Article

Thematic Cultural Exegesis on Selected Filipino Catholic Youth's Perception of the Saints

Philip Joseph Sarmiento

Christian Living Education Department, Institute for Christian Formation and Social Integration, Holy Angel University, Angeles City 2009, Philippines; pjsarmiento@hau.edu.ph

Abstract: This study aims to describe the perspectives of selected Filipino Catholic youth on the saints. A descriptive survey research design was used with two hundred and thirty-seven (237) respondents from two universities in one of the provinces of the Philippines. A validated open-ended survey questionnaire served as a research instrument to gather pertinent data on the perspectives of selected Filipino youth respondents on the saints. Responses from the open-ended survey were transcribed and processed using thematic cultural exegesis. Findings revealed that the perspectives of selected Filipino youth respondents on the saints are as follows: they are devoted/dedicated to God (*Itinataya at ibinubuhos ang sarili sa kalooban ng Diyos*), they help people with their needs (*Tumutulong sa masidhing pangangailangan ng mga tao*), they provide inspiration to follow God's will (*Nagpapakita ng halimbawa ng pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos*), they are models of righteous living (*Isinasalob at pinangangatawanan ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*), they are faithful followers of Christ (*Mga tapat na kinatawan ni Hesus*) and they are witnesses of God's graciousness/benevolence (*Mga bakas ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). This study recommends that persons in charge of formation in schools and parishes may craft a contextualized catechesis that will further develop the perspectives of the Filipino youth in an inculturated way.

Keywords: saints; thematic cultural exegesis; Filipino youth; Catholic faith

Citation: Sarmiento, Philip Joseph. 2021. Thematic Cultural Exegesis on Selected Filipino Catholic Youth's Perception of the Saints. *Religions* 12: 286. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050286>

Academic Editors: Fides del Castillo and Jon Paul Sydnor

Received: 27 February 2021

Accepted: 19 April 2021

Published: 21 April 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Part of the teachings of the Catholic Church is the veneration of the saints. Since the early Christian communities, saints are models in living a way of life as disciples of Jesus Christ. Their influence traces back to the emergence of the cult for the saints with veneration and devotion accorded to them, which became part of the historical and liturgical life of the Church. Furthermore, saints show what holiness means; that is why the Church sees them as models for Christians to imitate. Given the edifying examples of the saints, their stories provide a thought-provoking challenge and encouragement for everyone to review their own spiritual lives. They inspire believers to live holy lives, and they are respected because “they successfully modeled their lives on Jesus’ life” (O’Malley 2000, p. 9). Saints were showcased by the Church who patterned their lives after the person of Jesus Christ, the perfect holiness model.

Through the years, efforts to catechize young people about the saints have been made in the global and local scenarios. The availability of published materials written by scholars, local television, and radio programs such as “Once upon a Saint” by the Family Rosary Crusade (TV Maria 2016) and movies depicting the lives of saints contributes to the development of young people’s knowledge, beliefs, and practices with regard to the saints. In the Philippines, some Filipino theologians, religious educators, writers, and catechists have tried to publish materials in the hope of catechizing the people about the saints. Most of the catechetical materials are focused on the lives of the saints (Diaz de Rivera 2013; Abriol 1957, 1988, 2010; Ramirez and Cruz 1993). Other materials focused on how to pray for the intercession of the saints (Bautista 1975). In addition, biographies of the first two

Filipino saints, namely, St. Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila (Valiente 1989; Tan 2007, 2013) and St. Pedro Calungsod (Arevalo 1988, 1998), were also published. These catechetical materials and broadcast media are essential contributions in catechizing young people about the saints. However, there is a gap within these existing materials—a lack of contextualization to the needs of young people, especially on matters of attitude, context, and, most notably, the culture that they belong to.

Consequently, the Catholic Church's teachings on the saints focus on the role of saints as intercessors, models, and companions that are complementary to one another (Lumen gentium #51). As intercessors, saints pray for the people, especially their intentions, and in turn people also observe devotions and practices to ask for their intercession. As models, saints also invite the faithful to follow their example of living a life patterned after Jesus. As companions, saints continue to be in communion with people as a pilgrim Church here on earth. These roles of the saints can still be prevalent and influential among the Catholic faithful and these can also be traced to the perspective of young people.

1.1. Catholic Church Teachings and Theology of the Saints

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994, #956) highlights the intercessory role of the saints because “they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus . . . So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped”.

The intercessory role of the saints is also connected to their veneration in the Catholic Church. Hence, the *Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments* (2001) issued the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy that discusses the veneration of the Saints and the Blessed “as an ancient ecclesial phenomenon that is rooted in the Scriptures (cf. Act 7, 54–60; Acts 6, 9–11; 7, 9–17) and the practice of the Church of the first half of the second century (265). Both Eastern and Western Churches have always venerated the Saints” (#208). Alexander (1998) articulated that it is important to regard the development of the sanctoral cycle, the liturgical articulation of the cult of saints, as part of the same sense of historical consciousness that gave rise to the temporal cycle of the liturgical year. In addition, O'Malley (2000) explained that the Catholic Church has three levels of praise, namely *latria*, *dulia*, and *hyperdulia*. *Latria*, which means “to worship” in Greek, is given only to the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, *dulia* is attributed to paying honor to the saints and angels. Saints are never worshipped in Catholic liturgical life. Lastly, *hyperdulia* is special praise given to the Blessed Virgin Mary who has the highest honor given to a human person because of her unique role in the Incarnation of Christ. Sullivan (2005) cited that the intercessory role of the saints is ignored today in favor of the saints' role as models of holiness. Sullivan (2014) also explained the views of Rahner and von Balthasar regarding the saints. For Rahner, saints act as mediators of the Mediator while Von Balthasar argues that saints are revealers of the Revealer. She concluded that “the missions of the saints are revelatory in that they re-present the Gospel, and this is a challenge to others to live their own missions consciously dependent upon Christ” (Sullivan 2005, p. 280). Scott (2010) investigated the relationship between miracles of cure and healing and one's devotion to saints such as joining pilgrimages to shrines as an example. Kairaityte (2015) discussed the interplay of folk religion and the cult of saints in Lithuania. For Lithuanians, human religiosity such as joining a pilgrimage to holy places and putting up personal altars at the home are manifestations of beliefs in folk religion and the cult of saints.

1.2. Saints in the Philippine Context

In the Philippine context, the Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC) (*Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines* 1997) No. 697 also highlighted the observation that Filipinos are fond of religious processions, novenas, and numerous devotions to Christ, Mary, and the other Saints. Popular devotions and religiosity are common and are very much alive in the Philippines. Likewise, Abogado (2006) said that among the religious rituals that

Filipinos engaged in with regard to their devotion to saints are three notable practices, namely the *besa manto* (kissing the mantle of the saint's image) and *punas-punas* (wiping the sacred image with a cloth and then applying it to a part of the body), *prusisyon* (participating in religious processions), and *panata* (vows and promises—binding oneself to a vow or pledge). [Alonsozana \(2006\)](#) cited that there are lots of venerated icons in the Philippines, and the images of the saints are among them. Devotional materials and practices related to the religious icons may have contributed to the knowledge and understanding of Filipino Catholics regarding the life of Christ and those of the saints.

Further, Filipinos' veneration of the Saints can be related to faith expressions in connection with the indigenous beliefs before the Spaniards came to colonize the Philippines. [Yalung \(2011\)](#) stated that Filipino Catholicism is deeply rooted in popular religiosity. Filipinos are very much attached to religious devotions including the devotions to the saints. He further explained that saints are also customarily venerated on altars or shrines, a very distinctive Filipino religious practice. However, the real objective of celebrating the feast of saints is the glorification of God. [Masong \(2015\)](#) believes that novena and devotion to Mary and even the saints illustrate the kaleidoscopic Christian faith of the Filipinos, even defining the emergent Filipino Catholicism.

It can be said that central to the Filipino practice of popular Catholicism is fervent attention given to the cult of saints ([Abogado 2006](#)). The National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines (NCDP) highlighted that “the most characteristic aspect of Filipino popular religiosity is devotion to saints ([Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education 1985](#)). This fits well with the Filipino's natural attraction to the concrete, as well as for mediators. The saints, as God's friends and intercessors and models are concrete, individual persons who can be pictured, prayed to—thus the proliferation of statues, images, and pictures of all kinds of the local patron saints in churches, barrio-chapels, and individual homes. The value of devotion to the saints remains high, but the catechetical effort must lead it to more direct link with Christ, the source and goal of each saint's life” (#40). Moreover, the NCDP reiterated that catechesis for a true devotion to Mary can naturally lead to explaining authentic devotion to the saints and the practice of prayer for the deceased saints ([Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education 1985](#)), especially at the “All Souls and All Saints Days.” The Creed which states the “communion of saints” affords a fruitful approach to this typical “Catholic” attitude and perspective. Using the Filipino *sakop* or *samahan* (companionship) as images of the Church, the saints can be understood as members of the spiritual *sakop* or *samahan*, the faithful's intercessors and patrons. Thus, *sakop* or *samahan* can be considered to extend horizontally among the living and vertically from the living men and women to the deceased, to the saints, Mary, and the Father. Accordingly, the Catholic Church in the Philippines sees the devotion to Mary and the saints as part of popular religious practices that Filipinos should continue to foster, however making sure that these devotions are seen in relationship with, and subordination to Christ, the one Mediator between God and humankind ([Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines 1992](#), #174).

1.3. Inculturation to Understand the Saints in the Philippine Context

It is also significant to consider the tenets of inculturation of the Christian faith since this study desires to describe Filipino youth's perspective using thematic cultural exegesis. In understanding the concept of inculturation, it is an important task to consider its definition. [Pope John Paul II \(1990\)](#) in his Apostolic Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* elaborated inculturation as “the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures” (#52). He also cited that “through inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community” (#52). Inculturation means inserting the Gospel into a culture and expressing it through the elements of that culture (PCP II, #207). In the process of inculturation, the Church and culture of a people interact (PCP II, #203). Inculturation

is also “the endeavor and process of making the Gospel relevant and challenging in a particular culture” (de Mesa and Cacho 2012a, p. 186). It is also the rootedness of the Gospel in a culture. Mercado (1997) defines inculturation concerning culture as a dynamic “process and evolves in the history of a people” (p. 3). He also emphasized that he is taking inculturation “in a special sense of contextualization” (p. 4) because some authors take these two terms to mean the same. For him, inculturation is not acculturation, adaptation, contextualization (which stresses on the present context), dynamic equivalence, enculturation, transculturation, or translation. There are essential characteristics of inculturation as a method that need to be considered. Pope John Paul II (1990) stressed that inculturation must follow two principles, to wit, compatibility with the gospel, and communion with the universal Church (Redemptoris Missio #54).

Mercado (1997) also explained some principles of inculturation. The first principle dealt with the reality that inculturation is an integral part of evangelization. The second principle cited that inculturation demands trust in the Holy Spirit. The third principle emphasized the incarnation as the basis of inculturation. The fourth principle mentioned that inculturation is a by-product of faith. The fifth principle highlighted that inculturation is an on-going process. Lastly, Mercado dealt with the norms of inculturated authenticity which incorporated the concept of discernment. de Mesa (2016) cited that culture serves as a primary guide in inculturation. For him, there must be “mutual respect and critical interaction of Judeo-Christian Tradition and the culture” (p. 84). He spelled out that meaningful inculturated theology must take reference to the locally lived experience of people. Culture is indeed a “second-nature to us. Culture is a tradition of experiences” (de Mesa and Cacho 2012a, p. 129). Meanwhile, language plays a significant role in inculturation. Inculturation, in certain aspects, is a linguistic task (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, #208). Pope Paul VI (1975) also considered language as an important consideration in evangelization (Evangelii nuntiandi, #68). de Mesa and Cacho (2012a) also pointed out that inculturation entails “vernacularization.” This means that “language is thought expressed and hence, a culture’s interpretation of what reality is” (p. 132).

Given these realities, this study is motivated to explore the perspectives of Filipino Catholic youth on the saints by employing thematic cultural exegesis as an on-going effort to understand the inculturation of the Christian faith, especially in the Philippine context.

2. Materials and Methods

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design. Survey research “provides a description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell and Creswell 2018, p. 336). The survey method involves asking individuals questions on a topic and then describing their responses (Jackson 2018). This study involved two hundred and thirty-seven (237) Filipino Catholic youth respondents aged 15–24 years old enrolled in college from two universities (a Catholic and a state university) in one of the provinces in the Philippines. An open-ended survey questionnaire was crafted to gather pertinent data regarding the perspectives of the respondents on the saints. In terms of the structure of the survey instrument, the first part elicited the demographic profile of the respondents such as age, gender, religious affiliation, and school affiliation. The second part was composed of three framing open-ended questions on their perspective of the saints. The open-ended questions were answered by the respondents using keywords, sentences, and/or even paragraphs on the space provided in the survey questionnaire. The respondents were also given the option to choose the language that they were most comfortable using in expressing their answers either in Filipino or English.

Respondent’s answers to the open-ended survey questionnaire were analyzed employing thematic cultural exegesis to clarify and explain the themes on the perspectives on the saints based on how the respondents experienced, practiced, and understood them. Filipino lay theologian Dr. Jose M. de Mesa (2016) defines cultural exegesis as an “interpretative activity. It is a form of cultural analysis for the purpose of theological examination and evaluation of the culture . . . As cultural analysis, it explicitly intends to make sense of

the implicit cultural meanings arising from a tradition of experiences that are embodied in specific cultural elements or aspects” (p. 106). Cultural exegesis, as a methodological option for a hermeneutics of appreciation, follows certain attitudinal principles such as (1) it is performed from a given perspective, (2) being aware of one’s own cultural presuppositions and adopting the insider’s point of view, (3) going beyond the cultural stereotypes, and (4) using the vernacular as a key to understanding the culture in its own terms (de Mesa 2016).

3. Results

3.1. Tabulation of Responses

An open-ended survey was conducted among the youth respondents to collate their perspectives on the saints. Tabulation of verbatim responses was performed to easily organize the common ideas and concepts derived from the respondents, as shown in Table 1. Other respondents had multiple answers to questions which were also included in the analysis of results.

Table 1. Tabulation of Responses on the Perspectives of the Saints.

Emerging Concepts	Catholic University Respondents	State University Respondents	Total Frequency of Responses
Devoted/dedicated to God (<i>Itinataya at ibinubuhos ng sarili sa kalooban ng Diyos</i>)	15	13	28
Help people with their needs (<i>Tumutulong sa masidhing pangangailangan ng mga tao</i>)	27	35	62
Provide inspiration to follow God’s will (<i>Nagpapakita ng halimbawa ng pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos</i>)	14	15	29
Models of righteous living (<i>Isinasaloob at pinangangatawanan ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos</i>)	51	37	88
Faithful followers of Christ (<i>Mga tapat na Kinatawan ni Hesus</i>)	32	18	50
Witnesses of God’s graciousness/benevolence (<i>Mga bakas ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos</i>)	28	38	66

As shown in Table 1, results on the tabulation of responses on the perspectives of selected Filipino Catholic youth participants on the saints were presented.

After the tabulation of responses, a thematic cultural exegesis (de Mesa 2016) was employed to analyze the emerging perceptions based on the respondents’ answers to clarify meanings, connotations and denotations embedded or implied in these insights.

3.2. Cultural Exegesis

An open-ended survey was conducted among the youth respondents to collate their perspectives on the saints. Tabulation of verbatim responses was performed to easily organize the common ideas and concepts derived from the respondents, as shown in Table 1.

3.2.1. Devoted/Dedicated to God (*Itinataya at Ibinubuhos ang Sarili sa Kalooban ng Diyos*)

The first emerging concept is that saints are devoted/dedicated to God (*Itinataya at ibinubuhos ang sarili sa kalooban ng Diyos*). Twenty-eight respondents mentioned that the saints’ role is to be devoted/dedicated to God—fifteen from the Catholic University and thirteen from the State University.

Respondents perceived the saints as having strong faith in God (*kinakikitaan ng malakas na pananampalataya sa Diyos*), because they offered their lives (*itinataya ang buhay*) to God as an expression of faith (*paniniwala*). As mentioned by a respondent, “Saints are people who did good and with great devotion to God. Their faith is very strong.” (Respondent No. 48 from the Catholic University). Because of their strong faith as a manifestation of devotion, saints were able to offer their whole self to God. A person who has strong faith will surrender everything to God as a sign of his/her devotion and total dedication.

Many saints have been known to have strong faith in God and they willingly sacrificed even their own lives for God. The first Filipino saint, namely St. Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, offered his life (*itinaya ang buhay*) as a sign of devotion to God. St. Lorenzo Ruiz left Manila together with the Dominican friars in an expedition heading to Japan. During that time, Christians were persecuted in the 17th century. He was captured and tortured by the Tokugawa Shogunate. He was even given the chance to escape on the condition that he would renounce his faith in Jesus Christ. He refused to renounce his faith and said, “If had a thousand lives, I would give them all to the Lord” (*Isang libo man aking buhay, iaalay ko lahat sa Panginoon*). His dedication to God did not falter and that led to his martyrdom. St. Lorenzo Ruiz’s example shows how dedicated and devoted the saints were to God—they were willing to offer their lives for their faith.

Devotion/dedication to God by the saints means sacrificing their own lives for God (*pag-aalay ng buhay para sa Diyos*). Saints offered and sacrificed their lives for God as a form of martyrdom. One respondent mentioned, “They are the ones who devoted their lives to share the teachings of God with other people. They are willing to sacrifice their lives just to maintain their faith” (Respondent No. 26 from the Catholic University). However, sacrificing one’s life can also mean *pagbabagong buhay* (transformation) to follow God’s will (*kalooban ng Diyos*). Devotion to God is not just lip service (*hindi pawang salita lamang*) because it must be concretized by adhering to the will of God (*kalooban ng Diyos*). St. Pedro Calungsod, the second Filipino saint, is an example of how to offer one’s life in following God’s will (*kalooban ng Diyos*). St. Pedro Calungsod was a sacristan and catechist who joined the Spanish Jesuit missionary Fr. Diego de San Vitores (now Blessed) in Guam for missionary work to the Chamorros in the 17th century. He was able to perform his duty as a catechist and that led to the conversion of many Chamorro people to Catholicism. However, an untoward incident that happened was the death of some infants who were baptized by Fr. Diego. Chamorros thought that it was the water used for baptism that led to the death of their young ones. One of the leaders of the community became outraged and attacked Pedro together with Fr. Diego. He was struck with a spear that led to his martyrdom. St. Pedro Calungsod followed God’s will (*kalooban ng Diyos*) even amid danger and surrendered everything to God.

Likewise, the devotion/dedication of saints to God conveys service to God and people (*paglilingkod sa Diyos at kapwa tao*). Serving God and people involves proclaiming the Good News (*pagpapahayag ng Mabuting Balita*) to those who do not know it and by doing good especially to the last, the least, and the lost (*paggawa ng kabutihang*). As cited by one respondent, “They devoted their body, soul, and heart in serving God and other people” (Respondent No. 48 from the Catholic University). Devotion/dedication to God is a sign of commitment to be bearers of Good News and of doing good for others. It is through the commitment of the saints that they were able to fulfill their mission on earth. Saints became committed to serving God and people in various capacities and ministries. To date, many ministries that some well-known saints had established continue to touch the lives of people and to give glory to God. St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta is an example of someone who dedicated her life to God by serving (*paglilingkod*) the sick and the poor. She was able to proclaim the Good News by serving the needy (*paggawa ng mabuti*) with compassion and dedication. Service to God and fellow human beings truly manifests one’s devotion to God (*Sa paglilingkod sa Diyos at kapwa mas nakikita ang tunay na debosyon sa Diyos*).

3.2.2. Help People with Their Needs (Tumutulong sa Masidhing Pangangailangan ng mga Tao)

The second concept is about saints helping people with their needs (*Tumutulong sa masidhing pangangailangan ng mga tao*). Sixty-two respondents support the view that the saints’ role is to help people with their needs—thirty-five from the State University and twenty-seven from the Catholic University.

Respondents perceived that the saints help people with their needs through prayer (*panalangin bilang tulong ng mga santo*), which affirms their intercessory role. One respondent affirmed this perspective when he mentioned that “We can pray through them”

(Respondent No. 24 from the Catholic University). Asking for the prayers of the saints to help people with their needs connotes *pagtitiwala at paniniwala sa Diyos*, which means one is giving up everything in God's hand as an expression of faith. Prayers are expressed through various devotions attributed to the saints (*pagdiriwang ng mga debosyon*) as a means of putting one's trust and belief in God to grant people's needs. People express their prayers to saints in seeking their help by performing devotions such as celebrating feast days and participating processions for saints (*Pamimintuho ng mga tao sa mga santo sa pamamagitan ng pagdiriwang ng mga debosyon*). As articulated by one respondent, "I participate in processions during fiestas. We have images of saints in our house. I call a particular saint when I'm praying. I dance to honor a saint" (Respondent No. 96 from the State University). Respondents believed that saints are helping the people with their needs through their prayers and intercessions (*panalangin bilang tulong ng mga santo*).

Saints help people with their needs through their intercession because they act as messengers to God (*tagapaghatid ng panalangin sa Diyos*). As cited by one respondent, "Because of their faithfulness to God, we ask for their help that they will bring our prayers to God" (Respondent No. 56 from the State University). This observation has been practiced by many Filipinos, who even write their petitions on a piece of paper and put it in front of the altar or at the footstep of sacred images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints. In some pilgrimage sites dedicated to the saints, Mary, and Christ, drop boxes of petition letters are also in place. It is an act of trust (*pagtitiwala*) and confidence (*pananalig*) that saints will bring their petitions to God. That is why there are saints who are considered *pintakasi* (patrons) to specific intentions such as St. Jude Thaddeus who is the patron of hopeless cases and many other saints. Respondents also believed that saints hear people's prayers (*pakikinig sa mga panalangin*) that will eventually be offered to God.

Saints help people with their needs by asking God to perform miracles for them (*paghingi ng milagro sa Diyos*). One respondent said that "Each saint has many works and purposes. The saints are capable of healing sick persons and grant wishes like those who ask for a child or to bear a child. A couple will dance as a form of a petition to the saints which eventually lead to the granting of their petitions." (Respondent No. 87 from the State University). This perspective also connotes that saints respond to the sufferings and trials of people (*pagtugon sa hinaing ng mga tao*). Respondents believe that saints know the dire needs of people (*pangangailangan ng mga tao*) such as the cure for the sick, protection from harm, hearing one's prayers, financial stability for oneself as well as the family, and even the birth of a child.

3.2.3. Provide Inspiration to Follow God's Will (Nagpapakita ng Halimbawa ng Pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos)

The third concept is that saints provide inspiration to follow God's will (*Nagpapakita ng halimbawa ng pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos*). Twenty-nine respondents believed that the saints' role is to inspire people to follow God's will—fifteen from the Catholic university and fourteen from the State University.

Respondents believed that saints lived meaningfully by following the will of God (*makabuluhang pamumuhay ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos*). One respondent mentioned that "I see the saints as an inspiration on how to live my life with meaning" (Respondent No. 17 from the Catholic University). Saints value God's will (*kalooban ng Diyos*) because it is where they draw the meaning of their lives. This is also related to the Filipino concept of the meaning of life (*kahulugan ng buhay*). Saints set the example that it is in God's will that one can find meaning in life (*kahulugan ng buhay sa kalooban ng Diyos*). Because saints lived meaningfully (*makabuluhang buhay*), they showed how to live with God's will (*gabay sa pamumuhay sa kalooban ng Diyos*).

Respondents viewed the saints as a guide for people on how to be obedient to God's will (*pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos*). As stated by a respondent, "They are also symbolized and seen as an inspiration and guide in our daily lives so that we can move forward to the right path where God awaits us" (Respondent No. 9 from the State University). This perspective also connotes that saints serve as inspiration (*nagbibigay inspirasyon*) to

surrender oneself to the will of God (*kalooban ng Diyos*). Following God's will also mean that saints are bringing people to the right path (*gabay sa tamang landas*) through their example. God's will constitute a life of holiness and saints guide people through their examples. In the previous practice of Filipinos, a newborn is given a name based on the saint's namesake whose feast day falls on the birthdate of the child called "*pangangalendaryo*" which means "the choice of first names was dictated by a person's birth date. A Filipino couple was likely to name their baby after the saint whose feast day it was on the child's birthday" (Tope and Nonan-Mercado 2005, p. 83). It is a reminder that the child may emulate the life of the saint whose name they share. That saint will be a personal guide of the child throughout his/her life in following God's will (*pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos*).

Respondents cited that saints are thought to be models of trust in God's will (*huwaran ng pagtitiwala sa kalooban ng Diyos*). One respondent stipulated that "They serve as an inspiration to every Catholic. They are our models to pursue more about our relationship with God" (Respondent No. 13 from the State University). Saints as models of *pagtitiwala sa Diyos* connotes that having faith in God (*may pananampalataya sa Diyos*) requires *malalim na ugnayan sa Diyos* (relationship with God). Filipinos can relate to the saints with their unwavering trust in God.

3.2.4. Models of Righteous Living (Isinasalob at Pinangangatawanan ang Kagandahang-loob ng Diyos)

The fourth concept is saints as models of righteous living (Isinasalob at pinangangatawanan ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos). Eighty-eight respondents considered the saints as models of righteous living—fifty-one from the Catholic University and twenty-seven from the State University.

Respondents believe that the saints serve as role models of living a moral life (*huwaran sa mabuting pamumuhay*). One respondent said that "... the role of the saints in the Catholic Church is to become models so that we will do good" (Respondent No. 48 from the State University). Living a moral life is a challenge but through the example of the saints, they show that it is possible to live ethically (*may pagpapahalagang moral*). Saints do not only internalize what it means to be moral, but they also show a way of life by doing good (*pinangatawanan ng mga santo ang mabuti*).

Respondents perceived the saints as models of righteous living through their holiness (*huwaran sa kabanalan*). Saints are examples of living a holy life. As cited by one respondent, "They are role models for us people of God because of their holiness." (Respondent No. 65 from the Catholic University). The holiness of the saints is an affirmation of their faith in God (*pananampalataya sa Diyos*). Saints are formed by their experiences (*hinubog sa karanasan*), which is why holiness and having faith in God become integral in their ways of life. Saints are ordinary people who attained extraordinary holiness, thereby providing believers the hope that, they too, can attain holiness.

Respondents viewed the saints to possess good qualities (*huwaran sa magandang katangian*). One respondent explained that "Most people want to go to heaven when they die, so people can look up to Saints and they can copy some of the good characteristics that the saints have" (Respondent No. 7 from the State University). These good qualities (*magandang katangian*) connote that saints have internalized God's word (*may pagsasalob sa mga salita ng Diyos*), as shown in their lives (*pangangatawan*). The saints' good qualities inspire people (*inspirasyon sa mga tao*) to live righteously according to God's will (*kalooban ng Diyos*).

3.2.5. Faithful Followers of Christ (Mga Tapat na Kinatawan ni Hesus)

The fifth concept focuses on the saints as faithful followers of Christ (*Mga tapat na kinatawan ni Hesus*). There were fifty respondents who shared the same perspective that saints become models and faithful followers of Christ—thirty-two from the Catholic University and eighteen from the State University.

Respondents perceived the saints as *kinatawan ni Hesus* who sacrifice their own lives to follow Christ (*pag-aalay ng buhay sa pagsunod kay Kristo*). One respondent cited that "The

saints are the individuals who follow the path of Jesus Christ” (Respondent No. 20 from the Catholic University). Offering one’s life (*pag-aalay ng buhay*), as shown by the saints, means that one is ready to serve God (*buhay paglilingkod sa Diyos*)—not necessarily to literally die for God, rather a life of service, especially to others. Meanwhile, other saints are considered martyrs because, during their time, they fought for their faith in Christ (*ipinaglaban ang pananampalataya kay Kristo*), even up to the point of death. Respondents claim that the saints are faithful followers who are willing to sacrifice their own lives for Christ (*pag-aalay ng buhay kay Kristo*).

Respondents identified the saints as faithful disciples of Christ (*tapat na kinatawan ni Kristo*). As articulated by one respondent, “Saints are known as the disciples of Jesus wherein they are remembered because of their goodness and the legacy they left as a footprint” (Respondent No. 29 from the State University). Saints as *tapat na kinatawan ni Kristo*, meaning that they followed the teachings of Christ (*pinangatawanan ang mga aral ni Kristo*), as shown in their ways of life (*pangangatawan*). As such, being a *kinatawan ni Hesus* connotes following his path (*pagsunod sa landas ni Kristo*) in proclaiming the reign of God (*pamamayani ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). Saints are committed to follow Christ in their lives (*Pinangatawanan nila ang pagiging kinatawan ni Kristo*).

Respondents cited that saints serve as paths or models in following Christ (*huwaran sa pagsunod kay Kristo*). One respondent said that “The saints are the individuals who follow the path of Jesus Christ” (Respondent No. 20 from the Catholic University). As models in following the path to Christ, saints proclaimed the words and deeds of Jesus (*ipinahayag ang mga aral at turo ni Hesus*), especially during their lifetime. And because of that, saints make people remember the very memory of Jesus (*ipinapaalaala si Kristo*). In addition, respondents believe that saints are paths or models in following Christ (*huwaran sa pagsunod kay Kristo*). Saints, as paths/models of following Christ, also experienced conversion, which is why they were able to follow Christ in their lives.

3.2.6. Witnesses of God’s Graciousness/Benevolence (Mga Bakas ng Kagandahang-Loob ng Diyos)

The sixth concept highlights the saints as witnesses of God’s graciousness/benevolence (*Mga bakas ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). Sixty-six respondents identified the saints as witnesses of God’s graciousness—thirty-eight from the State University and twenty-eight from the Catholic University.

Respondents viewed the saints as manifestations of God’s goodness (*kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). One respondent mentioned that “They are instruments of kindness from God” (Respondent No. 14 from the Catholic University). Saints are but concrete manifestations of *kagandahang-loob ng Diyos* because they were able to transform themselves into the best that they can be as disciples of Jesus. Respondents perceived the saints as signs of God’s unconditional love (*bakas ng pagmamahal ng Diyos*). As stated by one respondent, “... they are also living proofs of God’s unconditional love for us” (Respondent No. 33 from the Catholic University). God’s unconditional love was proclaimed (*ipinahayag ang pagmamahal ng Diyos*) by the saints through their words, deeds, and teachings because they themselves experienced the love that emanates from God (*nadama ang pagmamahal ng Diyos*).

Respondents recognized the saints as God’s gifts of goodness (*regalo ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). One respondent said that “The saints are the people who did good things when they were still alive” (Respondent No. 75 from the State University). Their examples show people their own potential for goodness and perfection. Saints show that spiritual virtues must transcend flesh and blood. Saints become gifts to the people to show how good God is to humankind. Every person can become holy and be good because God has lavishly given us his *kagandahang-loob*. God’s promise is fulfilled through the example of the saints to show his graciousness to people (*tinutupad ang pangako ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). The gift of goodness (*kagandahang-loob*) that saints showed to people through deeds was their way to preach the teachings of Jesus (*ipinangaral ang mga aral ni Hesus*) through their deeds. Nevertheless, results revealed that respondents perceived the saints

as an expression of God's goodness (*kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). As such, this connotes that saints are signs of God's unconditional love (*bakas ng pagmamahal ng Diyos*).

Further, respondents claimed that saints show God's graciousness and benevolence through their good deeds (*pinangatawanan ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). As cited by one respondent, "The saints are the people who have done good for the society. They are called as the "chosen ones" because of their good deeds" (Respondent No. 96 from the Catholic University). Saints became instruments of God's benevolence (*kasangkapan ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*) because of their good deeds (*paggawa ng kabutihan*). Furthermore, saints are God's gifts of goodness (*regalo ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*) and saints show God's graciousness and benevolence through their good deeds (*pinangatawanan ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). Many saints submitted themselves in service to the Church and the poor (*Pinangatawanan nila ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos sa kanilang buhay paglilingkod*).

3.3. Nuances between the Perspectives of Respondents and the Catholic Church Teachings on the Saints

Certain nuances were observed between the perspectives on the saints of selected respondents and the current official teachings of the Catholic Church. Common elements were present but there were also some nuances between the perspectives of selected respondents and the official teachings of the Catholic Church regarding saints.

3.3.1. Saints as Miracle Workers

Some respondents believed that saints were the ones exhibiting and performing miracles especially those whose prayers were granted through the intercession of the saint/s such as cure of sickness, passing the board exam, financial stability, granted work abroad, and the like. As mentioned by a respondent, "These Saints are those people who are gifted to make miracles among people" (Respondent No. 85 from the Catholic University). This nuance may be influenced by the native Filipino belief in indigenous spirits, namely anitos, who were replaced with the saints by the Spanish missionaries. Anitos were thought to have direct access to God, called *Bathala* (Jocano 1998), and they were perceived to perform with *bisa*. However, the official teaching of the Catholic Church conveys that God alone is the one performing miracles. Saints only intercede for the prayers of the people because it is the most exalted service of the saints to God's plan (CCC, #2683). They are not the ones performing miracles but because of their intercession, God may grant miracles.

From a cultural standpoint, respondents believed in the Filipino concept of *sakop* or *samahan* as images of the Church. The saints can be understood as members of the spiritual *sakop* or *samahan*, the faithful's intercessors, and patrons (Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education 1985). Saints and the faithful form part of the *sakop* or *samahan* who exhibit the value of cooperation and helping each other in times of need. Saints, through their prayers, are noted to help people in dire need. This is part and parcel of *pakikisama sa Samahan kay Kristo*.

3.3.2. Confusion between Adoration and Veneration of the Saints

Some respondents stated that they adore the saints, especially when they pray to them. As mentioned by one respondent, "We worship and believe the statues of saints. In every place especially among Catholics, there are saints whom we worship" (Respondent No. 80 from the Catholic University). Selected respondents appear to be confused by the distinction between adoration and veneration. Because of the favors granted through the intercession of the saints, some selected participants believed that they need to adore them because of their power to grant prayers. However, granting prayers is solely attributed to God and He must be the one to be adored and to be given praise. The teachings of the Catholic Church explain that only God is the one to be adored (*latria*), while Mary and the saints are to be venerated (*hyperdulia* and *dulia*) (O'Malley 2000).

Nevertheless, the Filipinos revere God and everything associated with Him. The Filipino traditional belief in the *anitos* as divine beings who are connected with *Bathala*

explains seemingly adoring the saints. As explained by [de Mesa \(2011\)](#), “the striking similarity between the roles of the indigenous spirits and the Catholic saints as understood by the native population illustrates this. Though officially presented by the Church as particular models of holiness, the saints are regarded like the spirits who are asked to grant favors, to refrain from inflicting harm or remove the harm they had inflicted. Interest in the powers of the spirits spills over to what the saints are capable of doing” (p. 60).

3.3.3. Images of Saints as Amulets and Lucky Charms

Some respondents viewed the saints in association with their images or sculptures placed inside churches and homes. For them, images of saints are very powerful representations that can bring about good luck, miracles of cure, and protection from harm. One respondent believed that representations bearing the image of the saint bring protection (e.g., evil spirits); as she explained, “We had a retreat and they gave us St. Benedict’s necklace. There are souls in the retreat house, but I always believe that St. Benedict will protect me that is why I am safe and did not see anything like others” (Respondent No. 16 from the Catholic University). The belief that wiping the images of saints brings cures and protection was also articulated by another participant, who stated that “I wipe my handkerchief to the image of the saints and afterward wipe it into the aching part of my body” (Respondent No. 67 from the State University). This belief manifests that some respondents were not well informed in terms of the purpose of the images in the Catholic Church, especially those of Jesus, Mary, and other saints. It is certainly true that Filipino Catholics are very much attracted to the images of Christ, Mary, and the saints (CFC, #892).

The teaching of the Catholic Church reminds the faithful that images of the saints are devotional aids to bring the faithful to prayer and not as mere amulets and lucky charms. As cited in CCC No. 1162, “the beauty of the images moves [the faithful] to contemplation, as a meadow delights the eyes and subtly infuses the soul with the glory of God . . . the contemplation of sacred icons . . . enters into the harmony of the signs of celebration so that the mystery celebrated is imprinted in the heart’s memory and is then expressed in the new life of the faithful.”

In the Filipino cultural context, Filipinos culturally need images in their worship, and they have notable practices such as the *besa manto* (kissing the mantle of the saint’s image) and *punas-punas* (wiping the sacred image with a cloth and then applying it to a part of the body) ([Abogado 2006](#)). [Beltran \(1987\)](#) also explained that “these images provide ultimacy to the people, provide a visual expression of what they believe and feel, and move them forward to dimensions of consciousness not directly accessible to discursive thought” (p. 127). Through the images of saints, Filipinos feel the presence of God by looking, touching, and giving reverence.

3.3.4. No Detailed Knowledge of the Saints

Some respondents stated that they do not know who the saints are. As cited by one respondent, “I honestly have no idea who the saints are. I am familiar with a couple of names (common names) that are considered as saints but I’m not knowledgeable about them” (Respondent No. 77 from the Catholic University). Further, another respondent was also confused, as he mentioned “No, honestly I don’t really know the saints well some of them I am familiar, but I cannot fully describe the saints” (Respondent No. 52 from the Catholic University).

This shows that selected respondents were not knowledgeable regarding the saints even though the Church and the community they belong to have been performing devotions and practices related to the saints.

The official teaching of the Catholic Church reminds us that saints are categorized according to their way of discipleship, especially in following the Lord Jesus. Saints, no matter how they are categorized, must all lead us to Jesus Christ. The saints responded to the call of Christ to discipleship. There are many witnesses to true discipleship that best exemplified what it means to follow Jesus Christ. These witnesses are but the saints.

Saints are also considered fellow disciples (McBrien 1994). Christ himself commissioned his disciples to continue his work (cf. Matthew 28:19).

4. Discussion

Results of the thematic cultural exegesis of the perspective of youth respondents on the saints showcase six (6) overarching concepts.

First, the devotion/dedication of saints to God (*Itinataya at ibinubuhos ang sarili sa kalooban ng Diyos*) is related to the concept of pagsasaloob in the context of faith. de Mesa and Cacho (2012b) cited that “faith is the pagsasaloob and pangangatawan of God’s kagandahang-loob” (p. 96). Pagsasaloob connotes risk (*pagtataya ng sarili*) and absorption of self with something (*pagbubuhos ng sarili*). Devotion/dedication to God must entail pagsasaloob. Saints were concrete examples of pagsasaloob because they did not falter even when there were risks (*pagtataya*) involved and they let themselves be absorbed (*pagbubuhos ng sarili*) by the faith they have in God. Truly, saints are devoted/dedicated to God (*Ang mga santo ay may pagtataya at pagbubuhos ng sarili sa Diyos*).

Second, saints help people with their needs (*Tumutulong sa masidhing pangangailangan ng mga tao*). In the Filipino context, the intercessory role of saints is related to the influence of the native Filipino belief in the indigenous spirits, namely anitos, who were replaced by the Spanish missionaries with the saints. Anitos were thought to have direct access to God, called *Bathala*, who was difficult to reach and that is why the early pre-colonial Filipinos appealed to and asked for their intercession (Jocano 1998). There are similarities between the roles of indigenous spirits and Catholic saints, as understood by the native population, such as granting favors, and inflicting and removing harm. Of course this explains why many Filipino Catholics have high regard for the saints, as they believe that God will grant their petition through their intercession (de Mesa 2011). Hence, saints help people with their needs, and even prayers affirm the teachings of the Catholic Church that saints are companions, for example, as “we seek from the saints’ fellowship in their communion” (Lumen gentium, #51). Helping one another in times of need is also a concrete manifestation of Filipino values such as *pakikisama* (willingness to share with others), *samahan*, and *bayanihan* (CFC, #792). Respondents’ perspective that saints help people with their needs relates to the Filipino value of *pagdadamay* as one of the building blocks of truly having a Christian community, a genuine *pagsasamahang Kristiyano* (NCDP, #28).

Third, saints provide inspiration to follow God’s will (*Nagpapakita ng halimbawa ng pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos*). As Filipinos, “the attitude of trust in God is echoed in the traditional Filipino attitude of *Bahala na*” (CFC #1158). *Bahala na*, in a positive sense, is a “deep trust in God’s care” (PCP II, #435–438). Throughout their lives, saints have shown that they deeply trusted God.

Fourth, saints are models of righteous living (*Isinasaloob at pinangangatawan ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). They showcase the concept of Filipino theological ethics in connection with pangangatawan by living beautifully as a way of Christian discipleship (de Mesa and Cacho 2012c). Righteous living can be related to the concept of “*ganda*”, which also means ethically right (de Mesa and Cacho 2012c). Saints lived righteously because they always sought to live beautifully (*magandang pamumuhay*) and “we consider the behavior or action as ethically good (*mabuti sa larangan ng pagpapakatao*)” (de Mesa and Cacho 2012c, p. 20). Everyone is encouraged to follow the example of the saints even in the ordinariness of life. This means that the saints’ virtuous lives showcase their examples even within ordinary life circumstances (Pope Francis 2014). Having a virtuous life can be observed in ordinary lives, as demonstrated by many saints in the past such as the example of St. Therese of Lisieux. More so, to live beautifully (*pangangatawan in relation to loob and ganda*), as exemplified by the holiness of the saints, one must set his/her mind (*tutukan ng isip at damdamin*) and heart and claim it as one’s own (*akuin*) (Cacho 2019). Saints are faithful disciples and this is why they possess essential characteristics in following Jesus. Christian disciples are followers of Christ and that is rooted in one’s Christian identity (PCP II, #34).

Fifth, saints, as faithful followers of Christ (*Kinatawan ni Hesus*), can be understood more deeply in connection with the concept of *pangangatawan* as discipleship. [de Mesa and Cacho \(2012c\)](#) explained that the concept of *pangangatawan* is intertwined with *pagsasaloob* because they are mutually connected. *Pangangatawan* presupposes *pagsasaloob* and vice versa. *Pangangatawan* is giving of the whole self, including the *loob*. Hence, *pangangatawan* is discipleship, especially to those who are following Jesus by embodying his spirit in the world. Disciples are considered as “*kinakatawan ng diwa ni Hesus*” ([de Mesa and Cacho 2012c](#), p. 80). Saints embodied their commitment as faithful disciples of the life and mission of Jesus (*Pinangatawanan ng mga santo ang buhay at misyon ni Hesus*). This means that a saint as a disciple must act like Jesus himself especially his words and deeds (cf. Mark 9: 33–50; 10: 42–45). [Cacho \(2019\)](#) also pointed out that “the call of discipleship entails a wholehearted commitment to follow Jesus in his singular dedication to quality life and service to the disinherited even when they may be risks of rejection and opposition in the world” (p. 94). This concept means that, aside from martyrdom (being killed because of one’s faith), sacrificing one’s life in following Jesus as his disciple entails a total commitment to his mission of proclaiming God’s kingdom. Hence, saints are also concrete examples of following Jesus. To follow Christ, there must be conversion. It is a transformation of the mind, and is very much connected with discipleship, because it makes following Christ possible (CFC, #958).

Saints are witnesses of God’s graciousness/benevolence (*Mga bakas ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*) and this constitutes the idea of *kagandahang-loob*, i.e., the “lavish benevolence of God that far exceeds human expectations” ([de Mesa and Cacho 2012c](#), p. 85). Saints, as witnesses of God’s graciousness, are living proofs of that overwhelming and extravagant love (*Ang mga santo ay mga bakas ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). This finding can be related to the concept of *kagandahang-loob*, which is the Filipino theological concept of *agape*, which “denotes a love that is oriented towards the well-being of the beloved” ([de Mesa and Cacho 2012b](#), p. 61). God as *kagandahang-loob* is experienced by the saints in their lives because they were compelled to surrender everything and follow God’s will. The love of the saints for God brings well-being to people (*lubos na kaginhawaan*) as they fulfill their mission as part of the *Samahan kay Hesus* ([de Mesa and Cacho 2012b](#)).

Meanwhile, cultural grounding on the perspectives of respondents and the official teachings of the Catholic Church on the saints is considered an important point of reference in understanding and appreciating the nuances. The perspectives of respondents present their cultural and experiential presuppositions as to how they view the saints in their lives. It can be observed that respondents focused on their experiences regarding the role and identity of saints rather than their knowledge of them. These nuances are not questioning as to how the respondents must know the saints but rather focused on how they experienced them in their lives as Catholics. Filipinos express and understand their faith through “felt experience.” Likewise, the [Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines \(1999\)](#) in its pastoral letter cited the reality of felt experience in our Filipino spirituality as stipulated, “It also reflected on our popular customs which express our desire to touch, smell, to be close to the sacred and the holy.” [de Mesa and Cacho \(2012b\)](#) pointed out the significance of experience in understanding concepts of faith; “Filipino theologizing should attend to themes that arise from concrete local experiences and not import both theological questions and answers from the West” (p. 24). In addition, [Cacho \(2019\)](#) also stressed the significance of *pandama* (integrative sensing) as a starting point to faith within the Filipino culture.

Based on the results of the thematic cultural exegesis, the need to develop a contextualized catechesis on the saints for Filipino Catholic youth is a response to the on-going efforts to bring the gospel message closer to its recipients. Theologians, religious educators, catechists and even the clergy, especially those who handle formation among young people in schools and parishes, are encouraged to develop a contextualized catechesis for teaching on the saints following the universal and local Church directories on catechesis. [Pope John Paul II \(1979\)](#) reiterated that the primary and essential object of catechesis is to lead the person into the mystery of Christ (*Catechesi tradendae*, #5). The proposed

contextualized catechesis for the Catholic youth takes into consideration the observations given by the NNCDP (New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines) ([Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines 2007](#), #413–415) in terms of Catechesis for Youth, to wit, (a) youth is an age of increasing spiritual interest and insight, of searching for authentic values and increased responsibility, and (b) youth catechesis, then, must speak to their level of thinking, questioning, and searching. There are also interrelated goals of youth catechesis such as (1) proclaim the Gospel message, (2) pursue opportunities for service, and (3) promote group communal worship, with all contributing toward (4) creating a particular Christian youth community.

The proposed contextualized catechesis must be anchored with the tenets of inculturation, which means inserting the Gospel into a culture and expressing it through the elements of that culture (PCP II, #207). Hence, the proposed catechesis must be developed as authentically Filipino, that is truly inculturated (PCP II, #210). The NNCDP also emphasized catechetical methodology principles—catechesis must be integrated, inculturated, and community forming ([Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines 2007](#), #356–404).

The contents of the proposed contextualized catechesis must observe three essential dimensions of the Christian faith, namely doctrine, morals, and worship ([Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines 2007](#), #213). Doctrine focuses on the creed and teachings of what individuals believe. Morals direct how persons can freely act by being witnesses, following commandments, and becoming beatitudes. Worship emphasizes why and how the faithful pray by celebrating the liturgy and sacraments. These three dimensions reflect the interconnected link of the Christian Faith which is also situated in the Filipino context. The NNCDP ([Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines 2007](#), #213) illustrates that “all three dimensions of Christian Faith are treated specifically in terms of the concrete Philippine cultural and religious context. They are viewed from the perspective of catechesis and in terms of God’s Self-revelation today and the Filipino’s response of faith.”

5. Conclusions

The perspectives of Filipino Catholic youth respondents on the saints are focused on the (a) role of saints—they are devoted/dedicated to God (*Itinataya at ibinubuhos ang sarili sa kalooban ng Diyos*), help people with their needs (*Tumutulong sa masidhing pangangailangan ng mga tao*), provide inspiration to follow God’s will (*Nagpapakita ng halimbawa ng pagtalima sa kalooban ng Diyos*), and are models of righteous living (*Isinasaloob at pinangangatawanan ang kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*); (b) unique characteristics of the saints as Jesus’ disciples—faithful followers of Christ (*Mga tapat na kinatawan ni Hesus*) and witnesses of God’s graciousness/benevolence (*Mga bakas ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos*). Nuances were observed between the perspectives of Filipino Catholic youth respondents and the current official teachings of the Catholic Church such as saints as miracle workers, adoration of the saints, using images of the saints as amulets and lucky charms, and having no knowledge of the saints. These nuances are expressions of Filipino cultural upbringing of faith rooted in indigenous beliefs and interpreted as felt experiences through the lens of *pandama* as integrative sensing. Persons in charge of formation in schools and parishes may craft a contextualized catechesis on the saints that will bridge the gap between the nuances in the perspectives of Filipino Catholic youth respondents in correspondence with the official teachings of the Catholic Church.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Holy Angel University, Angeles City, Philippines (Protocol Code: 2019-062-PDSARMIENTO-CONCATECHESIS, Date of Approval: October 22, 2019).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to acknowledge the respondents of the study. He would also like to recognize the Theology and Religious Education Department of De La Salle University-Manila for allowing him to pursue this study as part of his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education major in Religious Education and Values Education.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Abogado, Jannel. 2006. The Cult of Saints among Filipino Catholics: A Study of Inculturation. *Philippiniana Sacra* 41: 499–541.
- Abriol, Jose C. 1957. *Talambuhay ng Mga Santo*. Manila: Catholic Trade School.
- Abriol, Jose C. 1988. *Talambuhay ng Mga Santo*. Pasay City: Saint Paul's Publication.
- Abriol, Jose C. 2010. *Talambuhay ng Mga Santo*, 3rd ed. Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, vols. 1 and 2.
- Alexander, J. Neal. 1998. Rejoice in the Glorious Company of the Saints. *Liturgy* 14: 1–16. [CrossRef]
- Alonsozana, Venicris M. 2006. The Role of Religious Icons in a Catholic Worship and Liturgy in the Philippine Setting. Ph.D. dissertation, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines.
- Arevalo, Catalino. 1988. *Pedro Calungsod: Young Visayan Proto-Martyr*. Pasay City: Paulines Philippines.
- Arevalo, Catalino. 1998. *Pedro Calungsod: The Visayan Proto-Martyr in Tumhon, Guam, April 2, 1672*. Manila: Mater Dei Publications.
- Bautista, Juan S. 1975. *Paano Magdasal sa Mga Santo*. Quezon City: Prentice Hall.
- Beltran, Benigno. 1987. *The Christology of the Inarticulate: An Inquiry into the Filipino Understanding of Jesus the Christ*. Manila: Divine Word Publications.
- Cacho, Rebecca. 2019. *A legacy Bequeathed: Foundational Theology*. Manila: St. Scholastica's College.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). 1994. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM (accessed on 8 December 2018).
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. 1992. *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II)*. Manila: CBCP Secretariat.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. 1997. *Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)*. Manila: ECCE Word & Life Publications.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. 1999. *Pastoral Letter on Filipino Spirituality*. Available online: http://www.cbcponline.net/documents/1990s/1999-filipino_spirituality.html (accessed on 26 November 2018).
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. 2007. *New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines (NNCDP)*. Manila: CBCP.
- Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. 2001. Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines. Available online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html#ChapterSix (accessed on 26 November 2018).
- Congregation for the Clergy. 1997. General Directory for Catechesis. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html (accessed on 13 October 2018).
- Creswell, John, and J. David Creswell. 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication.
- de Mesa, Jose, and Rebecca Cacho. 2012a. *Becoming Church Being Sacrament: A Filipino Ecclesiology for Students*. Manila: St. Scholastica's College.
- de Mesa, Jose, and Rebecca Cacho. 2012b. *In Love with God: Doing Theology for College Students*. Manila: St. Scholastica's College.
- de Mesa, Jose, and Rebecca Cacho. 2012c. *When Beauty Beckons: Theological Ethics of Filipino Aesthetics*. Manila: St. Scholastica's College.
- de Mesa, Jose. 2011. Christianity and Culture in Asia. In *Studies in Religion and Theology: Issues and Perspectives*. Edited by Rito Baring. Quezon City: Central Book Supply, Inc., pp. 53–69.
- de Mesa, Jose. 2016. *Jose de Mesa: A Theological Reader*. Manila: De La Salle University Press.
- Diaz de Rivera, Lina. 2013. *The Lighter Side of the Saints*. Mandaluyong: Anvil Publishing, Inc.
- Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education. 1985. *Maturing in Christian Faith: National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines (NCDP)*. Pasay: St. Paul Publications.
- Jackson, Sherri. 2018. *Research Methods and Statistics: A Critical Thinking Approach*, 5th ed. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Jocano, Felipe. L. 1998. *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage*. Quezon City: PUNLAD Research House.
- Kairaityte, Ausra. 2015. Folk religion and cult of saints in Lithuanian rural culture at the beginning of the 21st century. *SOTER Journal of Religious Science* 54: 37–54. [CrossRef]
- Masong, Kenneth. 2015. Popular Religiosity and the Emergent Filipino Catholicism: Process Themes and the Challenges of Faith Inculturation. *Pamisulu: Interdisciplinary Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 3: 1–11.
- McBrien, Richard. 1994. *Catholicism: New Edition*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- Mercado, Leonardo. 1997. *Doing Filipino Theology*. Manila: Divine Word Publications.
- O'Malley, Vincent. 2000. *Ordinary Suffering of Extraordinary Saints*. Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.
- Pope Francis. 2014. Pope at Audience: The Universal Call to Holiness. Available online: http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/11/19/pope_at_audience_the_universal_call_to_holiness/1111603 (accessed on 30 December 2018).
- Pope John Paul II. 1990. Apostolic Encyclical "Redemptoris Missio". Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html (accessed on 13 May 2019).

- Pope John Paul II. 1979. Apostolic Exhortation “Catechesi Tradendae”. Available online: http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html (accessed on 22 December 2019).
- Pope Paul VI. 1975. Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii Nuntiandi”. Available online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (accessed on 13 May 2019).
- Ramirez, Josefino, and Reginald Cruz. 1993. *Modern-Time Prophets of Contradiction: Models of Holiness for Contemporary Christians*. Manila: Archdiocese of Manila.
- Scott, Robert. 2010. *Miracle Cures: Saints, Pilgrimage, and the Healing Powers of Belief*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sullivan, Patricia. 2005. A reinterpretation of invocation and intercession of the saints. *Theological Studies* 66: 381–400. [CrossRef]
- Sullivan, Patricia. 2014. Saints as the Living Gospel: Von Balthasar’s Revealers of the Revealer, Rahner’s Mediators of the Mediator. *The Heythrop Journal* 55: 270–85. [CrossRef]
- Tan, Susan. 2007. *The Martyrdom of St. Lorenzo Ruiz: A Historical Novel*. Pasay City: Paulines Philippines.
- Tan, Susan. 2013. *Martyred: The Story of St. Lorenzo Ruiz*. Pasay City: Paulines Philippines.
- Tope, Lily Rose, and Detch Nonan-Mercado. 2005. *Culture of the World: Philippines*. Tarrytown: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark.
- TV Maria. 2016. Teens-Once Upon a Saint. Available online: <https://tvmaria.ph/project/teens/> (accessed on 12 June 2020).
- Valiente, Ethel. 1989. *Lorenzo Ruiz: Ang Unang Santong Martyr ng Pilipinas*. Manila: San Lorenzo Ruiz Society, Inc.
- Yalung, Oliver. 2011. Veneration of Saints in Popular Religiosity. *Pamisulu: Interdisciplinary Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 1: 29–49.