

The Heroic Virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod: Its Significance for the Youth

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Abstract – *One of the most celebrated saints in the Philippines is Saint Pedro Calungsod. Though very little is known about him but at his young age, he was able to do great things for the church and of his faith. This research explores the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod as manifested in his martyrdom. A biographical approach is used to analyze the specific objectives of this research: identify and analyze the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod as manifested in his martyrdom based on the account of his life; extrapolate the significance of Saint Pedro Calungsod's heroic virtues in the lives of the youths in Parish Youth Ministry (PYM). On the basis of the analysis, it is revealed that Saint Pedro Calungsod manifested the heroic virtues of faith, charity, and fortitude in his martyrdom. Such martyrdom may be sufficient enough to challenge his devotees specially the young ones to always use the virtues in order to receive the grace of God. Hence, such heroic virtues are significant to the youth in the aspect of creating a culture of love and deep faith by having missionary zeal which would also inspire other youths to live in Christian faith.*

Keywords – *Heroic, Virtues, Saint, Pedro Calungsod, Youth*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is a country which is dominantly occupied by Roman Catholic people. The richness of its religion fascinatingly reflects the spiritual life and values among Filipinos who are great devotees and believers of Saints. One of the most celebrated saints in the Philippines is Saint Pedro Calungsod. Though very little is known about him but at his young age he was able to do great things for the church and of his faith. According to the biographical account of Calungsod written by Leyson [1] Calungsod, as a devoted young catechist, went to a missionary work to the Ladrone Island with the Jesuits missionaries to evangelize the native people about God. In this instance Calungsod as a young man had already embedded his love and faith for God by

answering His call through a missionary work away from his home.

In his pursuit for holiness he went through persecution of faith as he defended catholic faith amidst the display of trials in his missionary work. In this manner, Calungsod became a hero as he chose to become a martyr until the end of his life and such heroicity was driven by his heroic virtues. Thus, his heroic virtues propelled him to manifest an extraordinary virtuous act as conviction of the truth for Catholicism.

Further, heroicity is a term derived from hero which refers to a man who is admired by many because of his great act of bravery and possessions of other distinct extraordinary abilities [2]. A hero is a man who also possesses great goodness and is capable of translating heroicity into actions to help and save others. Moreover, St. Augustine of Hippo first applied the pagan title of hero to the Christian martyrs whose virtues and good works greatly outdistance those of ordinary good people [2]. These martyrs have known to manifest several heroic virtues which made them accept and face the difficulties of their persecution by the non-believers. In New Advent [2] Benedict XIV described heroicity as virtuous actions based on Christian virtues considering to sacrificing something through an extraordinary act which is done naturally and without any force. Therefore, a heroic virtue is an innate characteristic which is motivated by goodness to help and save others.

Moreover, being hero does not mean having an extraordinary power rather it is having heroic virtues that motivate man to perform heroic acts in the real world. It is rather manifestation of extraordinary actions for the salvation of faith. Thus, heroic virtue can only be manifested by those who have learned to detach themselves with the worldly things and solemnly focuses on the love of God. The one who chooses to become a saint should leave all earthly desires and surrender all possessions to God - the source of life.

On the other hand, there are theological virtues which considered as heroic virtues because it motivates man to perform heroicity. First, is Faith which stands as the

foundation of all the virtues. Through faith God is perceived and felt in a spiritual way through Holy Spirit. It lies in man's conscience and ignites man to manifest good works to serve and save others who are in need [2]. Furthermore, there are certain works of man which professes faith to the church and to God. Among Christians faith grows by demonstrating and practicing religious acts. Some of these acts involves the observance and obedience to the Divine Commands; devotion to the church; avoidance of sin; penance for sins committed; patience in times of misfortunes; helping those in need; etc. The mentioned religious acts when practiced consistently over period of time and performed under difficult circumstance may lead man to manifest heroicity.

Second, is the virtue of Charity, a virtue which allows man to love God above all things by loving one's fellowmen. As indicated in the bible in Mark 12:31 to love God means loving one's neighbours, as man is created equally through the image and likeness of God [2]. There is no other commandment greater than loving one's fellowmen - for God has made man in his image and likeness and therefore all men are children of God; with equal rights to live and be loved. Hence, loving ones fellowmen by serving them is also like serving God and loving Him. Thus, charity becomes a distinctive mark of the Christians.

Third is Fortitude, a virtue which ignites man to stand in times of adversity. If fortitude is practices to its apex as to how it is manifested in times of abtacles then such virtue becomes a heroic element. A man is considered to possess a heroic virtue of fortitude when one fights and overcomes obstacles to which no ordinary man can do [2].

Hence, Saint Pedro Calungsod's martyrdom is the reason why many Filipinos venerate him as a saint and look to him as example of a life well lived in the faith. This interesting story of Calungsod had embellished the lives among Filipinos. His dynamic commitment and unwavering love to the Catholic Church's mission of evangelization made him known as the patron of young catechist [3]. Eventually, his heroism endeared many people specially the youth to devote him. Calungsod represents the youth as an instrument in serving the church selflessly and with great faith to God.

This study aims to analyze the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod and how these virtues becomes significant to the lives of the youth today particularly the Parish Youth Ministry (PYM) – the young church servants. In this pursuit, the significance of this study will provide better understanding and create steadfast in faith

to the followers and believers of Calungsod. Also, the propagation of this research may be of a great help to understand better the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod and how such heroic virtues be inculcated in the lives of his believers and most especially to the youth. Hence, this study was conducted.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to analyze the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod as manifested in his martyrdom. Specifically, it concentrates on the following: 1) identify and analyze the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod as manifested in his martyrdom based the account of his life; 2) extrapolate the significance of Saint Pedro Calungsod's heroic virtues in the lives of the youths in Parish Youth Ministry (PYM).

METHODS

This study utilized the biographical criticism as the approach in analyzing the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod and its significance to lives of the youth. Specifically, this analysis was made through a reader-response method in which Pedro Calungsod life's account based on Leyson's works in "San Pedro Calungsod, The Canonization Album" published by Archdiocese of Cebu and University of San is mainly utilized to analyze critically the heroic virtues of the saint. In addition, an interview was also made to the youths to extrapolate the significance of Calungsod's heroic virtues in their lives. This paper also made used of other materials which focuses on the written accounts of Calungsod's life specifically the biography from published journals, web information, and historical data.

Framework

This discourse analysis is grounded on the assumption that Saint Pedro Calungsod revealed a collective heroic virtue on his religiosity, service for others, and heroism. Nevertheless, this paper also attempts to look into the discourse of analyzing the heroic virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod using the biographical approach.

Griffith [4] explains that biographical criticism is an approach which is used to analyze a person's biography as a way of understanding literature. Often it is being associated with Historical-Biographical as it sees literature as a reflection of a person's life and time.

Kennedy [5] noted that the works of authors were read as sources of information about their lives, personalities and interests. Literature is then used by

other critics and literary enthusiast to explain passages in their works and its implication in reality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Heroic Virtue of Faith

Faith allows man to believe and surrender everything to the will of God [6]. Although man faces uncertainties in life but because of faith man is strengthened because one believes that God will protect and will stay eternally. Man believes that God will protect and will not allow his people to perish. Hence, Christians considers faith as a gift from God because is essentially the work of God through Holy Spirit who gives light, strength, and comfort to those who truly believes. Among the Christians, believers of Christ received the virtue of faith before Baptism yet through Baptism man receives the helps and graces of the Holy Spirit in response to one's faith. However, even though the Holy Spirit is prompting man's heart to respond in faith still the act of faith still depends on man. Therefore, God gives the grace and free will to those who believes in Him yet man has still the freedom to follow one's own will.

Hence, to be a Christian means to live with stronger faith in God. As stated in the bible that anyone who wishes to come to God one must go first to Jesus Christ. Thereby, making faith as essentially the work of God for it is only drawing close to Jesus that a man's faith is strengthened and through the Holy Spirit man's heart is opened for God.

According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, believing is an act of intellectual assenting to the divine truth [6]. God reveals the truth through light of faith. Thus, to believe to the truth of God means to live with faith; faith that requires commitment to God and considers God as the creator, saviour, guide, and the source of life. Although these divine truths are beyond human grasp and understanding but to believe in faith is neither irrational nor illogical. Faith, therefore, is a means to see things beyond human perspective; a way of understanding things which are incomprehensible [6]. Nevertheless, to believe in God means to obey God's commandment and the core of His teachings. Faith requires more than of commitment it requires something from the self that naturally comes when life is shaken. God does not require anyone to follow Him and live with faith rather one knows the he can freely choose to obey God and live with faith.

Faith is one of the most significant virtues of Saint Pedro Calungsod. It has been the strength of Pedro Calungsod as he struggled in his martyrdom which testifies to the truth of his faith. His deep faith to God is

rooted in his service to the Church and nurtured when he joined missionary work. Young as he is, he was able to stand his faith as he survived in the difficult journey of their mission. Based on Leyson [1] Pedro's faith to God grew through evangelization and most of all his act of converting the Chamorros into Christians. Many have been baptized however his faith was also challenged when Matapang, one of the villagers in the island, attacked them for baptizing his child. During the attacked, Pedro's faith rises above his fears as he patiently faced the adversity without taking any violent response to Matapang. Many said that he could have ran and escape the danger but he chose to stay with Father Diego because he knew that God is with them and in that battle he believed that even if he dies, his faith will bring him to eternal life with God. During the beatification of Calungsod, he was recognized as a great martyr for the faith by Pope John Paul II [7].

Pedro Calungsod's faith to God and to the Church is unfathomable. No ordinary man would sacrifice his life for his faith but Pedro decided to stand for his faith and because of that he was known as the young martyr. The act of sacrificing one's life in order to proclaim one's faith was a manifestation of heroicity and such act was motivated by his heroic virtue of faith. Such virtue made the young Filipino catechist a Saint. His recognition of Sainthood was known by the world as his act of martyrdom and his manifestation of martyrdom was an extraordinary act that requires an ordinary man a very deep faith to God. Pedro's life was lived with so much faith and it reflects the idea that life to holiness is not easy, to live a holy life means to encounter so much pains, struggles, sacrifices, sorrow, and most of all test of faith. Indeed, Pedro Calungsod's holiness is the source and true measure of apostolic activity and missionary zeal [1]. Pedro Calungsod had sacrificed his happiness, family, and life to help others in their spiritual sanctity.

Further, as a Saint, Pedro is rare person among Filipinos [8]. To date, Pedro Calungsod is considered as the second Filipino Saint canonized by the Church. Young as he was, he put his faith into action and was able to defend his faith even it took his own life.

The deep faith of Pedro Calungsod propelled him to study the truths of Catholicism. Likewise, his knowledge of the truths helped him deepen his faith [1].

According to Leyson [1] Fr. de San Vitores chose among his young catechists who were considered as men of deep faith to be his companion as they serve a mission of evangelizing the words of Christ in Marianas; they evangelized the Chamorros more by example than by words. Pedro Calungsod must have deeply possessed and

lived the virtue of Christian faith because he was among those men chosen by Fr. de San Vitores to be his companion in the mission in the Marianas Island.

Essentially, Pedro Calungsod had lived this virtue in a very remarkable way, so much that he must have been one of Fr. de San Vitores' best young servants, most trusted and closest collaborators in that time. It means to say that at young age he had shown great faith as he had served dedicatedly the church. This becomes plainly seen when, out of the several missionaries, Pedro Calungsod was chosen by Fr. de San Vitores to be his lone companion during that critical moment of the Mission and in that fateful journey to Tomhom where they both gave their final witness of the Christian Faith [9].

Heroic Virtue of Charity

The virtue of Charity comes from God and it is a gift given by God at Baptism together with faith and hope. Through charity, believers of God are moved by showing love of God by loving ones neighbours. God's love is the source of charity; it is what enables man overcome one's self-centeredness by loving others with the same redeeming love Jesus revealed on the cross [10]. In this concept man believed that loving God means loving ones neighbours, even if it means giving up one's own life. Loving others through charity to the extent of abandoning one's self-centeredness means revealing God's genuine love to humanity as the same love He revealed on the cross. Such feeling of love is a characteristic of a life lived in charity. Simple daily acts of kindness and generosity are expressions of charity. In fact, such small acts motivated by charity are infinitely greater than any heroic actions.

Charity is the source of goodness of Pedro Calungsod. Specifically, it is his great love that he was able to do a heroic act of sacrificing his life in persecution of Christian faith. At his young age, Pedro Calungsod submitted himself to God through a missionary work [7]. As explained in cfamphil.org [3] Calungsod's life in Ladrones was hard. It was believed that the provisions of food and other needs did not arrive regularly; the jungles were too thick to cross; the cliffs were very stiff to climb; and the islands were frequently visited by devastating typhoons. However, despite the circumstance, Calungsod and other missionaries courageously persevered and because of their determination they were able to convert most of the natives into Christians.

It is in this troubled and difficult far-from-home Mission that Calungsod proved his love to God and to his fellowmen. He risked and sacrificed his life by dedicating himself selflessly to help others conversed

into being Catholic. Such act of heroicity was driven by his heroic virtue of charity. This heroic virtue of charity was very evident as Pedro shown eagerness to share what he knew about Jesus with others. He did well, and many people were baptized into the faith because of his efforts [11]. His heroic virtue of Charity motivates him to serve the people in the island despite of the circumstance he encountered. He managed to face all the difficulties in their missionary with patience and determination because of his deep and strong love for God and the way to prove this love is through charity. It is in serving other people that he was able to share the love of God to others.

Therefore, Pedro Calungsod's heroic virtue of charity had made him an instrument to proclaim God's Good News so that people will love each other and live a life in equality and peace, as brothers and sisters. Pedro Calungsod's virtue of charity is a proof that a true Christian should always love neighbors as God love mankind equally. It is, therefore, a welcome thought that a Bisaya had become world-class in terms of sanctity of life because he possesses a heroic virtue of charity. This self-giving concretizes by St. Francis de Sales says that love is immeasurable. This theme was beautifully set into music by Msgr. Rudy Villanueva, renowned Cebuano novelist and composer, who wrote a song for Beato Pedro "Way Sukod ang Pagmahal" (There is no measure in love) during his beatification rite [8].

Heroic Virtue of Fortitude

Fortitude is a virtue which strengthens the soul of man to face and fight in times of adversity. It allows the self to be constant amidst the obstacles. In times of great danger, it dominates fear preventing man to feel afraid and be coward. The virtue of fortitude man is able to fight courageously even if it takes one's life [12]. In addition, Fortitude allows man to face courageously and endure difficult things. As a Christian one should endure struggles for the love of God and for humanity thereby making fortitude as man's self-weapon to survive amidst the struggles in life. As emphasized in catholictradition.com [12] the virtue of fortitude appears in Martyrdom, a martyr had to undergone difficulties to give testimony to the truth of faith and live the grandeur of a Christian virtue. Outside of Martyrdom, the virtue of fortitude, the gift of fortitude intervenes each time that something heroic is to be accomplished or a great trial is to end [12].

Pedro Calungsod as a young man was nourished daily with the Holy Eucharist. His being prayerful strengthened his mind to face difficulties courageously

and bravely especially for those who want to persecute his Christian faith. His courage and toughness were clearly manifested in his life as he chose to face a violent death instead of escaping to save his life. According to Leyson [1] during the time, when Matapang attacked the missionaries because of baptizing his child Pedro never forsake his companion, particularly Father Diego. In encountering such imminent danger, Pedro courageously faced the anger of Matapang with no armor nor weapons to fight back - he became a good soldier of Christ.

The act of bravery shown by Pedro during that moment was a clear proof of his heroicity and such act was motivated by his heroic virtue of fortitude which leads to his martyrdom. Calungsod chose to die at the mission. He remained faithful to the mission and to God; fulfilling the promise of the mission which is to convert the natives into Catholic and making them to allow receiving the word and love of God [1]. Heroic virtue of fortitude of Saint Pedro Calungsod shines out clearly as he had shown bravery in evangelizing about Christian faith and converse with Chamorros knowing that it was a difficult time to evangelize about Christianity in that island as the territory was not easy to navigate and the native people were not always receptive to the word of God [13]. Therefore, even in the midst of hostility and discomfort of their mission, he still continued to work as a true Christian missionary until the time of adversity.

As a martyr, Pedro Calungsod fought and spoke the truth about God's love for humanity. As it was believed that the reward of dying in faith like a martyr is an everlasting life with the Holy Trinity. Leyson [1] quoted *"Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude."*

Saint Pedro Calungsod's martyrdom renounces the truth for Catholicism. Through his heroic virtue of fortitude, he suffered martyrdom which is the supreme witness to the truth of his faith. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of courage and fortitude. The early Christians who began to use the term "martyr" in its new sense saw Jesus as the first and greatest martyr, on account of his crucifixion [3].

Pedro Calungsod's heroic virtue of fortitude proved, especially to the young people that being courageous means loving God and putting so much faith in Him. Pedro's fortitude made him a witness of God's goodness and love because he believed that death will never be

feared for He proclaimed that those who die of his faith may live an eternal life in heaven.

Significance for the Youth Today

The young teenage martyr, Pedro Calungsod, had really shown his great heroic virtues to defend Christian faith. The virtues of charity, faith, and fortitude became his armour as he faced imminent danger in his persecution. Nevertheless, because of these virtues, at his young age, he became known as the patron of catechist in whom such characteristic represents as model of faith and heroism to the youth today. As stated by Saint John Paul II in 2000, during the World Youth Day in Manila that Pedro Calungsod lives among youth especially the young Filipinos[8]. Implicitly, young people today can draw encouragement and strength from Pedro Calungsod, who had inspired many youths as he had devoted his teenage years to teach the faith as a catechist which led in his martyrdom. As a Filipino, Saint Pedro Calungsod led the life of young Filipinos today to live faithfully in their religious [3].

Accordingly, most young people today particularly in the Parish Youth Ministry, see Pedro Calungsod as a young catechist who possessed the zeal of a missionary. The youth today consider Calungsod as a model for them to develop and nurture the zeal to help other fellow youths grow in their faith and encourage them to become closer to God. This missionary zeal also helps and inspire other youths to strengthen their faith through serving the church and become good model in their family and society. The zeal of missionary helps the youth to create culture of love, good relationship to Christian families, and friendships to one another.

On the other hand, most of young people today, especially those youth who are weak in faith are involved in immoral actions and abandoned their Christian faith. It is therefore the role of the PYM, just like Pedro Calungsod, to become trailblazer of change by purifying morality of these youths who are weak in faith, through evangelization and activities that can help the weak in faith be transformed in the way they live. As stated by Saint John Paul II that as Christians it is our duty to recognize our past to live with our peers and share our worries and hopes because Christians must be relevant in his time [3]. Moreover, some millennials today have lost their way because of family problems. It is therefore the mission of the PYM to help and guide these youths who weak in faith, to have the courage to face, accept, and heal their family problems by bringing God at center of their lives and family.

Therefore, the life of Pedro Calungsod serves as inspiration among the young Filipinos today allowing the young ones to be a model in their Christian faith. As what Saint John Paul II stated that Pedro Calungsod at his young age had declared himself steadfastly for the love of Christ by responding with courage and generously to His religious call [3]. The courage, faithfulness, purity, and love for others are the qualities of Calungsod that the youth make as inspiration to follow his path. In addition, Saint John Paul II said to the youths during the World Youth Day in Manila that as Christians, like Pedro Calungsod, we should be a hope and great light to others. As Christians we need to ignite others to be a light to the world [3]. Pedro Calungsod brought a fresh dose of Christian idealism for our dynamic young people who are now making a stand for Jesus.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Saint Pedro Calungsod reveals heroic virtues of charity, faith, and fortitude as manifested in his missionary and most of all his martyrdom. His martyrdom may be sufficient enough to challenge his devotees specially the young ones to always use the virtues in order to help others who in need. Likewise, the grace of sainthood is granted only to a few and his heroic virtues can be a source of inspiration to many who are called to follow Christ. Hence, such virtues also make significance to the lives of the youth in the aspect of creating a culture of love and deep faith by having missionary zeal in which extent would also inspire youths to live in faith and live the way God has prepared for them as true Christians.

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