

# Prayer of Filipinos in Diaspora: A Case in South Korea

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## Abstract

This study examines the Filipino migrants' personal journeys of "home" from colonial to global dislocations, as well as their journey to an eternal home, which is founded on prayer. According to the findings, Filipino migrants' prayers are genuine heartfelt expressions. It exhibits trans-reciprocity, or the visible and invisible form of reciprocity between the transnational, transcendence, and the migrants' relatives in their home countries. They serve God and their family members who are far away in return for God's blessings. Migrants who are family breadwinners and who themselves serve as a sacrificial offering to alleviate poverty in their homeland pray for material benefits and virtues. Migrating is a step toward a richer and better life, similar to the goal of prayer, but it does not preclude the concept of home because each step of the journey is a search for healing; a search for a true home, i.e. the self.

**Keywords:** Prayer, migration, Filipino diasporas and identity

## Introduction

Prayer is embedded in the Filipino consciousness and is manifested through culture and values. For Filipinos, *ginhawa* (breathing), the most basic act of prayer, is the root of *kaginhawaan*, which means health, holiness, or well-being. The Latin root word *hal* (breath, wholeness/holiness, and health) explains that holiness and healing, the fruit of prayer, are not separate entities and have the same meaning as *ginhawa* and *kaginhawaan* in Filipino. From its Latin root, one inhales and exhales holiness. The basic goal of prayer is to maintain breathing from first to last, and so the human quest for health and holiness. Prayer is the breath and heartbeat of every religious man and woman; it is the oxygen of the soul for those who seek holiness and the lifeblood

that sustains religion. The prayers of the saints, the sages, the monks, and the primitive people are always geared toward a better life, and so is the prayer of the secular pilgrims, the migrants.

This research explores the active and lived experience of Filipino migrants in interacting with the sacred, the host society, and their homeland on the global stage. Their prayer leads them to an awareness of everyday miracles that become the thread-links to dynamic relationships, both imagined and mundane. The interplay with the imagined (heavenly home, homeland) and mundane realities redefines their sense of self and belonging. Their belief system and spirituality are aided by memory and romanticization of the past, which they reinvented and recreated. The nostalgia and loneliness that migrants feel find

their mirror reflection in the Israelites in exile, who were also “yearning for home and the God of their home” (Hieler, 1932:298). This memory of home is so powerful that it made them gather as a community of prayer.

The exploration of the Filipino migrants’ prayers does not only prove that prayer is the central phenomenon of religion (Heiler, 1997: xiv; Dresser, 1929:62); but also, it gives voices to the practicing majority who are sitting in the pews. The approach to living prayer gives importance to the “popular” over the elite, the “practice” over ism.” The prayer of Filipino migrants manifests a multifaceted layer of cultural history, values, ethics, and identity, sense of community, and how they search for a home in their personal odysseys of self-displacement from colonial to global settings. Their prayers show how they make their bodies a global source of capital, filled with the foundation of consciousness of the sacred and social orders that are products of immunity injected by the culture of Western syringes that made prayer function both as anti-bodies for resistance and immunity for adaptation to the new environment.

This study exhibits the practices and contents of Filipino migrants’ prayer and their religious experience. The practices of Filipino spirituality have shifted from primitive practices to ritual practices brought about by the hegemonic influence of Western civilization, which changes not just a mere embodiment or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984; Cscordas, 1990), but the work of nostalgic memories that are re-enacted and recreated in their praying practices. The re-enactment of the prayer practices from their homeland is part of their quest for cultural identity in a foreign land.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to explore the Filipino practices of prayer while away from homeland (diasporas). It has three objectives as follows:

1. to review the meaning of prayer based on the perspective of Filipino in diaporas;
2. to link the relationship of prayer and migration;
3. to seek the impact regarding the content of their personal prayers in relation with the characteristics of their communal prayers; and

## Methods

To develop the arguments and answer the above questions, the researcher reviewed literature about prayer in general and its link to migration with migrants’ personal odysseys of home, healing and self-identity. It seeks answers to questions regarding the content of their personal prayers, the characteristics of their communal prayers, and the impact of prayer on their lives.

The ethnographic method or participation-observation method, an inquiry of the actual involvement and participation of migrants’ prayers and religious practices is applied by the researcher. The method is commonly applied in the study of lived religion and anthropological research, but the researchers found no difference with the free association method in psychology, which is a one-on-one field interview and a process of developing a rapport with the research subject.

The researcher collected written prayers and individual life stories, which included testimonies and religious experiences of how God journeyed with them. The researcher also participated in migrants’ Eucharistic celebrations and Charismatic gatherings, visited their homes during blessings and special events. The narrative collected provides the whole picture of what they prayed for. The narrative reawakens memories and imaginations, which they do not only romanticize but also realize in their prayers and rituals in a foreign land. In order to observe the privacy of the respondents, the researcher used pseudonyms in presenting their

stories and prayers. In their testimonies of God's experience, they have proven that prayer is effective.

## Literature Review

The sense of guilt and ambivalence of migrants and their "homeless minds" are fueled by unrealized dreams of an ideal haven entrapped in "between and betwix" the dichotomous social constructs of the sending and receiving countries, between heaven and earth, between body and soul, between what is ideal and what is real, between the past and present, between psychic and physical relocation. In between and betwixt is the playing ground of imagination and actualization of self, yet seeking for identity and belonging from "dislocations caused by colonial history and migration" (de Manuel, 2004:1). The isolation from the family and community added to their guilt feelings of absence at home. They substantiate nostalgia and loneliness with prayer and altruism toward their kin and yet feel the void of not doing enough. Migrants' "transnational ways of being and transnational ways of belonging" (Glick Schiller, 2003) explain the divided sense of identity consciousness when their minds are in their homeland while their physical bodies are in a foreign land. They are romanticizing the metaphors of living the memories over 'there' while facing their future 'here'.

The divided consciousness challenges the idea of home, which is the core basis of identity and belonging. Prayer links the circuit of a fragmented home, which can be observed in the written prayers of the migrant mothers who fueled the domestic forces of global care drain and ironically trusted the care of their own children to the extended families left behind in their homeland. In the receiving countries, these women are religiously empowered. Most of them are community prayer leaders, who actively transmit their spiritual energy throughout most Filipino communities.

The Filipino migrants, although marked by multiple displacements, show some layer of resiliency in appropriating global structures and developing the characters needed for adaptation. Politically, migrants are dubbed 'heroes' by the Philippine Government for keeping the country's economy afloat. They are like saints who have to become living sacrifices for their beliefs. Migrants are living sacrifice on the altar of nationalism whose sweat of labor is not only offered for the immediate family but also for the country.

The selfless sacrifices are honed by the environment which influenced their prayer life. Their upbringing shows how they have begun to believe in beliefs and pray for prayers. Their forefathers were nature lovers who believed in the enchanting works of environmental spirits. Their pre-colonial stories proved the value of reciprocity to the environment, to each other, and to the gods. Before the Bible was introduced to them, they were already a community of sharing and observed the social order of their *barangay* headed by the *datu*. However, their ancestral beliefs remained hidden after Catholic Christianity was introduced by the Colonial government in 1521. Some beliefs and practices were curtailed, but Filipinos aesthetically combined their traditional beliefs and prayer practices with the Roman Catholic practices. They learned the Latin prayers by memory without understanding their meaning. They were baptized without proper catechesis, but they fully trusted in the power above them, including the environmental spirits. At present, migrants freely practice their prayer life in a foreign land with minor constriction from the mainstream culture. Some Catholic churches in the receiving country are hesitant about the Filipino presence, especially since some Korean Catholic church leaders are still clinging to the ideology of homogeneity. However, the Catholic Church founded an initiative for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people which mandated parishes to accept the migrants into their care.

The prayer of the West became dominant in its colony; the house of prayer and monastic communities were prominent colonial media to enlighten the pagan world throughout its history. This history became spontaneous and dynamic in the prayer life of migrants blended with traditional beliefs and practices. The migrant prayers are uttered from their *nararamdaman* (feelings) and *karamdaman* (illness, pain, disease, complaints, grief, indisposition, and sensations). Their prayers show how they feel (*damdam/ramdam*) and the desire of their heart (*damdamin*). Their *karamdaman* and *damdamin* (heart) are closely linked to their beliefs and relationships at home. The community prayer gathering becomes an outlet for sharing *damdamin* and for creating a family like relationship in the absence of immediate family. Prayer becomes an instrument of self-expression and a powerful support network for Filipino migrants. The refuge for strength and consolation does not remain metaphysical, but physically realized by the presence of the community.

The vulnerability of migrants to social control, their state of identity consciousness, and their “homeless minds” made the researchers prefer to study their prayers. Apart from the visibility of their religious practices and the positivity of their life outlook, they also have spiritual darkness and dryness, especially since separation by distance threatens family relationships. Being ‘outsiders’ to the mainstream culture, they can be viewed as evils and agents of deterioration in the receiving country. The culture and language barrier made them vulnerable to maltreatment from employers and colleagues. Possessive husbands or employers constrict and stifle their growth. Undocumented migrants exist physically, but would rather wish to become invisible to immigration authorities due to fear of deportation and penalties. Once deported, they will be banned from entering the Korean border for ten years.

The perpetuation of poverty in the homeland pushes Filipinos to migrate and look for a greener pasture. The lack of agency to protect themselves has made them vulnerable victims of political and religious division. The division of groups in politics and religion affects employment opportunities in the homeland. The patronage system during the time of Jesus in the Mediterranean culture can be seen in the Philippine patronage system in politics. The politician who wins becomes the immediate patron and protector of his or her supporters, while the poor, whose patron loses in the election, experience extreme inequality, including some government services and job opportunities, albeit public awareness against religious discrimination in the workforce. In a Catholic country like the Philippines, the general preferences for job opportunities are also for Catholics. This culture perpetuates the idea that the only way to find employment is to migrate to urban cities or go abroad.

Apart from political struggle and poverty in the homeland, the Philippines’ location in the Pacific Ring of Fire is susceptible to typhoons and earthquakes. The destruction from natural calamities every year stagnates economic growth and becomes an additional burden on the poor, who try to make both ends meet for daily survival. The circumstances of migrants remind them that they need God and their situation keeps them closer to God. They thrive amidst life’s tribulations and prayer sustains them. Despite the worldly allures offered by materialistic global society, migrants did not “lose the wonder of all the things of God” (Merton, 2003:122).

The study of Filipino migrants’ prayer captures the holistic picture of the study of religion as it includes the rhetoric of public speaking, history, culture, arts, ethical or moral instruction, human relations, human desires, dreams, experience of inner feelings and human emotions. Although prayer is the lifeblood of religion, there are only limited sources,

especially the prayers of the lay majority. Literature in prayer is mostly written by religious leaders or pastors whose writing style is for the purpose of teaching or instructing others how to pray or those who are practicing prayer and “contemplation as the highest form of all activities.” Secondly, most research on prayer lacks the participation-observation of the religious practices in the grassroots as it places a premium on deciphering the classics. This created a bias in how scholars view the secular world as disenchanted, but in reality, there is only a lack of interpretation of the work of the spirit in the secular world.

*Trans-Reciprocity describes the migrant or transnational relationship with transcendence in which prayer serves as the link that transmits gifts and goods to/from God and their families back home.* This relationship is maintained by reciprocity that governs spiritual, familial, socio-communal, and other forms of relationships.

### Result

The table below is the summary of the typology of Filipino migrants’ prayer. The prayer for guidance, protection, safety, peace, healing and health, the material and non-material supplications

**Table 1. Typology of Migrants Prayer**

There are 100 total numbers of prayers collected from the Filipino Migrants. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of migrants who pray the said prayer e.g. thanksgiving, forgiveness

| Items                | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Thanksgiving      | 62                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2. Forgiveness       | 18                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 3. Prayer for family | 60                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 4. Guidance          | 30                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 5. Healing           | 38                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6. Peace             | 18                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 7. Praises           | 10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 8. Supplication      | <p>Financial blessings (invest, open a business, build a house, win in lottery, hit 120 million won quota, for the company to gain customers (1) Health/long life (23), to have a child (3), to have a life’s partner (1) for job (2), stay longer in South Korea to work especially the undocumented migrants (8), pass the test (2), protection from evil (2), protection from immigration authorities (1), to become famous (1)</p> <p>Happiness (1), understanding (2), knowledge (1), moral/physical strength (24), faith (2), love (1), fortitude (1), to become a good Christian (2) to serve God (1), offer life to God (3)</p> |
| Intercession         | For the gossipers (1) for the husband’s mistress (2), for the missionaries (1) for the hungry (1) for South Korea (2), for the OFWs (1)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Observation

Based on the findings, the following are observation on how Filipino migrants in South Korea dedicated their prayers:

1. The Filipino migrants say prayers of thanksgiving for the blessings they receive, such as the years of successful marriage, health, love, strength, answered prayers, protection and guidance, work abroad, acquiring a visa, having a son, for life, for forgiveness, having children, and having a family. Out of 100 written personal prayers, 62 Filipino migrants show gratitude to God.
2. The Filipino migrants' prayers are homebound and centered on the family. The prayers for guidance, safety, protection, health and healing, prayer for peace, prayer to work longer in Korea are for the families in the Philippines. Prayer replaces the immediate responsibility of the Filipino migrants in their absence at home.
3. The common pattern or formula of the Filipino migrant's personal prayer is thanksgiving, asking for forgiveness and supplication. The prayers are said in general forms like "thank you for the blessings", "forgive me for my sins", "heal my mother", but they do not say much in detail what kind of blessing they received, what sin needs to be forgiven, and what part of the body or the kind of sickness that needs healing.
4. The thanksgiving prayer is a symbol of *trans-reciprocity* which God gives to man and man confirms that s/he receives the blessings, which the Filipino migrants, consider those gifts and blessings need to be reciprocated, they return back to God in serving him and serving others and the family. In thanksgiving prayer, this research observed that the gift is circulated from the source and passing it forward then back to the source. The universal law in all forms of relationships is reciprocity; it is either reciprocity toward transcendence or transnational.
5. The prayer of forgiveness shows that man is man and God is God, as the common saying goes, "to err is human, to forgive is divine". It is in the prayer of forgiveness that man recognizes his own weakness, and it is in the prayer of praise and adoration that man places God as God, through man's recognition of His mighty deeds.
6. The prayer for health and healing is vital for migrants whose only means of earning a living are their own physical bodies as laborers.
7. The prayers, although short and in general form, well up from the heart's desire and needs of migrants, who do not only pray for material blessings, but also for virtues like patience, courage, faith, love, happiness, understanding, fortitude, the desire to serve and offer one's life to God and for the inner strength to forgive others.
8. The Filipino migrants' prayer for virtue and material blessings bridges that gap between the primitive materialistic prayer and the prayer found in the philosophical thoughts of Friedrich Hieler, which means that man needs both material blessings and virtue in order to sustain life.
9. The Filipino migrants' prayer for virtue and material blessings bridges that gap between the primitive materialistic prayer and the prayer found in the philosophical thoughts of Friedrich Hieler, which means that man needs both material blessings and virtue in order to sustain life.
10. They pray for the significant others whom they consider members of their family circle, like the godson and goddaughter, and those who are directly connected to them, like the prayers for South Korea, for peace, for the healing of their own land, and for the peace of the whole world. They also pray for their significant others more often than for themselves.

11. Prayer shows where the heart is, the treasure goes. The migrants' fruits of the sweat of their labor go to the love ones: their family.
12. The prayer starts with greetings like "Dear Lord", "Lord", "Almighty God", "Dear God" and ends with "Amen" and "we ask this through the name of Jesus."
13. A Filipino migrant's prayer shows that they behave well in front of God or when talking to God. There is no prayer for the destruction or curse of an enemy or showing grievances and anger; instead they pray for the enemy, like the two married Filipina migrants who prayed for the gossipers and the mistresses of their husbands.
14. Prayer becomes the weapon to fight the covid-19 virus. South Korea has become a second home for Filipino migrants, but they rarely pray for it until the COVID-19 pandemic hits. The Filipino migrants only pray for the places, things, and events that are part of them.
15. Prayer becomes the bullet to combat loneliness and social isolation, as well as to combat the Filipino migrant war against different illnesses, including the social illnesses in their homeland, especially poverty and unemployment.

## Discussion

The prayer of Filipino migrants in Korea manifests the *trans-reciprocity* that weaves together the relationship between transcendence and the transnational and is geared toward the vision transformation or metamorphosis of migrants' lives. The trans, which is the common affix of the terms above, describes how prayer becomes an active circuit that flows and circulates visible and invisible goods and graces back and forth from the source of energy and power (transcendence) toward the migrants (transnationals) and forwards them to

their families in the homeland before returning to the transcendence through service, thanksgiving, and praise. This common *trans* has something to do with the distances as the playground of realizing the trance (dream) in prayer, i.e., in between and between the sending and receiving countries, and the distance between heaven and earth. The foreign land where the migrants reside is not their real home, but it is in this transitory home that they trans-reciprocate with the homeland and their ideal home (God/heaven).

It is prayer that becomes the lifeblood of *communitas* through the reciprocity between the transcendence, the transnational and the members of their family. Reciprocity is the holiness that governs all relationships. It is holiness in the sense that the continuity of the praying community is based on the active reciprocity of God and the prayer. It is only in reciprocity that a structure, be it social, political, spiritual, etc., is maintained and continued. Prayer as the lifeblood and breath of a community means that both the pray-er and God cannot survive in a parasitic form of relationship when one keeps giving and the other end is not reciprocating, which is not necessarily giving back but also giving forward to others. The active trans-reciprocity is shown in the praying behavior of migrants. Their personal prayers and testimony of God's experience shows that migration is an answered prayer and it is also in migrating that they experience God. An answered prayer is not taken for granted by the Filipino migrants who are praying intensely to go abroad. The sense of gratitude that migrants feel in their hearts is a manifestation of value that is the dignity of the poor, for they know how to give back to God in gratitude. The common response to migrants, who have God's experience, is service which they have shown to their community. Filipino migrants reciprocate God for giving them the gifts and offerings. They reciprocate transnationally toward their parents and kin in the homeland through

remittances and the Balikbayan boxes, which do not only contain the money and goods but are emblems of sacrifices sealed with prayers and love that fill in the empty longing for home. The migrants' treasure goes where their hearts and minds are. Poor migrants pray as one of the treasures of the poor in surviving abroad and also to ask for safety, health, healing, and protection of their families, a responsibility that they are supposed to do themselves, but entrust to God in their absence.

Prayer becomes an instrument of self-expression and a powerful support network for Filipino migrants. Prayer fills the void and substantiates nostalgia and loneliness in the homeland. It became the migrants' source of strength and consolation in the moments of isolation. Prayer links the circuit of a fragmented home. The ones abroad and in the homeland connect with each other not only in social media and virtual realities, but also spiritually, as observed in this research through their family-centered prayers.

The migrant prayers are uttered from their *nararamdaman* (feelings) and *karamdaman* (illness, pain, disease, complaints, grief, indisposition, and sensations). Their prayers show how they feel (*damdam/ramdam*) and the desire of their heart (*damdamin*). Their *karamdaman* and *damdamin* (heart) are closely linked to their beliefs and relationships in their homeland. Their prayers and testimonies disclose the stories of the heart and the struggle of the poor that keep them closer to God and teach them to pray. Their prayers are altruistic, which means the majority of the content is prayers for others rather than prayers for themselves. The gifts they offer to God are not only a form of petition to grant their wishes for their families, but also a form of gratitude to God, who is gracious to them. The characteristics of the Filipino migrants, volunteerism and altruism, are not solely from the teachings and guides on how to live and how to

pray, but also come from the wisdom of the natural environment, like the movement of the moon and the stars, which they consider as the guide of their actions both in planting and fishing.

The praying guides of the early teachers of Christian prayers have a vertical influence on the prayer of the Filipino migrants in Korea. Prayer as the monastic treasure is handed down to the younger generation of monks, to the mendicants and itinerants and the lay people like the migrants. The spread of prayer in the Catholic Christian tradition was through the praying guides written to instruct the young members of the monastic and religious communities, which are derived from the mystical stages (purgative, illuminative, and unitive) of prayer coined by Origen, the first Christian writer on prayer. Reading of sacred scripture is common practice in monasteries, among mendicants and itinerants who follow the same stages introduced by Origen like Pseudo Dionysius, Denys the Areopagyte, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Cisneros, and Bonaventure. It is the mendicants and itinerants who bring this influence from the scholastics down to the ordinary people in the market places. Migrants continue to read scripture in communal prayers such as the *lectio Divina*, charismatic healing prayers, and the Holy Mass. The Imitation on the Life of Christ by Thomas A Kempis, The Meditation on the Life of Christ and the *Devotio Moderna* by Gerard Groote influenced migrant devotion in praying the holy rosary, the Way of the Cross, the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Santacruzán or Flores de Mayo, *salubong* during Easter Sunday, and other re-enactment of Christ's life.

The pantheistic devotion in the Catholic tradition in honoring many saints was easily accepted by the Filipino migrants, who practiced polytheism and believed in environmental and ancestral spirits (*anito/Diwata*) in their pre-colonial history. The rooster ritual was common during the start of war

and for bringing the sick or the dead back to life. They offered a rooster to the aerial spirits and a pig to the spirit of the earth. They had their own prayers, songs, and dances for the Gods, as well as prayers for the dead's mourning (taghoy, pananabitan). They also had their own pre-colonial community structure headed by the *datu*, who had the highest rank in settling disputes, and the next in rank was the shaman, locally called the *baylans*, who served as priests and priestesses in the pre-colonial society. As a priest and doctor, the shamans performed the ritual for the healing of the illness caused by the spirits that had been transgressed by humans and not the virus, germs and bacteria as illness causation discovered in science. They respected the natural environment that gave them the order of things. The heavens they adored and the belief in *gaba/karma*, or mystical retribution, also taught them ethics and morality. In their proverb, "*Nasa Diyos ang awa, nasatao ang gawa*" (Mercy is in God, but hard work is in man) explains their hard labor in the dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs inside the Korean factories, while also trusting in God's mercy.

The Christian doctrine is embedded in their consciousness, which is the outcome of the 333 years of Spanish colonization and around 60 years of American rule that made the Filipinos hispanized and Americanized. Filipino culture and religion are the outcome of the mixture of the different colonial influences which have altered the modern culture of the West. Religious syncretism and hybridity form Filipino culture with a "colonial mentality." The Filipinos have an "altered state of consciousness" that makes them ambivalent about their very own ethnic identity. Despite the ardent wish to rediscover their cultural roots, the four centuries of the colonial period have replaced the pure native Filipinos' religious roots with a hybrid spirituality embroidered together that forms a unique religious craft. Religious Syncretism is gradually being nurtured in the land with the help of the blend of

native practices and adapted foreign religious practices. Filipinos continue to wear *amulets or talismans* in South Korea to protect them from dangerous weapons, bullets, and evil spirits.

In their colonial and global dislocations, their prayers show how they made their bodies a global source of capital filled with the foundation of consciousness of the sacred and social orders that are products of immunity injected by the culture of Western syringes. Prayer functions as an antibody for resistance and immunity for adaptation to the new environment. Filipino Catholics claim their identity as Filipino Catholics and not Roman Catholics, because of the religious syncretism that is an intricate traditional motif of their religious practices.

The Filipino migrants' communal prayer is a well-structured and orchestrated social effervescence of people sharing common time, space, and matters that they consider sacred. The gathering of the migrants for the holy mass, the *Lectio Divina*, the feast day of the patron saint, and the charismatic healing prayer gatherings of the Filipino immigrants show the work of memory of Abrahamic religion. It is the commemoration of salvation history that becomes a ritual or repeated practice for the purpose of *habit*, i.e., the embodiment of the Christian tradition. This commemoration brings together those who have a connection to migrants, including those who have already made the journey to the next life. Most of the prayers in the communal gatherings of Filipinos already have a structured order and fixed formula uttered by the community in unison, reflecting history, teaching of ethics, and moral standards of society or the community. A narrative about the life of the saints that touches human sentiments serves as a model of a virtuous life. The formula in the holy mass is fixed, but the prayers of the faithful are an open intercessory prayer for the pope, the leaders of the country, and ordinary men and women. It is

open for an extemporaneous prayer of the mass goers that makes prayer a rhetorical act of public speaking.

The communal prayers of the Filipino migrants are mixtures of both the devotional, meditation, and charismatic forms of prayers. The charismatic form of prayer shows the rhetoric that rises from the heart of the pray-er, who is very spontaneous without looking at any written formula. The communal prayer also shows the feminization of women religious participants surrounding the patriarchal deities. Women prayer leaders in the charismatic gatherings show the de-gendering of communal prayer gatherings and it shows women empowerment of the mostly invisible mothers, domestic helpers and production workers in Korea's small and medium industries. The platforms and pedestals boost their confidence and become a symbolic space to showcase women's talent and skills in speech, in singing and in dancing.

A family-like or filial relationship is created in the communal joy of thanksgiving. This is observable in what they call God the Father, which is embedded in the consciousness of man, whose celebration of thanksgiving is anchored to the patriline's ancestral God. The members of the community call each other *kapatid* (brother or sister). The communal prayer of the migrants is often followed by a communal commensality that keeps them closer to each other in partaking the symbolic meal and the real meal; an extension of commemoration by remembering the homeland in sharing Filipino delicacies. The gathering of migrants in communal prayer and the commensality renew friendship and strengthen the bond through the reciprocity necessary for the community's survival. For Filipino migrants, communal prayer and commensality have become the medical memory of the cure for nostalgia, loneliness, and isolation. Filipino migrants in South Korea show happiness in serving God and the

community. The measure of their happiness is the measure of their gratefulness to God manifested in their thanksgiving prayers. Their sense of gratitude to God and to one another maintains a good relationship with the Divine, their families, and their neighbors.

The majority of the content of migrants' prayers is centered on their families in the homeland. Their praise, thanksgiving, and adoration are signs that God answered their prayers, and they reciprocate the gifts by serving the community and serving their families.

The prayer of Filipino migrants is a metaphor for the primitive materialistic prayer that pleads for well-being, for financial blessing like winning the lottery, hitting the target quota, having more customers in the company etc. like the primitive's prayers for food and drink. They pray for the significant others whom they consider members of their family circle, like the godson and goddaughter, and those who are directly connected to them, like the prayers for South Korea, for peace, for the healing of their own land, and for the peace of the whole world. They pray for their significant others more than for themselves. Prayer shows where the heart is, the treasure goes. The migrants' fruits of the sweat of their labor go to their loved ones: their family.

A Filipino migrant's prayer shows that they behave well in front of God or when talking to God. There is no prayer for the destruction or curse of an enemy or showing grievances and anger; instead, they pray for the enemy, like the two married Filipina migrants who prayed for the gossipers and the mistresses of their husbands.

The common pattern or formula of the Filipino migrant's personal prayer is thanksgiving, asking for forgiveness and supplication. The prayers are said in general forms like "thank you for the blessings", "forgive me for my sins", "heal my mother", but they do not say much in detail what kind of blessing they

received, what sin needs to be forgiven, and what part of the body or the kind of sickness that needs healing.

The prayer pattern is influenced by the stages of the prayers coined by Origen, the first Christian writer on prayer. The personal prayer consists of the penitential rites or the prayer of forgiveness that coincide with the *purgative stage* in which a mystic tries to suppress the worldly senses and feels sorry for his weakness, sinfulness, and failures. The *illuminative way* is the realization of God's love and seeing God in all creation. It is the stage of being enlightened and recognizing the goodness of God like the praises, thanksgiving and adoration in the migrants' personal prayer. The unitive stage in mysticism is manifested when they give gifts to God as a consecration to God. They serve God in a form of voluntarism to do good for others and the community. They also wish to follow Christ in mundane realities, but it does not exclude the monastic prayers that are interwoven in their day-to-day practices.

## Conclusion

The effects of prayer are prosperity, healing and forgiveness. The migrant experience of God in poverty is explored by Rudolf Otto (1917) in his *Idea of the Holy*, describing the human psychological responses in the presence of Divinity. Christian memory, although inherited from the Judaic tradition, has a unique characteristic: the memory of the humbled, defeated, marginalized, and condemned. This is a source of "medical memory" for the poor and the oppressed because it fueled hope that there is God who is the God of the poor who lives and works with the poor. The Christian God is a commoner who knows best the daily life of ordinary men and women. Prayer is the strength of the poor. The poverty of God is the medicinal balm that eases the pain in life's struggles. Any scientific,

philosophical, or theological criticism cannot destroy the poor's nave prayer and complete reliance on God. The migrants' prayer proves that prayer is an act of loving the self, the family, the neighbor and of loving God.

The Filipino migrants, although marked by multiple displacements, show some layer of resiliency in appropriating global structures and developing the characters needed for adaptation. Filipino migrants are heroes in keeping the balance of the Philippine economy; they are selfless saints who sacrifice for the lives of their own families. They are dignified laborers who toil with sweat for the food they give to their families. Migration, as a ritual performance, is an answered prayer for Filipino migrants; however, this migration journey is only a part of the process of wholeness and homeliness. In this research, the vision of the *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (The Love of Christ for Migrants) is realized. Christians' migration experiences are not only a source of meaningful growth, but also "an occasion for new evangelization and mission." The mission is not only realized by the missionary priests and nuns, but also with the full cooperation and participation of the lay majority.

Prayer and migration have the same direction, i.e., homebound. However, one can never return to the home or ideal comfort inside the mother's womb, yet a person carries the nostalgic memory of the comfort of the original place of belonging. The human quest or longing for this comfort creates an imagined home like heaven or utopia as the destination of a praying man's journey.

The nostalgic idea of home becomes the driving force or Divine energy of all human endeavors to live a life with meaning, because without the imagined destination of home, praying becomes futile and living has no more purpose. In prayer, the self is the object of the *trans* discussed above in the transnational, transformation, transitory,

transcendence. The self-pilgrimage to healing is not avoiding the self and denying what it has. It appreciates and accepts everything about the self, but is also mindful of the self-orientations that lead to self-homelessness. Self-homeliness and healing are the outcomes of prayer that can only be attained when one is comfortable and confident in himself before God and others.

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