

An Interreligious Dialogue in Mindanao Today

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Introduction

“Mindanao is the land of promise.” This is a famous slogan that people say so often. It means that Mindanao is abundant with trees, plants, animals, and vegetation. It too is the home of diverse cultures and religions. Despite the welcoming land and the colorful cultural-religious diversity, however, Mindanao presents to the outside world an image of struggling poverty, conflict, and violence. What happened to the “promised land”? Can its peoples heal it from within?

This paper intends to present a picture of interreligious dialogue in Mindanao today. In developing this paper, the following questions will be treated: First, what is the context of Mindanao? Second, why is interreligious dialogue important in Mindanao? How can we promote and sustain interreligious dialogue in Mindanao?

There are three terminologies in this paper that need to be defined according to the purpose of the writer, namely: interreligious, dialogue and Mindanao. *Interreligious* means a relationship among adherents of different religions and other faith traditions. *Dialogue* is understood not just a conversation between two people or groups of people. It is not a tool nor an approach to solve conflicts and problems, but a spirituality. By spirituality, we mean living a “life according to the Spirit” or a “life in the Spirit.”¹ It is a life grounded in “religious experience.” This is an experience that can transform the direction of one’s life towards a life that is led by the Spirit, led by God. *Mindanao* refers to the main island group in the Southern part of the Philippines, which encompasses the whole of Regions IX to XIII, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).²

¹Karl Müller and others, eds., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), s.v. “Spirituality” by Walbert Bühlmann, 413.

²The Regions of Mindanao are the following: Region IX – Isabela City, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga and Sibugay; Region X – Bukidnon, Cagayan de Oro City, Camiguin, Iligan City, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental and Misamis Oriental; Region XI – Compostela Valley, Davao City, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental and Davao Occidental; Region XII – Cotabato, Cotabato City, General Santos City, Sarangani, South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat; Region XIII – Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Butuan City, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur; ARMM – Basilan (Excluding Isabela City), Lanao del Sur, Maguindao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. www.mindanaomaps.com/Mindamaps/MindaRegions.pdf (Accessed January 6, 2017).