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Inhaling Truth, Achieving Wisdom

50 Years STFK Ledalero



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Georg Kirchberger, SVD, and Felix Baghi, SVD***

INHALING TRUTH, ACHIEVING WISDOM

The STFK Ledalero in Golden Jubilee

The authors present briefly the papers and proceedings at the symposium celebrated at Ledalero's Golden Jubilee in September 2019 in the context of the STFK's history.

1. History at a Glance

In 2019 STFK Ledalero celebrated Pope Benedict XV's apostolic letter, *Maximum illud* (1919). One of the letter's urgent appeals was that church leaders, in every area of what was known as "mission territory," prioritise the formation of ordained ministers from the local indigenous population. In line with the Encyclical's appeal, the leadership of the Vicariate Apostolic of the Lesser Sunda Islands in the Dutch East Indies pioneered the education of local clerical candidates on the island of Flores in what is now the independent Republic of Indonesia.

In 1926 the Vicar Apostolic, Mgr. Arnold Verstraelen, opened the first minor seminary for the Lesser Sunda Islands in the village of Sikka on the south coast of Flores. Then in 1929, the seminary was moved to Mataloko in the hills of central Flores. Four years later, in 1933, also in Mataloko, a novitiate and major seminary were opened for SVD candidates. In 1937, the novitiate and major seminary were moved to Ledalero, nine kilometres up the hills from the northern coastal town of Maumere. For thirty years the major seminary trained candidates for the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD), then in 1955 diocesan candidates were admitted and three years later an inter-diocesan major seminary was built one and a half kilometres up the road. Today both the diocesan and SVD candidates for the priesthood, living in separate houses, still study at the same major seminary.¹

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** Felix Baghi SVD is from Indonesia and was ordained in 1995. He studied philosophy at the Gregorian University (Rome, Licentiate 2003) and at the University of Santo Tomas (Manila, Philippines), where he obtained a doctorate in Philosophy with a study on Paul Ricœur (2017). He was a vice dean for

The school of Ledalero Major Seminary, as a place of education for prospective priests, received recognition from the Indonesian government in 1969. With government recognition, the Ledalero Catholic Institute of Philosophy and Theology was established (STFT Ledalero), the name later being changed in line with government stipulations to Ledalero Catholic Institute of Philosophy (STFK Ledalero).² On 4 June 1971 the Indonesian government, through the Directorate General of Higher Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture, inaugurated the three-year Bachelor's programme for Catholic philosophy and theology (B.A.). Then on 22 January 1981 the Bachelor's degree programme, in line with government norms, was changed to a four-year first-degree programme (S1). Seeing that the Indonesian government gave formal recognition in 1969, STFK Ledalero celebrated its 50th anniversary throughout 2019.

2. Three Intellectual Challenges

During this Jubilee celebration, the entire *civitas academica* of Ledalero was aware of three challenges that must be faced. First, *the contextualization of philosophical and theological teaching material*. Philosophy and theology should not be a field that revolves only around the tradition itself, but must strive to be always up-to-date and relevant to the socio-cultural context of today.

Second, *intellectual isolation*. STFK Ledalero is located on Flores island in the eastern part of the vast Indonesian archipelago, a fringe area compared to Java, some two thousand four hundred kilometres east of Jakarta, the political capital and economic centre of the country, and no less than one thousand nine hundred kilometres from Yogyakarta, the major centre of culture and education. Because of this there is always the danger that STFK Ledalero will not keep up with scientific intellectual developments taking place elsewhere in Indone-

the academic programme at the Ledalero Institute of Philosophy and Theology (2004–2007). He serves as a part-time formator in Ledalero and is a lecturer in Philosophy at STFK Ledalero. Among his publications are: *Pluralisme, Demokrasi dan Toleransi*, ed. (Ledalero Printing, 2012); *Alteritas: Pengakuan, Hospitalitas dan Persahabatan* (Ledalero Printing, 2012); *Redeskripsi dan Ironi: Mengolah Cita Rasa Kemanusiaan* (Ledalero Printing, 2014).

¹ See, Tenaga-tenaga Imam bagi Gereja Katolik di Nusa Tenggara: *Pastoralia* (15 Nov. 1969) 18-19.

² In those days the government had not yet recognised theology as a separate academic discipline, thus the Jesuits in Java had their “academy of education” recognised, the SVD in Flores their “academy of philosophy.”

sia. In addition, considering that Ledalero alumni work in over forty countries throughout the world, intellectual education at Ledalero must open up to current developments both in Indonesia and in the world at large.

Third, *school administration*. Today the Indonesian government is making increasing administrative demands for school accreditation and in the assessment of the quality of teaching and scholarly research. This demand needs to be answered by STFK Ledalero while still maintaining its identity as an ecclesiastical educational institution educating prospective priests and laity according to Catholic practice.

These challenges must be faced by STFK Ledalero by building a truly scholarly community, where the theology and philosophy lecturers and social science researchers really show their responsibility as “intellectuals” who balance a sense of reality with a sense of possibility. Clearly, this balance would only be possible if the academic staff in this institute build a scholarly community who do not live together in a formalistic or rigoristic way, but are able to live in dynamic intellectual interaction.

Intellectual interaction within an institute is not only built within the framework of a “logic of order” that is administratively strict because of its structural demands, but with the “logic of discovery” that is rich in creativity, open to the power of social and cultural imagination, and sensitive to messages of religious and cultural symbols that are so rich in metaphor.

It is to be hoped that by realizing the challenges and importance of intellectual interaction, staff who teach theology and philosophy, and research social science at STFK Ledalero, are able to formulate the role of their individual scientific disciplines, always placing their reflections within the context of multiple social awareness. Each one, from the same or from a different discipline, is expected to be able to open up, give criticism of what is done by his/her fellow scholars, and respond to research in discussions that are rich in the dialectics of mature questions and answers. Understandably, the aim is not just to achieve a kind of *fusion of horizons* to test each prejudice, nor to show off its intellectual capacity, but at a more human level as siblings—brothers and sisters—be able to build a kind of “sharing of research experiences” while living together in a good and appropriate manner.

3. Inhaling Truth, Achieving Wisdom

The STFK Ledalero *civitas academica* community has been reflecting together on the main theme of “inhaling truth—achieving wisdom.” Wisdom is the basic principle and main purpose of *praxis* in this world. The wisdom characteristic of philosophy and theology appears in the authentic dimension of its metaphysical search, namely from its attempt to inhale truth from an empirical perspective to achieve the deepest nature of life. This reflection is built in a more open and dialogical academic community, an openness that marked the beginning of the year’s celebration when we began to inhale the history of the establishment of STFK Ledalero, and how this institute has continued to exist for the past fifty years. Furthermore, the institutional dimension of the institute is deepened by an awareness of the fundamental options of STFK—preparing education, teaching philosophy, social science and theology—while maintaining truth and wisdom with their metaphysical characteristics.

Theological and philosophical articulation as developed at this Institute draws spiritual wealth from the revelation of God’s Word as the main source of wisdom. This articulation is built in an open dialogue with our literary heritage, with the tradition of classical philosophy, modern philosophy and postmodern philosophy, and with an array of social sciences. All of these articulations aim to lay a practical basis for the praxis of missionary pastoral work in the light of divine wisdom.

It is vital that Indonesian philosophers, theologians and social scientists sniff out philosophical and theological truths from within Indonesian contexts. Indonesia has a multicultural identity enveloped by a wealth of different faith traditions. Cultural and linguistic plurality has always been a feature of Indonesia. Indonesian people are aware of their very different identities while at the same time they still feel as one. This collective awareness of multicultural identity enables social scientists, philosophers and inter-contextual theologians at STFK to reflect truth as the basis for gaining wisdom in mutual dialogue and recognition.

4. The Social Sciences and Practical Contexts

In the opening seminar of the Jubilee Year on 15 September 2018, Dr. Ignas Kleden—a Ledalero alumni and a well-respected sociologist in Indonesia—challenged this institute in his paper entitled “The Role of Social Science in the Development of Contextual Theology.” If a theology as a rational reflection on faith wants to be relevant to the context in which the reflection is held, then it needs information that can

be accounted for accurately regarding the situation from a sociological perspective that researches sectors such as the economic, political, social, cultural, and the family. This interaction between social science and theological reflection was outlined by Ignas Kleden in the opening seminar of the Jubilee Year.

The importance of the social context for philosophical and theological reflection was also highlighted by a number of academics and politicians with varying specialties and life experience. Prof. Dr. Karel Steenbrink, professor emeritus at Utrecht University (Netherlands), who undertook his field research in Sumatra and has been a visiting professor at the Islamic State Universities in Yogyakarta and Jakarta, spoke on the theme: “The Need for Internal Variations and Differences in a Religion: The Example of Indonesian Catholicism.” If a faith community wishes to undertake a reflection on faith and on faith appreciation in relation to specific contexts, then that reflection will produce considerable variations and differences in the practice of their faith, because believers live, and live their faith, in a variety of social, cultural and individual backgrounds. Thus, it is essential for believers to respect and value these differences and variations as a source of wealth and not reject them as a threat to the living out of their faith.

In his public lecture, Viktor Laiskodat, the Governor of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province, spoke about “Weaving together Dreams and Hope about a Better NTT.” In his lecture he introduced the plans and programmes of the Regional Government to advance economic development in the province. In the same vein, Johnny G. Plate, SE, a member of the national parliament Commission XI for Finance, Development Planning and Banking, gave an overview of “An Economy for the People and Entrepreneurship” through efforts at grassroots economic development within the perspective of the Indonesian Central Government. Likewise, Ignasius Jonan, the Indonesian Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, discussed the theme “Just Energy for the People.” His treatment largely focused on the concrete situation of people in the Sikka Regency, the district where STFK Ledalero is situated. The Sikka Regent, Fransiskus Roberto Diogo, S.Sos, M.Sc, discussed the “Sikka Regents’ Strategic Programme on the Road to the Prosperity of Sikka.” Through this series of public lectures STFK Ledalero tried to broaden its horizon and overcome intellectual isolation by having contact with various parties at the national and international level, while at the same time obtaining a clear picture of the situation within which STFK Ledalero needs to develop a rational reflection on faith through academic teaching and scientific research.

5. *Contextual Theology and Philosophy*

Concluding the Jubilee Year, from 4-6 September 2019, an international symposium was held under the title: “Love the Light of Wisdom.” There were three keynote speakers,³ namely, Prof. Dr. Stephen Bevans from the Catholic Theological Union (CTU, Chicago); Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra, professor and former Chancellor of Syarif Hidayatullah, the Islamic State University in Jakarta, who also serves in the special staff for Bureaucratic Reform to the Vice-President of Indonesia; and Dr. Paulus Budi Kleden, formerly on the teaching staff at STFK Ledalero, who is presently serving as the Congregational Leader of the SVD in Rome (2018–2024). There were also four respondents to these three keynote speakers, and ten other speakers who presented results of their research in small groups. What is interesting is that each of the speakers succeeded in attracting the academic interest of their audience through discussions from different perspectives.

On the first day of the symposium Stephen Bevans laid a strong foundation for the idea of contextualization in theology. He described how Pope Francis, as a significant teacher in the Catholic Church, supported the idea of contextualization and also contextualized the teachings of the Christian faith in his own teachings.

In the first place Prof. Bevans explained conclusively that Pope Francis, through his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, strongly supported inculturation while correcting the views of his predecessor, Benedict XVI. Benedict XVI repeatedly demonstrated his opinion that Hellenistic culture was especially suitable for expressing the Christian faith and needed to be respected as the norm for the church in addition to the Scriptures. Contrasting that view, Pope Francis emphasized that there is no culture that needs play a special role among the numerous cultures of the world, specifically in terms of expressing and promoting the teachings of the faith and understanding of the contents of the Christian faith. On this basis it needs to be said that the tradition of faith always needs to enter into a dialogue with cultures that are forever changing, so that the process of understanding and expressing the contents of that faith is never complete. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the church and the faithful can also learn from various cultures and from life situations how they can live their faith better, more deeply, more in line with the initial inspiration of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Steve Bevans gave several examples of how Pope Francis himself inculturated his teaching. In his encyclical *Laudato si'*,

³ Their presentations constitute the main part in this issue of *Verbum SVD*.

Francis, according to Steve Bevens, employed the method used in Latin American liberation theology, namely “See—judge—act.” By seeing and observing the situation (see), and by confronting the situation observed with the Gospel (judge), and working out practical ways of living the faith (act), Francis is doing contextual theology. Because doing contextual theology means seeing the situation and confronting it with the Gospel, in order to develop an orientation for living out the faith that is relevant and up-to-date in concrete actions.

With reference to Chapter 8 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, Steve Bevens discusses the risks that must be borne by anyone who wishes to confront the Gospel with actual concrete situations, and confront the situation with the teachings and inspiration of the faith. Based on his favourite theme, God’s mercy, Pope Francis highlights in this eighth chapter a crucial issue in today’s socio-cultural situation, namely couples who have been validly married in church, found themselves incompatible and so divorced civilly but then remarried civilly in a successful marriage. The official view of the Catholic Church has understood that these couples live in mortal sin and therefore cannot receive Holy Communion at Mass.⁴ Francis alludes to the possibility that clerical leadership needs to be more discerning in cases of this kind. He opens up the possibility for such partners to reconcile with the church. This view received much praise and raised hope for many Catholic couples,⁵ but on the other hand it also received a fair amount of criticism, especially from a few cardinals and high officials in the administration of the Vatican. Pope Francis was aware that he would provoke sharp criticism with this consideration, but he was willing to take that risk, because there will be no renewal in the church without a willingness to bear the risks that arise in dialogue with complex situations. It is not always easy for these situations to be appropriately assessed.

Finally, Steve Bevens still revealed the Pope’s sensitivity to the complex cultural and socio-political situations by referring to the Apostolic Letter *Magnum principium* and the pope’s pastoral visit to Myanmar. In *Magnum principium* the Pope determined that the Vatican curia would no longer approve liturgical translations and local adaptations undertaken by local churches. Henceforth, Vatican authorities will simply acknowledge and confirm what has already been approved

⁴ In this official view, an incompatible couple who can no longer live together but who are validly married in church are a sign of Christ’s love for the church, while a loving couple in a civil marriage who are active in Church are living in sin!

⁵ In central Europe half of first marriages end in divorce while most second marriages last a lifetime.

by the local Bishops' Conference. In this key decentralisation of authority in the church, it can be seen how Francis acknowledges that the leaders of the local church are in a far better position than Rome to assess and appreciate the use of local languages in translating liturgical texts.

During his trip to Myanmar, Pope Francis showed, according to Steve Bevans, a great sensitivity to the socio-political situation in the country. Francis respected the request of the Archbishop of Yangon not to mention by name in his talks and sermons the issue of the Rohingya being treated unfairly by the Myanmar government. This theme would be very sensitive and if the Pope touched on it, the consequences might well have been very negative for the Catholic Church, a very small minority in the country. The pope appreciated that the local bishop could assess the concrete situation in his country better than he himself who came from the outside. But after he had landed in Bangladesh, where many Rohingyas had sought refuge, Francis used the name Rohingya explicitly, insisting that "the presence of God today is also called Rohingya." He made concrete the fact that God, according to the testimony of the Scriptures, was precisely with those who are refugees and persecuted.

In this way Steve Bevans provided a fine inspirational basis for discussions on the inter-contextualization of theology, both during the symposium and in subsequent STFK Ledalero activities.

On the second day of the seminar, ten people gave short papers in five separate groups, where they presented some of their research to be discussed in the group. The ten speakers came from various places in Indonesia including Manado, Jakarta and Yogyakarta, some also from the STFK Ledalero campus. This is one way how STFK Ledalero wishes to open up, to discard any remnant of academic isolation, and so enter into academic dialogue with various parties throughout the country.

6. The Indonesian Context

On the third day two keynotes were presented which specifically spoke about the current situation in Indonesia. Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra from the State Islamic University in Jakarta talked about "Education as Revitalizing National Insights: The Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and Unity in Diversity." Whereas Dr. Paulus Budi Kleden, SVD, presented a paper with the title: "Philosophy and Doing Theology in Indonesia: Thinking and Believing in the Midst of a Plural Nation, in a Society Shadowed by Poverty and an Endangered Environment."

6.1 Revitalisation of Pancasila Ideology and Multicultural Education

Dr. Azyumardi Azra, an Islamic intellectual, knows the Indonesian socio-political situation from the perspective of the government as a member of the Special Staff to the Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia for Bureaucratic Reform. In his paper “Revitalizing National Insights”, he gave a general description of the social and cultural situation of Indonesia which he considers to be in a critical flux, with the result that a large number of Indonesian people are losing their orientation. In such a situation people who feel lost are easily influenced by extremists who are looking for people who can be recruited for their radical groups. Such religious and ethnic groups close themselves off from people of other religions, ethnicity and cultures, so that the Indonesian people is in danger of disintegration and fragmentation.

In such a situation Azyumardi Azra advocated and promoted a revitalization of the nation’s underlying philosophy as expressed in the five principles of the Pancasila and in the 1945 Constitution along with the motto of the Indonesian State *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (“Unity in Diversity”). He described how Pancasila was abused by President Soeharto’s regime during the so-called New Order (1967–1998) in order to secure his own power and enrich his family and military cronies. Understandably, after the fall of Soeharto and the beginning of the Reform Order, Pancasila became suspect and was practically ignored. But Prof. Azra advocates and struggles for a revitalization of Pancasila and the other foundations of the State as expressed in the 1945 Constitution and the motto Unity in Diversity. According to Azra, only such a rejuvenation can give the Indonesian people the spirit and strength to overcome the danger of disintegration and fragmentation.

To replant and develop the spirit derived from the ideology of Pancasila, Prof. Azra sees education as the most important means that needs to be given special attention by the government and the Indonesian people in order to overcome the crisis that is facing Indonesia. What is really needed is multicultural education, which he defined as “education for/about the cultural diversity of the Indonesian people in the past that today is undergoing demographic and socio-cultural changes.”

Multicultural education should not simply be education for minority groups in society, so that they can adjust to the culture of the majority group. On the contrary, multicultural education must precisely empower minority groups, so that they feel proud of their own culture and so are able to appreciate the culture and views of other groups. In particular, the majority group and its mainstream culture must self-motivate and learn other cultures and beliefs, so that they can respect

them and learn from them to enrich themselves. Thus, different cultures and beliefs are not uniform, but rather they enrich each other and so develop. Only in this way can a community grow as *bhinneka tunggal ika*: plural and harmonious at the same time.

Prof. Azra did not describe the methods that must be used in multicultural education, in order to achieve the desired results. Here lie the duties and responsibilities of STFK Ledalero as an educational institute that forms people who then work in various fields. They should foster the morals, enthusiasm and habitus of the people entrusted to them as pastors, teachers, catechists, journalists and others.

In order to celebrate this Golden Jubilee, STFK Ledalero also inaugurated a new study programme, namely Catholic Religious Education, which prepares Catholic teachers of religion. It would be fine if the new programme really did conduct research that could assist in the search for methods and tools in shaping and fostering the spirit needed so that in a plural society people can form a clear self-identity and at the same time be truly open to respecting the equally clear identities of others.

6.2 *Doing Philosophy and Theology in Indonesia*

Dr. Paulus Budi Kleden focused his paper⁶ explicitly on the relevance and significance of doing philosophy and theology in Indonesia. In the first place he generally reflected on the relevance and necessity of philosophy and theology for the academic world in Indonesia. Such a reflection is crucial because today in general, and specifically in Indonesia, the academic world is dominated by the natural sciences and technology, whereas the humanities, in particular philosophy and theology, are seen as word games for people with nothing else to do. Only what is quantified is recognized as relevant research, anything else approaches dreaming or is considered a personal hobby or an intellectual game.

In this situation Paulus Budi stated that a plural society needs a way of thinking that seeks a basis and that reflects and pays attention to ways of thinking and arguing, so that discourse can be held that clarifies different positions and we can listen to each other and understand and respect each other's different positions. A society needs not only accuracy in measuring and weighing, it also needs truth in thinking and arguing.

⁶ Paulus Budi Kleden, *Berfilsafat dan Berteologi di Indonesia*, lecture during the International Symposium at STFK Ledalero, 6 September 2019—included in this issue of *Verbum SVD*.

Likewise, Paulus Budi stressed that faith requires understanding, it requires rational reflection on its content, so that it does not easily fall into the danger of fundamentalism and radicalism. Based on Anselm of Canterbury's saying *fides quaerens intellectum*, Paulus Budi also emphasized that faith requires language, and so needs contact and dialogue with culture, so that the proclamation becomes relevant and can help the community of faith to find appropriate and relevant answers to the problems and questions of society.

Based on this general reflection on the relevance and necessity of philosophy and theology in Indonesian society, Paulus Budi spoke about the content that theology needed to work on if it wished to be relevant to the actual situation of the Indonesian people today. He mentioned three areas that needed to be given a place and attention in theology in Indonesia, namely the diversity of the Indonesian people, efforts at economic development, and the struggle of the Indonesian people with issues of mutual advantage and with efforts to uphold the integrity of creation as an ecological environment for future generations of humanity.

Theology must engage in these three fields and try to provide answers that can point the way for believers. For this reason, theology needs to listen carefully to the Word of God in the Scriptures, it needs to examine various efforts throughout church history to make the faith relevant, and it should collaborate with various disciplines to clarify the problems facing the world, and so contribute tangible answers according to concrete situations based on the content of faith and divine orientation in the witness of the Scriptures.

7. Exchanging Lecturers and the Demands of School Administration

In addition to open lectures and symposia, there were also other activities during the Jubilee Year. One of them was to open up and establish collaboration with institutes outside STFK Ledalero. From mid-August to the beginning of October 2019 Dr. Ermine Douglas Lewis from Melbourne, Australia, gave a series of guest lectures in cultural anthropology. Dr. Romy Abulad, SVD, from Christ the King Mission Seminary, Quezon City, the Philippines, gave lectures on post-modernism and other contemporary philosophies. Meanwhile, Felix Baghi of Ledalero has given lectures in contemporary philosophies at Christ the King Mission Seminary in 2018 and 2019. There are also a number of lecturers at STFK Ledalero who have participated in research programmes and international seminars in various countries.

The third challenge faced by STFK Ledalero today concerns educational administration and quality improvement according to increasingly strict demands from the Indonesian government. There have been serious efforts from all parties to work in line with administrative demands during the Jubilee Year. We are ever working at the demands for the accreditation of our various study programmes. Indeed, this has become a priority for STFK Ledalero to meet the increasing demands of accreditation. The mechanism for maintaining the quality of teaching and research internally within the institute has been clarified and put into writing. STFK Ledalero has made a strategic plan for the next five years and within this framework a new study programme has been opened, namely a course in Catholic Religious Education (PKK) which has received government recognition and was opened in August 2019. The process to open a Master's Programme in philosophy is advanced, and all the required conditions have been submitted to the government; it is hoped that this programme can commence in the near future.

In Conclusion

STFK Ledalero has reached the age of fifty. This institute seems increasingly stable, and is becoming aware of its duties and responsibilities in responding to the contextual situations in Indonesia and in carrying out the mission of the worldwide Catholic Church. In addition, this institute is not expected to give up on the spirit of being ever ready to inhale truth and achieve wisdom, remaining open to pioneering new paths. It is to be hoped that STFK Ledalero will develop in a healthy manner carrying out its duties responsibly and with enthusiasm.