is to direct their attention to the criteria of self-identification. They are invited to join the international community's effort to implement Article 8 of the draft UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People: Indigenous peoples have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including the right to identify themselves as indigenous and to be recognized as such (p. 4).

To be able to retain the traditional episcopal juridical authority of a particular church, while identifying with a native people, the bishop may simply begin with a process of self-reflection in the context of his local community. He may commence by identifying pivotal moments when he was able to hold his culture and the Roman Catholic culture in creative tension. In this way, the bishop might embark on finding his

historical connections with the original peoples of the Islands. He might start with the notion that like Lonergan's conception of the Church, his indigenous community has achieved a common meaning of what it means to be native "from common experiences, common understanding, common judgments and common commitments" (Lonergan, 1988, p. 226). Thus, the bishop's identity as a local bishop is not going to be "found in his behaviors, nor, important though this is, in his reactions to others, but rather his identity will be found in his capacity to keep his community's narrative of the experience of the Spirit going" (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). This story will continue to echo the long history and tradition of the Roman Church, but it will add the resonances of how his ancestors retained their connections to the sacred, the land, and community. Ultimately, this broader story is part of his own story and what he understands by the concept of indigenous.

### *The Meaning of Indigenous*

There is no simple or precise definition of indigenous applying equally to all countries. Most studies frequently refer to descriptions given by two UN legal experts, Jose Martinez Cobo (1984) and Erica-Irene Daes (1996). They both focus on (a) aboriginality (being first on the land), (b) cultural distinctiveness, and (c) self-identification as three criteria of who is indigenous. I will use these three criteria as guides in this discussion. However, I argue that greater emphasis should be placed on self-identification as the fundamental criterion since it includes the indigenous peoples in the search for a definition.

In Oceania, indigenous groups would likely agree with the three criteria proposed

by Cobo (1989) and Daes (1996). Representatives for the Aboriginals in Australia and the Maoris in New Zealand generally accept aboriginality, cultural distinctiveness, and self-identification as traits distinguishing them from other dominant European cultures. Yet, they stress that throughout history, their rights have been violated making them arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world today. These two groups judge that the British colonialists had unjustly treated them. Therefore, they wanted the Church to help them in overcoming the discrimination they experienced. Thus representatives from these groups made this one of central issues at the Synod for Oceania. They were concerned not with a bald definition, but with the basic human rights of their indigenous people:

The present social structure of large parts of Oceania is the result of previous colonization, especially in Australia and New Zealand, but also in New Caledonia and Fiji. In these countries, the original indigenous population has to cope with the effects of large-scale immigration from colonial times. In some places the indigenous population has become an ethnic minority, leading them sometimes to feel disenfranchised because of a lack of respect for their identity and development. (Instrumentum Laboris, 1998, p. 20)

Consequently, in the 1998 preparatory document (*lineamenta*) of the Synod, indigenous issues were addressed under the themes of social justice and human rights. The Synod Fathers believed that the concern for rights of Maoris and Aboriginals should be expanded to discuss social justice issues relating to all native groups in the islands. As

a result, the Pope dedicated a good portion of *Ecclesia in Oceania* to the description of the unique characteristics of indigenous people while also apologizing for past injustices.

Although the Pope's exhortation did not provide a formal definition of indigenous peoples, all his references to the word indigenous may fit into three categories: (a) they possess cultural uniqueness; (b) they have direct links to the original inhabitants of the islands, and (c) they preserve and practice inimitable spiritual traditions. The Pope stressed the third category. He acknowledged the preservation and recognition of the indigenous identity, but he does not explicitly bestow self-identity as a *sine qua non* of indigenous.

#### Statement of Purpose

The goal of this study was to write interpretive biographies of three Oceanic bishops by narrating how they experienced being witnesses of faith in their respective indigenous cultures while leading the Christian community in their dioceses. This study showed how the three men were formed before becoming bishops and how they have lived out their ordination promises and episcopal motto as they attempted to be priest, teacher, and shepherd in their dioceses. It focused specifically on how they fostered their self-identify, within the indigenous milieu and in relation to traditional ecclesiology and the ethos of the Roman Catholic Church in all of its ramifications.

The study commenced by looking at epiphanies in their life experiences and how these turning point moments shaped and formed their relationship with the people in their diocese. I gained an understanding of the full range of the characteristics of indigenous and bishop, arising out of the epiphanies as they created their biographies.

This research showed how the Catholic Church, through its episcopal leaders, might truly assume leadership by being witnesses of faith to the indigenous people. Of interest was whether the bishops can stand up to the challenge of being a witness of faith and identify themselves as indigenous so that they can authentically implement the words of Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Oceania*: “The Church will support the cause of all indigenous people who seek a just and equitable recognition of their identity and rights” (p. 24).

An interpretive biographical approach by Norman Denzin (1989a) was used in this study. In interpretive biography, the researcher studies personal life-documents, stories, accounts, and narratives, which describe turning-point moments in individual lives. Denzin defines epiphanies, or turning point experiences as “interactional moments and experiences that leave marks on people's lives. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life” (p. 70).

The interpretive biography method was chosen for this study because the methodology respected and recognized the subjective experiences of the bishops. They were the primary persons giving meaning to the concept of indigenous. This method allowed bishops to subjectively reflect and create their biographies. They were able to narrate their stories in a way that reflected their relationship to both their cultural and religious communities.

Identification of the bishops with the indigenous people has implications for a change in the sphere of religious anthropology. The negative colonial nuances of the word indigenous may begin to disappear once they have a contextualized understanding

of the concept. The indigenous people will reclaim their dignities as human persons with unique rights. The self-identification process may spark reflection on what constitutes a human person. A bishop in Oceania, by referring to himself as indigenous and witness, may be able to engage in bringing about a just Christian solution to the ethnic conflicts in some of the islands like Fiji, New Caledonia, and Papua New Guinea.

Like the Black bishops of the US, the indigenous bishops of Oceania as a group can be invited to recognize the richness of the indigenous experience and share them with the entire people of God. Since they belong to the first generation of bishops in post Vatican II, they too are able to tell their stories of “what they have seen and heard in their cultures.” As first-hand witnesses to the Spirit, they may provide insights, which may help the Church in the islands address other issues that were discussed in the Synod like: Christian formation and lay leadership, plurality of religions, and social justice. Most importantly, the indigenous bishop may become a true witness of inculturation of faith to his community. Accordingly, he accepts the role of master conch blower, who communicates the true and authentic experience of the salvation in his own community.

#### Overview of the Dissertation

This study, entering into the life experiences of three bishops, described turning point moments that left marks on their lives, helped shape, and form their understanding of indigenous episcopal leadership. Chapter II describes the difficulties of formulating a universal definition of the concept indigenous. It also shows how the criterion of self-identification can be used to assist the Oceanic bishops become witnesses of faith for indigenous people. Chapter III discusses the reasons for choosing interpretive biography

as the selected research method. Chapters IV through VI describe the three bishops' experiences of the epiphanies and how these experiences formed their self-understanding of being a witness and indigenous episcopal leader. The interpretive biographies are written with information and data that was passed on by the bishops themselves. Chapter VII discusses the findings from the study. It looks at similarities that connect the three bishops. It describes how the three bishops have fostered their self-identity through story. It also proposes two traits that might assist bishops in being witnesses of faith in their communities. The two characteristics are apostolic faith and humble courage. These emerged as the bishop's biographies were placed in the multilayered context in Oceania

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, I describe conceptual elements of indigenous and bishop. The concept of indigenous is studied within the context of Oceania, the Roman Catholic Church and the international bodies, notably the United Nations and the International Labor Organization. Several common factors have been identified by these international organizations as to who are indigenous. The Roman Catholic Church has entered the conversation about the plight of indigenous through the Synod for Oceania in 1998. As a result of this meeting in Rome, the role of bishops has expanded since the prelates have received a mandate from the Pope to become involved in trying to help their indigenous people in their struggle for self-identity. In other words, the bishops in Oceania have been asked to consider their self-understanding of what it takes to be an indigenous bishop within the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania.

#### Indigenous People

The United Nations and the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) estimates that there are roughly 5000 ethnic groups spread from the Arctic to the South Pacific islands that self-identify as being indigenous (United Nations, 2001, p. 1). These data are based on working definition used by the UN in the last decade:

Indigenous peoples are the inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to other people and to the environment. Indigenous peoples have retained social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in

which they live. Despite their cultural differences, the various groups of indigenous people around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. (The United Nations Guide for Indigenous Peoples, 2001, p. 1)

Using this very broad description, the UN estimates these groupings to number about 370 million persons in more than 70 countries worldwide. They have been clustered into five geopolitical regions: Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and "other," viz. North America, Australia, New Zealand. Among the many indigenous peoples, the ones who immediately come to mind are: the Indians of the Americas, for example, the Maya of Guatemala or the Aymaras of Bolivia, and the Native American tribes in United States and Canada; the Inuit and Aleutians of the circumpolar region and the Sámi in northern Europe; the Aborigine of Australia and the Maoris of New Zealand; Fulani in the Sahara; Maasai of Tanzania and Kenya; and San of Botswana.

According the IWGIA (2001), the largest number of indigenous people live in Asia. The IWGIA estimates that there are 158 million indigenous groups spread from the continent of India to the island of West Papua (p. 22). In Asia, people frequently use the term indigenous to refer to the various tribal or hill peoples dwelling in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, and the Ainu in Japan. In India, the name *Adivasi*, is a collective term that is used to describe 200 different indigenous groups in the forest and mountainous area of Central India. However, most Asians deny that there are any indigenous peoples within their territories. An adviser of the Chinese delegation to the

UN Commission on Human Rights (1997) was adamant that there were neither indigenous people nor indigenous issues in China. From the Chinese perspective, the indigenous issues are a product of special historical circumstances; by and large, they are the result of the colonists' policy carried out in modern history by European countries in other regions of the world, especially on the continents of America and Oceania (p. 1). As in the case of other Asian countries, the Chinese people of all ethnic groups have lived on their own land for generations. India and Bangladesh also argue that they do not have indigenous people because they maintain that, after decolonization, every native was indigenous, because it is impossible, as a matter of fact, to establish which ethnic groups were antecedents. Thus for most Asians the concept of indigenous is ambiguous and has caused controversy amongst the many groups that try to gain recognition on an international arena like the UN. Daes (2001) describes most Africans as indigenous because their ancestors came from Africa. However, she maintains in Africa the indigenous people are those communities who were neglected and oppressed because of their way of life, their religion, their means of subsistence, and their attachment to their lands (p. 2). This standard has also been used to describe the indigenous people of Oceania.

### *Indigenous people in Oceania*

In this paper, the concept of indigenous was studied in the regional context of Oceania. Burger (1990) demarcates Oceania as one of the nine regions that has distinct indigenous populations (p. 19). The IWGIA refers to this region as Australia and the Pacific. The Aboriginals and Torres Islanders of Australia and the Maoris of New

Zealand have been identified internationally as two major groups of indigenous people. This stems from the fact that the two groups have been very vocal in the struggle for recognition and respect for their identities ever since a Maori delegation went to the League of Nations in 1924.

Different English words have been used to describe the original inhabitants of Oceania. The original inhabitants of Australia are referred to as *aboriginal*. This term literally means "from the beginning." It designates these people as being the "first people" of an area or a given place. In New Zealand, the original people called themselves Maoris, a term used to refer to the ordinary people and descendants of the Polynesian immigrants. In the other small islands, the terms used to describe the original settlers depended on the colonial power. In the English colonies, like Fiji, the term *native* was used. It refers mostly to the origins of an individual. In the French colonies, like Tahiti, the term *autochthonous* is used and refers to people living in the same land since immemorial time. The term *indigenous* was used to convey the Latin understanding of *indigene*, which distinguishes persons who were born in a particular place and those who arrived from elsewhere. Recently, people in the Oceania, who claim to descent to the original peoples, have adopted this identification. Besides been used in international forums, it carries a strong connotation of authenticity, belonging, and time-honored prescriptive rights.

Several island countries, notably Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Tahiti, and Guam have recently gained international attention. The reason is that there have been movements by the indigenous peoples in these islands for self-determination. One way

they have done this is to get rid the English names and revert to the local vernacular designations. For example, in Fiji the indigenous people now refer to themselves as *taukei*, first people to occupy the land; in New Caledonia the original inhabitants self-identify as *kanaky*, or generic native, it is an indigenization the French *canaques*; in Tahiti the natives use the phrase *to ao moahi*. For purposes of this study, the other smaller islands in Oceania are not included, since they have predominantly indigenous populations and have not had problems preserving their cultural distinctiveness.

#### *Indigenous and the Catholic Church*

At the Synod for Oceania in 1998, bishops and representatives from New Zealand and Australia have been the primary voices raising the issue of the relationship between the Church and the indigenous people. However, the real voice that caught the attention of the Synod was that of Manuku Henare, a lay representative of the Maori people. In his intervention he states,

The progress of the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples is faltering and indigenous communities are concerned about its adoption and seek the Holy See's continued advocacy on our behalf. In the spirit of reconciliation with indigenous peoples worldwide, I would ask the Holy See to reconsider any references in Church thinking and official statements of the past, especially those which doubt the humanity and person-hood of indigenous peoples and which continue to be influential in the formation of or the maintenance of state and international law.

(Congregation 8, 1998 para.1)

This powerful statement impacted the delegates because the Pope directly addressed these issues in the exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*. Numerous references are made in the document to the indigenous people. This was the first time that an official Vatican document attempted to speak to the criticisms raised by Manuka and other indigenous leaders. In *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the Pope acknowledges that, “the Synod strongly encourages the Holy See to continue its advocacy of the 1994 draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (p. 27, paragraph 28). The Draft Declaration is the result of almost ten years work in the WGIP by representatives of indigenous peoples, governments, and non-governmental organizations, as well as individuals from all parts of the world. It begins with the desire by the International UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to intentionally address the abuses and injustices faced by the indigenous peoples, especially those who faced discrimination or marginalization due to their differences from another dominant group who arrived in the islands at a later date.

Most of all, the Pope admitted that the wrongs done to indigenous people need to be honestly acknowledged. In a dramatic statement that caught the attention of the news media around the world, the Pope states,

The past cannot be undone, but honest recognition of past injustices can lead to measures and attitudes which will help to rectify the damaging effects for both the indigenous community and the wider society. The Church expresses deep regret and asks forgiveness where children have been and still are party to these wrongs. Aware of the shameful injustices

done to indigenous people in Oceania, the Synod Fathers apologized unreservedly for the part played in these by members of the Church. (John Paul, 2001, p.25)

The Pope's admission is important because not only did the Church publicly apologize for the past injustices to the indigenous people, but the Pope signaled that the Roman Catholic Church recognized indigenous people as being a "unique part of humanity in a unique region of the world" with a number of distinctive characteristics:

1. They are considered "original inhabitants" of the islands prior to the coming of the colonizers and Christian missionaries in the 17th century (*Ecclesia in Oceania* 2002, p. 5).
2. The indigenous cultures are made up of a mosaic of many different cultures and languages which are distinct even amongst people living in a particular geographical area (p. 6).
3. They have a profound sense of community and solidarity in family and tribe, village, and neighborhood (p. 6).
4. The indigenous peoples have a sense of solidarity with those who went before them, and exceptional authority accorded to parents and traditional leaders (p. 6).
5. Land is important for the indigenous people (p. 4).
6. They possess an ancient and profound sense of the sacred (p. 6).
7. Practices and rituals are very much part of their daily lives and thoroughly permeated their cultures (p. 6).

8. For indigenous people, the natural world is not just a resource to be exploited but also a reality to be respected and even revered as a gift and trust from God. It is the task of the human beings to care for, preserve and cultivate the treasures of creation (p. 26).
9. They retain their appreciation of silence and contemplation and a sense of mystery in life (p. 31).
10. They have traditional religions which have seeds of authentic God-awareness (p. 25).

One might be able to extrapolate a definition from these ten characteristics but it would not capture the richness that is present amongst indigenous peoples in Oceania. The notable feature of this list is the priority on spirituality distinctiveness of the indigenous peoples. Five of the traits (numbers 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) refer to some aspect of the spiritual component of the indigenous peoples. These religious values are similar to the proposed rights in Part III of the Draft Declaration. Article 13 highlights that indigenous people have the “right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious tradition. . . . [and] ensure that indigenous sacred places be preserved, respected and protected.” The international community, including the Catholic Church recognizes the spiritual distinctiveness of the indigenous people, but this has not always been the case.

The Catholic Church does not have a favorable historical record of recognizing the distinct identities and characteristics of indigenous people. On the contrary, the Church in its association with the early Spanish explorers has been accused of resisting

any attempt for indigenous people to identify themselves as indigenous and to be recognized as such. Indigenous groups in North America cite the Papal Bull *Inter Caetera* of May 4 1493 as essentially sanctioning the early Portuguese and Spanish genocide campaigns Americas. Critics of the papal decrees claim that *Inter Caetera* established Catholic dominion and called for the subjugation of non-Christian peoples and their lands (Newcomb, 1992, p.2). The following quote from *Inter Caetera* is used by advocates for symbolic burning of the Bull:

Among other works well pleasing to the Divine Majesty and cherished of our heart, this assuredly ranks highest, that in our times especially the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and *that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself*. [emphasis added] (p.1)

On the other hand, some legal scholars argue that this Bull “represents the first European acknowledgement of the national character of indigenous peoples in the new world” (Morris, 2002, p. 4). He further argues that as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century there were serious debates and discussion amongst European theorists in France and Spain on the treatment and rights of indigenous people. This resulted in the Bull *Sublimus Deus* in 1537. In this Bull, Pope Paul III instructed his Catholic subjects to view indigenous peoples as true humans who possess the nature and faculties that enable them to receive the Catholic faith. He states,

The Indians are truly men and that they are not only capable of understanding the Catholic Faith but, according to our information, they desire exceedingly to receive it. . . . That the said Indians and all other people who have been or may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their property, even though they are outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should freely and legitimately enjoy their liberty and possession of their property. Nor should they in any way be enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null. (Morris 2002, p. 7)

History shows that this did not completely stop the harsh treatment of the indigenous people. Nevertheless, the Dominican missionary Bartolme de Las Casas attempted to faithfully follow the instructions found in the above Bull. He advanced the principal of human dignity in the Caribbean and Latin America. Morris gives a brief background of Las Casas work:

[He] argued fervently that native peoples could not be subjected legally by the Spanish. He agreed with Victoria that the indigenous nations of the Western hemisphere were in rightful sovereigns of their territories, that Europeans has no cause to wage Just Wars, and that conquest of the region was “unlawful, tyrannical, and unjust.” (p. 7)

A brief history of the use of the word indigenous in pontifical documents might help illuminate the Church’s alleged ambivalence in the conversation about the identity of indigenous people.

In a Bull promulgated by Pope Eugene IV in 1435, the native inhabitants of the Canary Isles are described as “led solely by the natural law.” The rest of the Bull strongly reprimands those Christians who are engaged in slavery. In *Inter Cetera*, Pope Alexander, using the observations from Columbus’s voyages, describes the indigenous people in the Americas as:

In the remote islands, dwell very many tribes. Peacefully living, and as it is asserted, going naked and not eating meat; and so far as your messengers are able to conjecture these nations living in the said island and lands believe there is one God and one Creator in the heaven. (p. 1)

Most of the later papal documents that use the word *indigene* refer to the clergy. Pius IX *Maridionali America* 1865 (Seminary for Native clergy) alludes to the need for seminaries in the Americas while Leo XIII’s *Ad Extrema* (Seminaries for Native Clergy, 1892) appeals for assistance in training priests in the Orient, namely India, China, and Japan. Pope Benedict (1919), in *Maximum Illud*, was the first Pope to define *indigene*. He describes an indigenous priest as “having a particular place of birth, character, mentality, and emotional make-up.” This characterization has been cited in later documents, especially in encyclical by Pius XI, *Rerum Eccelsiae* (1926). In this latter document, Pope Pius restated this definition by describing a “native” priest as one who had a distinct “birth, temper, and sentiment” (p. 7). Later in this same document, the Pope makes an important clarification that addresses the issue of belief that *indigene* peoples were inferior:

Anyone who looks upon these natives as members of an inferior race or as men of low mentality makes a grievous mistake. Experience over a long period of time has proven that the inhabitants of those remote regions of the East and of the South frequently are not inferior to us at all, and are capable of holding their own with us, even in mental ability. If one discovers an extreme lack of the ability to understand among those who live in the very heart of certain barbarous countries, this is largely due to the conditions under which they exist, for since their daily needs are so limited, they are not often called upon to make use of their intellects. (p. 17).

In 1951, Pope Pius XII in an encyclical, *Evangelii Preacones*, refers to the existence of native bishops, especially in Africa and Asia. For him a native bishop was one who was born in the missions, and who had a “unique character and thought pattern.”

Other ecclesiastical documents use the word *indigene* within the context of missionary activity of the Church. Pope John XXIII (1959), in *Princeps Pastorum*, made an important apologetic statement about the use of “native” in earlier papal documents. The Pope clarifies that "Neither slight nor discrimination was intended by the word "native," or was ever expressed or implied by the language of the Roman Pontiffs and ecclesiastical documents" (p. 4).

In the Vatican II document, *Ad Gentes* (1965), Pope Paul VI does not use the Latin *indigene* but employs the French translation of indigenous: autochthonous. It comes from the German autochthon meaning “to spring from the land itself.” In English

language, autochthonous refers to any of the earliest known inhabitants of a place. The reason for the change is not known, but one may speculate that it might have had to do with the raising of the consciousness of the unique identity of the people. In this same document, the word ‘local’ is also used to refer to the *indigene*. This change concurs with the movement in the world to move away from the negative connotations of the word native.

Theologian, Robert Schreiter (1985) agrees that it is better to use the word “local” when referring to theology or bishops because the word indigenous has too many derogatory connotations and is rooted in a particular colonial historical experience in a particular geographical area of the world, especially East Africa and India (p. 4). Yet the question remains, how can the bishops help the indigenous people preserve their identity and remain Roman Catholics? Or in other words how can the subjects define themselves and be recognized as such? A possible solution to this dilemma would be to move away from trying to construct a definition. The ILO and UN (WGIP) have admitted that a definition might be helpful as guidelines for policy makers, but there is no single definition that can capture the diversity of the indigenous people worldwide. No one has succeeded in devising a definition of indigenous that is precise and internally valid as a philosophical matter, yet satisfies demands to limit its regional application and legal implication (Daes, 1996, p. 23).

#### Working Definitions

In this section I summarize the working definitions of: a) Daes in her work with the Working Groups on Indigenous Groups, b) Cobo and his definition presented in a

report on the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations, c) the ILO as they tried to protect the indigenous people in independent countries, d) the World Bank and e) the Asian Development Bank and its attempts to help the indigenous people in region of Asia (see appendix A).

*Daes' standards*

Erica-Irene A. Daes (1996), the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), drew attention to the dilemma of trying to devise unambiguous standards that could be used as a global definition of indigenous (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1996/2). She was of the opinion that the concept of indigenous is not capable of a precise, inclusive definition, which can be applied in the same manner to all regions of the world (p. 5). She came to this conclusion after a historical review of the use of the term and listening to points of view expressed by indigenous advocates, governments, and other members of WGIP. She argued that historically the term was used to distinguish between those who were born in a particular place and those who arrived from elsewhere. During the colonial period, the term indigenous was used to identify and distinguish the inhabitants of colonial territories who were distinct geographically from the administering power. An implicit element in this definition was race, based on the color of one's skin.

The League of Nations added a second level to the above qualification, characterizing indigenous populations as peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world. Then indigenous referred to two factors: colonial domination and institutional capacity (Daes 1996, p.6). In 1938, the Pan

American Union gave another interpretation to this term. The union employed the word to identify marginalized or vulnerable ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and racial groups within the State borders. Since the Second World War, the ILO, the UN, and the World Bank (WB) have endeavored to provide a definition of indigenous. These attempts are documented in ILO Convention No.107 (1957) and No 169 (1989), the UNESCO Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations (1986), and WB Operational Directives 4. 20.

From the working definitions articulated in these three documents, Daes (1995) elicits five criteria she believes might be applied when considering the concept of indigenous people: 1) historical continuity, 2) distinctive cultural characteristics, 3) traditional lands, 4) non dominance, and 5) self-identification and group consciousness (pp. 4-6). In the following year (1996), now guided by modern international organizations and legal experts (including indigenous legal experts and members of the academic family), Daes condensed the criteria for identification of indigenous into four factors. She cautions that this was not an inclusive definition but a description of factors that may be present, to a greater or lesser degree, in different regions and in different national and local context:

1. Priority of time, with respect to the occupation and use of a specific territory;
2. The voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness, which may include aspects of language, social organization, religion and spiritual values, modes of production, laws, and institutions;

3. Self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups, or by State authorities as a distinct collectivity; and
4. An experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination whether or not these conditions persist (p. 22).

*The Cobo Report*

In 1971, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) created the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP). The group was entrusted with two tasks:

1. Review development pertaining to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedom of indigenous populations.
2. Give special attention to the evolution of standards concerning the rights of such populations

The study resulted in a report entitled Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations. In his report, José Martínez-Cobo, the Special Rapporteur to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, states,

Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those which having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued

existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and legal systems. This historical continuity may consist of the continuation for an extended period reaching into the present, of one or more of the following factors: 1) Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them; 2) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands; 3) Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an *indigenous* community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc ; 4). Language; 5. Residence in certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world.

(UN Doc E/CN 4/Sub 2/1986/7 Add 4.)

An important point to note is that Cobo, in a later part of the same document, explains that an indigenous person is "one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group).

Cobo (1986) intentionally uses the reflective phrase “consider themselves” to emphasize the point that this working definition has evolved from the perspective of indigenous people. Consequently, the discussion on the concept of indigenous peoples has been crafted with the centrality of self-identification by those who claim cultural, social, geographical, political, and religious commonality. This was confirmed in Article 8 of the draft Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People: “Indigenous people have the collective and individual right to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics including the right to identify themselves as indigenous and to be

recognized as such” (UN Doc: E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/2/Add.1).

*ILO Convention 107 and 169*

From 1957 until 1982, the International Labor Organization (ILO) was the only international body concerned with indigenous rights. In 1957, the ILO approved Convention (No. 107), which focused on the protection and integration of indigenous and other tribal and semi-tribal populations of independent countries and tried to define what they understood as tribal. For the ILO in 1957, tribal or semi-tribal populations in independent countries whose social and economic conditions are at a less advanced stage than the stage reached by other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions and by special laws or regulations. (Article 1(a)). Also described as indigenous are those populations regarded as such:

On account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization and which, irrespective of their legal status, live more in conformity with the social, economic, and cultural institutions of that time than with the institutions of the nation of which they belong.

(Article (1) (b))

However in 1986, the governing body of the ILO concluded that the integrationist approach of the Convention was obsolete and that its application was detrimental in the modern world. In June 1989, the ILO adopted Convention 169, which deleted the condescending attitude which referred to indigenous people as “less advanced” and added

the subjective element of self-identification. In Article one 1.b, the ILO identified indigenous people as:

Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as the fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply.

The inclusion of self-identification stemmed from an injudicious assumption that guided the 1957 Convention. The assumption was made that integration into the dominant cultures was the only possible future for indigenous people. The original inhabitants were different and less advanced and needed to be brought into the development plans of the state. The decisions regarding their future and development were concerns of the states rather than of the people most affected. Fortunately, with the growing awareness of their human rights by indigenous people during the 1960s and 1970s and their increasing participation at the international level, these assumptions began to be challenged. The meetings of a Committee of Experts convened in 1986 by the governing body of the ILO concluded that the intergrationists' approach of the Convention was obsolete and that its application was detrimental in the modern world.

Article 1(2) of Convention 169 made a fundamental change in the attitude

towards the indigenous people by acknowledging that these people should be closely involved in the planning and implementation of development projects that directly affect them. This allowed for all people concerned to dialogue with each other. The subjects of all the policies were to become active participants in defining who they were as human beings.

According to Tomei and Swepston (1996), the philosophy behind this inclusion of self-identification had to do with respect and responsibility:

The newer Convention takes the approach of respect for the cultures, ways of life, traditions and customary laws of the indigenous and tribal peoples who are covered by it. It presumes that they will continue to exist as parts of their national societies with their own identity, their own structures, and their own traditions. The Convention presumes that these structures and ways of life have a value that needs to be protected. It also presumes that these peoples are in most cases able to speak for themselves and to take part in the decision-making process as it affects them. It also presumes that they have the right to take part in this decision-making process, and that their contribution will be a valuable one in the country in which they live. (p. 10)

*The World Bank Operation Directive 4*

The World Bank aims to promote indigenous peoples' development and ensure that the development process fosters the full respect for the dignity, human rights and uniqueness of indigenous peoples. Directive 4 emphasizes that “self-identity as one of the

distinctive identifying characteristics of indigenous people” (2001, p. 2). In order to do this they provide indigenous people with a voice in the planning and implementation of the policies. Furthermore, they acknowledge that indigenous peoples have distinct identities. The World Bank identifies indigenous people in particular geographic areas by presence, in varying degrees, of some of the following distinctive characteristics:

1. close attachment to ancestral territories and natural resources in them,
2. presence of customary social and political institutions,
3. economic systems primarily oriented to subsistence production,
4. an indigenous language,
5. self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group. (World Bank, Operation Directive(OD) 4, 2001 p.1)

*Asian Development Bank*

The Asian Development Bank has a reference to self-identity as one of the characteristics of indigenous people. The first part is similar to the World Bank but they add: “the indigenous people display the desire to preserve that cultural identity.” The Asian Indigenous people articulated this in their Declaration of Rights for Asian Indigenous/Tribal People, adopted in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in May 1993:

We Asian indigenous peoples know who we are. We are descended of the original inhabitants of territories which have been conquered; we consider ourselves distinct from the rest of the prevailing society. We have our own languages, religions, customs, and worldview and we are determined to transmit these to future generations. (p. 1)

One area of contention in the deliberations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) has been the issue of whether a formal definition for indigenous should be an integral part of the above document. Countries like China, India, and Bangladesh argue that a definition is necessary because “without a definition of indigenous peoples and a scope of application for the declaration, it will be difficult to prove the special necessity to draft the declaration and to ensure that the special rights specified in the declaration be accurately applied to genuine indigenous people” (China Embassy, 1997).

#### *Indigenous Group*

The indigenous groups have expressed a similar view in their submissions to Commission on Human Rights Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (CHRWG). These groups feel that an abstract definition of the concept of indigenous is neither necessary nor desirable. Daes (1996) outlined the sentiment of the indigenous groups in the Working Paper on Standard Setting Activities. (UN E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1996/2 para 35-40) She explained that some indigenous leaders fear that a number of indigenous persons may not be covered by the scope of an absolute definition. The indigenous people believe that the principle of self-identification and acceptance as such by the group should be the primary guides in identifying its members. The report cites other representatives who maintain that Mr. Jose R. Martinez Cobo’s (1984) criteria is adequate for it recognizes both objective characteristics, like aboriginality and cultural distinctiveness but emphasizes the subjective principle of self-identification (para 35). Daes points out that most indigenous emphasize the subjective

elements as dependent on a choice or value judgment like self-identification more than the objective elements which are not dependent on a choice e.g. descent. Citing speeches by indigenous leaders, she argues that for indigenous groups, the self-identification method of defining indigenous appears to be the most accurate for it begins with the people themselves and it allows for individual choice (para 35 & 36). One of the main conclusions of Daes' (1996) historical study was that indigenous groups stressed "the need for flexibility for respecting the desire and the right of each indigenous people to define itself" (para. 68).

#### Self Identification

Although the international community does not have a coherent understanding of the term indigenous, most acknowledge that self-identification is the primary norm that must be used for determining who are the beneficiaries of resources that have been set aside for indigenous people. Daes (1996) states,

Indigenous groups insist on their right to define themselves both in terms of an individual's "self-identification as an indigenous person and with respect to the community's right to define its members." This subjective approach -- that indigenous people are those who feel themselves to be indigenous and accepted as such by members of the group--has been widely accepted, although it is not clear whether it would be sufficient of other objective criteria, such as ancestry, were absent. (p. 13)

In the Draft Declaration, there is reference to self-identification. Article 8 simply refers to the right of indigenous peoples "to identify as indigenous and to be recognized as such".

In *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the Pope does not use the principle of self-identification. However, several phrases in this papal document authenticate the right for self-identification; as presented in Article 8 of the draft UN Declaration. The Pope (2001) states,

Without losing their identity or abandoning their traditional values, they (indigenous people) want to share in the development resulting from more direct and complex interaction with other peoples and cultures. It is the Church's task to help preserve their identity and maintain their traditions . . . support the cause of all indigenous people who seek a just and equitable recognition of their identity. (pp. 5-6)

Anthropologist, Tenckhoff (1999) argues that a first international principle in recognizing an indigenous person is that of self-identification: "someone who defines himself or herself as a native of a particular country, and who is accepted as such by the community, irrespective of the way that community is defined, is an indigenous person" (p. 1).

Despite the wide acceptance of self-identification as a norm, a single, specific definition or identification for indigenous has been difficult. This is due to the fact that each individual community reflects diversity in its cultures, histories, and current circumstances. Opponents of prioritizing self-identification claim that indigenous peoples are indigenous people whether they identify themselves as such or are identified and/or recognized by others and the international community would be confronted by a "proliferation of pretenders" to indigenous status.

All working definitions have singled out self-identification as one of most important factors in trying to define indigenous. It is always subjective, beginning with the indigenous people. The reason for this was echoed in the Cobo report. He states,

The fundamental assertion concerning any definition must be that indigenous populations must be recognized according to their own perceptions and the conception of themselves in relation to other groups. There must be no attempt to define them according to the perception of others through the values of foreign societies or of the dominant sectors in such societies. . . (and) artificial or manipulatory definitions must, in an event, be rejected. (Cobo E/CN.4 /Sub 2/1983/21/Add. 8, pp. 49-51)

The absence of the indigenous people's perception in developing a definition points to the fundamental cause of the abuses and injustices caused to the indigenous people. "At the heart of the violation has been the denial of our control over our identity and the symbols through which we make and remake our cultures and ourselves" (Dobson, 1994, p. 6).

Several scholars have attempted to present explanations of self-identification. Daes (1995) explains that self-identification happens when the indigenous people acquire the "rightful authority to define and determine who they are as indigenous" (p. 7). Nesti (1999) contends that self-identification contains two elements: the recognition of a group and the recognition of a person. The first implies that a group asserting itself as indigenous people is so accepted by the international community and the other indigenous groups. The second implies the definition of oneself as an indigenous person

and his/her recognition as such by the group (p. 3). Tomei and Sweptson (1996), in their work on the ILO Convention 169, define self-identification as "the right to decide whether you consider yourself a member of an indigenous or tribal people or community" (p. 4).

Dodson (1994), a spokesperson for the Aboriginal and Torres Islanders, presents a detailed account on what self-identification may mean to his people. He uses the metaphor "throwing away the mirror" as an image for the process of self-identification. (p. 11). For Dodson, the aboriginals in Australia must "de (find)" their aboriginality without the western mirror. For him, self-identification is a process where one has to rid oneself of the stereotype and biases that have shaped one's self-understanding. He states,

None of us have escaped the effect of false representation and invisibility.

We feel it every day when we come into contact with the dominant society. We even feel it when we look into the mirror. Our experiences of our selves, and our Aboriginality has been transformed by the representations. (p. 11)

Dodson (1994) insists that when anyone talks about the identity of the indigenous people they are always talking about self-identity. He argues that self-identity is part of the broader right to self-determination. It is the right of a people to determine its political status and to pursue its own economic, social, and cultural development. He uses self-definition, self-identification, self-determination, and self representations interchangeably. He argues, however, that in order for indigenous people to enter a process of self-identification they should (a) be free from the control and manipulation of

an alien people, (b) have the right to inherit the collective identity of one people, and (c) transform that identity creatively according to self-defined aspirations (p. 6).

Self-identification is about an experience connection with the past, the retelling of the past, which is embodied and evident in the voices and ways of seeing. The past cannot be dead because it is built into the beings and bodies of the living. "We do not need to re-find the past, because our subjectivities, our being in the world are inseparable from the past" (Dodson, 1994, p.13).

Simply stated, self-identification is primarily about dancing, singing, painting, and telling ourselves stories "from the past into the future." (Dodson 1994 p. 14) Two modern philosophers echo this understanding of self-identification: Charles Taylor (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1991). Charles Taylor (1992) in his work, *Sources of the Self* writes, "In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going" (p. 47). Taylor further argues that self identity involves the imagination, for persons will need to be creative. Ultimately, self-identification is negotiated through dialogue, partly overt, and partly internalized, with others. It cannot be done in isolation; it depends on the dialogical relation with other. The full definition of someone's identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community (p. 36).

Giddens (1991) contends that self-identity is about awareness that has been routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual. He argues,

Self-identify is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by an individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in term of his or her biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across the time and space; but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. (p. 53)

Giddens (1991) refers to Laing's (1965) analysis of people whose sense of self is fractured or disabled. This framework may help us construct a framework of how we might help the indigenous people begin the process of self-identification. The following characteristics for ontologically insecure individuals also apply to indigenous people. If we replace "they" with indigenous people, the descriptions are very revealing because they clearly parallel the experiences of brokenness faced by many indigenous groups around the world.

1. The indigenous people lack of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity. They are anxious about obliteration, of being engulfed, crushed or overwhelmed by externally impinging events.
2. In an external environment full of changes, the indigenous people are obsessively preoccupied with apprehension of possible risks to their existence, and paralyzed in terms of practical action. There is "inner deadness" and they seek to 'blend with the environment so as to escape being the target of the dangers that haunt them.
3. The indigenous people fail to develop or sustain trust in his own self-integrity. They lack "the warmth of a loving self-regard. They feel that

living spontaneity of the self has become something dead and lifeless.

(Giddens 1991, p. 53)

Conversely, in order to get indigenous people out of this quagmire so they can begin a process of self-identification, the indigenous people need to cultivate a feeling of biographical continuity, which they are able to grasp reflexively, and, to a great or lesser degree, communicate to other people. They need to create a context where the indigenous people can filter out, in the practical conduct of day-to-day life, many of the dangers, which in principle threaten the integrity of the self. Lastly, they have to sustain a sense of trust in their own self-integrity. The indigenous people will have to be given the opportunity and resources to return to a life that is lived spontaneously without the threat of being conditioned to live another meta-narrative that has been predetermined by more powerful ideologies. In the case of the indigenous people it was primarily colonialism that deprived the natives of the self-knowledge and self-integrity.

Giddens (1991) further offers a way by which the Roman Catholic Church might preserve, maintain, and support a just recognition of the identity of indigenous people. He states,

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual 'supplies' about herself. A person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor-important though this is-in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to *keep a particular narrative going* [emphasis added]. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It

must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing story about the self. (p. 52)

The concept of indigenous will continue to be debated on the international level. However, self identification is the beginning of the broader right to self-determination. If the peoples themselves are to be involved in a process, their voices must be heard in their own mother tongue. In other words they will have to regain the pride and capacity to tell their stories, which has been ruptured by foreign influences. Self-identification must begin with people in communities who desire to tell their stories in their own language, using their own symbols and images about their ancestors, their land, and their connections with the sacred. Appropriately, at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, meeting at United Nations Headquarters from 13 to 24 May 2001, there was an exhibition with the theme "Voices." It was to celebrate indigenous cultures in the form of artworks, photographs, textiles, artifacts, and live performances. This forum was the first time that so many indigenous voices (1,000) would come together to discuss indigenous issues relating to development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. When voices of the indigenous people are heard, their stories are woven together and there is a retrieval of myths and legends. Yet at the same time, there is a deliberate effort to connect to the present situations, but this time, one has choices. This happens when we can proudly tell our story of who we are, and how we came to be where we are. One's self-identify is nurtured and people can gain self-knowledge and engage in self-reflexivity.

### Tradition and Bishop

The Catholic bishop does not normally engage in a self-reflexive process as espoused by Giddens (1991). In other words, he is not free to answer the question, ‘How shall I live as a bishop?’ His episcopal identity is largely determined by a Canon Law which is based on a hierarchical structure and medieval tradition. When tradition dominates, individual actions do not have to be analyzed and thought about so much, because choices are already prescribed by the traditions and customs (Giddens 1991, p. 5). The episcopacy is a hierarchical system that has evolved out of the Roman Empire. When Emperor Constantine legitimized the church in 313, the Christian communities went from house church to basilica, from simple community ministry to the emergence of monarchical bishops (Bernier p. 21). The centralization of the Church with Rome and bishops as its center occurred in the eleventh and twelfth century. At the summit of the hierarchy in terms of orders was the bishop, the divine or angelic principle within the Church (p.131). Little has changed since St. Thomas Aquinas uttered these words. This image of bishop is still prevalent today. Canon Law 375 §1 and §2 states,

By divine institution, Bishops succeed the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who is given to them. They are constituted Pastors in the Church, to be the teachers of doctrine, the priests of sacred worship and the ministers of governance. By their episcopal consecration, Bishops receive, together with the office of sanctifying, the offices also of teaching and of ruling, which however, by their nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head of the College and its members.

There are various types of bishops in the Roman Catholic hierarchy: diocesan, auxiliary, titular, and emeritus. A diocesan bishop is the ecclesial leader of a diocese. He is the chief pastor of the area. He is normally known as an ordinary denoting that he has certain powers of governance. In large dioceses the bishop is usually assisted by an auxiliary bishop who enjoys the full rights of any consecrated bishop, but exercises control of their diocese as subordinates of the ordinary. Canon Law outlines the roles of an auxiliary bishop: "He assists the diocesan Bishop in the entire governance of the diocese, (403 §2) and takes his place when he is absent or impeded (nos. 403, 405). He also works in harmony with the ordinary (no. 407.3)" Auxiliary bishops are assigned "titular" Sees, which are historical dioceses that are no longer in existence. There is no geographical diocese. The titular bishopric is thus simply a title of honor. There is a special type of auxiliary bishop called coadjutor. Most often the only difference is that they have a "right to succession" which means that when the current bishop leaves office by death or resignation, the coadjutor automatically becomes the new bishop. A bishop emeritus is a bishop that is no longer acting as the leader of the diocese due to advanced age or ill health. An Archbishop is simply the title given to a bishop of an archdiocese.

Most archbishops begin their episcopacy as auxiliary bishops. The normal promotion in the hierarchy is from a priest to an auxiliary bishop then onto a bishop and finally an archbishop. If a bishop requests an auxiliary bishop, he must convince the *pronuncio* that there is a pastoral need. The possible reasons for requesting an auxiliary bishop may be the size of the diocese, or a particular ethnic or racial group requires special attention. For example, Bishop Mariu was appointed as auxiliary in the Diocese

of Hamilton because there was a special need to minister to the Maori Catholics in New Zealand. The selection process of a bishop is “shrouded in secrecy with the participants bound by a vow of silence about the names under consideration” (Reese, 1984, p. 6). Therefore, many priests are surprised and even shocked when they receive a letter from Rome informing them of their appointment to the episcopacy.

All diocesan bishops, whether they are coadjutor, auxiliary, or titular, belong to an episcopal conference. The latter is an assembly of bishops: “a council in which the bishops of a given nation or territory jointly exercise their pastoral office to promote the greater good which the Church offers mankind, especially through the forms and methods of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of the age” (No 38.1, *Christus Dominus*, 1965, p. 15). For example, in Oceania there are four episcopal conferences: the Australian Bishops Conference (ABC), the New Zealand Bishop Conference (NZBC), the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC), and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (CBC). These four Conferences come together as the Federation of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Oceania (F.C.B.C.O).

The bishops have the opportunity to further cooperate with one another through Synods of bishops. The synod of bishops is a permanent institution established by Pope Paul VI, 15 September 1965, in response to the desire of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to keep alive the positive spirit engendered by the conciliar experience:

Literally speaking the word "synod", derived from two Greek words *syn* meaning "together" and *hodos* meaning "road" or "way" means a "coming together." A synod is a religious meeting or assembly at which bishops,

gathered around and with the Holy Father, have the opportunity to interact with each other and to share information and experiences, in the common pursuit of pastoral solutions which have a universal validity and application. The Synod, generally speaking, can be defined as an assembly of bishops representing the Catholic episcopate, having the task of helping the Pope in the governing of the universal Church by rendering their counsel. (Holy See Press, *General Introduction on the Synod*, 2001)

Synods are not new in the Church. “From the very first centuries of the Church bishops, as rulers of individual churches, were deeply moved by the communion of fraternal charity and zeal for the universal mission entrusted to the Apostles. And so they pooled their abilities and their wills for the common good and for the welfare of the individual churches” (*Christus Dominus*, p.15). The last six synod assemblies have instituted a new type of bishops who identify with a particular continent or region, attempting to boldly address issues that are pertinent to the faith experience of the people in these particular areas. There have been continental synods on Europe (1991), Africa (1994), Lebanon (1995), America (1997), Asia (1998), and Oceania (1998). In the case of the African Synod the bishops addressed the problems that were prevalent on the continent like justice and peace, dialogue with Moslems, the rights of women, formation of priests and catechists, and the inculturation of Christianity in African liturgy, theology, and family life. The theme chosen for the African synod reflected the bishops desire to highlight the witnessing aspect of the church. The theme was, “The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000 ‘You Shall Be My Witness’ (Acts

1:8).” The bishops in Asia also took up similar issues like inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and preferential option for the poor. The Synod for Oceania likewise addressed issues of inculturation, evangelization, and spiritual life of the islanders. One of the new topics that subtly made its way into the Synod for Oceania was the interpretation of the concept indigenous. This was in the context of highlighting and recognizing indigenous rights and identity.

From the brief discussion on episcopal conferences and synods one can elucidate that when bishops meet as a group, they have the opportunity to engage in self-reflexivity. They are engaged in expanding their self-identity. Bishops are working collaboratively address what it is to be an “American” bishop, “an Asian” bishop, or “an Oceanic” bishop. In doing this they have tried to reflect the real issues that affect not only the faith lives of the people, but also the social, political, and economic well-being of the human person in that particular geographical context. Even within each episcopal conference there are major differences. Therefore the individual bishop further asks questions about who am I in this particular context. Within the Oceanic bishops, there are those that consider themselves indigenous. By self-identifying as indigenous, they have the opportunity to reflect on how they have created their biographical narratives.

### Indigenous Bishops

To identify oneself as indigenous and to be recognized as such is a recent phenomenon in the Church. Historically, Roman Catholic bishops have identified themselves with a local diocese, a religious congregation, or an episcopal conference. Pope John Paul first used the use of the term “indigenous bishops” in his exhortation,

*Ecclesia in Africa*. He alluded to the fundamental importance of the high percentage of indigenous bishops who now make up the hierarchy on that continent as a sign of growth in the church (*Ecclesia in Africa*, John Paul, 1995). Apart from this reference to indigenous bishop, there are few instances where the designation “indigenous bishop” is used in the official church documents. On the other hand, the Anglican Church has used this term for a long time, especially in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Unlike Catholic bishops, an Anglican indigenous bishop is non-geographic bishopric. For example, the Bishop of Aotearoa has jurisdiction over all the Maori of New Zealand, regardless of where they reside.

If a bishop self-identifies as a bishop, he keeps his people’s story going by first telling his story. He creates biography that gives meaning to his people. He provides leadership by identifying with hopes and pains of the people. I propose the following working definition for an indigenous bishop. It takes into consideration the regional (Oceania) and international dimensions of the concept of indigenous. An indigenous bishop in Oceania as a man who

1. identifies himself as bishop and indigenous and is recognized as such by the other members of that group of people, the Church, and other ethnic groups in the islands.
2. claims to have historical continuity with a group people who occupied the islands “first,” before the European explorers arrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
3. voluntarily wishes to perpetuate his group's cultural distinctiveness, which includes language, social organization, spiritual values, and affiliation to

the land.

If the indigenous Roman Catholic bishop embraces the above characterization, he can then facilitate the self-identification of his fellow indigenous brothers and sisters. He may have to adopt a new image. The images that bishop adopt are very different depending on their context, and historical ecclesiology.

*A renewed episcopal image*

The episcopal image has undergone several mutations. This is due to the historical context and the theological reflection of the episcopacy at that time. A brief historical survey of these changes will show that the image of witness has once again become the primary image. However, all the images are based on the faith claim that the bishops are successors to the first apostles who received their commission from Jesus to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19). They were to be unique witnesses.

Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem You are witnesses of all these thing. (Luke 24: 46b-48)

The immediate successors of the apostles adopted the image of missionary and evangelist. (2 Timothy 4-5). In the gospel of Luke, the group of men that had some authority of the local church was known as *presbyters* or elders. These were “older men” who were authority figures in their community. Sullivan (2001) describes the presbyters as “responsible persons who cared for the poor and the needy, they shared a sharing

decision-making role with the apostles (p. 60). In the first century, the image used to describe the successors of the apostles was prophets. The *Didache* or the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles describes a prophet one who teaches, speaks in the Spirit and exhibits the Lords ways. The Greek word *episcopos*, which eventually describes a bishop in the modern sense, is used in a deliberate manner by Clement of Rome in his famous letter the church in Corinth about the year 96. Sullivan argues that Clement used the plural form *epishopoi* which meant that there was a group of presbyters who carried out the ministry of oversight (p.124).

As the church adopted a monarchical episcopate, the image changed dramatically. In 250 Cyprian was the first to adopt the image of *sacerdos*. The bishop was the high priest especially when presiding at the Eucharist. He is *vice Christi*, in Jesus place, he symbolizes Christ (Schillebeeckx 1984, p. 48). The third century document, *Didascalia*, also adopted these regal images:

The Levite and high priest is the bishop He is the servant of the word, but to you a teacher, and your father after God. This is your chief and your leader and he is a mighty king to you. He guides in the place of the Almighty. But let him be honored by you as God is because the bishop sits for you in the place of God Almighty. (Voobus 1979, p.100)

In the first Vatican Council, the image of shepherd was given prominence. In Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium* the bishop retained this image of shepherd but included the triple *munera* of teacher, pontiff and pastor:

Bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken

up the service of the community, presiding in place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship, and ministers for governing. (p. 40)

The most recent images adopted by the bishops are those of servant and witness. These were emphasized in the X Ordinary General Assembly of Synod of Bishops when they met in 2001. In stressing these two images, the bishops have tried to return to first commission to the apostles as reported by evangelist Luke who wrote, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth”(Acts 1:8). The image of a successor of the apostles has gone a full cycle and returned to the initial image of witness. More importantly the bishops acknowledge that this renewed consideration of the image of bishop might help them “recognize, in a humble gesture of repentance, that at certain moments in history the episcopal ministry was seen by some more as a form of power and prestige and less an expression of service (*Lineamenta* 2001, p. 7). It is important to reclaim the image of witness today because there is a crisis of identity among the bishops. Carlo Molari (1972) explains the crisis of episcopal identity:

If one speaks of the crisis of priestly identity, one thinks instinctively of ordinary pastors. But perhaps it would be better to consider the situation of the bishops. How often does one meet bishops who feel rather at a loss? Many of them think of themselves as bureaucrats, dedicated to solemn ceremonial and officialdom. Others suffer from a serious isolation in their present calling, separated from the people and perhaps even more from the

clergy. . . . Misunderstood by their own brethren, living in isolation from, and at times under suspicion by, the central authorities, many bishops admit to extraordinary difficulties in fulfilling their mission, and often are unable to grasp its real meaning. What can we do? they ask; and what ought we to do? (p. 13)

The Catholic Church has, in various ways, attempted to answer these two questions presented by Molari (1972). The church has responded by revising the 1917 Canon Law. In the 1983 Code of Canon Law, principally Canon 373 paragraph one, the Church clarifies the divine institution of the episcopate and defines the triple aspects of the bishop's pastoral role as teacher of doctrine, priest of sacred worship, and minister of church government.

There was an attempt in 1982 by the United States Catholic Conference to reflect on these questions. In a book titled, *The Ministry of Bishops Papers from the Collegeville Assembly*, the bishops took the ideas from *Lumen Gentium* and tried to reflect on how they experienced being teacher, priest, and shepherd in the context of the US. Several bishops presented papers and oral summaries on how they identified themselves within the framework of triple roles mentioned above. Archbishop Hickey of Washington identified himself as "teacher" (pp. 15-20); Archbishop Sanchez of Santa Fe singled out the image of "evangelizer" (pp.22-26); Archbishop Borders of Baltimore advocated the image of "community builder" (pp. 37-42); while Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee proposed the image of "sanctifier" (pp. 43-48). Interestingly three of the four archbishops chose to explore other images of evangelizer, community builder, and

sanctifier instead of the three images of shepherd, priest, and king.

In this same conference, Cardinal Hume of England (1982) reflected on the "Spiritual Foundations of a Bishop's Ministry." He suggested that in order to address the seemingly contradictory images of the bishop, the bishops needed time. He states that if he were running the church, he would have a new law in the new code saying that the most important property a bishop must have is time. He continued to argue that "the chief trouble with most of us is that we haven't got time. We haven't time to think, we haven't got time to pray, and we haven't got enough time for other people" (p.51).

The black bishops in the US have also tried to answer Molari's (1972) questions: What can we bishops do and what ought we to do? In a book by Hemesath (1987) titled, *Our Black Shepherds*, the author points out that the bishops need to tell their stories. In other words, they have to reflect on their black Catholic roots. This book follows a simple biographical style and gives insights into how ten black bishops have preserved their African heritage but remained faithful to the Church. These ten church leaders narrate their experiences with pride in their historical relationship to the descendants of a people of intelligence, ingenuity, artistry, and skill. In *What We Have Seen and Heard. A Pastoral Letter from the Black Bishops* (1984), the black bishops stated their Christian community had reached adulthood. As black bishops of the US, they emphasized that they were "chosen" from among the black people to serve the People of God. They identified themselves as significant signs among many other signs to the black community in the American Church.

The Synod of Bishops has finally arrived at the similar conclusions Molari (1972)

proposed thirty years ago. Throughout the X General Assembly of Synod of Bishops this new image of witness was given credence. The bishop was called to be a credible witness in the community. The credibility of preaching, the efficacy of the pastoral ministry, and the communion every Bishop was called to serve among the faithful, depended on the communal witness of Bishops. In his zeal for missionary activity, the Bishop was to show himself to be a servant and witness of hope. In the *Lineamenta* for the X General Assembly, in a section sub-titled, *Bishops: Witnesses and Servants of Hope*, the bishops write:

The Church experiences in Her Body the same strife and tension which afflict today's men and women. Through her members, she wishes to participate in the defense of the dignity of the human person and the full and total promotion of each individual. (*Lineamenta*, 1998, p.14)

The image of bishop as witness may be new and disconcerting since it moves away from the traditional roles of priest, teacher, and shepherd, but it has been sanctioned by the Pope. In 1995, Pope John Paul II identified himself to the UN and the world as a “witness of hope.” I argue that his words to the General Assembly give the indigenous bishops in Oceania more urgency to adopt the image of witness for he is basically speaking about the dignity of the human person, a core tenet of the struggle of indigenous people throughout history. The indigenous peoples need to hear the Pope’s message from their local ordinary:

I come before you as a witness: a witness to human dignity, a witness to hope, and a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all nations lies in

the hands of a merciful Providence. We must not be afraid of the future. We must not be afraid of man. It is not accident that we are here. Each and every human person has been created in the image and likeness of the One who is the origin of all that is. We have within us the capacities for wisdom and virtue. With these gifts, and with the help of God's grace, we can build in the next century and the next millennium a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and we must do so! (Pope John Paul II, 1995 p.9)

In the biography of Pope John Paul II titled, *Witness of Hope*, author George Weigel (1999) describes his work as an attempt to understand the Polish Karol Wojtyla from the inside. The Pope has chosen the image of witness of hope.

In his essay, Molari (1972) asserts that the new image of bishops as witness will be complex and at times precarious. However, the image of bishops as witness in the Church is not new. In the Church, the episcopal ministry is linked to the witness of the first apostles. The uninterrupted witness of tradition acknowledges bishops to be those who "pass on the apostolic seed and succeed the apostles as Pastors of the Church. Just after the Lord's Passover, the Twelve became unique witnesses of the mystery of the Word Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen (*Lineamenta*, 1998, p. 16). However, in a recent book on development of the episcopacy, Francis Sullivan (2001) demonstrates that it is difficult to establish apostolic succession through the use of historical evidence. He argues apostolic succession is based on more faith (pp. 224-230). Therefore, one must look to the bishops as witnesses of the faith that was passed down through the generation

through the ministry of leadership that did involve bishops but not confined solely to them.

The image of witness proposed by Molari (1972) might be the best image for the indigenous bishops of Oceania because of the emphasis on the role of the community. The importance of community for the indigenous people has already been stressed by John Paul (2001), Dodson (1994), Giddens (1991), and Taylor (1992). They all emphasize that in order for self-identification to take place there is a need for dialogic relationship. Molari asserts that a witness can only exist if he is in relation to a community living out its faith and giving it effective expression in the conditions of its own culture. If faith comes to life in a community, the bishop can only be a witness to it if he reflects on it faithfully. Accordingly, the bishop becomes the true and authentic spokesman of the experience of salvation in his own community; hence he states those formulas of the faith which the word of God inspires in the actual conditions in which he lives. The apostolic character of the bishop's witness is stated and given verbal expression in reference to their own community, whose experiences he communicates to other communities.

Another reason why the witness image is applicable to Oceania is that each bishop is a witness for his own community. Thus, he has to proclaim the verbal formulas in which God's word has been embodied in the living conditions of his own island and his own culture. This bishop can only become witness if the faith of the community is challenged and purified by its conversation with other communities in the universal Church.

For the indigenous bishop, once he has identified with the indigenous people, then he has the task of faithfully reflecting the experiences of faith in his own community. For Molari (1972), the bishop's chief duty in his contacts with other Christian communities is that he shall be faithful, that he shall pass on the verbal forms in his own community in all their completeness (p. 22). He allows self-identification to take place by cultivating a feeling of biographical continuity that the people are able to grasp reflexively. He listens to the stories of his people and detects all the modulations of the Spirit present in this own community. Molari further claims that the bishop as witness also admits that he is not in possession of the secret of truth. He makes himself attentive to the diverse formulations which God's word takes on in his community. He accepts that his *mana* or spirit power is present, however, it not his personal gift but the gift of the Spirit for the people of the community.

For Molari, the bishop as witness of the apostles is fundamentally a man who waits and listens. Thus, as witness the bishop must be aware of all the manifestations of the Spirit within his own community; he has the obligation not to quench the Spirit who distributes his gifts as he pleases. The bishop as witness must be the sensitive part of his own community; the center where the various *mana* come together are perceived and discerned, to the benefit of the universal Church. It is the bishop who gives meaning to the life of the community, and so supplies a correct interpretation. He is able to sustain indigenous community's sense of self as 'alive' with the Spirit. Thus, people accept integrity as worthwhile. The bishop becomes witness to the power of salvation as revealed in history and actually manifested in other conditions of life. The bishop can

create a context where the indigenous people can filter out, in the practical conduct of day-to-day life, many of the dangers which in principle threaten the integrity of the self.

### *Inculturation*

Ultimately, a witness is authentic if he echoes of the experiences of the Spirit in that particular culture. In other words, he is directly involved in inculturation. Father Arrupe, (1978) the General of the Jesuits wrote that inculturation is:

The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular local cultural context, in such a way that the experience not only finds expression through the elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies a culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about “a new creation.” (p. 1)

The Pope states that in "recent times the Church has strongly encouraged the inculturation of the Christian faith. In *Ecclesia in Oceania*, he reassured the bishops by stating:

The Church invites all people to express the living word of Jesus in ways that speak to their heart and minds. The Gospel is not opposed to any culture, as if engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms that are alien to it. It is vital that the Church inserts herself fully into culture and from within brings about the process of purification and transformation. (Pope John Paul, 2001. p. 15)

The indigenous bishop embodies the experience of Spirit in a culture. The island cultures offer him many examples of unique cultural expressions in the areas of theology, liturgy and the use of religious symbols.” In the early stages of the planning for the Synod, the bishops in their suggestions and observations (*lineamenta*) for the Synod for Oceania they boldly stated,

The Church's expression of Her life in faith in symbols and rites is linked to the culture of the person who receives that Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Traditional stories and symbols, music and dance, rites and celebrations, all of which are expressions of human memory and imagination, are deeply part of the cultures in Oceania. (*Lineamenta* 1997, p.15).

This relationship is important to the people, because the Church acknowledges the importance of cultures in Oceania to make this link between their traditional cultures and the new culture of Christianity. It also brings to consciousness the challenges that indigenous peoples have had to face in trying to make sense of the Gospel using their indigenous “thought patterns” and morals. The frank discussion by the bishops of Oceania on inculturation might also allow the bishops to recognize that the seeds of authentic God-awareness in traditional religions may offer possibilities for a creative interpretation of Christian ideas (*Instrumentum Laboris*, 1998, p. 15). Furthermore, the original sense of the sacred, present in so many indigenous cultures, might be a stepping-stone for Catholic liturgy. The Church now accepts that inculturation of faith must be through dialogue between the indigenous people and the Church. So in order to celebrate the positive aspects of both cultures. The bishops of Oceania were also convinced that the

Church, in her efforts to present Jesus Christ effectively to the peoples of Oceania, must respect each culture and never ask the people to renounce it.

*Episcopal contradiction*

In the *Instrumentum Laboris* (1998) for the X Ordinary General Assembly for Synod of Bishops, the bishops themselves acknowledged that the image of the Bishops has undergone a change in recent years. They pointed to the fact that the Bishop is weighted down with a variety of ministerial tasks has become "a sign of contradiction in the defense of truth (p. 5). This honest self-identification is a result of new occurrences and challenges. Schillebeekx (1972) says that since Vatican II, the Church has passed through a time of unity in uniformity and is now entering a period of unity in pluriformity (p. 7). The bishop is faced with a pluralism of duties; the *ad intra* and *ad extra* duties, the duties of a spiritual leader, the duties of public civic leadership. If he does not have a proper balance, the faithful may see him as a symbol of ambiguity. Another possible reason for this predicament is that the bishops unrealistically strive to make themselves "all things to all people "(*Lineamenta* p. 7).

Reese's (1992) study of archbishops on the American Catholic Church corroborates this dilemma faced by the bishops. He claims that since Vatican II, the bishops have had to face a more complex and constantly changing environment. They are face with many uncertainties. He describes how the archbishops try to cope with the plural roles as civic leader, ecumenical leader, teacher, pastor, administrator, national leader, and international leaders. The expectations are enormous that he has to divide his time trying to fit their personalities and leadership styles so that they fulfill the multiple

roles:

He should provide national and international leadership in the church without leaving the archdiocese more than two days in a year. He must be a holy priest who understands the real world of budgets and finances. He must be loyal to the Holy Father, but he should not be pushed around by the Vatican. . . . He should be ecumenical but stress Catholic identity.

(p. 76)

Scripko's (1992) doctoral dissertation showed how Bishop Hunthausen of the Archdiocese of Seattle was able to overcome the episcopal contradiction. He showed the papal investigators and his opponents that he was not a sign of ambiguity. In fact, Scripko argues that Hunthausen was living out the call of Vatican II of being shepherd to all the people of God. In addition, he used a discernment process to prevail over the difficult moral issues: a) peace and justice issues, b) ministry to gays and lesbians, c) the Vatican crisis, and d) the woman's role in the church. Scripko concludes that even under pressure Hunthausen offered consistency in his moral leadership as he addressed and responded to the moral issues of his day. In an indirect way, Bunz's (1994) study of ten Bishops from Canada and the US shows how these prelates have addressed the episcopal contradiction. He argues that to do this effectively the bishops have adopted a transformational type of leadership that is empowering the laity. In order to do this the leaders have a vision, they “have an enlightened self-interest, they have integrity, build positive relationships with others and continually strive toward mastery” (p. 195).

The episcopacy's admission of being signs of contradiction suggests that the

bishops may be in a double bind situation. Hennestad (1990) using Gregory Bateson's theory of double-bind states, that double bind connotes a situation where conflicting messages occur, but where it is vitally important to discern what message is being communicated, and where the individual is unable to comment upon the ambiguity (p. 265). Hennestad contends that the conflicting signals and inability to comment on the ambiguity are parallel to situations in many organizations. Therefore, a double bind organization is one in which members are constantly confronted with situations in which conflicting messages occur, resulting in the inability of members to "communicate about communication" (p. 269). The members are left with the feeling of something going on other than what is said to be going on or the feeling that there are other agendas in action. The situation can result in "organizational schizophrenia. Two examples might show that as a group and as individuals, bishops might be unknowing victims of double bind.

The lives of individual bishops are fraught with contradictions. Reese (1989) points out that these paradoxes result from manifold messages from both the Vatican and the people that these prelates need to be ideal episcopal leaders. He states,

The ideal archbishop is a pastorally sensitive administrative genius who can prophetically preach the gospel in a nonthreatening way and provide extensive social services and education programs at low cost with few bureaucrats. He must govern in a way that is widely consultative, decisive, innovative, collegial, and orthodox, while keeping everyone happy. He must be prophetic in his concern for the poor and raise money for the rich. He must convince his priests that they are the most important people in the

archdiocese without alienating religious and laity by being excessively clerical. (p. 76)

The bishops may be in a double bind because they are in a double-bind organization. The episcopacy as an institution still sends out a strong message that the bishop a member of hierarchy. Yet according to *Lumen Gentium* bishops are expected to be shepherds and servants. Therefore, the “old meaning” of a bishop as monarch still exists. Any attempt to give a new meaning so as make sense of new situations has caused confusion, and in some cases, intervention by Rome. A notable example of a bishop who has experienced this double-bind situation is Archbishop Hunthausen. He was accused of sending mixed messages about doctrinal matters. The latter was a Vatican II bishop, a pastor “who stressed principals of shared responsibility, Gospel values, and active participation in church life” (Scripko, 1992. p. 111). In a letter from the Vatican, they complimented Hunthausen but accused of causing “routine misunderstanding.” In the rest of the letter, the Vatican attempts to address the mixed messages communicated by the bishop by offering clarity on particular doctrines. They state in the letter that Hunthausen should make sure there is a clear presentation of the sacramentality and indissolubility of Christian marriage; a correct appreciation of the priesthood and the role of the laity should be inculcated in the seminary; routine intercommunion on the occasion of wedding and funeral should be recognized as clearly abusive; the exclusion of women from the priesthood should be explained unambiguously; the compassionate ministry to homosexual persons must be developed that has as its clear goal the

promotion of a chaste life-style. (Reese, 1989, pp. 339-340)

Episcopal conferences can also be seen as examples of double-bind organizations. Sullivan (2002) implicitly stated this in an article titled *The Teaching Authority of Episcopal Conferences*. One of the understated arguments put forth by the author is that in the document *Aposotos suos*, the Pope was sending a mixed message. Sullivan argues that in the latter document the Pope answered “yes” to the question of whether the episcopal conferences can make doctrinal statements that oblige the faithful of their region to adhere to their teaching with *obsequium religiosum*, a sense of religious respect. To the contrary, Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith, has consistently answered “no” to that same question in his writing on ecclesiology. Ratzinger stated in 1983 and 1988 that the episcopal conference does not have a *mandatum decendi* or mandate to teach. This belongs only to individual bishops and to the entire college with the pope. Sullivan contends that the difficult conditions stipulated by the Pope are in fact consistent with the message communicated by Ratzinger. Sullivan (2001) states,

I have analyzed several passages of the *motu proprio* which rather clearly confirm my judgment that the two conditions laid down by the pope really mean that an episcopal conference is not an intermediate subject of teaching authority. To have a binding effect, its doctrinal statements must receive their authority either from the individual bishops, each of whom has approved it, or from the Holy See, In my opinion, it is Ratzinger’s view that has prevailed. (p. 491)

Because of these two conflicting messages, this issue has been part of intense discussions amongst theologians, canonists, and bishops since 1983. The discussions and papers appear in a collection edited by Tom Reese: *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical & Theological Studies*. This was one attempt to address the mixture of practical and theological issues involved in this confusion caused by two leaders of the hierarchy. The ambiguity has also stifled the power of episcopal conferences to unambiguously communicate the truth as discerned by the bishops of a particular region.

The Oceanic bishop who self-identifies as indigenous may find himself in a double bind. Although the message of *Ecclesia in Oceania* seems clear about the Pope's commitment to preserve and recognize indigenous identity, it does not specify how this might be carried out in the islands. The bishops have to discern and interpret the nuances in the apostolic exhortation so that they can respond appropriately. Closer study of the papal exhortation may ascertain two contradictory messages: the indigenous people are unique and their identity should be recognized but that interpreter will have to use the Vatican's understanding of terms like self-identification before getting involved in an advocacy of the rights of indigenous people as outlined in the draft UN Rights for Indigenous People. Thus like a person suffering from a double bind, the bishop in Oceania may not be able to effectively comment on their understanding of phrase "preserve and recognize the identity of indigenous" without an interpretive key from an official in Rome who has little or no knowledge of the island cultures. More serious is that the bishops may not be able to discuss the issue of indigenous self-identification because Vatican officials may reprimand them. Moreover the bishops may be incapable

of investigating and gaining insight into their own culture and its relationship to the institutional church. This happened to Bishop Samuel Ruiz, the ordinary in San Cristobal de las Casas diocese until he retired in 1999. This diocese was part of violence-torn Chiapas State in Mexico. He became world famous for working with the indigenous people in Chiapas trying to improve the basic human rights so that they might preserve their identity as human beings. He did this by being a mediator between the Zapatista Indian rebels and the government. However, he was accused of preaching Marxist doctrine rather than true Catholic doctrine. His opponents claimed that he confused the flock with his ideas of liberation theology. For Ruiz, recognizing the identity of the indigenous also meant that he challenge the government to provide Indians with access to land, schools, and medical care.

A double-bind situation occurs in times of dramatic change. *Ecclesia in Oceania* is part of the reforms that began with Vatican II, particularly those documents that discussed a new understanding of “Church.” *Lumen Gentium* attempted to present a self-definition by proclaiming that the Church was a mystery of Christ and is a people of God. It was a major change since the understanding of church was considered hierarchical and triumphalistic. In addition, the Vatican Fathers acknowledged that the bishops received their ministry and authority from Christ (not from the pope as leaders of the local church for which they were ordained (Bernier, 1992, p. 218).

### Summary

This chapter describes an “indigenous bishop” in the context of Oceania. In order to come to any workable description it was necessary to answer two fundamental

questions: Who is indigenous? and What is a bishop? In trying to find answers to these supposedly simple questions, it was realized one has to define the concept within a particular context.

The designation “indigenous bishop” has recently come into the parlance of officials of the Roman Catholic Church. It is a result in the increase in the number of local bishops that have been ordained in the missionary countries, namely Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania. Vatican II and the end of colonialism have also helped in this process of identifying bishops as indigenous since people are becoming aware of the distinctive traits of indigenous peoples. The long struggle by the scores of ethnic groups who self-identify as indigenous has also prompted the Church to take notice of what is happening at the United Nations, especially the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights, the Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (1995-2002), and the establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held 13-24 May 2002 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The plight of the indigenous peoples in Oceania was highlighted by members of the New Zealand and Australian delegation at the 1998 Synod for Oceania in Rome. This resulted in the Roman Catholic Church joining the UN, the ILO, and other world bodies in acknowledging that indigenous people in Oceania had a unique identity that should be recognized and protected. But in order to come to this conclusion, the Pope implicitly formulated a description of what the Church understood as “indigenous.” He acknowledged that these peoples form a unique part of humanity in a unique region of the world by drawing attention to ten distinctive traits, ranging from being original

inhabitants to having their own traditional religions. The Church chose to highlight the spiritual aspects of the indigenous culture adding to other common characteristics that have emerged over the years, like distinct language and culture. Historically the Church has used the word indigenous sparingly and has been cautious to avoid highlighting the negative connotation of the concept since many indigenous scholars associate the colonialism of the Spanish with Catholicism.

Nevertheless, the Church does highlight three factors specific to indigenous that are found in other descriptions by the UN and the ILO. These are: (a) priority of time, with respect to the occupation and use of specific territory; (b) the voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness, and (c) self-identification. These three factors have come to be accepted by most people. These factors have evolved over a number of years since the ILO first began to define the concept in 1957. The UN has also attempted to highlight the fundamental elements in the concept of indigenous. Cobo's 1987 monumental study resulted in a description that has been used over the years. The three factors mentioned above have evolved through a historical and legal analysis of the concept by Erica-Irene Daes (1996). In a UN working paper on the concept of indigenous people, she cited these factors but warned that "these factors do not, and cannot, constitute an inclusive or comprehensive definition. Rather, they represent factors which may be present, to a greater or lesser degree, in different regions and in different national and local contexts" (p. 22). Other international bodies like the UNESCO, UNDP, the World Bank, and the Asian Bank have used Cobo's and Daes' working definitions to articulate for themselves what they understand by the concept indigenous.

In all the discussions, one factor has recurred, and that is, the element of self-identification. Most indigenous groups have voiced their concurrence with the need for the people to have the right to self-identify with a particular indigenous group. Like indigenous, self-identification can become ambiguous. Using a philosophical approach by Giddens (1991) I describe self-identification as the ability to keep one's biography going by a process of reflexivity by the agent. It means that one has to know the story of the people and participate actively in keeping that narrative going. This is important because for too long, the stories of indigenous people have been silenced. A dominant Western Christian story has become the truth and everything else has been subsumed into this meta-narrative. The telling of life stories is the beginning of this process of self-identification which is part of self-determination.

Indigenous peoples around the world have sought recognition of their identities, their ways of life, and their right to traditional lands and resources; yet throughout history, their rights have been violated. Indigenous people are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world today.

For the indigenous people in Oceania, the chance to tell their stories again was given credence when the bishops, through the Pope acknowledged that the Church had the responsibility to help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their traditions. With the promulgation of *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the responsibility of carrying out this recommendation falls on the shoulders of the bishops, but in particular on those who self-identify as indigenous. To carry out this out can be difficult, for being a bishop is embedded in an ecclesial structure that highlights the hierarchy. However, with the

episcopal conferences and Synods the bishops may now have a chance to collectively address the indigenous problems and those associated with it like inculturation.

In order to echo the stories of the indigenous people faith, the bishops may have to put more emphasis on the witnessing aspect of being bishop. This will not mean he changes the traditional roles of priest, shepherd, and teacher, but that he places emphasis on being a witness of the faith. This witnessing aspect of the episcopal identity is not new and the Pope and Synod of Bishops have recently called the bishops to be witnesses of the faith. This may allow the bishop to begin the process of telling the people to tell their stories from their own experiences and from within a context that includes both their Christian and indigenous connections to the sacred. For the indigenous people, self-identification is keeping the narratives of their communities alive so that they can construct individual biographies. Accordingly, the biographies are now recreated from the perspective of the people themselves as they struggle with inculturation. The bishop who wishes to be indigenous must also recreate his biography. He can do this by accentuating the image of “witness.” As a witness he becomes an echo of a living experience of those people who in a particular place desire that the Church recognizes and affirms their aboriginality, their cultural distinctiveness, and their right to self-identification. The Pope in *Ecclesia in Oceania* restates this call for the bishops to be witness:

Like the Apostles, the Bishops are sent to their Dioceses as the prime witnesses to the Risen Christ. During the Special Assembly for Oceania, the Bishops recognized that they are themselves the first called to a

renewed Christian life and witness. As the Acts of the Apostles makes clear, the outstanding characteristic of the apostolic mission inspired by the Holy Spirit is the courage to proclaim "the word of God with boldness" (4:31). This courage was given to them in response to the prayer of the whole community: "Grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness" (4:29). The same Spirit today too enables the Bishops to speak out clearly and courageously when they face a society that needs to hear the word of Christian truth. The Catholics of Oceania continue to pray fervently that, like the Apostles, their Pastors will be audacious witnesses to Christ. (No 19)

Oceanic bishops not only need to be witnesses of Christ, but witnesses of apostolic faith. Molari (1972) put forth this idea mainly because he felt that there seems to be a crisis in the episcopal identity. Many bishops find themselves in a contradictory situation, where they try to balance the expectations of Rome and the needs of their local people. They find themselves in a double bind where they send out messages that are not congruent with their behavior or their spiritual beliefs. Being a witness of apostolic faith may help in getting the bishops to be rooted in their local contexts and allow experiences of the Spirit of the local people to determine the ecclesial policies and religious programs. A bishop who chooses to self-identify as being indigenous has to articulate for himself what specific factors in the global discussion on "indigenous" is important to regain the human dignity of his people. Once this is clear to him, then he will have to tell his life story and how as bishop he has tried to be a witness of apostolic faith.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to write interpretive biographies of three Roman Catholic bishops in Oceania. I made sense of their lives by studying their lived experiences. In particular, I studied the prelates' experiences of being Christian witnesses within the context of their indigenous cultures. The study focused on turning point moments in their life experiences, particularly their appointment and ordination to the episcopacy and how these experiences shaped and formed their image of being a bishop in their dioceses. The bishops, as primary interpreters, assisted me in the creation of their biographies, for only they could give authentic meanings to these phenomena.

The methodology for this study was based on the interpretive model of biography as developed by Denzin (1989a). Denzin describes the interpretive method as the studied use and collection of personal life-documents, stories, accounts, and narratives, which describe turning-point moments in individual lives (p. 13). In using this qualitative approach, I narrated the stories of the three bishops. But in doing so, I not only created the persons I wrote about, but the bishops created themselves as they engaged in the storytelling practice. This method is different from classical biography, where the story is only created from the perspective of the objective narrator telling the story about objective events and experiences. A comparative table shows the major differences. (see Appendix B)

## Stories

In this study, I used an interpretative format which Denzin (1989a) terms making “sense of an individual’s life” through story telling (p. 58). This strategy shows how the subjects’ lives are weaved into and through the researcher’s interpretation of that life. This is a variant of Sartre’s "progressive-regressive" method of writing interpretive biography. I began with a pivotal event, namely the episcopal ordination. I studied how this incidence came to occupy the central place of the life of the bishop. I then examined how the meanings of the ordination promises have changed over time. The main part of the story narrated how the three bishops have tried to live out their mottos. Unlike Sartre, I went beyond the bishops’ pastoral letters and newspaper articles to self-stories and life-histories organized around the single theme of indigenous. In this study, forward progression began with the episcopal ordination, the bishop’s selection of an episcopal coat of arms and how he has tried to be an authentic bishop to the present time. I then worked backwards identifying how his family and educational and religious institutions instinctively formed him for the episcopacy. Uncovering the multiple meanings to pivotal episodes in their lives as bishops was key to understanding how they function in the Church as both indigenous and witness. I constructed three interpretive biographies of three bishops who live in a unique cultural and religious context: Oceania and the Roman Catholic Church. These primary forces shape their episcopal narratives.

Interpretive biography rests on stories. The stories are expressions of life experiences of real people who were born and feel human emotions like love, anger despair and caring for others. Denzin (1989a) describes a story:

Stories are fictional, narrative accounts of how something happened.

Stories are fictions. A fiction is something made up or fashioned out of real and imagined events. History, in this sense is fiction. A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. They are narratives with a plot and a story line that exist independent of the life of the storyteller or narrator.

Every narrative contains a reason or set of justifications for its telling. . . .

A story is told in and through discourse, or talk, just as there can be discourse about the text of a story. (p. 41)

Telling oral stories is still part of the island ethos. This research method supports the perception still prevalent in the islands that no self or personal story is ever an individual production. One's self-identity derives from a larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts" (Denzin, 1989a, p. 73). The bishops' stories are part of the islanders' stories. In some ways, the biographies of the bishops are in part, my autobiography, for I share much of their clerical and cultural experiences. I was not able to completely expunge my own biases and values. Therefore, I can lay some claim to being the subject of this research. Even then, I must keep in mind that an interpretive biography eludes fixed meaning--actual lives, and like words, exist only in traces, spaces, and differences.

Interpretive biography allowed me to enter into the research in a nonthreatening manner. I used the technique of guided narration rather than direct interviewing. By using this genre, I was able to ask the bishops to tell me their stories behind significant events in their lives. I liken the discourse to spiritual direction. The bishops felt privileged to be

chosen to share their experiences about the most intimate parts of their lives. With few guided questions as props, I was able to allow them to dream about the future but and reminisce about the past. So, the self-stories that the bishops narrated were open-ended, inconclusive, and ambiguous, and subject to multiple interpretations. At times the narratives were about spiritual matters, at other times they moved to ethical considerations. Certain times I could feel the emotions as they spoke about the challenges of being bishop and indigenous. The stories slowly unwound and twisted back on themselves as the prelates searched for meaning in the experiences they call their own. As a researcher, I became aware that these biographies told stories of the search for their identities.

The bishops' biographies echoed stories we tell each other in the islands, for the narratives that groups pass on to one another are reflective of understandings and practices that are at work in the larger system of cultural wealth. The stories revolved around family, community, and customs. However, the three biographies illuminated the dilemma of "double bind" that seemly haunts the bishops as they attempt to give shape a self-identity that moves beyond the traditional roles of being bishop. Besides, their self-narratives gave them an opportunity to reflect on self, for one becomes the story one tells. At first the bishops' stories appeared to be elusive but this should not surprise us, because a life story is just that, it can never be completed but clamors for continuation (Denzin, 1989a, p. 81).

### Philosophical Foundations

Creswell (1998) argues that biographical writing has its roots in different disciplines and has found interest in recent years. The intellectual strands of this tradition are found in philosophical, literary, historical, anthropological, psychological, and sociological perspective as well as interdisciplinary views from feminist and other cultural thinking (p. 48). Interpretive biography has its roots in phenomenology as presented by Husserl (1962). The latter argues that one can know something subjectively and that is just as valid as knowing it objectively. In the former case, knowing something subjectively draws on the personal experiences to understand and interpret a particular phenomenon.

Denzin (1989a) contends that the French philosopher Derrida builds on the work of Husserl and suggests that as real people we live lives that have meaning and that we need to find a way or a method to give meaning to the lived experiences by “invading” the subject. However, Denzin (1989a) cautions that there is no clear window into the inner life of a person because everything is filtered through our own experiences (p. 14). This is in response to arguments put forward by positivists and empiricists who claim that if the data are not objective and measurable, then they have no validity and reliability. This position contends that in order to carry out this study I would have to begin with an absolute grasp of the concept indigenous. There are objective unambiguous scientific traits that can be applied to all indigenous people. But this is the very point that the indigenous people wish to reject, for we predicate that we can never attain a clear, unambiguous definition of the concept. We need to begin with real experiences of the

subjects who are situated in a particular cultural context.

Bernard Lonergan (1971) confirms this principle that no person can really “know,” unless he first becomes attentive to his experiences. He argues, “in a world mediated by meaning and motivated by values, objectivity is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, and genuine responsibility. Objectivity is the fruit of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility (p. 265).

All three philosophers Husserl (1962), Derrida (1972), and Lonergan (1971) challenge the positivistic philosophy of science and advocate a more humanistic approach, which considers “subject-as-subject.” The subject-as-subject is the one who establishes that all “outside” relationships are impressions, and that which erupts within never reaches outside the self without interiorizations. Lonergan (1971) classifies these as interior operations which are: (a) experience of data, (b) the effort to understand it, (c) the judgment after relating the hypotheses back to the data, and (d) and a decision after discernment, about what to do about it (pp. 6-12).

Since the emphasis of interpretive biography relies on the subjective experiences of both the researcher and the one telling his story, Denzin (1989a) argues that validity and reliability are not considerations because the real problem is how to locate and interpret the subject in biographical materials (p. 26). Thus within a humanistic, interpretive stance, Denzin identifies a criterion of self-interpretation as the standard of judging the quality of a biography. However, he insists that authentic interpretation should always be based on respecting the researcher’s perspective as well as on a “thick

description.” The challenge of the researcher is to illuminate the phenomenon of indigenous in a thickly contextualized manner so as to reveal the historical, processual, and interactional features of the experience (Creswell, 1998, p. 206).

### Epiphanies

Denzin (1989a) defines epiphanies as interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives. In them, personal character is manifested. Epiphanies alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life. I would argue that one who is recalling and narrating these epiphanies might give some insight to how the bishop identifies himself in relation to the Church and the other indigenous peoples. (1989) distinguishes four forms of the epiphany: (a) the major event which touches every fabric of a person's life; (b) the cumulative or representative event, which signifies eruptions and reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time; (c) the minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a minor, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life and (d) those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience (p. 71).

The biographies that emerged highlighted the social and kin relationships that surround and shape the identities of these bishops. These biographies spoke to the issues of human dignity, and the suffering of indigenous people whose hopes, dreams, and lives are affected by their relationship to the institutional church. The texts of the indigenous bishops can become written texts of communal testimonies of indigenous people in their attempts to endure, to prevail, and to triumph over the structural forces that threaten at any moment to annihilate all of us (Denzin, 1989a, pp. 81-83). The biographies give

pause or cause a punctuation of the main run of things and cause further epiphanies.

In this study, I focused on two major ritualized epiphanies and a cumulative epiphany in the episcopal life. The two major ritualized epiphanies were: (a) the bishops' appointment and ordinations, and (b) his participation in the inculturated liturgy at the opening of the Synod for Oceania in 1989. These two significant events were part of rituals within the Catholic worship. The first epiphany is based the Catholic belief that at ordinations there is spiritual transformation. There is permanent spiritual mark on the bishop but also on the people in the diocese. The second epiphany, which brings an updating to the bishops' view of the Church, was in the context of the liturgy in Rome, where music, rituals, songs, and dances were approved by these bishops to give witness to their distinct identity as indigenous islanders.

#### Research Participants

The participants for this research included three bishops from Oceania: Bishop Mariu from the Diocese of Hamilton in New Zealand, Archbishop Mataca from the Archdiocese of Suva in Fiji, and Archbishop Apuron from the Archdiocese of Agana in Guam. In selecting the bishops I used three criteria: (a) he self-identifies with indigenous peoples of the island, (b) he is a progeny of original inhabitants, and (c) he is an advocate for cultural uniqueness of the indigenous people.

To narrow my selection and get a good cross-section of the episcopal indigenous population in Oceania, I used other determinants like cultural and priestly affiliation, age and episcopal longevity, priestly formation and episcopal qualification, colonial history, and indigenous awareness. The three profiles below are the results of selection process

and additional traits that would be important for this study.

### *Maori Bishop*

Bishop Max Takuiria Matthew Mariu is a representative of the Polynesian bishops. New Zealand is the largest island in the Polynesian group. This group comprises of Hawaii, Tonga, Samoa, Cook, Tahiti, and Tuvalu. Bishop Max identifies himself as a Maori. This is the name given to the original inhabitants of New Zealand who were part of the great Polynesian migrations across the Pacific Ocean. Since the League of Nations, the Maori people have been part of the international initiative to recognize the rights of indigenous people.

Mariu did his priestly formation in New Zealand with the Society of Mary, commonly known as Marists. The Society of Mary is a missionary congregation which started in France. They came out to the islands in the 1860s and continue to work in other countries in Oceania like Australia, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, New Caledonia, and Solomons. He is one of the few Marist indigenous priests from the islands to be ordained a bishop. He follows Cardinal Pio from Samoa and Bishops Finau and Foleaki from Tonga.

Mariu just barely fulfilled the age criterion on his episcopal appointment. He was one year over the canonical age (35 years old) and longevity of being ordained priest (5 years) when he was appointed auxiliary bishop. He was finally selected for this study because his episcopal appointment was part of the Maori Catholics request for a Maori bishop.

*Fijian Bishop*

Archbishop Petero Mataka represents the Melanesian bishops. Ethnographers place Fiji into Melanesia or “black group of islands.” This group includes Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia. He identifies himself both as a *tauvei* or indigenous Fijian and Fiji Islander. The term *tauvei* is the name that refers to owners of the land and who distinguish themselves as possessing certain unique cultural traits. Fiji Islander, on the other hand, is a recent designation used by Mataka to include other ethnic groups living on the islands namely Indians and mixed races. There have been two coups in Fiji (1987, 2001) which were staged because the *tauvei* were supposedly fearful that the new immigrants to the islands would take over their land.

Mataka did his priestly formation in New Zealand and Rome. He is a diocesan priest. A better understanding of a diocesan priest would be to compare them to religious priests like Mariu and Apuron. A diocesan priest is generally ordained to serve a particular geographic area (diocese) for his entire priesthood and normally lives on his own. Religious priests are also ordained to serve the church, but are assigned by their own religious superior and live with others in a community. Religious priests take three vows-- celibacy, obedience, and poverty, which mean they do not own any property. Alternatively, a diocesan priest commits himself to a celibate life, and to respect and obedience to the bishop. There are about 2,819 diocesan priests in Oceania. He is one of the few indigenous diocesan priests from the islands to be ordained a bishop. He follows Bishop Loesio Fuahea of Wallis and Futuna. In recent years other indigenous diocesan priests have been elevated to the episcopacy: Bishop Thomas Chamcho of Northern

Marianas (1984), Bishop Amando Samo of the Caroline Islands (1987), and Bishop Michel Visi of Vanuatu (1996). Presently there is no bishop in Papua New Guinea who was a diocesan priest, even though they have the largest number of indigenous bishops in Melanesia. Mataca was vicar general before his episcopal appointment. He was finally selected for this study because of the rise of indigenous rights and identity in Fiji. He is also considered the *qase* or elder within the Bishops Conference in the Pacific islands usually abbreviates as CEPAC.

#### *Chamorro Bishop*

Archbishop Anthony Sablan Apuron, O.F.M. Cap. is a representative of the Micronesian bishops. Guam is the largest island in the “small island” (Micronesian) region. This group includes the islands of Kiribati, Northern Marianas, and Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. He identifies himself as a “Chamorro Guamanian.” The term refers to a person who has links to the original aborigines of the Mariana islands while recognizing the other ethnicities present on the island of Guam. The knowledge and use of the Chamorro language has become one of the main characteristics of the indigenous people in Guam. Apuron has been involved in discussions and writings on the future political status of the islands in relation to the US.

Apuron did his priestly formation in US. He is a member of the Capuchins, a branch of the Franciscans. The appellation OFM Cap stands for the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins. The Capuchins were founded in 1528 to follow the ideals of St. Francis. They are consecrated by religious vows to living fully the gospel of Jesus Christ after the spirit and manner of St. Francis of Assisi ministering to the people of God. The Capuchins are

in large numbers in Australia (37), New Zealand (10), and Papua New Guinea (52). The Capuchins were present in Micronesia as early as 1886 when the Spanish Capuchins were assigned to the islands of Yap. When the Carolines were sold by Spain to the Germany, the German brothers replaced the Spanish Capuchins. In 1901 the first Capuchins arrived on Guam. Since then six Capuchins have served as bishop in Guam. Apuron is the first indigenous Capuchin to be appointed bishop in Guam. He was finally selected for this study because he is very active in the movement in Guam to safeguard the Chamorro language and culture.

#### Data Collection

Data collection for this study was determined by choice of interpretative biography as a method. The method suggests that the interviewer have considerable knowledge of the social, historical, and cultural contexts of the research participants. I had to also gain permission from the bishops to involve them in the study. And lastly I had to allow them to tell their story in a way that would be authentic.

I began initial communication through e-mail, phone and fax with Archbishop Mataka, Bishop Mariu, and Archbishop Apuron. This was difficult to get them to commit to be part of the research so it was decided that I would fly down to New Zealand, Fiji, and Guam to make personal contact. I would formally request that they be part of this study. I personally visited with them in December, 2001 and explained the purpose of my visit and requested them to be participants in the study. The responses were cautious. They requested that I send them more information once I had done more research. However, this conversation was the beginning of the collection of data. It was an

occasion for them to resurrect pastoral plans which perhaps had lain fallow and needed a prod. It allowed them to dream about their visions for their dioceses. They alluded to the difficulties that they were encountering with the indigenous movements and with the policies of inculturation with Rome. Although they did not make a definite commitment, I felt the conversation was an optimistic sign that they would be willing to be participants in the research. The fact that I was to be ordained a priest in June of 2002 helped in developing a relationship with the three bishops. I was already considered an “insider” since I was from the islands and belonged to the clerical status. Yet, it also helped that I would be a Jesuit priest because this allowed me some distance from the experiences of these three leaders who belonged to different priestly affiliations. While in the islands, I was able to spend time in the local libraries collecting and collating biographical documents of the three bishops. I was also able to collect newspaper/magazine articles that mentioned the bishop in English and the local languages and make copies of the bishops’ interventions to the State or other international organizations like the UN and Commonwealth about indigenous matters. These materials allowed me to refine my questions, develop a protocol for the interview, deepen my background knowledge about the different contexts, and make transitions when there was a hiatus in the actual interview. I contacted the bishops through e-mail and phone asking them to confirm if they were still willing to participate in the study. They all responded in the affirmative. So I made my plans to fly down to the islands in June 2002.

Qualitative interviewing was the main method of data collection. Patton (1980) states that interviewing begins with the basic assumption that the perspective of other is

meaningful, knowable and able to fully and clearly be expressed. (p. 196) He contends that the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which the respondents can express their own understanding in their own words. (p. 205). In order to do this, I faxed a letter explaining the goals of the research, the reason why they were selected, the key questions and time line (see Appendix C). This was followed by phone calls and e-mail ensuring that they had received the letter.

Patton (1980) recommends three approaches for collecting qualitative data in open-ended interviews: (a) the informal conversational interview; (b) the general interview approach; and (c) the standardized open-ended interview. At first, I decided to use the standardized open-ended interview. This approach was selected because time was limited and I wished to have the same information from each of the three bishops. The political nature of this study also required that the set of questions were carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each bishop through the same sequence and asking them the same questions with essentially the same words. To enable this to work out I had arranged the interview into three parts with specific questions (see Appendix D). This approach only worked with Archbishop Apuron. He had read the instructions on the letter and had made a conscious effort to prepare for the interview. Archbishop Apuron chose to conduct the interview at his desk and go through the questions in a systematic way making sure that we covered all the important questions. At times, I requested that he expand or explain shifting the interview in another direction but for the most part we covered the questions in the time agreed upon. He requested that he also tape the interview. Archbishop Apuron had done much of the background work,

so he had his responses already typed out. This allowed me to delve deeper into some of the issues that were important to him. He also had the documents and tapes readily available to me during the interview.

With Bishop Mariu and Archbishop Mataca, I used Patton's (1980) suggestion and eventually combined the three approaches to best suit the situation. This framework provided these two bishops a more relaxed disposition and freed them to express their thoughts and ideas. Throughout the conversation both Mariu and Mataca used the vernacular language to stress a point or to underscore a humorous aspect of the topic at hand. I was attentive to these words and laughter because they expressed more than what was actually said. The interview with Bishop Mariu was conducted in his living room over cups of tea. The atmosphere was very relaxed as we sat on the sofa and, basically, had a conversation. He immediately confessed that he "did not exactly know what epiphany and interpretative biography were about" and suggested that I just ask the questions as simply as possible. Although he had seen the questions ahead of time, he felt that it would be better if he tell his story with me guiding him to make sure that I had covered the important topics. The interview with Archbishop Mataca was conducted in his office. We were moved to a lounge section of the office to conduct the interview. He considered this interview as a *talanoa* so he very quickly began telling his life-story with ease and emotion. At times, he interpreted a comment or question that was different from what I had in mind so we discussed matters important to him.

These two interviews confirmed Mishler's (1986) contention that a qualitative interview is a "form of discourse" (p. vii). It is a joint product of what interviewees and

interviewers talk about together and how they talk to each other. An interview is a purposeful conversation or speech event, usually between two people, that is directed by one in order to get in-depth information (Ely, 1991, p.57). An example of the reciprocal nature of interview is best described by Archbishop Mataca and his repetition of the word *talanoa* during the interviews. The term *talanoa* means to have a dialogue where two people are considered equal and there is no real agenda and time constraint. It is telling stories about common interests. I wanted to be able to learn to see the world from the eyes of the bishops. In striving to come close to the understanding bishops' meanings, I learned from them as informants and sought to discover how they organized their behavior (Ely, p. 58). Mishler expands the notion of *talanoa* by contending that the original purpose of interviewing as a research method is to understand what respondents mean by what they say in response to our queries, and, thereby, arrive at a description of respondents' worlds of meanings that is adequate to the tasks of systematic analysis and theoretical interpretation. Furthermore, the meanings of questions and answers are contextually grounded.

Each interview began with the bishops' episcopal ordinations with specific questions about how it affected his life as an indigenous man. It seemed that all three felt it was an epiphany, recounting the events of the day with great joy and pride. This relaxed disposition allowed me to move into other topics that were more sensitive, like inculturation and relationship with the clergy. Right through the interview it was evident that they had information to share, if given the opportunity and time. There was very little pause between my questions and their responses. They were quick to articulate what they

thought. They also showed emotions when certain topics were discussed. Therefore, I sometimes moved away from a strict inquiry format because once the bishops were alone with me they almost demanded flexibility. They pointed out that this method of sticking to a rigid format constrained and limited naturalness and relevance of questions and answers.

In order to retain some sort of organization I gave the three bishops a context for responding to a question. For example, the first question was in the context of their ordinations to the episcopacy. The remaining questions were contextualized around the opening liturgy in the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1998. Patton (1980) affirms that questions asked in a particular context enable respondents to answer questions that would otherwise be difficult to answer. By providing a specific context in which the bishops were the main players placed them in the role of the expert: they knew something of value to someone else. This put me in the position of a novice. I was the newly ordained priest that had come to learn wisdom from the esteemed bishops. The “experts” were being asked to share their expertise with the novice. There was no doubt during the three interviews that the bishops felt that they were in charge. They considered themselves leaders who had a responsibility to carry out. Yet, they were aware that the people of God in their particular local contexts were the prime concern.

The use of presupposition questions were used in this study. These were questions that presupposed the respondent had something important to say. In the case of the first epiphany, I made the presupposition that the ordination to bishop and Synod for Oceania were important turning-point moments for the three bishops. Patton (1980) argues that

the presupposition format bypasses the initial step by asking for a description rather than asking for an affirmation of the existence of the phenomenon in question. Another presumption that I made was that all three bishops self-identified as indigenous. This allowed them to describe what being indigenous meant without trying to affirm a definition of indigenous that did not fit their particular context. This allowed naturalness that made the bishops more comfortable in what might be otherwise embarrassing questions. Furthermore, it provided a stimulus that asked the bishop to assess the answer to the question directly without making a decision about whether or not something actually occurred.

Each interview was a one-to-one taped interview that lasted for about two hours. Although, it could have been extended, I chose to keep the time agreement. The interviews moved into a story telling mode as the bishops naturally progressed and regressed. They were at ease and spoke candidly about their lives as bishops.

#### Data Analysis

I followed the analysis strategies for biographies described by Creswell (1998). He combines ideas from Denzin and other scholars who have written about interpretive biography. I began by analyzing the transcripts of each bishop to ascertain the true meaning of these stories relying on individual verbatim quotations to provide explanations and searching for multiple meanings. Since the three bishops used many vernacular terms, I had to do further research of these terms and phrases so that I understood what the bishops were trying to communicate. I attempted to cluster their stories around Maori, Fijian, and Chamorro concepts and philosophies but this became

very tedious. It was difficult to follow the story since the translations had to be explained throughout the narrative. I then tried to look for larger structures to explain the meaning, such as social interactions in groups, cultural issues, ideologies, and historical context. Certain themes began to emerge, like formative years, living out his motto, inculturation, local church, relationship with clergy and governments. I then related the bishops' stories to the theories of self-identification and witness to illicit the patterns of leadership that the bishops used in order to keep faithful to his Christian and cultural values. Finally, I presented each bishop's story focusing on context, ordination, coat of arms, pre-ordination formation, post-ordination challenges, and enlightenment.

In writing up the biographies, I found a need to verify the data since I felt that certain statements by the bishop might be controversial. Feeding findings back to informants is venerated, but not always an executed practice in qualitative research. Nevertheless, at this juncture I wanted to verify my report by asking two questions: (a) How do I know that the biography that I have written about the bishop is believable, accurate, and "right"? (b) How is this story credible? I chose two of eight verification procedures to assist me in answering these questions. The two methods are thick description and member check

The quote from Denzin (1989b) best explains what researchers do when they write thick descriptions:

It [thick description] captures and records the voices of lived experiences, or the prose of the world. Thick descriptions contextualize experience. It goes beyond the mere fact and surface appearances. It presents details,

context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick descriptions evoke emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 31)

I tried to do this in the writing of the biographies by recalling the feelings and emotions that were communicated during the interview. I went back to listen to the tapes to take note of the times when there was emotion but also when there were pauses. In the islands long silences by leaders are sometimes interpreted as anger. I also had to give a brief history of the island with special reference to the indigenous and Catholicism, so I could contextualize the experiences of the bishops.

In member check, I solicited the views of the bishops on credibility of the findings and interpretations (see Appendix E). Many scholars consider this approach the most critical technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research (Atkinson, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Ely et al, 1991 ;) This approach involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account. In order to do so I sent drafts to the bishops so that they could provide alternative language, critical observations, or interpretations. Some authors refer to this procedure as corroboration when the report is a life story. Similarly the edited life story is given back to the storyteller to read over to corroborate the report. The bishops would have the opportunity to confirm or support what was said originally during the

interview.

The reasons for asking the bishops to get actively involved in the “member check” are also well documented in the literature on research methods. Atkinson (1998) explains,

When you ask for people’s stories, and they tell you what matters most to them or they tell you the meaning of what has happened to them, it is a “*sacred moment*”[emphasis added] that is shared. In some ways, the experience is akin to what transpires in the confessional relationship. Naming or defining something, giving voice to it in story form, often makes that thing clear for the first time and therefore recognizable and understandable to the teller. Defining our story, giving it spoken meaning, can be knowing it for the first time. (p. 65)

Thus in order to make sure that I told the bishop’s stories in a new, clearer, or more complete way so that they may see their own life a bit differently than before and in ways that they can be pleased with, I returned to New Zealand and Fiji to conduct a second interview. During these interviews, the bishops felt that I correctly represented what they had communicated to me in the last interview. Both Bishop Mariu and Archbishop Mataca did not feel a need to make substantial changes to the biographies. They did however, wish to add parts to the story that they felt would fill in the gaps. Mariu reiterated his real concern about the interpretation of evangelization and inculturation in the Maori context. Mataca was very passionate about his ongoing challenge to create a “local church” in Fiji. There were facts about their family or

experiences within the indigenous community that they wished to be included. We checked the facts like dates, author's names, and family names. Since the bishops insisted that the vernacular terms were central to their stories, we spent a long time making sure that I had the bishop's interpretation of the word or concept. Because of illness, I could not make the trip to Guam. However, I was able to have a telephone interview with Apuron. He wished to emphasize this interpretation of Franciscan obedience and how this affected his leadership style. He was able to make corrections to the narrative and send me the copy through e-mail.

In the second round of interviews, I felt that the bishops had taken ownership of their biographies. It gave them a chance to talk in peace and in greater depth. In articulating and clarifying their interpretation of inculturation, local church, and obedience they were in fact make sense of these important concepts as they attempted to be bishops and indigenous. Therefore, these sets of interviews were meaning-making exercises for the bishops. As they communicated their ideas, I observed clarity of their thoughts. They believed in what they were saying. These issues were challenges but it did not create a sense of despair.

#### Limitations

The first limitation was trying to schedule three meetings in a period of two to three weeks in three different countries. I had to make contact with the bishops themselves. This was always difficult since their personal assistants had to make schedule decisions for them. I found that a telephone call to them personally eventually sorted out the scheduling. Making flight schedules to be in New Zealand, Fiji, and Guam when the

bishops were available was also a problem.

The second limitation was that I was bringing my own views of ecclesiology, clerical experiences, and cultural feelings about bishops into the narrative. I was also right in the center of Boston sex abuse scandals. The supposedly complacent role of bishops in this affair also impinged on my neutrality. The media reports on the American episcopacy lack of integrity and prudence forced me to be attentive to my own emotional response. Therefore, I had to clarify my standpoint that I was not going to allow personal negative stories by others to play any part in the study. I was very clear with the bishops, beginning with the initial letter of introduction, that my biases about the episcopacy from my readings and subjectivity being part of the religious group would be an integral part of this research. I also informed them that their stories were in part, also my story. I was concerned, however, that the bishops might ask me more questions than the other way around. Fortunately, this did not happen for once they started a momentum, it was easy to ask questions of clarification or verification. The issue of confidentiality and integrity was discussed in a preliminary meeting, so that the bishops would have the opportunity to be active participants of the writing of their stories. The integrity of the bishops as leader was the reason for verifying my data with the bishops. I wanted to make sure that the biographies were honest representations of the bishops. I wanted to allow the voices of the bishops to emerge in a coherent manner. But more importantly I wanted their interpretations and mean-making so that I would honor their integrities and their role of bishop.

The third limitation was the limited knowledge of the New Zealand and Guam

contexts. As the researcher, I had to have a clear understanding of historical and contextual materials so that I could see the relationship between the bishop and the larger societal and cultural context. I had a good understanding of the Fiji situation but I needed to do more research on the New Zealand and Guam contexts. Therefore, I had to be specially attentive to what was being communicated and in what context. I also had to withhold judgments so that I could discern meanings in the stories, within the multilayered contexts found in Fiji, New Zealand, and Guam.

#### Ethical Considerations

The main ethical consideration is how I honor the bishops' stories. All of them were willing share their stories with me and with the public. Denzin (1989a) states, our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that we protect those who have shared with us. (p. 83)

Since the biographies are personal reflections of the bishops, I have made sure that they see the final biographies before they are given in the public domain. The bishops have made changes and clarification that reflect who they are as indigenous bishops. It was also important understand the sensitivity of material that they would divulge so the confidentiality form was very carefully worded so that they would be no mistakes committed (see Appendix F) The item about identity was discussed since the population was very limited and it would be very easy to identify the participants.

An ethical dilemma may arise if bishops' statements on Catholic doctrine are

misinterpreted or used out of context. In the narratives, the bishops speak about certain doctrines of the Catholic faith. Critics might use these to valid their claims about the bishop. On the other hand, nationalist groups may use their thoughts about the plight of indigenous as justification for the use of extreme method to attain their goal.

Nevertheless, in sharing their stories they spoke about the Catholic call to respect the human dignity of the person, for it is here that a person finds one's true identity as indigenous and Catholic.

## CHAPTER IV

### BISHOP MARIU MAX TAKUIRA S.M.

This chapter is the interpretative biography of Auxiliary Bishop Mariu Max Takuira. He was appointed the first Roman Catholic Maori bishop of New Zealand. The life story begins with a major epiphany in the life of a 35-year-old Maori Marist priest. The pivotal event was his unexpected appointment and ordination to the episcopacy. The biography then moves backward in history to the formative years, highlighting cultural and religious value systems that influenced Mariu's decision to accept the status of Maori bishop. The self-narrative then moves forward from the episcopal ordination to the present time, drawing attention to how Bishop Max has experienced his culture and fostered his self-identity within the indigenous and Catholic milieus in New Zealand.

#### Story Context

New Zealand is located between 34 and 46 degrees of latitude south and 174 degrees east of the meridian in the Southern Pacific Ocean. The country comprises two main islands, the North Island and South Island. The total area of the two main islands is 268,680 sq km.

Roughly three quarters of New Zealand's 3.9 million people live on the North Island (CIA-The World Factbook, 2002). The main ethnic group is of European descent (74.5%), while the Maori or indigenous people comprise only 14%. The other Europeans make up 4.6%. The rest of the population includes Pacific Islanders (3.8%), and Asian (7.4%). The Roman Catholics constitute 15% of the total population or 473,112 while the other Protestant Christians make up 52 %. The Maori Roman Catholic population is

about 66,235 or 14 % of the total Catholic population (Statistics from the New Zealand Official Yearbook 2000).

In 1642, a Dutch expedition led by Abel Tasman made the first European contact with the Maori peoples. Tasman named his discovery Staten Land, believing that it might be part of the *Staten Landt* discovered by Le Maire and Schouten off the southeast coast of South America in 1616. However, on his world map of 1645-46, another Dutchman, Joannes Blaeu, renamed it *Zeelandia Nova*, *Nieuw Zeeland*, perhaps to match New Holland, as Australia was then known. One hundred years would pass by before the next Europeans arrived. In 1769 James Cook, a British explorer, and Jean François Marie de Surville, commander of a French trading ship, arrive coincidentally in New Zealand at the same time (Davidson, 1996 p. viii). The interaction between the Maoris and the *pakeha*, or foreigners was burdened with violence and wars. This continued with the arrival, in the late 1790's, of whalers, traders, and missionaries. The subsequent influx of European settlers led to the turbulent period of the New Zealand Wars, also known as the Land Wars, which lasted over twenty years.

The first foreign missionaries to arrive in New Zealand belonged to the Church Missionary Society (CMS). These were Protestants who came mainly from England. The French Roman Catholic missionaries belonging to the Society of Mary, the Marists, arrived after New Zealand was included in the newly created Vicariate Apostolic of Western Oceania in 1835. In the following year its first vicar Apostolic, Monsignor Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier, began his journey to New Zealand with two other Marists, Father Cathrin Servant and Brother Michel. They arrived at Totara Point in Hokianga on

January 10, 1838. This is normally viewed as the beginning of the Catholic mission in New Zealand. These three missionaries set about learning both English and Maori. The relationship between the Protestant groups and the Marists was fraught with conflicts. Weir (1989), writing on the celebration of the centenary of the beginning of the New Zealand Marist province writes: The Anglicans and the Wesleyans both regarded these Catholic priests as interlopers. Whereas the two churches had agreed to respect each other's mission's catchments, the Catholic priests declined to recognize such boundaries.

Rumors of French plans for the colonization of the South Island contributed to the hastening of British action for annexation, and then colonization of New Zealand. Representatives of the British Crown and Maori chiefs signed a Treaty with the British on 6th February 1840, known as the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty was to guarantee the Maoris full possession of their land in exchange for their recognition of British sovereignty. Pompallier was present at the signing and asked that a phrase guaranteeing religious tolerance (including Maori beliefs and customs) should be inserted. Pompallier, in writing to Colin (Marist founder and superior in France), expressed support of the Treat but expressed his neutrality publicly.

In recent years, the Maori people have highlighted the fact that justice has not been done and that the partnership, signified by the two languages at Treaty of Waitangi, has not been honored. Confiscated or appropriated land continues to be a cause of conflict in parts of the country. There has been frustration at the lack of progress. It has caused pain and suffering for the Maori people. However, the *whenua tangata* or indigenous peoples of New Zealand still have a very rich culture that they can trace back

to their ancestors who settled in *Aotearoa*, ‘the land of the long white cloud’ sometime between 950 and 1130 AD.

Within this cultural, historical, and religious contexts Father Max Mariu Takuirā was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton. The episcopal ordination was a major epiphany not only for Mariu, but also for the Maori people and the Roman Catholics in New Zealand. Through the use of both Maori ancestral rituals and sacred symbols and Roman episcopal ordination rites, Mariu transformed the fundamental meaning structure of what it was to be Maori Catholic bishop in the New Zealand context. It was epiphanic for the *tangata whenua* of Aotearoa, since it authenticated in a special way that the Spirit of Christ is present in the indigenous cultures. To celebrate this sacred occasion, the *tangata whanau* were involved in the ordination liturgy. The Maori language and chants were used extensively, the *marae* protocol was strictly observed, and the Maori symbols were incorporated into the episcopal insignia.

#### Episcopal Ordination

On the Feast of St. Joseph, 19 March, 1988, nearly three thousand people from the four canoes and four winds of Aotearoa began assembling on the *Papa O Te Aroha marae* or sacred open meeting area named “built on aroha, or love.” People of all races and religions had come to the small town of Tokoroa for the episcopal ordination Mass of Father Mariu Max Takuirā. After 150 years of Catholicism in New Zealand, church history was about to be made. A Maori priest was to be ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton.

As the 13 bishops and about 50 concelebrating priests processed onto the *marae*,

the sound of traditional *karanga*, or Maori welcoming chant, filled the sacred space. The bishops moved up onto the stage that acted as the sanctuary. The bishop-elect and his *whānau*, or extended family, proceeded to slowly walk towards the entrance of the *whare*, or meeting house. As they approached the sacred grounds, they were greeted with a traditional welcoming gesture. The bishop-elect's *whānau* stood silently as the Maori choir led the congregation in chants remembering and paying tribute to the dead, the ancestors, and the saints.

After the gospel was proclaimed, Pa Henare, one of the Maori priests, then intoned the Maori greeting: "*Haere mai, Haere mai, Welcome Welcome.*" He then turned to the Maori and Marist *whānau* to bring their son and brother forward to the sanctuary. The bishop elect walked between his parents, Maihi and Mary Mariu, surrounded by his *whānau* from the Nagati Tuwharetoa tribe in central North Island. Mariu was to give his tribe another reason to celebrate. Like Kerehi, his great grandfather who became the first Catholic in his tribe in the late 1840s, Mariu was to become was the first Maori Catholic bishop.

After the appointment letter from the Pope was read in English, Bishop Gaines of the Diocese of Hamilton asked the people if Father Mariu should be ordained as bishop. At this, the *whānau* moved slowly to the steps of the sanctuary. The people from Whanganui performed what they call *Te Tupoki-o-Rangi*, a very ancient sacred ritual for Mariu, because of his connections to their tribe. This was a sign of support, endorsement, and encouragement as the *whānau* sent forth the son of Tuwharetoa to accept the challenge and responsibility of being the first Maori Catholic bishop.

As a sign of welcome, Bishop Gaines descended the steps to *hongi* the bishop-elect and his parents. The *hongi*, or traditional welcoming protocol, occurs when two people press noses. Maoris believe that when two people *hongi*, each person is sharing the breath of life, or the *iwi*, of the other person. This was a signal that Mariu would now symbolically leave his family to take up his new role as bishop. This was poignantly accentuated when Mary Marui emotionally embraced her son before he separated from the *whānau* to join his brother priests and bishops on the elevated dais. With tears streaming down her cheeks, the mother and son clutched each other. Mary slowly withdrew to the congregation as Marui ascended the steps to accept the responsibility of bishop.

During the actual Ordination Rite, the *whanau* played important roles. The distinct Maori chanting continued throughout the liturgy. Interweaving the Maori symbols and Roman rite was evident in the presenting of the episcopal symbols to the new Maori bishop. Women from his *whanau* unfolded a mat with classic patterns before the ordination rites. On this mat the bishop elect prostrated himself as the people chanted the Maori translation of the Litany of Saints. It was on this mat that he would be actually ordained.

His uncle then came up the sanctuary and presented the crozier or pastoral staff to the newly ordained bishop. The crozier was unique because it was made of wood instead of metal and was carved with intricate Maori designs. A cousin of Mariu was commissioned by his tribe to carve the crozier out of root of the *whetawhetara tree*. Since it was one of the strongest native trees it had great significance to him. He named it *tu*

*maru*, which means protector. Like a tree, Maui would *te maru* his people by providing them shade, protection, and shelter.

His sister brought his mitre to the sanctuary. The miter had elaborate designs on the borders depicting distinct features of his Tuwharetoa tribe. The episcopal ring carved from New Zealand's famous *pounamau* or New Zealand green stone was then presented to him. It was a gift from his alma mater, Hato Paora Maori Boys who formed a hundred male chorus regaled "*te pihop hou*," "the new bishop" as he placed the ring on his finger. This chant was a sign of affirmation that with all the episcopal symbols one of their former students and teachers was taking up the challenge of the new ministry as Maori bishop. Lastly, his parents draped a *korowai*, a Maori cloak, made from flax fibre and feathers, over his shoulder. The cloak used on special occasions, for special guests, is sign of respect, dignity, and honor.

Before the final blessing, the new Maori bishop of Aotearoa delivered his *mihi*, his inaugural speech, as bishop. He spoke about his shock at the sudden appointment. He estimated that it all happened in the span of a month. He received a call from the Papal Nuncio in January who informed him that the Pope thought he would make a good bishop. He had to give an immediate reply and ten days later the news was announced that Pa Marui Max Takuira was to be the new Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton. It was a surprise for him, since he never thought that he would even be considered a candidate. He explains,

I was told that the Holy Father has considered the names and thinks I would be a good candidate to be bishop. I asked, "How soon does he need

a reply”? The bishop said, “immediately.” So I wasn’t sure what was happening. It came as a shock, a surprise however way you want to put it. So I flew back from Wellington to Hawke's Bay that evening. I had to keep my mouth shut and try to act as normal as possible. I would be honest with you, I never thought that I would be considered, for three reasons: one, I was religious, secondly, I was only seven or eight years ordained, and, thirdly, they would have known about the heart condition. For these three reasons, I felt I was safe from being appointed bishop.

He continued his inaugural speech by attesting that it was a day of exaltation, a day of joy, a day of thanksgiving. He called on the “peoples of the four winds” to give thanks. He reflected that “many had dreamed, many had worked and many had petitioned and some even went to Rome requesting a Maori bishop.” The bishop finished in a laugh that has become a distinguishing trait of Bishop Mariu. He ended his *mihi* recalling the words of St Paul to the Ephesians: “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers.” Bishop Mariu’s greatest gifts were his Maori culture and Catholic faith. The other gifts were his relative youth and naturally relaxed disposition. In addition he had a big boyish smile and distinctive Maori laugh, loud and from the heart. These gifts Bishop Mariu brought to his episcopacy were a result of his formation in the *marae*, in Catholic education system, in Marist seminary and in the Maori missions.

#### Formative Years

Bishop Mariu Max Takuira was born 12, August, 1952 in Taumarunui at a time

when the *marae* system was experiencing dramatic changes due to World War II. He is the fourth in a family of nine born to Maihi and Mary Mariu. The *marae* is central to the life of Mariu and he has fond recollections of his very early years on the *marae*. He reflects,

I was lucky; I was brought up in the *marae* situation. So as children we were always around our *marae*. A *marae* is a place where I have all our cultural events: our funerals, our weddings, our birthdays, our parties, sometimes our sports, and our fights. It is where our ancestral meeting houses that I tell the story of our tribe with its carvings, its decorations, its history, its characters, and its people. And the meeting house is described in terms of the body of a person. So the meeting house has a personality of its own, it's got a name that means something. A lot of meeting house is named after ancestors. They may be named after the canoes. I was brought up with that. I was always part of that. So hearing all that and living a lot of that formed me in the Maori way of life.

Accordingly, young Marui was brought up with very close connections to his *marae* and the activities that took place within its precincts. Being a curious child, he would get nosy and sit around listening carefully to the elders, especially asking questions of his grandmother, who sometimes found it annoying. It was in this family setting that he began to acquire a clear sense of his identity as Maori and Catholic. He says that he was blessed because he was "always around old people who lived their Maori life to the full. They made no excuses for it and they didn't have to, no one

expected it either.” In this milieu, Mariu was able to learn the language and cultural values. This was a great achievement and he is thankful for this parent's boldness and attachment to the Maori ways. They went against the norm at the time. He states,

There has been a gap with our language, in the sense that for a long time the New Zealand education system didn't recognize our language as being important. So for my parent's generation they were constantly taught that it was bad to speak Maori. They were even Maoris who were convinced that it was silly to teach their children Maori because they needed to understand English on in the world. Therefore they spoke English and they would not speak Maori to their children.

Young Marui received his basic religious formation in the *marae* system. His great aunts and uncles, who had a deep Catholic faith, passed it on to the young Marui by teaching him the prayers. He observed that for the elders, there seemed to be no conflict between their Catholic faith and living and practicing everything that their Maori culture had taught them. He recalls that “his grandparent's generation had catechetical schools which they participated fully so they were considered ‘educated Catholic Maoris.’ They not only knew their faith but could talk about their faith in the same way they could talk about other topics in Maoridom.”

Bishop Mariu gained knowledge of Maori respect and protocol on the *marae*. He explains one such cultural practice on the *marae* and how it involved women.

As a kid I would closely observe how the *karanga*, or ceremonial welcome, would take place. I would follow the whole interaction between

the two groups of women, the home women, and guest women. The home women would begin the welcoming and identify the guests with the *karanga*. The guests, in turn, would respond with a *karanga*. This was to set the tone for the gathering and everything else that went on in the *marae*. So the men would know which particular tribe was coming on to the *marae* but also their intention. So there was something like a meeting of memories as well, the meeting of entities. In days gone by, the interaction could last anything between 20 and 40 minutes. And then visitors would go and take their seats and then the men would give their *mihī*, the formal speeches of welcome. Once that was over only then would there be the *hongi*, or rubbing of noses. Sadly this formal process of welcoming to the *marae* is being lost, for in some cases only one male can do it properly. The art of speech making which was an integral part of the *marae* system is disappearing as a result of World War II, urbanization, and Western education.

Mariu began his formal Western education when he attended St. Joseph's Primary School in Little Waihi in 1961. He remembers that he did not learn much about his Maori culture. He recalls, "We sang our Maori songs, did our *haka* and challenged everyone in sports, the Maori way." However, young Mariu would be impacted by events happening in another part of the world. At that time, Vatican II was taking place in Rome and brought about changes that greatly affected his family, which in turn had an impact on him as a young Maori Catholic. In particular, the Vatican II document, *Sacrosanctum*

*Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, negatively affected him and his Maori people. This document mandated that “in Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue.” This was cause for great celebration in most countries for now ordinary Catholics did not have to pray in Latin, a language that was considered “dead” and elitist. The reaction was different in New Zealand. The mother tongue for all New Zealanders was deemed English. Sadly this meant that in New Zealand the Mass would now use English. This would be the demise of the Maori prayers and active involvement of the lay people in keeping the Catholic culture and faith alive. Mariu recalled that as “a child back home, any European priest who came to celebrate Mass had to learn Maori or at least be able to read it because the Mass was in Maori.” The foreign priests got rid of the anything Maori in the Mass arguing, “Maoris could speak and understand English anyway.” But in getting rid of Latin they also unconsciously were ostracizing many of Maoris as well. Mariu argues that in some parishes the purging of the Maori language in liturgical contexts was not unconscious, it was deliberate. So in the 1970s, the ordinary person’s notion of Maori Mass was for a group of people to sing a Maori hymn in the beginning and at the end with everything else in English. Mariu laments at the loss of the culture and language:

In some parts of New Zealand, it was interpreted that English was the vernacular, no other language. Furthermore, how this change to the vernacular was introduced did a lot of damage to many communities.

There was no consideration for the Maori language and no explanation as to why the changes had been made. In some communities priests were told

they were not allowed to say Maori Mass or Mass in Maori. Some people argued that the new Mass was still being translated, but how they did it and how they introduced the new Mass superceded Maori.

According to Mariu the most devastating effect of the introduction of the English language into the Mass was the lost of Maori lay leadership in the church. It did damage to the whole system of the persons who led the prayers; the Maori catechist. Prior to Vatican II, local Maori leaders and catechists actively participated in the prayers because the early missionaries had translated them into the Maori language. Mariu bemoans the loss of the natural abilities of spiritual leadership of these catechists by stating that, “the organization and importance of local Maori prayer leaders disappeared and so prayers in the mother tongue were not handed on to the next generation.” He argues,

So the role of catechist gradually became nothing. So on our *marae* where we used to have people lead the prayers, now we had to wait for “Father” to arrive. That natural ability to lead was superceded by the priest. The development and ongoing education of the people was stalled. We lost that natural ability to handle that Maori aspect of our faith. What it really means to pray and lead in a Maori way.

After primary school, Mariu moved away from home to attend Hato Paora Maori Boys’ College in Fielding. He describes how the old school chapel enabled him to appreciate the use of Maori images in a sacred Catholic space:

In my old school, the chapel was fully carved of wood with different traditional Maori designs. For me this is an expression of inculturation.

But how would Rome see that. I know how some people here react to it. Some think the carvings are evil images in the Catholic chapel. I reply, why what's wrong with those images? What's wrong? That's us! You might have photographs of your great grand parents; we have carved images of our great grand parents. Some non-Maoris quote Scripture where refers to the law against worshipping craven images. We are not saying that they're Gods. They represent our ancestors.

Because of experiences like this, Mariu began to ask questions about his Catholic faith and his Maori culture. In the religious education class he learned about the different titles given to Jesus of Nazareth: Christ, the Risen Christ, the Redeemer, Christ the Son of God. He started thinking that "it would be great for someone to explain Christ in terms of Maori culture, Maori traditions, and Maori history." These thoughts motivated him to pursue a religious vocation.

When Mariu was a seminarian at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Greenmeadows, he continued to ponder on questions of self-identity, inculturation in relation to his priestly vocation. The study of philosophy, psychology, and theology impelled Mariu to make comparisons between his Maori culture and Catholicism. This prompted self-reflection questions: "Why am I in the seminary? Why do I want to be a priest? Why do I want to be a religious in the Society of Mary? What is all this Christian Catholic theology got to do with me being a Maori?" He does not know if this questioning of priestly and Maori identity is a common experience with the other Catholic Maori priests. Some did not have to go through this experience. But it is his hope that "every Maori

priest, at some stage, should confront the question of priesthood and Maoridom, not so much to validate their priesthood but to ask themselves questions about being Maori. How their priesthood develops because they are Maori, and how their Maori identity can be enriched by their priesthood.”

### Pastoral Years

Mariu was ordained to the priesthood on 30 April, 1977. For the next ten years Pa (Father) Marui worked as a priest in the Society of Mary (s.m.) commonly referred to as Marists. Pa Mariu worked with the Maori mission. He lived in a community of four priests in Taradale, Hawkes Bay. He recalls “these small Maori community settlements were very compact and had a closeness in the members of the community.” Yet he laments that over the years there has been a gradual reduction of priests who work with the Maori apostolate. He argues this is a result of the “Irish model of church.” He explains that this latter model of church emphasizes the parish priest as the most important figure. He adds that the “call of every Irish priest was to be a parish priest.” Mariu admits that making this statement has caused people to label him racist. But he argues that the parish priest became more important than the bishop. He continues and contends that it became common for the Irish priests to think of the parish as their kingdom, so instead of the prayers became “my kingdom come not your kingdom come.” With the gradual change to this model, the Maori were compelled into a parish structure where being Catholic and Maori were considered separate entities. One left his or her Maori culture at the door of the parish church. Mariu contends that the Maori apostolate was slowly incorporated into that type of parish and as a people we “lost the natural

ability to handle the Maori aspect of our faith and what that really means.” In recent years, the special concern for the Maori apostolate has waned because of the gradual reduction of the number of priests. Priests who worked with the Maori apostolate are being taken out and placed in parishes or schools.

Pa Mariu then moved back to his alma mater, Hato Paora Maori Boy’s college in Fielding. Here he performed hostel duties and teach religion. While teaching religion in the classroom, Pa Mariu was challenged by students to explain what really happens to the bread and wine during Eucharist Liturgy. His response then and now is that the “Eucharist is essentially a mystery and it goes back to faith.” He maintains that there needs to be further reflection on how the Eucharistic liturgy can be inculturated in the Maori context. For him the Eucharistic liturgies that were most moving included an aspect of the Maori culture. He cites an example: “At the school liturgies, at the acclamation when the priest holds up the consecrated bread and wine, a hundred and twenty students would do the *haka*, or dance.” To understand how a war dance is incorporated into Catholic mass one must be aware that:

Like many other Maori words there are levels of meanings wrapped up within the words themselves. The word *haka* is made up of two parts: *ha* meaning breath and *ka* meaning to ignite or to energize. *Ha-ka* can mean, “to ignite the breath”. The *haka* is simply a way to ignite the breath, energize the body and inspire the spirit. We can see that the root meaning of the word *haka* is associated with the breath in a similar way the word *spirit* derives from the Latin word *spiritus* meaning breath or air. This

leads to such words as inspiration or expiration.

In his priestly ministry as teacher and pastor, Mariu has never found any contradiction between being a Catholic and a Maori. He was very clear about this and strongly reacts to insinuations that you cannot be both. He states,

And for people to try and tell me that I've got to be one or both, sorry do not ask me to do that because I can't... because the moment I decide that being Maori is more important than I am Catholic, I am actually denying who I am. People ask me, "How do you justify being priest and Christian and still take part in this Maori ritual?" Quite easy. There is nothing I do in the Maori ritual that contradicts what Christ taught. After all if Christ came as a Jew and having been a Jew he didn't always agree with what the Jews did or said. And so, why do you worry about me being a priest and being Maori?

#### Appointment and Coat of Arms

Pa Mariu was working on the Maori missions in the backblocks of Pakipaki, Hawkes Bay, when he received the call to travel to Wellington to see the Papal Nuncio. His religious superior asked him several questions and confirmed that the Nuncio had also contacted him. Mariu explained how "his mind suddenly went zoom like a computer." He turned to his superior asking, "Wouldn't this have anything to do with the Maori bishop?" The superior replied that he could not confirm his suspicion and that he needed to fly down to Wellington the next day to find an answer to his question. In Wellington, he was told that the Pope thought that he might make a good bishop. The

Nuncio did not inform him of the reasons; but in retrospect, he has come to believe that he was a candidate for the episcopacy because he was Maori. He insists,

You know if I were not a Maori, I would not be a bishop. I would not have been considered for a bishop if I were not a Maori. And some said: “Why wouldn’t you have been considered a bishop?” I haven’t got a Roman degree; I didn’t do any of my training in Rome; I wasn’t a first-rate theological scholar; I haven’t done any post graduate studies; and I am a religious. Furthermore, I have a history of heart problems. And I said, “I can guarantee you, if I was not a Maori, I would not have been a bishop.”

Although the episcopal appointment came as a surprise to Pa Marui, the announcement of the appointment of a Maori bishop did not shock the Catholic Maori community. They had been working for seven years on the possibility of having a Maori bishop. In 1985 a delegation went to Rome to ask the Pope if the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa could have an indigenous bishop. Dan Whata, the Chairman of *Te Runanga O Te Hahi ki Aotearoa* explained that their visit stemmed from the strong feelings of Maori Catholics about a Maori bishop. Whata explains,

Maori people must have a Maori bishop if we are to achieve Maori Catholic solidarity. There must be changes within the present Catholic structure so that the Maori and *Pakeha* [New Zealander of Caucasian descent] can come together rather than oppose each other in terms of Maori theology, Maori liturgy, and the incorporation of Maori symbols and rituals. But all these [changes] hinges on our ability to achieve

solidarity.

An article by Pierre Lyndon in a Maori newspaper, *Tu Tangata*, mused that “it was never envisaged that a party of fifteen *whanaunga*, or relatives, would go to Rome with an important *kaupapa*, or concept, from the Maori people: that of a separate Maori bishop for *tangata whenua*.” This trip was noteworthy because in classic Maori style, the delegation requested that an Aotearoa Maori Catholic Diocese be declared, something that had never been done before by any ethnic group. The Canon lawyers could not find a precedent for this request. Whata said that it was history in the making. The Maoris were asking the Pope to interpret the phrase “some other similar quality” in Canon 372 §2 to mean that ethnicity was a legitimate “quality” to justify the establishment of a particular Church for the Maoris. The Maori Catholics were asking for a “personal bishop” for an ethnic group.

When the Pope visited New Zealand in 1986, the Maoris were hoping then that he would make an announcement of the first Maori bishop. Mariu recalls that “there was a joke going around at that time that the Maoris had asked for a Maori bishop and they received a gold plated icon, Our Lady of Czestochowa, commonly referred to as the black Madonna of Poland.” In retrospect, Mariu reflects on how Mary may have had something to contribute to a Marist priest becoming the first Maori bishop:

So Our Lady for us as a people is vitally important. She is still very important in our history, especially in the Maori side of the Catholic Church. So maybe, it was her strategy. In a way, he [Pope John Paul II] was preparing us for the very real possibility of a Maori bishop.

People were mentally and spiritually prepared for the papal announcement of a Maori bishop, so the actual preparation for the ordination moved very fast. Even Bishop Gaines, who was the Ordinary of the Diocese of Hamilton, concurred with this rapid progress by insisting that “his new auxiliary bishop get ordained and be in place as quickly as possible.”

One of the main hurdles in the ordination planning process was the involvement of the elders of Mariu’s tribe. The normal procedure in the Catholic church for any ordination was to have a committee appointed by the bishop. They were either priests or curial personnel who knew the rubrics of the ordination Mass. This committee would do the planning and inform the bishop-elect and his family. This *modus operandi* caused some concern for Mariu because he did not consider his ordination as solely a Catholic event; it was also a celebration of Maori spirituality and culture. Consequently Mariu wanted his uncle, Hepi Te Heuheu, be consulted and his decisions valued in the different stages of the planning for the ordination. It was Maori protocol to defer to Hepi since he was paramount chief of the tribe. This entitled him to initiate the networking amongst various Maori *iwi*, or tribes. Bishop Mariu recalls that Bishop Gaines was surprised when they traveled to his hometown to discuss the venue for the ordination. It became evident that uncle Hepi was to be included before, during, and after the episcopal ordination. Mariu states,

Because it was to be a Maori occasion, there was no way we could not involve him [Hepi]. We had to involve him. In fact if it were not for him, a lot of things would not have been pulled together for my ordination.

Because of our connection with the other tribes, he could put out the word to the *iwis*, or tribes, to pull things together for the actual ceremony.

One of the first things Mariu had to do after the appointment was to choose his episcopal coat-of- arms. He wanted something that expressed his cultural history and relationship to the Christian tradition. This was possible since he was to be an auxiliary bishop. As an auxiliary bishop Mariu could choose his own personal symbols for his coat of arms. They did not have to have any identification with the Diocese of Hamilton as such. Bishop Mariu chose to omit the traditional shield and presented his seal more as an illustration depicting his roots in Maoridom and his Christian faith. The coat of arms is very unusual, because it includes the symbols of the canopy of *koru* fronds, four shoots of the fern interfaced with the symbol of a cross. In the background loom symbols of mountains and running water. In the foreground there are four budding *koru* fronds signifying the peoples from the four winds. The *koru* is scroll shape and is linked to the New Zealand fern plant, technically called the bracken fern, *Pteridium aquilinum*. The shoot of the fern has a curled-over tip, which unfurls and becomes a fern leaf. Although, the Maoris have given various interpretations, most agree that the *koru* represents the unfolding of new life beginning, growth, renewal, harmony, and peace. The curved or spiral shape has become an essential part of all Maori designs, even in their carving and tattoo work. In the early days the root became the staple diet of the Maori, who called the fern *rauaruhe*. It has become a New Zealand symbol, which people normally refer to as the “silver fern.” In the background of the coat of arms, there are symbolic outlines of mountains and ripples of water. Bishop Mariu explains why these symbols are important

to him and his people:

It is about creation. We are a people who live according to nature. Like most Polynesian people, we are close to nature because we are totally dependent on nature. So for me to talk about *truth*, as if it is a living being, is not unusual. This is how Maoridom identifies itself. So I refer to *my* mountains, *my* lakes. Different tribes identify themselves by referring to their lakes, their mountains, and their birds. If you go to another tribe, the hosts will welcome you by chanting about their mountains, their rivers, and their lakes because that it is their identity; it is who they are as a people. So the sacredness of man is through creation [mountains and rivers] and sharing in that one divine spark. For Maoris, when we gave names, it was with good reason. It was important to know the name of my mountain, so that whenever I am speaking publicly as a Maori people will be able to link me to my *iwi*. People identify me with the name of mountains.

The symbol of the cross, in the midst of the canopy of *kuro* ferns symbolizes Christianity and in particular the death of Christ. Mariu's motto is: "*Ko te whakapono me te matauranga*" which translates into English as "faith and knowledge." Mariu adopted it from his old convent school at Little Waihi. He explains,

It sums up the two biggest needs in the church amongst the Maoris today. The deepening of faith that is built upon a true knowledge of what their faith teaches. One of the worst things is ignorance. And when you are ignorant of faith and what

the church teaches, you do not really have faith. The two need to go together, faith and knowledge.

#### Living out His Motto

Bishop Mariu began his episcopacy with standards informed by his Maori culture and his Catholic faith. He had the knowledge of the Maori way of life but he also was fully aware of the teaching and procedures of the Catholic Church. He differentiates his role in the church and the *marae*. He keeps a balance between the aspirations and problems of his people and the need for solid Catholic ecclesiology. He insists on knowledge of the Eucharist and inculturation. He searches for commonalities between Catholicism and Maoridom. The motivation that propels Mariu is his desire for a “Church that spiritually sustains his people as Catholic and as Maori.”

In the rest of this chapter, I narrate how Bishop Mariu has attempted to set his own standards of how a Maori bishop should function in New Zealand. The standards have been influenced greatly the Catholic principle of “both-and” instead of “either-or.” He has endeavored to communicate in speech and action that being Maori and Catholic are complementary rather than incongruent.

#### *Maori Catholic Bishop of Aotearoa*

Bishop Mariu is the Auxiliary Bishop of Diocese of Hamilton who is a Maori. It only has juridical authority only in this diocese. The Diocese of Hamilton covers a defined geographical area of 949, 700 sq km with a Catholic population of about 65,355 persons. This episcopal jurisdiction was subtly communicated to the Maori people on ordination day, with the selection of a Tokoroa *marae* as the venue for the episcopal

ordination. This *marae* was selected ahead of Mariu's home *marae* in his own tribal region. The reasons for decision were that it was the big *marae* that could hold a big crowd but it was also built by the Tokoroa Catholic Maori community. But more importantly, the *marae* was situated in the Diocese of Hamilton. Mariu concurs with Bishop Garnes that it was important that episcopal ordination occurred in a neutral *marae* for he is not just a bishop of one particular tribe; he was bishop of a diocese. The choice of a neutral location of the ordination also symbolized the fact that as the first Maori Bishop he had one outreach to all Maori tribes. Up until this time, there were major differences among the Maori as to approaches to their Catholic faith. There was no common Maori prayer book. The Auckland diocese had the "black book" while the Wellington diocese has the "red book." This was a result of the different types of evangelization conducted by the Marists and the Mill Hill fathers. This was also due to the different dialects in the Northern parts and the rest of the country:

Part of my appointment was the hope that it would help to bring our Maori Catholic traditions closer together. In many ways it has, but at the same time there will always be a debate of what unity really means. Does unity mean that we have to do everything the same? The Church does not teach that, even in an ethnic group, cultural differences are there. The northern people have a different way of doing a *tangi* or funeral, than how we do down here. From the point of view of inculturation, the Church needs to understand and accept those differences.

Despite the fact that he is only juridically the Bishop of Hamilton, the Maoris still

refer to him as their “personal bishop,” the Maori Catholic Bishop of Aotearoa. The designation Bishop of Aotearoa is not new in New Zealand. Within the Anglican community there is the Bishop of Aotearoa who has jurisdiction for pastoral care of the Maori Anglicans. The latter have different provinces that are independent of Canterbury so they can set up their own ecclesial system. Mariu says, “there are those among the Catholic Maori, who would love to see the equivalent to the Catholic side as well.” But Mariu has explained to the people that the Anglicans have a slightly different ecclesiology to Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic position on apostolic succession requires that bishops still come under Roman Pontiff. Bishop Mariu outlines other practical problems if he tries to create Maori Catholic Diocese. He states,

How do you set up a Maori diocese that covers the other five dioceses in New Zealand? According to Canon Law, each Diocese is independent of the other dioceses. Therefore what they do in Diocese of Wellington may be done differently in Diocese of Hamilton. They [the bishops] have responsibility within their own diocese. When you have a limited number of [Maori] clergy, how can I set up the [Maori] diocese? In answer to this last question, they say that every Maori priest will be under your jurisdiction. I explain that they may choose not to be, in fact, some of them probably won't want me at their bishop. Then we have to set up an administration and a funding system. How do we finance it all? We have set up ecclesial bodies to administer all the funds. Under the present system, I have to work with the New Zealand Bishops' Conference since

this is our guiding body. Everything to do with the Maori apostolate has to go through this episcopal body.

All the same, Mariu has been able to be the “Maori Bishop” by working within the guidelines of the New Zealand Bishop’s Conference. There is an understanding from the other bishops that he can move in and out of the other five dioceses to visit the Maori people. But as a matter of ecclesiastical etiquette, Mariu makes sure that when he does move into their dioceses he informs them of what he is doing with the Maoris from that particular diocese. He also tries to involve the resident bishop so that he is knows what is going on and he can have an input into the Maori apostolate. As he states below, he is very clear on his role as bishop as articulated in Canon Law:

I am the auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Hamilton, officially that is my position. There is an understanding with the bishops of the other [five] dioceses; they are happy for me to be part of their diocese, to help with the Maori apostolate in their dioceses but that is on an unofficial level. Simply because Canon Law as such does not allow personal bishops except in special circumstances like the other rites that are total union with Rome, like the Chaldean rites.

The strict canonical interpretation has resulted in some Maori people asking a very fundamental cultural question to Marui: Are you a full bishop? and have you got *mana*, or authority, in your right? Bishop Mariu’s answer has always been, “Yes I am, I was ordained a bishop, so I am bishop.”

He feels that he needs to make it clear to his Maori people that it is they who are

telling him he has to have a separate Maori diocese. But these same people have not asked him whether he wants Maori diocese or not. He believes that the first step in seriously thinking about a Maori Catholic Bishop of Aotearoa is for people to get a clearer understanding of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. This means that they need to understand how the church functions, the whole methodology and how the chain of authority comes from the Pope right through to the bishops. He strongly feels that the Catholic claim that bishops get their authority through “apostolic succession” is important to the Church. In short, Catholics cannot afford to try and bypass this faith claim, “otherwise we end up denying who we say we are.” Mariu feels that all should acknowledge the issue of “unity in diversity” in Catholic ecclesiology. He states,

Unity is the cultural cloak over the whole humanity. I actually believe that diversity can lead to unity. If the Church is honest *with* itself and honest *to* itself, it must admit that it has always had room for diversity. And the documents like *Ecclesia in Oceania* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* talk about that diversity that is part of the human culture. We would be a deprived church if we did not have that diversity, but we still have a common goal, which is [the] salvation through Jesus Christ.

*Pa and Pihope*

An aspect of identification that Bishop Mariu had to sort out was what form of address he would encourage the Maoris to use. In an interview with a Catholic newspaper on the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his episcopal ordination, he explained why he preferred to be called Pa (Father) instead of *Pihope* (Bishop) by his own people. For him the

Maorification of Bishop that is *Pihope* sounded “like a chicken hopping around on one leg. If you break down the word, *pi-hope*, *pi* means a young chicken, *hope* sound like hopping around the place, it is true that I hop around the place.”

Mariu had to quickly elucidate for his people that his authority did not necessarily extend into a traditional Maori setting. On the *marae* he feels that although he is a leader in the church, he still is a youth compared to the *kaumatua* or the elders. For this reason when he is with the elders in special traditional meetings, he will not speak because it is disrespectful to speak while his father and uncles are still alive. He describes how he tries to keep these two roles separate: I find it awkward in other places I go if they automatically expect me to stand up and utter words of wisdom. If I can get out of it, I do. I shouldn't be expected to speak simply because I'm a bishop, unless it's a matter of my special duties as a bishop.” As soon as he puts his foot on a *marae*, he maintains that he is not a bishop. “I'm a Maori; my bishop's rank is secondary to me as a Maori.” This applies outside the *marae*. If he goes to some Church event and is asked, “Can you give a welcome, he responds, “No if that is why you asked me, it's for the wrong reason. What you should do is ask the local *kaumatua* (elders) to give the welcome.”

Mariu stresses that he sticks to this distinction even when he is administering the sacraments. If he is at the Cathedral in Hamilton for the sacrament of Confirmation and asked to do a *mihi*, or welcome speech first, he defers to the *kaumatua*. He is able to interchange his roles as *Pa* and *Pihope* because for the first years of his episcopal ministry, he found that he was accompanied and nurtured by a small group of Maoris. The Maori call this value of nurturing *awhi*. Bishop Mariu elucidates this tradition:

*Awhi* is similar to the experience of a kid who runs up to you and you throw your arms around and give a hug. This is an instance of *awhi*- so you *awhi* them, you help them; you make sure that they are not lonely; they are not to be by themselves. It is not just a physical action, it is whole psyche, social, physical embracing of someone to help you. These Maori Catholics viewed this embrace as part of the tradition. It was their way too of protecting me, so I never ended up in an awkward situation. If I did, they dealt with it, not me. . . It made all the difference, it make it easier because you could do things in a way that I just can't do now.

In his early years as bishop, it would have been rare for Mariu to go on a trip by himself. Maoris believed that it was not good to “wander alone like a dog.” In other words, the people ridiculed individualism. The person was part of a network that provided *awhi* through direct help and support. Therefore two or three groups of people who would make sure they knew what was happening and where the bishop was going to be. When he turned up somewhere, they would be waiting for him to accompany him on his visit or just to be part of the group. This practical support for the bishop was strong in the early days but this *awhi* has disappeared since many of these faithful associates have grown old or have died. He bemoans the demise of this close reciprocal relationships, “Without these friends, it is sometimes a lonely life being the only Catholic Maori bishop in the world tracing a path which no-one had walked before, especially trying to be Maori and *Katorika* (Catholic).”

*Maori and Katorika*

After a few years of observing Bishop Mariu functioning as a Maori and as a bishop, some commentators concluded that Bishop Mariu's insistence on being a Maori and Catholic or Katorika made him a candidate for schizophrenia. But over the years he has repeatedly emphasized that this perception of him being a schizophrenic or in a "double-bind" situation is in the mind of the *pakeha*, or New Zealander with Caucasian descent, not his. He insists that if he is going to be a Maori and a Catholic, he has to be good Maori and good Catholic, and if he is not a good Maori he can not be good Catholic. He believes that the two can walk together on the same path, for one compliments the other. Nevertheless, he admits that at times one may supercede the other, but it is like any walk of life in this modern world. He is realistic that we are a modern generation, but that should not prevent us from being both Maori and Katorika, otherwise, it will deny who we are. He explains,

For me personally, I could never be anything else but a Catholic. My understanding of my culture and heritage has always had that Catholic bent. So to be one and not the other would be contradictory. That's the real task of evangelization, able to help a particular ethnic group in a way to help them retain their ethnicity, but at the same time be Catholic so that one never contradicts the other in the sense that one must never cancel out the other. You are never in a quandary by asking the questions: if I do this am I still a Catholic or if I do that am I still a Maori?

Yet Mariu admits that the historical experiences of Maori Catholicism make this

dual identity difficult for many Maoris. The changes that were brought about by the WWII and urbanization eroded the traditional bonds and traditional way of living. The number of speakers who know the formal processes of welcome on the *marae* is very few. Therefore people cannot learn the Maori way of life. Some have gone to universities to study Maori studies but they do not have the commitment to the *marae*. They do not share their knowledge and expertise with the people in the tribes. When the younger generation asks questions about their culture, there is no one who can answer “because those who had that knowledge and the type of answers needed are dead.” The rural based population moved to an urban-based population resulting in an urban sprawl. This resulted in the urbanization of Maoridom, where the “owning of a private home became more important than the relationship to the *marae*. So the *marae* system suffered, the tribal system suffered, the sub tribal system suffered.”

As a teacher of Christian doctrine, Mariu has continually portrayed Christ as Maori. In other words, he strives for a Maori vision of how Christ’s redemption has been revealed in the Maori culture. However, formulating a Maori Christology has been a daunting task, for Christ has always been linked with the Judeo understanding of Christ. Mariu insists that the Christology of the French and Irish missionaries “cannot lock the Maori into this mindset, because the Maori faith in Christ will die.” Mariu suggests that to overcome this narrow approach to redemption “there needs to be the development of a Polynesian appreciation of the redeeming act of Christ.” This might be able to done if one uses the character of Maui founder in the Polynesian tradition. To explain Christ from within a Maori historical and cultural consciousness, Mariu uses the myth of Maui

and *Hine nui o tepo*, earth mother. He uses the term mythological reluctantly, because for a long time the “European understanding of myth was that it was a fable, something that is not true, a fantasy.” Mariu contends that behind every myth, there is a basic message, a basic truth. He explains,

In Maori mythology they speak about Maui, a Maori ancestor who sneered the sun and so enabled the earth to warm up and gave heat to the people. Maui decided to discover the essence of life and death, so he searched for *Hine nui te po*, the earth mother. In classical Maori oratory, they believe that in order to locate this ancestor, one must return to portholes of death and life. So Maui decided he wanted to discover the essence of life and death, so he decided to crawl back into the womb through the vagina of *Hine nui o tepo* while she was sleeping for he knew where human life came from. A fantail bird got the giggles with this curious event and Hine woke up crushing Maui into two. So he did not find the answer to life and death, he died in the process.

Mariu admits that some people may not like the crude analogy of Christ to Maui, but he makes the point that both searched for the secret and meaning of eternal life. For Mariu this narrative shows that “Christ went one step further, he died and rose again.” The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the fulfillment of what Maori are searching for: the afterlife, the eternal life. Like Christ and Maui we all possess the human desire to go back to our original homeland where we will enjoy life after death. This story will also assist in bringing understanding of the Maori perspective of life after death into a

Catholic context.

Similarly, he is critical of the imposed interpretations of Maori “Gods.” He has difficulty when Christians use the term Maori “Gods” because of the point of reference. Who defines a Maori God? Is it the Maoris or the Western anthropologists who studied primitive religions? He is not sure that in Maoridom, *ko matani*, the spirits of the forests, lakes, and mountains are understood as Gods in the Christian sense, where God is understood as the Supreme Being or the source of all life. There is a tendency to automatically impose the colonialists’ interpretation of “Gods” onto anything that cannot fit into Western anthropological Christocentric thought. Therefore anything Maori, the *pakeha*, could not understand they tried to define it within Western terminology and rigid categories. Mariu acknowledges that there are basic tenets of the Christian religion that will never change, but how we live out our Catholicism will always be subject to change. He points to the experience of Vatican II, which “called the people to go back to the essence of the liturgy. Pope John XXIII opened the doors, the windows to see the cobwebs. So you can’t lock us up because we will all die.”

Mariu contends that there have been more changes in the last thirty years in Maoridom than the rest of history. Therefore, he objects to the notion that we can give a definition of Catholic Maori. He maintains that it could be dangerous to try to define what a Christian Maori is or ought to be; otherwise we will tend to lock what our Christian vision ought to be in a time frame. “We can not afford that. Otherwise we run the risk of saying we can not change. For culture to be alive it has to be dynamic, for anything to be dynamic, it has to change. For this reason, it is up to the Maoris to be

aware of the changes and to develop a local Christology that may speak to both Maori and Catholic sensibilities.” For Marui the guiding question in this process should always be: Who is Christ for the Maori people? But to answer this, the enquiry needs to begin with a fundamental belief that Christ was part of God’s creation. Mariu maintains that the Maori identity is engrained in the belief that through creation everyone shares the “divine spark.” Catholicism and scripture all begin with God creating humankind in his own image and likeness. This creative act is infinite and manifested in the ethos and ritual of both Maori culture and Christianity. He explains,

Christ came to renew the whole of creation. Christ just did not only come to save man from sin. God renews the whole of creation, so the coming of Christ, is not only the rebirth of the divine spark in the human being. It is the reestablishment of kingdom of God and from a loving God comes everything: nature, universe, and all those things. That is why Christ came; he said so in scripture, again and again.

Making connections between Christianity and Maoridom, Mariu highlights a common anthropological belief that underlies both systems. He maintains without doubt that the most important aspect of both Christianity and Maoridom is *te tapu te tangata*, or “the sacredness of the human person.” He explains,

Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. In Maoridom, we refer to “*te tangata te atua*,” the life giving principle of God and the life giving principle of man. Man shares in the divinity and the divinity shares the humanity and that is where the sacredness of the

human person comes from. Without that flame of divinity in the human person, then we are just human. We cannot strive forward just as human persons. Eternal life is about sharing the divinity. So, therefore, if we are going to share the divinity, we need that spark, the sacredness of the human person.

When the Synod for Oceania opened in Rome in November, 1998, Mariu was sick in bed with heart problems. Yet he was able to watch the opening ceremony on television. He was very pleased and his feelings and thoughts about inculturation were again affirmed by the opening liturgy. He commented that although members of the Curial staff were not happy with the show of bare bodies in St. Peter's, it set the tone for the Synod. He was adamant that it was necessary to include the cultural flavor; otherwise it would have simply been another Roman liturgy. But more importantly, it brought the issue of inculturation to the forefront of the Synod's agenda.

He proudly states,

[Dance, music, and leis] are what we as Pacific islanders are all about. It's part of us. If we divorce all that from liturgy, if we define and look at liturgy as a living act of thanksgiving and worship to God, then all these cultural symbols are part of the normal Pacific psychic and way of doing things. Back in the islands, these symbols are just part of culture. You can't escape it; otherwise we will be denying who we are as a Pacific indigenous people.

One month later on 10 December, Mariu came out of the hospital, a-day-and-a-

half before the closing Mass for the Synod. But he was able to get Bishop Browne of Hamilton to read his intervention. Mariu's intervention to the Synod was basically about inculturation. Part of it was the historical background of the arrival of the early French Missionaries with Bishop Pompallier. He stressed that these men set in motion the initial process of inculturation in New Zealand by the very fact that their whole life was to mission to the Maoris. Some even took the culture of the Maori to heart. They lived with the Maori culture without feeling that there was any contradiction to the Catholic faith they were preaching and the teaching.

About inculturation Mariu quoted the papal document *Redemptoris Missio*, which stated that inculturation, was a "long process." But he questioned this guarded mentality, and wondered if it "needed to be as long and as tortuous as it is." For Mariu the whole process inculturation must work two ways, otherwise it is a monocultural exercise. For that to happen, the Church must allow the local churches to compose prayers and liturgies in their own language, idioms and with the flavor of the cultural heritage which is proper to the peoples concerned. Simply translating English texts that have been translated again from Latin does nothing to help develop indigenous culture or endear the Church to local cultures. Issues such as ecclesiology, sacramental practice, ritual, religious life, and priesthood need to be taken into the whole question of inculturation.

Yet he ponders on the question; how far can we go with inculturation. This is one of the big questions in the back of his mind. He has reframed this question in several ways:

How far can you actually go with the Mass and really give it a true

classical Maori style of Eucharist? How far can you actually bring all the Maori value of sharing of special dishes like preserved birds into the Eucharist? How far can you actually go with inculturation before you run the risk of losing the real identity of what the Mass is about and the identity of what your culture is about?"

His answer to these questions is guided by the work of theologian, Shapunga. The latter maintains that the Roman liturgy was noted for its simplicity and purity. To keep these qualities, it might be necessary to identify concepts that are new to the Maori thought patterns. Mariu points out that when Catholics say that we really consume the real body and blood of Christ, the experience of cannibalism comes to mind. This will then lead to language. It will be important to accurately translate certain parts of the Eucharistic celebration. One must separate out the most vital words, "like take and eat, this is my body" and apply a precise interpretation that communicates the tradition. But Mariu is cautious because this is not easily done. He explains,

Today we don't have the purity in modern languages that we had 100 years ago. How close do we need to get to the equivalent of the Latin? I know what Rome is saying and that is important but then not every language can be as precise as they can be in Latin. Simply because the whole thought process is different. We say [in English] "that's a chair." In Maori I'd say, "A chair that is." Mariu suggests that that another factor that should guide how far one can go with inculturation is by setting a tone and atmosphere so you can build people up towards a really deep

meaningful moving Eucharistic liturgy. The liturgy must give meaning to the experience.

He narrates he was involved in a liturgy that achieved all the qualities mentioned above:

A few years ago, we had what we call a *Waka'aro* - which was a type of catechesis and we were having six of these gatherings a year. At the elevation of the sacred species; the women would, *Karanga*, or greeting. *Karanga* is a verbalized half-pie sung greeting. So for instance if you go onto a *marae*, the first people to greet you are a specific group of women whose main role at that stage is to call you on to the *marae*. It's a calling, so they call your visitors on. So at the Mass at the elevation the sacred species, the women would call Christ into the midst of the gathering. I suppose the pure Roman liturgy that would be almost an anathema, but then for us as Maori that would our normal respectful reaction. Someone so special as close as Christ is coming. How do we make him present in the actual consecration but how do we acknowledge his presence.

Some of these same concerns about inculturation were voiced by many of the fellow island bishops from Oceania. They decided that they needed to voice their pastoral concerns with candor. Others highlighted the difficulties in the family, the marriage situation and how the process of annulment was often painful, turning people away from the Church. He feels that the frustrating part of the Synod is that few of the bishops were very forthright in what they said but this did not come through in the Post Synodal

Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania*. Mariu adds that a possible explanation for this truncated report may be due to the whole process of Synod of Bishops, where initiatives and interventions are filtered down to such an extent that the final reports do not necessarily reflect many of the real concerns that were discussed at the Synod Congregations.

As mentioned above, when Pope John promulgated *Ecclesia in Oceania* in 2001 it did not cause Bishop Mariu any excitement. He gives his reason for this muted reaction:

While *Ecclesia in Oceania* talks about inculturation, it sets a few guidelines but it really reiterates what we already knew. It doesn't really take the whole question of inculturation to another level. The exhortation is still fairly well in the air about how far we can go or how we can actually speed up the process of inculturation. And so for me, while the section on inculturation is positive, I would still like to have seen not so much a bit more direction, but maybe a bit more openness to how the whole process of the inculturation can actually happen in the twenty first century.

He feels there is nothing new in *Ecclesia in Oceania*. Some of the statements on inculturation the bishops had seen before. Moreover there was nothing innovative. Mariu feels that even the apology to the aboriginal people for the abuse handed down to them by the members of the Church, could have been taken further, for abuse happened in a lot of other cultures as well.

He is critical of the wording of the document with regards to how inculturation

can authentically happen in the Church. He does not agree with the phrase “cultures need to be purified. He prefers the word “completed.’ He explains, “I would talk about it as being “completed,” simply because all cultures are on a continual process of change. Part of the saving act of Christ is the search for truth and always searching for the divine causes.” In this search for truth, Mariu contends that the Maori will also have to ask hard questions about their culture. They will have to confront what is really Maori because the *marae* system is not as intact as it was thirty years ago. The modern world with its own notion of work has disrupted the culture to such an extent that many younger people “find it extremely difficult to really relate to their cultural side in any depth.”

Though he was not enthusiastic about *Ecclesia in Oceania*, he acknowledged that the responsibility was now on his shoulders as Bishop. The bishops in Oceania will have to implement the recommendation in the document. Mariu suggests that to make proposals alive in the dioceses the bishops might have to revamp the catechesis programs.

After fourteen years as auxiliary bishop, Mariu still witnesses to the treasures of his Maori culture. He lets the Gospel of Christ continue to penetrate and permeate his ministry, and he believes that his sense of Maori identity is unquestionable. He maintains that it is as a Maori that the Lord calls him to be bishop; it is as a Maori that he belongs to the Church. Therefore his priority has remained the same in these intervening years: for his Maori people to come to understand and appreciate their indigenous culture and their Christianity so that they can express themselves as Maori and as Catholic without any contradiction between the two. He asserts these qualities were evident in the Maori leadership before the Second World War. But many men of this caliber were lost in the

war. “For us Maori, we lost a lot of our Maori leadership, the cream was lost.” However, he claims that these leaders still can serve as models for the present day Maori Catholic. These men had deep faith. They were educated in the good Catholic schools. They possessed the Maori knowledge and the Catholic knowledge. They were unique because “they had the ability to speak, and the confidence to speak in both worlds, both languages, to explain everything in both languages without any difficulties at all.”

He is also confronted with his roles as Maori bishop as witness and administrator. He thinks it is true that as bishops they have become bogged down by administration. Consequently, they have lost the witnessing aspects of their episcopal ministry. In fact administration colors how they react to others; therefore, their administrative expertise or lack of expertise tends to determine their public image. Self-reflecting he says, “I really love to get back amongst my own people. Why am I looking after a diocese, having to go up to Hamilton twice a week to sign the documents? I think if I am not careful, I will lose my own people. As bishops, we have to bring back our role of servant since one cannot be a witness if one is not a servant.” Mariu continues his questioning of his culture and religion. New questions have emerged as he looks to the society that has been influenced by modernity. He explains, “New Zealand is one of the most secularized societies in the world. Secularization has affected the Maoris just as it has affected others. The commitment to Church, the commitment to Mass is not there. It is an ongoing struggle to bring Maori communities together.”

Another reason for this predicament is the lack of priests. This problem brings into question the whole methodology of evangelization in the country. Thus one of the

tasks of Mariu is helping people understand that they have to come to terms that the church today is not the church they knew thirty years ago. He feels that there is still reluctance out there for people to accept this change. People do not accept that church is different. This has resulted in the reorganization of dioceses especially in the number of priests serving parishes. In certain areas like Rotorua, the number has gone from nine priests to two active priests even though the number of Catholics has remained the same.

Mariu is confronted with numerous questions: “What is my role? How can the Church spiritually sustain my people as Catholic and as Maori? What should I be doing now? Why the huge drop of Maoris who participate in the Church? Where am I going to get the people to do the work of God?” With these questions come fears as he continues to try to be bishop to the Maori people. He explains,

Deep within me I have a feeling that I need to get back to some basics, but how I am going to do that, I am not sure. One of my big fears is that while the Church is there to bring the people to Christ, is the Church capable of feeding this child spiritually? Another of my fears is that the Church may not be able to spiritually sustain my Maori people.

## CHAPTER V

### ARCHBISHOP PETERO MATAKA

This chapter is the interpretative biographical study of Archbishop Petero Mataka from the Archdiocese of Suva in Fiji. He was first indigenous Fijian to be appointed Roman Catholic bishop of Fiji. The life story begins with a pivotal event in the life of a 41-year-old Fijian diocesan priest. The epiphany was his timely appointment and subsequent ordination to the episcopacy. The biography then moves backward in history to key religious experiences that facilitated Mataka's formation and groomed him for the episcopate. The self narrative then moves forward from Mataka's episcopal ordination to the present time, narrating how the Archbishop has attempted to actualize his motto "to preach Christ" in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious milieus present in Fiji.

#### Story Context

Fiji's 300 islands lie in the heart of the Pacific Ocean, midway between the Equator and the South Pole, and between longitudes 175 and 178 west and latitudes 15 and 22 south. Viti Levu and Vanua Levu are the two main islands and make up 85% of Fiji's total land mass. The total area of the two main islands is 18,270 sq km. (CIA Fackbook 2002)

The population of Fiji is approximately 856,346. About 51% of the population is made up of indigenous Fijians, who are predominantly Melanesian with a Polynesian admixture. The Indians make up 44% of the population. This segment of the population is mainly made up of descendents of indentured laborers. People from India were brought to the islands by the British government, sometimes against their will, to work on the sugar

plantations beginning in 1879. The rest of the population, about 5%, comprises European, Chinese, and other Pacific Islanders. Fiji has a relatively young population with about 53% or 413,100 persons below the age of 25 years. Of Fiji's current population, more than 60 per cent live in the rural areas. More than half of Fiji's population is Christian (52.9%), while the other portion is made of Hindus (38.1%), Muslim (7.8%), Sikhs (0.7%), Others (0.5%). It is important to note that the Fijians are mainly Christian, while the Indians are either Hindu or Muslim. The Roman Catholics make up 9% of the total population. (CIA Factbook 2002: Fiji)

Fiji was first discovered in 1643 by the Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman. The English navigator, Captain James Cook, followed and sailed through the islands in 1774. Major credit for the discovery and recording of the islands went to Captain William Bligh, who sailed through Fiji after the mutiny on the *Bounty* in 1789. The first Europeans to live among the Fijians were shipwrecked sailors and runaway convicts from the Australian penal settlements. Sandalwood traders and missionaries came in the mid 19th century. (Adapted from Fiji Government online)

The first Catholic mission in Fiji was founded in 1844, and on 10 March, 1863, the territory was erected into a prefecture Apostolic. A small band of Marists arrived on a small island of Lau group. From the moment they landed they were made aware that they were not welcomed, for the Fijians had their own traditional religion. In addition, the Wesleyan Missionary Society arrived early in 1835 (Knox, 1997, pp. 1-2). On 5 May, 1887, a vicariate was established and entrusted to the Marist fathers. The first vicar Apostolic was Julian Vidal. The bishop immediately began to set in motion his plans for

evangelization, education, and building. This zeal of the bishop and the Marists was resented by the Wesleyans thus leading to friction between the two Christian denominations.

Fiji was ceded to Britain in 1874 and remained a colony until it gained its independence in 1970. Since independence, Fiji has experienced two *coup d'etats*, with the latest one occurring May 19, 2000. Both coups were caused by racial tension between some of the indigenous Fijians and the Indians. As noted above, each racial group represents about half the population, but the Fijians have title to about 80% of the land. The Indians, on the other hand, hold many of the professional posts, own most businesses, and farm sugar cane. It was into these cultural, historical, and religious contexts that Father Petero Mataca was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Suva.

#### Episcopal Ordination

On the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, December 3, 1974, several thousand people from the different parishes of Fiji assembled for the episcopal ordination Mass of Father Petero Mataca in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Suva, the capital city of Fiji. One hundred thirty years after the French missionaries founded the first Catholic mission in Fiji, history was being made. This ordination was a clear sign that Fiji was no longer a missionary country but now a “local church” with its own indigenous leadership. An indigenous diocesan priest was to be ordained Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Suva. Mataca recalls, “Fiji literally stopped to listen to the live broadcast of the whole ceremony.” Bishop Finau of Tonga gave possible reasons for this response to Mataca’s ordination. In his homily he states,

In your person, Peter Mataca, the missionaries labour and the faith response of the people in Fiji has been rewarded. You have been graced by God in calling you to be his bishop, but at the same time you are a gift of the people of Fiji to God and to his Church . . . Bishop Mataca may you be a living witness of Jesus Christ, so that the people of Fiji, irrespective of race or creed, see in you a father, a brother, “another Christ.”

To celebrate this sacred occasion, all ethnic groups were involved in the liturgy, Fijian and Hindi hymns were sung at key moments of the ordination, and symbols reflecting the local church were incorporated into the episcopal insignia. After the ordination Mass, traditional Fijian ceremonies of welcome, reserved only for paramount chiefs, were accorded to the new auxiliary bishop. He was now spiritual leader of the Catholic people in Fiji. It was epiphanic for the *tauvei viti*, or the indigenous peoples of the land, for it authenticated in a special way, that the universal Church, through Pope John Paul II was recognizing the *tauvei viti* as Church in Fiji. However, Bishop Finau expanded the meaning of local church by emphasizing the it was “the church of the people, it had a good number of local priests and religious, but above all, a flourishing community of lay people mature in their Christianity.”

Different sectors of the community expressed their joy at the ordination of Petero Mataca. Indo Fijians felt that the ordination was a turning point in the history of Fiji. Even though they were Hindus, some Indian shopkeepers came up to him, and as a sign of great reverence, touched his feet. Following that act of homage, they unflinchingly informed Mataca “he was not only the Bishop of the Catholics, but he was their bishop

too.” Reasons for the Indians holding him in good esteem were that he was Fiji born who had a common touch; they viewed him as man of many human virtues and a person of deep spirituality. The Prime Minister Ratu Kamasese Mara also expressed the nation’s reaction to the event. Speaking in Fijian during the traditional ceremonies he states,

E dua na siga talei, siga lagilagi, ka siga bibi vei keda na siga daidai. E sevutaki kina e dua na noda gone me cabeta nai tutu cerecere ni veiliutaki en noda lotu ena noda vanua. It is day of happiness; a day giving praise, today is a very significant day. For the first time, a child of these islands has risen to the highest rank of leadership in the Church in our islands.

As customary, the new bishop responded to the traditional ceremonies accorded to him by the Fijian community. He stated that he was filled with thanksgiving for the many people who helping in his formation.

#### Formative Years

Petero Mataca was born at Cawaci, on the island of Ovalau on 28 April, 1933. His father was Gabriele Daunivucu Isei and his mother was Akeneta Lewawiri, who died when Mataca was thirteen years old. He was one of four boys and four girls. The desire to become a priest may have begun germinating in the heart of Petero as a young child, since he was the born into a family of a *vaka vuvuli*, a catechist. The date of his birth is special for Mataca, since it is the feast day of St. Peter Chanel, the patron saint of Oceania. The French priest was martyred in Wallis Islands. In 1841 the Marist missionary was clubbed to death and his body hacked into pieces with hatchets.

Young Mataca grew up at Vuaki village, Matacawalevu, in the Yawasa Islands.

This father was the *Qase-ni-yasana*, or the head catechist of the particular parish. He was the village lay spiritual leader. Being a son of the *Qase-ni-Yasana*, Petero learnt to memorize and recite morning and night prayers, the commandments and sacraments. Even then, Mataca was experiencing leadership in the indigenous church through the witness of his parents, particularly his father. He was able to observe his father, Gabriele, as he helped European missionaries translate their sermons and instructions, prepare the people for the sacraments, and teach the people to pray in their vernacular language. He was the first catechist to be given faculty or authority to officiate at a Catholic marriage. As the head catechist Gabriele had a close relationship with the priest. He endeavored to make sure that the priest's plans were implemented. This even meant using his son, Petero, as a form of appeasement. Mataca tells the story of how at the age of seven he was abruptly transported to Cawaci to attend primary school: "The four boys who were supposed to go ran away and hid in the bushes on the day of departure. The priest at the time, Father Elliot, was furious and threatened the *qase-ni- yasana* that he would "close the school and remove the sister if no one went with him to Cawaci." The catechist, without another thought offered his son, Petero, as a possible candidate. The frustrated priest said he would take anyone. So in the matter of several hours, Petero's belongings were assembled by his mother. Still wet from chasing ducklings on the other side of the island, young Petero was told to board the mission boat Santa Ana. "It was only when the island started to disappear, that the implications of going on a boat struck me. I was leaving my family and friends. When the people on the boat confirmed this, I cried all night."

Mataca was motivated and enticed to the priesthood by the desire to be available and be of service to all people, regardless of race or religion. This wish had its genesis early in the life of Mataca when he was still a young man attending the school now known as St. John's College, Cawaci on the island of Ovalau. Here Marist priests, who he felt were models of servant leadership, taught him the academic subject but also instill within him the value of self-reflection. Their missionary zeal facilitated the seventeen-year-old student's vocation to the priesthood. He recalls the event that helped him begin the discernment process about a priestly vocation:

It had been raining for about two weeks and our teachers then consisted of two priests, Father Clerken and Father Tom Foley. I think I was in Form Five. On this particular day, Fr. Clerken was supposed to come and teach us. But at the time, something was wrong with his leg, so he was limping with the aid of a walking stick across the *rara*, the playground, from the priest's house to the classroom. He was hobbling through the water and I was sitting there, watching him.

This event prompted Mataca to reflect on the possibility of becoming a priest. With that picture captured in his mind, Mataca began to think and question: how come this Irishman, who had come all the way from Ireland, could do this for a Fijian? He had left his home and his family and here he was limping across the watery field, wet shoes and so on, to come to teach. There must be something that motivated this old man. This event truly started the young Mataca to think about a vocation to the priesthood.

After encouragement by Bishop Foley, Mataca was sent to Holy Cross Seminary

in Mosgiel, New Zealand where he studied philosophy for the diocesan priesthood. It was hoped that he would be able to establish the local church. Besides the problems of weather, food, and language, Mataca felt that amongst the New Zealand seminarians there was a deliberate separation, according to ethnic group and education level. On completing these studies, he was sent to Rome, to the Propaganda College for his theological studies. Here “he felt at home with the different races and color of the students.” The seminarians came from different parts of the world: Sweden, Egypt, America, Lebanon, India, Africa, China, Korea Japan and Vietnam. After ten years of formation in Rome and New Zealand, young Mataca was ordained to the priesthood in Rome 28, December, 1959 by Cardinal Gregory Agagianian. The ordination class consisted of men from forty-two nationalities. When he finished in Rome, it was a “really hard parting with his friends.” He was supposed to do post graduate work, but the bishop at that time wanted some one to work with Monsignor Francis Wasner. He explains,

Monsignor Francis Wasner was the chaplain of the world famous Von Trapp family singers. He volunteered to come to Fiji as a priest and work here with the bishop. Since Wasner was a diocesan priest, he specifically asked Bishop Foley for an assistant priest who was indigenous. At that time, I was the only indigenous diocesan priest available to Bishop Foley. There were other Fiji citizens and priests but they were Marists. He contacted me and asked, “Can you please you come back? I want you to be monsignor’s assistant.”

So in July 1960, Mataca suddenly found himself returning home to the islands to begin

his pastoral years in the priestly ministry.

#### Pastoral Years

From 1960 to 1962, Father Mataca served as an assistant parish priest at St Francis Xavier Parish in Navunibitu in Ra. Shortly after arriving in the parish, Monsignor Wasner commissioned a series of frescos on the altar panels in the church built in 1918. The murals, done in true fresco style were painted by the Frenchman Jean Charlot over a period of three months. Wasner instructed Charlot to design a mural that reflected the different ethnic groups of Fiji, all united under a Christ. This resulted in a triptych, three panels, called the “Black Christ with Worshippers.”

During these months, Father Mataca acted as an interpreter, advisor, and theologian for Chalot and Wasner. He even agreed to be a model for the painting. On one of the side frescos, there is a portrait of Mataca wearing a white alb. He is part of the Fijian entourage of worshippers, consisting of a young girl and a Fijian couple. All are venerating the black Christ using the traditional gifts that are highly valued in the community: a *tabua*, or whale’s tooth, and an *ibe or* traditional mat.

The painting of the triptych was an audacious move on the part of Mataca and Wasner. It communicated an innovative and different message about Christianity in the islands. This was a conscious attempt to incarnate the Gospel message into particular cultural context. The fresco artist and the parish priest may have not realized that they were inculcating in the young assistant priest’s mind a representation of the “local church” in Fiji.

The full mural depicts a church that includes the Fijian and Indian community

unified by a “black Christ.” Christ is a dark skinned crucified man clothed in *masi*, a loincloth of local bark. It expresses the confidence that Christ is already active in the culture. The two side frescos illustrate how the local church in Fiji uses Fijian traditional symbols and Hindu gifts in worship.

In August 1962, Father Mataca left St. Francis Xavier Parish and for the next ten years would be groomed in administration. This was not the plan since he was supposed to go to the islands of Lau to continue doing parish work as a priest. This was not to happen, because the bishop needed personnel in the newly established Cathedral Secondary School. He began teaching at this school where in due course he became its principal in 1966. In that same year Fiji was elevated to an archdiocese. Mataca was appointed the Vicar General. Although only thirty years old, Mataca was considered as possessing the necessary requirements for this administrative role: sound Catholic doctrine, integrity, prudence, and practical experience. Being Vicar General also allowed him to be addressed Monsignor Mataca, an honorary ecclesiastical title granted by the Pope to some diocesan priests. He quickly learned about governance in the Church. His appointment as Vicar General was a turning point in the Archdiocese for it reflected the changes that were taking place in the Church in Fiji. Mataca recalls, “the Churches in the Pacific were established, they were no longer missionary, they became local churches.” During this time, Monsignor Mataca was also asked to be the parish priest of the newly formed parish of Raiwaqa. He was also spiritual director for the seminarians.

In 1972, Monsignor Mataca was the first local rector of the newly established Pacific Regional Seminary. He was given the task of organizing the movement of the

seminary from its temporary premises to its new site. Reflecting on the formation of priests, he feels that the training in “the seminary has not equipped the young priests to continue reflection.” They are not formed to be self-reflective.

#### Appointment and Coat of Arms

The appointment to the episcopacy was an epiphanal moment for Monsignor Mataca. Despite the positive evaluation by Archbishop Pearce and Monsignor Mataca’s various leadership roles within the local church, he still considers his appointment to the episcopacy a major epiphany. At first he was shocked that he would be considered qualified for the ministry of bishop. It was a significant turning point for it would require that he make dramatic personal changes of how he would become teacher, preacher, and leader in the islands of Fiji. When asked how he felt being the first indigenous bishop, he responded, that he felt privileged and humbled when he got the announcement. The real shock came when he got an apostolic letter from Rome. He recalls that he said to myself, “You, you’re it [bishop] now! The Holy Father is going to announce that you are becoming the auxiliary. That was a shocker...that letter, Why so, why, why me?” All he wanted was just to be a priest and to be in touch and in service to the people everywhere. He felt that becoming a bishop might take him away from my original goal of being ordinary priest serving his people. On further reflection, he reasoned that his episcopal appointment was not really about him. It was about the Church recognizing his people as “Church in Fiji.” It was one way of the Church recognizing Fiji so she could take its role in the universal church.

There were immediate external changes that were directly linked to Mataca’s

appointment. Bishop Mataca was expected to publicly reflect his episcopal vision in his coat of arms. The new auxiliary bishop selected symbols that reflected his family origins, his religious formation, and his Fijian traditional culture.

The external ornamentation of the coat of arms is unique and salient. Enfolding the standard shield is a large *tabua* or sperm whale's tooth, attached to *magimagi*, a cord of plaited coconut fiber. On the *tabua* are the Latin words *Praedicare Christum*: "to preach Christ." This motto also is spelled out in the Fijian language, *Vunautaka Na Karisto*. A cross is surmounted on the shield. Above the shield is a *lali*, a Fijian wooden drum. This represents the call of Christ to carry out his mission in this life.

The *tabua* is the most prominent symbolic icon noticeable in the coat of arms. This is deliberate inclusion, because for the Fijian, the *tabua* is the supreme token of respect. It is much prized in the Fijian tradition and ceremony, therefore taking precedence over everything else. The name *tabua* is the same throughout the Fiji islands, and may have originally meant "sacred object." Some claim that the word *tabua* may have come from the word *tabu*, which is now translated into English word taboo. In various languages in Oceania, *tabu* or *tapu*, literally means sacred and profane existing together in an object, place, or person. Hence when used in a religious context, like the coat of arms, the *tabua* highlights the sacredness of human relationships in both the Christian and Fijian ethos.

The *tabua* and the *magimagi* cord embrace the shield that contains other important symbols of Bishop Mataca's heritage. In the top center of the shield is an outline of an island. This represents Vuaki, his village home in the Yasawa Islands. This

island is sandwiched between a carved and decorated Fijian war spear with barbs and a *bowai*, a type of war club. These armaments or weapons are no longer instruments of death, but used today in *meke*s (dances) showing respect for the present day culture of the people. Below the club is another pictogram of a hill with three crosses. This symbolizes Holy Cross College, in Mosgiel, New Zealand where Mataca studied philosophy. Under the spear are the symbols of a hatchet and an axe. The hatchet represents the martyrdom of the patron saint of Oceania, St Peter Chanel. The axe signifies the beheading of St. John the Baptist, the patron of St. John College Cawaci, Ovalau, where Petero received his primary and secondary education. The symbol of a globe is at the bottom of the shield and stands for the Propaganda Fedei College in Rome. This has a double meaning; it credits the place where Mataca was ordained while at the same time signifies Mataca's hope of preaching Christ not only to the people in Fiji but to the entire world.

#### Living out His Motto

In the rest of this chapter, I trace how Petero Mataca, as bishop and archbishop, has tried to live out his motto "to preach Christ" in his indigenous culture, in the local diocese and in multi-ethnic and multi-religious milieus present in Fiji. In order to be faithful to his motto, his Fijian culture and his Catholic faith, Archbishop Mataca has made some original theological connections between the Fijian culture and Catholicism. At the same time he has challenged those aspects of his culture and island Christianity, which he feels are incongruent with the authentic preaching of Christ. Nonetheless, the common thread that is woven into his ministry of leadership is the belief that he can only genuinely preach Christ if he keeps this question always in the forefront: "How can I, in

my ministry, lift my people to their dignity as human beings”?

*Tabua and Cross*

Archbishop Mataca believes that a person can truly answer the above question by accentuating both the *tabua* and the cross. In other words, one must speak about Christianity *and* culture. For Mataca these two symbols indicate that in both the Christian tradition and the Fijian culture, human dignity is sacred. Consequently his pastoral ministry has been imbued with the recognition and promotion of the dignity of the human person. For the Archbishop, this fundamental human value forms the bedrock of Catholicism and his Fijian culture. The two ways of life reinforces each other, even though the explicit manifestations are different. Mataca explains how he has attempted to make the connection:

The one value enshrined in the Fijian tradition that I try to carry over into the Catholic Church is the dignity of the human person. In our way of thinking and especially in our cultural ceremonies, we place great honor in publicly recognizing the dignity of human persons. For instance, as soon as a guest arrives, we offer the *sevusevu*, a ritual that involves traditional items, food, and drink using nuanced discourse. When we do this, we show respect not only for the person, but also for his chief, and his *vanua*, and his kinspersons.

Mataca’s passionate call for the recognition of human dignity of people arises out of the sacrosanct value of respect amongst the Fijian people. The respect for others is embedded in the Fijian ethos so much so that at times foreigners interpret this deference

as submission. To avoid this false impression, Mataca advises that one needs to always place this distinctive orientation to be respectful of others in the context of relationships, “for you will not be respected in isolation but in a community. It is within the community where one’s honor is valued and where this respect is enshrined.”

For Mataca, one of the messages of Christ’s cross and gospel is the call to respect the dignity of the human person, irrespective of race, color and religion. This has become an integral part of recent Catholic church’s moral teaching. Human dignity normally understood as a person’s capacity, and thus his vocation, to enjoy communion with God through and in the local church of which one is a member. Numerous references are made in the 1965 *Gaudium et Spes*, (Pastoral Constitutions on the Church in the Modern World), the 1979 *Redemptor Homnis*, (Redeemer of Humankind), and the 1995 *Evangelium Vitae* (Gospel of Life on the Values and Inviolability of Human Life). He refers to these documents, because in them the Catholic Church similarly proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. More so, this anthropological orientation of the Gospel message must inform our behavior towards others. Mataca believes that in Catholicism and traditional Fijian ethos, “every person is precious, people are more important than things, and the measure of every culture is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.”

Mataca maintains one has only to observe his indigenous culture to see the high value that is placed on human life. It is enshrined in the psyche of the Fijian. In fact, they have an acute awareness of the sacredness and dignity of every human life in the other,

especially visitors. This is manifested in the traditional ceremonies, cultural rituals, and kin relationship, respectful recognition of elders and chiefs and communal village living. Mataca states, “All these, *vaka vanua vakaturaga*, activities pertaining to tradition, highlight only one truth: the recognition of the dignity of the human person.” For example, in a traditional welcoming ceremony there is normally an offering of the *yaqona*, kava root, accompanied by an exchange of genealogies and kin relationships. Each party will begin with the other’s chiefly lineage, normally accentuating the positive attributes of this clan. Then the kava root is mixed and after more forms of reciprocal acknowledgment, they share the kava in a communal fashion. All this highlights one thing, the respect for the dignity of not only the guest but for his family, his chiefs, his people, and his ancestors.

In order to retain the deep cultural and religious reverence for human relationships, Mataca contends one must be ever aware of the community, since we cannot be respected in isolation. It is always within the community where one’s honor is found and where one’s respect is preserved. The above-cited papal encyclicals also emphasize the connection between the community of believers and human dignity. The community of believers in a particular geographical area with a common history with its own indigenous leadership is normally known as the local church.

#### *Local Church*

After being appointed Archbishop on 10 April 1976, Mataca spent a year touring the local church called the Archdiocese of Suva. At the end of that tour he prepared a pastoral letter in which he articulated his vision for the “local church.” He outlines his

understanding of the local church in Fiji:

[It] is the locus of the universal mission [of Christ] in a particular locality. [A local church] when a group people take ownership of what they have at present: its wealth, its weaknesses, and its strengths. Then the [local] church tries to purify itself in every way: its people, each member, as a community, the way we worship, the way we do things, our culture, our mentality, own people. We take responsibility for its existence.

Archbishop Mataka distinguishes three functions of the local church in Fiji. It needs to be self-supporting, self-ministering, and self-propagating. When the church is self-supporting it has moved to a position where it is financially independent of the diocese and overseas assistance. A church becomes self-ministering when local men become priests taking over the pastoral ministry from the foreign missionaries. Finally, the local church becomes self-propagating when all the people are directly involved in evangelization. He sums up these goals by saying, “The local church would do this work within and outside the church in Fiji, using her own members, her own initiatives and her own methods and means.”

#### *Self-Supporting Church*

Mataka believes that a local church can only become self-supporting if there is a dramatic transformation in the people’s thinking about overseas gifts, education and ecotourism. In particular, the indigenous population has to redefine what they mean by *loloma*, or gifts. They will have to develop a work ethic based on *bono*, or sweat and hard work. He is adamant “that people will continue the cargo-cult mentality that they do not

have to work. It is dangerous, you will never progress, you will never go anywhere if you do not do hard work.”

### *Redefining Loloma*

The changing economic and social conditions in Fiji require that *loloma* be redefined. *Loloma* is not about handouts. It is a moral obligation that one “acknowledges the dignity of the other person and so reaches out to him or her. It is a movement of the heart that becomes aware of the other person’s needs.” The foreign grants, gifts and loans to the island church are tangible examples of this island virtue. Mataca feels that people have to recognize that the generosity of foreign benefactors is aimed at building up a “local church that is self sustaining and responsible.” The understanding that *loloma* as generosity in the form of perpetual handouts without any accountability needs to be erased from the mindset of the island peoples. The onus is also on the foreign donors. He argues “that *loloma*, or gifts and charity from overseas is alright, but the foreign donors are obliged to get involved in the educating of the local people so that they can wean themselves from dependency to responsibility.” He maintains that just coming to the islands and giving gifts to people in villages has been detrimental to genuine growth of the local church. As a result of this change in mentality, he strongly requires that parishes develop plans that are consonant with their funds and resources. There is to be a change in the mindset from a “missionary mode of planning,” where ninety percent of the money used in the church came from overseas and only ten percent came from the parishes to a “local mode of planning,” where ninety percent of the money was to be raised locally and supplemented by overseas funds and contributions.

### *Self-worth through Bono*

In proposing this change, Mataca hopes that it might instill in the indigenous people the need for *bono*, sweat and hard work and a renewed pride. A sign of self-worth will be realized when people can stare others in the face proudly declaring that they have begun to reclaim their human dignity. Now they do not only depend on *loloma* but on *bono*. For Mataca, this is the true meaning of development. He expresses this in the Fijian language.

*Au sa rawa ti au, va kania noqo qone, noqo vuvale, au bono taka, au bono, dukaduka na liqagu, au seqa ni madua, au.* Oh I have achieved all these things through sweat. I have achieved self-reliance. I am able to feed my child and my family through sweat and hard work. Nobody gave it to me, I am proud of this success, not ashamed that I sweat, I dirtied my hands. I am not ashamed. I am proud and I am free.

### *Uplifting Education*

Freedom comes with education. One of the greatest challenges for Mataca has been providing an alternative type of education that will provide opportunities to allow the people of Fiji be free of a money economy. He states, "We must uplift the education of the people here in Fiji, especially in the rural areas. We must also look at what kind of education do we need and for what? Our approach is not for them to make money but so that they can understand and enjoy the dignity of the person."

For Mataca, the key to attaining true autonomy and development is the provision of holistic education. Persons must discover for themselves that development is first and

foremost about human persons; they are key sources and recipients of the development plan. This is a difficult concept to sell in a consumer world, so people should be trained to resist the strong urge to focus exclusively on money and material goods. But most importantly “the goal of education is to create a community where people can enjoy basic human rights, like living in a good house, having a good education for their children, and have running water.” If the focus moves in this direction then the beneficiaries might then include people living in the rural areas and islands. Mataca is informed by the educational philosophy that the Church’s primary goal should always try to educate persons so that they can understand and enjoy self-respect as the human person.

Mataca articulated his thoughts on the importance of Catholic education in the 1997 Synod of Oceania. His intervention at this assembly addressed the priority of education in evangelization. He outlined the role of Catholic education in the islands and how it affects all tenets of life in the islands. But he also is concerned that Catholic schools are not able to accommodate all the Catholic children and they may be losing out to other religious groups because of money. His biggest concern is that Catholic schools are losing their aim due to the distracting pressure of big businesses. As well, he sees the positive outcomes of Catholic education in Oceania: “Catholic education is a source of joy. The Catholic schools are a tribute to missionaries. . . . But now most, if not all our schools, are administered and staffed by committed lay people who see Catholic education as their apostolate.”

Past students of Catholic schools are putting Christian values into public life, into business life, into family life and are active in the practice of their faith and in parish life.

We praise and thank God for them. Catholic schools do not only affect the receivers but also the givers of Catholic education. Catholic schools are known for their moral teaching, discipline, and academic excellence. So non-Catholic parents as well as non-Christian parents favor Catholic schools for their children. For this reason, the Catholic schools are the first contact with the Catholic Church of many parents and children.

### *Ecotourism*

One of Mataca's latest ventures to promote development and education is to encourage ecotourism. Many interested people in Fiji and tourist destinations have become involved in this form of nature-based tourism. It involves responsible travel of tourists to relatively undeveloped areas to foster an appreciation of nature and local cultures, while conserving the physical and social environment. In doing this they respect the aspirations and traditions of those who are visited, and improve the welfare of the local people. What triggered Mataca to think along these lines was a couple who visited Fiji from Spain. They wanted to come to Fiji for two weeks to enjoy canoeing. But the first condition was that they wanted to stay in the mission where they could go to Mass. He describes his plan of how the parishes may begin to get involved in this new industry, which has benefited many rural villages in Fiji and other parts of the world:

The villages will build six or ten *buves*, thatched houses, with facilities that can be used by tourists and other groups connected to the parish, like the youth group. People will stay there for a nominal fee. But these units will belong to the parish, which will provide only the bedding facilities and breakfast. Every other service the tourist needs will be supplied by

the villagers. The parish will employ a manager who will allocate the homes where guests will go for lunch and dinner. And if they want to go fishing, the tourist will have to go to the village and hire a punt (small boat) from one of the villagers. The services will be shared, everyone working together. The tourist will be encouraged to even do her shopping in the local village store. If they want to go for a picnic, a family will be assigned to take them to the beach. The youths could be directly involved by taking them for a walk or hikes. They would provide them food somewhere on the bush trail; they could even cook there, on the spot.

Ecotourism values reciprocity. For this reason, Mataca relentlessly communicates to the donor parishes in Australia that, “*loloma* is not a one way street and if you think it is a one way street, then forget the *loloma*.” He feels that if the local parishes begin to get involved in ecotourism, tourists will in turn respect the indigenous peoples. With the above scenario, Mataca argues that it can forge an ongoing reciprocal relationship between overseas donor parishes and the local rural parishes. The donor parishes will pay to visit the local village surroundings and the local parish can return their generosity with authentic Fijian village hospitality. With this set up the villagers will have the facilities to reciprocate the tourists’ monetary *loloma* or gifts by inviting them to come out to the islands and stay in the parish community.

Despite the cynicism and ignorance by many Catholics, Mataca says, “He has not given up. I will keep trying.” Mataca firmly believes that this relationship might begin a new trend where tourists will opt to go to the parish community in the rural areas and not to

the hotels, because the former promotes ecotourism. Furthermore true reciprocity will occur since human relationships will be formed and sustained. Above all, *loloma* will go beyond one-sided handouts but return the give-and-take charity based on reciprocal relationships.

### *Self-Ministering Church*

For Mataca, a self-ministering church consists of believers who recognize that there is a variety of ministries instituted by Christ. The goal of these various ministries is for service to all persons of faith. He spells it out further saying that “a local church is self-ministering when all the essential services needed for the life and work of the church are actively assumed by members of that local church. It needs an educated and committed lay people, leaders who are committed to living their faith, committed catechists and teachers and dedicated religious and self-giving and missionary priests.” Two ways of creating a self-ministering church has been through the formation of an association of indigenous priests and the crafting of a “mat theology.”

#### *Luvei viti*

An early pastoral initiative to build up the self-ministering church was to form the *luvei viti*, an association of indigenous diocesan and religious priests. In order to be a member, the priest had to be Fijian. This was implied by the name *luvei viti*, which literally means a progeny of the original peoples who first settled the islands. Archbishop Mataca formed the *luvei viti* in the hope that this group of indigenous priests would assist him in creating a “local church” which genuinely reflected the history, culture, and traditions of the indigenous people and Catholic faith. In other words, he believed that

there was a distinct way of being a Catholic priest in Fiji if one was an indigenous man. He felt that the diocesan group of priests, which included expatriate missionaries, was not adequate enough to tackle this task of making connections between Catholic theology and local indigenous culture. Mataca's vision was for the *luvei viti* to act as a think-tank with regards to matters and concerns they faced as indigenous priests working with an indigenous population. The *luvei viti* was also to be an informal forum where indigenous priests could also reflect on the real problems for the indigenous experienced the multi-racial parishes. The assumption was that it would be a type of grassroots theology, a reflection on the lived faith experiences of the local people within a particular cultural and historical context.

In the initial years, *luvei viti* was doing very well so Mataca thought that it might be time to hand the leadership over to elected officers. Not long after, the *luvei viti* was disbanded by the members. A possible reason for this was that the younger indigenous priests did not embrace and share the vision of the Archbishop. The possibilities for *luvei viti* were infinite, but it might have been too soon and too exclusive for the indigenous parish priests to venture into a project that was considered by some as time consuming, too intellectual, and irrelevant to their real problems in the parish.

### *Ibe theology*

When Mataca formed the *luvei viti*, he suggested that the indigenous priests start looking at *ibe* or "mat theology" as opposed to "coconut theology." In recent years, South Pacific theologians have attempted to use local items like coconut and *kava* to help inculturate or indigenize the Eucharist and reconciliation. They propose that if Jesus had

been born to a coconut culture like those in the islands, he might have used the symbols of coconut meat and juice instead of bread and wine in the Christian eucharist celebration.

Mataca, however, finds “coconut theology” limiting since any theology should mediate between the entire culture and the religion in that particular context. For this reason, Mataca suggested that the *ibe* is a better symbol since it goes beyond the eucharist to all facets of island life. In order to begin this theological reflection he suggests that the islanders begin with two questions, where and why do Fijians use traditional mats? He answers “in the islands of Oceania finely woven mats are used from conception to death, thus covering the full span of a person’s life.” Mataca asserts that if one talks to the old people they will tell you that *ibe* or mats play a significant role in the daily life of the Fijian community:

*Ibe* are used from birth, even before the child is born. The women would weave a mat in preparation for birth. When the child is born, he or she is born on *davodavo ni gone*, the bed for the newly born child. When we celebrate a birthday, the person is given his or her *nona dabedabe*, mats that one sits on to accentuate the special occasion. Then mats are used in the *vakamau*, marriages. Here the female relatives perform the custom of *tevutevu*, the orderly arrangement and display of the fine mats to be used by the newly married couple. When we have the *veiqaravi*, or welcoming ceremonies, there is the *vakamacamaca*, presentation of sets of fine mats to ensure they have dry garments. With these mats, the hosts show that the

visitors will be accorded special care. When people gather together for special function and feasts, everyone sits on a big *ibe*. In the sacramental ceremonies like an ordination, the new priest will have his *nona dabledabe*, place of honor will be prepared with several layers of mats. And finally when you die, the coffin or corpse is wrapped in *ibe* to give a person protection from the elements.

The possibilities of using the symbol of mat to theologize are enormous. One can begin with the art of weaving and how this has implications for the active role women in the church. Weaving can symbolically explain the multiple relationships between culture and Christianity. Mats can communicate the creativity of the Spirit in diversity cultures, races, and religions. The centrality of mats in cultural events highlights the communal aspect of worship. Further, various sizes of traditional mats and designs are woven for different events such as births, weddings, and ceremonial occasions and with larger shapes and weaves used in the construction of houses, sails for canoes, and flooring for the home.

For Mataca, the reason traditional mats are important is that they point to the sacredness of the human person. Mats are used because the person who will sit or lie on it deserves respect. When people are on the mat, the community acknowledges his or her dignity. Communal relationships are also symbolized by the interweaving of the different colored strands in the mats.

### *Self-Propagating Church*

A self-propagating church tries to evangelize its own members by affirming them in their faith. But Mataca explains that it has second function that is important at this juncture in the history of Fiji. He explains, “In self-propagating church we share our faith with those outside the church in Fiji and outside of Fiji. We are being challenged to commit ourselves fully to building up a diversity of peoples into one people, living in one nation where love, peace, and justice are treasured and lived.” This part of the paper will look at the nine ways he has tried to create a self-propagating church.

#### *Helping the Traditional Chiefs*

“Chiefs need help!” This is a mantra of Mataca as he reflects on the disunity amongst the traditional chiefs and amongst the indigenous peoples of Fiji. Mataca has challenged the *turaga ni vanua*, the traditional hereditary chiefs of the land because he ascertains that they are “not united, they are only concerned with money and not concerned with persons, or relationships. They have no human touch.” Even more important is that these men and women play a major role in the cultural, political, and economic life of indigenous people. Therefore, Mataca firmly believes the traditional chiefs are morally responsible for fostering unity amongst the various ethnic groups.

Hence in the mid 1980s, he asked several priests to assist him in planning seminars for the traditional chiefs. He would traditionally approach the *turaga ni vanua*, or traditional chiefs, inviting them to come to this seminar to spend time as a group critically reflecting on their changing role in the political, economic, and social life of the Fiji. Mataca was “hopeful that the chiefs would come along.” He was able to take this

initiative, because as bishop, he is accorded the same respect and deference shown to the *turaga ni vanua*. Accordingly when Fijians formally address him, they use the word *saka* (roughly corresponding to sir in English) and use the second person plural. In official gatherings when he is there as the main guest, people usually crouch in his presence and clap their hands after touching him or after he has eaten or drunk. (Nayacakalou 1975, p. 37)

Like most educated and non-chiefly Fijians, Mataca feels that the *turaga ni vanua* seriously need help if they are to be effective leaders today. There are debates and disagreements that have emerged a collision of discourses of identity and power circulating in the Pacific today. (Lindstrom and White, 1997, p. 3). In Fiji, this assistance is even more acute since only a few of them have been properly installed as chiefs according the traditional protocols. There are claims and counter claims to the paramount chiefly titles from different factions within the same extended family. This has caused disunity, confusion, and abuse of funds. Because of this, the chiefs are unable to exercise their role as custodian of the indigenous people. More so, the *turaga ni vanua* are still demanding unquestionable service from a stratum of urbanized educated Fijians who have become skeptical about the traditional deference accorded to the traditional chiefs. Many feel that instead of uniting the people, the traditional chiefs are unnecessarily fragmenting the people.

#### *Reacting to the Coups*

In 1987, Mataca's plans to organize seminars for traditional chiefs were abruptly brought to a halt when Sitiveni Rabuka led a coup overthrowing the elected government.

Like everyone in the world, Mataca was shocked that such a violent event could happen in the island. Two weeks after the coup he wrote a letter addressed to the Catholic community. He acknowledged that the society in Fiji was complex. It was multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious. He urged the community to join hands in nation building. At the same time, he acknowledged the rights, aspirations, and fears of both the Fijian people, especially in view of the unique traditional link between people and land. He worked with the Council of Churches in trying to bring the different parties to dialogue.

Any hope by the Archbishop to help the traditional chiefs disappeared. The status of and deference for the *turaga ni vanua* was dramatically revolutionized. In abrogating the constitution, Rabuka radically inverted the role of the traditional chiefs and brazenly showed that a commoner could lead the country. Furthermore, Rabuka exposed the internal contradictions in values, beliefs, and habits embedded in the consciousness of the indigenous Fijian as regards preserving or changing the Fijian way of life. Mataca echoed this dilemma of *veisau*, (change):

The issue here in Fiji, like in most of these confrontations that are multiplying around the world, is the inability to accept modern society, the changes that this brings to our lives, and the creativity to move forward, not underlining what made our past, but creating what will be our future with others and enriching the whole with the contribution from our inherited and developed wisdom.

When the second coup occurred in Fiji in May 2000, Mataca was quick to

condemn it by sending out a pastoral letter titled, “We are Fiji Islanders.” He deliberately identified himself not as a *tauvei* but as a Fiji islander, a designation that included all ethnic groups in Fiji. He wrote that this event was part of Fiji history and he was ashamed to be known as a Fiji Islander. In another sermon he states,

The events of May 19, the holding of hostages and the overstaying of the coup makers and supporters in Parliament caused confusion, disrespect for human dignity, property, law, and have destroyed many marriages and many innocent people have suffered much. The perpetrators of these acts are indigenous Fijians and the receivers of much of these acts were indigenous Fijians. The indigenous Fijians are divided and are fighting among themselves. They are pawns in the hands of people who are greedy for power, rank, and wealth. The Indo-Fijian and other Fiji Islanders have lost much and are insecure in their land of birth; especially those who do not want to leave and cannot leave Fiji.

*Exposing the Cargo Cult Mindset*

A possible cause of the coups in Fiji is the subtle reemergence of the cargo cult mindset. Mataca says that the cargo-cult mentality “is very very much alive and doing very well” yet people cannot identify it as the possible reason for many problems facing the indigenous people. It needs to be exposed for it has masqueraded itself as Christianity. He claims that contemporary cargo cult mindset “has a different expression,” but it still has analogous beliefs of the *Tuka* cult that emerged amongst a hill tribe in 1885. Mataca links the coup leaders to the adherents of the *Tuka* cult. Both

groups interpret change not as *tavuki*, or new direction, but *veisau*, a radical reversal of the socio-economic and political order. Mataca nuances the Fijian interpretation of change. He admits that “*veisau* and *tavuki* are almost the same thing, but *veisau* is just to change but *tavuki* is more than just a change for change sake, it is new direction that has the common good as its goal.” In other words, the *Tuka* believe that change, *veisau* was an end in itself, while Mataca is claiming the change, *tavuki* has a broader understanding it is implied that change is a “means to another end.” As a result, the cult adherents believed that there was “*no other way*” than to turn the existing social, political, and economic order upside down. In this upheaval, the Fijians would become the masters while the other races would become servants, and the roles of chiefs and commoners would also be inverted; the *kaisi*, or the lowly born without any title, would ascend to the top and the paramount chiefs would descend to the down rung of the social ladder.

Mataca attributes this subtle reemergence to the inability of many indigenous Fijians to change, especially those who avoid hard work and asking the hard questions about cultural changes. Furthermore, monetary wealth (*cargo*) would now be the focal symbol instead of the traditional items that valued relationships and reciprocity. Mataca observes that the obsessive pursuit of material accumulation would be evident in the cargo cults to the extent that “the followers believed that through a miracle, *cargo* would come from heaven.” And when the *veisau* happened, the followers would have all the riches, and all the power. They would not have to engage in hard work because they were now in a superior position where they would have a vantage point to accumulate wealth. Mataca cited the recent example of how a group of people belonging to a form of *Tuka*

cult abandoned everything and came down the town of Lami to wait for the ships or airplanes apparently believed to laden with abundant wealth. They were told by their leaders that with this *cargo* they would finally enjoy a rich and peaceful life. The event never happened; the false expectancy subsided until this cargo-cult mentality surfaced in the 1987 coup.

Mataca argues that cohorts of the 1987 coup created the necessary context for the *cargo-cult* mentality to flourish in Fiji. Using the anxiety caused by rapid socio economic and religious change, Rabuka and his supporters were able to draw elements from the indigenous ethos and Christianity to convince people to change for the sake of change. The supporters of this type of radical change fulfilled the three purposes of *cargo-cults*. First they altered the sacrosanct status of the traditional chiefs; second, they misrepresented revelation theology claiming that God inspired them to carry out the coup, and thirdly they distorted reality by claiming that through their armed actions indigenous Fijian would be assured *cargo*, or financial wealth.

Mataca also claims that there is some overlap between the cargo cults and both the fast growing Christian revivalist movements and nationalist political movements. The members of these two groups also claim they have personal directives from God as to how the situation should be handled. “And you hear even today people preaching: *E tukuna vei au na Kalou!* God has directly spoken to me! Ministers preaching in the Church, and even those who preach on the radio can blame God for everything. But as humans we are responsible for what we do.”

*Defining Indigenous Rights*

For Mataca, indigenous rights are primarily about responsibility. People must be conscious to the fact that all peoples have rights and “sometimes our indigenous are limited because we have a responsibility to other people. Citing himself as an example he explains,

We are talking about our rights as landowners. But those advocating for these land rights do not say anything about the rights of those who have no land. That is what I am afraid of. If we are to talk about our rights, our ownership of land, then we must also talk about the responsibility of how to use these rights, and the rights of those other groups. They must all go together.

Since the two coups, Mataca has confronted his own people on the definition of *taukei*, indigenous rights, since the coups were purported to have been carried out to safeguard indigenous rights from being taken away the Indians. This placed Mataca in a very precarious position, because the recent Synod of Oceania and its subsequent *Ecclesia in Oceania* also advocates for the special rights of the indigenous people. In line with these documents and the UN Declaration of Right of Indigenous People, he acknowledges that like other indigenous peoples in the world, the *taukei* “do have some unique rights.” However, he asserts that it is up to the indigenous people to identify these fundamental rights. Fijians do not have the right to overthrow at gunpoint the democratically elected government, or hold hostage the Prime Minister and Cabinet members. They must also know that other citizens, namely the Indians, have rights that

need to be protected by the government. Failure to respect the dignity or rights of another person is contrary to the Gospel and destructive of human society. In his visits to villages, he explains how he understands *tauvei* rights:

When the *tauvei* uses the word rights in our language, they do not mean the UN Bill of Rights. It is used in a very limited way and so we are only speaking about exclusive rights: rights of the individual, the rights of women, rights of the child, *kedra na tauvei*, and the rights of indigenous people. Those who are talking about our [indigenous] rights must also tell us about rights of other people. It is like a woman who wants an abortion, she talks about her rights to have an abortion, but she will not talk to you about the right of the unborn child. Exactly the same is happening here in Fiji. We can talk about our rights as Fijians, but I propose that the Indians next door also have basic human rights. When we know his rights as a citizen and we know ours, only then will the Fijians and Indians talk face to face.

*Recognizing Fijian Insecurity and Identity*

The 2000 coup also compelled Mataka to address the insecurity of the indigenous peoples. He wrote in his pastoral letter that the Catholic Church in Fiji “did hear the cry of frustration and anger of the indigenous Fijians.” But yet again, he reiterated his message about the intrinsic value and dignity of every person. He outlined how he would achieve these two goals:

We will journey with them until they feel secure in their identity, in their

rights as indigenous and in their stewardship of time, talents, and treasures, including land given by God to be under their care. We pray that in spite of their frustrations and anger, they would be mindful of the Giver of Life who has gifted us as people with Fiji and all its resources. Fiji has come a long way, with help, as a small island nation in the Pacific and in the world. Let goodwill prevail, for we are a caring people. By putting God, and not money, at the center of our lives, we will avert infighting and divisions among ourselves. And let us not forget our neighbors.

*Dialoguing with other Christians*

According to Mataca the breakup of Christians into small groups is “our biggest sin.” Due to the involvement of the main religious groups in the two coups, Mataca currently has a strenuous relationship with other Christian churches. He feels that the sense of economic and political insecurity among the *tauvei* has been transferred to a splitting up of the main Christian denomination. This is evident by the fact that many indigenous Fijians are leaving the traditional Christian churches and joining small Pentecostal groups. In these new groups, their insecurity is supposedly abated by charismatic praying and singing. He suggests, “These people believe that during an hour or two of prayer, they will feel secure.”

He is also critical of these people because they have developed a type of ghetto mentality, whereby there is a clear dichotomy between the insiders and outsiders. The insiders look after themselves because they believe that God only looks after them. This has caused fragmentation and distrust amongst the Christian denominations. He compares

it to a physical competition whereby the “right hand is fighting the left hand, the right foot kicking the left foot.” To reinforce his argument he went public by saying that before the coup of 1987, Christian churches numbered fourteen. In 1989 he had another look and the number had increased hundredfold, from fourteen to twenty-four. Religious congregations that claimed to be Christian had increased. At the beginning of 2001, the government gazetted all marriage officers belonging to the Christian churches. There are now fifty-one government- recognized religious communities that identify themselves as “Christian.”

*Interpreting St. Paul’s “body of Christ”*

Mataca attributes this Christian fragmentation in Fiji to the different literalist interpretations of St. Paul’s theology of the body. In his letters, especially the ones to the Corinthians and Ephesians, Paul likens the church to Christ. “For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (I Cor.12: 12). Mataca proposes that many Christians have narrowly interpreted Paul’s metaphor of “the body of Christ.” In an ironic way, they justify their breaking away to the fact that it is possible for one Christian church each have distinct traits. In order to address this fragmentation, Mataca offers another image, which he believes, is closer to the authentic teaching of Christ. He offers the image of the kingdom of God. Mataca refers to Jesus’ life to validate his point since everything the latter preached and did during his ministry was about making the kingdom of God a reality. It was the will of the Father.

Mataca deems that beginning with the theme of the kingdom of God has a basis

for inter-religious dialogue:

To talk about the kingdom is easy. We can all agree that God is the Creator. It is incredible. With this foundational belief, one can talk to the Methodist, the Seventh Day and even the Hindus and Muslims. We are coming from different points of view, but if we shift to the kingdom, and come from the kingdom, our approach to these two will be the same.

*Participating in Reconciliation*

In recent years, Mataca has tried to actively participate in the conversation about the reconciliation process in Fiji. He continues to argue that those who were guilty for the two coups should take responsibility for their decisions and bear the consequences. This can only be achieved through the due process of law. After thirteen years, no one knows the guilty parties and until these people are brought to a court of law and punished, reconciliation will not take place.

When addressing a peace conference in Suva, Mataca warned that the reconciliation process must not become politicized nor treated as a separate development issue. He hopes that peace building and reconciliation will take place at all levels. But to achieve this aim, time will be necessary and victims' pain will have to be acknowledged. To begin this process, Mataca suggests, "there was a need to move away from racial stereotypes." He repeated his call that in Fiji the educated grass-roots people can be advocates in overcoming ethnic and religious labeling. Likewise, he has "challenged churches and its leaders to thoroughly identify the role they play in countering and addressing racial and political conflicts." He is concerned that some of the derogatory

statements towards the Indo-Fijians are said to be motivated by Christian faith. “Biblical verses are used in support of view that breed religious and racial hatred.”

*Continuing the Talanoa*

Despite the numerous challenges Mataca has faced as archbishop, he is still hopeful that ethnic and religious misunderstandings can be reconciled using the Fijian *talanoa*, an informal dialogue within a safe social environment with the goal of getting people to talk without feeling threatened by time limit and a rigid agenda. In his twenty-eight years as Bishop and Archbishop, Mataca has made use of *talanoa* around the kava bowl’ technique to get in touch with both the ordinary people and the chiefs. In doing this, he has been able to discuss serious topics like human rights but at the same time he receives feedback on the state of the Catholic Church on the parish level. It is also through *talanoa* that he has been able to express his vision for a creating a harmonious society in Fiji to members of the government, the business people, and the *turaga ni vanua*. Nonetheless, he believes that as an Archbishop, his primary mission in these *talanoa* sessions remains the same as expressed in his motto when he first was appointed to the episcopacy: “to preach Christ.” He has achieved this by interweaving the value of the sacredness and dignity of human person into his life, his pastoral decisions, and his public prayer. Recently when Mataca was asked to give the benediction at the residence of the President of Fiji, he again prayed and reiterated that the leaders of Fiji must become aware of the value of human persons as sons and daughters of God:

Our Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit onto our political leaders: the President, the PM his Cabinet, members of Parliament, and the Senate.

Send the same Holy Spirit to our *turaga ni vanua*, traditional leaders, so that they may lead your people, all the people of Fiji. I emphasized all the people of Fiji, give them compassion and love, let them treat the people they rule and see them as a family, because all of us are sons and daughters of one God. And that we, here in Fiji will see each other as brothers and sisters with love, justice and one nation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is at times like this when he has the opportunity to pray with others, *talanoa* with others, and socialize with others that energizes Mataca. However, he points to prayer and the Mass as the two main activities that sustain him as a bishop.

## CHAPTER VI

## ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY SABLAN APURON O.F.M CAP.

This is a biographical narrative of Archbishop Anthony Sablan Apuron Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (OFM Cap) of Guam. Beginning with the historical and cultural contexts, the narrative then proceeds to his ordination as auxiliary bishop of Agana. The story then moves backwards to his formative years to focus on how certain people and events influenced his decision to accept the appointment of bishop. It then moves from his episcopal ordination to the present time, describing the major challenges he has encountered during the last twenty years.

## Story Context

Guam, approximately 30 miles long and 4 to 9 miles wide, is the largest and southernmost island of the Mariana archipelago. The Marianas archipelago is a chain of fifteen islands in the Northern Pacific, situated between 13° and 21° N. latitude. and 144° and 146° E. longitude. They include the small islands of Saipan, Rota and Tinian.

The present population of Guam is approximately 160,796 (July 2002 est.) of whom roughly Chamorro 37%, Filipino 26%, white 10%, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other 27%. The Roman Catholic population makes up about 85%, (1999 est.) of the total population. (CIA World Factbook 2002: Guam)

The islands were first discovered in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan who called them *Las Islas de los Ladrones* (Thieves' Islands) on account of his first experience with the islanders, who felt they could take possession of anything on the ship. The Jesuit missionaries led by Padre Diego Luis de San Vitores arrived in 1668 and established a

regular Spanish colony on Guam. Vitores gave the islands the official title of *Las Marianus* in honor of Queen Maria Anna of Austria and the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he called "the first missionary to the Marianas" (Sanchez 1987. pp 29-34).

During the early Spanish period, the Catholic Church became the focal point for village activities. The Spanish encountered a people that had been living on the islands for about 4,000 years. The indigenous people are called Chamorro. Apuron's understanding of the origin of the word "Chamorro" comes from the "word *morro* which means, at least in the translation in our language, a person who is not educated and a person who doesn't have a depth of knowledge. *Cha-morro* means a person who is not that." The real interpretation of this word has been debated. Some scholars link it to the local language, while others find its origins in the Spanish language. Cummingham (1992) also addresses this issue:

The most commonly held theory is that the Spanish gave the name to the people of the Mariana Islands. Chamorro, an old Spanish word for "shaven head," was used to describe the high caste (*chamorri*) who shaved their heads. However the word "Chamorro" may have come from *Chamurre*, an indigenous word, not an adaptation of the Spanish word "Chamorro." In reports by Gonzalo de Vigo (1564), *Chamurres* was used in reference to the people of the Mariana Islands. The fact the men shaved their heads was not reported until 1688. Don Luis de Torres in the early 1800s said that Chamorro came into usage as the result of a misunderstanding. When the Chamorro's canoes came close to the

Spanish ships, the chiefs cried, *Tcha-mo ulin*, which meant, don't use the rudder any more." The Spanish took these words pronounced "*chamulin* or *tchamorin* as the name of country or people. (p. 1)

Whatever the explanation of the origin of the word, it has come to classify the people who originate or come from a chain of islands called the Mariana Islands. Those who have tried to develop an identity unsoiled by the Spanish language do not use the word Chamorro but prefer to use the term *taotao tano*, which literally means "people of the land."

Chamorro culture is characterized by a complex social protocol centered upon hospitality and familial respect. Many local people single out *Inafa'maolek*, or interdependence, as a central value, for the Chamorro culture depends on a spirit of cooperation and inclusiveness.

Guam was ceded to the US following the Spanish American War in 1898 and formally purchased from Spain in 1899. The Spanish Augustinians who had been entrusted with the mission in the Marianas were driven out of Guam with this transference of ownership. The single remaining priest, the native-born Father Jose Palomo, turned to the Spanish Capuchins for help, and in 1901 the first Capuchins were sent to work on Guam.

Placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the U.S. Navy, Guam was used mainly as a refueling and communication station until 1941, when it fell to invading Japanese forces shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Guam remained under Japanese control until reclaimed by American forces in July of 1944. In 1949, U.S. President Harry

S. Truman signed the Organic Act, making Guam an unincorporated territory of the US with limited self-governing authority, which it remains to this day. The islanders became American citizens adopting the U.S. government and education systems.

Despite the fifty years of American influence, Spanish Catholicism is still instantly recognizable on Guam in the form of religion, language, dress, fiestas, and architecture. Hope Alvares Cristobal (1999) laments that Guam has developed a hybrid culture, a blend of ancient tradition of the Roman Catholicism and the practices of the Hispanic world. (p. 138) This hybrid culture is further 'Hispanicized' by the large number of immigrant Filipinos who were also colonized by the Spanish.

In recent years, there have been calls for Chamorro self-determination. Some have used the Legislature to debate the issue, while others have resorted to the United Nations to take up their case. Guam remains on the United Nations list of non self-governing territories. This is a sensitive issue since Guam's economy depends on U.S. military spending. The total U.S. grants, wage payments, and procurement outlays amounted to \$1 billion each year (CIA World FactBook: Guam).

It was into these historical, cultural, and religious contexts that Anthony Sablan Apuron was born, raised, and ordained as a Chamorro-Guamanian bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. "He springs from the soil of Guam. He breathes the language, culture and faith of the island community." These traits were written by Father Thmoas J. McGrath about Apuron in a souvenir booklet especially prepared for Apuron's episcopal ordination. Prayers and songs were sung in the Chamorro language, the extended family participated in key moments of the liturgy and bishop-elect chose scripture reading that

reflected his mother's deep faith in the Christian value of service.

### The Episcopal Ordination

Father Anthony Sablan Apuron was ordained the auxiliary bishop of Agana 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1984. This date was significant to the people of Guam, since it was the third anniversary of the visit of Pope John Paul to their island. On this clear tropical day, about three thousand people congregated in the Cathedral of Dulce Nombre de Maria (Sweet Name of Mary) and the surrounding grounds to witness this solemn event.

The episcopal ordination began with the entrance of a long procession of brothers, seminarians, priests, and bishops from the back of a packed Cathedral. The Knights of St. Sylvester and the Knights of Columbus in their distinct attires, acted as honor guards in the front and rear of the procession. As the four bishops entered the center aisle, the choir sang the opening hymn in the local Chamorro language. Bishop-elect, Anthony Apuron, joined in the singing of *Nina 'huyong Yu 'us* with his beautiful voice. He was very familiar with this hymn, for he had earlier translated several hymns to be sung at this liturgy.

The greetings and penitential rite concluded with the prayer by Bishop Flores, the principal celebrant and bishop of Agana. He prayed that “the Lord would give his servant Anthony, whom the Lord had chosen to be shepherd of His flock, a spirit of courage and right judgment and a spirit of knowledge and love.” The congregation responded with “Amen,” or “so be it” in Hebrew.

The congregation was invited to listen to three scripture readings, specially chosen by the Bishop-elect. They reflected his own feelings about his future ministry as bishop. The theme that wove these three readings was that of a bishop is sent “to be

servant to all.” The homilist, Bishop Cummins from the Diocese of Oakland in California, would later expound on this theme.

After the gospel reading, the Rite of Ordination began with the Latin hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus* invoking the Holy Spirit to become part of this sacred act. The bishop-elect was then led by Monsignor Zoilo Camacho and Reverend James Gavin to the chair of the principal consecrator. The two priests represented the local clergy and the Capuchin friars. On behalf of the people and the Capuchins, Father Gavin asked Bishop Flores, the main consecrator, to ordain their brother priest for service of bishop. This was followed by the reading of the official apostolic letter from the Pope appointing Father Anthony of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin as auxiliary bishop of Agana. As auxiliary bishop Apuron would assist Bishop Flores in the running of the Diocese of Agana. The congregation then gave Apuron a standing ovation. This was a sign that the people also approved and confirmed the papal appointment.

Soon after, Bishop Cummins commenced his homily by elucidating the rich history of Catholicism in the Marianas. Following that, he dwelt on his main theme; the paradox of being both a shepherd and servant in the contemporary Church. To conclude, he emphasized the role of bishop as one who united the people to God.

Bishop Flores then read the ordination instructions on the duties of the bishop. He followed the age-old custom of questioning Apuron in public. Responding with the words “I am,” the bishop-elect answered nine questions about his faithfulness to the Church beliefs, its leaders and tradition. Satisfied with the answers, Bishop Flores invited the congregation to kneel and pray for the intercession of the saints. Apuron prostrated

himself on the floor, as the two religious nuns intoned the saints and God to have mercy upon the soon-to-be ordained bishop.

Following the litany of saints, Bishop Flores again said a short prayer before he and the other four bishops laid their hands on the head of the bishop-elect. On completion of the laying of hands, the Book of the Gospels was placed open over the head of Apuron. Again Flores implored God to pour out on Apuron the governing spirit so that he would make a good shepherd and priest. The priestly role was further accentuated by the anointing of the bishop's head with chrism or holy oil.

After wiping his head of some of the oil, the newly ordained bishop patiently waited as three members of his family brought up the ring, miter, and pastoral staff. For Apuron this was one of the poignant moments of the whole ordination. The attention of the congregation was fixed on the father of the newly ordained bishop, Manuel Tajjito Apuron. With the aid of his two sons, he walked unsteadily onto the sanctuary to hand over the crozier which would be presented to the new bishop. Apuron recalls this life changing experience:

The handing of the crozier was a poignant moment for me. The crozier was made of *ifil* (native) wood. The people were so proud that a native son was made a bishop. To honor this, I actually asked someone to carve a crozier from the strongest native wood in Guam. I thought that this was a very poignant moment because it really ushers in a new vision in my life to see that, now I'm really called to lead. I mean not that I've not led as a priest but in a new way, in a greater way because now I'm responsible, or at least along with the Ordinary, I'm

asked to be responsible for the entire church of the Marianas at that time.

The ceremony proceeded with the investiture of the bishop's ring, placement of the miter, and handing over of the pastoral staff. Now that he had all the symbols of bishop, Bishop Flores led the new auxiliary bishop of Agana to the seat especially prepared for him. The ordination was completed with the kiss of peace extended to the new bishop by the four older members of the episcopacy. Apuron recalls that the investiture of the especial symbols was a significant moment for him. These rituals and symbols were a call of the church to really be a shepherd, which meant that he had to preserve and teach the Catholic tenets. He was "to be a leader in the community, correct error where it exists, and bring back the stray." The final act of being seated in an Episcopal chair was a sign that ushered in a new vision in Apuron's life. He knew that "now I'm really called to lead in a new way, in a greater way because now I'm responsible, or at least along with the ordinary for the entire church of the Marianas at that time."

Now that the episcopal ordination was over, the Mass moved into the liturgy of the Eucharist. Again members of Apuron's extended family participated in the offertory procession bringing up the candles, the ciborium, the chalice, and wine decanters. Many of the prayers asked for God's blessing on the newly ordained bishop. During the communion rite, at the time for the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, Bishop Apuron led the congregation in singing the prayer in Chamorro.

After communion, the new bishop walked down the church to give his first episcopal special blessing. He returned to the sanctuary to listen to messages of

congratulations from Rome and the US. The new bishop thanked the people, the bishops, and his family in both the Chamorro and English languages. In response to his speech, Bishop Flores in his booming voice called out to the congregation, “Viva Apuron.” He invited the people to respond. The people shouted three times in Spanish: Viva Apuron! Viva Apuron! Viva Apuron!

### Formative Years

The life-story of Archbishop Apuron begins on November 1, 1945, two months after the end of World War II. He was the tenth child of Manuel Taijito Apuron and Ana Santos Sablan who had moved to Mongmong from Agana because of the devastation of war. Apuron proudly points to his family as the primary source of his Chamorro culture and Catholic faith. This pride for his family heritage was incorporated into his coat of arms for he wanted express his parents’ family roots. He writes,

The lower left hand portion contains two silver mountains, the *suní* or taro plant, and a river on a field of blue. One mountain stands for my paternal ancestors from Ilocos Sur in the Philippines and the other for my maternal ancestors from the high islands of the Marianas. The *suní* symbolizes the unity between these ancestors in the fertility of soil and traditional hospitality through the sharing of food. The taro plant is on a running silver line. This symbolizes the fruitfulness and fertility of the union of my father and mother, which allowed me to come into existence.

It was from his mother that he heard novenas prayers to Santa Tersita, San Petero and San Pablo and the Nino in her Chamorro language.

At an early age Anthony began to take an interest in music. He gives credit to his sister Severina for encouraging him to sing. He would sing with his sister as his brother Paul played the ukulele. In recent years he has produced several cassette music tapes. He handed me the tapes and humbly gave me a short history of his interest in music:

I used to sing in the shower and I just got caught up in that kind of a mood and attitude. I love singing and I love to hear music, but I'm very selective. I like to hear good music, clean music... I don't know much about music, I don't write music, but I have a good ear for music so I try to put in phrases and words that sort of stick to the text of those, not a literal translation but it captures the essence of each verse. I try to decipher how the notes go up and down. The only formal class I had in music was really in fifth grade and eighth grade.

This musical talent would later flourish into the recording of three cassettes. In 1992, he produced a cassette titled *An Advent Christmas Prayer*. This was followed by another cassette in 1995 titled *Hymns to Mary* and finally in 1999 with a Chamorro title of *Mafanago Hao* (You were Born). In this last cassette, Apuron sings the traditional Christmas hymns in both English and Chamorro. The reasons for these three volumes of music is to "help preserve the Chamorro language and to help others appreciate the native language by providing a translation of it."

On a more somber note, Apuron vividly recalls his experiences in the elementary public school and the challenges of trying to retain his mother tongue:

In those days the teachers insisted that we speak English. We would get

fined, 5 cents, 10 cents, or 25 cents. . . . On campus we were very conscious of the rule, sometimes we would slip, get caught and we get fined. We looked at it as a law. As soon as we leave campus after school we'd be mocking the teachers off ground because they can't do anything! So we would play that kind of a game. We wanted to make sure that they understood that they could not really deny us the use of our native mother tongue, even if they put laws on it. Sure, we'll live by the laws, when it's convenient but when it's convenient for us too, we will stand up for our own rights.

The repression of the Chamorro language served to make young children like Apuron more determined to protect their mother tongue. They learnt to acquire this tenacity because "the Chamorro women, the mothers, kept the language alive teaching it to their young children, especially in the homes," since they were trained in a long tradition of oral education.

When he moved to Cathedral Grade school for fifth grade, young Anthony developed a practice of attending daily morning Mass. He would accompany his mother to the Mongmong Church. He recalls that sometimes he did not like to get up that early. However, this routine would instill within him a deep commitment to daily Eucharist. As was the practice in the 1950s, young Anthony learned the responses to the prayers of the Latin Mass. Subsequently the twelve-year old began thinking about the seminary and the invitation from God to become a priest. He also discerned that he would request entry into the Franciscan Capuchins. For the next four years he would attend Father Duenas

High School excelling in his studies and finding out about the three religious groups: the Augustinians, the Jesuits, and the Capuchins.

But the high school student's decision to become a priest was put to the test by his mother Ana Santos Sablan. Apuron recalls that at first she refused to recognize and accept that her son had a vocation the priesthood. She did not want him to be a priest; she wanted him to be a doctor. She said "you have a [good] mind; you're intelligent enough that you could study to be a medical doctor, and serve your people that way." But Apuron insisted that he was sure about his vocation to be a priest. He convinced his Mom that he would like to serve God in the church because he hoped that after serving Him in the Church, the Lord would say, "Okay, faithful servant come and take the last seat." Though she really could not fully understand the rational, she still helped foster his vocation through prayers.

After graduating salutatorian from Duenas High School in 1964, Apuron left Guam for the Capuchin Novitiate at Milton, Massachusetts. He did not know then, that besides going to be formed in the spirituality of St Francis, he was to be indirectly tutored in the Chamorro language by his mother far away in the northern Pacific. He recalled this incident with great reverence and love for his mother:

When she heard that I was joining the novitiate, and I was going off island on my first trip, it was quite a shock for her. [She was] shocked that I would be lifted from one end of the world to the other, 9,000 miles away. Then she told me these words and I quote her, saying, "Son if you write to me in English, I will just throw it in the garbage can. But if you write to

me in Chamorro I will respond to you.” And so I struggled. It took me one week, as an 18-year-old boy, to compose a letter in Chamorro. I didn’t know what to say. [Until then] I had never written in Chamorro. And the amazing thing is that every time I struggled with one page and sent it home, I would get back six pages in Chamorro and handwritten! I would exclaim, “Dear Lord, it takes me a whole week to decipher what she’s trying to say!” But I loved it and that’s always been communicated. I think that helped me or forced me to appreciate the native tongue. And from that [experience] I think I have developed an appreciation of the culture and the language that I still carry and want to continue to preserve.

Seven years after leaving the shores of his island, Apuron had completed most of his priestly formation. He had made his vows, he had completed philosophy, and he was in his third year of theology preparing for his diaconate ordination. Regrettably his mother was diagnosed with cancer, so he returned to Guam and was able to be at her bedside when she died on December 6, 1971. He was ordained deacon on December 12 enabling him to preach and be the main minister at her funeral. Among the many words of wisdom spoken by his mother, Apuron treasures those about service. He reminisced about his Mom’s last words before she died: Her last words were “serve your brothers and sisters.” And it really was vivid to me because then later on when I was trying to figure an episcopal motto, I decided on *Serves Tuus*, Your Servant. What she meant was for me to be servant, not only to my immediate family, but also to all believers, for this is the role of a priest.

### Pastoral Years

Apuron was ordained to the priesthood August 26, 1972, in the Agana Cathedral. After ordination he was sent to complete his fourth year of theology. He then moved to the University of Notre Dame to begin an intense year of study in liturgy. In 1974, he returned to Guam to begin his pastoral duties just about the time that there were attempts to produce a Chamorro orthography. There were efforts to purify the language so that it really reflected the pronunciation of the words. Apuron recalls that in his own life, this revival meant reeducation in writing and speaking his mother tongue. He now can look back and laugh at the process:

When I first came back from studies at Notre Dame, the bishop asked me to write articles on the liturgy every week in Chamorro. Now, I laugh when I look at them because I wrote like a Spaniard, following the Spanish spelling. Our older people would recognize the pronunciation or the spelling or the orthography, but the modern orthographers, would laugh at it. So I even went to school for six weeks to learn how to spell the words. For example, *maolek*, instead of *mauleg*. *Maolek* means good. So it has been a learning experience for me. Some people say that I'm an authority on the Chamorro language, I'm really not, but I still try my best to be a student of the language and try to preserve and promote it.

For the next ten years, Father Apuron served the local church in Guam and the Capuchin Friars. He held posts of leadership that allowed him to get involved in the formation of seminarians and altar boys, translation and development of the Chamorro

language, governance of the Capuchin mission, and spiritual guidance of legislators. Yet his passion was to be available to the people and celebrate the Mass with them. He made every effort to attend the fiestas and visit families in their homes.

His own family continued to be part of his priestly life. If there were any decisions that the family had to make, they always turned to him. They did this because they had a respect for him and the office that he represented. At first Father Apuron found this deferential treatment mind-boggling. He explains, that his family knew that “I was placed in a larger capacity of service that is I am not to just to minister to them but to the larger people [of God].” His father summed the respect for his son when he said, “You are a separate, and you’ve been separated from the family . . . . we have a respect for you and the office that you’re going to have.”

#### Appointment and Coat of Arms

The unexpected news of Father Apuron’s appointment came when he had just finished celebrating daily Mass at the Cathedral. Bishop Flores approached him to say that he needed to see him and that his superior, Jim Gavin had been invited to the meeting. The two men arrived at the bishop’s residence at about 7.30 a.m. in the morning. The bishop read a letter that he had received from the Holy Father, appointing Apuron auxiliary bishop and titular bishop of Muzuca. Apuron’s first reaction was a question, where is Muzuca? The bishop jokingly replied, ‘you go down to Nauru and make a turn left, but it is somewhere in Africa.’ Recapturing the seriousness of this event, Bishop Flores indicated that he needed an immediate response. So he suggested that Apuron go into the chapel to pray over it and to make speedy discernment. Below he talks about this

epiphany:

So I went into the chapel and conversed with the superior and I asked, “What should I do? I never expected it, I didn’t want it.” I continued, “this is the reason I became a Capuchin because I knew as a diocesan priest I might be a candidate for bishop later on. I became a Capuchin thinking I could escape all that and here I find myself in this situation, so what should I do?” And he said, “Well, it’s your decision.” So I went out and the bishop asked me what I thought. I said, “Well, what would happen if I say no?” He responded, “Well, I’ll write the Pope and say that you said no, but he might write back and ask you again a second time.” I asked, “What happens if I say no a third time?” He replied, “I think he might write back and ask you a third time.” Coming out of a Franciscan Capuchin background, I was very conscious throughout my studies that Francis was always at the service of the church... And so I thought, “here’s a church calling me to serve in a greater capacity and I said to myself, you know, who am I. I’m really unworthy [of being a]bishop and I don’t know if I can handle this, and I never expected this but if this is what the church wants, then I say yes.” I had already said yes when I was ordained a deacon, that was the very first, formal commitment that I made to become a servant of the church. So when I said, “Yes,” he said, “Okay, I’ll send the letter telling the Holy Father.” I never in my wildest dreams. . . I complained to the Lord in prayer asking, “Why did you do this to

me’? I thought I was running away from it! Not from you, but I guess you wanted me to be it [bishop].”

Soon after the announcement of this appointment on December 8, 1983, Apuron was sent to the Philippines to have cassocks made and gather ideas about designing an episcopal coat of arms. It suddenly dawned on him that “nobody has ever been trained or taught about becoming a bishop or how to get there.” With the help of several priests and Cardinal Sin of the Philippines, he was able to retain the coat of arms of the diocese and Marian themes from the two previous bishops.

In the upper left hand portion, Apuron retained the diocesan symbol which depicts a white field with a low green knoll and three stone monoliths known as *latte stones*. These coral stone pillars are supposedly only found in the Mariana Islands. In his explanation of their meaning, Apuron states, “The latte stones were the foundation of every Chamorro home that was built before modernization and Americanization. They were used to build their home above that, six or eight feet above ground because of the typhoons. So it represents really the foundation of the culture, so to speak. Therefore, for Apuron, the *latte* stone has also come “to represent the link between the ancient Chamorro who first saw the Light of Christ at the arrival of the first missionary Luis Diego de Sanvitores S.J. Besides, the symbol represents the continual growth and development of Christianity among the Chamorro people under the guidance of and charitable leadership of the Jesuits, Augustinians Recollects, and Capuchin missionaries.” The *latte stones* represent the firm foundations first in the culture, later in faith on which the bishop Apuron stands today.

Apuron also retained the moon and star in the diocesan coat of arms. The two symbols represented a Marian theme. The capital letter “M” represent the deep devotion to Mary. The six-pointed star also stands for her title Star of the Sea. Apuron muses, “those two kind of capture the essence of who we are as a people.”

In order to reflect his Franciscan heritage, Apruon used the standard Franciscan coat of arms. It shows the arms of Christ and St. Francis in saltire surmounted by a cross commonly known as the *tau*. This represents the miracle of the Stigmata.

For his motto the new auxiliary, bishop Apuron took the advice of Cardinal Sin and choose *servus tuus* (your servant). However, these words were personal and significant for they echoed a similar expression spoken by his mother on her deathbed. He says, “I like that motto because it was the last words that I remember my mother telling me before she died in 1971, six days before my deaconate ordination.” The motto also stands for ten years of pastoral service as a priest in the Northern Marianas, Saipan, and Guam—Father Duenas Seminary, Mt Carmel Agat, and Agana Cathedral. Finally the words *servus tuus* is a pledge of Apuron’s service to the people of the Diocese in imitation of Jesus Christ, the humble servant of his Father in Heaven.

#### Living out His Motto

Apuron ranks the preservation of the Chamorro language and culture as the primary cultural value that helped him in his episcopacy. He states proudly, “I am an avid preserver of the Chamorro language.” This has not been an easy task because after the Spanish American War in 1898 Chamorro “receded into the background.” He claims that 20% of the words in Chamorro are of Spanish origin, since it was only written down

when the Spanish missionaries arrived on the islands. There is so much inter-mixing of the two languages that Apuron spent much of his life “working to purify our Chamorro language and let it stand on its own.” This continual strong influence of the Spanish language and culture poses a challenge to the bishop. The question for the bishop has been how does he preserve and revive the Chamorro identity which he has appropriated?

*Chamorro language and culture*

As bishop he has tried to do this mainly by getting directly involved in the preservation of the Chamorro language. He served in the liturgy of the Chamorro Language Commission. He gave the Chamorro radio talks for the Catholic hour on the two local radio stations. He also has translated reflections of the Sunday Gospel readings into the Chamorro language. He feels that with these reflections, people are “spiritually fed” even if they do not come to church since those who go to Mass can bring the parish bulletin home. However, his main way of keeping the Chamorro language alive is by celebrating the 5.45.am Mass in Chamorro.

In 1996, at a series of talks on the effects of the Spanish-American War held at the University of Guam, he presented a paper titled, “The Role of the Church Played in Helping to Preserve the Chamorro Language and Culture.” In this speech he defends the early missionaries, especially the Pale Diego who “knew that in order to identify with the Chamorro it is important that he identify with them through the heart. And when you speak the language of the heart, you will have touched them. And when you have touched them, then you have won them over.” This does not mean that Apuron is not critical of the Spanish colonizers. He states,

Throughout the later Spanish era when at times the Spanish language was stressed and emphasized at times to the detriment of the Chamorro language, the people maintained their determination not to allow their native tongue to die. . . . Try as they may, the Chamorro language had the resiliency that does not know how to quit.

He has also ventured outside the archdiocese and Guam to give public speeches in the Chamorro language to advocate for the revival of the language. In 1990, in a very passionate speech in Chicago, Apuron reiterated the challenges that Guam faced because of its colonized history. Again he stresses the loss of language:

With the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, we were thrust into subsequent and ongoing colonization by foreign powers. Since then, we have experienced many events which have limited our ability to exercise the talents and resources that God has given to us as a people. Our language has been compromised. For many years following American re-occupation after World War II, Chamorro was not an official language.

Nevertheless, the devotional legacy of the Spanish is so much a part of the present day culture that it may be unrealistic to pursue an unadulterated Chamorro language and culture. In a conversation with anyone from Guam, including Apuron; one inevitably talks about the fiestas. Every village has a patron saint whose feast day is celebrated with a mass followed by a great fiesta of food, song, and dance. Yet Apuron points that although it reflects how the great hospitality and strong kinship ties of the Chamorro people, fiestas may be the cause of health problems. He describes how his own health has

been affected by bad eating habits:

Because of that sense of hospitality, which always, always extends to providing food, abundance of food, all kinds of foods, we have been inflicted in modern days with diabetes, heart problems, and strokes. We have become a sedentary group, or sedentary society. And we do not eat as healthy as we ought to or we should. In the old days we always sweat it out by working on the farm, working in the garden, and tilling the soil. Now, we just run to the grocery, go from one air-conditioned place to another air-conditioned place. Therefore we do not really work out, if you will, all the food that we ingest and so therefore we're kind of struck with diabetes. I've had diabetes since I became a bishop, which I've never had before. So if anything has to be purified [in the culture ] it's to try to see how we can eat in a healthy way, and we are struggling and trying very, very hard, but it is very difficult.

Notwithstanding, Apuron points out that these fiesta and novenas creates a sense of connectedness, an integral value in Chamorro culture. He attributes this to Spanish missionaries, since they affirmed the ancient Chamorro's great respect for the ancestors. Thus first anniversaries are as big and important as the day of death itself, or the funeral. Today with modern communication, being scattered in the US or Europe does not deter people from returning to the island for the funeral of a relative. They go through the process of mourning and the rites and then they go back to their own lives. By the time of the actual anniversary of death, they find themselves back on Guam for they have this

desire to stay connected with the living and the departed.

Besides the Chamorro language, Apuron feels that other aspects of the culture may be difficult to bring back. One of the reasons he gives for this negative attitude is that the Chamorro people are “removed from their ancestors.” He feels that the Chamorro dances “running around in these skin paints and stuff, wielding big chunks of three stems and stuff as if in warfare is repetitive and gives the appearance that we’re a violent people.” He questions the real meaning of “the stomping on the floor, and the rhythmic banging of the wood.”

The self-identification as a Chamorro has been natural to Apuron. He considers himself a native Chamorro because he is a descendent of a person who belonged to the original inhabitants of the island. Yet he recognizes his Filipino ancestry, since his paternal grandfather was originally from the Philippines. He is atypical of most people from the island of Guam who refer to themselves as Chamorro, in that most of them trace their lineage back to the Philippines. Therefore, for Apuron being indigenous means ‘longevity of living on the island’ and can trace their Chamorro ancestry through ownership of land, language, and culture.

#### *Americanization*

Another related challenge for Apuron is Americanization. By this he means that American values of individualism, separation of state and religion and consumerism have negatively affected the island people. He laments that because of the prevalence of these values, many younger Chamorro do not desire to stay connected with family members and the clan:

Any attempt to bring members together is getting more and more difficult because “the younger generations are beginning to forget and sometimes they don’t even care. They are becoming so Americanized that is when they leave here they don’t want to be bothered.” Sadly some Chamorro cannot speak the mother tongue and prefer to communicate only on English. It is the American thing to be able to speak English since Chamorro is only a “kitchen language.”

Apuron also blames Americanization for the decrease in the number of people coming to church. He feels that “they don’t pray, they don’t do anything, they just fight to survive and try to make ends meet.” There are other Guamanians who argue that they are searching for a deeper sense of meaning which they think can be found in other religions, whether they be Christian or non-Christian. This concerns Apuron because there is a proliferation of new religious sects and groups in Guam, which provoke Catholics to be “open to any religion because it’s part of the American culture.” He describes a typical scenario: “They don’t want a crucifix in their home, and they don’t want to force their kids to pray or to think of God or even to go to church. They become hedonist, whatever it is, practical, and atheist. And they haven’t been back.”

The controversy over casino gambling and poker machine has been used by Apuron to illustrate the power of American consumerism. Shortly after being appointed Archbishop of Agana in May 11 1986, Apuron was confronted with the issue of poker machine gambling. As bishop and indigenous leader, he found himself divided between the values of the Catholic Church and American value of separation of state and church.

It was a major struggle because now there were plans to introduce casino gambling. Poker machine was already proliferated on the island. Apuron organized a group of lay-people who called themselves “*Basta* (no more) Poker Machine,” to counteract this movement. He still has vivid memories of this struggle and how it brought him into conflict with many Catholics, even his brother Capuchins. Although it was hard to recall his incident, Apuron outlined the struggle:

But I became involved because they were looking at me as a leader. It was a non-profit organization, neither political nor religious. On the sidelines, I was helping them. And so it came to a point where it had to come to a head because the forces of evil are saying, you know, you hypocrite, you have bingo and raffles in churches and poker machines are here already, what are you trying to say, are you trying to get rid of it? You don't want casino gambling? We were arguing the fact that it's been destroying the lives of people. And so paycheck after paycheck usually goes into throwing into these money-sucking machines. We went canvassing from door to door and from village to village. The clash was going to come when the committee asked to have a Mass to sensitize the political leaders. After one Mass on a Thursday I was asked to stay back. I didn't know what it was, but they had all planned it, three of them got up and blasted me for politicizing the church because now I'm asking the priests to come together for prayer before Mass. And it's really a Mass for the Holy Spirit to align our senators, the leaders, to enact a legislation to get rid of poker

machines. I went home crying I was so heartbroken. I called a very close friend in New York, and asked, “What I should do?” I’m coming to a point of getting on a plane, getting out of here, and just disappearing. He said, “That’s not the way to solve the problem. You were asked to get up on the cross, to be nailed to the cross, don’t come down from the cross. Endure it.” So I did. I stayed.

Nevertheless, Apuron and his group were able to collect over 9,000 signatures of voters, forcing the senators to pass legislation banning the poker machine. The gambling industry was killed overnight with the confiscation of over 1,800 machines which were crushed in the dump or dumped in the ocean. Although this experience was painful, he felt vindicated.

Another issue that causes strained relationship between the Chamorro people and the American government is that of land. For Chamorro, land is more than a commodity to be used, it is precious and sacred. In 1995 Apuron was part of a delegation that went before the Brac Commission in Washington DC to plead that the land that the U.S. military did not use due to the closure of naval facilities be returned to original landowners. In a passionate speech he pleaded with the Commissioners:

If you decide to close these bases, as you have so many others, that will be a painful decision. But if you decide to close these bases and, at the same time, not also decide to return the assets and the land associate with them to the people of Guam, in order that we can do whatever is possible to provide for our people, that will be more than just a painful decision. It will

be an immoral decision.

The commissioners were listening to a leader in the church of the largest segment of the population in Guam. People supported this involvement in the land issue because for them it was an issue of justice. There was no concern between separation of state and church. People believed that there should be some kind of restitution because “the people really valued the land.”

He recalls that because of the submission of the Guam delegation, “they [the U.S. military] returned something like 2,500 acres.” Apuron feels that land is important because it would give the people a sense of security. “If all else fails you can at least depend on the land and the segment of the land that you can call your own, to grow things, to raise whatever you need. I think people do identify with the land, a portion of the land that they call their own, which is passed down from generation to generation.”

Apuron feels that in the last ten years there is a greater consciousness of the importance of the land now because “we see that at times our land and natural resources are really pilfered and abused. The U.S. military has polluted land. “They bury, for example, chemicals there that are not conducive for growth, in fact, it’s harmful for man and it’s really sad because they’ve done this secretly.” In other words they have “violated the sacredness of the land and the people the land belongs to.”

However, Apuron does not lay complete blame of the U.S. Navy. He points to some of his own people who have sold their land and now “are homeless in their homeland.” He states, that’s why I say it’s very unfortunate, like the example I gave of Tinian where they sell their birthright because of financial gain and money. But many

people are finding out that financial gain and money whittles away and then they have nothing. Then they really become powerless, not only powerless but even homeless.

*Relationship with clergy*

The above experience over the poker machine exemplifies the strenuous relationship Apuron has had with his brother Capuchins. At a critical time when he needed their support to outlaw poker machines, they criticized him for politicizing of the church. In a moment of candid self-reflection, Apuron articulates the possible reasons for this strained rapport with his religious brothers:

I think they [the Capuchins on Guam] know me as Brother Tony and Father Tony and they saw me as being elevated above them, [when I became a bishop]. Even though they professed the fact that we will support you [as bishop] because you are one of us, you are a native, especially the expatriate, in reality they don't. The ones that give me the hardest time are non-natives. Some of them have left and moved on, sad to say. But even of the native ones, I really detect that they pay courtesy, but in their hearts there's always, I don't know what it is, whether it's judgment against me, or whatever, or probably the way I administrate. Because I'm very, very pastoral. I don't really like to sit behind a desk and just administer the diocese, or the archdiocese. I like to go out and touch people's hands, visit them when they're sick, comfort them when they're dying, do weddings The Lord will judge me later on, but I feel it's a pastoral reason and people are so honored when they do that, and I'm not

doing that just to give me a tall hat or whatever. I really do it out of genuine concern. And when I do it I know that they understand.

He is further saddened because he believes that St Francis, whose charism the Capuchins try to embrace, and would do whatever the Church would want. But Apuron finds that some of his Capuchin brothers resist this call to be faithful and obedient to him as Archbishop. They do not necessarily go with what he, as spiritual leader says, for sometimes they interpret some of the Church's teachings and pronouncements differently. He emphasizes, that because of his training as a Capuchin Franciscan, and the way and life that he understood Francis has convince him that the latter saint "was always submissive to will of the Church. The Church could be the Pope, the Magisterium." Therefore he believes that this interpretation should guide the Capuchins brothers to "try to move with the Church in his day and age answering secularism and hedonism, and all those "isms" hat counteract the things of Christ"

These differences of interpretation also manifested itself in 1999, when Apuron, through a Decree, "erected" the Archdiocese Missionary Seminary Redemptoris Mater. In that Decree Apuron referred to the call by Pope John Paul II for a "new evangelization which is needed as a response to the demands of the present circumstances which are changing rapidly." Thus he embraced the Neocatechumenal way and established a seminary for young men from Spain, Philippines, and Canary Islands.

Although Apuron personally thinks this is the way of the church to help people who are struggling with their Catholic faith, his brother Capuchins have made a pact that they will not support the Neocatechumenal community. Some have even chided him. He

has responded by pointing out the positive values of the latter community; these men were being formed in community and they were really strengthened by the Word and the celebration of Reconciliation. It continues to cause Apuron disappointment and has distanced him from his own Capuchin community since they echo the common criticisms that Neocatechumenal community is like a clique in the church and divisive of the local church. But he admits that he has found that this group helps revive his spirits after his fiesta Masses:

I get revived when I hear the experiences of individuals who what they call echo the Word, who bounce off the Word of God and see and tell us or share how that Word has touched them. . . .it is an effort I think on the part of these individuals to form what is called small Christian community And they enjoy, they love it, and they come out of their own experiences of brokenness, of short-sidedness perhaps, or prejudices, and it helps them to reevaluate their Christian life in terms of what we call walking in the way of the Lord.

The challenge posed by the pastors of parishes and diocesan priests is more on the level of administration and transparency. One of changes that he has tried to introduce into the archdiocese was making the pastors of parish accountable for the financial status of the parish. He admits that with certified accountant they have made some progress but it is still a struggle. He was able to get an agreement to an assessment, whereby each parish was asked to give in to the Archdiocese a reasonable amount based on the current average monthly income. There were several pastors who did not turn in anything. They

had to be repeatedly reminded, since they were in arrears for three months or four months.

In general, Apuron thinks that he can trust his priests. Yet he still has questions: “What the hell do these people want and what do they want of me and what do they want of the church?” At times they feels that it is “like pulling teeth” and hope with the help of the Lord that eventually they might come around agreeing to the changes that he has tried to implement since becoming Archbishop. Yet he feels that they can be too caught up in their own ministries in their own parishes. He pondered on how to find a balance in his episcopal roles:

They’ll be the judges as to whether I am an effective shepherd, both administratively as well as pastorally. I take to heart, for example, the readings from Ezekiel these past few days. The prophet is so critical of the shepherds and the Lord is telling them in no certain terms, either you shape up or I’m going to fix you, or permanently. I’m going to find new shepherds who are truly going to guide my sheep and not just feed on them and suck on them and leave them stranded. It’s a good meditation for me. It reminds me that’s what I need to always try to be archbishop. The Lord will be my judge, He will be my judge.

Another struggle that Apuron faces is the formation of diocesan seminarians. Recently he has had to dismiss three seminarians. Two cases were related to homosexuality. The third one refused to move to a seminary that was a little stricter in its formation. The problems have become more complicated for Apuron because two of the

three are still in theology studies looking for another bishop to sponsor them and hopefully ordain them to the priesthood. So Apuron questions the motive of the bishop that accepted one of them into the seminary. He feels that such bishops are really in for trouble because the issue was obedience. This will arise again if not addressed in the seminary. In addition, he strongly feels that the solution to the shortage of priest is not “one more person, one more warm body in the seminary.” His solution is for the young men to stay on the island where they can be nurtured in a discernment process before they are sent off island to the college seminaries. He also feels strongly that the Neocatechumenal way of formation for the priesthood might be one way of ways that the diocese might pursue. He states,

The (Neocatechumenal seminarians) fall back to a community. They are formed in community; their vocation is nurtured by the community. Then they are really strengthened by the Word and celebration of Eucharist. I think these are the future priests who can truly be of service for the Lord and can really serve the church.

#### *Acculturation*

Apuron believes that early Spanish-Chamorro acculturation makes inculturation difficult to promote in Catholic Church on Guam. These changes may be reciprocal, which results in the two cultures becoming similar, or one-way and may result in the extinction of one culture, when it is absorbed by the other. He feels that it is hard to get involved in the inculturation of the Chamorro, for “most people are removed from their Chamorro ancestors” due to the inter-mingling of the two cultures resulting in a Spanish-

Chamorro culture. Apuron argues that the bi-cultural way of life changed the “traditional Chamorro ranking system.” These ideas are corroborated by another scholar, Maritiza Del Priore (1986) who describes this phenomenon:

The loss of the primary culture of the Chamorro to that of a new Spanish – Chamorro culture is an interesting phenomenon which may have resulted from the Spanish method of instituting a readily establish educational system, and making the Chamorro adapt to the new environment by complete immersion in the Spanish culture. In addition, their choosing of leaders of the community and members of the elite as special targets of acculturation through mandatory education eventually created a new class of leaders who were no longer Chamorros, but individual representative of the newly emerging Spanish-Chamorro culture. (p. 118)

Because of this hybrid culture, inculturation of the liturgy is not evident in the church in Guam. Apron believes that “We don’t do it here because we are Westernized. The transition even to the community participation is still a difficult concept for many older people on Guam. He explains,

It’s still very hard because by nature, too, I find our people are very shy. They like to keep to themselves. The [Chamorro] concept of coming to church is that you come there and pray, you find a chair or a seat or a bench where it’s comfortable and you pray. It’s your religion. It’s hard breaking them from that old tradition of the old Latin Mass where there’s all the mystery and so therefore you have to behave, you have to be quiet,

you have to be silent, there's no conversing with a stranger or other people. I think the church asks us today to try to be hospitable so that people will feel welcome because there are visitors who come and say, "Well, there's nothing happening here and we don't feel that we're a part of this congregation."

This does not prevent Apuron from positively commenting on the island dances and rituals incorporated in the opening liturgy of the 1998 Synod for Oceania. For him, it was a marvelous celebration of island culture blended into the Mass. He states,

It was a moment of joy because I think I mentioned that this was the very first time that I think this happened in the Church. I could really tell that it was kind of like a shock because we were in the front, the cardinals and archbishops, they came with their regalia with their purple robes, really taking a second look because it was just shocking. You could tell by their facial expressions that they were shocked, as if to say, you know, this is scandalous, you know, with the loud banging, the conch shells, the bare feet, and you know, the bare breasted men, and the women of course wore the native coconut shells.

He continued to relate how he thought that for the first time in the history of the Church, the Vatican officials were paying attention to what was happening outside the Vatican walls. It seemed to him that "the cardinals were fine with inculturation in the missions, but they wanted to keep it there. To bring loud banging, the conch shells, the bare feet, the bare breasted men, and women, who wore the native coconut shells into St.

Peters was shocking and scandalous.”

*Paradox of servant and shepherd*

As an Archbishop in the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, Apuron has recently had a chance to reflect on his role as an indigenous bishop. The proclamation in 2001 of *Ecclesia in Oceania* gave him some materials to further guide his ecclesiology. He feels that as a witness of faith, he is grounded in a tradition that is firmly rooted in Christ and the apostles. For him the church is about people who can tell stories of faith experiences similar to that of the first apostles. He believes it is within this community of believers that one retells his story of conversion from being leader to a servant. He has revisited his motto *Servus Tuus*, especially in light of the recent call by Pope John Paul for bishops to be “servants of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world.” Apuron had an occasion to articulate for himself what he understands by a bishop being servant and shepherd in the islands.

Unlike what Bishop Cummins attested to in the episcopal ordination homily, Apuron feels that there is not a paradox in being shepherd and servant. He points out that as shepherd, the bishop is called to preserve the faith. He has to be a leader in the community, correct error where it exists, and to bring back those who have strayed away from the faith. In a very Christocentric way, he explains the difference between shepherd and servant:

My vision of a servant is not in the sense of slavish, but really of being available to be of service. I really don't think it's paradoxical. I've been in it now for twelve years and I don't think it is. I look at Christ; he's the

ultimate example of a servant, doing things for others or even for His Father, for His will. And a shepherd is willing to go out and seek the lost, to seek the stray. Sometimes I think the concept of shepherd is, is thinking I am better than the sheep; I should distance myself from the sheep. I'm there but I'm not there, I don't identify with them. I think it would depend really on the attitude of the people. And you know, I think part of my blessing.

Apuron points to his pastoral visits as his primary mode of being shepherd and servant. Although time consuming and sometimes exhausting, he feels moved to visit the homes of the sick and the homebound. He contends that he can "see them crying out of joy that the shepherd cares for them and comes to them to give them communion, to come to them in their struggles and pain, to spend a little time talking to them." This gives him energy and the willingness to always be of service. Pastoral visits and being with the people gives him strength, as he hears "people speaking about their life, their faith, their struggles, and their pain." It also allows him to be questioned by the ordinary people about his decisions. He has the opportunity to listen but also share information of what he knows and believes.

As a result, Apuron finds that the stress of the office of an Archbishop is not as taxing as it would have been otherwise. It is tiring but when he comes home at night he is refreshed and renewed knowing that the people thanked him for being a good shepherd. Yet he is quick to admit that he is 'not *the* good shepherd, the Lord is'. All he tries to do is be like Christ, trying to extend myself to others, ministering to their spiritual needs.

Subsequently, he tries to be rooted in the Gospel, trying to live his life in it, and allowing the Lord to work. He strives to “let go and let God be in control.” He states,

In honesty, if my leadership got into the way of advancing the church in however it needs to go, I think I am humble enough to admit that if I have to go, I have to go. I do not want to cling onto power to my last breath.

This means that he has to be constantly attentive to what the people want of him and the Church in Guam. In recent years, he has tried to delegate responsibilities to qualified laypersons. This comes from the reality that he is not qualified to do certain tasks and secondly the archdiocese is too big for one bishop to control. However, trying to get lay people involved can be a difficult task. Sometimes he feels that he may delegate to the wrong people, but this he uses trust the people that the people that he hand over the responsibilities will carry on “the spirit and intention that he would like to see.”

Apuron has also tried to whittle down the aura the ‘mystique’ of an archbishop. For him, the latter is not a leader in a church if he continues to exist in an ivory tower. He endeavors to come to the level of the common folk in the pews. In doing this, he has opted to be more pastoral than administrative, since he believes that this will make him truly be more shepherd-like as opposed to being a CEO. He believes that it is his make up. But he admits this latter attitude still persists in the episcopate:

I go to the bishop’s conference in the United States where my observation is that they [bishops] tend to be standoffish. They seem to think of themselves as some elite group. And I think the beginning of a breaking down of a wall of a sense of elite-ness has been brought about by this

sexual abuse meeting this last June. The leaders of the church has to become more accountable, we're not just hiding behind a cloud, an aura of mystique that we are untouchable, you can't do anything to touch us.

The focus and emphasis of Apuron's episcopacy has been "to try to be as accurate as possible in imitating Christ." Being available to people to all kinds of people propels his leadership style. He feels that being Archbishop is a learning process, where one becomes aware that he does not have all the answers. Nevertheless, the guide is always the teachings of the Master. He believes that once this has been appropriated and practiced in his own personal life first, then he can try to share it with others in hope they will be also be influenced by Christ.

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Petero Mataca, Max Mariu, and Anthony Apuron self identify as Roman Catholic bishops and as indigenous persons. In other words, they are indigenous bishops. This designation is not yet fully been articulated since the Catholic Church began to critically reflect on the identity of indigenous people with *Ecclesia in Oceania* in 2001. The three bishops will have to continuously work and reflect on these two realities and what they mean in their particular contexts. However, they have created, maintained, and revised a set of biographical narratives. From childhood, they have continually constructed stories of who they are, how they came to be, and where they are now. This study has allowed them to engage in their own reflexive understanding of their biography. Telling their stories about pivotal events and experiences allowed the bishops to answer some of the above questions and make sense of what it is to be an indigenous bishop in Fiji, New Zealand, and Guam. They were able to identify people, life experiences, influences, and challenges that have affected their self-identity. More importantly, they have been able to explain these experiences and influences to other people without much difficulty. By identifying themselves as indigenous bishops these men have explained their past and are oriented towards an anticipated future.

The bishops' narratives are grounded in the working of the diverse cultural and religious groups within Oceania. Nonetheless, the biographies and lived experiences, the epiphanies of the lives of the three bishops are connected to similar social relations that surround and shape their episcopacy in their respective dioceses. The narratives deal with

comparable problems, familial cohesions, deep inner selves, and one faith in Risen Christ. Furthermore, these life documents speak to the sacredness of human dignity present in both Christianity and the indigenous cultures and how the ritualizing of this fundamental value has been central to the stories of the island peoples. The biographies identified several similarities across the three indigenous bishops:

1. The three participants were influenced by their families. Particular members played a major role in their early Christian and cultural formation. Therefore, like most indigenous people they have a “profound sense of community and solidarity in family and tribe, village, and neighborhood.” (*Ecclesia in Oceania* p. 6)
2. The three bishops were appointed at a transitional time in the history of the church and the islands. With Vatican II there were attempts to move away from the missionary mode to that of a local church with its own indigenous episcopal leadership. There were also moves in the world to end colonialism. In the three countries there is a greater awareness that the indigenous people were a minority in their own land and, in many ways, a dispossessed cultural group. Like most indigenous people, the bishops recognize that, to varying degrees, their people have had experiences of discrimination, subjection, dispossession, and exclusion.
3. Archbishop Mataca, Bishop Mariu, and Archbishop Apuron were acutely aware that their indigenusness was a criterion in their appointment as

bishops. It was part of the Church's willingness to look for the minority candidate wherever they can be found.

4. The three participants came from ordinary life backgrounds but elevated to assume traditional or social status within their cultural situations. Like the traditional chiefs they have been treated with dignity and deference by their people and also the local political and cultural leaders. The three bishops accept the reality that exceptional authority is accorded to parents and traditional leaders.
5. The three prelates all self-identified as indigenous. They claim a common ancestry with the original occupants of the land. This was explicitly represented in the inclusion of the local language, symbols, and rituals during and after the episcopal ordination. The perpetuation of the cultural distinctiveness was evident in the choice of family and cultural symbols in their episcopal coat of arms.
6. The three bishops intuitively choose to tell their stories with candor. They were giving voice to a group of persons who are rarely given the opportunity to tell true stories about their lives in a courageous, prudent, and passionate way.

#### Emerging themes

Several themes emerged as the three bishops created their interpretive biographies. In trying to make sense of their lives, the prelates reflected on the theme of self-identity through story telling. It seemed clear to me that they have given little

thought to questions or anxieties about their identity as indigenous bishop. This study allowed them to analytically address existential questions about relationships, beliefs, and profession. In doing this they were engaging in reflexive awareness. Giddens (1991) argues that self-identity is a contour of high modernity or post-traditional society. It is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual's action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (p. 52). The three bishops were given the opportunity to make more choices and work out their episcopal roles for themselves. As Giddens (1991) explains, "What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity - and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behavior" (p. 71).

However, since the bishops are part of hierarchical social order based firmly in tradition, where there were clearly defined roles, they have faced contradictions. They find themselves in a double-bind organization. Yet the three bishops showed that one could consciously be "Roman Catholic indigenous bishop" through story-telling, possessing apostolic faith, being witness of the Spirit, and having humble courage.

#### *Self-identification*

The prelates identify themselves first as members of the Roman Catholic episcopal hierarchy whose primary roles are to pray, preserve, and proclaim the apostolic faith. Consequently, a large section of their narratives were descriptions of themselves as they functioned as priest, shepherd, and teacher in their dioceses. The biographies appropriately begin with their reflections of the episcopal ordination. Through the

imposition of hands, the words of ordination and anointing with holy chrism, the three young island priests experienced a spiritual epiphany. The Catholic faith teaches that with the sacred character imprints, the priests' identity changed and they became the living image of Christ (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21). This new identity as bishop was confirmed by handing over of the various episcopal insignia at their ordination. These external symbols are identification markers of the bishops' apostolic faith.

The meaning of being pastor was dramatically altered with the unexpected appointment to the episcopacy. After the initial shock at the announcement and numerous questions, they accepted the honor and responsibilities of being named auxiliary bishops. Each had three months to assume a new identity prior to assuming partial responsibility for the governance of the dioceses. All three bishops believed that their appointment was a special call by the universal Church to be of service to the local Church. The Pope, on advice of the local bishops was convinced that Fathers Mataca, Mariu, and Apuron had been suitably formed and fulfilled the first canonical requirement of a bishop, namely that they had "a solid faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence, and human virtues" that empowered them to assume responsibility of leading the people of God in the local diocese (Code of Canon Law: Text and Explanation Canon, 378 § 1).

Conversely the three bishops, through their stories, related with enthusiasm how they self-identify as indigenous. All three found no contradiction in being indigenous and being a Catholic bishop. They felt that they were not sending mixed-messages to the people about the real possibility of being *both Catholic and* indigenous. Bishop Mariu

expressed his opposition to the common criticism that an indigenous bishop was schizophrenic and suffers from double bind. He states, “If want to be a good Catholic, I would have to be a good Maori. The two can walk together on the same path, one compliments the other. If we separate the two then we deny who we are.” Thus when they became bishops, the problems of indigenous identity was not an issue and it did not need much reflection. The bishops related that they had not reflected on indigenoussness, it was not an issue to self-identify as Maori, Fijian, and Chamorro. Thus the cultural values, the habits, the attitudes, and knowledge acquired in formative years in the *marae* and villages became important resources that would sustain them in their early years as bishops.

The biographies speak about the difficulties of forming a congruent episcopal self-identity. The three Oceanic bishops were no different from other Catholic bishops who sometimes feel rather at a loss and do not know how to foster an identity because of the different pressures they face as bishops. In their early years their self-identities were shaped by the fact that they were auxiliary bishops. There was no formal formation for the episcopal role and identity. The only model they had were missionary bishops who had been ordained prior to Vatican II. People only got a glimpse of the missionary bishop when he came to the parish to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation or opening a new school. He was chief in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and was viewed as reverend managers of the diocese.

Therefore, the three island bishops still face a similar episcopal dilemma as has been highlighted by Molari (1972), Reese (1989), Hume (1982), Scripko (1992), and

Bunz (1994). The episcopal leaders all feel that at times they are misinterpreted by their own brethren and priests. There is also tendency for them to become totally consumed by the bureaucratic and the traditional ceremonial aspects of the office, which seems to the people to be a detriment to the spiritual role as pastor to his flock. Time is also a difficulty because of the public role assigned to him and the number of people wishing to see him for multiple reasons. The three indigenous bishops expressed that their greatest difficulty was trying to give time and energy to be with the ordinary people listening to their struggles. They all “feel” for their people as they try to live out their faith in times of accelerated changes. They desire to be with the people but various types of responsibilities, coming in rapid succession sometimes completely fill their calendars. This predicament has continued to be a major challenge for these bishops because the self-identity of a bishop remains within a framework that is still hierarchical and judicial in nature. This dominant viewpoint stresses the traits and functions of bishops that are clearly stated in mainly in Canon Law, *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus*, and *Ecclesiae Imago*. Although these documents emphasize the spiritual aspects of the role of a bishop, the tendency by the bishops has been to spend a great deal of time on the duties that go with the governing office of the bishop. This persuasion is ingrained in both the island and Roman Catholic tradition, which give the impression that the island bishops ignore of the changing cultural phenomena that affects the leadership styles in the church. Thus, all three still struggle for they embrace and develop an administrative leadership style that appears to be contradictory to the image a bishop who is to be servant and witness.

However, being post Vatican II bishops, Mataca, Marui and Apuron feel that they

are far more than administrators. They identify themselves as dynamic pastoral leaders involved in complexities of spiritual and moral leadership influencing change in their local Churches and the Universal Church (Bunz, 1994, p. 192). One possible reason why the bishops have reoriented their sense of self-identity may be because the emphasis of the role has changed dramatically. They have been expected to be more visible in the society. They have to become a civic leader, an ecumenical leader, and a national/international leader (Scripko, 1992, p.16). In addition the three island bishops have assumed the role of traditional leader or chief. As bishop is an elder in the indigenous community; in the Fijian community Mataca is the *matua tabu*, the wise and holy man, similarly in the Maori community Mariu is *kaumatau*, the wise elder, while in the Chamorro community Apruon is the *magas*, the chief. This identification with the indigenous hierarchical structure is something that is beyond the control of these bishops and not without problems. There are expectations by the people that they will assume the traditional responsibility of elders to preserve the culture and traditions. More so, they are obliged to enunciate the narratives of their indigenous cultures, which have gained prominence again in the island situations.

In line with recommendations of *Lumen Gentium*, the island bishops chose to emphasize service, preaching, and learning as the action words that would identify them as bishops in their local context. These do not exclude the functions of sanctifying, teaching, and ruling; yet it showed that these men were aware of their own gifts and the needs of the local church. The three bishops further fostered their self-identity through the choice of symbols in the coat of arms as auxiliary bishops. All three chose to include

some aspect of their family backgrounds in their coat of arms. The taro leaf, the fern, the islands, the stream, and the mountains had an implicit story, which the bishop wanted to communicate.

### *Story Telling*

Despite these present challenges, the three bishops have been able to foster their self-identity as indigenous bishops. They have done this by telling their stories of how they have attempted to be witness of both the Catholic faith and their cultural heritage. In other words they have, through the power of story telling communicated what they heard and seen particularly in their local context. They have been formed in the art of story telling which still remains the main medium of preservation of the indigenous culture. Daes (2000) when speaking to the chiefs in British Columbia note how the process of indigenous self-determination was started by four old men who were able to pass on the history, laws, calendar, and sciences through the art of story telling. (p. 7) Atkinson (1998) asserts that in traditional communities of the past, stories played a central role of the lives of the people. It was through story that the timeless elements were transmitted. Stories told from generation to generation carried enduring values as well as lessons about life lived deeply (p. 3). In both the Catholic and indigenous traditions the enduring values are the same: the value of being community, the profound sense of the sacred, the value of practices and rituals, the appreciation of silence and contemplation, and a sense of mystery in life. The bishops were recipients of an oral tradition that constructed meaning to events, experiences, and happenings in story form.

The bishops heard stories that spoke of “first peoples” as they journeyed across

the vast Pacific Ocean in search for food and land. They also heard stories of the ancestors who were involved in wars. All three heard stories from their Fijian, Maori, and Chamorro traditions that spoke of ancestors who valued relationship with those who went before them. Even so, they heard stories of the great missionaries who came out to the islands to bring the Christian faith. They heard the stories of their families' conversion to Christianity. The island prelates heard real stories of how the native catechists in many islands were not only trained to teach, but led the community in prayer and evangelized beyond the bounds of the Catholic community. They were part of a local church where these lay indigenous men best communicated the faith orally by using the mother-tongue to tell stories, and to pray in word, song, and dance. These multiple narratives were illustrated in the three episcopal coat of arms in the choice of particular symbols. Each bishop made a deliberate decision to include his family and community story in his coat of arms because these narratives were what formed him. He wanted people to know that he was a progeny of a community who valued the land, nature, and family. Mataca, Mariu, and Apuron have been lucky, because as children, they still had members of the extended family or clan who were able to communicate these stories using the oral tradition. The medium was personal for the mother tongue was used. Yet all these stories echoed the universal themes of creation, sin, redemption, and death.

The faith stories of their families and communities played a major role in their self-identification and socialization process of the bishops. They were all formed in a rich tradition of the Catholic faith. They all told stories of persons who had great faith, sometimes the narrative was about their parents, or grandmother, or another member of

the extended family. The parents' faith played a crucial role in the participant's decision to become a priest and then bishop. During the early childhood, prayer and Mass were strongly encouraged. More importantly, they came from an extended family, which stressed the complementarity of Christian faith *and* indigenous culture. These two realities were never two separate ways of living. This fundamental integration of both culture and faith has allowed the bishops to honestly confront both systems without being in a double bind. This has happened because they have a good grasp island history, vernacular language, and faith.

Indigenous bishops are historians. The three bishops are knowledgeable about Catholic history in the islands. They all believed knowledge of colonial history was important for them to foster their self-identity. The French, the Spanish, and the English had a major impact on the lives of the indigenous people and therefore any discussion on the present identity has to take into consideration this particular part of the island story. They are critical of certain aspects of this colonial experience like the forced alienation of the land. However, they feel that the historical studies have begun to vindicate some of the early missionaries for they were instrumental in the preservation of some aspects of the indigenous culture. There is no doubt that they brought education to the islands. They spoke with great respect for the missionaries.

Personal and community stories speak of the positive experiences that they and their people have personally had with the some of the missionaries. Mariu consistently spoke of the early French missionaries, while Apuron spoke of the early Spanish missionaries. Mataca talked about the Marist missionaries who came mainly from

Ireland. The three participants also cite historical figures as their role models. These early missionaries became the first agent of inculturation of faith in the islands. They believed that the traditional cultures of the island people and the Roman culture of the Church could coexist in harmony. Apuron insists that his passion for the preservation of the Chamorro language is due to the influence of the Jesuit Spanish missionary Diego de Sanvitores. For Apuron, Sanvitores is a model of a person who throughout his short life made every attempt to learn the language of the Chamorro for he believed that “this language [Chamorro] is one of God’s gifts to a special group of people.” One of Mariu’s role models has been Bishop Pompallier “who started a process of inculturation, which if the church in New Zealand has accepted, would have borne fruit.” He is one of the early missionaries who learned the Maori language and “took the culture of the Maori to heart.” In his story, Mataca cites his high school teacher, Father Clerkin, as his role model of priesthood for the local people. This Irish priest was a model of perseverance and service. His missionary zeal for the education of the indigenous Fijian instilled within Mataca a similar passion to “lift my people to their dignity as human beings.”

The three bishops have a good sense of colonial history. They believe that their local church, including their episcopacy have been affected by intermixing of the different cultures and religions. In their biographies, the bishops speak mainly of the negative effects of that modernization brought to the islands. Because of the phenomenon, the traditional societies to which they belonged had a continual struggle to maintain their identity. The influence of secularization, consumerism, and dependency still affect the lives of the people in these islands so much so that the religious faith has

been greatly challenged.

The three bishops speak, understand, and promote the study and use of their local languages. They know that this is a gift in cultivating self-identity of their people. This deep-seated affiliation to the vernacular is a result of their negative experiences of the systematic imposition of English in the education system. They grew up at a time when education was focused on the learning of a new language and the proscription of mother tongue either consciously or unconsciously. The English language became the norm and if one wanted to advance he had to acquire fluency in language of the colonizers. They were fortunate to be able to listen to the stories of the elders in the own mother tongue. Throughout the research, it was evident that many of the vernacular terms were used because the bishops were telling his most intimate story. There were phrases and words that expressed the full meaning of what he was trying to do. Apuron's life long goal has been to preserve the Chamorro language. Mariu's ordination was mainly in Maori; the program was in the Maori language for he wanted this epiphany to reflect this indigenous heritage. Mataca's continual use of the vernacular to articulate his thoughts indicates his sophistication in cultural nuances of the Fijian language. He felt that when speaking about his *tauvei* people it was only sensible to communicate in the language that shaped their culture. Accordingly, one can argue that without an exhaustive knowledge of native language, one would find it difficult to fully self-identify with the indigenous culture. Language and culture are intricately connected, one giving meaning to the other.

Since their episcopal ordinations, the bishops' stories are not focused on the challenges but the hopes that they have for their people. Sometimes the stories move to

experiences when they have had to confront their own people or their brother priests. Both Mataka and Mariu tell of his own going desire for the indigenous priests to reflect on their priesthood and indigenous. Apuron narrates the sad experience he has had with his brother Capuchins. Other times, their stories narrate their experiences with other constitutes in the community, like the government or other Christian denominations. Yet they are still hopeful that people may come to understand the reasons for their decisions. In the biographies, the three bishops have weaved together stories from their cultural milieus and narratives from their faith communities. Sometimes the strands of both sets of stories emerge from a deep-seated belief that the human person is sacred. Therefore, the rituals and the values that permeated these two systems of belief aim to allow the people to make connections to the dignity of the human person.

#### *Apostolic faith*

The three men can self-identify as indigenous bishops because they can report their stories of possessing apostolic faith. Molari (1972) begins his discussion of apostolic faith with what it is not: It does not mean thinking exactly as did the apostles and the first Christians; it is not an intellectual transmission, as an uninterrupted transmission from earliest times to the present day; it is not derived entirely from the past; it is not the simple recording of doctrine and ideas, it is not preserved in fixed forms or formulas; it is not the exclusive possession of one group. It does mean proclaiming the same liberation of mankind, recalling the coming of Christ and the experience of his active present through the Holy Spirit. Thus for Molari, faith is apostolic when it proclaims the same freedom and salvation that the apostles and the first disciples

experienced when they encountered Christ. The same transformation and self-renewal that propelled the apostles to go out and be witnesses is again to proclaim the gospel. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (*Mt 28:19-20*).

The second characteristic of an apostolic faith is to remember the coming of Christ. Therefore it is not only about the past but also about the future. We remember the love of God made known to us in Christ yet we too have hope for the future. We look for the day when we will receive the gift of God. The truth is an acceptance, in a new and rich manner, of the gifts of the one who loves us. It is an active acceptance if a duty. The third trait of apostolic faith is the experience of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Each person experiences the Holy Spirit within a particular context. If one has a religious experience of Christ there can be no turning back and one is invited to share with others in the community this experience, which ultimately moves to human existence and freedom. It recognizes that there have been changes in the course of centuries, and is in fact bound to change. Molari (1972) sums this up by asserting that “if the faith is interpreted as the acceptance of the transforming power of the Spirit, which is operative in different dimensions and in multiplicity of forms, the task of witnessing to the faith becomes rather a striving to prevent the richness of the past from being diminished by the inertia of the present (p. 23).

*Witness*

Molari (1972) suggests that if one reflects on the experiences of our time, then we need to find a new “image” for the bishop. He proposes that a bishop needs to be an authentic witness of faith as expressed in his own community in the forms in which it is expressed. He has to tell what his faith story. He is an echo of that living experience of those believers who in a particular place receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Molari (1992) argues that the bishop is primarily the witness for his own community, within the bounds of the universal Church. He has to proclaim the verbal formulas in which God words have been embodied in the living conditions of his own environment and his own culture.

When one experiences the Holy Spirit, freedom and self-renewal are positive outcomes. The person feels that liberating power of the Spirit and seeks personal and communal transformation. The bishop must have this experience before he can take up being witness. Only then can he give Holy Spirit effective expression in the conditions of its own culture. But in order to be able to do this Molari claims that faith goes beyond intellectual affirmation of the dogmas and formulas, it is “an actual reality which transforms those who believe in the operative power of Christ alive in God” (p. 17). It reaches out from the depth of human freedom to seek salvation and liberty. It is a declaration of freedom and salvation to the end that every man, every day, can begin a new life, can find new ways of living with his brethren (p. 17).

Rahner (1975) corroborates with Molari’s (1972) contention that the values of freedom and self that must be inherent in a Christians witness. He explains that witness is a term which involves an intrinsic reference to someone else. Manifestly, however, it is

also witness signifying not the imparting of some *thing*, but rather that in which someone communicates himself, and moreover, by the most intense use of his own freedom in so disposing of himself that thereby a corresponding decision is evoked in some other person too (p. 153).

The bishops in this study show signs of many of the characteristics of witness of faith identified by Molari (1972) and Rahner (1975). The bishop showed that he does have freedom and has power over his own self. He has attempted to use his power and authority to make contact with other people. He has tried to make himself intelligible so that people will come to closer relationship with Christ. The bishops echo the stories of the experiences of the Holy Spirit in three unique ways that are particular to indigenous bishops. They give expression to this liberating experience of the Spirit with apostolic faith, humble courage and prudent wisdom. In the last analysis the decision must be his own, made with prudence and wisdom, but more importantly with courage and passion informed by an apostolic faith.

Moore (1972) argues that bishops might lead in witness if they step out into more dramatic and controversial action. He explains that the witnessing image “is not something which ordinarily occurs because of set principles worked out by a commission and general councils, but rather out of the mix of events, out of previous experiences, out of the kind of friends you are drawn to, out of a chance passage in Scripture coming to you at the right moment, out of a life style that informs your work” (p. 113). Thus, it is necessary to hear and see the sights and sounds of the suffering humanity more intently than usual. It is often difficult for any one to witness to social issues; it takes courage,

prudence, and energy. However, this style of leadership in the institutional church does not have the memory and experience to hand out ready-made solutions to the complex problems that are emerging in the islands. The bishops in this study exhibited the traits of a witnessing style. In their years as bishops, they were involved in controversial issues like the coups in Fiji, the poker machines in Guam, and Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand. As indigenous leaders they used the symbolism of their episcopal office to challenge the political leaders on issues that involved ethics and morality. They have made efforts to visit the ordinary people so that they can find out what is happening but also to get a sense of where the Church can assist in alleviating social problems like education.

### *Humble Courage*

The three bishops Oceania possess humble courage. The term humble courage was used by the Leonidas Proano, Bishop of Riobamba in Ecuador in an article in the book *Unifying Role of the Bishop* (1972). As bishop he felt that he had to recognize, admit, and confess with humble courage that the Church had become an accomplice to the establishment and maintenance of a state of sin by associating itself with the privileged few (p. 103). The way the Ecuadorian bishop uses that words depends of a deeper understanding of the word humble. When one is humble, the person recognizes that one is from humus, i.e. the earth which is beneath us. He is grounded in the reality of his situation. He depends on his experiences more than his reason to inform him of he should do. He has feelings. Aware that he is mixture of negative and positive emotions he knows that he is limited. This implies that one is conscious of one's defects and

shortcomings yet patience and not pretentious. The humble person is one who makes a realistic assessment of who he is and puts that judgment into practice. Starratt (1993) sums this up:

Leaders in the postmodern world are called to engage the challenge with humility, knowing that their own genuine social standing is limited, and that the possibilities for genuine social progress are threatened on all sides by irrationality, greed, and deception. Humility does not imply lowered aspiration. On the contrary, leaders are challenged to see the agenda as a moral agenda, calling forth the best that is us to revere the tragedies of their century. At the same, however, leaders have to help their people come to terms with their darker side of the human heart, to name the destruction that it causes, and to cleanse its poison with the life –giving goodness which the human heart has in abundance. (p 108)

Yet when conflict must be resolved, when justice must be defined and carried out, when promises need to be kept, when the Church needs to hear who counts-these are the times when bishops act with courage and live up to their covenant with the people they lead. (De Pree, 1993, p. 222). Thus, in this sense humble courage is attentive to both the mistakes as well as the accomplishments. The bishops in this study recognize and acknowledge their weakness due to religious historical and cultural past. On the other hand, he is aware that he should not be afraid in finding the truth and loudly proclaiming from the pulpit or through the mass media.

For English speakers the term humble courage seems paradoxical and even

contradictory. Yet, the paradoxical combination of traits has been identified as crucial for leaders who wish to transform an organization from a good one into a great one. In a report by Collins (2001) in the Harvard Business Review of 1,435 Fortune 500 companies over a five-year period, he identified only 11 companies had achieved a dramatic transformation. He attributed this transformation to Level 5 leaders. These were individuals who possess a paradoxical mixture of extreme humility and intense professional will (p. 68). There was a duality in their leadership style: they were “modest and willful, shy, and fearless” (p. 70). In other words, they possessed what I call humble courage. The three bishops exhibited several traits similar to the Level 5 executives. They were reserved and gracious with a gentle patrician manner, typical of many of the traditional island chiefs. During the interviews the bishops were always courteous, unpretentious and preferred to speak about the people of God than themselves. They spoke with calm determination about the plight of their people. For example, Mataca’s main ambition was to lift up the human dignity of his Fijian people. Similarly, Mariu’s key dream was how he would spiritually sustain his Maori people. Apuron was concerned about how he could minister to the spiritual needs of his people. They were all modest about their appointment to the episcopacy; Mataca recalled that, “he was humbled,” Mariu exclaimed that he “never thought he would be even considered;” while Apuron reflected that he was “unworthy.”

But at the same time, the bishop’s stories reflected courage. The word courage arises from an old French *cuere*, meaning heart. To be courageous means at the bottom to be heartfelt (Whyte, 2001, p.14). They were passionate about certain issues and were not

afraid to confront political and traditional leaders. Within the church, they were not timid about questioning and challenging tenets of the church's teachings. They confront the priests in their dioceses. They have set standards on how the church can move from being missionary to being local. They have made some controversial decisions and have resolutely followed through with them despite opposition from within the local archdiocese. Imbued with humble courage, the three prelates are willing to risk, to risk all in order to achieve the necessary breakthrough in the present circumstances that confront the Church, their people and the leaders (Starratt, 1993, p. 45).

The paradoxical mixture of humility and courage might not be as counterintuitive and countercultural to episcopal leadership in Oceania. The three bishops may have had the right circumstances to nurture these traits. The qualities of humility and courage have historically been associated with bishops and how they should lead the diocese. They have had to consistently be self-reflective as part of their spiritual life. The mentors both in their villages and schools would have been role models for these bishops. The fact that the environments in the island with its significant emphasis of social relationships based on the value of community than on the individual might also have allowed the seed of this type of leadership to germinate and grow.

The epiphany of the appointment and ordination was a significant life experience that might have nurtured the seed. This transforming event continues to guide their episcopal leadership. At their ordinations all three bishops chose Scripture readings that highlight the value of service: "Whoever wishes to be great among you must be servant (Matthew 20:26). Being a servant leader "compassion will be needed as much as hope,

humility as much as courage, dogged persistence as much as creativity” (Starratt, 1993, p. 157). This desire of being of service to the people has continued to influence decisions, though at time it has been misinterpreted as work avoidance. Even in the words used in ordination rites speak of the paradoxical combination of humility and courage. The bishop-elect is instructed to strive to serve rather than rule and not to be greater than the least. He is to proclaim the message whether it is welcome or unwelcome, and correct error with unfailing patience.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

This writing of interpretative biographies has tried to make sense of what it means to be an indigenous bishop in Oceania today. Reflecting on epiphanies in the context of self-identity has allowed the bishops to think about who they are, where they have come from, and where they would like to be. But all biographies are incomplete and thus an ongoing process of research. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered for future research.

- (1) One way for the Oceanic bishops to become an advocate of indigenous people’s unique traditions and characteristics is by self-identifying as an indigenous person. There is a need to explore other ways the indigenous bishops in Oceania might preserve the unique traits of indigenous people, as outlined by the Pope in *Ecclesia in Oceania*
- (2) There needs to be a study to describe more fully the nature of episcopal contradictions to double bind that might arise out of personality, family, culture, priestly formation, pastoral experience and church structure.

- (3) One could take the descriptions of indigenous bishop that have emerged in this study and apply them to the indigenous priests in Oceania to find out if the bishops embrace similar descriptions

### Epilogue

The three stories show that the episcopal indigenous leaders in Oceania can identify themselves as master conch blowers. In a sense, they can take up the *cassis cornuta* conches that have been clogged and blow them again after years of silence. This image has its origins in the acknowledgment that the conch shell may have at one time been a sacred object for the pre-Christian island community. Presently in the islands of Oceania, the use of the conch, as a signaling device, has regained a prominent role in the cultural revival of the indigenous people. The conch's heraldic sounds are well known in the islands: low and loud, echoic with a single note. Island people use the conch to signal the beginning of a cultural gathering. The shell trumpets are used to herald the entrance of chiefs. In Hawaii, the horned helmet conch it is used to signal setting of the sun, while in Fiji the triton trumpet is used the signal to proclaim the return to a fishing boat hence people may come to buy fish. The Maori word for conch is *puutaatara*, in Fijian it is known as the *davui* while in Chamorro the word is *sawi*. All of the words have an echoic-that is, onomatopoeic - origin. If one were to pout the words *pu*, *vu*, *wi* for a sustained period of time, one would hear similar sounds as when one blows a shell trumpet. But in order to successfully blow these conch shells, one needs great lungs, lip, and tongue coordination training and most of all an attentive ear. Therefore to be a master conch blower one needs to go through a formative apprenticeship process so as to gain

knowledge and skills of how it has been used in the past. But because he has his own story, he needs to be creative on how to use the conch within his own situation.

The Church in Oceania adopted the conch shell as one of the cultural symbols to signal the distinctiveness of the cultural groups spread out across the vast ocean. Like any musical instrument, the island trumpet produces plentitudes of distinctive sounds that are unique. The low evocative, haunting sounds called the Bishops together for the Synod for Oceania; the deep sounds were heard again at the closing liturgy of the Synod. Finally the low reverberating moans played a deliberate role in calling the world's attention to the plight of the indigenous people in Oceania in John Paul's *Ecclesia in Oceania*. With this papal exhortation, the Roman Catholic Church stridently reechoed the call by the United Nations and other world organizations for the world community to hear the reverberation of the indigenous people as they try to reclaim their unique identity and cultural tradition. The responsibility has now shifted to the bishops as leaders of the Church. They have the mandate from their papal "chief" to give voice to the indigenous people in their dioceses. As a group, the Oceanic bishops have began this process by endorsing the use of cultural symbols and rituals in the liturgy, by openly discussing inculturation and encouraging theological reflection on how cultural values can be incorporated into the faith life of the islanders. As individual bishops, Mariu, Mataca, and Apuron have self-identified as indigenous and asserting that the paradoxical combination of episcopal leadership traits is part of being both indigenous and Catholic. This is a powerful reverberation that identifies them as master conch blowers.

The three indigenous bishops, as master conch blowers, give witness to the faith

of their people. Mataca, Mariu, and Apuron are foremost men of apostolic faith, unwavering in belief in God active in the world, especially in their local contexts. The indigenous bishop are men who have foresight, well versed in reading the ‘signs of the times’, discerning the positive elements of life in contemporary island society. They attempt to herald with potency the Gospel in modes of expression suited to the understanding of local people. As master conch blowers, the bishops wait and listen. They are hearers. They have heard the modulations that have come from the oral traditions of their people and of the Catholic Church. The bishops hear these faith stories in his mother tongue. The island bishops have been trained to discriminate the myriad sounds that have come from their multi-cultural islands nations. The three prelates have learned when and with what intensity should they reecho the faith stories of their people. In times of change, conch blowers have emitted loud and unwanted resonances. This noise has caused people to misinterpret the real message, thus causing conflict and pain. As island conch blowers, the bishops symbolize authority laced with humility. They make public appearances and statements only when there is a genuine need to “blast” the Gospel message of love and hope. In a composed and determined way the episcopal leaders signal to the people that there is a need to calm the rough seas of doubt and fear. Occasionally people have chosen to ignore the episcopal resonances but the bishops courageously continue to emit evocative signals trying to be faithful to the promises he made on his episcopal ordination day. And yet, the graces of the episcopal office will only be effective if the islands people identify the reverberations coming from their bishop as analogous to the echoes in their individual and communal stories.

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## APPENDIX A CROSS COMPARISON OF DESCRIPTIONS OF INDIGENOUS

International Labor Organization	United Nations	World Bank	Asian Development Bank	Catholic Church
<p><i>The ILO has difference and I quote the Convention 169 :Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. In that document, tribal and indigenous peoples are defined in the following way</i></p> <p>1. Indigenous and Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural, and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;</p>	<p><i>The UN has not developed a formal definition of indigenous people. As a guide the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations has used the definition prepared by Jose Martinez Cobo.</i></p> <p>The Martinez Cobo definition states that indigenous communities, peoples and nations:</p> <p>* have a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their</p>	<p><i>There are significant changes in the Bank's indigenous policy—beginning with the Bank's redefinition of who is eligible for project benefits and safeguards. The policy continues to define indigenous people by the presence, in varying degrees, of some of the following distinctive characteristics:</i></p> <p>close attachment to ancestral territories and</p>	<p><i>From the perspective of developing a working definition of indigenous peoples for use in Bank operations, several aspects must be considered. A starting point would be to define indigenous peoples on the basis of characteristics they display. Two significant characteristics would be</i></p> <p>descent from population groups present in a given area, most often before modern states or territories were created and before modern borders were defined, and</p> <p>(ii) maintenance of cultural and social identities, and social, economic, cultural, and</p>	<p><i>Indigenous People or Aboriginal people or Original inhabitants/people</i></p> <p>Colonization and modernization has blurred the line between the indigenous and imported. Unjust economic policies are especially damaging to indigenous peoples, young nations and their traditional cultures; Dispossessed cultural group</p> <p>Moved by the divine presence in the riches of nature and culture .Traditional religions</p> <p>Form a unique part of humanity made up a mosaic of many cultures</p> <p>Fro many of them land is most important. Many are</p>

<p>Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or by geographic region to which the country belongs, at the time of the conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.</p> <p>2. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply.</p>	<p>territories;</p> <p>* consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories;</p> <p>* form non-dominant sectors of society;</p> <p>* are determined to preserve and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.</p> <p>In addition, an</p>	<p>the natural resources in them;</p> <p>presence of customary social and political institutions;</p> <p>economic systems primarily oriented to subsistence production;</p> <p>an indigenous language; and</p> <p>self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group.</p> <p>Developing a single, specific definition or identification for</p>	<p>political institutions separate from mainstream or dominant societies and cultures. In some cases, over recent centuries, tribal groups or cultural minorities have migrated into areas to which they are not indigenous, but have established a presence and continue to maintain a definite and separate social and cultural identity and related social institutions. In such cases, the second identifying characteristic would carry greater weight.</p> <p>Additional characteristics often ascribed to indigenous peoples include</p> <p>*self-identification and identification by others as being part of a distinct indigenous cultural group, and the display of desire to preserve that</p>	<p>minority in their own land</p> <p>Powerful sense of community and solidarity in family and tribe, village and neighbourhood .Sense of solidarity with those who went before them</p> <p>Decisions are reached by consensus achieved through an often long and complex process of dialogue</p> <p>Deep respect for tradition and authority .Exceptional authority accorded to parents and traditional leaders</p> <p>Struggling to maintain their identity, own identity and traditional values</p> <p>Gradual lessening of the natural religious sense</p> <p>Great variety of language .own language and culture</p> <p>Have an identity and</p>
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	<p>indigenous person:</p> <p>* belongs to indigenous peoples through self-identification as indigenous;</p> <p>* is recognized and accepted by these peoples as one of its members.</p>	<p>indigenous peoples would be difficult.</p> <p>Within the Asian and Pacific Region, individual indigenous peoples communities reflect tremendous diversity in their cultures, histories and current circumstances.</p> <p>Country by country, the relationships between indigenous peoples and dominant or mainstream groups of society vary.</p>	<p>cultural identity, a linguistic identity different from that of the dominant society,</p> <p>social, cultural, economic, and political traditions and institutions distinct from the dominant culture,</p> <p>(iv) economic systems oriented more toward traditional systems of production than mainstream systems, and</p> <p>(v) unique ties and attachments to traditional habitats and ancestral territories and natural resources in these habitats and territories.</p>	<p>traditions;</p> <p>Already possessed an ancient and profound sense of the sacred.</p> <p>Indigenous people have retained their appreciation of silence, contemplation and a sense of mystery in life.</p> <p>Practices and rituals were very much part of their daily lives and thoroughly permeated their cultures</p> <p>Live in harmony with nature and one another.</p> <p>Natural world is not a resource to be exploited but also a reality to be respected and even revered as a gift and trust from God.</p> <p>Preserve and Cultivate the treasurer of creation</p>
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## APPENDIX B COMPARISON OF APPROACHES TO WRITING BIOGRAPHY

Classical Approach	Objective Hermeneutics	Interpretive Approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Select a series of research hypotheses.</li>   <li>•Record the objective events and experiences in the subject's life relevant to the hypotheses.</li>   <li>•Triangulate these events by source and point of view.</li>   <li>•Obtain the subject's interpretation of these events.</li>   <li>•Analyze reports in terms of internal and external validity.</li>   <li>•Resolve the validity of the above sources and establish the priority of the sources for testing hypotheses.</li>   <li>•Test hypotheses while searching for negative evidence.</li>   <li>•Draft the entire life history, submitting it to subject.</li>   <li>•Rework the report in light of these reactions.</li>   <li>•Conclude with a statement concerning theory.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•All sociologically relevant information about the subject's life is extracted from the account.</li>   <li>•Construct a typical course of life and typical hypothetical motivations of actions which could plausibly belong to a person of the extracted social attributes.</li>   <li>•Compare construction with information given by the respondent.</li>   <li>•Deviations of the individual case from the constructed case are used as a key to the structure of the individual case.</li>   <li>Note: *Based on an ideal-typical Weberian approach.</li>   <li>*Is committed to the development of qualitative counterparts to the usual criteria of validity, reliability, generalizability, and hypothesis testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Subject's point of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Subject's voice is captured</li> <li>*Subject is presented in "life like" fashion</li> </ul> </li>   <li>Example: The Children of Sanchez (Oscar Lewis, 1970).</li>   <li>•Subject's perspective (autobiographical) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Written by the subject and then used for sociological, psychological, or anthropological interpretive purposes.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>Example: The Polish Peasant (Znaniecki).</li>   <li>•Making sense of an individual's life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Finding a person in their works.</li> <li>*Focusing on a key event, then progressing and regressing from that point to understand the event and/or the individual involved (progressive-regressive method).</li> </ul> </li>   <li>Example: The Alcoholic Self (Denzin, 1987).</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C REQUEST LETTER

Your Grace,

I write this letter to follow-up my earlier request that you participate in my research as part of my dissertation for a Ph.D. in Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University. Since our January meeting in Tokoroa, I have been writing my proposal using the following primary written sources as my main guides: the 1998 *Synod for Oceania*, the 2001 *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the 2001 *Synod of Bishops X Ordinary General Assembly* and the 1994 draft *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*

The dissertation proposal defense took place on Thursday 25, April, 2002. I am happy to report that my committee has given their approval to proceed to the next stage of the research. This means that now I can initiate my fieldwork and collect data.

In my proposal, I state that I will attempt to construct a story of a life of a "real" bishop who lives in a unique cultural and religious context: Oceania and the Roman Catholic Church. I want to describe how Oceanic local bishops experience being indigenous albeit within the context of the Roman Catholic Church. The stories will focus on three epiphanies or turning point moments in their life experiences and how these experiences shape and form their understanding of indigenous.

With the help of my committee, I have selected to study you, and Archbishop Apuron OFM cap and Archbishop Mataca because all three bishops give me a good representation of the following criteria:

- 1) self-identification with the indigenous population
- 2) cultural categories
- 3) priestly groupings
- 4) age groups
- 5) colonial histories
- 6) location of priestly formation
- 7) episcopal longevity
- 8) existence of indigenous movements

As I work through the data, I have three research questions I will seek to answer:

- A) How did a bishop's experiences during the three epiphanies or turning point moments help him identify with indigenous people?

- B) How did these experiences shape and form his understanding of being at one and the same time, an indigenous leader and being a Roman Catholic prelate?
- C) How did the epiphanies influence the bishop's leadership roles in his diocese and in the indigenous community?

At the end of the research, I hope to develop an interpretive biography for each of you. According to one author, in an interpretive biography the researcher studies personal life-documents, stories, accounts, and narratives, which describe interactional moments and experiences that leave marks on people's lives. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's identity.

I would like to conduct my fieldwork during the months of June-September. The reason for this is that I get ordained a Jesuit priest in New York on June 8 and plan to visit my Mum and family in New Zealand immediately after this event. I would like to combine both visits for reasons of money, schedule, and time.

I realize that you are very busy in your ministry and I would be honored to be granted three two-hour interview sessions, if necessary, over a period of a month. The interview approach and questions are attached to this letter. I would prefer if the interviews with you were to take place in mid June to early July. But if your schedule does not admit openings during this time, then I will be willing to find a convenient option. My plan is to return to Gonzaga in September and have a first draft of the dissertation by end of November.

Please contact me if you have any questions at Gonzaga University. I can be reached by phone: 509-323-6033 or fax: 509 323-5819 or e-mail: [legerarthur@hotmail.com](mailto:legerarthur@hotmail.com). Thank you again Bishop, for your kind attention. I shall be waiting to hear from you.

Sincerely,  
Arthur Leger S.J.  
Gonzaga University  
Jesuit House  
502 E Boone Ave  
Spokane WA 99258  
US

## APPENDIX D INTERVIEW APPROACH

I will use the *standardized, open-ended interview* approach. This will consist of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words.

### Interview Questions

#### *Epiphany I: Ordination to Bishop*

[We will watch excerpts from video of your ordination to bishop and you will be asked to respond to the following questions.]

1. Describe some of the poignant moments during the ceremony?
2. How did you feel being the first indigenous bishop?
3. What cultural symbols and rituals were used during the ceremony? What was the significance of these symbols and rituals?
4. Comment on your choice of an episcopal coat of arms.
5. What was the reaction of your clan, family, and the indigenous people to your appointment of bishop?
6. Describe traditional cultural ceremonies that happened before or after the ordination?
7. What cultural values have shaped your image and role as bishop?
8. What cultural values and customs should be purified so that they communicate Christian values?
9. How have you coped with the stresses, especially the ones that arise from your own indigenous people?
10. What does the future hold for the indigenous people in your diocese?

#### *Epiphany II: Synod for Oceania and *Ecclesia in Oceania**

[We will watch excerpts from the video of the opening liturgy of the Synod for Oceania and you will be asked to respond to the following questions. For question 2-6, I will provide you with summaries from the *Synods* and *Ecclesia*.]

1. What was your reaction to the dances, symbols and music at the opening liturgy of the Synod for Oceania
2. Refer to the excerpts from the Synod and *Ecclesia* on inculturation. What are your reactions?
3. The Pope refers to "indigenous" people *Ecclesia*. From the list of characteristics extracted from the document, prioritize them in order of importance and give your reasons for your order.
4. How will you implement the following recommendations from *Ecclesia*;
  - a. Help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their tradition.
  - b. Study more thoroughly the traditional religions of the indigenous populations.

- c. Support the aspirations of indigenous people for a just solution to the complex question of the alienation of their lands.
5. How can you as a bishop, help the Holy See as it continues advocacy of the draft United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
6. What is your reaction to the promotion of the image of bishop as "witness" as emphasized in the X Synod of Bishops?

*Epiphany III - Own Choice*

[You will choose an epiphany that has affected your identity both as a bishop and indigenous leader. It may be a family story, an experience with other churches or one within the Roman Catholic Church, it may be with the political leaders of the islands. The following questions will help guide your responses]

1. Describe an experience where you found yourself divided between the values of the Church and the values of the cultural group you belong to?
2. Why did it happen?
3. Who was involved?
4. How did it affect your relationship between the indigenous people and the Roman Catholic Church?

What Church guidelines or values helped you cope with the situation?

## APPENDIX E LETTER TO VERIFY DATA

Dear Bishop , P.C.

I write this letter to update you on the progress of my dissertation writing and request that we meet again sometime in late March or April 2003. I met with my advisor yesterday and we decided that in order to honor your story, I would have to have another conversation with you. I will explicate this later in the letter.

I am presently on my second revision of the draft of your interpretive biography. It is presently a chapter on its own; about thirty pages, double-spaced. To construct your story, I analyzed the edited transcripts from my interview with you in July. In short, I have tried to make sense of the data that I collected using the themes of indigenous, self-identification, double-bind and witness. It has been a meaning-making process, where I have attempted to understand your life-story within the New Zealand context.

I am now planning the final and the most crucial stage in the research. In the research design literature, this phase is technically known as *verification*. Feeding findings back to informants is venerated, but not always an executed practice in qualitative research. Nevertheless, at this juncture I strive to verify my report by asking two questions: (1) How do I know that the biography that I have written about Bishop Mariu is believable, accurate and “right”? (2) How is this story credible? I have chosen two of eight verification procedures to assist me in answering these questions. The two methods are: *thick description* and *member check*.

*Thick Description*

The quote from Norman Denzin best explains what researchers do when they write thick descriptions.

It [thick description] captures and records the voices of lived experiences, or the prose of the world. Thick descriptions contextualize experience. It goes beyond the mere fact and surface appearances. It presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick descriptions evoke emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.

I am presently trying to do this in your biography by recalling the feelings and emotions that were communicated during the interview. I have also had to give a brief history of New Zealand with special reference to Maoridom and Catholicism, so I can contextualize your experiences. If we meet, I will be able to dramatically improve the thick description.

*Member check*

In member check, I will solicit your views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations. Many scholars consider this approach the most critical technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research. (Atkinson 1998; Creswell 1998, Ely et al 1991; Erlandson et al, 1993; Glesne & Pershkin 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles and Huberman, 1994.) This approach involves taking data, analyses,

interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account. In this research I am asking you to examine rough drafts of my work and to provide alternative language, critical observations or interpretations.

Some authors refer to this procedure as *corroboration* when the report is a life story. Similarly the edited life story is given back to the storyteller to read over to corroborate the report. You will have the opportunity to confirm or support what was said originally during the interview.

The reasons for asking you to get actively involved in the “member check” are also well documented in the literature on research methods. One scholar explains, When you ask for people’s stories, and they tell you what matters most to them or they tell you the meaning of what has happened to them, it is a “sacred moment”[my emphasis] that is shared. In some ways, the experience is akin to what transpires in the confessional relationship. Naming or defining something, giving voice to it in story form, often makes that thing clear for the first time and therefore recognizable and understandable to the teller. Defining our story, giving it spoken meaning, can be knowing it for the first time.

Thus in order to make sure that I help you tell your story in a new, clearer, or more complete way so that you may see your own life a bit differently than before and in ways that you can be pleased with, I have come up with the following plan:

- March 10 2003: Send you the rough draft copy of your interpretive biography and related paragraphs. I will have instructions on how you could proceed to give me feedback.
- March 24 2003: Send you the rough draft of the final chapter where I synthesize the materials and make my conclusions.
- April 2003: Visit you to discuss the biography and final chapter.
- May 10 2003: Graduate
- August 2003: Send you the final copy of the dissertation.

With this plan, I will have to make trips to New Zealand, Fiji and Guam. I will need to coordinate my visits in such a way that I will be in the different places for at least four days. I request that we meet for two two-hour sessions: one to discuss the biography and the other to discuss the final chapter. These dialogues will greatly facilitate the writing process in a timely manner. But more importantly your interpretation and mean-making will ensure that I honor your integrity and your role of bishop. Norman Denzin, one of my primary resources, succinctly echoes my primary *raison d'être* for my visit.

We must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project, or a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared with us. And in return, this sharing will allow us to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the

people we study. These documents will become testimonies to the ability of the human being to endure, to prevail, and to triumph over the structural forces that threaten at any moment to annihilate all of us.

I gave you this “technical treatise” so you understand how important it is to verify the reports. I am aware that time is very precious for you, so I ask if you could please let me know if the above plan might work for you. I would appreciate if you could give me several dates when we could meet, preferably in late March or April. I will then get the responses from Mataca and Apuron and plan accordingly.

Again thank you and God Bless

Arthur Leger S.J.

## APPENDIX F CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

## Dissertation study on indigenous bishops in Oceania

I agree to participate in this research study, an interpretive biography of indigenous bishops in Oceania on issues of self-identification, inculturation and episcopal leadership. The study arises out of indigenous issues that were highlighted in the recent Synod for Oceania and *Ecclesia in Oceania*. The theory base informing this study is subjective interpretation theory. This study is conducted by Arthur Leger, Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies, Gonzaga University.

- The faculty dissertation committee, which has the responsibility to monitor this study, has approved the eight criteria for participants in this study.
- Because I will be interviewed about my experiences, participation in this research may help me to evaluate those experiences from a new or different perspective.
- I release the rights to any audiorecorded sessions which are part of this study and any transcriptions of such audiorecorded sessions.
- I understand my identify and the identity of the diocese involved in the research, along with other individuals, organizations, or identifying locations named in the course of the interviews will be protected from disclosure if I chose to remain anonymous.
- Participation in this research is voluntary. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study or ask questions at any time before, during, or after the study begins.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_