

EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue of *Landas* offers essays on various topics of interest for our readers: two on Biblical exegesis and theology and one each for pastoral ministry, moral theology, religious education, missiology, and interfaith dialogue.

Miriam R. Alejandrino, O.S.B. (“Heroic Women in Deuteronomistic History”) examines the various meanings of *gibbôr* in the Hebrew Bible and uses them as criteria for identifying and describing certain women in the Deuteronomistic History who may be regarded as heroines (*gebîrôt*). The author considers the following as worthy of the title: Rahab (Jos. 2:1–24), Deborah and Jael (Jgs. 4–5), the unnamed woman who killed Abimelech (Jgs. 9:50–55), Hannah (1 Sam. 1:9–20; 2:1–10), Michal (1 Sam. 19:11–17), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:18–31), and Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:14–20). According to her, moreover,

there are still stories in the Bible about women with heroic qualities despite the strong patriarchal culture of the society from which these sacred texts emerged. These women risked their lives and made sacrifices for the sake of the nation and the well-being of the chosen people of God. The sacred texts give witness, therefore, to the significant role that women play in the fulfillment of the divine plan for humanity. (15)

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J. (“Hosea 3:1–5: Afterwards the Israelites Shall Repent and Seek the Lord Their God”) presents an exegetical essay on Hos. 3:1–5 in which he finds three elements that are inextricably linked with one another and which are essential

for communicating the integral message of the prophet: *allegory*, *interpretation*, and *outcome*. Narrated as a first-person account, Hosea's life story is an *allegory* meant to convey a prophetic message to Israel. All his actions have symbolic meanings which are explained in the storytelling process and interpreted in terms of their significance and import for the nation. The *interpretation* comes in the form of a comparison—how God will deal with his people—while the *outcome* spells out what is in store for Israel's future; punishment (v. 4) along with its healing effect (v. 5) are thus foretold. "The divine strategy of loving Israel despite her infidelity and of divesting the nation of its government and cult for many days triumphs and elicits repentance from the people: "afterwards the Israelites will repent and seek the Lord their God" (20).

Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo ("Internet and Social Media: Bridge or Barrier for a Culture of Communion?") discusses how the evolving technology of the Internet and of social media can be either a bridge and/or a barrier for a culture of communion. The author traces the development of the Internet from its primary stage (Web 1.0), which gave users access to information stored on servers, to a second stage (Web 2.0), which interconnected people interactively across social networks like Facebook and Twitter, before continuing on to the present third stage (Web 3.0), in which search engines and applications can predict or anticipate users' interests and thus connect them to websites and people with similar pursuits, and finally to a future fourth stage (Web 4.0), in which there will be an increasing symbiosis between human beings and computers on the cloud. Yet while such advances in cybertechnology have revolutionized communication and enhanced interconnectivity among individuals, the Web has, at the same time, created serious problems such as Internet addiction, social and emotional impairment in growing children, cyberbullying, the proliferation of "fake news," easy access to pornography and gambling, the use of algorithms in targeted advertising, and cyber identity and personal data theft, among others. Ocampo thus compares the ambivalent character of the

Internet to the Biblical image of a two-edged sword that cuts both ways; “the challenge for us,” he says, is “to harness the potential of the Internet so it becomes a bridge and not a barrier to a culture of communion” (58).

James McTavish, F.M.V.D. (“A Critique of Gender Ideology”) points out the confusion that gender ideology promotes among people, especially with children who are growing up into sexual maturity. The idea that one can choose their gender regardless of their biological sex only exacerbates the problem of young people who are experiencing “gender dysphoria” (distress brought about by an incongruence between biological sex and experienced gender) and gives them free rein to engage in immoral behavior or activities such as homosexual relationships (prone to HIV infection), “sex reassignment surgery” (a form of mutilation that does not really change the sex of a person), having a *laissez-faire* attitude toward sex, etc. McTavish notes: “Gender-confused young people ... need clearer guidance ... to enable them to traverse the choppy ocean of sexual maturation during their adolescent years” (73). Indeed, Pope Francis is also quoted as inculcating Catholic teaching on sexuality:

valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. (*Laudato Si’*, no. 155)

Johnny C. Go, S.J. (“Catholic Educational Leadership as a Spiritual Practice”) argues for new educational leadership in which spirituality plays an essential role. To navigate the rough seas of the contemporary world with all its complexities and hazards, leaders need inner strength and clarity of vision that are nourished by religious faith, a conviction that impels them to fulfill their mission and commitment toward their community. “This attentiveness to the community’s purpose and members,” the author explains, “enables leaders to transcend themselves in order to carry out the task of leadership” (89–90).

James H. Kroeger, M.M. (“Discovering the Profound Wisdom of Pope Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi*”) revisits and reexamines Pope St. Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World) in celebration of the latter’s canonization on October 14, 2018. Published in the wake of the 1974 International Synod on Evangelization, the exhortation contains profound insights that are the results of both the Synod discussions and the extensive consultations undertaken to prepare for it. The document as such has contributed to a holistic and integral understanding of evangelization, and delineates the theological principles and guidelines which all Christians should follow when evangelizing and giving credible witness to the Gospel. Kroeger notes that Paul VI, who also placed evangelization at the heart of the Church’s contemporary mission, “carefully defines, nuances, and balances diverse elements within the evangelization process.... It is his unique genius to have achieved integration and balance on so many topics” (95). As a result, both Pope St. John Paul II (*Redemptoris Missio*) and Pope Francis (*Evangelii Gaudium*) have taken up the challenge of redirecting the Church’s mission toward evangelization. Francis’s reform agenda, for instance, envisions the creation of a new “super dicastery for evangelization” which is expected to surpass the Congregation of the Faith in terms of importance. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* can thus be called the *magna carta* of the Catholic Church’s mission of evangelization, and rightly so.

Jojo M. Fung, S.J. (“The Mystique of Dialogue: Pathway to Spirit Power for Liberative Struggle”) describes his experience of being initiated into the mysterious world of shamanism in a Murut village community called Bantul in Sabah, East Malaysia. Here the pathway of acquiring what he calls the “spirit power” of the shaman consists of various stages, with the first step involving a ritual “dipping in the waters of shamanism” which the Muruts call “*na rio*” (taking a bath). The initiate then goes through a period of apprenticeship where the master-shaman trains her/him to invoke, by means of ritual incantations, various spirits favorable for healing the sick, delivering those possessed by demons, bestowing blessings

upon the community, or mediating harmonious relationships between human beings and spirits. During a full moon, the apprentice stays in a hut away from the community; there the master-shaman will introduce her/him to various spirits, among whom one will be her/his spirit-guide. Finally, the apprentice becomes the shaman of the community when the master-shaman dies. Reflecting thus upon his experience of being initiated into the world of shamanism, the author feels called to accompany the indigenous communities of Asia and utilize the soteriological power of their shamanic beliefs and rituals in their quest for social justice and ecological well-being.

Felipe Fruto Ll. Ramirez, S.J.