

Grace in the Higaunon Traditional Religion

Fr. Jonecito R. Saguban, TOR

Abstract

Grace, the unconditional favor given by God to all of humanity and whole of creation, sustains every reality. The understanding of this can be seen and explained only from the point of view of religion. The Higaunon tribe of Rogongon, Iligan City, having kept their tribal religious belief in their rituals through oral means, recognize such favor. They continue to adhere to their tradition expressed in their yearly and periodic ritual practices. It is in these occasions that they encounter the divine as a community.

Narratives of a Journey

“Every person, every reality has the potential to be touched by God’s love.”¹ Indeed, everything has the possibility to be graced by God. This was affirmed in Vatican II when it pronounced that “the Holy Spirit was at work in the world before Christ was glorified.”² Thus there is no further argument when we talk about grace in the context of indigenous religions and belief systems such as that of the Higaunons. God has been with them since the beginning of their existence.

This paper will try to present grace according to the understanding and experience of the Higaunons. I have a considerable time of exposure in the area of the Higaunons of Rogongon, Iligan City as I have been in the locality conducting preliminary research for a projected major paper. Most of the outputs in this paper are based on my direct experience with the way of living of this indigenous community and their religious practices, customs, and rituals. Two specific areas are to be dealt with in this paper. The first is grace in the context of the Higaunon myth of creation; and second, grace as a spiritual gift to man expressed in the ritual *Pasabay*.

¹ Christopher Dumadag, “Elizabeth Dreyer’s Manifestations of Grace,” Lecture Notes (Cagayan de Oro City: Grace, 2006).

² Paul VI, “Ad Gentes,” in Vatican Council II: *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, gen. ed. Austin Flannery, OP (Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 2001), no. 4.