

Generosity: The flourishing virtue in the consecrated life

Author: Bao Nguyen

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GENEROSITY: THE FLOURISHING VIRTUE IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE

Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment
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By Bao Nguyen, S.J.

Thesis Director: Daniel Harrington, SJ

Second Reader: Thomas Kane, CSP

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*In memoriam of my mother,
Mrs. Vinh Nguyen,
who had taught me generosity through her life.*

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INTRODUCTION

Virtue ethics have been enriched by interpretations of Holy Scriptures and Catholicism, and Christians for centuries have attempted to practice virtues as Jesus' teaching in their lives. One of the most important virtues is generosity. It is a spirit of self-sacrifice and divine transformation impacting the life of Christian communities, such that its life becomes rooted in *agape* love and service to others. It encourages Christians to transform their lives as gracious responses. In gratitude we are human persons; in generosity we are Christ like: "You received without pay, give without pay" (Mt. 10:8). Thus, the thesis for this S.T.L paper will be that Christian generosity is the natural outcome of divine love transforming human life. This transformation begins in earnest when the disciples have an encounter with a humble God. Jesus, the Son of God, was so generous to give himself up for the world as the priceless gift—so that those who want to be with him might love and serve one another. The virtue motivates generous roads to reconcile the world together. The thesis will present an exegesis of the biblical passages of Jesus' foot washing (Jn. 13:1-17) and Pauline teaching of generosity (2 Cor 8-9) as the two of the scriptural foundations for this virtue. Then, I will discuss this virtue in philosophical and theological contexts as the paper approaches the application of religious lives. Generosity will become a compass to analyze the historical and social dimensions of the consecrated life in Vietnam, especially. The virtue is the foundation of the three evangelical counsels and a prophetic bridge to connect the religious communities together for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Reasons for Writing the Thesis

In the world today, people usually link generosity to philanthropic foundation within business corporations, which donate monetary sums to the poor or to victims of natural disasters. Generosity is considered as an elite virtue of wealthy people who have time and money to distribute their surplus to the poor. In the world's eyes, generosity is somehow reduced to a process of promotion for capital campaigns. Thus, I like to present a better perspective on this virtue which inspires others to think of graciousness, care, hospitality, justice, and magnanimity. To be on the receiving end of someone's generosity is a lovely and sometimes profoundly humbling experience. Generosity in a humble service for others is one of the most important virtues rooted in divine love through the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. It encourages Christians to transform their lives as gracious responses. In gratitude we remain human persons; in generosity, we become like Christ whose generosity flows from his divine love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

Personally, I have been attracted to the prayer for generosity of St. Ignatius before entering the Society. This prayer has been a foundation of spiritual attitudes in the Society of Jesus, derived originally from the Spiritual Exercises, which is to know, to love, and to follow Jesus through meditation and contemplation of the Scriptures. My desire is to promote the consecrated life in the twenty first century by the spirit of generosity. This virtue is the cause for holy desire, dreams, encouragement and commitment to follow the evangelical counsels and zealously pursue the mission of Jesus Christ for the Kingdom of God.

Methodology and Synopsis of Intended Work

I intend to develop the thesis in the following structure. In the introduction, I will discuss the misunderstanding of the virtue of generosity. It is not simply an issue of fund-raising or philanthropic foundations in business corporations where people donate monetary amounts to the poor or to natural disasters. Then, I move to present a new perspective on the virtue of generosity. What does generosity mean according to Christian tradition? How is it related to gratitude? Why do I choose this virtue to integrate my theological studies with pastoral and spiritual life in the context of the consecrated life? At the end, I will make an argument that the most important motif of religious vocations is generosity.

In the chapter one, I will employ the New Testament of Jesus' foot washing (Jn 13:1-17) as an original foundation of generosity and employ the passage in the second epistle to the Corinthians 8-9:15 to illustrate a transformational approach of generosity. As we know, the foundational message of the Gospel of John is divine love revealed by Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who came down from heaven and became a human person among the human race. Jesus is the most valuable self-gift for human beings and the most wonderful example of generosity that God has extended to people out of love. This passage (Jn. 13:1-17) portrays adequately the close connection between love of God and love of the other—as the main thesis of the Gospel of John and his three letters. The symbolic act of foot washing points to two fundamental dimensions: the love of God is related first to the community of believers, and secondly loving one another is demonstrated by Jesus' own example of self-sacrifice for his friends. These are the foundations of generosity rooted in divine love. The mysteries of God's self-humiliation and servanthood point to the uniqueness and wisdom of Christianity. The foot washing is a unique

act of John's symbolic language and imagery because it illustrates the connection between Jesus's self-revelation of his divinity and his call to the disciples to follow this model of service.

In chapters 8-9 of the second letter to the Corinthians, the main topic is the collection but also a practice of divine love from Jesus' example of foot washing. To be generous as Jesus has been generous to others is a connection between these two passages. Paul requests the Corinthians to contribute generously toward the financial collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church before he arrives to Corinth. Even though he mentions financial contribution, Paul wants the readers and Corinthians to understand the spirit of generosity. To be generous to the Church in Jerusalem is to respond to Jesus Christ's love—who gives himself up for the human race for the sake of salvation—and to be fair and show gratitude for Christians in Jerusalem—who have shared his spirituality and good news to the Gentiles. It is justice to contribute themselves to the holy works that many Christians have tirelessly devoted themselves to. Generous contribution is a symbol to show reconciliation and unity (*koinonia*) with the Church which is the body of Christ.

In chapter 2, I will focus on theological and philosophical discourse of this virtue ethic. Some misunderstandings of the virtue are in the context of political, social and economic motivations; especially when generous acts are mixed with justice and reciprocity. Three typical philosophical discussions of Tibor Bachan, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas for the virtue of generosity will be presented differently for apprehending its meanings as they attempt to separate generosity from any exchange relationships. Thus, generosity seems to be an impossible virtue. As they define a virtue of "giving without counting the cost," philosophers suggest that generous acts must be giving up self-possession or oneself first and then direct to do magnanimously for others. According to Thomas Aquinas in Question 117, Second Part of

Second Part in *Summa Theologiae*, liberality or generosity is the virtue encountering to greed – the sin of immoderate desire for earthly things. Wealth and possession are gifted by God to many people so that they should be responsible for a good stewardship. The virtue of liberality or generosity is to help people become detached from temporal things and focus on spiritual goods with a willingness to give, freely and without request for compensation. On the other hand, generosity promotes the transformative imagination in the context of a transcultural theology. Saint Thomas relates closely generosity with justice, the two virtues coincide in their proper act: to give a good to another. It is a commitment to giving, unconditionally and with an emphasis on those who are most in need. The virtue generosity or liberality does not merely happen with material commitments, but it also carries an intellectual commitment, a commitment to a meeting of minds. That is, intellectual generosity is a willingness to look for the best understanding of different cultures and beliefs and to be open to learn from them. Moreover, generosity comes from Christian spirituality founded on the resurrection of the crucified one and should be a constant advocate of the marginalized and the vulnerable one in the scope of religious life.

In chapter 3, the consecrated life with three evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience will be examined through the lenses of the virtue of generosity. The life of chastity allows religious to live a relationship of more intimate communion with Christ. It is a generous act to give up the most beautiful gift for the One whom the religious love. From the spring of generosity, the vow of poverty is a way of expressing gratitude to Jesus for his love. It reflects a desire to imitate Him for the sake of kingdom of God. When Jesus was among his disciples, he did not consider himself as Lord, but as a suffering servant and friend. He emptied himself to be able to serve. He was obedient to God as a servant until death, even the most horrible and infamous death of the cross (Phil 2: 5- 11). Poverty is expressed as a participation in the poverty

of Christ (2Cor 8: 9). Similarly, the religious vocation is a calling to develop our relationship as children of the Father, who is love. It is out of gratitude that we offer a response of chastity to Jesus who obeys His Father absolutely to love us with his whole heart. The evangelical counsel of obedience in the consecrated life is thus a journey to freedom of the heart and unity with God's will in the discernment of the Holy Spirit's movements. Finally, I will suggest transformational approaches to bridge different forms of religious life from different parts of the world, especially in the intellectual ministry. It is the Christian calling of stewardship to facilitate educational resources between benefactors and worthy recipients for the transformation of lives in the body of Christ.

CHAPTER 1: SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR GENEROSITY

In the New Testament, generosity traditionally is a reflection and response of God who sets a perfect example by giving up his only Son, Jesus Christ as a sacrificial self-gift to save the world out of his love and makes human beings become children of God (Jn. 3:16). In responding to the One who sacrifices his life for others, Christians in the first century are encouraged to give freely and generously to worthy causes such as the poor, widows, missionaries, and orphans (1Tim 5:9, Acts 2:45, Acts 6:1). Therefore, generosity becomes an important virtue of Christianity and appears many times in the New Testament. The act of giving to those in need has been considered as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22). Jesus explicitly mentions this virtue when he teaches others the new perspective of generosity above human justice in the parable of laborers (Mt 20:15). In divine love, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him” (Rom 10:12). Generosity makes no boundary among peoples because true generosity is from God’s love. “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (Jas 1:17). Especially, Pauline communities see giving as a blessing. It does not require or demand sacrificial giving but commends it (2 Cor. 8:14, 1 Cor. 16:2 and 2 Cor. 8:8). Paul convinces people to contribute in various ways to the healthy body of communities because of Paul’s view of Jesus’ followers as body of Christ. Each person who has different financial resources contributes generously to the poor. The wealthy has the opportunity to offer their economic resource, but the poor can show the opportunity to receive assistance. In spite of different backgrounds and economic situations, people are various

parts of the Body of Christ.¹ Therefore, in this chapter the scriptural foundation for generosity will be exemplified in Jesus' humble example of John's Gospel and generous acts of Pauline community. Of course, many Scriptural passages mention generosity but these two passages Jesus' foot washing (Jn 13:1-17) and (2 Cor 8-9) are the most adequate interpretation of the virtue of generosity according to Christian tradition.

I. Generosity in Johannine tradition

As we know, the foundational message of the Gospel of John is divine love revealed by Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who came down from heaven and became a human person among the human race. Jesus is the most valuable self-gift for human beings and the most wonderful example of generosity that God has extended to people out of love. John 13:1-17 portrays adequately the close connection between love of God and love of others—as the main thesis of the Gospel of John and the three letters. The symbolic act of foot washing points to two fundamental dimensions of divine generosity: the love of God is related first to the community of believers; and second, loving one another is demonstrated by Jesus' own example of self-sacrifice for his friends. The passage is a preparation and demonstration for what Jesus will teach later in the Gospel: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13: 34-5).

The image of Jesus washing the feet for his disciples is a challenge to the world to understand the meaning of the person of Jesus Christ. It shows that the world and Christianity are intertwined but remain completely distinct at the level of core of values. What the world

¹ Bruce W. Longenecker. *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2010) 281-7

understands by the images of Messiah, King, Son of God, Prophet or Teacher is absolutely different from what a self-giving person, Jesus Christ, wants to express in his action. Similarly, what people consider the virtue of generosity by prosperity and wealth is different from divine self-gifts and humility. His teachings and actions, even his own self, presents a mystery to everyone who tries to resolve the paradox of Christology. How can an almighty God, Jesus Christ, incarnate Himself in the world, humble Himself by taking the form of a human person, suffer persecution, and wash feet for his disciples as a slave? How could a heavenly God let His only Son do such a humiliating act?

The mysteries of God's self-humiliation and servanthood point to the uniqueness and essentials of generosity. The account of the foot washing is special and important in the Gospels because only John indicates and recounts this event in the Last Supper, omitting the institution of Eucharist and priesthood. The foot washing is a unique act of John's symbolic language and image because it illustrates the connection between Jesus's self-revelation of his divinity and his call to the disciples to follow this model of service.² This passage truly reflects the meaning of the Son of God's role, as core meanings of generosity, in Philippians 2:5-11, in which Jesus is the Lord who humbles himself and plays the role of a slave. By this humiliation and generous service, he cleanses his disciples' feet, signifying purification from sinfulness, and prepares them for Christian fellowship and service.

² Martin, R. P. "New Testament foundations: A guide for Christian students" - *Volume I: The four gospels* (Revised ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (1975) 306.

1. Exegesis of the Account of Foot Washing

The account of John 13:1-17 is certainly distinct and unique from the Synoptic Gospels because of the symbolic act and language of foot washing. Moreover, this passage is part of one compressed conversation and discourse in a single night. John emphasizes the unity and intimate friendship of Jesus with his disciples so that he shows Jesus always with his students.³ This image reflects the good shepherd caring for his flock and willingly laying down his life to defend them; thus it underscores the theme of divine generosity to the end of Jesus's human life.

Even though the Johannine presentation includes almost all of Jesus' activities recounted in the Synoptics, it leaves out the essential part of the Last Supper—the institution of the Eucharist. So how can John use his symbolic image of foot washing to interpret adequately the Eucharist and the Last Supper? Thomas Stegman believes that the theme of the Eucharistic meal is not always absent in the Gospel of John and that foot washing is more accurately and very closely linked to the Eucharist. As a matter of fact, the Eucharist is symbolically alluded to many parts of John such as the miracle at the wedding in Cana, the feeding of five thousand, and the bread from heaven in Chapter 6. Stegman claims that the Catholic Church is very justified in using this passage of John on the Holy Thursday to illustrate the Eucharist. While the Synoptic Gospels mention the institution of the Eucharist by linking what Jesus did with the bread and wine at the Last Supper to the historical Passover, John relates Jesus to the image of Lamb in the Passover to refer to the Exodus story and the Good Shepherd picture.⁴

³ Rudolf Bultmann. *The Gospel of John: a Commentary*. G.R. Beasley-Murray, trans. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. 1971) 457-8

⁴ Tom Stegman. "Lecture in the Class of John's Gospel and Letters". At School of Theology and Ministry. On Oct. 24, 2011

2. The second prologue of the Book of Glory

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God (Jn 13:1-3)

Many Biblical scholars believe that chapter 12 is the conclusion of Jesus' signs and rhetorical conversation with the Jews in Jerusalem. They infer, consequently, that John 13 must be a beginning chapter of "the Book of Glory." Accordingly, John 13:1-3 forms a prologue to the Book of Glory; just as John 1:1-18 functions as a prologue to the Book of Signs. Interestingly, Neyrey puts the two prologues together for purposes of comparison and contrast, and thus develops an argument that these prologues are introductions to the main themes in the books of Signs and Glory, respectively. In the first prologue, Jesus enters the world from God—the source of light. Now he will leave the world and his disciples very soon to return to his divine Father. He sheds light into the darkness of world in the beginning; now he has to leave his beloved students in the world to reunite with his Father after dying an agonizing death on the cross before being raised from the dead and ascending to heaven. The prediction in Jn. 1:11 now becomes obvious: evidence mounts that the world hates him, especially in the series of events such as evil manipulation, a deceiving disciple, and enemies who are trying to eliminate him from their world. Moreover, while the first prologue describes mainly the creative power of Jesus, the book of Glory focuses on the eschatological power of Jesus over death and life. Jesus knows these powers have been handed over to him by the Father, but out of generosity he continually obeys His Father's will by completing his mission to the end (4:34, 5:36, 17:4, 19:28, and 19:30).⁵

⁵ Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J. *The Gospel of John*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 226

Furthermore, Jn. 13:1-3 provides the literary and the theological setting within which the whole of Jn. 13-17 can be read and interpreted. 13:1 introduces the reader to the love which Jesus had for his own. This expression was used already in the prologue to designate the portion of Israel who had not received the Word. It could be a subtle indication by the evangelist to imply that the disciples now take the place of Jesus' own. 13:1 indicates the third Passover in the Gospel of John, and it follows the narrative of Mary washing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume.⁶ The author mentions the feast of the Jews and the "hour" of Jesus in order to imply that, by the plan of God, the two feasts or the two covenants now become one through Jesus Christ. The "hour" of glorification of Jesus will take place in his life, death, and resurrection. The "hour" of pouring his love to others will be an exemplary model for Christian community.⁷

Even in the shadow of persecution and death, Jesus still loves his disciples and loves them "to the end" (*eis telos*), which is to say, to the maximum loyalty or completeness. His divine generosity is truly so endless, complete and infinite that he is ready to give up his life in love. The verb "to love" can indicate that Jesus loves his disciples until his last moment and he loves them completely.⁸ It also relates to the first prologue in which the Logos dwells in the world in order to choose his people, Israel, and to grant them the privilege of being children of God (Jn. 1:12-13). Someone has listened and believed in him; thus, he will inherit everlasting life with Jesus.⁹

⁶ Stegman's Lecture.

⁷ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B. *The Gospel of John. Sacra Pagina Series Volume 4* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998) 373

⁸ Barrett, C.K. *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. (London: SPCK, 1965) 365

⁹ Herman C. Waetjen. *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciples: A Work in Two Editions*. (New York: T&T Clark, 2005) 328

In verse 2 John mentions the meal as a farewell dinner in order to portray an Agape meal—a precious moment in which Jesus expresses his love for “his own” by uniting the disciples around him in the communion with the Father. “His own” means that Jesus cannot do anything more than love his own: the utmost love is manifest in this foot-washing, the symbolic act of God’s love. Even though Jesus spends time to teach, to care for, and to be with them for many years, and even though they are considered as chosen ones of Jesus, there is one still betraying him in the Last Supper as the intrusive remark of Jn. 6:71 recalls.¹⁰

As the context of the fellowship of a communal meal, the evangelist employs the traditional Greco-Roman banquet in the first century A.D., which includes both a meal and a symposium (teaching, discussion, or entertainment). The symposium, conducted with wine and food, includes conversations, discourse, blessing and closing prayers. There are certain rites and religious practices in the Greco-Roman meal, such as “reclining at table” (Lk. 7:36-50). Among these, foot washing is a respectful act of welcoming honored guests. Though the act of foot washing simply refers to a traditional ritual for hygiene, it becomes an important Johannine symbolic gesture. This custom belongs to the practice of hospitality and the courtesy that the owner shows his guests at any Jewish celebration conducted within Greco-Roman culture. We can see that Jesus rebukes Simon for not keeping the tradition of washing the feet of Jesus in his house (Lk.7:44).¹¹ Historically, washing feet is part of the ritual washing to prepare Jews for the meal. After the *Kiddush*—the traditional blessing when the cup of wine is taken by the head of an assembly-- it was a common practice to wash hands before touching the food. Washing the

¹⁰ Ibid, 328

¹¹ Ben Witherington, III. *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995) 232-3.

feet of diners ordinarily precedes the meal and is usually done by a member of the group with low status or by the host's slave.¹²

Before performing the foot washing, Jesus seems to know everything in advance, but he nonetheless loves his disciples unconditionally—including the one who will betray him. The power and authority that were handed over to him by his Father are Christology beyond human finitude in verse 3. It communicates the perfect relationship between the Father and the Son: Jesus comes from God and goes to God. Notwithstanding, through his knowledge Jesus here draws the line of power between God and Satan who dwells in Judas Iscariot's heart.¹³

3. Foot washing as the act of love and generosity

Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.' (Jn 13:4-11)

Therefore, John uses this passage of foot washing to show that Jesus, who is in effect the host, assumes the role of a slave in order to wash his guests' feet. This is an act not only of hospitality but also of humble service. This could be an effective parable, meaning that he intends to offer his life for all of us. Washing the feet conjures the image of Mary, who had recently washed his feet with her hair in Bethany (Jn. 12:1-8); and this in turn evokes the anointing of Jesus—a Messiah—for his coming burial.

¹² Robin Routledge, "Passover and Last Supper," *Tyndale Bulletin* 53.2 (2002) 203-221, 210.

¹³ Stegman's lecture.

Even though Jesus is fully aware of his divine origin and destiny, he assumes the ordinary work of a slave, who generally washed the guests' feet, which, being protected only by sandals, were typically dusty from walking on unpaved roads. In vv. 4-5, the tools that Jesus employs for washing are his robe, a towel, water, and a basin-- all of which are the common tools for a servant, not for reputable persons like master, teacher, rabbi, or king.¹⁴ The fact that he removes his robe or garment implicitly indicates that he will lay down his life for others as of the Good Shepherd discourses. Thus, Jesus' performance is profoundly symbolic. He sets aside the honor, deference, and divine dignity that are due to him so that he can put on the role of a servant. Some Jewish teachers said that washing feet was even too menial, a task for a Jewish slave to perform. Only Gentile (non-Jewish) slaves were considered low enough to wash feet.¹⁵ Jesus' deed demonstrates an example of leadership and governance (Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:24-27). Only Jesus—the Son of God can do such things because foot washing and crucifixion indicate how God is so extravagantly generous to human beings.¹⁶ These actions echo the Christological *kénōsis* of Paul's letter to Philippians 2:6-11. Jesus knew his power and authority as a divine person, but willingly empties himself to become a slave—an act of the utmost generosity and humiliation. He will thus be exalted to the highest place so that every being has to bend down to pay homage to him.

Verse 6 shows a disconnection between Jesus as a Master and Peter's protest. What Peter understands by the Son of God and expects from his Master is different from the mission that

¹⁴ Daniel B. Stevick, *Jesus and His Own: A Commentary on John 13-17*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eedmans Publishing Company, 2011) 30-1.

¹⁵ Beasley-Murray, George R, *John. Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 36. 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999) 233.

¹⁶ Wright, Nicholas Thomas, *John for Everyone: Part 2, Chapters 11—21*. (London: SPCK, 2002) 45.

Jesus received according to God's design. John may borrow this theme from Mark's Gospel, where Peter rejects the idea of Jesus undergoing persecution. Peter refuses to accept that his Master, Rabbi or Teacher would serve him in this humble way.¹⁷ But this objection is very understandable. This concept is hard for us to believe, even in our egalitarian culture. It would be impossible to have a dignitary or an important guest empty trash and to clean up restrooms in our homes. John did not disguise the attitude of misunderstanding of the disciples. Evoking the theme of disciples who have "no faith" in Mark and "little faith" in Matthew, John presents Peter's expostulation as a lack of surrender to and belief in the divine revelation of Jesus's words and deeds.¹⁸ Maybe Peter thinks that Jesus should not embarrass Himself or he simply becomes shocked by Jesus's behavior. John has Peter repeating the response of John the Baptist, when Jesus came to John for baptism (Mt 3:11-15). As John the Baptist feels unworthy to untie Jesus sandals, so Peter has the same feeling about being washed by his Lord.¹⁹

Peter is obdurate in his hierarchically ordered cultural perspective, a perspective still quite influential in Asian cultures with strong Confucianism influences. The higher ranking persons never perform any jobs lower than their deserved level. It also remains a common mistake for Christians to believe that Jesus is exclusively a divine person rather than a human one. We easily believe that Jesus is in a distant heaven rather than that he is an intimate to us and wants to wash dirty feet—our sinfulness. It is difficult for us sometimes to be convinced that God is so generous that he gives himself up to be with us in our daily life. We regularly reject the

¹⁷ Stegman's Lecture.

¹⁸ Moloney, 374

¹⁹ Carson, D.A. *The Gospel According to John*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994) 462-3.

act of salvation, whereby God forgives our ugly sins in the form of a servant.²⁰

“Jesus answered, ‘you do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand’” (Jn. 13:7). He requires Peter to accept his foot washing to show that the time “now” and “later” are both parts of Jesus’ hour—the hour of his glorification through death and resurrection. In the present, Peter and other disciples may not understand completely what Jesus performs, but afterward they will comprehend everything when the Son of Man is glorified (Jn.12:23).

Unfortunately, Peter does not understand the wisdom of Jesus’ enlightenment in his symbolic act of servanthood. Peter at first refuses to allow Jesus to make himself subservient by washing feet. Jesus’ answer, in effect, shows that understanding the symbolic importance of washing feet is a prerequisite to discipleship. A community of believers must believe what Jesus wishes to offer when he says, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me” (Jn. 13:8).²¹ Immediately, Peter changes his attitude and asserts unexpectedly that he wants to be washed all over, not simply on his feet. He eagerly desires to have as a great part of Jesus as possible because he comes to understand that being washed is an indispensable criterion for admission to communion with Jesus.

Why does Peter change his attitude from a hierarchical mentality to demand instead more than he has already received? Bultmann suggests that Peter fails to understand that Jesus’ self-gift is unique and complete in itself. Jesus’ generous gift is so perfect and satisfactory that people do not have to ask him for more or less than what they receive.²² Regardless of how adequately these answers are, I believe that Peter shows his deep desire to be close to Jesus as soon as he

²⁰ Bultmann, 468

²¹ Waetjen, 329

²² Bultmann, 469

identifies the foot washing a condition for the admission. It is fair to recognize his positive sincerity rather than to pay attention to his misunderstanding. At least, he gives up his cultural mentality to participate extravagantly in the symbolism of Jesus' humble service—revealing a desire for intimacy and for a precious relationship between Jesus and himself. To allow Jesus to wash his feet is symbolically to permit himself to be incorporated completely into Jesus and to renounce his ego. Peter is motivated to become Christ-like, as St. Paul believes, “not I, but Christ in me” (Gal 2:20). Peter may not completely understand Jesus' extraordinary work, but he believes in Jesus and accepts the reality that divine knowledge is beyond human limitation. Symbolically, Peter's extreme desire is to show how generous he is to let God work humbly in his life. Moreover, while other disciples may be afraid, astonished, and confused in the extraordinary moment, Peter instantly chooses to be assertive by demanding extra washing. The reaction of astonishment and objection is quickly superseded by the desire to be Jesus' disciple, to be close to Jesus and to participate in what he is doing. This behavior therefore points to his unique capacity of leadership.

Jesus affirms that, for one who has walked on unpaved streets, wearing only sandals, washing the feet would represent only a supplement to a complete bath. If someone had a bath already, he may not need to have another one right away; washing the feet would be sufficient. Jesus' response is not simply a factual answer but a symbolic utterance, foreshadowing the baptism by which Jesus, who will sacrifice his life, will wash away human sinfulness. To participate in the foot washing of Jesus is to belong to the self-giving love of the divine community that generously wishes to redeem all through the paschal mystery of Jesus.²³ It can also indicate the sacrament of confession, by which baptized people have the privilege to become

²³ Moloney, 375

more deeply children of God and to become free from sins. Our concupiscence makes this necessary. As John proclaims in his first epistle, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jn. 1:8-9); hence, human nature remains stained by bondage to sin, even though they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This issue may be one of struggles that Johannine community experienced in the first century A.D., when it wondered about the completeness, finality, and unrepeatability of baptism in view of the reality of human limitations. Once people have submerged themselves in water for baptism, they are like those who have had a bath; there is no need to have another one. Still, the unrepeatability and permanent seal of baptism does not guarantee the baptized person a life free from sinfulness.²⁴

On the other hand, though Jesus’ disciples have been cleansed and have remained faithful to their teacher, not all of them are clean. Jesus implicitly talks about how Judas Iscariot will betray him in verse 11. Jesus is fully aware of Judas, the one who stands outside the purity and intimate circle of discipleship. This disclosure is part of identifying the traitor beforehand. Schnackenburg concludes on exegetical grounds that the disclosure in John 13:11 begins the process of naming the traitor gradually. Judas’s identity becomes more evident as chapter 13 progresses: “but not all of you” (10), “he who ate my bread” (18), “one of you” (21), “to whom I shall give this morsel” (26a), and “to Judas (the son) of Simon Iscariot” (26b).²⁵ Interestingly, Jesus still washes Judas’ feet, even though he knows that Judas will betray him. We might expect that we would expel the traitor immediately if we knew him. Jesus does not excommunicate him

²⁴ Stevick, 33

²⁵ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John. Volume Three Commentary on Chapters 13-21* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 22-23.

or cast him out; in fact, he even washes his feet. Truly he wants to demonstrate an example of loving and being generous to his enemies to the end (Mt 5:44; Lk. 6:35). The presence of the defective disciple and the symbolic dirtiness of the feet reflect the concept of holiness in the Church, the group of believers. The holiness of disciples of the Church does not mean perfection but implies a conversion of hearts—to clean up our souls and to invigorate the faith in God who is generous enough to wash us from sins.

4. A discourse of Jesus to interpret the foot washing: Transformative example for generous service (Jn. 13:12-17)

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them (Jn 13:12-17).

John 13:12-17 is brief discourse to explain the meaning of foot washing. This explanatory passage takes the form of a dialog between master and disciples. If the first section (Jn13:1-11) shows Jesus’ demonstration of the foot washing as a symbol of humble service, this second section (Jn. 13:12-17) serves as an interpretation of the extraordinary act, an instruction for implementation, and a blessing and desire of the Lord. Jesus puts on his clothes and resumes his place at the table, then asks if his disciples can understand what he has done (v. 12). The disciples are still astonished and are not ready to reply with correct answers. The rhetorical question here is Jesus’s pedagogy of demonstrating the servant style of leadership, not in abstract illustration but precisely in the unexpected experience of his disciples.²⁶ In vv. 13-14, if Jesus,

²⁶ Bultmann, 474

teacher (*didaskalos*) and Lord (*kyrios*) of the disciples, humbled himself to wash their feet as an exemplary action, they should also follow this model to serve one another (1 Jn. 4:10-11).

Certainly, Jesus does not act out of self-negation but out of self-gifting love. His self-humbling arose from an inner power he receives from his heavenly Father. In spite of being a Teacher or Lord, Jesus descends to the level of a humble slave so that his disciples and others believing in him will be raised up to the level of God—an invitation to the new community of God. In truth, he never denies his honorable rank as a Teacher, Master, and Lord in a circle of his students; nonetheless, he humbles himself in his self-knowledge and self-possession to do such menial jobs. Jesus demonstrates his divine love for everyone, even his enemy, first by washing the feet of his disciples, of course, and even more so, later by dying on the cross for the human race. As a result, his death will motivate and empower everyone to love and to be generous to one another, especially the lowly. In a dramatic gesture, Jesus reverses the roles of the regnant cultural hierarchy so as to embody his request that his disciples carrying on his model: the teacher becomes a servant and a teacher stoops to wash a servant's feet.²⁷

In verse 15, Jesus now invites his followers to serve one other as a way of carrying on the mission revealed in the Father's love for His people. Of course, foot washing is not the specific act that Jesus wants them to do; it is a symbolic act. Jesus invites others to offer his love. The act of foot washing now requires of the believers that they do as Jesus, the Son, has done and that they love as Jesus has loved (Jn. 15:12). The evangelist hints at Christology, whereby people are truly incorporated in the new community of God, rather than by foot washing. It is not a ritual example per se, but Christ extends his love to a world that-- like Judas-- rejects Jesus' invitation

²⁷ Stevick. 34-35

by free choice. While the disciples of Jesus choose Jesus' love, Judas betrays and manipulates Jesus' generosity.²⁸

Jesus clearly requires his followers, as his agents and messengers, to do what he has done symbolically—washing feet to others as a symbol of generosity through Christ. This is a moral exemplar of self-giving love. In verse 16, Jesus observes generally that the one who sends is greater than the one who was sent. He then draws in the implications in the final discourse: Jesus sent this love to his disciples. If the greater one wants to share his love through this exemplary act to others, his disciples need to take the notion of foot washing seriously.

In other words, if the Master or the Sender has so humbled himself, his students and all Christians must continue to give generously of their lives to heal the sick, to forgive sins, and to reconcile the world torn by divisions of injustice, wars, discrimination, and prejudice. “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (13:17). The evangelist thus concludes this section with an exhortation of Jesus promising a blessing for those who continue to serve others. John may be alluding to Matthew 25 to persuade Christians that performing generous acts is not only caring for others but also serving the Lord, who identifies himself with his disciples, especially the least ones. Living in a communion of love and generosity is the way of manifesting the active epiphany in the world (Jn. 17:23), and the only way of being free children of the Light.²⁹

Neyrey depicts the two sections of this foot washing (13:4-11 and 13:12-17) as 1) an event or ritual of transformation and 2) a ceremony of confirmation. In the first section, Jesus orders Peter to have a “status-transformation ritual” to purify himself thoroughly in order to

²⁸ Stegman's Lecture.

²⁹ Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*. (Collegeville: the Liturgical Press, 2001) 196.

transform his life into a new person, an elite group leader, and child of God—in short, an inheritance of divinity that Jesus wants to share with his disciples. And Jesus instructs his transformed disciples to perform this ceremony for others so that all will enjoy the same inheritance with God. Yet, more than this, the ceremony that disciples will continually exercise confirms their status and position as leaders of Christianity: “Unless I wash you, you have no part in me” (Jn 13:8). Unless Peter accepts Jesus’ offer and lets him wash Peter’s feet, Peter cannot be purified from his current status and be transferred into the circle of selected membership of Jesus’s community. On the other hand, by presiding over the ceremonial washing—a symbol of humble service--the disciples confirm their new roles as leaders of the group. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord;’ and you are right, for so I am” (13:13). If they want to be exalted leaders, they must be humble themselves and serve others.³⁰

5. Implications of foot washing

Having explored exegetically the background of Jesus’ generous act, we now move to the important part of the meaning and implications of foot washing. In this story, the Teacher and the Lord humbly takes the form of a slave and performs a tedious service for others. The role-reversal encompasses an eschatological event, inasmuch as a divine person becomes incarnate in the world, and becoming a human person, so that human beings, especially marginalized and the poor, could ultimately be raised up so as to share divinity with God. As St. Irenaeus exclaims: “God becomes a human person so that human beings can become God.”

When surrendering his inmost being, Jesus does not lose his identity and status as God. He sets a revolutionary example, opposing the cultural idea that the greatest one will be served

³⁰ Neyrey, 228-9

and respected, while the poor and lowly will struggle. In 13:12-17, Jesus shows himself as the example of service par excellence. His disciples, and others sent by God, are encouraged to extend their generosity to bridge gaps in the world and to be in solidarity with human suffering. Humanity receives momentum from Jesus' exemplary action to serve others, even in menial jobs, for the sake of justice, goodwill, and dignity among people. Christology truly becomes ecclesiology. The Light of the Word illuminates the darkness of the world and enlightens the Church—the community of faithful—to be the light of the world. The transformation of humanity through Jesus will affect the emancipation of the world.³¹

The act of foot washing also symbolizes another meaning of generosity. Self-giving service to others entails transforming oneself first and making it more abundant. Generosity enriches transformative perspective, which restores our true identity in the relationship with God, and enlightens other hearts to be more generous. When Jesus humbles himself to wash the feet of other disciples, he does not negate his divine identity nor his honorable rank as a Teacher, Rabbi, Lord and Master. He does so in the strength, confidence, and authority that his heavenly Father hands over to him. When he shares what he has through the symbolic act, his disciples become clean from sins, enjoy company with him, and share what they experience of their Master's generosity and love for one another. In other words, selfishness is the opposite of generosity; it shows its poverty because it narrows the gaze of human hearts inwardly. The excessive selfishness becomes unhealthy and deadlocks a generosity naturally geared to a contemplative dimension of Christian love and service. When people in an *agape* community seek to serve others rather than expect to be served, they flourish and enrich their human relationships with

³¹ Stevick, 42-43

divine love, just as Jesus promises, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10:10). Brueggemann interprets this verse as follows:

Jesus had identity questions, destiny issues, settled in his life. He knew that he was totally empowered by God; all things were given into his hand. And because that issue was settled, he was able to remove the garments, the outward signs of respect and control that the world acknowledges. He was able to take all of that off precisely because the real issues were elsewhere and were settled...He knelt, not in humility or in fear but in strength and confidence.³²

II. Biblical Interpretation of Generosity: Pauline methodology of generosity and collection in 2 Corinthians 8-9

In chapters 8-9 of the second letter to the Corinthians, the main topic is the collection, but Paul wants to teach his followers the great example of divine generosity from Jesus Christ who has humbled himself to serve others. Foot washing certainly is a symbolic act of generosity that the Pauline community may follow in term of financial contribution. Paul wants to encourage his people to respond to God’s generous act in Jesus Christ’s *kénōsis*. The passage illustrates how Paul requests the Corinthians to contribute generously toward the financial collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church before he arrives to Corinth. Even though he mentions financial contribution, Paul wants the readers and Corinthians to understand the spirit of generosity. To be generous to the Church in Jerusalem is to respond to Jesus Christ’s love—who gives himself up for the human race for the sake of salvation—and to be fair and grateful to for Christians in Jerusalem—who have shared his spirituality and good news to the Gentiles. It is justice to contribute themselves to the holy works that many Christians have tirelessly devoted themselves to. Generous contribution is a symbol to show reconciliation and unity (*koinonia*) with the

³² Walter Brueggemann, *Living toward a Vision: Biblical Reflection on Shalom* (New York: United Church Press, 1982) 135.

Church which is the body of Christ.³³ Paul starts by recognizing how generous and enthusiastic the Macedonians have been traditionally (8:1-7). Then he uses the image of Jesus' gracious act to encourage people to participate in charity collection (8:8-15) and appoints Titus with other two brothers to Corinth to coordinate fundraising (8:16-24). Passage 9:1-15 is another exhortation for contribution and generosity as the spiritual fruits of the Spirit of God.

1. The poor are the most generous (2 Cor. 8:1-7)

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.(2 Cor 8:1:7)

In the beginning of the financial appeal to Corinthians, Paul employs the example of the Macedonians' record of generous contribution to encourage others to participate in fundraising as an act of God's grace. Paul addresses this letter to "brothers" – inclusive and intimate language—to request everyone to join in this contribution regardless of their socioeconomic status. In Paul's view, the collection here is not only an act of charity but a practice of the spirit of generosity as God has become a salvific gift for everyone; thus, the collection should be boosted in the Christian communities. Paul never intends to order people in Corinth to donate for the sake of social justice, even if it is legitimate. Paul never puts more burdens on their shoulders in view of their economic plight, wishing them to take initiative on contributing to the

³³ Thomas Stegman, SJ. *Second Corinthians*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009) 190.

collection. He instead advises them and helps them to be prudent in thinking of others who are struggling and of the graces benefiting their lives from generous ministry.³⁴ As a Vietnamese proverb states, “you can give any gifts without love and sympathy, but you cannot love without giving something from yourself.” Similarly, Paul does not only wish to raise money from the Gentiles, but he wants them to think about relationships and divine graces that come from holy works.³⁵ As matter of fact, “the grace of God” that he comments within the churches of Macedonia refers to the divine gift of love—the generous gift of sending His only Son to the world (John 3:16) and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Rom 5:5). This grace is the free gift from God for sanctifying people’s lives, without counting the cost or anything returned.

This grace or divine gift has made the Macedonians become “an abundance of joy” even though they struggle from severe poverty and afflictions of persecution and banishment. The great sacrifice the Macedonians offer during times of poverty and affliction was rewarded by joy and a “wealth of generosity” (2 Cor. 8:2). This example implies that the afflicted and the poor usually donate their money and time for others more than do the wealthy. Powerless persons admit their insufficiency in their lives and have a tendency to increase their dependence on others. Lacking something is a state of incompleteness which requires a person still reaching out, moving on, and longing for another to fulfill their emptiness. The powerless usually rely on someone else to meet their needs. Thus, generous contribution is a manner in which the Macedonians respond to God’s grace which they long for. Generally speaking, the poor are great teachers of generosity through their lives and practices. The word generosity actually comes

³⁴ Longenecker, 281-7

³⁵ Jan Lambrecht, S.J. *Second Corinthians: Sacra Pagina Series. Volume 8.* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press. 1999) 141

from *haplotēs*—meaning singleness of mind and heart. Macedonians want to follow Jesus’ movement by dedicating themselves to the holy acts.³⁶

Other interesting points in this passage are “the ministry to the saints” and “they gave themselves first to the Lord.” The service or ministry here implies the work of reconciliation between Gentiles and the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The generous contribution of Gentile Christians establishes the new covenant mission in the body of Christ who has made himself become a mediator to reconcile the division between Gentiles and Jews and to create peace on the earth. The virtue of generosity seems indicatively an instrument to open hearts and minds to reach out to each other between the recipients and benefactors. Again the contribution of benefactors here is not only monetary donation but also their lives—“they gave themselves first to the Lord” and “then also by the will of God” to the apostles (8:5). Their gift formed part of their larger and more fundamental consecration of themselves to God in Christ. Paul compares the action of self-giving of Jesus Christ to Macedonians’ works. Because of obedience to the Father’s will, Jesus Christ has taken the form of a human person to be in solidarity among human kind, to wash people’s feet as a servant, and to give himself up on the cross to fulfill His Father’s mission of saving people from the slavery of sinfulness.³⁷ The most generous gifts that Macedonians and the Gentiles in Corinth donate are not utterly financial but the human life to the service of the Lord. This is the challenge of generosity. To love and to follow Jesus Christ require someone dedicating her life entirely and investing completely in other’s lives. To give away a few thousand dollars may be difficult but to make ourselves as gifts for others is a profound demand.

³⁶ Stegman.191-2

³⁷ Stegman. 193

2. Jesus' grace is the supreme model of generosity. (8:8-15)

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has— not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, 'the one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.' (2 Cor 8:8-15)

Paul's strategy for appealing to the Corinthians to give to the collection is to center on the knowledge of Jesus Christ who gives himself voluntarily and sacrificially for the benefit of others and so is the supreme model to be followed in giving. The knowledge of "the gracious act" (8:9) of Jesus Christ was well known in the community of Corinth, and Jesus' disciples would have understood very well and imitated Jesus' generosity. The Corinthians have both cognitive and empirical knowledge of Jesus at the personal level—who shows gracious acts by closely associating with the poor so that everyone can become rich.³⁸ Jesus' humiliation to take a human form and to lay down his life for the salvation of everyone is the greatest level of generosity and a supreme model of all generous acts. In spite of being a King of kings and Son of God, Jesus willingly becomes a poor and humble person to wash our dirty feet and to redeem us from any bondages of sinfulness (Phil 2:8) because he loves the world and wishes to praise us to be children of God. Divine generosity invites us to friendship and shares in the essential life of God. At the same time, God's generosity challenges us to be generous toward others. The self-

³⁸ Murray Harris. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2005. 578

giving love of Jesus Christ is a cause and guideline for all generous ministries in which believers show the signs of the genuineness of their love through the collection for the poor in Jerusalem.

Paul is not referring to an easy donation as fulfilling a Christian's obligation, but a heart transformation that occurs at the deepest part of who we are. When someone becomes a disciple of Jesus, his core identity changes, God's grace overflows, and that should impact everything he does, including how he uses his resources. The journey of being generous begins when people encounter Jesus' grace.

Hence, Paul pays attention to the relational manner that people donate to others. "I am giving counsel in this matter, for it is appropriate for you who began not only to act but to act willingly last year" (8:10). Paul wants to clear out any negative attitudes about the collection and pushes people to think that one's motivation in giving is more essential than the real amount collected. Probably, people did not show very much enthusiasm to contribute expected amounts as Paul requests but he emphasizes eagerness and generosity of donation.³⁹ His goal for this fundraising is not based on the actual collected amount but to help people in Corinth to understand the issues of social justice and relationship with the Lord who is the source of all material things. Even though he really cares for the poor in Jerusalem, Paul tries to avoid coercing ways of moral decision making (Phil 8, 14; 2 Cor 9:7). Thus, he shows some suggestions for collection and relates this holy work to Christology.⁴⁰ In verse 8:13, the principle of proportionality is applied for fundraising. Basically, the one who has surplus in the present year should contribute his possessions to the poor in Jerusalem and the poor one should

³⁹ Stegman, 199.

⁴⁰ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. *Keys to Second Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

not become more burdensome for taking care of others. Paul does not appeal to financial assistance for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem at the expense of depleting the Corinthians.

“Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less” (2 Cor. 8:15). This idea of equality in generous contribution is borrowed from the story of Israel in the wilderness when they were fed by the manna (Ex 16:18). It has been suggested that the shortfall of some was relieved by the generous and voluntary contribution of those who had more resources than they needed. Even though Paul wants to see generosity as a free giving with Christian motivation, this principle of proportionality indicates a dimension of social justice.⁴¹ In the world today, the issue of social justice has been more profound and problematic. The wealthy, who make up less than ten percent of worldly population, own more than four-fifths of the natural resources and international funds. This proportionality reminds us, especially the rich, to pay attention and be sensitive to the poor. The Christian vision is one of sharing voluntarily, out of deep compassion.

3. Transparency and self-care are necessary parts of generosity

But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming of the good news; and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill. We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you. (2 Cor 8:16-24)

⁴¹ Harris, 592-3.

The last part of chapter eight (8: 16-24) deals with transparency and integrity of collection for the Jerusalem community. To organize the fund-raising events in Corinth, Paul decides to send Titus and two brothers to this community with prudent instruction. First, Paul emphasizes the gratitude that Titus experiences divine graces in his life, and this gratuitousness moves him to return to Corinth with internal freedom. Divine generosity has transformed Titus' heart to be free and generous to others (8:16). Second, generosity is not a benevolence of a person who performs heartfelt acts to others without fulfilling other moral virtues such as gratitude, self-care, and prudence. When Paul sent his delegates to administer the process of collection, he implicitly encourages that generosity must be accompanied with the cardinal virtues of self-care, fidelity, prudence, and justice.⁴² Transparency is significant procedure that Paul instructs against any possible suspicion regarding collection. Thus, prudent procedure and self-care for the community's integrity are very important for generous collection.

4. Theological foundation and fruitfulness of generosity (9:1-15)

In chapter nine, Paul continues the theme of the collection for the church in Jerusalem and reminds them to have their contribution available before he arrives there. The theme of divine self-giving is mentioned as a motivation for the community's generosity. Paul compares generous acts with an agricultural job. "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (9:6). This is a proverbial wisdom to imply that the more seeds we plant, the more fruits we harvest in the future. The adverb "bountifully" means blessings or graces. When people generously perform charitable works, they will receive

⁴² Cardinal virtues traditionally are prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude, but James Keenan constructs a new list of cardinal virtues. James Keenan, "Introduction to Ethics: Virtue Ethics," accessed on March 25, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/virtue.shtml>

spiritual fruits and inspirations in return much more than monetary profits. God will bless the generous people and provide them abundantly all things they need. Moreover, the Christian recipients from Jerusalem will pray for them and wait for them with affection.⁴³ It is really in the realm of financial stewardship as also in farming that generous sowing meant a generous harvest. In Christian spirituality, we believe that we always receive God's graces in good time or bad time. The only thing God asks us to do is self-surrender and open our hearts generously to let Him work in our lives. Our generous acts for ourselves or others will be a sacrificial offering to God for His blessings. "God is able to make every grace abundant for you" (9:8). In the verse 9:10, God is powerful to make every grace abound among you. God's provision is not to reward the giver, but to enrich the work itself (the mission, the church, and the gospel). What begins-or appears to—as a passage about the virtue of giving and the way it accrues to the benefit of the individual now emerges as a passage about the way in which human generosity can become part of God's work in the gospel itself.⁴⁴

The passage 2 Cor. 9:11-15 continually mentions the benefits of the generous collection from Corinth—that they would be rewarded by God in both the material and the spiritual enrichment and that the recipients from Jerusalem offer their prayer of gratitude to God for his superlative graces in the Corinthians' lives. As we can see, the whole passage of 2 Cor. 8-9:15 highlights the virtue of generosity and divine graces overflowing from the fruits of the Spirit. Through the life and death of Jesus Christ, people, especially the Gentile Christian Macedonians and Achaians, acknowledge how much God generously loves them and responded tremendously

⁴³ Stegman, 212

⁴⁴ Ronald Vallet. *Stepping Stones of the Steward: A Faith Journey Through Jesus' Parables*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994) 55

by donating a great amount for the poor in Jerusalem. Therefore, generosity must be a virtue from the fruit of God which directs human life to love others.

The account of Jesus' foot washing and 2 Cor. 8-9:15 are the most attractive biblical passages that I prayed with during the discernment retreat before joining the Society of Jesus. With an MBA degree and an excellent job as a risk assessment manager for a bank, renouncing everything, including my family and friends to follow Jesus was a challenge. The story of the foot washing encouraged me to forsake fear, to be humble myself, to renounce all things, including myself, and to join with Jesus in a generous service to others. I actually experienced this washing story literally when I was sent to do hospital experiment in the novitiate. I had to bath a naked senior Jesuit and to kneel down to change his clothes in the retirement house. The pride of being a successful businessman almost caused me to abandon the religious vocation. Just as Peter in the passage, I could not accept such humble service unless I understood that Jesus, the Son of God, has generously done menial jobs to transform my life. Contemplation of the account of "Foot Washing" reveals to all Christians-- especially to Pauline communities and religious-- both the eschatological will of Christ and our intimate relationship to him. Jesus is the center and ground of all generous gifts and divine love. The humble service of Jesus also evokes the value of social justice and solidarity with the poor, in which people are invited to devote themselves completely to God with undivided hearts, and to abide in a relationship with Jesus through the servant leadership and service to others made in his image. Truly, the story of foot washing is about divine generosity--a journey from humility to conversion to investing ourselves in a relational commitment through service. The Johannine account of the foot washing therefore becomes a causality and inspiration for the first Christian communities and Paul's disciples. 2Corinthians 8-9 is an interpretation and implementation of Jesus' generosity in John's Gospel.

CHAPTER 2: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL

UNDERSTANDING OF GENEROSITY

We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop. (Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

In the world today, people usually link generosity to philanthropic foundations within business corporations, which donate monetary sums to the poor or to victims of natural disasters. Generosity is considered as an elite virtue of wealthy people who have time and money to distribute their surplus to the poor. In the world's eyes, generosity is somehow reduced to a process of promotion for capital campaigns. Donators at the end of the fiscal year can claim the charity amounts for income tax returns. People sometimes come to have the illusion that generosity is reserved for the rich and excludes the poor. They think that to be generous one must be wealthy first so that they can share what prosperity they have. In return, wealthy people receive praise and respect and commercial promotion for their brand names.

If people understand generosity simply as giving something to others, this virtue seems unattractive and undesirable. Or at least it fits better the categories of business discussions rather than the generosity that Jesus spent his whole life to teach us. Certainly, it is not merely about fundraising or monetary donations or freely sharing resources with others, especially when this is done without discernment of Spirit. Neither is generosity the word for apparently charitable acts done in order to buy one's good reputation. Giving selflessly to others without counting the cost lies at the heart of what it means to be a generous and moral human being. Generosity has become a profound and inspirational virtue to answer the magnificent question: how should we live? Or how do we treat each other and share what we have? Given the importance of this question, we do well to develop our comprehension of generosity as both an ethical virtue and a

best practice. If the previous chapter employs scriptures as a foundation for generosity, this chapter presents the meanings of this virtue through the eyes of philosophers and Christian theologians. Starting from the blueprint of Thomas Aquinas' virtue ethics, I make an argument that generosity is the natural outcome of divine love transforming human life. It is a subset of love-theological virtue but also a reflection motivated by generous acts of God. Without divine generosity, this virtue becomes almost impossible for human beings. In this chapter, I will discuss some common misunderstandings of the virtue and move to examine major philosophical and theological discourses about generosity.

Misconceptions of Generosity

Before we discuss the definition of generosity, we need to examine some misunderstandings of this virtue, especially those that arise from its being mistaken for properly political, social and economic motivations. The most common misconceptions of generous acts are intertwined with justice, trading and reciprocity in material and intangible goods.

First, a generous act is not defined simply as giving something to someone in order to seek for return. Generally speaking, no action is generous if one thing is given for another, like a trading relationship or a business contract. This principle can be seen in exchange agreement not only for material benefits but also for any intangible benefits.⁴⁵ For example, it is not generous to give away some to a robber who is threatening someone's life; in this case, one is attempting to acquire one's security. Neither is it generous when someone donates financially or gives away useless material goods to others in order to seek a better income tax return at the end of the year.

⁴⁵ Lester H. Hunt, "V. Generosity," *American Philosophical Quarterly* Volume 12, No. 3, July (1975): 235.

Generosity has nothing to do with showing off prosperity or success in capitalism and consumerism.

In the interview with some American religious sisters, I was told that the Church and people have betrayed the sisters' generosity and do not appreciate or care for them enough in the end of their lives after many years in generous ministries. Such unappreciated women religious, instead of responding creatively in their ministries and opening their arms wide to the marginalized and to new vocations, tend to become more resentful and to focus on self-care and retirement plans. I will discuss this issue further in chapter 3, the Consecrated Life, but this phenomenon should raise the question of the meaning of generosity in the ministries in which many religious have engaged. If resentment and bitterness are the results of repayment perceived to be inadequate, then the ministries that religious have exercised would seem to have an emphasis on justice more than on generosity. They should deserve compensation for the ministries they have served.

Second, the most regular misunderstandings of generosity are actions operated out of duties, fear, or honor. Any acts performed with an intention to satisfy one's obligations—to pay one's bills, keep one's promises, and live up to one's contracts, for example—are not generous by definition. Properly generous actions do not fulfill the duties of one's state in life, such as one's status as citizen, student, teacher, or father, etc. When I, a student, have to do homework and submit assignments as the teacher expects, I am certainly not acting generously. Another misconception of generosity is a psychological involvement in which a person performs an action for another person because he feels guilty. This is not an act of generosity but an act of

repaying a debt or perhaps an act of atonement—repairing what is thought to be his due.⁴⁶

People may give gifts with many reasons, benevolent or meritorious. Sometimes they give in order to gain influence, power, or control. Sometimes they seek recognition, reward, or wish to have a favor. Motivations or reasons play important roles in examining generous actions.

I. The Virtue of Generosity

Webster's Dictionary defines generosity as readiness and liberty in giving, or a freedom from meanness or smallness of mind or character. Generosity is the habit of giving freely without asking anything in return. It can involve offering time, assets or talents to help someone in need. It contains gratitude and hospitality. "Often equated with charity as a virtue, generosity is widely accepted in society as a desirable trait."⁴⁷ People attain this virtue through learning, practicing, and expressing it in attitude and action—as a heartfelt compassion for others leading to giving liberally. Generosity starts from a feeling of compassion, but it is a basic, mature, personal and moral orientation to life. Generosity is not compatible with negative traits such as selfishness, greed, fear, and meanness; and it cannot be enacted alone. This is a relational virtue according to which people care for others and willingly give up something to improve the well-being of others.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid. 236.

⁴⁷ Merriam Webster Dictionary. Accessed by May 10, 2011. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/generosity>

⁴⁸ College of Arts and Letters. University of Notre Dame. Accessed by May 6, 2011. <http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/about/>

1) Different concepts of generosity

Generosity is an attractive virtue that is cultivated in habits, passions, and dreams. It motivates and inspires individuals and organizations to experience satisfaction, contentment, and well-being (in the past), hope and optimism (in the future), and excitement and happiness (in the present). For many generations, people have articulated and portrayed this virtue as part of benevolence, love, justice or other moral virtues. This section will rely on a few philosophers' thoughts about this virtue to comprehend its meanings in the context of philosophy.

a) Tibor R. Machan's virtue in civil society

Generosity according to Machan is a benevolent virtue that motivates a disposition or inclination to act magnanimously toward and to do good for others. It depends on acquaintance with the recipients of generous conduct if the virtue is guided by human habit and emotional determination. Humans need other moral virtues to monitor and supervise generous acts for coping with unaccustomed tasks. Generosity is a virtue of moral priorities because it assigns hierarchical levels to other virtues. Certain acts only happen to be generous after being just. One cannot become generous without fulfilling one's moral responsibility and justice. The virtuous act appears to be generous only if there are no deliberations or any duties providing the act's motivation. Generosity is a completely free and spontaneous performance that is rooted in the generous persons' life-quality.⁴⁹

Generosity is not reducible to an economy of exchange between sovereign individuals. Rather it is an openness to others that not only precedes and establishes communal relations, but also constitutes the self as open to otherness. Primordially, generosity is

⁴⁹ Tibor R. Machan, *Generosity: Virtue in Civil Society*. (Washington D.C.: Cato Institute, 1998), 1-26.

*not the expenditure of one's possessions but the dispossession of oneself, the being-given to others that undercuts any self-constrained ego that undercuts self-possession.*⁵⁰

Thus, it belongs to a group of virtues called "second nature," such as compassion, kindness, hospitality, and generosity.⁵¹ They refer to second nature because "first nature" relate to tendencies with which we are born. Such character traits or virtues are not innate from beginning of a human life. Generosity is a moral virtue that goes beyond any welfare state or any social and economic contracts. Generosity emerges spontaneously from the givers' characters without calculation or deliberation. In some situations and without much effort, performing helpful acts to others, not from a right due to them, arises simply from a generous character. Unlike charity which comes from a sense of duty, generosity inclines one toward spontaneous acts. Even Machan acknowledges that generosity, though it may benefit the generous person abundantly, is not self-sacrificial in the way charity and even compassion can be, but is a self-giving act without asking for a return of favors. Persons do not perform generous acts for others because of a sense of duty or obligation. The self-benefit that the author mentions here is one's becoming a morally good person.⁵² When someone becomes generous with others, this act contributes instantly to the giver's good moral character—to be free from a certain attachment, to care for goodness of others, and to make generous persons better human beings. Generosity is a cultivated trait or moral virtue that guides one simultaneously toward benefiting others and attaining one's own excellence.

However, generosity does not alone suffice for human flourishing, but relies on other moral virtues to lead one to act ethically. Any individual acts are considered to belong to the

⁵⁰ Rosalyn Diprose. *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002),4.

⁵¹ Machan.

⁵² Machan, 3-4.

virtue of generosity after they have been prudently evaluated in a manner at once self-present, self-reflective and self-separate from others. Prudence and self-care play important roles to separate generous acts from other motives and examine habitual guides if it can go astray. Generosity, according to Machan, is exerted subsequent to individual sovereignty and property ownership as part of the conditions for social and communal contracts.⁵³ This seems a paradox for Machan's concept of this virtue. If someone fulfills all conditions of moral virtues, as the author suggests, he is less likely to extend any generosity toward others. Generosity becomes a luxurious virtue, a so-called a spontaneous virtue that enriches human nature. Either that or it is a libertarian form of conduct and thinking that protects individual property rights and the individual freedom of choice to give to others. Even though Machan defines generosity as a free and spontaneous act to do good for others and oneself without deliberation and calculation, one who has to first fulfill one's own responsibility and duties in life to family, friends, and other social relations. This contradictory statement could make a generous attitude collapse into the individualism and parsimony in a world where wealth, honor and prosperity have been successfully promoted, because generosity incidentally becomes a luxury of the few. How can we guarantee how sufficiently we have to fulfill our debts of justice before being truly generous?

b) Jacques Derrida's impossibility of gift and its identity

The paradox in Machan's account of generosity is the aporia of the gift that Jacques Derrida discusses in his theory of the impossible generosity. To Derrida, as soon as donation is recognized as a gift, the beneficiary will be indebted and obliged to offer a return and thus fall

⁵³ Tibor R. Machan, "Politics and Generosity." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 7 (1) (1990): 61-73.

into the realm of economic or social exchange. A true gift can happen so long as it remains unrecognized by both giver and receiver. Derrida may push this critique too far on the grounds that the gift can create the social identity of the parties and establish a social bond that requires the recipient to repay the benefactor. Eventually, it is not well defined why a desire for reciprocity injures generosity, especially when generosity is interpreted basically in terms of a self-gift offered with a hope of opening a relationship with the other. Therefore, Derrida constructs a concept of generosity as an impossible virtue unless the gift is given freely without any remembering or abiding self-presence of the giver. Any recognition, gratitude, or appreciation for free gifts, Derrida regards, destroys possibility of generosity because it builds up individual sovereignty or institutes a social contract in which donators expect something in return, such as public recognition or the beneficiary's appreciation.⁵⁴

Derrida goes further to discuss the socially-accepted discrimination in generous behaviors. While the generosity and the gifts of someone such as millionaires, whites, Westerners, men in elite socioeconomic classes have been recognized, honored and remembered usually in public media and social communication, the generous acts of others such as marginalized, the poor, indigenous peoples, unemployed, immigrants, and minorities become unknown and forgotten. "It is in the systematic, asymmetrical forgetting of the gift, where only the generosity of the privileged is memorized, that social inequities and injustice are based."⁵⁵

Here Derrida has a point. There is obviously an issue of social justice when we understand generosity in such a way that it becomes a privileged virtue for the wealthy and powerful. Why did many newspapers and magazines praise the charity of Bill and Melinda

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 30.

⁵⁵ Diprose, 8.

Gates' foundation, of Warren Buffet, or of any millionaires while they ignore generous acts of the marginalized such as the widow of the Bible (Mk 12:41-44)? I believe that many poor people and immigrants in the U.S. have contributed tirelessly to Jesuit education system and indirectly promoted the schools' existence. For instance, Boston College was created initially to serve Irish working immigrants who were rejected by other schools in Boston. Yet some Catholic schools have honored and named buildings or departments after those who have money and power. Many CEOs or millionaires are invited to Board of Trustees of Jesuit institutes to direct and focus their missions. Instead of pursuing the mission of the Church and the Society, we can easily end up catering to benefactors as a way of appreciation and recognition for the gifts. Certainly, Derrida's argument for the impossibility of this virtue raises an awareness of the requirements of social justice and consciousness that generosity can be a way to constitute hierarchical relations of domination within economic contract and exchange. Whoever has more financial backing and power can establish social structures and norms in the world. Thus, the quality of openness to others in the virtue of generosity becomes impossible if their gifts come "with strings attached," with recognition, intention, deliberation and reflection.

c) Levinas' Radical Generosity

Concerning the social and economic contracts hidden in generous acts, Emmanuel Levinas criticizes insufficiently unconditional mentality in giving, the hidden expectations of reciprocity attached to the concept of generosity in the world. Instead of denying the possibility of this virtue, Levinas argues that real generosity should not discriminate more or less deserving recipients, nor should it expect return. He constructs a radical generosity based on an

unconditional giving to others and an opening of oneself in a way that the giver's identity can be allowed to lapse into ignorance. Asking not only for detachment from material goods, Levinas calls for a giving away of one's self-possession and an opening of oneself and beyond oneself. This is what he calls "a primary dispossession, a first donation."⁵⁶ The most generous acts are the surrender of ones' egoism, self-possession, and everything to the other. This radical generosity can guarantee a movement toward the other that does not involve any social or economic contracts that bring about transformation in the giver. This idea encourages human beings toward a new path of thinking and a style of living, a generous way of responding motivated by alterity. Generosity is no longer an expression of paternalism or individual sovereignty but an affective and corporeal relation to alterity that bridges cultural, national, economic, sexual, and ideological gaps.⁵⁷

2) Thomas Aquinas' Liberality

According to Thomas Aquinas, generosity or liberality is a virtue designating an attitude of indifference or detachment toward possessions along with a willingness to give freely to other people's needs as a way of promoting happiness. Unlike previous non-Christian philosophical generosity, I believe that Aquinas identifies the significant motivation for this virtue founded in the heart of human gratitude to divine generosity.

a) Terminology

In *Summa Theologiae*, the author does not use the term "generosity" to refer to the virtue that I discuss in this thesis, but he employs the term "liberality" or "open-handedness." In

⁵⁶ Emmanuel Levinas. 1969. *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 173.

⁵⁷ Diprose, 13.

Second Part of the Second Part (*Secunda Secundae*), question 117 of the article 2, the virtue of liberality refers to two different personal qualities. 1) “It must be observed that the very act of giving away one's possessions liberally, in so far as it is an act of virtue, is directed to happiness.” 2) “The term "liberality" seems also to allude to this, since when a man quits hold of a thing he frees it [liberat], so to speak, from his keeping and ownership, and shows his mind to be free of attachment thereto.”⁵⁸ Aquinas utilizes the term liberality 460 times, of which 35% are in the nominative case. Liberality is Aquinas’ equivalent of the word generosity. He employs this terminology mainly in *Summa Theologiae*, and Books of *Sententiarum*, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, and *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*.⁵⁹ Aquinas quotes Aristotle’s formula for the generous man (IV; I, 12), where Aristotle uses the Greek adjective *eleutherios*, signifying the only truth that sets the heart free. In doing so thus, Aquinas translates *eleutherios* into Latin as *liberalis*.⁶⁰

Although the word liberality indicates detachment from material goods, it also has different meanings. Liberality comes from the Latin: *liber, -era, erum*—an adjective that alludes to acting according to their own desires, or to mastering themselves. The particular meanings of the word “liber” are to be free from something or from the social point of view. In a political perspective of Aristotle, liberality is said of the people free from any royal authority or any other power.⁶¹ On the other hand, generosity with its Latin name, *generositas, -atis* means “nobility,” “excellence,” “goodness,” or “liberality.” The Latin stem *gener-* is the declensional stem of

⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q. 117, a 2. Accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3117.htm>

⁵⁹ José Francisco Nolla, “La Virtud de la Generosidad Según Santo Tomás De Aquino,” (PhD Diss., La Universidad de Navarra, 2005), 10-11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 12.

⁶¹ *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 117, a.6.

genus, meaning "kin," "clan," "race," or "stock," with the root Indo-European meaning of *gen* being "to beget." The same root gives us the words genesis, gentry, gender, genital, gentile, genealogy, and genius, among others.⁶² Therefore, generosity theologically refers to divine creation and God generating all things on the earth. In a broad sense, generosity allows humans to be free from any restraint, boundary, or attachment, free to pursue their own desire to do the right thing. The virtue implies honest, noble and affable characteristics. It also refers to detachment from wealth and possession in a more restricted sense. Liberality is synonymous with the virtue of generosity in terms of its disposition toward material goods and of its capacity to share with others. Even though the term of liberality has been reduced to economic and political content recently, in its properly spiritual and theological contexts it assumes an interior liberalization of the soul. Thus, liberality and generosity are almost synonymous and the same virtue of being free from any attachment and considering the goodness of others.

b) Generosity is a virtue

Aquinas understands virtues as habits that cause human nature to flourish and, in so doing, appropriately direct actions toward happiness. He borrows the concept of virtue from Aristotle that this virtue is not from the nature of person but acquired by rational choices. These decisions are made between two extreme vices even though generosity sometimes is illustrated by heroic, challenging, and extreme demonstrations.⁶³ While the object of this virtue is the good of other by love and desire, rather than the intellect, generosity or liberality is contrary to two

⁶² From Wikipedia accessed on April 8, 2012 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generosity#References>

⁶³ Roger Crisp. *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 3-4

vices of excess and deficiency or the vice of prodigality with its excessive spending, and the vice of covetousness with its deficient spending. Aquinas' account of virtue supposes a potentiality or ability intrinsic to human nature that can reach two levels of its actualization: the natural capacity, in other words, perfects human nature through different virtuous activities.⁶⁴ Therefore, generosity or liberality must be a virtue because people, Aquinas argues, have wills and intellects (natural capacity) to discern disposition of material things for the sake of happiness (virtues actions).⁶⁵ Generosity is a virtue because of its object, its matter and its proper act, and its relation to other human and supernatural virtues like justice, temperance, fortitude, prudence, and charity, faith and hope.

Every virtue tends towards a good; wherefore the greater virtue is that which tends towards the greater good. Now liberality tends towards a good in two ways: in one way, primarily and of its own nature; in another way, consequently. Primarily and of its very nature it tends to set in order one's own affection towards the possession and use of money. On this way temperance, which moderates desires and pleasures relating to one's own body, takes precedence of liberality: and so do fortitude and justice, which, in a manner, are directed to the common good, one in time of peace, the other in time of war: while all these are preceded by those virtues which are directed to the Divine good. For the Divine good surpasses all manner of human good; and among human goods the public good surpasses the good of the individual; and of the last named the good of the body surpasses those goods that consist of external things. Again, liberality is ordained to a good consequently, and in this way it is directed to all the aforesaid goods. For by reason of his not being a lover of money, it follows that a man readily makes use of it, whether for himself. Or for the good of others, or for God's glory. Thus it derives a certain excellence from being useful in many ways.⁶⁶

Generosity or liberality is not caused by any external imposition on human persons. It results, however, from the personal struggle to manage the internal affections, passions, and

⁶⁴ Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Collen McCluskey, and Christina Van Dyke, *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009) 131-8.

⁶⁵ ST, II-II, q. 117 a. 1.

⁶⁶ ST, II-II, q. 117 a. 6, a.1

appetites according to reason. Generosity, as a moral virtue, helps the person to be moderate in love of and desire for wealth. This habit of moderation will enable man to dispose his possessions according to his own needs and those of others. Persons who discover the goodness of the generous act to perform, must discern whether their attachment to property and wealth prevents them from achieving their goals. Moreover, wealth has a strong seductive power over human persons. According to the virtue of generosity, they need to dispose of material obstacles as well as disordered attachment to possessions in order to achieve a higher degree of perfection and to be more available for God's kingdom. Therefore, generosity is classified among the so-called social virtues, that is, with those subsidiary virtues of justice that affect the relationship between people. In the social virtues, there are two categories: those absolutely necessary for social life and those simply conducive to the decent life.⁶⁷ Justice and prudence, for example, belong to the first group; while generosity, kindness, and hospitality belong to the second one.

c) Generosity with Justice

According to Aquinas, generosity or liberality is a virtue in relationship with the virtue of justice and listed in the category of justice. In the development of his ideas, he clarifies the classical Aristotelian definition of the virtue: "justice is a habit whereby a man is said to be capable of doing just actions in accordance with his choice."⁶⁸

Aquinas believes that a person cannot have the virtue of generosity without justice, but someone might have the virtue of justice without generosity. He links closely generosity with

⁶⁷ Nolla. 23.

⁶⁸ S.T. II-II. q. 58.

justice. The two virtues have the same goal in their proper act: to give a good to another. Justice is the prerequisite for any generous act. A person cannot perform any generous act if he does not have a stable disposition to return what he owes to others.⁶⁹ For example, an act of stealing another's money and donating it to a church fails to live up to the standards of justice, and so is not a generous act but a sort of money laundering. In the *Secunda secundae*, Aquinas argues that the virtue of justice might be exercised by an act pertaining to the virtue of generosity, but generosity is only a possible part of justice, not coextensive with justice or an integral part of it.⁷⁰ The just act requires a response to an extrinsic debt and remains, in a certain measure, reclaimable by the creditor. On the other hand, generosity is self-giving act that the subject imposes on himself in the attitude of detachment from his possessions.

Despite this difference, justice and generosity are connected in that the two different virtues are essentially involved in the welfare of others. The foundational element of this distinction is their relations with certain things. Lester Hunt argues that actions are considered prudent just in terms of their relation to things other than subject; whereas, generous acts focus on one's relation to oneself in the act for benefiting people. Just acts emphasize mainly one's external circumstances—in the sense of thinking about something or acting on something. Generosity suggests operating within oneself and centers on personal discernment.⁷¹ It is an interior liberation or an attitude of detachment for benefit of others. It is also a desire to do good for others without asking for any return. Aquinas uses the “practical intellect” to assess generous

⁶⁹ S.T., Ia IIae, q. 66, a.4, ad1.

⁷⁰ Bonnie Kent, “Habits and Virtues (Ia IIae, qq. 49-70)” Stephen Pope, Ed. *The Ethics of Aquinas*. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 124.

⁷¹ Hunt, 242.

actions as “the cause of things understood by it”⁷² in order to attain the ultimate end. Practical intellect is apprehension of motive power and guidance to direct operative actions. “The calculation that goes into a just or prudent act can be described as an attempt to find out whether the act would be just or prudent, but calculating whether one’s deed would benefit someone, when it occurs, is part of making an act which results from it a generous one.”⁷³

d) Generosity in relationship with God

Even though generosity has no external or legal obligation, like justice, to perform certain acts, there is moral debt or an internal passion directing humans to perform generous actions. As we know, generosity is an ability to give away willingly what it is not due to anyone and to give without demanding returns. The motivation for generosity would exhibit a minimal degree of moral obligation. Aquinas explains that with certain knowledge of God and of one’s personal limitations, the human person discovers the gratuitousness of the gifts that he has received from God: his own being, intelligence, will, life, family, etc. This acknowledgement of God’s generosity leads persons logically to gratitude and to availability for potential divine requirements. The moral debt is the right reason—to know good-will of God who reveals the internal passions in human heart. Hence, the gratitude to God helps people detach themselves from material goods, even their lives, so as to devote themselves to be generous with others as God has been generous to them. “Although liberality does not consider the legal due that justice considers, it considers a certain moral due. This due is based on certain fittingness and not on an

⁷² S.T., Ia IIae; 3, v, obj.1

⁷³ Hunt, 242.

obligation: so that it answers to the idea of due in the lowest degree.”⁷⁴ Thus, the generous person sees the goodness of others and performs generous acts. In light of detachment from material goods and having no legal obligation, generous persons have the inner conviction of doing such acts according to the will of God, who cannot will anything but good for human beings.

e) Determination of the midpoint of the virtuous disposition

As is the case with other virtues, generosity is characterized by the achievement of a happy balance and overcome interior struggle, between extremes. To help us achieve our supernatural end, God inserted in human hearts an invitation to be holy and intimately united with God. However, lust and greed are the cause of a seductive fascination inside people, a fascination that prevents them from attaining equilibrium between holy desire for spiritual transcendence and attachment to material things. Aquinas acknowledges that people with their own duties and responsibilities in their families and society cannot detach completely from material goods nor look negatively at money or possessions. They need material things for survival and happiness. Nevertheless, those who adhere to temporal goods as their ultimate end abandon their spiritual pilgrimage. Thus, attaching to material goods is necessary as long as this attachment does not become an obstacle to the spiritual life or prevent people from achieving the ultimate goal of life. To determine the midpoint with respect to one’s appetite or passion, a person has to take into account the circumstances and motivation of certain generous acts. Of course it is not decided solely by how much the person owns or how much he gives away. The

⁷⁴ S.T., II-II, q. 117. A.5.ad. 1.

virtue of generosity does not depend on the amount of assets possessed, but the degree of attachment or detachment that the holder enjoys. As we can see, generosity is not a function of prosperity or wealth, but a passion and interior detachment from possessions that free one to desire something good for others.⁷⁵

f) Application of Aquinas' concept of generosity

According to Aquinas' sketch of liberality, generous persons have internal liberation from any material attachment and are disposed to be good toward others. Generally speaking, the poor seem to be more generous than the rich. Experiments conducted at Northwestern University found that socioeconomic position affects psychological experience and the way people value others. Powerful and wealthy people consider themselves to be important and expert in almost everything. These people have an ambition to control and influence other's freedom. They want to get attention and become the center of the crowd. When the survey was conducted with the question of how much they can donate to others, the wealthy respond by deluging themselves with amounts of their donation. They prefer to share their "wisdom" and show off their material treasury without willingly sacrificing their resources and energy for others.

On the other hand, powerless persons admit their insufficiency and have a tendency to increase their dependence on others. Lacking something is a state of potentiality which requires that person continue to reach out, to move on and to long for another to fulfill their completeness. The powerless usually rely on someone else to meet their needs. They experience insecurity in their lives and adjust easily for changing and transformation, while the rich get used in their comfort zones and become more reluctant to give up what they have. When the

⁷⁵ S.T., II-II, q. 117, a.1, ad 3.

interviewer asked the powerless the question: how much should be spent on others? They answered by lavishly spending on others.⁷⁶ Of course, this experiment focuses only on wealth, power, and socioeconomic as categories for the survey. There should be some other traits, such as diligence, charity, hospitality, responsibility, justice, etc., that influence the dynamics of generosity. In reality some wealthy people are generous but, generally speaking, the poor are great teachers of generosity through their lives and practices.

Accordingly, Aquinas' concept of generosity or liberality in the *Summa Theologiae*, drawn heavily from Aristotle's account of generosity, is that of an internal disposition toward material goods. It is not about what or how much a person donates to others but about an attitude, affection or interior freedom from material attachment that promotes the good stewardship of the possessions. This interpretation is not very much different from "the First Principle and Foundation" in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. The grace of indifference that the retreatants pray for is the freedom to respond to God's love and with an interior freedom from any disordered attachment to created things. Even though this social virtue is not a mandatory virtue to sustain society, it is necessary for a decent life. It moves us beyond the concept of justice and toward a concern for the well-being of others. Justice is a matter of concerning the things in social and economic contexts, but generosity is the best practice of taking care of people—to of having goodwill toward others.

This being said, the foundational message of Aquinas' account of self-giving is not found in the concept of liberality, which concentrates on the donators' disposition toward wealth, but in

⁷⁶ Derek D. Rucker, David Dubois, and Adam D. Galinsk, "Generous Paupers and Stingy Princes: Power Drives Consumer Spending on Self versus Others," *Journal of Consumer Research*, November 9, 2010. Accessed March 7, 2012, http://www.jcr-admin.org/files/pressPDFs/101810121625_Rucker-generouspaupers.pdf

the status of internal freedom and gratuitous response to divine love. These generous acts, to Aquinas, are gratitude to divine bounty and conform to divine generosity, whose principal attribute is self-communicative goodness. This perspective on generosity adequately responds to philosophical discussions of this virtue, as well as to philosophers who consider it an impossible virtue, on the grounds that all free gifts require reciprocity or deliberation. Only God freely grants many gifts and blessings without asking for return. His selfless love is expressed outwardly in the creation and redemption of the world and through Jesus' paschal mystery. Hence, only divine generosity is absolutely perfect and self-effacing. Human beings are called to respond to this great love by loving God and one another without any discrimination among persons. On the other hand, the profound idea of the virtue of generosity in Aquinas' ethics reinforces a positive vision of the created things. People should enjoy material possessions and use them as means to seek happiness on earth and eternal blessedness.

II. Transforming impossible generosity to be possible

1) Differences between transactional and transformational generosity

Before we move further to discuss the virtue of generosity in responding to divine love, it is helpful to distinguish two different approaches or generous models of generosity—transactional and transformational generosity. The former one focuses on a fundraising mindset within the secular business corporations. It may bring peace of mind and blessings when benefactors contribute some monetary amounts and expect to have something good in return—foreign policy, sweatshops, disaster relief, fulfilled obligations, etc. In this approach, people rely on the self-evaluation of failure/success outcomes by employing manipulative business and

marketing techniques. The central goals of this approach are to raise money oriented for charity projects or temporary reliefs.⁷⁷ As we can see, most of philosophers do not classify this approach as a virtue of generosity because it involves deliberation and lacks the quality of selfless gifting.

By contrast, the transformational approach focuses on a transformed heart that assimilates the generous mission of Jesus Christ. Ideally, there are no benefactors and recipients, but only God as a great Creator and benefactor and human beings as recipients. We are called to stewardship for all resources, to share willingly what we have with others and to be merciful to their sufferings. With faith in Jesus and mindfulness of his graces, people naturally perform concrete acts of kindness and generosity; they feed the hungry, accept the immigrant, practice hospitality, and work for social justice (Mt 25:31-40). Focusing on competitive and reputational fundraisings, the transactional approach will divide the Church and the world into two groups: rich and poor, patrons and clients, virtuous benefactors and needy beneficiaries. The transformational model, on the contrary, moves everyone to be Christocentric, to recognize Jesus as the greatest gift and the “everything” of our lives. God is the only and greatest benefactor, the most generous patron for the human family. Everything people have belongs to God and is to be shared within the community.⁷⁸ Generosity helps us to recognize the reality of God’s love and to experience the joy that God feels in reaching out in love to a lost world. Humans are called to respond to God with full recognition of God as Creator and Owner. When we act generously, we seek to fulfill God’s purpose, sensing that God is always generous in providing resources far

⁷⁷ Wesley K. Willmer, “Chapter 1: Creating a Revolution in Generosity,” *Revolution in Generosity: Transforming Stewards to be Rich toward God*.(Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 39.

⁷⁸ Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 306-7.

beyond anything we can imagine. The only thing necessary is to respond with a transformed heart in generosity toward others. (For further explanation, please see appendix 1)

2) Christian Generosity: Christocentric Dimension

The virtue of generosity is a disposition of the heart and mind to give spontaneously of oneself, to reach out to others with love and care, and to strive to bring about the common good for others. It is not simply a duty that one ought to do, but it goes beyond what is expected or required or owed. A generous heart asks for nothing in return. This virtue moves us to act selflessly and to share our resources of time, talent, and treasure for the sake of others' well-being. It is a heartfelt movement to give of oneself and share one's resources. Unlike previous philosophical discourses, Christian generosity mirrors divine generosity, which is an impossibly perfect virtue for human beings. It is not simply a virtue of benevolence to others but centers Christians in Christ who is a self-gift for human happiness and eternal blessing. "What shall I give to the Lord for all the Lord has given to me?" (Ps 116:2). Christian generosity is first a response to the divine generosity toward human beings. Jesus is incarnated into the world because of God's generosity and a total outpouring of self in love. Jesus' public ministry, where he shows mercy to people through the forgiveness of sins, the healing of the sick, and the liberation from the slavery of sin, is also a beacon of divine generosity. He gives of himself utterly and completely on the cross, dying like a criminal to save humankind.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Gerald Fagin, S.J. *Putting on the Heart of Christ: How the Spiritual Exercises Invite Us to a Virtuous Life*. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), 86.

Of course, generosity is a Christian virtue intrinsically derived from the theological virtues, especially love, and related to mercy and humility. Without mercy and humility, people cannot have enough compassion to practice Christian generosity. Humility is a virtue which grounds us in reality and the places where we are in society. It is an awareness which aides us in understanding how fragile and limited human beings are. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:2-3). All the things we have come from God, and our responsibility is to be stewards of these resources. From the standpoint of humility, people can show mercy to those who are weaker and need their help. Israelites cannot show mercy to the poor and foreigners if they do not remember their diaspora experience. Similarly, Americans cannot practice generosity to other aliens, immigrants, and the poor if they forget the history of immigration. For example, the history of Catholic charity institutes in the U.S. was established by the generosity of religious orders. The road of generosity must start from the recognition that God has been merciful and generous to us by placing our trust in Him. To learn to give generously is not to learn to deny oneself as asceticism; rather it is to love God and others generously, as we are loved and blessed. The generous effects will be multiplied by charity and mercy. Thus, generosity is one of the fruits of the Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

Generosity turns our attachment and love away from possessions and toward God’s kingdom. The only way to establish such solid foundations is to set our hearts and minds upon our heavenly home and heavenly treasure. By doing so, we become free from any obsession with the world and we pay attention to social justice issues as the way of building up the Kingdom of

God.⁸⁰ It is significant to have generosity in society because God first is absolutely generous to everyone; because other people--the marginalized, the poor, the least brothers and sisters--need human generosity to help them; and because God wants us to perform such acts as if for Him (Mt 25). Generosity is not a duty to act without compassion and pleasure, but a virtue in which people feel joy and meaning through loving others.⁸¹

3) Jesus: the greatest gift of generosity

As Jesus becomes the most valuable gift for our lives, we can give to another the gift of ourselves, which is the highest gift. Giving one's self to others exemplifies the virtue of generosity. The perfect example of generosity is divine creation. God created human beings in his image by means of his generosity. God's gift of himself through Christ and for the sake of his creation illustrates the ultimate model of generosity and serves as an exemplar for all human generosity. Because everything including human beings is created out of God's generosity, a dynamic impulse toward generosity is engraved in the depth of human hearts. The self gift of the Son of God is an expression of unselfish love. Nevertheless, does the selfless gift of Jesus Christ fulfill the philosophical conditions of true generosity that we discussed above? Is his generous act beyond conditions of deliberation, calculation and exchange that vitiate virtue? If we consider our human gratitude in responding to divine generosity as reciprocity, truly this is a mistake; God is so perfect that he does not need any of our returns. As Derrida discusses the impossibility of

⁸⁰ Daniel Harrington, S.J. and James Keenan, S.J. *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2010), 144-5.

⁸¹ James. F. Keenan, S.J. *Virtues for Ordinary Christians* (New York: A Sheed & Ward Book, 1996), 106-111.

generosity, only God can make this impossible virtue to be possible by giving without counting the cost or stipulating conditions.

But his free gift does not mean being wasteful, irrelevant, or anarchic. Unquestionably, divine giving contains some levels of reciprocity because what God grants is both himself and generous gifts that encourage us to recognize, multiply and return his graces by loving him and others. The doctrine of divine transcendence shows that his perfection and his generous gifts abundantly exceed what human beings could comprehend. In the meantime, God's immanence indicates his relationship and desires to be with people. And the greatest gifts of his love are Jesus' incarnation as a human person by which he reconciled the world with God and redeemed us from sinfulness. This concept of divine immanence may imply that God needs our response and association with him, or that he needs our cooperation to participate in his kingdom for our salvation. "You received without payment; give without payment" (Mt 10:8). Eventually, divine abundance exceeds any human reciprocity because human beings come from nothing and have nothing sufficient to repay his gifts.⁸² Our gratitude to divine bounty is not really a reciprocity but an expression of our inability to give at all, even in our sentiment or worship. People show gratitude to God and become more generous to others because we cannot give anything else except our ourselves. When we participate in being generous, we are not only giving away ourselves but also receiving many graces as a way of empowering relationships of mutuality and reciprocity. As a result, to be an authentic human being is to be generous. Generosity suggests the gracious and excessive nature of divine love that God models, a going beyond the boundary

⁸² Stephen H. Webb. *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 84-90

of justice. Generosity is rooted in divine love; therefore, to be a human person is to love God and others as Jesus did on the earth. And to love is to give oneself generously for others.⁸³

4) The road of generosity starts with faith

Like any other virtue, generosity depends on the theological virtues: faith, hope and love. Faith enables humans to transform their hearts, to acknowledge divine love and to respond with gratitude. Hope guides generosity to its eschatological destination where there is the communion with Jesus in the Kingdom of God. And love maintains generosity by moving us along the transforming process of sanctification from the beginning to the end—a process marked mainly by striving to imitate Jesus' generosity. No matter their magnitude, our gifts are meager and impoverished if they lack the quality of gratitude from divine love.⁸⁴ The generous journey begins when people first open their eyes to become aware of Jesus Christ's generosity in their lives and then to place their trust and gratitude in Jesus. Generosity, the outgrowth of faith, sets us free from any disordered attachments, material obsessions or selfish desires. Being confronted by Jesus' instructions (Mt 25), we become more sensitive to others, especially the poor and needy. We become stewards for all resources created by God rather than sole owners or greedy possessors.⁸⁵

⁸³ George Newlands, *Generosity and the Christian Future* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1997), 153-60.

⁸⁴ Bangert. 68.

⁸⁵ Walter B Russell, "God and Giving: the Road to Generosity," Ed. Wesley Willmer. *Revolution in Generosity: Transforming Stewards to be Rich Toward God*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers. 2008), 64.

5) Motivations for generosity

If the faith in Jesus Christ causes human generosity, the gratitude toward Christ's paschal mystery is the motivation for generous actions. Generosity comes from an inspired heart and moves us to be in communion with God who fulfills human life. It is radiantly manifested in the process of creation, redemption, and completion of humanity and the entire cosmos. Gratitude liberates us from any personally disordered attachment to earthly possessions. Generosity turns our desire and attachment away from created things and toward God's kingdom. Karl Barth poetically puts grace and gratitude together. "Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace as thunder follows lightning."⁸⁶ Because we appreciate divine gifts and his love for our lives, the motivation of generosity grows from a blessed heart and aspires to cooperate in divine creation by contributing gifts to others. In gratitude, we are transformed by divine love and extend our assistance to others. Voluntary offerings (2 Cor 9:7) should show enthusiasm and eagerness to participate in the Kingdom of God. As Catherine of Sienna prayed,

I ask you to love me with same love with which I love you. But for me you cannot do this, for I love you without being loved. Whatever love you have for me you owe me, so you love me not gratuitously but out of duty, while I love you not out of duty but gratuitously. So you cannot give me the kind of love I ask of you. This is why I have put you among your neighbors: so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me--that is, love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself. And whatever you do for them I will consider done for me.⁸⁷

Moreover, the motivation of generosity is about relationships and involves better alterity. The most meaningful gifts are those that spring from the heart of gratitude for God's love--a heart formed by the giver's sense of being foremost a recipient-- rather than those that are

⁸⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. IV (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957),1-41.

⁸⁷ Suzanne Noffke, OP, *Catherine of Siena the Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980),121.

proportionate to the benefactors' finances and talent. Even though generosity is not similarity of justice according to Aquinas, "since justice pays another what is his whereas liberality gives another what is one's own,"⁸⁸ it should promote justice as decided prudently by the demands of individuals within their communities and society.⁸⁹ If the virtue of mercy encourages us to see that all relationships have some vulnerable exposures and require the merciful practice of reconciliation, generosity goes beyond merciful practices;⁹⁰ it reconciles broken relationships and opens one's life to others in friendship. To be generous is to give up one's time, energy, talents, and resources for someone else without asking anything in return. To be generous is to invest in close relationship and raise people up to be equal in social status, to imitate Jesus, in other words, who reveals the generosity of God by inviting us to friendship and a share in the innermost life of God. Once people have a holy desire to be with God and to follow him, other virtues like justice, fidelity, chastity, temperance, prudence, etc...will follow. For example, when I decided to sacrifice my life to enter into the Society of Jesus, I wanted to respond to Jesus' calling, specifically his generous love for me. I did not enter the Society of Jesus because I felt the desire to do social justice and to help the poor. Even though doing social justice and performing merciful acts are necessary for every Christian, I can be merciful and get involved in social justice without entering the religious life. To enter the religious life is to respond generously to His perfect love and to love him entirely without holding back anything in my life. An exclusive relationship with Jesus moves Jesuits to be open for inclusive relationships with

⁸⁸ S.T. II-II, q. 117, a. 5.

⁸⁹ Byron. C. Bangert, "What Does God Require of Us?" Ed. David Smith. *Religious Giving for Love of God*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 2010),66.

⁹⁰ Harrington. 206.

others and to become available for any mission. Generosity moves us to service of others. The heart of Jesus' disciple is shaped by generosity.

At the end of this chapter, it may not be wrong to say that generosity is a virtue reserved for the rich as we mentioned in the beginning because the generous people are the ones who experience abundant graces from God in their lives. They are rich because they transform others and the world by giving up themselves generously and being internal liberation from material attachment. Truly, generosity without counting any cost is an impossible virtue for human beings. But its impossibility becomes possible when the grateful motivation is implanted in human hearts by divine generosity. In keeping with Aquinas and Machan, who identify generosity as second nature (non-mandatory element) of virtue ethics, I can see generosity as a virtue of the "*MAGIS*" and "for greater glory of God"—the mottos of the Society of Jesus. It is truly a luxurious virtue that motivates us to go the extra mile, to be on the frontier in ministry, and to stretch ourselves out for the needs of others. But generosity also discloses our heartfelt desires in associating us with Christ and enabling us to work for what God dreams for his Kingdom.

CHAPTER 3: GENEROSITY IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE—THE INSPIRATION OF EVANGELICAL COUNSELS AND A BRIDGE AMONG RELIGIOUS ORDERS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND THE WORLD

In the previous chapters, we explored the virtue of generosity through the lenses of Scripture, philosophy, and theology. Now we look at the spiritual and evangelical aspects of generosity of the consecrated life in the world in general and Vietnam in particular. With the significant decline in the number of religious in Europe and North America after Vatican II and the increase in many lay movements in the Church, many religious congregations in Western countries struggle to attract vocations among young people. Many convents and religious communities have become smaller or closed. In these settings, a religious vocation does not provide a sufficiently special or attractive lifestyle to draw people who have many social, professional, and economic opportunities. Lay people today can work in the field of ministries that used to be reserved for Sisters, Brothers, and Priests, such as teaching, administration, theology, and spirituality. From external observation, religious life is in crisis in the U.S. and in other first world countries.

Nevertheless, in the third world countries under a communist regime like Vietnam, the consecrated life has flourished after many years of oppression and persecution. Many congregations have had to expand their ministries and facilities to accommodate increased vocations. Many young people have to wait and take various entrance exams before entering postulancies or novitiates because of space constraints. Various American and European religious have been in Vietnam recently to recruit young vocations and to establish houses.

Needless to say, many people may wonder in a country with harsh persecution and restriction of religion why many young men and women want to dedicate their lives in religious service.

Why do young people in third world settings sacrifice their lives to live in poor conditions? What are the main reasons that Vietnam produces a growing number of religious vocations? How do restrictions on religious freedom create more religious martyrs physically and spiritually? Of course, there are many different responses to these questions but I believe that the most important motive of religious vocations is generosity. By generosity, I mean not simply sharing resources and time, but the spirit of being generous described in chapter two. These are the habits of giving one's life for something—for God and others—not only self-sacrifice but also self-gift, and the interior dispositions and capacities to sustain these habits over time. From these standpoints, I believe that generosity drawn from divine love first has causes and effects on the religious life and on cultural and social systems. This virtue is the foundation for the meaning of three vows and becomes a bridge to bring the worldly religious orders together. Therefore, in this last chapter, I will provide some historical and social analysis of the consecrated life in Vietnam and discuss the virtue of generosity in the context of the evangelical counsels.

I. The Religious in Vietnam

1) Under Persecution

The tragic event of April 30, 1975, the communist revolution, and its subsequent devastation as well as the under-developed centrally planned economy under totalitarianism made more than four million Vietnamese people leave their country to become refugees in other non-communist countries. One million of them died on the seas. Thousands of people were kept in prisons. Because the communist government retaliated against those who worked for the

former government and suppressed all religions as if they were the “opium,” my family, like other Catholics, was forced to go to a new economic area—an undeveloped region—to have “reeducation.” My great uncle, a priest, was convicted and sentenced to more than twenty years imprisonment and died after severe torture. We suffered and paid a great price to escape successfully from Vietnam and to settle down in the United States. Those that were left behind the iron curtain of communism underwent persecution and suppression of many human rights, including religious freedom. Catholic schools, hospitals, convents and communities were confiscated and nationalized as communist leaders declared that all properties and possessions belong to “the people.” Communists constructed false reasons to embezzle from religious institutions and suppress them. For example, they claimed that the Jesuits had a secret connection to the C.I.A. and should be put in prisons for the sake of national security. Many priests, seminarians, and religious were forced to leave their vocations to go to reeducation camps or return to the world. Convents and seminaries could not admit any new members without the government’s permission.

Persecution of religious and seminaries is still severe, particularly for unregistered convents. Many religious institutes have chosen to remain unregistered because of the unreasonable restrictions the government imposes on registered orders and members. Night and day police could enter religious houses unexpectedly to intimidate their members or to search the houses for any unregistered persons. Many new young members have to hide themselves from police in closets, restrooms, or caskets. They even jump into the lake or river to run away from possible arrest. Arbitrary arrests, harassment and fines are common.⁹¹ Many have been forced to renounce their faith. Several religious, priests and Bishops died after being released from prisons

⁹¹ASSIST News Service. “Vietnam: More Church properties demolished as persecution escalates.” June 17, 2009 <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2009/s09060101.htm>

or while in police custody because of injuries caused by torture. For example, the former president of Pontifical Congregation of Peace and Justice, Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, who will be beatified soon passed away after thirteen years in the prison. Government efforts have intensified as religious orders like Redemptorists, Lovers of the Holy Cross, Daughters of St. Paul, the Jesuits, and the Daughters of Mary of the Holy Rosary respond to persecution with growth and outreach.

2) Rebirth of Religious Life

Despite harsh persecution, Vietnamese religious vocations have still grown in quantity. An ordinary convent receives the average number on forty to fifty novices a year. Recently, religious have played an important role in the life and mission of the Catholic Church. The difficult conditions have encouraged “a flourishing of new forms of consecrated life, more easily hidden from government control, and even more incisive and capillary as witness to the world. Indeed, religious have carried on quite a lot of activities in a dynamic and creative way, even in difficult circumstances.”⁹²

The Church in Vietnam offers a very optimistic picture: Catholics in 2002 were 5,314,628, and in 2009 were 6,150,726, an increase of 15.73%. Catholics are 6.79% of the population. Diocesan priests increased from 2,133 in 2002 to 2,877 in 2009, an increase of 34.88%. Similarly, women religious increased from 9,654 in 2002 to 13,675, an increase of 41.65%; major seminarians from 1,580 in 2002 to 2,186 in 2009, an increase of 38.36%.⁹³ There

⁹² UCAN News, December 15, 2005 - Ucan Feature- “Training of Religious Continued in 30 Years Since War at” <http://www.ucanews.com/html/uca/index.html>.

⁹³ Every five year there is a statistic report of the Catholic Church due to Ad Limina of the Bishops. Agenzia Fides. “ASIA/VIETNAM - Catholic Bishops of Vietnam begin Ad Limina to the Holy See - The

are some 7,500 novices and aspirants. In total, there is a contingent of 19,000 religious available for pastoral and missionary work. They contribute greatly to pastoral and catechetical work in parishes. They assist parish priests, teach catechism to children, catechumens and young couples, organize liturgical celebrations, and do missionary works at places where priests cannot reach.

Vietnamese bishops affirmed that throughout the 400-year history of the Vietnamese Church, religious have played a very important role in evangelization and inculturation.⁹⁴ They highly appreciate their contributions:

*You have contributed greatly to various pastoral works and involved yourselves in social activities through your presence in the dominantly non-Christian areas of the country. We would encourage you to make more contributions to society in such fields that correspond to your vocations and mission.*⁹⁵

The Catholic Church's commitment to work along with the government for the last 30 years had helped non-Christians and government officials to understand better the Catholic community, even though there are still many misunderstandings and conflicts over the issue of the church's functions. In particular, groups of religious women have dedicated themselves to work in social charity institutions to assist abandoned people such as HIVs, lepers, elderly, children. Thus "recognition should be given first to women religious and rank-and-file Catholics."⁹⁶ Needless to say, religious' activities have depended on the concrete political and

situation of the Catholic Church in Vietnam."

<http://www.fides.org/aree/news/newsdet.php?idnews=24534&lan=eng>

⁹⁴ Hoi Dong Giam Muc Vietnam, *Thu Chung 2010* (2010 Pastoral Letter of the Vietnam Bishops' Conference), in Vietnam Bishops' Conference at <http://hdgmvietnam.org/8.aspx>

⁹⁵ The Vietnam Bishops' Conference, *The Catholic Church's 2005 Yearbook*, p. 249.

⁹⁶ UCAN News, October 24, 1994, Ucan "Commentary, Vietnamese Catholics Search for a New Identity" at <http://www.ucanews.com/html/uca/index.htm>.

social circumstances. Therefore, sometimes they must be very discreet and practical. Despite many difficulties and challenges, they have sought a new manner of serving the people.

Legally, religious congregations have not been allowed to accept postulants. In reality, however, the number of sisters has increased. When I visited Vietnam two years ago, I was astounded by a great number of young women and men joining the consecrated life. Every day many teenage women knock on the door at convents to ask for religious admission. Each convent or community has an enormous dormitory where they can put up to hundred bunk beds without any private spaces. Their daily meals were very simple with vegetables and occasionally include meat, because meat and seafood in Vietnam are reserved for the rich.

For social ministries, they have contributed tremendously providing social services to those that the government first did not pay attention to, such as people with AIDS, lepers, orphans, etc. The government permits these women for their contribution to social work and turns a “blind eye” on them, even though the communists still want to control everything. Because the schools, daycare centers, homes for orphans and people with leprosy and hospitals were means of evangelization, they were taken over by the state, but the sisters continue to do social services as government employees to maintain their presence and ministry. The communist government technically does not allow any religious involvement in social and educational services and never wants to see religious people serve its citizens better than the government does.⁹⁷ It is a cultural characteristic of “losing face” but also a policy of religious suppression.

From 1990 religious have reestablished some institutions and formation programs. Because the government relies on the social work and education of religious, many

⁹⁷ Cf. UCAN News, April 30, 1990, Ucan Interview, “All Vietnam's Suffering People Need Economic Aid” at <http://www.ucanews.com/html/uca/index.htm>.

congregations were permitted to open kindergartens for the public, and theological institutes for their members under the government's regulations for the first time since April 1975. Besides teaching children communist propaganda, sisters teach them catechism and morality in secret. Generally, these students become more self-disciplined and moral than those in any other public schools. An intensive summer theological course, which is held every year to provide ongoing formation for women and men religious in southern Vietnam dioceses, was allowed to open in Saigon City in 1992. Besides the course, religious congregations also run a two-year theological course for women religious. In 1993, the Inter-congregational Committee, an informal structure of men and women's religious orders, was accepted by the government in the Archdiocese of Saigon. The Association of Inter-congregations of Religious was allowed to set up a formation program in 1993. This is the first program of its kind in the country. Since it began, "262 religious men from 30 congregations and secular institutes have graduated. Members of various congregations have benefited greatly from the joint program as they now feel closer to one another and ready to cooperate in future apostolate."⁹⁸

Under the current legal system, the Church as a religious organization cannot establish social service centers, hospitals and schools, but individuals have been allowed to open shelters or the centers for the handicapped. Besides, priests are controlled more strictly than religious. This is the reason why the religious, especially women religious, can more easily involve themselves in social ministries as well as in parish ministries in the context of Vietnam today.

⁹⁸ UCAN News, July 10, 2003, "Vietnam, Scholar Priest Urges Lecturers, Superiors to Improve Working Style; October 18, 1988, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Ucan Interview, Patriotic Catholic Paints Bright Picture of Church; April 6, 1990, Convents to Open Private Daycare Centers and Kindergartens" at <http://www.ucanews.com/html/uca/index.htm>

3) The Challenge of religious in Vietnam

The conflict between the government and the Church and limitation of religious formation are great challenges for religious orders. The government still strictly controls the Church in Vietnam including the following: the appointment of bishops; admission of seminarians; the opening of novitiates for religious congregations. It also harasses Catholics in remote areas and confiscates religious property. The Church's activities that require large gatherings of people become suspect and are seen as manifestations of power.⁹⁹ But these challenges have helped the Church to renew; it has become more mature in the mission of serving her compatriots. The present situation of Vietnam today brings forth new challenges as well as opportunities for evangelization. To prepare for the leadership of evangelization religious need greater competency and training. Studying abroad is one of the great challenges that religious have to face due to a lack of financing and international connections. Nonetheless, incarnation into the world and cooperation with others are an emphasis of the religious in Vietnam. *Perfectae Caritatis* gives emphasis to the importance of the apostolic action of consecrated life in the world today as the religious in Vietnam look forward in the trends of globalization. They must embrace the principle of incarnation in the world in order to understand and serve it better. They are called to discover God's will as revealed in the signs of the times:

*Institutes should promote among their members an adequate knowledge of the social conditions of the times they live in and of the needs of the Church. In such a way, judging current events wisely in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to assist men more effectively.*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Phan, Minh. *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*. (Hochiminh City. 2005), 48.

¹⁰⁰ Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_counsels/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html No 2. d)

II. Generosity: Necessary virtue in the evangelical counsels

Having described the current situation of the consecrated life in Vietnam, this section will illustrate the virtue of generosity as a foundation for the existence of the religious life, not only in Vietnam but also elsewhere. Choosing religious life is especially challenging today. It is not easy for young people to give up everything to make a life commitment because the world promises us so many attractive things. Our contemporary society gives us an illusion of self-sufficiency, promises instant gratification, and thus problematizes long-term commitments. The evangelical counsels really downgrade religious persons in relation to the basic values of contemporary society. Consecrated men and women challenge the dynamics of culture and society because they sacrifice what an ordinary people possess or want to possess—the marriage life that promises personal pleasure, life productivity and principal concern of the future; personal ownership of corporate wealth and even their lives, ambitions of political and authoritative power in political careers; and inclinations for personal successful enterprises.¹⁰¹ People no longer look at religious life as a beautiful life journey because of fears for various reasons. The story of Jesus' foot washing is an encouragement and demonstration of Jesus to those who want to consecrate their lives in religious orders by devoting themselves for union with God and humble service for others. Thus, the consecrated life somehow becomes idealistic and impossible for many people because generosity—the foundation of the consecrated life-- is an impossible and luxurious virtue for human beings.

Ultimately, no matter what motivations or reasons a religious had for entering the consecrated life, generosity must be a primary virtue to help him/her initially respond to divine calling and hopefully continues directing religious persons toward compassion. Evangelical

¹⁰¹ Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 139-141.

counsels and generosity have correlational aspects. Vows are promises and assistance to building virtue or means of acquiring virtue more perfectly. As we defined generosity as detachment from disordered possessions and internal freedom to pursue God's calling, this virtue will affect what the religious understands about her consecrated life and will decide how to practice the vowed life. It is the key to appreciating and treasuring the way in which religious embody and express their vows.

Generosity in the consecrated life is *magis*—the term of Ignatian spirituality—to go the extra mile where we sometimes do not want to stretch out, to be frontiers in ministries with endless renewal by the Holy Spirit, and to give away an undivided heart for Christ and others. Generosity is a virtue reserved for the rich as we mention in the beginning because the generous people are the ones who experience abundant graces from God in their consecrated lives. The generously religious persons are rich because they transform others and the world by giving up themselves generously and working for others' goodness. The more generous people are, the more they give their lives for entering the religious life, because they want to respond to God's love. Of course, not all generous people renounce the world to enter the religious life but generosity seems to be the main reason for embracing a religious vocation. It will decide how joyful, friendly, and spiritually each religious lives their vocation.

1) Chastity

The life of chastity allows religious to live a relationship of more intimate communion with Christ. It is a generous act to give up the most beautiful gift for the One whom the religious love with an undivided heart. Because this vow is special in religious life and shows the fullness of generosity, I would like to discuss it substantially on this section.

In consecrated chastity, aloneness with Jesus becomes a sacred moment, a chance to rely completely on Jesus Christ. As long as we focus our eyes on Jesus, we can overcome challenges and accomplish wonderful apostolic works that ordinary people find hard to understand or undertake. The Vietnamese religious through suffering and persecution may experience insecurity and fears in society; thus, reliance on Jesus for protection is the best way to live their mission. “The chastity of celibates, as a manifestation of dedication to God with an undivided heart is a reflection of the infinite love which relates to saving power of Jesus Christ and his divine identity.”¹⁰² The love in which Jesus wants to share his supreme authority and blessings to religious evokes a response of total love for God and others. This is the foundation of religious life in prayer and contemplation.

Chastity flows from the gift of generosity. The more gifts we have received from God and the people, the more we are expected to appreciate and serve others. “Chastity, which is before all else God’s gracious gift, is essentially apostolic and the source of radical availability and mobility for mission”¹⁰³ The vow of chastity is necessary due to the tremendous demands and identity of the consecrated life. To renounce sexual activities, romantic relationships, and married life is not for personal satisfaction but to be free to have special relationship with God and profound relations with the human persons. An Asian proverb says, “You cannot give something that you do not have.” The religious cannot serve others, for instance, by giving them spiritual direction or helping men and women to be more mature, grown-up, faithful and self-confident if they themselves are not well integrated and balanced in the religious life. A happy, joyful, competent and spiritual religious person is more attractive and effective in helping others

¹⁰² John Paul II. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata_en.html. 21

¹⁰³ Society of Jesus, *General Congregation 34*. D.8, No. 11

than is an isolated, struggling, or lonely person. Chastity is the vow of love in responding to God's love and a way to reach many people who are broken, lonely, marginalized, sick, or outcast. By forgoing the married life, a consecrated person has reserved her life in the spiritual state of aloneness with the Lord and is open to many possibilities of friendship with others. Religious "mediate to each other the presence of the Lord to whom they have offered themselves through their vow of chastity"¹⁰⁴

Consecrated men and women are asked to be true advocates of global solidarity and to practice the sense of ecclesiastical communion. The life of communion becomes a sign for the connections between all in the world and leads people to Christ. Schneiders also claims that consecrated chastity is a special gift given to certain persons and through them to the Church. This charism makes religious distinct from other vocational life. It is an ultimate desire from human nature for self-transcendence to become the image of God and union with God.¹⁰⁵ Consecrated persons are called to share with the entire world the reality that sexuality is not just for pleasure or reproduction. In God's plan, it plays an important role in spiritual fulfillment and happiness that transcends bodily pleasure. Wholeness and holiness are attained because the religious has succeeded in integrating his or her sexuality with spiritual life which is the level of intimacy with the Lord and spiritual fulfillment. Consecrated chastity is a *charism* given by the Spirit, a generous gift for the sake of the Kingdom of God, and for following Jesus Christ in the form of life, which He chose for Himself.

Yet, while religious men and women renounce generously marriage, family and any romantic relationships in joining the consecrated life, they should cultivate a garden of various

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. *Chastity*, No. 21

¹⁰⁵ Schneiders, Sandra. *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001) 125

relationships. Some may be affectionate and intimate. It is wisely advised that celibate persons who want to have peace and to live chastely should have at least one intimate friend or a few to whom they are not sexually attracted, who can support them and be companions on their religious journeys.¹⁰⁶ Of course, there are plenty opportunities for religious people who are free from any exclusive relationships to enjoy the splendid riches of a thousand families, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and friends in the world. While I was at home with my family, my circle of friendship was bounded in the Vietnamese community and my own family. Now in the Society, my friendships have become so rich and diversified that I can have friends globally. For instance, I am living in Faber Jesuit community in Brighton where many international and diverse Jesuits enjoy different cultures and ideologies, and this has broadened my mind. Thus, the circles of relationship in the religious life include many different groups of people from closest friends and soul mates, to religious communities, support groups, friendship networks, family networks, social groups, work colleagues, mentors, professionals, and acquaintances. The consecrated people have been blessed with many lay families who have invited us into their homes and shared many different occasions with us. Some of the religious have become spiritual companions in their joys at marriages, baptisms, graduations, birthdays, and in their losses at funerals, in times of sickness, depression, unemployment, and separations. They also share a common religious life and friendship with other religious men and women, diocesan priests and seminarians in the service to God's people and the quest for God.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, religious people out of generosity are called to be a bridge to reconcile and connect the many different people in the world without regard to geographical or provincial

¹⁰⁶ Groeschel, Benedict J. OFM Cap. *The Courage To Be Chaste*. (New York: Paulist Press. 1985),25.

¹⁰⁷ Lloyd G. Rediger, *Beyond the Scandals: A guide to Healthy Sexuality for Clergy*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2002), 39.

boundaries. In our ministries and daily life, we encounter diverse people: rich and poor, legal or illegal immigrants, men and women, Christians and non-Christians, theists and atheists, liberal and conservatives, homosexual and heterosexual, etc. “As celibates, we are not only open to close and intimate connection with others within appropriate boundaries, but over time we will depend on the quality of these ties to enhance our psychosexual health and maturity as chaste religious.”¹⁰⁸

Schneiders’s analysis suggests some concerns about this vow in the social context of Vietnam. First, many people, especially women, enter the religious life as teenagers or during the time of high school when they are not aware of “sexual orientation, problems with masturbation, tumultuous experiences of falling in love, or issues of sexual dysfunction or addiction”¹⁰⁹ During the high school years and the ages of romance, entering the religious life is a dream for many Vietnamese because the culture and society still respect and promote religious vocation. Traditionally, people believe that one religious person can bring the whole family, especially his/her parents, to heaven. On the other hand, in a society where survival is an existential question, religious life is a better place for climbing up the social ladder. For instance, Vietnam is still a very strong masculine culture, strongly influenced by Confucianism. Women are discriminated against and tempted into sex trafficking. The government and society somehow endorse or ignore social problems such as domestic violence, marriage arrangements for economic motives, family abuse, and kidnapping to other surrounding countries for midwives or sex workers. Hence, the motivation to enter religious life must not be for invalid reasons such as a way of avoiding marriage or parenting when the desire for these is lacking, increased

¹⁰⁸ Sonny Manuel, Gerdenio, S.J. “Living Chastity: Psychosexual Well-Being in Jesuit Life.” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*. Summer 2009. 41/2. P. 9

¹⁰⁹ Schneiders. 133.

educational opportunities, greater financial security, an avenue to pursue ambition and other reasons.

However, whatever the reasons that men and women in Vietnam want to devote their lives to God and others in the consecrated life, they must have a sense of generosity in order to nourish their religious vocations in the long term. In Western culture, the idea of renunciation of a successful career, degrees, money, sex, and other material wealth is not attractive, especially when people can find other forms of happiness and satisfactory ways of living outside of the consecrated life. Once people work hard and have everything they want, they do not give it up easily for others. Vietnamese Catholic people under persecution and hardship experience insufficiency in their lives and have a tendency to increase their dependence on God for healing their brokenness; therefore, renouncing the world to enter an exclusive relationship with God is more appealing than other lives. Under poor conditions, people respect and recognize greater values in others and generously respond to God's call because they know how to treasure what they had not had before.

Living consecrated chastity is openness to God, and sexual abstinence is only one of its manifestations. It is a lifestyle in which the religious becomes witness to the priority of God in all relationships as the grateful expression for what graces they have received. Moreover, community life in Vietnam takes a crucial place in the religious life. Even though people may enter the religious life with different motives as we discussed above, the community provides an environment to nourish the person's noble desires. Over time, religious will grow and transform their lives to understand the deeper meaning of religious life; especially, when religious genuinely live in an atmosphere of trust and openness, it leads to disclosure and personal revelations that uncover hidden pain and a vacuum that only love can fill.

In living consecrated chastity, the Vietnamese can offer themselves to the service of the community and express an intimate relationship with the Lord. Unconditional mutual love demands availability to serve others generously. The demanding schedule from early morning to bed time keeps community members busy. When we discuss the vow of chastity through the lenses of generosity, the words of St. Ignatius still echo in our minds that religious are called to be "rooted in a fundamental detachment and a determination to serve God totally" made possible by a deeply personal love for Christ. Consecrated men and women cannot live chastely by simply renouncing married life, sexual activities, and romantic relationships by themselves. Chastity first of all is the intimate and undivided relationship with Jesus our Lord in prayer, contemplation and examination of conscience. It also is an individual and communal discernment and discipline in which the religious seek for support and maturity in community life and friendships. But at the bottom, this vow is a manifestation of generosity and true love to recognize that human beings are very broken and imperfect. Only God's love that pours into our hearts and minds can sufficiently sustain our lives, and Pedro Arrupe's prayer is the best conclusion of our chastity section:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

2) Poverty

From the spring of generosity, the vow of poverty is a way of expressing gratitude to Jesus for his love. Even though each religious order has different interpretations of this vow, it fundamentally reflects a desire to imitate Him for the sake of kingdom of God. When Jesus was

among his disciples, he did not consider himself as Lord, but as a suffering servant and friend, and kneels down to wash the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-22). He emptied himself to be able to serve. He was obedient to God as a servant until death, even the most horrible and infamous death of the cross (Phil 2: 5- 11). Poverty is expressed as a participation in the poverty of Christ (2Cor 8: 9). So religious should bear a "vigorous evangelical witness to self-denial and restraint, in a form of fraternal life inspired by principles of simplicity and hospitality, also as an example to those who are indifferent to the needs of their neighbor."¹¹⁰ Voluntary religious poverty involves generosity because it calls religious out of themselves to return themselves to God who has given all to them; to one another in a community which shares all that any of them receives; and to the People of God, especially the marginalized and people in the third world countries.

Religious poverty contradicts a world obsessed with accumulating wealth. It demonstrates the prophetic detachment of "neither riches nor poverty" in the First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises.¹¹¹ Religious people make themselves indifferent to all created things and order their use of material things so as better to serve, praise and reverence God. This is the very purpose of human life. Religious are called to be detached from any disorderly material things both in order to be an apostolic witness with the poor and in order to maintain spiritual poverty. In the face of a consumerism and commodity culture, religious are called to give "a clear witness of personal and communal poverty, of diligent work, of detachment, of total availability and of the effective sharing of spiritual and material resources."¹¹² Basically, the vow is the way of embracing the generous abundance of God and

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, "*Vita Consecrata*," no. 90.

¹¹¹ Kammer, Alfred. "*Fr. Provincial's Letter on Poverty in 2004*"

¹¹² Synod of Bishops, IX Ordinary General Assembly, *The Consecrated Life and Its Role in the Church and in the World*, no. 53, p. 56.

His unconditional love for the kingdom of God. It realizes that all things are gifts of God—to be shared and used for mutual benefit. “We own nothing for exclusive personal use nor does anybody have a right to claim exclusive use over anything in creation...They invite us into mutual participation which is as much about discerning the meaning of the gift as it is about its responsible and appropriate use.”¹¹³ Vowed poverty is part of public witnesses of divine providence that runs counter to the trends in society. The vow of poverty can be expressed in the language of gratitude to the generosity of God for the sake of human salvation and solidarity. They must be poor and abnegated enough to discern God’s will in their apostolic and religious life. Furthermore, the vow of poverty is Christocentric—focusing on Jesus Christ. With the attitude of generosity, we can interpret and fit religious poverty in all models listed by Sr. Guider, OSF: asceticism, deficiency, deprivation, *sine proprio*, kenosis, begging, diminishment, graciousness, solidarity with the poor, and evangelical poverty. In each of these models, there are different characteristics from radical to traditional poverty, but generosity is the required virtue to accept humility, self-denial, asceticism or solidarity for the sake of the poor or the kingdom of God.¹¹⁴

Poverty is the only vow commonly considered least challenging in Vietnam, but it actually relates to the other vows and reveals how a religious practices the virtue of generosity. For obedience, how can a brother/sister become poor enough to surrender controlling his/her life and willingly to accept from their superiors’ apostolic assignments? And for chastity, how can a religious become poor enough to sacrifice prospective marriage and romantic relationship in

¹¹³ O’Murchu Diarmuid. *Poverty, Celibacy, and Obedience* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999) 67

¹¹⁴ Margaret Guider, OSF. “The models of poverty in the consecrated life” on the handout of the lecture in fall semester 2011, School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College.

order to let God rule his life? By the motivation of generosity, the virtue of poverty leads us to humility, and humility is the beginning of all other virtues and an opening for other graces. When a religious person renounces his life to be poor materially and spiritually, he no longer lives for himself, controls his life, or inclines to other disordered attractions. It is a moment that God incarnates into his life.

The spirit of poverty is also the experience of solitude and aloneness that the consecrated life requires. Neither has anything left to depend on, nor anyone else to share his life with but Jesus Christ, the only intimate lover. The poorest time of loneliness is an opportunity in the religious life to let God fulfill our emptiness in the life of prayer. It is also the time of Christmas, when God is mysteriously present in our lives: "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Religious person could experience highly demanding of ministries, feel burn-out, taste the darkness of lonely nights, and plunge into moments of complete solitude. Precisely when he can find no one to answer him, God answers him; when there is no longer anyone wants to converse him, God is there to communicate with him; and when no one can help him to meet demands and expectations beyond human capacity, God is there to reach him.

In the context of Vietnamese communism, the vow of poverty is a radical witness against the atheistic ideology in which material and property are main measurement for all aspects of life. The party leaders claim that all possessions of the country belong to people and the government needs to manage these for the people. In reality, they steal wealth and property from others. Nevertheless, the vow of poverty is a Gospel witness that human beings live not mainly by material "bread" but by something much more valuable than that in this life. It is a freedom to treasure all things as God's gifts on the earth, but also a detachment from material things to fixate human life on God. The German Jesuit, Alfred Delp, who was sentenced by the Nazis,

once wrote: “Bread is important, freedom is more important, but most important of all is unbroken fidelity and faithful adoration to God.” Furthermore, most Vietnamese families, especially in rural areas, are poor and have many children. A person joining the religious life is a blessing and an honor for family members. To live poverty as asceticism and deficiency is not unfamiliar to them. But to be in solidarity with the poor and to embrace evangelical poverty for apostolic witness is a radical and generous shift for those who have experienced poverty before they enter religious life. Hans Urs Von Balthasar says, “It would be folly to try to clear a path to evangelical obedience without passing through this entrance gate of evangelical poverty.”¹¹⁵

3) Obedience

When persons fall in love, they want to think of the beloved all the time and attempt to imitate the one whom they love. Similarly, the religious vocation is a calling to develop our relationship as children of the Father, who is love. It is out of gratitude that we offer a response to Jesus who obeys His Father absolutely to love us with his whole heart. The evangelical counsel of obedience in the consecrated life is thus a journey to freedom of the heart and unity with God’s will in the discernment of the Holy Spirit’s movements. It can be an internal freedom in the concept of Thomas Aquinas’ liberality in which the religious surrenders generously himself in terms of real commitment to the leading of God’s Spirit and the mission of the Church or his congregation through his superiors. Without sincere obedience, religious life and self-

¹¹⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 154, quoted in Mary Dominic Pitts, *The Threefold Response of the Vows*, in *The Foundations of Religious Life: Revisiting the Vision*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2009) 100.

surrender just fall into the trap of being deceptively self-transcending asceticism. Obedience helps religious persons to practice virtue of humility by generously denying personal inclinations for the sake of communal apostolic works and opening minds to seek God's will. Naturally, people like to set up their own plans, pursue their own courses of action, and enjoy pride in successful ministries. In the spirit of generosity, obedience allows religious persons to give up their own projects and to dedicate themselves to the missions of the entire community.

Obedience is a generous response of love, with the divine gift of greater internal freedom and energy, leading the religious to develop a deeper intimacy with God and a profound integrity of the human person.¹¹⁶ Obedience has similar characteristics of generosity in which transformation moves vowed members away from self-centeredness and opens themselves to the selfless generosity of God.¹¹⁷ "Obedience is the only way human persons, intelligent and free beings, can have the disposition to fulfill themselves. As a matter of fact, when a human person says 'no' to God, that person compromises the divine plan, diminishing him or herself and condemning him or herself to failure."¹¹⁸ Obedience places life entirely in Christ's hands so that he may use it according to God's design and make it a masterpiece. Consecrated persons realize that they are seeking the kingdom of God and are sharing intimately in the paschal mystery of Christ, which is the mystery of obedience.

What the religious does then, in vowing obedience, is to commit himself or herself without reserve to the seeking of the will of God in all circumstances and to fulfilling it

¹¹⁶ Gill Goulding, C.J. "Love Along is Credible." Ed. Richard Gribble, C.S.C. *Apostolic Religious Life in America Today: A Reponse to the Crisis*. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011),118.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Feeley, CSC. *Friends in the Lord: Exploring Consecrated Discipleship*. (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2001),124-8.

¹¹⁸ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. "The Service of Authority and Obedience." No. 5

*with wholehearted dedication not only because one's own holiness lies in this total obedience to God but also in order to extend the reign of God in this world*¹¹⁹.

In the consecrated life, the purpose of obedience to seek God's will is expressed through the community life and availability for apostolic needs. These needs are for peoples, dioceses, nations, the Church, the poor, and institutions themselves (in the case of contemplative life). To avoid blind obedience, persons may follow their own conscience through the art of discernments with the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Order, local community, and individual level. Through the vow of obedience, religious persons promise to cooperate in the life and charism of their orders and submit themselves under the superiors' instructions. Before making decisions, superiors usually need to hear their subjects' capacities for certain assignments and seek some consultations. But after the discussions have ended and superiors still insist the best missions for their subjects, religious should do the best job they can.

Of course, the process of decision making for the apostolic or religious assignment depends on different models of religious life in each religious order. Each one illustrates generous way of proceeding in relationship with each other: Military/Army in service to the King (i.e. Society of Jesus), Family of God (i.e. Benedictine), Community of Disciples "*communio*" (i.e. Columban sisters), Congregation (i.e. Franciscan Sisters OSF), Collegium, Corporation, or Guild.¹²⁰ These models reflect various levels of collaboration, authority, responsibility and decision making from their members in order to fix their goals in ecclesiastical, evangelical, canonical or social emphases. Even though these models have hierarchical structure of democracy, each member still strives to practice the virtue of obedience in their hearts and

¹¹⁹ Schneiders, Sandra, IHM. *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000) 229

¹²⁰ Margaret Guider, OSF. Hand-out in the lecture of the class "Consecrated Life in 21st Century," 2010

minds. Without generosity in relationship with the vow of poverty, a true emptying of self, there would be no space for obedience in a consecrated heart. It means self-sacrifice that we completely place our lives at the disposition of the whole which points to the common good of communities, the Church, and the world.¹²¹

Under difficult circumstances of persecution, discrimination, and secrecy because of the Communists, the vow of obedience in Vietnam may still be under development. In some communities, superiors mainly make all decisions for their subjects without dialogue and consultation; thus, religious may lack responsibility to express their freedom of choice in an apostolic assignment. This vow in Vietnam requires of each individual great generosity for the sake of community rather than individual's benefits. The model of the military/army in service to the King may be commonly the best illustration and necessary mode for religious life dealing with the Communist government. Recently, there is some discussion and openness between the superior and subjects in pontifical congregations but ultimately the superior has the final decision for any assignment. Hopefully, religious members will have more opportunities to express their holy desires through the process of discernments and become more responsible for their assignments as they seek the divine will in their lives.

III. Generosity: Bridging over divisions in the contemporary world

Having completed a critical analysis of the evangelical counsels, I want to present some proposals regarding the bridge as a metaphor of generosity, as a means for understanding and support in religious life in the context of globalization. As we know, religious life constitutes a lifetime of appreciation for our many blessings and a deepening sense of gratitude for all the gifts

¹²¹ Fiand, Barbara. *Refocusing the Vision: Religious Life into the Future*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001) 184-5

that we received. The act of sacrificing oneself for others inspires the human spirit. Being in solidarity with the marginalized and the poor provides us with dignity and meaning in life. Generosity plants seeds of love to enrich our lives and makes gaps in human hearts smaller by overcoming divisions. As consecrated persons, generosity is an essential attitude and foundational virtue to enable us to embody the compassion of God for others and to witness to God's love in the world.¹²² My dreams here for this presentation are to stir up people's consciousness on the difficulties of the third world countries—especially the suffering Churches like Vietnam so as to construct a vision based on generosity to connect religious in the world together. From this cooperation, religious hopefully will transform the marginalized and the poor and help each other in the consecrated life. Here are some practical projects on which I think religious can work together for the common good of the whole Church.

1) Providing Assistance for Education

It is one of the favorite projects that I have worked for more than five years to bring Vietnamese religious, seminarians and priests to America and some to European countries for study and training. Obviously, these projects are a consequence of the generosity of religious orders and Catholic colleges in the U.S and elsewhere. Historically, many orders in first world countries owned many Catholic universities and colleges. Now with the decline of members, religious no longer hold as many positions of teaching, administration and governance as they did in the past. However, many still have important positions on Boards of Trustees or as Directors of schools. With their positions and influence, they can collaborate in rebuilding the suffering Catholic Churches in third world countries, particularly by fostering the spiritual and

¹²²Au, Wilkie. *The Enduring Heart: Spirituality for the Long Haul*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2000) 155-157

intellectual development of religious. Generously providing educational opportunities for religious, especially women from the third world country, is one important way that people in developed countries can participate in the evangelization of the world. Religious orders of women, especially local/diocesan congregations, have no financial support from the government or ecclesial authorities. Bishops usually care for their seminarians and priests but not other religious. They seem to operate as independent agents in terms of finance, but absolutely belong to the Bishops in terms of operation and ministries. Some Bishops and pastors take advantages on their generosity by volunteering them without granting them paid jobs. Many religious leaders and members of councils have no formal education backgrounds. Thus, sending some Vietnamese religious to the U.S. or Europe for education is a potential solution for laying a foundation for the liberation of women from an unjust society where sisters have been oppressed by the government and patriarchal culture in the church.

Receiving an education in a developed country can have multiple effects on democracy, intellectual, ministries, missionary, and many other elements of life when the religious return to Vietnam to open schools, hospitals and other ministries. The religious need to have better educations to empower their congregations and raise their voices for the voiceless who experience injustice. Eventually, the intellectual life in Catholic tradition is not simply a development of concepts but an integration of reality—a desire for social justice and faith. At practical levels, the sisters, priests and seminarians should prepare themselves for positions of formators, educators, social workers, and leaders. Certain majors and programs must be made higher in urgency for short-term and long-term strategies. For example, theology, spirituality, counseling, administration, education (all levels), psychology, and nursing are immediate needs in the short terms while other majors and degrees in social and natural sciences will be

considered for future Catholic colleges in Vietnam. Intellectual life encompasses leaders to look forward in the future in the construction of a country after communism. They need to know how to rebuild hospitals, schools, colleges, and social institutions, and most essentially, how to heal the wounds from what destructive ideology created.

2) Assistance with Formation

For religious from poor countries like Vietnam, their motherhouses and original foundation often are in Western Europe and the U.S. where many religious communities have established and developed for a long time. With advantages in education, democracy, technology, and other aspects, religious orders have effective formation programs for religious and have sent many missionary to the world for evangelization. Their experience working overseas becomes a source of expertise. Third world countries may need Americans and Europeans to help them in training and giving advice. They hope for openness, understanding and cooperation, not the repression of new initiatives. The virtue of generously accepting and respecting differences in pluralistic cultures are necessary for the sustenance of religious life.¹²³ I wish that religious orders in the U.S. would open their arms and welcome more young people with vocations from other countries. Although some religious communities are pioneering to accept more foreigners, many others still have much hesitance from many fears such as immigrant laws, economic conditions, diversities, inculturation, etc. But the important challenge for them, I believe, is the generous attitude which will move them to share what they have, to risk with the poor, and to desire being solidarity with the marginalized as God has been generous to the human race. If our hearts are generous enough to see the consecrated life in the context of

¹²³ Azevedo, Marcello, S.J. *The Consecrated Life: Crossroads and Directions*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 101.

universal church, it would be an opportunity for flourishing rather a threat. In Vietnam, there are so many candidates waiting for many years to enter the consecrated life, while here in the U.S, some orders are in need of vocations if they are to survive. Of course, the fear that the economic motive may attract many young people is legitimate. There are those who just want to have a better life without having authentic vocations. Nevertheless, the question remains whether religious orders here can be hospitable and generous enough to accept outsiders as Jesus did? Can they be as generous toward others and trust other human beings enough to sacrifice themselves for a deep solidarity with others, as Jesus did on the cross?

3) Sharing resources.

As we can see, the number of members in many convents and religious institutes in first world countries have steadily diminished, and their ministries have converged on nursing homes and health care for their older members. Some other religious orders still have property, financial assets, professional knowledge and ministries. Can these communities become generous enough to share their possessions with other religious in third world countries? For example, I helped a group of Vietnamese Discalced Carmelite Sisters to establish a Carmelite convent in Mobile, Alabama where there are four Nuns (the youngest one is eighty years of age).¹²⁴ With this assistance, the Carmelite legacy will be continually carried on in that Archdiocese. Certainly, sharing resources requires understanding and respecting diversity; otherwise, the ones who share, become superior and the receiving ones turn to dependency. This may challenge religious in first world countries with new perspective of collaboration and humbly recognize that all the things

¹²⁴ Benjamin Mann, "Carmelite nuns come from Vietnam to Alabama to revitalize monastery." Accessed on April 4, 2012 at <http://www.ewtnnews.com/catholic-news/US.php?id=2693>

they have come from God. Their predecessors in the past had to struggle, immigrate and live out of other's generosity. On the other hand, sharing resources and religious life have another aspect of solidarity--being at one with another--which requires complete incarnation to other's existential experience. Without accompanying, sharing and solidarity, generous acts still stop at reciprocity relationship between receivers and benefactors. Only when benefactors in the West truly let the other's need benefit them, when the givers experience the ones with whom they generously share as contributing to them life and cultural values, and when the ministries and possessions they share become thanksgiving and gratitude, do they (benefactors) experience genuine solidarity with others.¹²⁵

4) Community Support: Women and Men for Others

The consecrated life is a special calling from God to devote oneself for vertical and horizontal relationships: God alone and human communities. Community life becomes an essential part of the spiritual journey to perfection. Mutual respect and hospitality as openness—appreciating, receiving from and sharing with the other, would be elemental for community life. In most Western or American religious communities, diversified people from different backgrounds and cultures commonly live in the same convents or seminaries because of the lack of vocations. Practicing openness within community life to the new and the unfamiliar as well as the critical opinions from their own mentality, promises the potential liberation in seeking knowledge and widening horizons of wisdom. If communist governments impose attitudes of suspicion and distrust of the other, Christian community life requires the virtue of generosity to trust and encourage each other to pursue fearless dreams and intellectual desires without

¹²⁵ Barbara Fiand. *Refocusing the Vision: Religious Life into the Future—Living the Vision: revisited, revised, and expanded*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 84.

criticism or imposition. When religious persons appreciate difference among others, social and cultural differences are transcended to greater understanding and communal support. Men and women for others and for the common good of religious life are the goals of community life where Jesus is the center of activities.¹²⁶

From a practical point of view, religious should develop mature relationships with their superiors and Bishops in Vietnam and local leaders in the U.S. so that the superiors could trust how diligent they live and fulfill their missions. This is very important for all women's congregations while they are diocesan orders belonging to local Bishops. To know canon law and to establish healthy relationship with Bishops would enhance better development for each order and open wider ministries. As Catholics and religious move into the mainstream of globalization, Father Adolfo Nicolas, S.J., the General of the Society of Jesus, advised in General Congregation 35 that each Jesuit, applicable for other religious people, should learn three different languages to be able to bridge gaps in the world: the language of the Church (specifically *Magisterium*), the language of indigenous (the poor), and the language of international community (reconciling language). With these languages of reconciliation, religious persons can enrich themselves more generously in ministries and evangelization of the world.

5) Crossing Frontiers and Globalization.

In the twenty first century, the consecrated life seems to have no geographical boundaries. Communication and technology have crossed the national borders to every corner and secluded areas where Christians are persecuted or unreachable. Generous collaboration and

¹²⁶ John Bennett and Elizabeth Dreyer, "Spiritualities of- Not At-the University," *A Jesuit Education Reader*. Ed. by George Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press. 2008), 118-9.

confluences can help religious to address fears, gaps, prejudice, local mentality and self-interest. Religious in developed countries enjoy abundant resources and abilities but do not have young vocations; whereas, religious orders in Vietnam, for instance, do not have enough facilities to host a great number of vocations. With the presence of young vocations from other countries, consecrated persons, outsiders, could teach cultural tradition and lessons of generosity to others. And looking at religious life as a whole, we can work together and become generous with each other for the apostolic vineyard of God. In the era of colonization, the West was so generous in sending many missionaries to the East and other continents for evangelization. They planted Christianity and consecrated seeds of hope in the world. Now in the next generations, I believe that the East and third world countries will re-evangelize and refound the first world. If we employ the idea of John Sobrino, “No salvation outside of the poor,”¹²⁷ logically the poor could be a sacrament of Christ’s salvation and through Jesus Christ-- a poor suffering servant, we may learn how to be consecrated persons who follow Jesus and seek to be in communion with Him for eternity. The poor have something to teach us about the generous and consecrated life. Are we paying attention and learning from their examples?

Therefore, the growth of vocation in the third-world countries, such as Vietnam reconstructs our understanding religious life in the world and sharpens our perspectives to work for social justice. The awareness of negative attitudes in the consecrated life such as selfishness, exclusiveness, bitterness, anger and prejudice should be addressed so that religious community knows how to collaborate with others and invite more international people into the mainstream of communities. Of course, the restoration and contribution of well-being of the consecrated life

¹²⁷ Sobrino, Jon. S.J. *No Salvation Outside the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008)

must depend on religious members' generosity and willingness to accept the new adventure of life and let God work through our lives.

Conclusion

When I thought about writing on generosity in this paper, I could not stop my Ignatian imagination in the exercise of the "contemplation in obtaining divine love" in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Everything including human beings in the world contains God's love because God is continually generous by generating created things for us, his beloved ones. He generously takes the form of servant to humble himself in order to serve his disciples and to set an example for us (Jn 13:1-22). We enjoy human life, friendship, communities, religious, intellectual, ministries as generous gifts of God. We cannot hesitate to express our gratitude to the Lord by generously jumping into the water with Jesus like St. Peter did (Mt 14:22-33), to take a perilous adventure with Him, and to let Him lead us to magnificent events of our consecrated lives that ordinary people may not fully understand. To live the vowed life in the spirit of generosity is to be free from any material and illusionary attachments, to give ourselves completely away for the sake of Kingdom of God and to care for the goodness of others, and to center our lives in Jesus Christ who has given up himself to let us live abundantly. In the spirit of generosity, the consecrated life truly is an impossible life that no one can fulfill its requirements perfectly; however, the divine graces are sufficient for those who open their hearts and willingly express gratitude to divine Providence by generously living with and for others.

Only through the virtue of generosity, can religious find freedom and peace in living out the evangelical counsels as God's gifts. In consecrated hearts, the world today should not have any boundaries that divide human beings. Generosity will help religious people to establish

bridges connecting the first world to third world countries like Vietnam, where people are struggling and need generous assistance from other nations. Only through generosity, can religious life show the compassionate outreach of God to others and pray for the light of divine love to shine upon others as St. Ignatius prayed:

*Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not count the cost;
to fight and not heed the wounds;
to toil and not seek for rest;
to labor and not ask for reward, except to know
that I am doing your will. Amen.*

APPENDIX 1

Comparison of Transactional and Transformational Models¹²⁸

	TRANSACTIONAL MODEL	TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL
PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNING	Philanthropy—improving the common good	Stewardship—managers of what God owns
FOCUS:	Raising money through marketing transactions	Facilitate raising stewards to be rich toward God, which results in generosity
ETHICAL FRAMEWORK:	Minimalist—“is it legal?”	Commitment to gospel values of truth, integrity, and love
IDEAL OUTCOMES:	Donor meets organizational need	Giver becomes conformed to the image of Christ and becomes generous, like Christ
SOLICITATION:	Manipulative business sales, technique intensive, hype the need	Present giving opportunity, prayerfully matching call to ministry
MOTIVATOR:	Asker’s style, personality	Holy Spirit works to transform heart toward Christlike generosity
FOLLOW-UP:	Pressure and persuade to meet quota, don’t take “no” for an answer	Encourage prayer to lay up treasure in heaven and experience godly joy
ACCOUNTABILITY:	To organization, the law	To God, eternal values
PREDICTABLE OUTCOMES:	Success/failure depends on asker. Burnout	Success/failure according to God’s calling
REWARDS:	On earth, temporal	Fulfillment in communion with God and joy in cooperation in God’s works.

¹²⁸ Wesley Willmer. *Revolution in Generosity: Transforming Stewards to be Rich Toward God*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 39.

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