

Bishop Jose Manguiran's Postcolonial Ecological Model of Solidarity

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Abstract

The paper explores the environmentalism of Bishop Emeritus Jose Manguiran of the Diocese of Dipolog, through his writings, letters, and various acts in support of the environment, indigenous peoples, and Christian praxis. It puts forward a postcolonial ecological model of solidarity which has the following features: 1.) An acknowledgment of the violence of the prevailing ideology to indigenous beliefs and practices; 2.) A recognition of the sacredness of nature; 3.) A deep commitment to ecological justice anchored in the Christian faith. It aims to honor and acknowledge the contribution of Bishop Joe, a pastoral leader with a profound and abiding love for God's creation, to promote postcolonial Catholic environmentalism.

Keywords: Environmentalism; Environmental justice; Mindanao; Nature; Philippine Catholic Church

1. Introduction

On the global economic stage, unabated capitalism provides the impetus for a neoliberal economic model, which upholds the view that natural resources are inexhaustible and that industrialization is the accurate indicator of a community's development and "progress." Moreover, unrelenting wealth extraction can leave the natural world unable to sustain life any longer. The heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides affects the productivity of our remaining agricultural lands. Decades of monoculture eroded the diversity of our food crops. The utilization of land and water resources mainly for the benefit of capitalists contributed significantly to the loss and eventual vanishing of what had been deemed by the communities as sacred spaces.

In particular, the ill effects of large-scale extractive mining on the environment are destructive to the communities. Large-scale mining in the Philippines devastated entire forests, leveled off mountains, polluted rivers and lakes with their mine tailings and chemical wastes. Moreover, these activities were taking place in poor communities where several ethnolinguistic groups live.

Against the background of the massive ecological devastation in the country, the environmentalism of faith communities, indigenous peoples, activist groups, and the clergy stands out. The paper highlights the contribution of Bishop Emeritus Jose Ricare Manguiran of the Diocese of Dipolog in the flourishing of ecological consciousness in the country and the Catholic community. William Holden documented the Philippines' Catholic response to large-scale mining. At the end of his paper, published in *Religions* in 2012, Holden discusses the impact of the ecclesiastical opposition to mining. The global mining industry took note of the Church's

opposition to mining, and an unnamed exploration company president stated, "[In the Philippines], NGOs, peasants and Church groups override [the] government constantly. You can spend millions developing a property in the Philippines, only to have it swept away by peasants, lobby groups [and] churches" (Holden, 2012, p. 851).

The following sections divide the paper. The first section presents a short biography and background of Bishop Joe's environmentalism. The second section offers a focused view of the environmental devastation in Mindanao and the various responses that Bishop Joe led and initiated to address it. The third section discusses Bishop Joe's postcolonial ecological model of solidarity that is informed and framed by liberation theology, postcolonialism, and ecocentrism.

2. Methods

The study used several qualitative methods, such as a literature review of Bishop Joe's published writings as primary literature and relevant academic sources as secondary literature. Pertinent documents that were reviewed and analyzed included news reports, press statements, online information, and documentation of events during the period of the Bishop's active engagements. The researchers extracted relevant information from the official social media account, training modules, and applicable local policies and programs of those events. One of the researchers, a Catholic priest who personally knows Bishop Joe, conducted several phone interviews with him during the pandemic.

3. A Short Biography of Jose Manguiran

The Most Reverend Jose Ricare Manguiran, D.D. was born on August 27, 1936, in Carcar, Cebu City, to Canuto Manguiran and Rosa Ricare (both deceased). He finished his elementary education at Malaybalay Central School and secondary education at San Isidro High School, all in the province of Bukidnon. After high school, he entered the San Jose de Mindanao College Seminary in Cagayan de Oro. He pursued his philosophical and theological studies at San Carlos Seminary, Makati. He was ordained a priest on December 27, 1966, by Bishop Teofilo Camomot. For thirteen years, Bishop Joe worked in different parishes. He became the Vicar General of the Diocese of Malaybalay in 1979. For seven years, he was the Rector of the Pope John XXIII College Seminary in Malaybalay. Pope John Paul II appointed him as the bishop of the Diocese of Dipolog on August 19, 1987. Bishop Joe served as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Episcopal Commission on Culture. Among his many accomplishments, he won third place from the Department of Science and Technology in 1990 for his invention of a self-lubricating motor vehicle.

The Start and Deepening of Environmental Consciousness

Bishop Joe grew up in a family of farmers. His environmental consciousness was already evident when his family resided in Cebu and was further strengthened when the family transferred to Bukidnon. Even to this day, in his retirement, his love for planting trees is undeniable because he proudly said that he had grown all kinds of *Balete* trees since he was an active bishop for twenty-seven years. His deep ecological consciousness inspired the invention of a cap that looked like a giant leaf. In several interviews, he was proud to say that no one in the world yet has made such a design.

Bishop Joe's deep ecological consciousness expanded when he became the bishop of the Diocese of Dipolog. During his term, mining companies were able to establish their places in areas belonging to his ecclesiastical jurisdiction and of the neighboring dioceses. He saw with his own eyes the horrors these large-scale mining companies had brought to the local community. The DIOPIM Committee on Mining Issues is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Dipolog City, Philippines. DIOPIM is composed of the following dioceses: Dipolog, Iligan, Ozamiz, Pagadian, Iligan, and Marawi. It is a committee spearheaded by the Roman Catholic Church and composed of Social Action Directors, NGOs, and the indigenous people. According to the DIOPIM Committee on Mining Issues, rivers and rice fields turned into red mud which spoiled their crop. The aquaculture industry was affected because the flora and fauna died due to the heavy presence of toxic waste in the water. Above all, Bp. Joe was hurt knowing that the most bullied at gunpoint were the non-violent indigenous people called the *Subanons*. He empathized with them so much and got so mad at the arrogance of the Canadian-based mining company that he went near the mining site and struck his pastoral staff (crozier) on the ground. Moreover, during the last years of his episcopate, he initiated the sainthood of Fr. Francesco Palliola, S.J.¹ Bishop Joe saw the deep need of having a patron saint of the indigenous peoples in Mindanao, especially since large-scale mining and logging companies constantly harassed them.

¹ An Italian Jesuit priest who lived with the *Subanons*, baptized thousands of them, and was martyred in Ponot, Zamboanga del Norte in 1648. The Diocese of Dipolog is now waiting for the Vatican to approve the submitted documents for the beatification of Fr. Francesco Palliola, S.J.

4. The Environmental Degradation in Mindanao and the Bishop's Response

From 1950 to 1973, large-scale logging in Mindanao led to the rapid loss of forest cover. In 1963, only 40% of the Philippines' total land area was covered in forest (Holden et al., 2017, p. 7). According to Minerva Chaloping-March (2017), from the 1950s to the 1970s, the pinnacle of Philippine mining, there had been virtually no criticism and opposition against mining operations because the catastrophes associated with mining were not yet evident. Hence they were less known. In the late 70s, several environmental activists analyzed the correlation between poverty and the ecological crisis and circulated widely their findings. The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines forwarded one of the earliest institutional opposition to mining. The 1988 pastoral letter, 'What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?' remains an essential document of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines on the environment (Peracullo, 2020).

The background of the said pastoral letter were the two critical environmental concerns that gripped the world back in 1988. One was the looming nuclear war amidst the escalating tensions between the U.S. and the USSR. The other concern was already real and has created untold misery for those concerned in the Philippines, especially the indigenous peoples and the rural communities. The rapid deforestation, alongside the loss of biodiversity, was caused, according to the bishops, by large-scale mining activities. These two interrelated environmental concerns were at the front of the bishops' consciousness. For Holden (2012), the Church implores that issues such as mining must not be seen as a purely environmental issue but also as a human rights issue because mining not only disrupts the biophysical environment but

also degrades the natural resources upon which many poor people rely, resulting to their further impoverishment. In October 1997, the bishops of the Dioceses of Dipolog, Iligan, Ozamiz, Pagadian, and the Prelature of Marawi, collectively wrote to President Ramos articulating their opposition to mining in the Zamboanga Peninsula on the island of Mindanao. They also called for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995.

In 2000, DIOPIM organized the Day of Reparation, Reconciliation, and Peace held in Ozamiz on April 14. DIOPIM issued a statement calling for an intensified interfaith relations to promote reconciliation and peace among the tri-people communities in Mindanao. In 2001, DIOPIM, through the support of Bishop Joe, participated in the Ipil Mining Dialogue among the *Subanon*, the *lumad* who live in the areas of Canatuan, Siocon, Zamboanga Del Norte, small-scale miners, and the Canadian mining company, Toronto Ventures Inc. (ESSC, 2008). The opposition to the mining activities in Zamboanga del Norte continued well into the first decade of the 21st century. In 2006, the *Apo Manglang Glupa Pasaka* (*Apo Manglang's Ancestral Land*), together with religious leaders from the Moro, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches, and local officials, merged to form the People's Response for the Protection of Environment and Natural Resources, a regional alliance opposing large-scale mining. On March 23, the group held an interfaith pilgrimage to Mt. Canatuan. According to the participants, including Bishop Joe, the pilgrimage was a re-consecration of the *Subanon* ancestral land in Mt. Canatuan, which the TVI has desecrated (Velez, 2006). In 2008, the mining company sued Jose Manguiran, the Bishop of Dipolog, for libel, which the Zamboanga City Prosecutor subsequently dismissed. Bishop Manguiran campaigned hard against mining operations in the

Zamboanga area long before 2008. His fervent resistance followed a long-time ecclesial opposition to mining in the country dating back to the 1970s. On January 22, 2011, Bishop Joe led 1,000 protesters who gathered at the Dipolog Cathedral on a Wednesday morning and marched around the city's major streets to protest mining and logging operations in the Zamboanga Peninsula (Gloria, 2011). On July 25, 2014, Bishop Joe retired as the Bishop of the Diocese of Dipolog.

5. Discussion

Figure 5.1. shows the intertwining of liberation theology, postcolonialism, and ecocentrism that influenced Bishop Joe's environmentalism. When intertwined with religion, environmentalism becomes part of religious piety and manifests in the community's commitment to environmental care (Gade, 2019).



Figure 5.1. The Conceptual Framework

The intertwining describes the *Balete* tree (*Ficus Benjamina Linn*), one of Bishop Joe's favorite endemic trees in Mindanao. The *Balete* is a metaphor that illustrates the intertwining of liberation

theology, postcolonialism, and ecocentrism in Bishop Joe's environmentalism. The *Balete's* intertwining roots highlight the contact points (where branches and trunks intertwine) between and among these influences. Since the *Balete* thrives in its niche and where it exists as part of the biotic community, Bishop Joe's environmentalism emphasizes the role of the community in determining the problems and the solutions to some environmental issues they face. The idea of *niche* comes from the ecological sciences. The *sense of place*, which is evoked by the concept of "home," is an essential theme in indigenous cultures in the Philippines. The vulnerability of the *Balete* tree due to deforestation highlights how life is precarious, and the fact of its precariousness makes life worthy of preservation.

The Cry of the Earth is the Cry of the Poor

When he was a seminarian in 2008, Fr. Leo, one of the authors, wrote a poem to sort out his feelings upon reading the news that the Canadian mining company sued Bishop Joe for libel. Fr. Leo reflected on what a *Subanon* child shared with him: *Kon langit ang atong kab-oton, nganong yuta man ang atong kutkuton?* (If we aim for heaven, why do we dig the earth?) According to Latin Theologian Leonardo Boff, the child's cry evokes the cry of the poor. *The Cry of the Earth as the Cry of the Poor* (1997) is a landmark book on the interconnections between the suffering of the poor people worldwide and the global environmental crisis. Its unique feature is its reflection, which grasps that human and nature's salvation are inextricably linked.

Murray Bookchin, the founder of the ecological framework, social ecology parallel with Boff's, declares that many social structures serve to oppress some members of the human societies

that, in turn, influence and reinforce the thinking and living that encourages domination in all forms, including the mastery of nature (Bookchin, 1998). Making the crucial connections between poverty and the environmental crisis expands the Christian praxis grounded in what Boff calls the social ecology, how human social and economic systems interact with the natural ecosystem (Boff 1995). Social ecology underscores that whatever onslaught towards the poor affects the natural world and vice-versa. The ideology of unrelenting, unlimited economic growth underscores the oppressive cycle. To subscribe to this line is to swallow the ideas that label human beings and the natural world as mere "resources" open for use and exploitation. For this reason, analysis of the relationship between the poor and nature concludes that the liberation of the poor and the well-being of nature are not separate issues but two sides of the same coin. The liberation paradigm of social ecology offers the best venue to undertake this shift as it contributes to the global conversation that links humanity with the natural world (McFague, 1997).

Bishop Joe embodied the social-ecological ideology which arose from liberation theology. In the book, *Lugas* (eng. grain) pens a poem, "The poor: at the passive position, the object of development," he writes:

*The poor are the receiver of sympathy—to be pitied.
 The poor are the receiver of grants —to be taken for granted.
 The poor are the receiver of loans—to be indebted.
 The poor are the receiver of employment —to be employed as laborers. (2011, p. 29)*

According to Bishop Joe, the passive position of the poor as a timid receiver of pity and oppressive employment in labor-intensive

mining enterprises reveals the harsh truth that in the models of development, the poor are objects; their rights to self-determination and gainful employment are not recognized, and they are treated as if they are nothing more than "an audience standing by" as local and global capitalists actively exploit their passivity (2011, p. 29).

Bishop Joe used his considerable influence to affect change because he understood why the poor appear passive and timid. Centuries of being silenced and exploited rendered the poor in the Philippines powerless and seemed unable to dismantle the unjust and exploitative structures that actively oppress them .

Postcolonialism

Indigenous peoples in the Philippines are those peoples who have a historical continuity with the pre-Islamic and pre-Hispanic society of that country (Holden, 2005). In the Philippines, Christianity came through colonization. This sobering truth has led to more disquieting reflections in recent years on the many ways religion sustains epistemic violence by those in power. The presence of Christianity in the Philippines is always problematic when viewed through a postcolonial lens. The Philippine Catholic Church has tried to address this problem. In 2010, the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples issued a statement that essentially asks for forgiveness from the indigenous peoples for the "historical wounds" which were inflicted when "[the Church] entered indigenous communities from a position of power, indifferent to their struggles and pains. We ask forgiveness for moments when we taught Christianity as a religion robbed with colonial cultural superiority, instead of sharing it as a religion that calls for a relationship with God and a way of life" (Gaspar, 2010). Like

the other pastoral letters or messages, the concrete calls to action are localized through the endeavors that directly impact vulnerable communities.

In many ways, Bishop Joe demonstrated through his words and actions that he was keenly aware of the ill effects of colonization. Nonetheless, his mission as a pastor motivated him to reach out to the indigenous groups in his diocese. He was not a missionary who would convert them to Christianity but a Christian who loved and empathized with the *Subanons*. He went to their communities several times, listened to their helpless cries, talked and dialogued with them. Bishop Joe's actions reflected the expanding global movement supporting, affirming, and advocating for indigenous cultures and beliefs. From Latina scholars such as Sylvia Marcos, recognizing the diversity of indigenous religious perspectives is gaining ground. Many indigenous religions share a cosmological vision marked by fluidity, equilibrium, and interconnectedness, highlighting colonial reality as static metaphysics (Peracullo, 2020).

Postcolonialism makes it imperative that culture becomes the *locus theologicus*. In *Lugas* (2011), Bishop Joe expresses his view of the land. In the poem, "The Land: to be Shared," he does not spare a loving eye towards "foreigners."

*The one who invades the entire sacred ground,
The few who grab all the sacred bread
Will incur a desecration; "depart from me...
You have turned this temple into a den of thieves. (p.113)*

In the snippet, Bishop Joe's description of the land as sacred ground, regardless of its usefulness to humans, anticipated what Pope Francis writes:

*In this sense, it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, the land is not a commodity but a gift from God and their ancestors who rest there, **a sacred space** they need to interact with to maintain their identity and values. (2015, p. 43)*

In the following stanza of the poem, "The Land: to be Shared," Bishop Joe writes:

*The one who shares a space,
The one who breaks bread with others,
Will receive a consecration: when God announces,
"Good and faithful servants...come,
Enter the kingdom I have prepared for you (2011, p. 113)*

In the second excerpt, Bishop Joe commends anyone who shares the sacred space as one who is faithful to God. The sharing of space and breaking bread are the engagement of both the *Subanon* and non-*Subanon* actors to come together as co-equals. It is critical to recognize that the *Subanons'* concept of land ownership is intricately linked with their belief system. They have no idea of private or communal land ownership (Sanz 2019, p. 97). The concept of land ownership then became a focal point of their exploitation by centuries of colonization and decades of neo-liberal economic activities.

Resistance as a Feature of Postcolonialism

Bishop Joe's collections of poems reveal the myriad emotions—from hopeful to indignant—he felt while engaging with the struggle of the indigenous groups in the Zamboanga peninsula. In writing his reflections, Bishop Joe demonstrated that he resisted the longstanding belief that indigenous cultures and religions were antithetical to a Christian worldview. He opposed the prevailing economic and development models that regard the indigenous people as passive bystanders who cannot afford to band together to resist their continued marginalization and exclusion collectively. Postcolonial writing is necessarily a resistance. It is resistance most subtly because while it appears to embrace the colonialist ideologies and even engages in the colonialist discourse through the adoption of its language, it rejects the fundamental logic with which colonialism is hinged upon, and that is, as a colonial subject, a Filipino person is wholly and thoroughly colonized, so resistance is futile. Opposition to and against power is also present in the *Lumad's* continuing assertion of their agency or capacity for action. Penelope Sanz (2019) painstakingly documented the various challenges the *Subanons* went through as those who opposed the mining activities of the TVI found their collective voice and effected changes with the help of the local Roman Catholic Church of Mindanao, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions.

From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism

Before *Laudato Si* was published, Bishop Joe promoted a paradigm shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. One of the more popular narratives on Bishop Joe involves the *Balete* tree. In the Philippines, *Balete* trees have a terrible reputation because

folklore says that mythical creatures such as *kapre* (giant hairy man smoking tobacco) or a "white lady" (female ghost) or *engkanto* (evil spirits) live in the trees at night and reportedly lures victims to their vicious traps. According to the stories that people share, many have heard sounds of wailing coming from the *balete* trees.

Bishop Joe did not take the insult against the *Balete* tree lightly. He dispelled the belief that the *Balete* is home to mythical creatures that terrorize the people. According to science, he explained that *Balete* trees absorb sound from passing vehicles or people talking with each other during the daytime. At night, people would hear spooky sounds because, technically, the sounds that the trees absorbed would reverberate. Secondly, to prove that urban myths wrong, he planted *Balete* trees just about anywhere: around the Dipolog Cathedral, in the diocesan schools, in the seminary, in private gardens of friends, and parishes. He wanted to let everyone know that a *Balete* tree is co-equal with all the other trees and therefore has the right to exist and flourish. Like what he did with the *Subanons*, Bishop Joe lifted the *Balete's* dignity.

In *Lugas*, he outlined a theological shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism. Anthropocentrism refers to the idea that only human beings possess inherent worth and moral standing. Robyn Eckersley (1992) puts the basic tenets of the ecocentric approach as based on an ecologically informed philosophy of internal relatedness. All organisms are not simply interrelated with their environment but are also constituted by those environmental interrelationships. Biocentrism is a feature or a mark of ecocentrism. Table 1 shows how Bishop Joe's theological shift underscores the importance of a paradigm shift in Theology, which traditionally put humans on top of the Great Chain of Being.

Table 1. The Theological Shift

| Shift From | To |
|--|--|
| Anthropocentrism (Man at the center) | Biocentrism (life is at the center) |
| Simply Community of persons | To the community of life-forms |
| Mechanical/utilitarian viewpoint on the Earth as an object | Earth as a vital, organic subject |
| Ethics as a moral discipline focused only on intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships | Ethics includes [hu] man's actions with other species and the Earth. |

Before *Laudato Si*, Catholic environmentalism leaned heavily towards stewardship. Lynn White, in 1967 accused Christianity as the root cause of the environmental crisis primarily due to its reading of Genesis 1: 27 – 28, which states: "So God created human beings, making them be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them, and said, "Have many children so that your descendants will live all over the Earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and wild animals." The idea of *stewardship as dominion* emerged from a particular interpretation of this Biblical text. Due to critical commentaries about the above picture, its adherents increasingly regard stewardship as environmental care for the Earth.

It is evident in Bishop Joe's outline that he rejected the idea of stewardship as dominion. He even went beyond the call for environmental care. His radical ecological consciousness was evident early on in his ministry. In an essay, "Connectedness,"

Bishop Joe emphasizes the symbiotic relationship humans have with the natural world (2011):

Fragmented life like ours must, for its wholeness, be connected to something more significant than the fragment. Looking at the human's physical existence, humans must attach themselves to the air by breathing; breathing the air makes them whole physically; to refuse to breathe is to disintegrate. Although humans use air, they cannot consume it; neither can they possess it. Air is not terminal to a human's death; it outlasts humans. (p. 68)

The Ecological Model of Solidarity

The ecological model of solidarity highlights the link shared by individuals or groups around a common goal and who are conscious of their common interests and their moral obligation and responsibility to help others (Jennings, 2015, p. 144). The ecological model of solidarity springs from ecology and conservation sciences (Thompson et al., 2011). Scientists noted various natural processes and observed that ecosystems operate in equilibrium, symbiosis, and interdependence (Thompson et al. 2011, p. 414). Figure 5.2. presents the ecological model of solidarity as gleaned from the writings of Bishop Joe.



Figure 5.2. Diagram of the Ecological Ethic of Solidarity

With the increasing human footprint in ecosystems, human activities and practices must be considered in the ongoing discourses about biodiversity loss, climate crisis, environmental destruction on the one hand, biodiversity conservation and protection, local ecological knowledge, and environmental care on the other. When we come together to study environmental issues and concerns and work together to find viable and sustainable solutions to the problem, we can support one another. What will emerge from the connection and support is an ecological ethic of solidarity, which mirrors the interconnectivity and reciprocal interdependence of beings in the world (Thompson et al., 2011, 144).

In his beliefs and lived practice, Bishop Joe demonstrated that it takes a community of individuals with deep ecological consciousness to speak for nature. Bishop Joe's environmentalism is how he lives out his Christian praxis, love thy neighbor. But who is thy neighbor? In his writings, sermons, and campaigns, it is very clear that Bishop Joe regarded the *Subanon* and the *Lumad* as his neighbors. They journeyed with him in various campaigns, the

members of environmental groups in Mindanao that oppose large-scale mining and other environmentally-destructive activities.

The ecological model of solidarity rests in recognizing the intrinsic value of the natural world and the indigenous peoples whose ideas of land, community, and life are intimately bound to the rhythms of the more-than-human world. Without this fundamental Gestalt shift, it would be difficult to regard ourselves as part of the more-than-human world. It would be challenging to see its current state and how our actions, individually and collectively, have rendered the Earth unable to sustain life that thrives and flourishes. In one of the anecdotes about Bishop Joe's radical environmentalism, he would get red-hot furious whenever he would see someone burning leaves. This reaction is unusual because burning dried leaves is a common practice! But, he abhorred that because, for him, burning leaves could destroy the ozone layer.

When extended to nature, the Christian praxis is a deep and abiding love towards it so that its well-being and flourishing would be a primary concern and occupy a faithful's heart. The relationship that results from this is symbiotic, wherein each other bestows care and loving attention. In a personal interview, Bishop Joe illustrates this interrelatedness in the analogy of a farmer and the land (2019):

When a farmer uses gloves and rubber boots when they till the soil, they deteriorate as the gloves and boots are worn down because they are foreign and cannot connect to the Earth. So, since they are not related, they cannot help each other grow and develop. But, when a farmer uses their bare feet and hands in tilling the soil, what do we notice? Kalyo or corns on the palms and

soles thicken, which can prevent a farmer's hands and feet from wounds whenever they accidentally grab or step on sharp objects.

For Bishop Joe, ecological solidarity must develop into a community consciousness that regards members as thoroughly embedded in their ecological communities. Such is akin to Eckersley's (1992) ecocentric approach to environmentalism that views creations as formed by environmental interrelatedness. In other words, we need each other. Just as ecological communities nurture and nourish us, they also need our help and respect.

6. Conclusion

The inclusion of Bishop Joe in the list of Philippine environmental heroes recognizes his commitment to advocating for the causes of the indigenous people, the environment, and the Catholic faith communities in Mindanao. *Rappler*, an independent online news journal in the Philippines, hailed Bishop Joe as one of the heroes for the environment in 2015 (Dulce, 2015). The article highlights Bishop Joe's decades-long resistance to mining and deforestation in the Zamboanga Peninsula:

Once in an interfaith pilgrimage to Mt Canatuan, Bishop Manguiran laid himself prostrate on the ground for a minute of silence and planted his Bishop's staff on the ground afterward. He said this was his prophetic plea for God's intervention in the attacks against Zamboanga's lands and people. (Dulce, 2015)

Bishop Joe created a legacy of deep environmentalism for the new generations of the Catholic clergy to emulate. The Social

Action, Justice, and Peace Ministry of the Diocese of Dipolog continues the work that Bishop Joe started. At present, the ministry members are in the far-flung barrios in the diocese, giving seminars and training to farmers on the use of organic farming and fertilizers. Fr. Leo shares a part of his telephone conversation with Bishop Joe recently: "When he proudly and excitedly told me to go to Bukidnon so that he could show me all his forty-three (43) species of the *Balete*. We continued talking and laughing, and he said these exact words: Care for the environment is not an option but an obligation" (Dagpin, 2021, personal communication). These words capture Bishop Joe's postcolonial ecological model of solidarity because the activity of caring springs forth naturally from those whose deepening ecological consciousness enabled them to work for the flourishing of life and communities.

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