

# **The El Shaddai Prayer Movement: Political Socialization in a Religious Context**

**GRACE GOROSPE-JAMON**

## **Introduction**

This study examines political socialization in a religious context, a terrain that is largely unexplored in studies on political socialization. Given the paucity of scientific studies on religious movements, this study hopes to contribute to an understanding of the evolution, internal dynamics, and socialization process within these movements towards a more precise reading of their behavior in the larger society and their potential impact on the politics of the nations of which they are a part.

Political socialization is seen here as involving a process by which the individual comes to internalize or learn certain politically relevant social patterns – group norms, attitudes, behaviors, corresponding to his societal position as mediated or transmitted to him through the various agencies of society. It is the process through which individuals acquire their political orientations, knowledge, feelings and evaluations regarding the political world.<sup>1</sup> This definition regards political socialization as an interactive process between the individual being socialized and the societal agents involved in the process. A person's "political self", while partly determined by society and its agents, is also influenced by factors that are more personal to the individual. These factors constitute the forms and workings of the political system in which one belongs, the types and experiences and relationships one has with other

individuals or groups, as well as the personal needs and capacities of the individual.

Socialization need not be about politics, as may be commonly perceived by others, in order to include political socialization.<sup>2</sup> It can be direct or indirect. Primary agents of socialization, for example, such as the family, school, peers and political events have been established in the literature on socialization as important agents of political socialization even when politics is never discussed.

In this context, religious movements/groups may also serve as one of the most potent venues for further socialization. Where what is required of the member is a "conversion of the heart," the transformation sought in the believer is meant to be more than the mere adoption of externals that might be accepted one day and discarded the next. This is very crucial in the socialization process, as there seems to be a systematic and purposive attempt by the religious movement to imbibe in the members "a basic re-orientation in premises and goals, a wholehearted acceptance of a new set of values affecting the convert or his group, day in day out, twenty four hours a day, and in practically every sphere of activity-economic, social and religious."<sup>3</sup>

Studies on the multidimensional aspect of religion and its impact on political action lend insights into the nature and role of political socialization in a religious context and also its impact on political behavior. Wald, for instance, considers religion as an important political resource. He regards religiously based resources as "qualities possessed by religiously motivated people that can prove valuable in political action."<sup>4</sup> Religious motivation may either encourage political activism

by fostering personal and group efficacy or may likewise stimulate action through morally perceived political issues. This is seen as likely to occur when political issues are articulated in moral terms, mobilizing religiously motivated actors or candidates for or against issues that promote moral perspective. Seen as a cognitive or psychological resource, Wald underscores that "religious ideals are potentially powerful sources of commitment and motivation, such that human beings will make enormous sacrifices if they believe themselves to be driven by a divine force."<sup>5</sup>

Hence, this particular case study on El Shaddai hopes to enhance a deeper understanding not only of its theology and organization, but also of its role in Philippine society, specifically, in Philippine politics. Given its unique characteristics as an indigenous religious movement, this study on El Shaddai also aims to shed light into the process behind its phenomenal rise and its attraction among the masses, which largely has a bearing on its capability to mobilize the people.

### **Global Religious Resurgence**

The past two decades have witnessed a religious resurgence, which swept across countries of varying status around the world. This phenomenon, recognizing no boundaries, has pervaded every continent, every civilization and virtually every country, and the Philippines is no exception. A new religious approach is seen to have taken shape aimed at "recovering a sacred foundation in the organization of society,"<sup>6</sup> sometimes finding its way through the emergence and growth of charismatic and fundamentalist movements. This trend, which began in the mid-1970s, veered away from secularization and toward the resacralization of modern society. Expressed in a

multitude of ways, particularly through the growth of religious movements, this approach advocated moving on from a modernism that had failed because of setbacks that were attributed to separation from God.<sup>7</sup>

Viewed as a reaction to secularism, moral relativism and self-indulgence, and as a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help and human solidarity, religious groups began to be viewed as an alternative – as entities that provide social needs left unattended by state bureaucracies.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, in the event of failure on the part of traditionally dominant religions – the Roman Catholic Church in the case of the Philippines – to meet the people's emotional and social needs, these groups offer a relief to such worldly frustrations. In the process, they greatly expand their memberships. Huntington, in his book, advances that by virtue of their phenomenal growth and sheer number, they increase the saliency of religion in political life.<sup>9</sup> To a large extent, this religious resurgence involved people returning to, reinvigorating, and giving new meaning to the traditional religions of their communities. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Orthodoxy all experienced new surges in commitment, relevance and practice by erstwhile casual believers. In all of them fundamentalist movements arose, committed to the militant purification of religious doctrines and institutions and the reshaping of personal, social, and public behavior in accordance with religious tenets.<sup>10</sup>

### **Religious Revivalism and Politics in the Philippine Context**

Indeed, even the Philippines has witnessed this remarkable resurgence of religious fervor especially in the last decade. This

phenomenon, in fact, prompted the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) to convene a national consultation on the new religious movements (NRMs) in the Philippines. This was done as early as a decade ago, in an attempt to make sense out of this burgeoning movement in the Philippine social landscape.<sup>11</sup> This consultation focused on a kind of revivalism that is happening, not within the mainline orthodox Catholic and Protestant churches, but among newly emergent Catholic charismatic groups, such as “The Loved Flock” and “El Shaddai” and Protestant born-again groups, such as the equally influential “Jesus is Lord” Fellowship and “Jesus Miracle Crusade”.

As such, Christian churches share a general feeling of unease over the threat posed by this new kind of religiosity outside the domain of mainline churches. While others within these churches consider them as a pastoral challenge, others sometimes look at them with suspicion and sometimes with considerable hostility. Yet because of the sheer number of these movements, a resource that cannot be underestimated especially in a democratic context, both church<sup>12</sup> and state have long recognized their political potential. The fact that candidates in electoral contests, such as those who ran in the May 1998 presidential elections, sought the endorsements of these movements’ leaders may be considered as fitting testimonies to the political influence these groups currently wield. The calls for their involvement and participation in issue-based protests may also be indicative of the importance of religion in Philippine political life at present.

Given the importance of religion in Philippine politics today, a closer look at the internal structures, dynamics and processes of some of these religious movements is deemed

necessary. A similar level of attention to a movement's religious beliefs, the values it propagates and the attitudes derived from its membership, also becomes relevant to a more informed and deeper understanding of the role of religion in contemporary Philippine politics.

Given this context, the study of the El Shaddai DWXI - Prayer Partners Foundation International, Incorporated (PPFI) as a Catholic Charismatic group, touted now as the biggest charismatic group not only in the Philippines but all over the world is thus deemed not only essential but timely as well. As acknowledged by its founder and servant-leader, Brother Mariano "Mike" Velarde himself, "the movement is now acting as a catalyst of religious fervor, which is happening now... it could be considered as a spiritual reawakening"<sup>13</sup> and as a reflection of the First Community of believers in Christ.

### **The El Shaddai Prayer Movement: Political Context**

The El Shaddai Prayer Movement is considered as one of the most powerful religious groups today. Claiming a constituency of eight to ten million members worldwide, and given its phenomenally rapid growth since its inception in 1984, El Shaddai has figured prominently not only as a large charismatic movement but as a potentially important power bloc in Philippine politics as well. The May 1998 presidential elections saw candidates seeking the support of El Shaddai in an effort to win Velarde's endorsement and, quite possibly, tilt the election results in their favor. One of the most open verbal recognitions of the kind of influence this religious movement wields is vividly captured in a statement made by President Joseph Estrada on the eve of his election as 13th President of

the Philippine Republic when he said: "Brother Mike Velarde is more influential than Cardinal Sin, that's why I'm choosing him as my spiritual adviser and with him around, the country can't go wrong."<sup>14</sup>

This salience in politics seems to have become a common fare for El Shaddai, as evident in their involvement in three other political events and mobilizations. The fact that their support had been solicited in several instances can be a relatively strong indicator of the increasing political potential of this group. El Shaddai's active participation in these events, however, has sometimes made its relationship with the Church all the more ambiguous. Given that, in the past, many in the Catholic hierarchy were cynical of the phenomenal growth of the movement, El Shaddai preferred to take as neutral a stance as possible in sensitive issues concerning the Church.

These events, wherein El Shaddai's involvement was likewise well-sought, could be classified into two types of political exercises: (1) elections and (2) issue-based political mobilizations.

In the May 1992 elections,<sup>15</sup> Velarde invited all the presidential candidates to an overnight prayer rally as he did later on during the national elections in 1998. Some 1.5 million El Shaddai followers were then present when Velarde, in yet another trademark now attributed to him, indicated his preference for Fidel Ramos<sup>16</sup> by giving a hint to those present at the vigil. This unique communication style, either through passwords or body language,<sup>17</sup> has sometimes caused Velarde to be earmarked as being ambiguous, if not, elusive.

During the pro-life rally initiated by the Roman Catholic Church against the Ramos administration's population control policy, El Shaddai's position once again became an object of contention. In an effort to reconcile the Church and former Pres. Fidel Ramos after a series of publicized bitter exchanges between the latter and Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, Velarde led the people in a prayer for the unity of the Church and the State on the issue.<sup>18</sup> This event proved to be very significant as El Shaddai was known to have become extremely close with the former president, whose policy was then being questioned by the Church on the grounds of morality.

El Shaddai also showed prominence during the Anti-Charter Change Rally held in 1995. Cardinal Sin, together with former Pres. Corazon Aquino, initiated this rally which was aimed at countering moves speculated to have been instigated by Ramos' supporters to enable him to run for a second term. This event, believed to be the culmination of efforts to oppose moves seeking for the rather "untimely" amendment of the constitution, provided yet another venue for El Shaddai to demonstrate its potential as an influential political actor. Probably attempting not to provoke either the Church or the State, El Shaddai went to the rally without an "official stand". In explaining the position of the movement on the issue, Velarde contended that they at El Shaddai believe that Ramos "will be true to his pronouncements that a peaceful and honest election and a smooth turnover of power will take place in 1998."<sup>19</sup>

Given its prominence as a "Catholic" charismatic movement and its almost indisputable potential as a political bloc, El Shaddai poses a challenge to the traditional mode of power brokers in the country. Who is Bro. Mike Velarde that he has



drawn millions of people to him? By what authority does he preach? How and why has the movement gained so much following both here and abroad? What are its religious beliefs and how are the followers socialized into these beliefs? What are the rituals, activities and religious practices engaged in by the movement that facilitates this process? Do these beliefs have any bearing on the manner in which members view politics? What are their values and political attitudes? To what extent do these activities and rituals constitute the avenues in the acquisition of certain political values, perceptions and attitudes? These are only some of the questions that come to mind as one reflects on the increasing political potential of this group.

### **Evolution and Its Historical Context**

The understanding of any religious movement normally begins with the global and domestic context of its inception and the story of its founder. The leader's "transformation" story, which usually coincides with an episode of social unrest, is usually bound up with the appreciation of the evolution of the organization itself. The history of El Shaddai, in this case, took the normal course most social movements take. Social movements, viewed as "collective enterprises designed to establish a new order of life,"<sup>20</sup> are said to be precipitated by "harsh times".<sup>21</sup> Most studies agree that the emergence of any social movement is usually precipitated by crisis situations that may be social, political or economic in nature. Covar, in his own study, underscores that the initial stage of a movement precipitates from general restlessness brought about by recent changes in society, which have disrupted certain traditional values.<sup>22</sup> According to him, this is when "social roles and goals have been made either insecure or destroyed...where tension

increases, attention wanders and self-confidence wanes." It is also during these times when differences with the ecclesia in terms of doctrinal points, ceremonial practices, religious authority and modes of worship may be singled out as sources of social discontent.<sup>23</sup>

The historical evolution of El Shaddai supports this theory, beginning with the conversion of Velarde to being a "born-again" Catholic, at a time of political and economic crises. The long stretch of martial rule under former Pres. Ferdinand Marcos which produced social, political and economic uncertainties,<sup>24</sup> inevitably led to the search for the essential "giver of hope." The following decade thus proved to be an auspicious time for the emergence and growth of non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), and other movements such as civic groups and religious organizations.<sup>25</sup> Religious resources then began to emerge as a primary means by which the process of socialization could take place. The attractiveness of religious movements presented a whole new perspective in studying not only religious socialization, but political socialization as well. It was during this time that charismatic groups from different denominations sprouted one after the other. The deteriorating political and economic situation, exacerbated by the assassination of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino, Jr. served as a catalyst of sorts to the accelerated growth of mobilizations and other kinds of political participation.<sup>26</sup> Incidentally, this phenomenon partly spurred the rise of religious movements in the country.

Indeed, the phenomenal growth in El Shaddai's membership during this critical historical juncture in the nation's life partly lends credence to findings in psychology that emphasizes how religions provide "outlets for pent-up

emotional tensions, relief from the impoverishment and monotony of daily life, and a gratification of important psychological needs.” Revivalistic religions, such as El Shaddai, have been found to help their adherents in maintaining their personal integration amidst widespread and enduring frustrations.<sup>27</sup>

### **DWXI and the Inception of the El Shaddai Prayer Movement**

It was during this time of crisis that the El Shaddai ministry was founded. The inception of the movement actually began in the acquisition of its official radio station DWXI. Three years following his “miraculous healing” in 1978 from a heart ailment, Velarde, a real estate developer, accidentally acquired the radio station DWXI while he was eyeing a property for development. Although not a professional broadcaster, Velarde hosted his own program in DWXI entitled “To God be the Glory”. Since Velarde thought that nobody was tuned in, he soon grew tired and decided to stop broadcasting. What hindered him from pushing through with this plan was a letter, which he received from a listener who claimed of having been healed of her migraine of 17 years by simply listening to and praying with Velarde in his radio program. It came as a surprise to Velarde that the woman had known of his plan even before he got the chance to publicly announce it. He was so touched by this experience that, instead of quitting, he read the letter-testimony on the air. A few days later, he began to receive hundreds of letters urging him not to quit. Moved and encouraged by the letters and stories sent by his listeners, Velarde invited the listeners of DWXI to a Mass and Healing Rally in front of the radio station near the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on the Sunday that was nearest August 20, 1984, his birthday. There were approximately a thousand

people who came. This small assembly of DWXI listeners, which soon became a monthly affair, was the beginning of El Shaddai's evolution as one of the largest and most influential religious movement today.

Since then, people started to come not only to the monthly mass and healing rally, but also to his office at Amorsolo, Makati City everyday. Velarde also began to conduct Life in the Spirit Seminars (LSS) at the El Shaddai building. The monthly Mass and Healing Rally soon became a weekly activity for the movement that was held at the parking space of the Amorsolo office and later, in different venues.<sup>28</sup> Many followers, particularly those claiming to have experienced miracles and radical transformation in their lives, started to volunteer themselves to help Velarde in the "gawain" or fellowship even without any allowance or salary. With the encouragement of his followers, Velarde decided to conceptualize a new format and rename his program. After coming across a religious pamphlet from the United States entitled, "El Shaddai," and upon hearing a song of the same title played over at DWXI, he decided to change the title of his program from "To God Be the Glory" into "El Shaddai." This, he also did upon learning that El Shaddai is "the real name of the Most Holy and Powerful Living God."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the inception of the El Shaddai DWXI-PPFI Prayer Movement. Soon, local chapters began to sprout one after the other nationwide. As of February 1995, there were almost 1,300 local chapters all over the country. In 1988, the movement's first international chapter was organized in Hong Kong, which is now touted as its largest chapter abroad. As of 1995, there were already 61 accredited international chapters in 25 countries around the globe.<sup>30</sup>

## Organizational Structure

Over a period of two years, several service volunteer ministries were organized and eventually, their organizational structure was further developed, with the roles of the different ministries becoming more defined and institutionalized as the movement grew almost by the million every year.

El Shaddai's organizational structure may be seen as a useful mechanism, which provides the movement with a communication network that reaches down to the grassroots level. It currently has parish-based local chapters that are being supervised by a Catholic parish priest who acts as the Spiritual Director.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, the movement has non-parish based communities or prayer groups, those that have not been acknowledged by the local bishops or parish priest in a given area. These are also those that are located in private offices, factories, and establishments.<sup>32</sup> Normally, a Provincial and/or City Coordinating Secretariat (PCCS) is also organized in far-flung provinces and cities to further assist the servant-leader and its Executive Coordinating Council (ECS)<sup>33</sup> in its outreach activities. Apart from this, there are also National Diocesan Outreach Coordinators (NDOCs) assigned to manage El Shaddai's National Diocesan rallies and coordinate with the core groups in each diocese. This group is also responsible for ensuring the proper implementation of the Foundation's Pastoral guidelines.<sup>34</sup> Through these local chapters and prayer groups, members are reminded of weekly rallies and announcements about the ministry's activities. These sub-level groupings thus become venues not only for community worship but for information dissemination as well.

At present, El Shaddai's organizational set-up<sup>35</sup> has the following ministries: (1) the Disciples Preachers Ministry; (2) the Administrative Affairs Ministry; (3) the Financial Affairs Ministry; (4) the Media Affairs Ministry. Two of the organizational structure's most notable features are the direct role played by the Spiritual Directors, a position assumed by Roman Catholic priests over the spiritual formation of the disciples and the direct supervision of the servant-leader over the Media Affairs Ministry.

There has been constant reshuffling of the workers in the ministry, as there are reconfigurations made with the organization itself. The latest development is that of the significant link established between the Roman Catholic Church and the formation of disciple-preachers. The Disciples Preachers Ministry, which was originally handled solely by the Elders in the ministry, is now administered directly by priests from the Catholic Church. This change is designed to monitor the formation of disciples, apparently because of the perception that there are disciples whose theological orientation is more Protestant than Catholic.<sup>36</sup> This was also the reason why, in the past, despite the support given by Bishop Teodoro Bacani<sup>37</sup> to the movement, many priests still refused to allow El Shaddai members to conduct their fellowships inside their parishes. Suspicious of the consistency of the teachings in El Shaddai with Roman Catholic Church doctrine, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) called Velarde to a meeting in 1993.<sup>38</sup> It was here that Velarde showed that the main purpose of El Shaddai was not to usurp the authority and question the doctrine of the Church but to bring back enthusiasm and fervor in the worship of God in the Catholic Church.<sup>39</sup>

As evident in its functions, the Media Affairs Ministry plays a crucial, if not a principal role in the dissemination of information on El Shaddai teachings and organization. It covers the various means by which El Shaddai can reach out to as many people as possible. The fact that the use of the communication media is placed under the direct supervision and control of Velarde suggests the critical role given to media in El Shaddai religiosity. The use of media in the El Shaddai community, particularly radio and television, has defined El Shaddai's involvement in, as well as its articulation of societal and political issues. Bishop Teodoro Bacani divulged that El Shaddai DWXI-PPFI holds prayer meetings over many radio stations where the average rate is thirty thousand pesos every hour. Expenses could pile up to six hundred thousand pesos for a round of radio programs. Today, Velarde himself acknowledges radio as the "main channel" of the El Shaddai Ministry, as it is their means of reaching as many people as possible to preach the Word of God. He even admits that the ministry spends more than 10 million pesos every month, with radio and television airtime rentals comprising a bulk of their expenditure.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Role of Media in El Shaddai**

Important in the understanding of the El Shaddai phenomenon is the role that mass media plays in El Shaddai religiosity.<sup>41</sup> Wiegele, in her study, underscores the centrality of radio and television in both the understanding of El Shaddai religiosity as well as its appeal to Filipinos.<sup>42</sup> Unlike some religious leaders who shun media and consider it as nothing but a threat to faith, Velarde regards media as an important and powerful instrument in communicating the message of Christianity in a compelling manner. Judging from the

enormous resources that El Shaddai channels to media, it can be said that Velarde considers media a challenge rather than a threat, an opportunity for the deepening and renewal of theology. The importance he gives to the use of media seems to be related to his story of how El Shaddai came to be. He even stressed that he started the ministry on radio and that it was through their radio station DWXI that he was called to "serve the Lord."<sup>43</sup> Although the movement spends an enormous amount for the four times a week television replay of their weekly fellowships, Velarde acknowledges that radio remains to be the "main channel for the ministry."<sup>44</sup>

The above is supported by the findings of the survey conducted among El Shaddai followers.<sup>45</sup> A significant number of those interviewed actually came to know of El Shaddai through an accidental tuning into DWXI. This is likewise confirmed by Wiegele's findings.<sup>46</sup> Of the 200 interviewed, 87.5% listen to DWXI and of these, 36.5% listen everyday, 27.5% at least once a week, while 14.5% listen all day everyday, that is, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They reasoned that they learn about the Words of God (30.5%) and they feel spiritually uplifted (15%) when listening to DWXI.<sup>47</sup>

A quantitative study conducted for El Shaddai in 1994 likewise underscores the importance given to media by the movement. With a total base sample of 100 El Shaddai followers, the results showed of the total followers, which represents 47% of the survey's total representative base, 45% report listening to various radio programs of El Shaddai. Twenty four per cent of the core followers in the sample, on the other hand, has a similar response. Their reasons for listening could be summarized into the following: (1) has good moral/spiritual lessons/ good message; (2) talks about the



Word of God/ they learn to know about God better; (3) enlightens the spirit/ has teachings that are inspiring; and (4) contains stories and testimonies that are interesting and encouraging.<sup>48</sup>

Another survey by the Asia Research Organization, Inc., (ARO) conducted in November 1997 for the “Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters sa Pilipinas” (KBP) revealed that DWXI ranked third among the AM radio stations being listened to by households in Metro Manila. The El Shaddai radio station was placed next to DZMM and DZRH, considered as two of the most formidable AM stations in the Philippines, on weekdays and during weekends.<sup>49</sup>

From these survey results, it could be inferred that DWXI has attracted a wide expanse of audience. As the ministry airs various radio programs that are geared towards topics ranging from faith to livelihood, listeners are exposed to both the religious ideology and political values advanced by the ministry. Aside from this, members nationwide are kept regularly updated of the affairs of the movement through announcements that are easily made on air. These findings suggest that indeed radio serves an exceptionally important role not only in religious socialization and information dissemination, but in the political socialization of El Shaddai followers as well.

One that this researcher found to be important in reinforcing the important political values and orientation of the group is the now defunct program called “Karunungan, Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran” or KKK, as it is so popularly known especially by El Shaddai followers.<sup>50</sup> Aired from 7-8 a.m., the program has an interactive format where the hosts tell each other stories as they reflect on the practical implications of

the biblical passage for the day. A segment is also reserved for what they call "classified ads on the air" wherein, generally, their followers advertise for free, products, real estate, job opportunities, and a wide array of activities and information. Conceptualized by Velarde himself, he thought of this program to give DWXI's radio programming an authentic socio-economic dimension that could be empowering to the members.<sup>51</sup> This program also appears to be reflective of Velarde's systematic attempt at raising the level of social and political awareness of its members as well as providing them a venue to ask questions concerning a whole range of topics, particularly about livelihood.

In the episodes heard by this researcher, there were those where the program hosts' level of political awareness and knowledge were made very apparent and contributed oftentimes to very highly politicized discussions of sociopolitical and economic issues. These discussions normally take the form of substantive, down to earth reflections and exchanges about relevant issues. A particular episode that was aired in August 1998, for example, covered the following issues: Parity Rights, behest loans, agricultural focus of Philippine economic development, and the importance of sovereignty in the conduct of the nation's affairs.

The El Shaddai community, as pointed out, actually started as a radio program and has evolved into a virtual "community on the air."<sup>52</sup> Wiegele underscores the kind of "imagined community" created by media in the ministry. In her study, she emphasizes how followers get to feel they belong to a community that is both anonymous and familiar at the same time. Given that personal narratives are being aired, one becomes familiar with the personal lives of others, who are

also part of a larger community. She also advances that through “language-based rituals” such as this, one can interact with God on a personalized and comforting level.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, months of listening to DWXI gave this researcher an insight into the kind of community every follower who listens to DWXI recognizes. The format of each program is interactive, with a lot of time given to sharing of personal testimonies through the airwaves. A listener gets to feel that he is a member of one big family so it comes as no surprise that, although seemingly handicapped in their verbal or communication skills, many of these followers volunteer to share their testimonies either on air or in the televised weekly fellowships.<sup>54</sup>

The above discussion allows one to understand the enormous potential of media in general and radio in particular not only to El Shaddai religiosity but to political socialization as well. It is also through radio that El Shaddai gets to air programs with direct social, economic and political content.

Another medium that El Shaddai has utilized and is important in understanding both the movement’s religiosity and potential as a medium of political socialization is television. Their four (4) times a week replay of the weekly fellowships give El Shaddai members a clear sense of the physical reality of their community and afford further “the sense of live-ness” to El Shaddai fellowships.<sup>55</sup> Messages, which Velarde wishes to emphasize, get the chance to be seen and heard again. This also connects in a personal way Velarde to his viewers a majority of whom never really get to see him up close in person. The airing of some of the international chapter’s anniversary celebrations all over the world where Velarde is usually the guest speaker, also give members a sense of the movement’s

international reach that, to a certain extent, seems indicative of their political mobilization potential as a group.

Print media has been recognized very early by Velarde himself as important for teaching the Word of God and for information dissemination as well. As a young organization in 1986, Velarde personally gave attention to the printing of "Bagong Liwanag" magazine. Today, as many as 200,000 copies are printed and circulated by the movement for free. These contain Velarde's sermons as well as personal testimonies of people who experienced miracles in their lives through El Shaddai. The movement also publishes their newsletter called "El Shaddai God Almighty" that contains, aside from the usual testimonies and sermons of Velarde, news and updates about the group's international activities and its socioeconomic and political involvement. To popularize Velarde's sermons, printed tract like materials are also disseminated to cover those that are not reached by the two earlier publications.<sup>56</sup> The survey cited above shows that an overwhelming 81.5% does so and of these, 53.5% read specifically "Bagong Liwanag Magazine." These respondents say that they do so because of the testimonies printed (40.5%) and the Words of God they learn from the sermons published (22%). As is the case with radio and television, the potential of print media in El Shaddai socialization cannot be underestimated.

These media of communication thus facilitate for El Shaddai venues for both religious and political socialization of the members.

## **Activities and Practices as Venues of Religious and Political Socialization**

In the course of El Shaddai's history, many activities have evolved to foster religious and political socialization in the movement. These activities, while intended primarily for religious purposes, are conveniently transformed into venues for political mobilization such as prayer rallies "for peace" which afford the movement ways to articulate its position on pressing national concerns. These have also become means for waging "electoral campaigns", initiated by Velarde himself in order to give his followers a chance to listen to candidates and to form a more objective and informed choice.

The most important of these activities are the weekly mass and healing rallies called weekly "Family Appointment with El Shaddai," the climax of which is the "healing message" delivered by Velarde or by a disciple. With an average of 500,000 – one (1) million attendance each week, these weekly meetings give El Shaddai members a sense of their overwhelming size and following, and a sense of the "genuineness of the movement of the Holy Spirit in their midst." In the survey conducted by this researcher, 67.5% of the respondents said that they attend their prayer meetings and rallies at least once a month. The mid-afternoon traffic congestion caused by the fellowship in the city's environs and the awesome view on TV of people oblivious of bad weather conditions appear to make El Shaddai members and the public realize the enormity of their size as a group as well as its political mobilization potential.

The other activities of the group that encourage political socialization as well are: (1) the local weekly mass and healing rallies, held within parish-based communities attended by as

many as 300-1,000 members; and (2) the weekly prayer meetings in out-of-parish based communities held in institutions, factories and offices with about 100-300 attending. In practically every province of the country there are El Shaddai communities. Each community holds regular meetings in all of their chapters here and abroad. Statistics show that in February 1995, there were already a grand total of 1,354 of these prayer communities in the Philippines and around the world. The meetings in these groups basically follow the format of the "Weekly Family Appointment with El Shaddai" but a disciple takes the place of Velarde as preacher. There are instances, however, when Velarde himself is invited as speaker in chapter anniversary celebrations. A concrete example of these chapter-initiated activities, where Velarde himself was the speaker, was the one held at the "Batasang Pambansa" or House of Representatives of the Philippine Congress. Employees, El Shaddai followers within the area, and some members of the House attended the said event. In this particular occasion, he took the occasion to remind the country's legislators of the root cause of the nation's problems and what actually constitutes greatness for a country.<sup>57</sup>

The ministry also holds overnight prayer vigils four times a year to celebrate special occasions such as the following: (1) anniversary celebrations of the foundation, (2) Annual Family Reunions with El Shaddai, (3) Easter Sundays, and (4) Pentecost. These are attended by approximately two to three million members and followers. It is usually during these occasions that Velarde invites the president of the country and other government officials to either deliver a speech before millions of El Shaddai followers or be mere guests of honor. It was in some of these overnight celebrations that Velarde expressed affirmation and support for the achievements and

policies of the Ramos administration as well as of other incumbent governments. The presence of government officials in these events also gives Velarde the opportunity to lead the people in praying for both the state and its officials. These prayer rallies often give Velarde not only the opportunity to preach the Words of God but also to emphasize and inculcate among members certain political values.

El Shaddai's outreach activities and social services provide another means for political socialization. Whether members are direct participants in the discharge of social services or are simple recipients of these services, these activities are attempts to instill in members the value of commitment and service to society. For instance, the movement was at the forefront of helping victims of natural calamities in a project dubbed as "Operation: Abot Kamay Tulong Mo". The movement, in order to gather donations for this project, networked with its local and international chapters and with other organizations to solicit funds in the effort to help the victims of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption and of the strong typhoon "Rosing" in 1995 and 1996, respectively. The movement's concern for the lot of overseas contract workers (OCWs) was also demonstrated in the signing of an agreement between the Department of Labor and Employment and the movement to set up an El Shaddai Overseas Desk to look after the welfare of OCWs worldwide.<sup>58</sup>

The other social services that the movement provides, to both its members and the public include medical and dental services and medical outreaches in city and provincial centers, free legal assistance, financial and burial assistance, parish assistance and assistance for livelihood projects.<sup>59</sup>

## Basic Theological Beliefs

The kind of salvation preached in El Shaddai, which up to this day of economic difficulty serves an essential purpose, is very well demonstrated in the basic theological beliefs of El Shaddai and is one of the movement's main sources of attraction. In a survey conducted among El Shaddai followers, 48% view El Shaddai as the "God Who Is More Than Enough" while 19.5% see Him as the "Supreme Being." As in most charismatic communities,<sup>60</sup> the belief in God's unchanging character seen in His present day intervention in human affairs is central to El Shaddai. The belief in "signs and wonders" among followers – that any miracle is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit within every believer in Christ – is evidenced in countless "patotoo" or testimonies. In no case do followers overlook the power of God working in their lives through spiritual, emotional and physical healing. It was in fact the miraculous experience of Velarde himself that has been retold and reiterated over and over again to emphasize the healing power of God. According to him, it was during his confinement at the Philippine Heart Center in 1978 that he had an angelic visitation. After reading a biblical verse from the Bible that was given to him by a supposed angel, and after repenting for his sins, Velarde claims to have since been cured of his heart disease. This played a significant role in his conversion and as "a living proof of God's power."<sup>61</sup> A passage in the Bible, which to the movement vividly captures the above nature and character of God, is one found in Psalm 91. This verse describes a kind of God who is the protector and faithful provider of the needs of those who remain in Him.<sup>62</sup> This belief may have come from a deeper faith and a closer "personal relationship" that followers begin to develop with God whenever they attend El Shaddai fellowships.<sup>63</sup>



Likewise, El Shaddai's practice of tithing<sup>64</sup> appears not only as an attraction in the movement but as a tool of "economic empowerment"<sup>65</sup> as well. Tithing, considered by followers as a recognition of God's ownership of everything, stems from several biblical passages.<sup>66</sup> In his exposition of this teaching, Velarde emphasizes that the key to financial freedom and material prosperity is the consistent giving of one's tithes and offerings to God's work.<sup>67</sup> Stressing the essentiality and the blessings that one would receive in giving, Velarde always mentions in his sermons how he was delivered from his financial problems when he began to tithe and give miracle seed-faith offerings<sup>68</sup> for the work of God. Even while his real estate business was then in a slump and Velarde was saddled with huge debts amounting to 200 million pesos, he shelled out 50 million pesos to fund a monthly Charismatic Mass and Healing Rally facilitated by the Quezon City Catholic Charismatic Renewal Secretariat of which he became a founding member. Not before long, he was able to sell a parcel of his property and eventually recovered from his financial problems. From a debt of 200 million pesos in 1986, he was able to acquire 300 million pesos in solid assets from the said deal.<sup>69</sup> Later, he would refer to his monetary contribution to the said charismatic movement as a miracle seed-faith offering.

The same survey by this researcher cited above shows that a significant 72.9% of the respondents report that they tithe religiously. They do so because of the blessings that come back to them (30.5%), aside from its perceived biblical basis (19.5%). The latter also reflects the centrality of Scriptures as basis for both faith and doctrine in El Shaddai. Giving in El Shaddai is not limited to tithes but include as well two other forms, namely love offerings<sup>70</sup> or "handog" and miracle seed-faith offering or "binhi ng pananalig." Among the 200 respondents in the

survey, 20.5% responded giving love offerings other than tithing.<sup>71</sup> As Velarde later on divulged, one of the areas of discomfort of the Catholic Church in relation to the El Shaddai ministry is in the area of finances since the latter's detractors claim that the movement exist primarily for the money which they could collect from its followers.<sup>72</sup> This was made explicit in the meeting with the CBCP where the bishops then present suggested that Velarde should keep an accurate accounting record of their finances to ward off suspicions regarding the handling of their finances.<sup>73</sup> Velarde has since complied with this suggestion.

This belief in tithing has also generated in the El Shaddai community a body of religious idioms often quoted by members as a form of encouragement as well as affirmation of what is believed to be the truth of God's promises. "Siksik, liglig, at umaapaw," the Tagalog translation of the biblical phrase "a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over," is a concrete example of a line frequently recited whenever members exclaim the manner in which God reciprocates faithfulness in giving.<sup>74</sup> Probably because of an overwhelming response, the movement's practice and emphasis on the miracles brought about by tithing has become one of the bones of contention regarding the false hopes given by the movement to those in need. El Shaddai members, however, particularly those who faithfully adhere to the practice, know very well the miracle Velarde is referring to as a result of giving financial support to the work of God. When some members were asked what changed in their lives as a result of tithing, 39.5% specifically reported to have been eased of their financial burdens while others (13.5%) report changes in their character and receiving other forms of blessing as a result.<sup>75</sup> In the El Shaddai community, tithing is considered as something that

actually gives genuine hope to people. An one El Shaddai staff member explains, there is nothing wrong with this practice because teachings about prosperity in times of desperation and poverty uplifts the spirit.<sup>76</sup>

### **Velarde as a Charismatic Leader**

While a high level of commitment from members is necessary for a group to survive, such commitment is not sufficient to ensure its ongoing viability. Likewise, a well defined religious ideology only comprises a part of the movement's sustainability. Charismatic leadership is said to play a crucial role both in the emergence of new religious movements and their continuity. Weber, in his pioneer work on charismatic leadership, maintains that "new religious movements get their impetus from the attraction of a charismatic leader, a dynamic person who is perceived as extraordinary and set apart from the rest of humanity."<sup>77</sup> El Shaddai members and followers depict Velarde to be all of the above. The kind of charismatic leadership that Velarde exhibits in El Shaddai is shared by a significant majority. In the survey, 70.5% of the 200 respondents indicate that they believe in everything that Velarde says. Of the reasons given, 48% do so because they believe what he says to be biblically based. Twelve percent thinks that he is an instrument of God while 25% see his positive qualities as well as his teachings, which they say are consistent with Catholic doctrines.<sup>78</sup>

Some other factors also appear to contribute to Velarde's appeal as leader. One is his down to earth, simple and very personal style of preaching. The findings in the survey supported this, which shows 39% of the respondents being attracted to Velarde's style of preaching.<sup>79</sup> indeed, an analysis

of Velarde's sermons reveals that his preachings are his own personal and fresh reflections of passages in the Bible. Devoid of theological sophistication, he expounds on a biblical passage based on his own meditation. He then simply shares his own personal testimony or the written testimonies of others which he oftentimes reads in full, to support biblical truths.

Another reason for Velarde's appeal appears to be the apparent sensitivity of his style of preaching to Filipino culture. It is his practice to instill into people's minds a particular theme or teaching derived from the Bible, by using simple but catchy words, which eventually become the "bukambibig" or bywords of the members. This practice seems consistent with the value Filipino culture accords to "kasabihan" or proverbs whenever stressing a point in any given situation. As catch phrases, such as "siksik, liglig, at umaapaw," "mabuti at maayos," and "tiyak 'yon" slowly become part of the movement's religious vocabulary, followers come to a better appreciation of spiritual truths and values conveyed by the same. Bywords do not only serve to capture the central ideas emphasized in Velarde's sermons but facilitate as well the retention of these ideas in the minds of his followers. The ease with which these are called to mind and uttered almost automatically may be indicative of the effectiveness of religious socialization in El Shaddai.

Aside from bywords, Velarde's use of symbolism and ritual in El Shaddai, one that is continuous with Filipino religious tradition and practice, also explains his appeal. Raising of one's hands, waving written down prayer requests, bringing oil, water, handkerchief, wallets and passports to be prayed over, and laying of hands on people for healing or empowerment are practices that have parallels in Filipino folk religiosity. While laying of hands is a common ritual practiced by all

“charismatic” Christians, it is done generally only on persons but seldom on objects, which is characteristic of El Shaddai. Attribution of “miraculous powers” to these objects, something continuous with Filipino folk religiosity<sup>80</sup>, is also predominant in movement.

Not the least of Velarde’s attraction is his own person. Aside from endearing characteristics ascribed to him such as humility, kindness, generosity and faithfulness to God is his being like the symbol of the message that he preaches. Most of his followers who come from the lower class find hope in him, getting encouragement from his own rags-to-riches story. This very personal way of relating to his members develop intimacy with his followers that soothes and encourages at a time of poverty and despair.

This influence that Velarde wields over his followers is also manifested in the manner in which certain political values and orientation are imbibed by El Shaddai members through their participation in political mobilizations initiated by him. Probably unmatched by any religious leader of his generation is his ability to persuade his followers, because of a remarkable sensitivity and ability to anticipate his audience’s response. Further, Velarde’s fairly effective organizational and managerial skills also earns him a kind of obedience from those who work in the organization. He recognizes the merits of encouraging participation among his followers. His calls for sharing of personal testimonies and regular attendance to the movement’s activities may have attitudinal as well as behavioral consequences. It has been established in experimental studies on persuasion in psychology that “an individual may be more likely to change his attitude if he can be brought to participate in the process himself, and especially if he assumes some of

the initiative.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, it is normally the case that members are encouraged, if not explicitly invited by Velarde to support a particular mobilization or rally for or against an issue. However, because of its peculiar position as both a Catholic charismatic group and one that is usually supportive of government, it often takes a relatively neutral stance. This was demonstrated in the political events cited above, wherein El Shaddai figured prominently, such as the Anti-Charter Change Rally.

This charisma of Velarde serves as one of the main reasons why this religious movement, early in its first decade of existence, has already gained millions of following. An article written on El Shaddai in 1993 vividly captures images of this seeming charisma:

Velarde deftly maneuvers the mood and switches to the dance mode. “*Ang paa ay sumasayaw sa tugtuging makalangit, baywang ko’y kumekembot, paa ko’y nag cha-cha...*” He has his audience dancing now. He has their undivided attention. Hold high your wallets, white hankies, hand bags, passports, bottles of oil, religious articles, he cries out. They do just that: Jump, he shouts, and he has hundreds of thousands jumping, stamping, leaping like innocents. He throws white hankies with Psalm 11 (sic) printed on them and people jump to catch them. He has the faithful in his hands. For two hours he preaches. For two hours the people, all of them standing, except for the sick, hearken to his words.<sup>82</sup>

## Content of Political Socialization

Given El Shaddai's distinct relationship with the Catholic Church and with the government, the movement was for many times caught in the crucible of the rift between the Church and the State concerning issues pertinent to national interest. From its inception in 1984 El Shaddai's participation was sought in almost all of the important political mobilizations and events that occurred. Ambiguous as their positions regarding pressing issues might appear, the movement gives high regard to certain political and societal values. It gives utmost value to societal transformation that begins with the individual, peace and unity, obedience to authority, nationalism, industry and commitment to the poor.

El Shaddai subscribes to a conservative view on societal transformation. The solution, as highlighted by Velarde in his sermons lies not in structural changes but should begin in the inner transformation of the individual. He asserts that society's problems are mere byproducts of a much deeper malaise, that of moral and spiritual bankruptcy, the main source of which is the sinful heart of the individual. He therefore contends that it is only through a significant change in the hearts of people can a positive change in the system and in the nation's life be made possible.

A recurring theme in El Shaddai is its emphasis on peace and unity. Throughout its 14-year history, Velarde has been consistent in playing the role of a "peacemaker," striving to take as neutral a stance on issues. The movement emphasizes the value of reconciliation and unity as it attempts to unite opposing sectors in society, particularly the Church and the State, rather than actively push for a particular view or take side on an issue. Unlike advocates of the principle of the

separation of Church and State, a principle also enshrined in the Philippine Constitution, Velarde clearly advocates cooperation between Church and State in many instances in his sermons.<sup>83</sup> This seem to have been imbibed by followers where according to the survey, 54% believe that Church and State should not be separate.<sup>84</sup>

Consistent also with their religious ideology is the need for the citizen to be subject to the authority of government. El Shaddai's support for the incumbent government is not only well-articulated in their teachings but is also demonstrated in their active involvement in political events. It has been a recurrent theme in sermons as well as a consistent incitement of the servant-leader to El Shaddai members and followers to submit themselves to the ruling administration because of the belief that "all authority is inspired by God", thus implying that it is incumbent upon the believer to obey. However, the survey results also suggest that El Shaddai followers would tend to choose their religious belief over the state (58.5%) regarding a policy or issue. They say so because God should come first (51.2%) and that it is biblical to do so (18.8%).<sup>85</sup>

The ministry, in the past three (3) administrations that coincided with its history, has consistently exhibited a tendency to support governmental authority. This disposition manifested significantly during the Ramos administration and, at present, the Estrada administration. Not only once did Velarde acknowledge the government's efforts and achievements, a practice that actualizes this political value of supporting and respecting governmental authority. This support for the administration however, does not mean uncritical submission to all its policies. Just as Velarde is generous with praises for the government, he is also open about his criticisms of



government policies deemed inconsistent with El Shaddai beliefs. There were instances, for example, when he openly declared his cynicism of the Ramos' government's inability to solve the national crisis through comprehensive and brilliant plans.<sup>86</sup>

Velarde's support for Estrada appears more defined and articulated, as the latter has long been seeking the advice of the servant-leader even before the May 1998 elections. This support finally became more pronounced when Estrada appointed Velarde as his "spiritual adviser."<sup>87</sup> In this election, while it can be surmised that followers who voted for Estrada did so because of their perception that he was Velarde's preference, 33% of those surveyed were careful to point out that they voted for a particular candidate out of their own volition and not because they were influenced by Velarde's personal preference. This suggests that those who voted for him did so because he was their personal choice. This was largely because of Estrada's promise to address the problems of the poor (50%) and partly also because of his personal attributes (19.7%).<sup>88</sup>

Nationalism is also an important political value emphasized in El Shaddai. On several occasions, Velarde emphasized the importance of love of country and people, particularly in one of his sermons wherein he stressed that "the only people who can help Filipinos are Filipinos themselves, and that every Filipino should be "his brother's keeper."<sup>89</sup>

Also salient in the political values advanced by the movement is its commitment to the poor. Throughout its 14-year history, the movement has sponsored and initiated various projects aimed at precisely giving assistance to the poor. One

such project is the multi-purpose cooperative launched in November 1998. Likewise, this project is reflective of Velarde's support for the Estrada administration's flagship project, which is to alleviate poverty. This commitment to the poor advocated by El Shaddai actually comes as no surprise since Velarde also comes from a poor background. Having experienced almost all of life's travails and challenges, Velarde himself admitted that he still feels "the pain of being impoverished."<sup>90</sup> He also deems this as continuous with the practice of community exemplified by the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles. However, in all these projects, Velarde always emphasizes the value of industry or helping oneself to achieve a certain goal. He underscores the importance of industry when praying for miracles and requests. Thus, he advises people to attend to their livelihood, as hardwork and determination are necessary for good living. Velarde tries to maintain a balance by not being an extremist in preaching. While he considers the importance of one's spiritual well being he considers material needs as equally important components for survival and economic prosperity as a blessing. Through the movement he claims to slowly endeavor to modify, if not radically transform the traditional perception of most Catholics towards a more balanced view of the Christian's life.<sup>91</sup>

These political values basically comprise the content of political socialization in El Shaddai.

### **Political Attitudes and Orientation**

In the survey<sup>92</sup> by this writer conducted among El Shaddai followers the levels of political cynicism and political efficacy were explored and were related to the respondent's level of political knowledge.

The survey results suggest that El Shaddai members

included in the sample appear highly cynical of Philippine politics (56%). This finding means that a majority of followers included in the survey tended to have a relatively “negative view of, or to have negative feelings toward, politically significant objects, such as political institutions and processes.”<sup>93</sup> In this study, cynicism was particularly directed against the practice wherein preferential treatment to a particular group is given by politicians, known as “palakasan” in the Philippine context.<sup>94</sup> This may be due to a realistic appreciation and awareness of the current social, political and economic situation, as exhibited by a high level of political knowledge among the respondents (74%). Political knowledge here refers to the amount of political information one has regarding politics. It also refers to one’s knowledge, feelings and evaluations regarding the political world.<sup>95</sup> This level of political awareness, in this case, seemed to have been developed throughout the years given the way El Shaddai has been drawn into active political involvement in the past. In this survey, for example, the item identifying the term of office of the Philippine president got the highest score (94.5%). Incidentally, this study was done only three (3) months after the May 1998 elections, wherein the movement was very much politicized. The findings on political cynicism are continuous with earlier studies conducted exploring this same attitude wherein Filipinos were found to be generally cynical.<sup>96</sup>

While the survey findings show a relatively low level of individual political efficacy (52.5%), there is evidence to suggest a high level of group efficacy. The former type of political efficacy is here defined as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, that is, that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties.” It is the feeling that both political and social change

are possible, and that “the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change.”<sup>97</sup> The members’ sense of group efficacy derives from the notion that, acting as a movement, they can make a notable difference in society. As demonstrated in the manner in which the group’s support or participation was constantly solicited, members have become conscious of their potential in political mobilization. The ease with which Velarde, through the use of media have mobilized El Shaddai followers, marked by their white handkerchiefs or “panyong banderitas” in past political mobilizations initiated by both church and state probably enhance, to a certain degree, this sense of efficacy as a group.

The survey conducted also shows that certain socio-demographic variables, such as age and educational attainment are significantly related to political efficacy. Although generally low in political efficacy, the middle-aged and those more highly educated are relatively more politically efficacious. As with age, it is probably natural to expect these results since it is in this particular age that people feel a higher degree of self-confidence than the young because of their lack of experience and the old because of their waning powers. The same is true with education wherein the learned people exhibit more confidence in oneself than the relatively unschooled.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Political socialization in El Shaddai happens in a variety of contexts. While activities in El Shaddai are not deliberately political in nature, these still serve as potent practices that shape the political orientations and attitudes of members. Apart from activities and practices that facilitate the religious socialization of the group, the same organizational resources serve as venues

for Velarde to inculcate certain political values among members. As the potency of religion in political life had been advanced in past studies, the case of El Shaddai appears to strengthen the viability of religiously-based resources in the process of socialization. The use of media, Velarde's charisma and El Shaddai's basic theological beliefs all seem to effectively serve this purpose.

El Shaddai's potential as an influential political actor owes a great deal to its followership, which continues to grow in number because of certain attractions innate in the ministry. From this study, it was found out that El Shaddai's phenomenal growth and attractiveness stem not only from its teachings about faith in a God "who is more than enough," but also from the miracles evident in the transformed lives of its followers. What draw people to the movement, aside from its supposed "prosperity theology" that is rooted in tithing, are the "healing message" and real life testimonies that encourage members to nurture a stronger "personal relationship" with God. Velarde is a charismatic leader who appears to have an intuitive grasp of what works for the Filipino. His use of signs, symbols, rituals, and bywords, practices that are continuous with Filipino culture, appears to be a major factor in the movement's appeal. The ministry also provides its members with a sense of "genuine community" not only through their weekly fellowships, but also through the use of other organizational resources such as media (TV, radio and print) and the El Shaddai office that serves like a near sanctuary to every El Shaddai follower. These resources are thus seen as the main reasons why various sectors solicit its support in mobilizations and elections.

This article gave a preliminary description of El Shaddai as a religious movement and the dynamic terrain of political socialization within the group. This study demonstrated how a religious group such as El-Shaddai can be an equally important agent of political socialization. This group's religious rituals, practices, activities and participation in political exercises provided the venues not only for religious socialization but also for political socialization to take place. Its religious ideology, charismatic leadership and its lavish use of media all contribute to the shaping of the process and content of political socialization within the movement. ❀

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Richard Dawson, et. al., *Political Socialization* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Kay Lawson, *The Human Polity* (: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Luzbetak, *The Church and Culture: An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker* (Illinois: Divine World Publications, 1963), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Session and Schuster, Rockefeller Center, 1996), 94.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>11</sup> This national consultation was held on October 18-20, 1988. One of the papers read in this meeting described the kind of global upsurge of spiritual renewal, which hit the Philippines during a time of transition, that is, the post-martial law years.

<sup>12</sup> From here on, the term "Church" shall refer to the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>13</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>14</sup> General Pastoral Guidelines of 1995, 46.

<sup>15</sup> Service Volunteer Workers Omnibus Administrative Code of 1995, 8.

<sup>16</sup> The Executive Coordinating Secretariat (ECS) was established to address the needs and problems of the workers. It is composed of Senior Disciples and Spiritual Directors and is directly under the Servant-Leader's supervision. Its main function is to "assist the servant-leader in enforcing ministry rules, guidelines, and policies and in the scheduling of assignments of service volunteers in various ministries. Service Volunteer Workers Omnibus Administrative Code of 1995, 12.

<sup>17</sup> General Pastoral Guidelines of 1995, 38.

<sup>18</sup> As of writing, the organizational structure being used took effect January 1997.

<sup>19</sup> This was acknowledged to be a current problem by Sis. Shirla Davies, head of the Administrative Department and International Chapter Coordinator, during a CLSS. Sis. Shirla Davies, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 13 August 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Bishop Teodoro Bacani is the spiritual director of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement in the Archdiocese of Manila and is concurrently the spiritual adviser of El Shaddai.

<sup>21</sup> This meeting was held in Tagaytay City on January 24, 1993.

<sup>22</sup> *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, April - August 1994, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>24</sup> This finding coincides with the view of Wiegele in her study on religion and media. Katharine Wiegele, "Unmediating the Divine: Mass Media and Religious Experience in the El Shaddai Movement in the Philippines," August 1998 (an unpublished monograph), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Eric S. Caruncho, "Holy Air Waves," *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, 12 April 1998, 7.

<sup>28</sup> In this survey, a "convenience" sample of 200 El Shaddai followers taken from one overnight anniversary celebration (August 22-23, 1998), one weekly fellowship (August 29, 1998), and several local chapter fellowships in Metro Manila was used. A convenience sample is one which is readily available to the researcher. While this type of sample gives useful information, and at times is the only one possible, it nevertheless contains no evidence that it informs about any group other

than itself. James A. Anderson, *Communication Research: Issues and Methods* (USA: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1987), 166.

<sup>29</sup> Wiegele, 1998, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Grace Gorospe-Jamon, "The El Shaddai Prayer Movement: A Study of Political Socialization in a Religious Context," (PhD diss., University of the Philippines, October 1998), 241.

<sup>31</sup> This study was entitled "Project Israel El Shaddai Followership." It was conducted by the Ace/Saathci & Saatchi Advertising Research Department in December 1994 in the Greater Manila Area (GMA). For a more comprehensive presentation of survey results and segregation of total representative base utilized, see Jamon, 157; 291-297.

<sup>32</sup> This survey was conducted on November 8 - 16, 1997 in Metro Manila. For a more thorough discussion of survey results, see Jamon, 156; 287-290.

<sup>33</sup> This researcher listened to fifteen (15) episodes of KKK over a two-month period (July-August 1998). For a complete list of episodes being referred to, see Jamon, 315.

<sup>34</sup> Bro. Ernie Cecilia (one of the four hosts of KKK), interview with author, 12 July 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Wiegele shares this view in her description of the growth of the El Shaddai community. Wiegele, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>37</sup> Jamon, 1998, 159.

<sup>38</sup> Wiegele, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Velarde has also come up with books (M.Z.V. publication) such as "Bro. Mike, Bakit?", which contains the servant-leader's answers to questions about the movement's doctrine that most other "born-again" ask him.

<sup>40</sup> "Batasang Pambansa Welcomes El Shaddai," *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, September - December 1994, 19.

<sup>41</sup> This was done on 2 September 1996. *El Shaddai Miracle Newsletter* 6, no. 3, 15.

<sup>42</sup> *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, January - March 1997, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Margaret Poloma, *The Charismatic Movement: Is there a New Pentecost?* (Massachusetts: G.K. Hall and Company, Twayne Publishers, 1992), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Jamon, 124.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 245.



<sup>47</sup> Tithing is "giving back faithfully to God" ten percent of one's earnings or yield. Bro. Mike Velarde, "Bro. Mike, Bakit?" (August 1997), 58.

<sup>48</sup> Bro. Rene Sazon, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 11 August 1998.

<sup>49</sup> The practice of tithing is based on the following biblical passages: Malachi 3: 10-12; Proverbs 3: 9-10; Luke 6: 38.

<sup>50</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, "Ikapu: Ang Susi sa Masagana at Malayang Kabuhayan," *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, April - August 1994, 49.

<sup>51</sup> Miracle seed-faith offering is considered by the El Shaddai movement as any financial or material contribution given to activities for the purpose of spreading the Word of God.

<sup>52</sup> Ceres Doyo, "Why El Shaddai?" *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, 22 August 1993, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Love offerings are parts of material or financial blessing that members share to anyone in need, without expectation of returns.

<sup>54</sup> Jamon, 1998, 242.

<sup>55</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>56</sup> *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, May - August 1993, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Based on participant observation in fellowships, seminars, prayer meetings and taken from interviews with key informants. *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>59</sup> Sis. Cathy Cruz, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 11 August 1998.

<sup>60</sup> Keith A. Roberts, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 161.

<sup>61</sup> Jamon, 244.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> This is derived from the insights of Maggay on Filipino religious consciousness. *Patmos* 14, no. 1 (July 1998): 4-7.

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of these experimental studies, see Jerome D. Frank, *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1963, second printing), 98.

<sup>65</sup> Ma. Ceres Doyo, "Why El Shaddai?" *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, 22 August 1993, 12.

<sup>66</sup> *El Shaddai God Almighty Miracle Newsletter* 7, no.1, 6.

<sup>67</sup> Jamon, 250.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, January - March 1998, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Christine Herrera, "Erap: Velarde more influential than Sin," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 May 1998, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Jamon, 252.

<sup>72</sup> Weekly family Appointment with El Shaddai held on October 10, 1998 with the theme, "I am my brother's keeper."

<sup>73</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with the author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>74</sup> Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with the author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

<sup>75</sup> In conducting the said interview, consideration was given to the following characteristics of the respondents: (1) those who professed having experienced "spiritual renewal" through the group under study; (2) fairly regular and active member, meaning, those who attend their weekly fellowship at least two to three times a month; and (3) should have been a member of the group for at least a year. These conditions were established through a preliminary interview with each prospective respondent.

<sup>76</sup> Loretta Sicat, "The Political Attitudes of Young Filipinos: A Study in Political Socialization," Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 1970, 70.

<sup>77</sup> Jamon, 190-191.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Dawson, et. al., *Political Socialization* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 34.

<sup>79</sup> See Sicat, 1970.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 90.

## References

### *Books*

Frank, Jerome D. *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1961.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Session and Schuster, Rockefeller Center, 1996.

Kepel, Gilles. *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

- Poloma, Margaret. *The Charismatic Movement: Is there a New Pentecost?* Massachusetts: G.K. Hall and Company, Twayne Publishers, 1992.
- Roberts, Keith A. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995.
- Wurfel, David. *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay*. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press, 1988.
- Youngblood, Robert L. *Marcos Against the Church: Economic Development and Political Repression in the Philippines*. London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

#### *Theses*

- Covar, Prospero. "The Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi: A Sociological Study of a Social Movement." MA Thesis, University of the Philippines, 1961.
- Jamon, Grace G. "The El Shaddai Prayer Movement: A Study of Political Socialization in a Religious Context." PhD diss., University of the Philippines, October 1998.
- Sicat, Loretta. "The Political Attitudes of Young Filipinos: A Study in Political Socialization." Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 1970.

#### *Newspaper and Magazine Articles*

- Caruncho, Eric S. "Holy Air Waves." *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, 12 April 1998. 6 - 7.
- Doyo, Ceres. "Why El Shaddai?" *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, 22 August 1993. 12 - 15.
- Herrera, Christine. "Erap: Velarde more influential than Sin." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 May 1998, 1 & 20.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Carlito Pablo. "Bro. Mike to Endorse by Body Language." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2 May 1998, 1 & 6.
- Tesoro, Manuel "Rising Prophet." *Asiaweek*, 20 September 1996. 36 - 43.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 6 September 1997.

#### *El Shaddai Publications*

- Bro. Mike Velarde, "Bro. Mike, Bakit?" (August 1997).
- Bro. Mike Velarde, "Ikapu: Ang Susi sa Masagana at Malayang Kabuhayan," *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, April-August 1994.

"Batasang Pambansa Welcomes El Shaddai," *El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, September - December 1994.

*El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, May - August 1993.

*El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, April-August 1994.

*El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, January - March 1997.

*El Shaddai Bagong Liwanag Magazine*, January - March 1998.

*El Shaddai Miracle Newsletter* 6, no. 3.

*El Shaddai God Almighty Miracle Newsletter* 7, no. 1.

#### *Journal Article*

Barber, Bernard "Acculturation and Messianic Movement," *American Sociological Review* 6, no. 5 (October 1941): 663- 668.

#### *Unpublished Materials*

Wiegele, Katharine L. "Unmediating the Divine: Mass Media and Religious Experience in the El Shaddai Movement in the Philippines." submitted to *American Ethnologist*, August 1998 (an unpublished monograph). Profile of the El Shaddai DWXI-PPFI, 1997 (an unpublished information material).

Project Israel: El Shaddai Followership Quantitative Study conducted by Ace/Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising Research Department for El Shaddai DWXI-PPFI (December 1994).

Survey by Asia Research Organization (ARO), Incorporated conducted for the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters sa Pilipinas (KBP) (November 8-16, 1997).

#### *Interview*

Bro. Mike Velarde, interview with author, El Shaddai office, 3 November 1998.

#### *Other Published Materials*

Bautista, Ma. Cynthia Rose B. "The Development of NGOs and the 1992 Elections" in *The Philippine Political and Economic Situation in View of 1992* ed. Randy S. David and Jonathan Y.

Okamura (University of the Philippines Third World Studies, 1992, Occasional Paper No. 11).