

The Philippines as a Center for Clerical Formation in Asia 2:

A Case Study of Philippine Theological Institutes and the Mobilities of Clerical Probationers

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[Abstract] In order to look into the recent flow of young religious probationers to the Philippines from surrounding Asian countries, research was conducted on four major theological institutes in Metro Manila where those regular clergy from abroad are enrolled besides local Filipinos. Three of them were founded by single international monasteries (congregations of men) while the other one was founded by a national association of convents (congregations of women) originally as a sisters' institute and still now, female students make up the majority there. The result of the research reveals that Vietnamese are the most among the foreign students in all the institutes followed by Myanmar, Chinese and Indonesians. The former two seem to continue increasing while the latter two are relatively stable in number. In addition, most institutes advocate the establishment of Asian theology although its whole picture is yet to be clarified. Moreover, two institutes maintain dormitories and scholarships in order to offer the educational opportunities otherwise unavailable to those from the most destitute countries in the region. Lastly, most institutes advocate liberal Christianity in varying extents. In the cases of institutes that express it to its fullest extent, their traditions were established during the authoritarian Marcos administration in 1970s and 80s.

keywords: Catholic Education, Vocations in Asia, Migration to the Philippines

1. Introduction

An increasing flow of Catholic clergy into the Philippines from surrounding Asian countries has recently been observed. Most of them are young religious probationers who move to the Philippines in order

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to undergo religious formation there. Behind this trend is the fact that many congregations began to recruit in countries other than Catholic countries like Europe where vocations declined. However, in those new countries including Asian countries such as Vietnam, Myanmar and China, proper religious formation seems unavailable as of now, and therefore, some congregations assign the new members to another country like the Philippines with the expectation of their undertaking suitable formation there.

In order to gain perspective on this trend, the researcher looked into language schools in Metro Manila where non-Filipino clergy study English or Tagalog upon their arrival in the Philippines.¹ As a continuation, this study focuses on theological institutes where the non-Filipino clergy undergo academic training together with local Filipino students usually after the language learning phase. Four institutes are examined here. Through these case studies, this article aims to gain more insight into the recent inflow of religious clergy² to the Philippines.

It should be emphasized that the significance of this study as educational research rests not in the fact that it looks into educational institutes, but that the entire process of clerical formation is an educational activity and deserves to be studied. As the present shape of the Catholic hierarchy results from the past clerical formation, recent trends in clerical formation, in turn, will be reflected in the future of the Church. In that sense, this study could allow us to anticipate the future of Asian churches, especially in terms of its response to globalization and increasing transnational movements of people.

2. Four Cases of Theological Institutes

As far as the researcher has been able to ascertain, exhaustive data on the foreign students of each theological institute is not available in the Philippines. Therefore, it was impossible to systematically identify institutes with the most foreign students. Necessarily this study makes no claim to be without omission. However, the researcher is relatively confident that he has accounted for all the major theological institutes. In the course of interviews by the researcher for the previous study on language schools, teachers there unanimously named the four institutes studied below as where their students would move to after their language learning. Moreover, during the present research, some professors from one of the institutes recommended the researcher to look into the other three.

The researcher made one-day visits to each institute in March and November 2019. Interviews were conducted with one to three faculty and staff members separately then, but no observations were made. The researcher also referred to the institutes' websites.

2-1. Loyola School of Theology : LST

Loyola School of Theology (LST) was founded by the Society of Jesus (SJ), one of the prominent global congregations of men. The institute is located in Quezon City in the campus of Ateneo de Manila University which has a long and distinguished history and was also founded by SJ. The school building is a 5-story construction. It holds a library which is claimed to be "the best library of theology in Southeast Asia". OPAC was said to be introduced very early and is now open to public use through the internet.

Since its foundation, LST has been admitting not only Jesuits but also clergy from other congregations

as described as follows: “Loyola School of Theology was inaugurated in 1965 to provide theological formation for the scholastics of the Society of Jesus, the seminarians of San Jose Seminary [SJ formation house], and the scholastics of a number of other religious orders.”³

LST was authorized by the Congregation for Catholic Education of Vatican to grant ecclesiastical degrees, in 1985 in affiliation with Fujen Catholic University, Taipei, and later in 1999 in its own right. In addition, as a secular educational institution, LST has been a federated unit in Ateneo de Manila University. They entered into an agreement in 2015 where LST was established as a new Theology and Ministry Program of the School of Humanities of the University. Ecclesiastical degrees LST presently confers are Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology, Licentiate in Sacred Theology and Doctorate in Sacred Theology while civil degrees are MA in Theological Studies, Doctor of Ministry and Doctor of Philosophy in Theology. LST also offers several non-degree programs.

Regarding international exchange, especially within Asia, LST claims that its composition of both faculty and students has been multinational. It is clearly stated as follows:

Since its foundation in 1965, LST has been serving not only the Philippine Church but the other local churches of Asia and the Pacific as well. Our community is enriched by faculty and students of diverse cultures and different nationalities, all co-learners in our mission “to form priests, theologians, and pastoral ministers who effectively respond to the ecclesial, spiritual, and social concerns of an increasingly missionary Church in Asia.”⁴

In this regard, LST sees itself as a theological center in Asia. It is expressed as follows:

LST or any other theological center in Asia is neither a center of “pan-Asian” theology nor one knowledgeable about all Asian theologies. However, LST can and must develop greater familiarity with theologies in and from particular Asian contexts and undertake comparative analysis among these theologies.⁵

These and some other features of LST are revealed in the statistics of its students presented in the tables below. Table 1 shows the distribution of students by program. The recent number of overall students is nearly five hundred. Enrollment is higher at the ecclesiastical degree program than the civil degree program. Among the former, the enrollment at baccalaureate level is the highest presumably because that is the standard program for the training for priesthood. On the other hand, a certain number of students are also studying at licentiate or doctorate levels, which seems to represent the scholarly feature of SJ.

Table 1. Distribution of students by program, LST, FY2018

Total	Ecclesiastical degree program			Civil degree program		Non-degree program	Non-certificate students
	Baccalaureate	Licentiate	Doctorate	MA	Doctor		
479	201	35	12	139	29	126	38

Note : The sum of individual numbers exceeds the total number because some students are enrolled in double degree programs.

Source : Records of LST

As to affiliation of students, more students are from congregations than from dioceses as revealed in Table 2. The former nearly quadruples the latter. However, compared with the other institutions below, the

Table 2. Distribution of students by affiliation, sex and whether priest or seminarian, LST, FY2018

	Dioceses			Religious congregations			Lay	
	73			281			125	
Total	Priests	San Jose seminarians	Other seminarians	Priests	Seminarians	Female	Male	Female
479	24	44	5	28	219	34	66	59

Source : Records of LST

proportion of the students from dioceses is still high. On the other hand, the proportion of female students, which is composed of religious and lay women, is only less than 20 percent.

Among the institutes studied here, multi-year statistics could be obtained only from LST, in which a recent increase of non-Filipino students is observed. According to Table 3, the proportion of non-Filipino students to Filipino students rose from one-to-two in 2013 to two-to-three in 2018. Most part of the increase of students during the period was apparently that of foreign students. Besides, those foreigners are mostly from the Asia-Pacific region, which is consistent with the remarks of LST cited above. In terms of nationality, Vietnamese are the most and still increasing. Indonesians and Myanmar are also many. The former's number is relatively unchanged while the latter is increasing.

Table 3. Number of students from major countries, LST, FY2013- 2018

Fiscal year	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Total	479	452	434	428	371	380
Philippines	289	281	288	278	242	257
Other than the Philippines	190	171	146	150	129	123
<i>Vietnam</i>	60	58	48	36	33	26
<i>Indonesia</i>	17	14	12	20	16	13
<i>Myanmar</i>	17	12	8	5	0	5
<i>India</i>	11	11	8	3	5	8
<i>South Korea</i>	9	11	8	16	20	16
<i>China</i>	8	9	2	5	8	10
<i>Thailand</i>	6	4	4	7	5	3
<i>Fiji</i>	6	3	3	0	0	0
<i>East Timor</i>	6	4	2	2	1	0

Note : The numbers are of first semester of each fiscal year except for FY2016 where the ones of second semester are put instead due to lack of data.

Source : Records of LST

2-2. Maryhill School of Theology : MST

Maryhill School of Theology (MST) is an institute of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM), another global congregation of men. While “MST serves first and foremost the initial formation needs of the CICM Asian Region and depends mainly on it for personnel and financial support”⁶, it also admits clergy including probationers from other congregations and dioceses as well as lay people. It is

located in New Manila district in Quezon City. The district is called "Little Vatican" because many religious houses of various congregations are located there.

MST is known for its championing of liberal or progressive Christianity. It is well represented in the following passages:

... Maryhill School of theology helps its students learn to do theology as a reflection-action process between the Judaeo-Christian Tradition and the present-day situation. In this manner, it contributes to the growth of a creative, Filipino theological scholarship ...

*to develop the student's capacity for doing theology in a critical, systematic and relevant way.

*to dialogue with the present-day situation of Church and world, giving special attention to the issues of inculturation and the promotion of justice and solidarity.⁷

Words like "critical", "present-day situation" and "justice and solidarity" are conspicuous and convey its awareness of and concern for secular social issues. One may deem it "Christian-Left". On the other hand, different from the passages of LST above, neither Asian theology nor the institute's role in Asia is mentioned here even though commitment to the growth of unique Filipino theology is expressed.

MST's advocacy of liberal Christianity is a tradition that can be traced back to its foundation. It was founded in 1972 on an occasion when five CICM priests were removed from a major seminary of the Archdiocese of Manila by the then archbishop. This removal occurred with a background of disagreements within the local Catholic circles over how to address the authoritarian Marcos administration. The development did not sit well with a majority of the seminarians and they followed the CICM priests in leaving the seminary. With 94 students composed of those seminarians and some clergy from CICM and other congregations, MST started its first class in that year. From then onwards, MST has been offering courses that "sharpen their [students and professors'] social awareness and participation in the struggles of the people."⁸ Portraits of the founding Fathers are hung on the walls of the main entrance hall.

Regarding programs, most students are enrolled in General Theology Program (GTP) which is a four-year study program designed for the academic preparation of candidates to priesthood and offers curriculum required by the ecclesiastical authority. In addition to GTP which is a non-degree program, MST also offers a degree program for MA in Theology which is granted by Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the secular regulatory agency on higher education of the Philippine government. Under this MA program, students can choose a special course called Practicum in place of writing a thesis. Those who choose Practicum are to undertake a fieldwork and submit a research paper based on it. Although students who choose Practicum are not necessarily many, it can be said to be a part of MST's tradition of paying attention to the "present-day situation". In addition to the daytime courses above, an evening program is also offered which is named the Adult Theological Education Program (ATEP). The ages of the students are relatively high, and in a relaxed atmosphere, the pacing of course is not so intense. No doctoral program is offered by MST.

Table 4 indicates the distribution of students by program. As mentioned above, most students are enrolled in GTP. They are candidates for priesthood and take it as an academic training for priestly ministry. In addition, there is a shorter program (2-3 years) named the Special Program. It is for those who have al-

Table 4. Distribution of students by program, MST, FY2018

	Grand Total	217
Daytime Classes	Subtotal	182
	GTP	151
	Special Program	24
	MA (Thesis Writer)	4
	MA (Practicum)	3
Evening Classes	Subtotal	35
	ATEP	22
	MA (Thesis Writer)	8
	Cross Enrollee & Audit	5

Source : Records of MST

Table 5. Distribution of students by affiliation, MST, FY2018

	Grand Total	217
Daytime Classes	Subtotal	182
	Diocesan	10
	Religious	167
	Lay	5
Evening Classes	Subtotal	35
	Diocesan	0
	Religious	4
	Lay	31

Source : Records of MST

ready learnt philosophy and some other secular subjects beforehand such as CICM seminarians from Indonesia.

Regarding the religious status and affiliation of students, more students come from congregations than from dioceses as shown in Table 5. This tendency is greater than that of LST. In addition, most lay people are enrolled in evening classes and form the majority. Data by sex was not available so far, but one faculty staff told the researcher that female or nun students are few because the regular program is designed for the training for priesthood. Most of those few nun students are said to be enrolled in the evening classes.

Turning to foreign students, more than eighty are enrolled as shown in Table 6. They account for around 40 percent of the entire student body. This proportion is almost the same as that of LST. It is also similar to LST in that Vietnamese are the most among the foreign students followed by Indonesians.

Table 6. Number of foreign students from major countries, MST, FY2018

	Total	GTP	Special	MA
Total	83	70	10	3
Vietnam	27	27		
Indonesia	14	5	9	
Congo	12	12		
Haiti	5	5		
Brazil	5	4		1
China	4	3	1	
Cameroon	3	3		
East Timor	3	3		

Note : Since not all countries of origin are included, the total number exceeds the sum of each countries.

Source : Records of MST

On the other hand, only in MST, non-Asian students constitute a certain portion of its foreign students. They are from Africa or Latin America. This seems consistent with the passage above which makes

no mention of its role in Asia.

2-3. Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia : ICLA

The parent organization of the Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia (ICLA) is another international congregation of men, namely Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or more shortly, Claretian Missionaries. It is also called CMF, an abbreviation of its Latin name: Cordis Mariae Filii. Among the four institutes studied here which are all located in Quezon City, ICLA is most northern. It means the area is relatively less developed.

ICLA is similar to LST in that it is committed to the service to churches in Asia. At the same time, ICLA shows concern for the poor and the marginalized, which is close to the stance of MST. These two aspects are represented in the following passages:

The Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia (ICLA) is an academic-formative community of higher learning in doing Theology, lived spirituality and mission, and serving a multicultural student population (Religious, Lay leaders and ministers, and Priests) from emergent churches, particularly in Asia.

... Rooted in the living tradition of the Church and in dialogue with Asian cultures, spiritualities and the poor, it

- educates for competent service in the Church through theological reflection, formation and accompaniment, missionary skills, and community building;
- promotes a deep sense of vocation and commitment to mission in a multicultural environment;
- seeks to form its students in gospel values expressed through compassionate service and friendship with the marginalized ...⁹

The contemporary issues of poverty and marginalization are specifically mentioned here. However, ICLA seems more moderate than MST in that it only shows concern for those issues but does not define the inevitable conclusion of action-taking such as "solidarity" stated by MST. In this light, the Christianity of ICLA can be described as liberal, but not equal with that of MST.

Turning to ICLA's commitment to service to Asian churches, it is originated in its planning stage. The General Government of CMF first proposed the establishment of a center for higher studies in Asia during its assembly in 1992 in Rome. Upon its approval, the following year, the Superior General convoked a meeting of major organisms of CMF in Asia, where the following consensus was reached:

- The Center would serve the consecrated Life in Asia;
- The Center would be established in Manila;
- The Center would be a shared responsibility by all the Claretian Major Organisms of Asia¹⁰

ICLA was finally inaugurated in 1997. The first batch of students came from eleven countries.

At present, ICLA offers both ecclesiastical and civil degree programs. As an ecclesiastical institute, ICLA is incorporated into the Faculty of Sacred Theology of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), a prestigious Catholic university like Ateneo de Manila. It is governed by a set of statutes approved by UST and confirmed by the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education. It confers a Licentiate and Doctorate in Sacred Theology. On the other hand, as a civil institute, ICLA is the Graduate Department of St. Anthony

Mary Claret College (another educational institution of CMF), which is recognized by CHED. It confers a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy in Theology.

ICLA is known for its specialized programs. In contrast to other institutes like LST and MST which provide general programs on theology, ICLA's programs are exclusively for the study of Consecrated Life, that is, a state of life in the Catholic Church lived by those faithful who have professed the public vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, or put simply, a life of regular clergy. Since ICLA provides only courses for this specialization, it provides no undergraduate programs but only graduate programs.

Another feature of ICLA is that it has a dormitory in its site and offers scholarships. The reason why neither LST nor MST holds a dormitory is because their students are regular clergy who are supposed to stay in religious houses and therefore have no concern for accommodation. This is indeed usually the case with both institutes. However, contrarily, regular clergy from a congregation without a house in Metro Manila or secular clergy from a remote diocese and even from abroad would find it difficult to study in those institutes. By offering accommodation, ICLA provides those disadvantageous clergy with educational opportunities, which can be safely said to be a unique contribution to Asian churches. Some 85 students stay in the dormitory in March 2019. Likewise, ICLA offers scholarships in affiliation with charity organizations such as MISSIO and Porticus. More than half of its students are recipients, mostly those from Vietnam, Myanmar, China and Indonesia due to the lack of budget for studying abroad. Some Filipinos are also granted scholarships.

Turning to statistics, table 7 illustrates the distribution of students by program. Since ICLA offers only graduate programs, its students are fewer than LST or MST. However, if limited to graduate students, ICLA is even with LST. It is notable, considering that ICLA provides only specialized programs but not general ones.

Table 7. Distribution of students by program, ICLA, FY2017

Total	Ecclesiastical degree program		Civil degree program		Non-degree program	Non-certificate students
	Licentiate	Doctorate	MA	Doctor		
145	10	5	96	12	4	18

Note : Non-certificate comprises students who are not under any program but attend some classes only. Some of them are given credits, but the others are auditors.

Source : Records of ICLA

Regarding the distribution between ecclesiastical and civil degree programs, the latter form the majority and comprise nearly 90 percent of the entire student body. Due to double degree programs that some LST students take, the data obtained so far does not allow direct comparison between the two institutes, but

Table 8. Distribution of students by affiliation, ICLA, FY2017

Total	Diocesan	Religious	Lay
145	24	114	7

Source : Records of ICLA

this tendency of ICLA looks similar to that of the graduate school of LST.

Table 8 presents the distribution of students by affiliation. Although detailed data was not available, one faculty member told the researcher that most students are not probationers but ordained priests or professed religious because ICLA provides not standard programs for religious formation but advanced MA and PhD programs with specialization. For the same reason, few religious congregations regularly send their members to ICLA. It is different from LST or MST to which some congregations send young members every time they need academic training.

Taking a look at the distribution by nationality illustrated in Table 9, in contrast to LST and MST, foreign students outnumber Filipino counterparts. Indeed, three fourths of the entire student body is foreigners. It is presumably resulted from the policy of serving Asian churches and its actual provision of dormitory and scholarships. Regarding students' nationality, similar to the other institutes, Vietnamese are the most. Filipinos follow, and then Chinese and Indonesians.

Table 9. Number of students from major countries by whether paying student or scholar, ICLA, FY2017

	Total	Paying students	Scholars
Total	145	66	79
Vietnam	42	11	31
Philippines	39	21	18
China	13	7	6
Indonesia	11	2	9
India	6	5	1
Bangladesh	4	2	2
Thailand	3	3	0

Source : Records of ICLA

2-4. Institute of Formation and Religious Studies: IFRS

Different from the three institutes studied above, Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS) was founded not by one congregation but by a national federation of congregations, named the Association of Major Religious Superiors of Women in the Philippines (AMRSWP).

In 1963, AMRSWP founded Sister Formation Institute, the predecessor of IFRS in order to "provide for the need of young women religious for sound academic training and background in spirituality."¹¹ After that, it had been admitting only nuns for about twenty years. Although it opened its doors to religious brothers and lay church workers later in 1980s, the majority of its students have still been female up to the

Table 10. Distribution of students by sex, IFRS, FY2019

Male	Female	Total
42	102	144

Source : Records of IFRS

present, as shown in Table 10.¹²

IFRS is located in Quezon City near the eastern border of New Manila. The main building is four stories high. IFRS has another building in a separate site, a half-kilometer away, which had been the only campus until the present main building was constructed in 1992. The older building is now used for the program for formators described below.

AMRSWP has reportedly been politically active, especially during the Marcos administration, together with Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP), its umbrella organization and other religious groups. Thus, IFRS came to embrace liberal Christianity like MST. It is revealed in the following passage:

IFRS offers religious formation and theological studies with the following characteristics:

Contextual - Rooted in Philippine, Asian and Third world realities in order to gain a deeper understanding of the religious, cultural, social, economic, political and environmental contexts so that the Gospel might be brought to bear as a historical force for the transformation of society;

Inclusive - Incorporates the perspectives of women, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized sectors; The insights of other religious traditions and spiritualities; And the concern for the integrity of creation.

Integrated - Guided by scriptural, theological, and pastoral reflections rooted in human experience and contemporary issues; Cognizant that justice, peace and ecological concerns are essentially related to the Gospel message and that the genuine Christian formation can only happen in a community setting;¹³

Concern for social issues are expressed in terms such as "social, economic, political and environmental contexts", "marginalized sectors" and "justice, peace and ecological concerns". Moreover, terms of "transformation of society" seemingly imply that the concerns inevitably involve action. In addition, the specific mentions of "indigenous peoples" and "other religious traditions" presumably reflect the local issues of the oppressions against hill tribes and the long-standing conflict in the Muslim Mindanao region respectively. It should also be noted that "Asian" context is stressed as well as Philippine and Third World like the statements by other institutes studied above. The mention of "women" also deserves attention as it seems to reflect the aim of the original institute which taught religious women.

Historically, one of the milestones of the institute is the Intensive Spiritual Integrated Program in 1974 under which contextualization of theology in the Third World context was reportedly undertaken. It was just two years after the declaration of Martial Law by the then President Marcos and the program was carried out in response to the rampant human rights violations in the Philippines at that time. After that, the institute pursued "a more integrated approach that includes a critical understanding of contemporary societal condition as an important element in theological education"¹⁴ through 1970s and 80s. This development led the institute to start accepting religious men and lay people, and even foreign students from Asia, resulting in the change of its name to IFRS in 1991.

At present, IFRS is authorized by CHED to grant civil degrees, that is, a Bachelor of Arts and MA in Religious Studies. Besides, it offers a one-year non-degree program, which covers introduction to Scriptures, Theology and Catechetics. On the other hand, it does not grant any ecclesiastical degrees.

Like ICLA, IFRS provides scholarships and holds a dormitory. The annual number of scholars is around 20, They are mostly undergraduates from Myanmar, Vietnam and China. The fund for the scholarship is obtained from Porticus, but IFRS chooses scholars from among its students. The dormitory is located on the 3rd and 4th floors of the main building. While the capacity is 44, 25 students boarded there in November 2019. Most of them are scholars. Even some students whose congregations have houses in Metro Manila prefer to board in the dormitory in order to avoid the daily traffic jam. Formerly, boarding students were not charged, but due to price hikes, the dorm recently started collecting fees.

Turning to the distribution of students, undergraduates are the most as shown in Table 11. As to nationality, foreigners outnumber Filipinos, accounting for two thirds as shown in Table 12. The ratio is almost the same with that of ICLA. Among them, students from Vietnam are the most, and those from China and Myanmar follow.

Table 11. Distribution of students by program, IFRS, FY2019

Bachelor of Arts	Certificate	Non-certificate	MA	Total
63	26	29	26	144

Note : Non-certificate comprises students who are not under any program but attend some classes only. Some of them are given credits, but the others are auditors.

Source : Records of IFRS

Table 12. Number of students from major countries, IFRS, 2019

Total	144
Philippines	48
Vietnam	33
China	17
Myanmar	13
Indonesia	6
Malaysia	4
East Timor	3
India	3

Source : Records of IFRS

In addition to the programs for the academic training of young religious and lay church workers, IFRS provides a program for formators of religious probationers, named the Accompaniment Program for Formators. The objectives of the program are described as follows:

The program is designed for men and women in formation ministry in all levels. The participants of this program will be able to:

*Be in-touch with their own personal dynamics, and recognize and accept their God-given potentials/ gifts as chosen formators;

*Understand and appreciate the value of consecrated life and the demands of a life-giving and pro-

phetic formation that the Church and society need today;

* Experience being accompanied in their life's journey so as to enable them to also accompany others also towards their psycho-social and spiritual growth and integration;

* Acquire, to a certain degree, the accompaniment skills such as understanding human dynamics in a given context, contemplative listening, counseling and spiritual direction/guidance.

* Attain, to a certain degree, competence and self-confidence in accompanying others in their faith-life journey.

SPIRITUALITY AT ITS CORE - With a lot of reference to "spirituality" throughout the program, the participants will have a deeper understanding of "spirituality" both as lived experience and as an academic discipline ...¹⁵

In the understanding of the researcher who is not a theologian, the frequent terms of "accompany" and "accompaniment" imply that formators or mentors of religious formation do not make probationers grow spiritually, but instead accompany them in their spiritual growth, in other words, it is not a human being but divine providence who makes someone grow spiritually.

Lectures, exposures, group dynamics activities, liturgies and retreats and some other elements compose the program. Regarding the time schedule, different from other programs studied above, this program is held only on Fridays and Saturdays for the period of three and a half months, which certainly enables only those residing in the Philippines to participate. Besides, the program is sporadic and has been carried out four times up to the present, that is, in 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2019. While the slots are limited to 25, enrollees of the program in 2019 were 8.

3. Conclusion

The major features of the four institutes studied above are juxtaposed in Table 13. Admittedly, it is not valid enough. The statistical elements are not from the same year and some of them are missing. The objectivity of some other elements is subject to question such as the expression of liberal Christianity. Keeping these in mind, tentative conclusions are drawn as follows:

First, the four institutes are classified into two types according to their major functions, 1) theological training for priesthood and 2) theological education for religious clergy who are not seminarians. LST and MST belong to the former type while ICLA and IFRS fall under the latter. This seems to correspond to the distributions of students by sex in each institute (except ICLA).

Second, among foreign students, Vietnamese are the most and still increasing. Chinese, Indonesians and Myanmar are also numerous among others. While Myanmar are also increasing, the numbers of Chinese and Indonesian students are relatively stable. (Although these trends seem most probable, multiple year data could be obtained only of LST, and therefore, further examination is still needed)

Third, although only ICLA includes "Asia" in its name, most institutes, except MST, advocate "Asian theology". It seems to imply their commitment to contribute to theological study and education in Asia. This commitment is tangible in the dormitories and scholarships of ICLA and IFRS, which provide the educational opportunities with religious probationers from countries of modest means who otherwise can-

Table 13. Comparison of the four institutes

	LST	MST	ICLA	IFRS
Year of Establishment	1965	1972	1997	1964
Founder	SJ (one religious order)	CICM (one religious order)	CMF (one religious order)	AMRSWP (association of religious orders)
Number and percentage of students from the founding order	61 (13%)	44 (20%)	unknown	–
Major function	theological training for priesthood	theological training for priesthood	specialized theological education	theological education
Material support for students	none in particular	none in particular	dormitory and scholarship	dormitory and scholarship
Whether "Asian theology" is mentioned in the official website	mentioned	not mentioned	mentioned	mentioned
Degree of the expression of liberal Christianity	not found	full	moderate	full
Total number of students	479	217	145	144
Percentage of male students	81%	unknown ¹⁾	unknown	29%
Number and percentage of Filipino students	289 (60%)	134 (62%)	39 (27%)	48 (33%)
Number and percentage of Vietnamese students	60 (13%)	27 (12%)	42 (29%)	33 (23%)
Other major countries of origin of students	Indonesia Myanmar	Indonesia Congo	China Indonesia	China Myanmar

Note 1) Although the exact number was not obtained, the researcher confirmed that the majority were male.

2) The years of statistics of LST and MST are 2018 while that of ICLA and IFRS are 2017 and 2019 respectively.

not afford to study abroad. Indeed, foreign students form the majority in both institutes, making a contrast with the other two where Filipino students account for about 60 percent. By accepting students not only from the Philippines but also from surrounding Asian countries, they aim to serve as centers of theology in Asia. (Regarding MST, its failure to mention Asian perspective probably results from the high percentage of non-Asian students such as African and Latin-American.)

Lastly, liberal Christianity is advocated by three institutes, namely MST, ICLA and IFRS, but the extent seems to vary and ICLA is more moderate than the other two. The difference may come from the historical division of the Philippine Catholic Church. In the Philippines, liberal Christianity enormously rose from 1970s to the middle of 1980s in response to the authoritarian Marcos administration. Many individuals and groups in the Catholic circle came to think of it as their mission to address the issues of the rampant poverty and oppression of people at that time. MST and IFRS were among them and the tradition is still strong. On the other hand, needless to say, the Catholic Church was and has been divided, and some of them criticized the leftist movement within the circle and some others kept distance, which seems to be reflected in the present division among the institutes on this issue.¹⁶ Moreover, in the case of ICLA, it was established more than ten years after the Marcos period. Although this explanation seems convincing, further

examination into the institutes is needed for its confirmation.

Before closing this article, it is worth mentioning issues that are beyond the scope of this article but deemed critical in exploring the theme of moving of clergy toward the Philippines. One is so-called "Asian theology". While mentioned by the most institutes, its picture and even its existence are still unclear. Given that indigenous theology (or theologies) has been emerging there, its possible impact on the universal Church will assuredly be non-negligible. Moreover, considering the religious and cultural diversity in the region, it will also play a significant role in the Asian religious scene, possibly with the institutes studied above as epicenters.

More comprehensive study on religious formation is also needed. The entire formation process is said to comprise human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and other phases. This preliminary research focuses only on the intellectual phase and the others have yet to be studied. For example, it is not yet known what kind of formation religious probationers undergo in the Philippines and, if any, in their home countries before and after the theological education. Furthermore, some probationers do not go to theological institute in their course of formation. That is the case mostly for religious women because only men can be ordained as Catholic priests. Since theological training for priesthood is not a necessary part of the formation to religious sisters, some congregations of women do not include theological schooling in their program. Therefore, if focusing only on theological institutes, certain number of religious probationers will remain overlooked. For this reason, it is needed to look into the entire process of religious formation, which varies by congregation. Since the number of congregations concerned are huge, a study on it will require much more time and effort than the present one, but even so, it is essential in order to understand the moving of clergy.

The final area that needs to be studied is religious and other conditions of sending countries of clergy, such as China, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam, where numerous congregations recruit. Certainly, each of those countries has its own push factors which have not yet been identified. They may be a failure of proper formation and educational systems, constraints on religious activities imposed by the national government, security deterioration, and so on. Further study on those factors in the sending countries is desired in order to obtain a wider perspective of the mobility of clergy for formation.

additional remark

The influence of the recent pandemic of COVID-19 over this issue needs to be mentioned. As far as the researcher has been able to ascertain through the websites and the Facebook pages of the institutes, LST, MST and IFRS conducted classes online at least for some of the time in 2020.¹⁷ Although undeniably affected, all the institutes seem to continue operating partially, if not fully, up to the present. In a long-term perspective, while the inflow of clergy to the Philippines might be suspended for the mean time, it is predicted to get back on track sooner or later. It is likely because the formation of regulars takes more than a decade and the recent restrictions on international mobility such as two-week quarantine periods will not exert a decisive impact. Therefore, once the travel ban is lifted, many congregations will probably start sending their young members to the Philippines again and accordingly, the four institutes will continue taking a crucial role in the formation of those regular clergy.

Notes

- 1 Ichikawa, Makoto, "The Philippines as a Center for Clerical Formation in Asia: A Case Study of Filipino Language Schools for Clergy and the Mobilities of Clerical Probationers", *Rikkyo University Department of Education Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 62, Feb. 2019, pp. 57-67.
- 2 In this article, both of the terms "religious clergy" and "regular clergy" refer to Catholic brothers and sisters who belong to one of the congregations, including their probationers such as postulants and novices, but they do not include diocesan priests (secular clergy) and lay people. Some brothers are ordained as priests while the others are not. Priests are only male and are authorized to offer Mass and some other sacraments.
- 3 Loyola School of Theology, History of Loyola School of Theology [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lst.edu/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 4 Loyola School of Theology, Vision and Mission [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lst.edu/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Maryhill School of Theology, History of MARYHILL School of Theology [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maryhillsoftheology.com/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 7 Maryhill School of Theology, "Who we are" and "Objectives" [Online]. Available at: <https://www.maryhillsoftheology.com/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 8 Maryhill School of Theology, History of MARYHILL School of Theology [Online]. op. cit.
- 9 Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia, Vision and Mission [Online]. Available at: <https://www.icla.org.ph/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 10 Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia, History [Online]. Available at: <https://www.icla.org.ph/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 11 Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, History of IFRS [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ifrs.com.ph/> (Accessed: 15 March 2019).
- 12 In a researcher's interview with a faculty member of MST, he said that MST's students were mostly seminarians and therefore male. When the researcher asked accordingly where religious women were studying, he answered that they studied at IFRS.
- 13 Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, Goals & Objective [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ifrs.com.ph/> (Accessed: 6 January 2021).
- 14 Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, History of IFRS[Online], op. cit. A few pictures of the program were displayed in the entrance hall of the main building with short descriptions which are the only information available so far on the program. Details such as duration and number of participants are not yet available.
- 15 Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, "Accompaniment Program for Formators: A Course on the Fundamental Aspects of Formation to Religious Life on Week-ends, Nov. 15, 2019 to Mar. 27, 2020" [brochure].
- 16 See for example, Abinales, Patricio N., *Images of State Power: Essays on Philippine Politics from the Margins*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1998, and Youngblood, Robert L. *Marcos against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- 17 A few pictures of lecture and liturgy were posted in the ICLA's website where all participants wear face masks, which implies ICLA also held some activities under the pandemic.