Title: Biblical perspective on the nature of God’s call: a case study

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Abstract:

This case study centers on the issue of the nature of God’s call. The main concern addressed in this study is: How is a person called to the ministry? Related to this main issue are sub-issues: a) what does it mean to be called to the pastoral ministry? b) How is pastoral ministry related to the lay ministry?

The study attempts to provide a biblical and pastoral approach to answer the issues. Research procedures used in this study are description, analysis, interpretation, and pastoral action. The description section includes the presentation of the case, and the introduction. The analysis section includes three chapters. The first focuses on the socio-cultural dynamics, followed by the Filipino family dynamics, and the third describes the ecclesiastical problems. The interpretation section provides biblical exposition on the nature of God’s call in the Bible, the Christian priesthood, and the doctrine of spiritual gifts. The last chapter is a pastoral action based on the synthesis of the preceding chapters.

Chapter 3 is a discussion on different features of Filipino culture that are actively operating in the given case. On feature is acceptance. For a Filipino, acceptance is highly valued. He becomes responsible in a group where he feels a part of it. Another is getting along well with others or pakikisama. A Filipino enjoys togetherness in a group by maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships.
The Filipino family dynamics are discussed in chapter 4. It provides information on the relationship among families in the Philippines, and how their members support cooperate, and respect each other. Filipino families are close-knit, extended, and traceable by lineage.

Chapter 5 presents the basic problems the church faces today. Members generally believe that only by becoming a pastor can a member take part in the life and ministry of the church. Further, they believe that their participation in church activities is not necessary. The pastor does the work of the church while the members remain passive and inactive.

Chapter 6 is a biblical survey of the nature of God’s call. Its approach is to differentiate a general call from a specific call. The general call is God’s call to the body of Christ, the church. In that body, He gives specific calls to individuals to become pastors who, in turn, equip members for their ministry. The calls of some patriarchs, prophets, and apostles are considered to shed light on the characteristics of the nature of God’s call.

The discussion on Christian priesthood is contained in chapter 7. The Old Testament priesthood halted at the death of Christ. His death gives a new dimension to priesthood. In that priesthood, every believer becomes accessible to the throne of God without a human mediator. Thus, Christian priesthood makes every member of the church a minister, or priest, to other members and to the world as a whole. As such, every follower of Christ is entrusted with the Great Commission.

Chapter 8 is devoted to the discussion of the doctrine of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit is a gift to the church members to equip them for ministry. Gifts are tools to be used for the finishing of the work of the church to fulfill the Great Commission to the world. Every believer has at least one gift and each gift represents a ministry, therefore, every possessor of a gift is a minister.
Chapter 9 contains the pastoral action based on the synthesis of the previous chapters. If properly implemented, the pastoral action will bring members of the church into active participation in its work. Three groups are envisioned to be reached by this pastoral action: the lay members, the pastors in the field, and the ministerial students at the college level. A seminar on the theology of laity will give them a wider perspective of their calling and ministry.