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A DEEPENING AND STRENGTHENING OF GRACE FOR A LIVELY
CELEBRATION OF FAITH: THE FILIPINO EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: In this article, I proposed a framework as a means of catechesis in the light of current realities facing Filipino Catholics. In the sacrament of confirmation, those confirmed are called to a full commitment to the gospel lifestyle since it is the completion of the Holy Spirit's gift begun in baptism, characterized by taking on the task of witnessing, even if it entails "sacrifice in the Spirit." To become effective witnesses to the gospel, Christians should develop personal knowledge, awareness, and experience of Christ. In the Philippines, both PCP II (para. 16) and NNCDP (para. 326) claim that many Catholics are "exteriorly" sacramentalized but never adequately catechized. This scenario sparked within me to investigate the situation with the goal of coming up with a modest framework aimed at helping Religion Teachers, Catechists, and Church personnel to instruct confirmands and the confirmed to a lively celebration of faith. This article utilized the exploratory research design in gathering the primary and secondary sources of data. The framework which I propose grounds the catechetical instructions for confirmation, i.e., Integrated, Inculturated, and Community-Forming Catechesis based on Scriptures and Church Traditions in terms of the total human experience of the listeners.

Key words: Holy Spirit, confirmation, catechesis, integrated, inculturated, community-forming.

1. Introduction

The Philippines is one of the most Catholic countries in the world. As a Catholic country, one of its marks is the pious and strong religiosity of the Filipinos. This religiosity is marked by their genuine forms of popular piety as expressed in their deep devotion to Mary as the Mother of God, devotional prayers to the saints, religious processions, and other communal worship. Conversely, this strong religiosity is also stained with a gap between their strong worship and daily life. Most who have accepted God's revelation in Jesus Christ and his plan of salvation has yet to mature in their daily life of faith. This maturing process embraces all ages, most especially the young generation who in their growing years, need guidance and direction.

The youth comprises the majority of the Filipinos. The Filipino youth of the twenty-first century are described as dynamic individuals, overflowing with blessings, willing and open to learn and to grow when they are provided with opportunities. Likewise, they are on the stage of searching for their identity, meaning, and their purpose in life. However, the majority of the youth faces myriads of issues which need to be addressed, such as lack of education, substance abuse, poverty, especially at the grassroots level. They are also beset with role confusion, lack of critical thinking, and decision-making skills that usually make them hesitant to commit. A disturbing issue which I also observe and later this article will focus on is the apparent dichotomy of faith and life among the youth.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines ([PCP II], 2004, para. 16) stressed that “many Catholics are said to be sacramentalized but are not properly catechized.” A large number of the Filipino Catholics receive the sacraments merely by typical folk-Catholic belief customs or the way they were brought up. A striking example of this is the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The PCP II echoes that majority of the Filipinos are still ignorant of the real significance of the sacrament of confirmation in their lives. This situation is not only observed in the Philippine Catholic Church but other countries as well. Gabrielli (2010, 103-104) found out that in the nineties, there is a gap between the U.S. culture and Catholicism. He also revealed that the gap ceases to exist, confirmation itself reflects American individualism. He further elaborated that many catechists are still trying to address the very same difficulty. The young people seem well-prepared for Confirmation, celebrate it joyously, and then disappear. He wrote, “those who see the difficulties with celebrating Confirmation as a time of choice, are in a difficult position. Catechists who have inherited the practice of Confirmation in its early teen/adolescent form are left to reflect on why young people are no

longer involved in the Church after Confirmation.” Similarly, in Houston, Texas, Learman (1993) divulged in his article that many of the new confirmands stopped coming to Church after they were confirmed. This problem is likewise, observed in Poland by Wierzbicki (2018, 6), who is a Christian priest. He shared his sentiment that almost 100 percent of the baptized children receive their First Communion when they are nine years old, but a few years later, when they receive confirmation, their number is smaller and unfortunately, many of them, this is the last time they are present in the Church, as if confirmation was meant to be farewell.

Dalby (2019, 54) suggested that “confirmation can regain its place in the church if it is understood as marking moments of faith-strengthening along the path of discipleship.” In Norway, confirmation is given great importance. The candidates need to finish a course on confirmation before it is administered to them. According to Gordon (2017, 93), the course given is designed to awaken the confirmands curiosity. Its main objective is to encourage reflection and critical thinking. He further said that this represents one step to adult life, which supports the young people as they face the challenges of daily life.

The Catholic Church in the Philippines endeavors to sustain the Christian faith of its members towards maturity. Apart from the celebration of the sacraments, she [the Church] continuously searches for avenues to nurture and deepen their faith-life, personally and as members of their Christian community, such as faith-sharing activities and social actions where the youth are involved.

The youth experience particular growing-up problems and commonly shared problems regarding their Christian faith. Obviously, there is a decline in religiosity among the young. Some have to stop thinking about God altogether while others find the religion of their childhood boring, or associated with fairy tales. Several among them find the language and thought patterns of scripture confusing, and find Church's teachings remote and irrelevant in their daily lives.

Shreds of evidence have proven that there are catechetical challenges which confront the Filipino youth, like the reception of the sacrament of confirmation. The interviews I had among the grown-ups, couples shared that the sacrament of confirmation was received because it is a requirement for the matrimony for unless the prospective bride and groom are confirmed, the priest cannot officiate at the wedding rite. These minimalist attitudes have affected the common understanding of most Filipino Catholics regarding confirmation. As a religion educator, whenever my college students are asked about confirmation in class, they could hardly give practical answers. Yet, these students have been confirmed; most of them were given at least some instructions before the reception of the sacrament and have the privilege of receiving systematic catechesis. When they are asked about what happened during their confirmation, their usual reply is all about the ceremonial slap, picture

taking with the bishop and godparents and inside the Church are most that they can remember.

Such a situation indicates that the celebration was simply an empty ritual for those confirmed, with little or nothing to do with their growing and maturing process. I lament the reaction of the youth as they trivialize the sacrament with their remarks, “I do not get anything out of it,” and “it has nothing to do with my life,” which is still very widespread among the youth.

Several reasons have contributed toward creating such conditions but among the several factors perhaps and the primary cause is the poor catechesis the youth receive before the reception of the said sacrament; and that there is no program or activities prepared to sustain their faith after confirmation. In some instances, the catechesis is ill-prepared, hurried, and abbreviated, that the confirmands have no real chance to celebrate the sacrament adequately, nor receive the new strengthening of the Spirit. Secondly, the materials used are usually out-of-date and rarely relate directly to their life. Many of the most commonly used materials are foreign productions, thus losing the opportunity for a genuinely inculturated catechesis in terms of Filipino attitudes, values, and religiosity. The ineffectivity is undoubtedly also due in part to the dearth of well-informed, trained, competent, qualified Church personnel who have undergone the professional training and formation needed to equip them to instruct, inspire and form the confirmands effectively. The New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines ([NNCDP] 2007, para. 449) is emphatic as it identifies this as the “lack of funds and availability of resource materials and facilities and also on the number of catechists and the quality of their work as most of them receive very little monetary compensation and formation for their work in public schools and parishes.” The number of trained personnel is “so disproportionate to a large number of catechumens that the Church's catechetical affectivity is gravely hindered” (NNCDP 2007, para. 324). Scriptures speak of this as, “The harvest is great, but the laborers are few” (Mt. 9:37). The growing number of Filipino youth is outstripping the number of trained personnel for the work of catechesis, thus, confirmation catechesis is often given to large groups.

Also, the confirmed individuals have difficulties in sustaining their faith as they go through life. As a consequence, the confirmed fail to see the essential points of a fruitful reception of the sacrament. With the growing numbers of candidates and the confirmed, it is an admitted fact that the majority of the Filipinos do not receive adequate and systematic catechesis.

Further interviews from among students, out of school youths and adults reveals that a significant number of Filipino Catholics receive the sacrament of confirmation during their younger years sometimes even without a solid catechesis. The steadily increasing number of parishes

within the diocese has made it quite impossible for the bishop to confirm all. More so, the scarcity of catechists to prepare the confirmands and a sound catechesis is poorly or moderately given or none at all. If there are catecheses, they are sometimes hurriedly done. In other place, there is can be an absence of a worked-out program given to confirmands before the reception of confirmation.

Moreover, the role of the parents and elders should not be missed out since the family is the locus of catechesis. Any catechetical program must invite the collaboration of the family in the common task of educating their children in their Catholic faith. In the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana in the United States, Gabrielli (2010, 106) pointed out the perceived weaknesses of current confirmation preparation programs. Among those that he mentioned are the lack of involvement of confirmands and their families in parish life, strong influence of secular culture on confirmands, and the disappearance of confirmands and their families after confirmation. It is a fact that many parents never get around to helping their children into confirmation preparation program which is a contrast with Pope John Paul II (1994, para. 68) exhortation in his encyclical titled *Catechesi Tradendae* of the critical responsibility of parents towards their children. The Pope urged that the family's catechetical activity has a unique character, which is, in a sense, irreplaceable. Education in the faith by parents which begins from the children's tenderest age be given when members of the family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. Likewise, Pope Francis (2015) encouraged parents as he declared, "It is time for fathers and mothers to return from their exile – for they have exiled themselves from bringing up their children– and to fully resume their educational role." NNCDP (2007, para 324) notes that "today's Filipino family is scarcely prepared to function as the first and principal school of evangelization and catechesis." Thus, it is clear that every Christian parent has the vocation of educating their children to grow in Christian faith and morals. At the minimum, parents should be able to impart in word and deed the most fundamental truths and values of the Christian life to their children (Catholic Church 1983, cann. 774 §2; 776).

Today's youth are in an age of increasing spiritual insight, of widespread searching for authentic values, and a new sense of responsibility. Catechesis, then, must speak to their level of thinking, draw them into a real dialogue about essential religious truths and the real conditions of their life considered in the light of Christian faith and directly pertinent to their total personal religious and moral growth. The challenge today for the Philippine Church is how to reach out to the vast number of youth with adequate catechesis. The PCP II (2004, para 177-178) identifies more vital areas of renewal of pre-sacramental catechesis, especially for the sacraments of initiation, namely; Baptism, Confirmation,

and Matrimony. Thus, the catechist in the parish should be a person balanced through his human, spiritual, and professional dimension, and capacity for understanding the recipient. Several authors suggested that the parish community should invest a great effort in the catechetical preparation (Benzoic 2015, 379-398; Osewska 2012, 123-131; Mikoski 2006, 175-181; Levada 1996, 302-312; Stala 2015).

Clearly, there is an urgent need to rectify the catechetical situation in the Philippines. Such situations call for an urgent demand for a catechesis that addresses itself to a Filipino context, with its particular needs, characteristics and crises as stated in the Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education (1997, para. 5-6) especially in the Philippines, which is predominantly a Catholic country. Gabrielli (2010, 8) further articulated the need to discern, as a Church, what sort of relationship between Catholics and the broader culture the sacrament of confirmation is instilling in mostly younger Catholics who receive the sacrament in the twenty-first century. Hence, catechists can do much to help Filipino Catholics and families to develop proper attitudes and dispositions for more fruitful participation in the sacramental life of the Church, particularly the sacrament of confirmation. Gabrielli (2010, iv) suggested the call for a renewed emphasis on the Gift of the Holy Spirit received in the context of the Church. Finally, Bellows (2013, 33) quoted two pontiffs of the importance of catechesis. Pope John Paul II highlighted the “absolute necessity” of an age-appropriate “systematic approach to catechesis” as part of the doctrinal formation, and Pope Benedict XVI calls for a “renewed zeal for evangelization and education in the faith.

2. Organization and Methodology

In gathering the primary sources of data, I utilized the exploratory research design. Some relevant Church's documents such as CCC, CFC, NNCDP, and encyclicals pertinent to the study were used. The secondary data were gathered based on my observations, interviews, and my experiences as a Religion teacher. Reviewing available catechetical resources, online and hard prints on confirmation were also carried out.

The following methodological steps were undertaken in coming up with this modest article. First, was to review and carry out a critique of the existing materials used in instructing confirmands to discover the major problems encountered by classroom teachers, priests, catechists and other Church facilitators in conducting pre-confirmation catechesis and after confirmation. Interviews were likewise carried out, which provided other data and information. The exploration of related literature was done. Following these initial efforts, the second major step is an intensive study of the sacrament of confirmation as developed in the Universal Catechism

(CCC) and the National Catechism (CFC). The researcher also studied other contemporary, relevant articles and studies by various authors. This was followed by an in-depth study of the NNCDP, which grounds the framework I proposed in developing a more specific methodology for the sacrament of confirmation.

3. Theology of Confirmation

In this part of the article, I provide a brief but necessary overview of the theology, that is, the meaning and purpose of confirmation in the Roman Catholic religious tradition. The latter part of this article will present a modest framework which is a basis for the development of confirmation catechesis for the youth in particular.

The witness to Christ that is a gift of the Holy Spirit comes to believers in Christ, particularly in their receiving the sacraments, especially in the sacrament of Confirmation. This is the same Spirit which gives the “confirmed” the personal strength so that they may become faithful witnesses to Christ in word and deed. The Spirit who empowers the individual in the sacrament of Confirmation is the same Spirit who was sent by the Risen Christ into the whole Church and thus anoints the confirmed to become more Christ-like. The person is a candidate who is called to be “more Christ-like, to be more perfect members of the Church, to be witnesses whose lives should reflect the goodness of Christ and to give [their] lives entirely in the service of all.

The sacrament of confirmation is one of the seven ritual sacraments received by the Catholics. This sacrament is a rite of passage which calls those confirmed to a full commitment to the gospel lifestyle, a commitment, a re-commitment since it is the completion of the Holy Spirit's gift begun in baptism. The commitment supported by confirmation is characterized by taking on the task of witnessing, even if it entails self-sacrifice, a “sacrifice in the Spirit.” The action of the Holy Spirit is the key to understanding the sacrament of confirmation. In the past centuries in the Catholic tradition, it has been connected continuously with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The theme of the Holy Spirit runs through the Old and New Testaments, and it is discussed briefly in this part of the article.

In the Old Testament Genesis account of creation (1:2; 2:7), the Holy Spirit is described as a creative, life-giving Spirit. The Spirit, as mentioned in Genesis, played a creative role in the creation and is portrayed as the source of human life. In the life of Israel, the Spirit played significant roles, especially about certain persons whom God called to leadership. Moses, for instance, was illumined by the Holy Spirit to deliver God's chosen people out of slavery, and it is the same spirit that has inspired Joseph to serve

God's people. Even under oppressive rulers, a significant number of the chosen people continued to be firm in their faith. The Holy Spirit continued to work in the life of the Judges and especially in the prophets to renew God's people. The wisdom writings and the Psalms as well present further the actions of the Spirit.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is ever active in the life of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, from his conception to his death on the cross, and in his resurrection. While the Infancy Narratives and Luke's account of the Annunciation are the most widely known, the Spirit was active throughout Jesus public ministry, climaxing in the Paschal Mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection. In the Acts of the Apostles, the early Christians took on the task of witnessing as they proclaimed the words and deeds of Christ, his Resurrection and the Good News of salvation. The same challenge is given to every Christian today; that is, every person confirmed is called and strengthened to bear witness and defend their faith in the Risen Christ with boldness and courage. It is noted then, that the proclamation of the Word is not merely a privilege of chosen few, but a vocation of every baptized confirmed Christian. However, to become effective witnesses to the gospel of Christ, Christians have to develop personal knowledge, awareness, and experience Christ in their daily lives. This demand can adequately be understood if a sound preparatory instruction for confirmation is given to help awaken and to enable Confirmation candidates to know their role and eventually lead them to a sense of their personal belonging to the Church and Christ.

In essence, confirmation is rooted in the New Testament narratives in the coming of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus before his Passion. The significance of confirmation becomes evident in the New Testament event at Pentecost. Confirmation is the sacramental perpetuation of the significant event. Pentecost was the new outpouring of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Risen Christ which renewed Mary and the Apostles. Their commitment to the Risen Christ was strengthened. From that time on, they became a "Spirit-filled community of disciples of Christ." The promise of Jesus to bring forth His Spirit was fulfilled (Lk. 12:12; Jn. 3:5-8).

The CFC (para. 1631&468) states that the main effect of confirmation is for the strengthening of and confirming the grace of baptism. The Christian is called to be more mature witnesses of the faith in Christ and be more active in sharing in the life and mission of the Church. Vatican II stresses that in the sacrament of Confirmation, Christians are endowed by the Holy Spirit with exceptional strength and they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed as true witnesses of Christ (Pope Paul VI 1964, para. 11). Bernier (2015, 7) clearly defined the overarching purpose of this sacrament as making the baptized into persuasive witnesses and reasons for hope, with the duty and capacity to witness to Christ through their participation in the Holy Spirit visibly sent upon them in Confirmation, as at Pentecost.

Witnessing assumes a missionary task. It means that those confirmed are summoned to active discipleship to go forth and witness to the Gospel in the world. It is accepting the responsibility to actively commit and involve oneself in carrying out the mission of Jesus, that is, to bring Him and his message to all. Hence, a more conscious reaching out to others is needed, especially to those who seem to be indifferent. Witnessing according to the letter to the Ephesian (4:15) states: *“living the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, Christ.”* To witness to someone or something means to give a loving expression by embodying it through one's action. It means that the ordinary Christian in their daily life embodies Christian truth which demands loyalty to Christ and his teachings and fidelity to the values of the gospel. It demands a change of lifestyle from being passive to active involvement in the Church, the body of Christ. The confirmed gives witness “before all in the world and eagerly work for the building of the body of Christ.” The change is from being passively served to active service of others in the Church, from the first initiation into the Church to public declaration of the full discipleship of the Church's ministry. The CCC (1994, para. 1303) summarizes the effects of confirmation as: „The divine filiation which makes us cry, 'Abba! Father!'; it unites us more firmly to Christ; it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us; it renders our bond with the Church more perfect; it gives us a special strength to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross”.

The sacrament of confirmation is so rich in meaning that it plays a vital role in the lives of those in the process of maturing in their Christian faith. However, if it is received without sound instruction, its celebration becomes purely ritualistic. The real significance of this research, then, is clear from its potential for making the sacrament relevant and fruitful for the confirmands leading them towards the maturity of their faith. The pre-confirmation catechesis is recognized as holding great importance, but it has to be carried out with utmost care so that the confirmands realize the sacrament's effects in their daily lives personally and become aware of its challenges. The catechesis must likewise help the confirmands to understand, grasp, love, and live out what the sacrament celebrates.

Thus, the PCP II (2004, para. 10&48) highlighted the crying need for a renewed catechesis. The council emphasized further that no sacrament can be administered without first instructing the participants on the meaning of the sacrament they receive. Among those that were identified which need pre-sacramental catechesis as identified by the council were Baptism, Confirmation, and Matrimony. Such catechesis given before the reception of the sacrament helps the recipients to understand better and help respond personally in the celebration of the sacrament and its challenges in their life. In the case of confirmation, those confirmed may be enabled to witness to Christ in words and deeds with courage and

conviction.

4. Purpose of the Research

Picking from PCP II, this article is, therefore, designed to help facilitators who are tasked to carry out the pre-confirmation catechesis and on-going catechesis of the youth. The proposed framework guides parish priests, religion teachers, catechists and Church personnel in preparing confirmands for the sacrament of confirmation so that they receive the sacrament with proper dispositions of heart and authentic worship. More so, the proposed framework grounds the on-going catechesis to effectively generate greater personal participation of the confirmed in the worship life of the Church and in providing increased opportunities for a lively celebration of faith in the community and the Church.

5. A Modest Framework

The author is faithful and believing that the fundamental principles should determine all forms of catechetical methodology; Integrated, Inculturated, and Community-Forming based on Scriptures and Church tradition in terms of the total human experience of the listeners. The proposed framework guides and directs anyone in conducting catechesis, such as the sacrament of Confirmation.

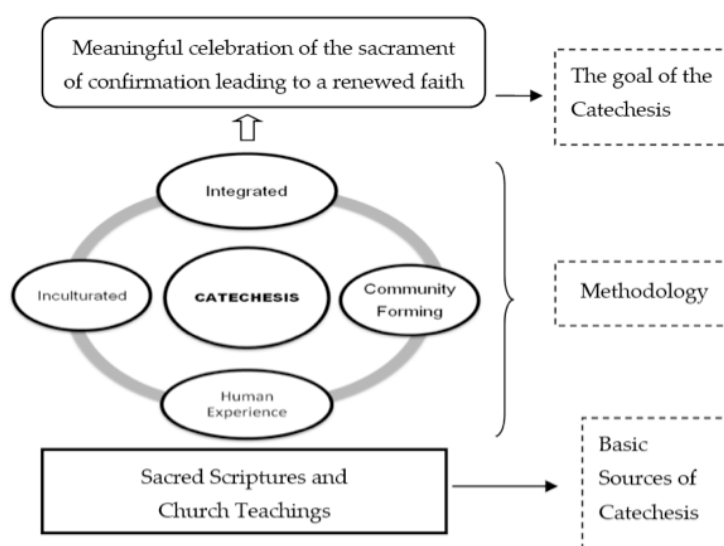


Figure 2. Proposed Framework for Catechesis

5.1 Integrated

For any Catechetical method, what is most important is an integrated catechesis, one that can incorporate all three dimensions of faith—doctrine, morals, and worship into a unified presentation of the Good News. The integration of the three elements is one essential criterion for evaluating the effectivity of catechesis. For faith is not merely “head knowledge” but saving convictions which directly influence role decisions/actions and prayer life. Morality, on the other hand, is not just series of do's and don'ts but moral principles, virtues, and decisional skills for living a life of loving service which is grounded on truths of faith, and celebrated by prayer-sacramental life. Moreover, sacraments and liturgy are not “out-of-this-world ritualism” but rather the living worship of the Christian community based on fundamental convictions of Christian faith and inspiring the Christian commitment to loving service. Thus, maturity in the faith entails the harmonious integration of the basic dimensions of the Christian faith, namely, doctrine, morals, and worship (NNCDP 2007, para.356-357) developing at the same time, one's involvement in the life of the Christian community, and always applying the truths of the faith in one's daily life (Life Integration).

The integration of the three aspects of faith is an effective means toward creating a fruitful and meaningful pre-Confirmation catechesis. As cited by Legaspi, Leonardo & Roche, Joseph (1988) the 1977 Synod of Bishops stressed that in all catechesis one must always unite indissolubly in an integrated manner the knowledge of the Word of God [doctrine]; the celebration of faith in the sacraments [worship]; and the profession of faith in daily life [morals]. The confirmation catechesis aims at balancing these three aspects of the Christian faith. However, this does not necessarily mean that all three have to be given equally “time and space” in the presentation of the topics. On the contrary, the primary focus on the pre-confirmation catechesis is clearly in the Worship dimension with the other two dimensions brought into and bringing out the underlying ground and relevance of the sacrament more fully. The order of the sacraments of initiation was addressed in 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI in his Post Synodal Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*. He noted that “It must never be forgotten that our reception of Baptism and Confirmation is ordered to the Eucharist” (Aquila 2013). However, the facilitators should make the candidates for confirmation aware of how the three flow into one another.

5.2 Inculturated

A second aspect in the catechesis is an inculturated methodology. It means communicating the Christian message through the Filipino patterns of thought, gestures, and language so that the Filipino catechumens might perceive the “Good News” as addressed to them personally, in their uniqueness and concrete situation. NNCDP (2007, para.

369) disclosed that “the Christian message must be expressed through images, symbols and rites that indigenous to Philippine culture. The CFC (1997, para. 13) speaks of this as “believing in Christ must be related directly to the daily Filipino human experience of living as Christ’s disciple.” Thus, the aim is to help the hearers to personally respond to Christ’s call in a uniquely Filipino manner. A solid catechesis while being true to the gospel message must always reflect the indigenous culture of the youth and the community at large and communicate the Christian message in a manner that is intelligible to their culture.

5.3 Community-Forming

“Faith ordinarily grows to maturity only in the supportive climate provided by the home, school, and community. The community is “a source, locus, and means of catechesis” (NNCDP 2007, 384). Thus, the community of believers plays an essential role in nurturing and bringing into maturity the faith of the individual, for Christian faith does not grow in isolation. It is primarily a “shared faith life” of a Christian community. We are social beings who are born, grow up, and mature, always relating to others. This “natural condition” of God’s creation is the way he acts on us even in his Self-Revelation. “This is how the Holy Spirit works not only within but among us as the people of God journeying toward our common destiny in God (CFC 1997, para. 687).

5.4 Based on Sacred Scriptures, Tradition and Human Experience

The primary source from which catechesis draws its message is the living word of God in Scriptures and Tradition (Pope John Paul II 1997, para. 27). Catechesis will always draw its content from the living source of the word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures, for “sacred Tradition and sacred Scriptures make up a single sacred deposit of the word of God (Paul, VI 1965, para. 10) which is entrusted to the Church, “both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end” (Paul, VI 1965, para 9).

The Compendium of Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993, para. 14) relates the profound unity of these sources. Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound tightly together and communicate one with the other. The NNCDP (2007, para. 359) further articulates that the sources of catechesis are Scriptures, Tradition, and human experience. These sources must be used creatively. Each one makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ. They flow out the same divine well-spring and together makeup one sacred deposit of faith from which the Church derives her certainty about revelation. Thus, the efficient use of sources is an essential dimension for a fruitful catechesis. There should be an integrated use of the Scriptures, Tradition, and human experience in an inculturated manner.

6. Conclusions

Confirmation is a sacrament of maturity which gives the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This gift of the Spirit completes baptism and bestows a unique strength that enables one to be a witness to Jesus Christ, more perfectly binding one to the Church, and allows one to worship the Father in spirit and truth. By exploring and investigating the different sources and references, I was able to come up with shreds of evidence on the barriers to catechesis on Confirmation. The Philippines as it encounters various catechetical challenges, especially in the preparation of the reception of Confirmation, should aim at leading every Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of the Christian life. To this end, catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the universal Church as well as the community. Such catechesis given helps the recipients to understand better what they are doing and help them to respond personally in the celebration. Hence, there is a need for “a more vibrant culture of education delivered by language that recognizes young people's spirituality is essential to lift these barriers and respond to Pope Benedict's call to rediscover the sacrament of confirmation without destroying the integrity of the content” (Bellows 2013, 33). Faith is “following Christ and it must be gradually and perseveringly developed so that it comes to touch every aspect of our lives, throughout our whole lives” (CFC 1997, para. 148). Maturing in our faith then is a lifelong journey. I believe that “if catechesis is done well, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it in their children, to make it known to others and to serve the humanity in every way” (Pope John Paul II 1994, para. 24). Hence, the proposed framework for the pre-Confirmation catechesis has been designed in the light of the different sources, most especially the NNCDP. Today, the Filipino Catholics are called to make the Gospel “come alive” in their hearts and appreciate better the depth and beauty of their authentic Filipino cultural attitudes and values.

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