

**UNDERSTANDING DEVOTION TO THE BLACK NAZARENE AND ITS CULTURAL  
INFLUENCE ON FILIPINOS: A NARRATIVE APPROACH**

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**Abstract** – This research explores the complex phenomenon of devotion to the Black Nazarene, highlighting its cultural impacts and its importance as an essential element of faith for many devotees. Through narrative research, the study gives insight on personal experiences, revealing how devotion is shaped by interactions with family, friends, and the wider community. It employs a qualitative narrative approach to gather and examine narratives from devotees, aims to understand the different aspects of their devotion, its influence on their lives, and its effects on their perception of the Catholic Church. The findings of the study indicate that devotion to the Black Nazarene represents a dynamic journey of deepening engagement, bound to social connections, moral values, and personal narratives of the of the devotees. It was found that although individual practices vary greatly, they collectively foster a strong sense of identity and belonging within the Catholic faith. Family and community are critical in developing and sustaining this devotion. Notably, themes of transformation emerged, demonstrating how commitment leads to significant changes in behavior, supports ethical judgments, and strengthens bonds with family and community. These findings reveal the profound and multifaceted nature of religious devotion and its capacity to shape personal and collective identities within a faith community.

**Keywords** – cultural impact, devotion, narrative research

**INTRODUCTION**

The Philippines is ranks as the third largest Roman Catholic nation, following Brazil and Mexico. Current statistics show that about approximately 80.6% of the population identifies as Catholic, reflecting a slight variation from earlier data (Pew Research Center, 2020). This significant Catholic demographic happen at the same time with the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Christianity's introduction to the Philippines, highlighted

by Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, the head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP News,2021). He stressed the continuous impact of Christianity in the country, a religion that has persisted for over five centuries. A review of the history of Christianity in the Philippines traces back to the Spanish Bull Inter Caetera of May 4, 1493, which gave permission to Spanish explorations and conquests, emphasizing the importance of teaching the Catholic faith and

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moral conduct to the inhabitants (Robertson, 1918). Ferdinand Magellan facilitated the first baptism in 1521 and celebrated the first Sunday mass on the island of Mazua. Later, Miguel López de Legazpi's

expedition resulted to the establishment of Spanish settlements in Cebu (1565) and Manila (1571), marking the beginning of continuous Philippine-European relations (Robertson, 1918). Msgr. Jose Clemente Ignacio, the Vicar General and Moderator Curiae of the Archdiocese of Manila, explained the deep devotion and rich history of the Black Nazarene in 2015. Originally introduced in 1606 by Augustinian Recollect missionaries, the Black Nazarene depicts Jesus Christ bearing the cross. It was first enshrined in St. John the Baptist Church in Luneta, then it was relocated to Quiapo Church in 1767. The Traslacion procession, which honors Jesus' painful sacrifice as the Nazarene's image is moved from Quiapo church to other churches, replicates the Lord's "paschal journey to Calvary," Ignacio explains (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 2015). Devotion to the Black Nazarene represents an important component of Catholic traditions in the Philippines. This devotion includes novena prayers, holy masses, and an

annual feast day on January 9, marked by one of the nation's most massive processions. The "Traslacion" features devotees walking barefoot as an act of humility and penance, showcasing the significant influence of Catholicism on the daily lives and beliefs of Filipino worshippers. This study aims to investigate the narratives of Black Nazarene devotees and their cultural significance. Adopting a qualitative research methodology, particularly narrative inquiry, this approach is grounded in collecting and analyzing stories to uncover insights into culture, history, identity, and personal experiences (Creswell, 2013; Butina, 2015). Understanding the development of religious beliefs provides critical insights for social science educators societal frameworks, cultural norms, and human behavior. This exploration into religious development seek to enrich our understanding of the various social, cultural, and historical dynamics that mold societies. By examining the influence of religion and its interaction with societal constructs and principle—such as through the Cognitive Science of Religion, understanding which emphasizes the evolutionary significance of religious beliefs (Geertz, 2015), and Critical

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Religious Education, which promotes and engagement with diverse religious perspectives (Demirel Ucan & Wright, 209)— educators are better equipped to promote critical thought, promote diversity, support multiculturalism and tolerance, and foster an appreciation for varied perspectives and an understanding of various cultures. Integrating the study of the evolution of religion within the social science curriculum enhances teaching approaches, develop classroom environments that are inclusive, enlightening, and interactive. In such environments, students are encouraged to engage in dialogue, make informed decisions, and embrace diverse cultures and communities. After completing this research, our immediate goal is to develop an educational framework that will enhance the teaching of the evolution of Catholicism in the Philippines, specifically focusing on the devotion to the Black Nazarene and its cultural significance. The study envisions this framework becoming as the reference and basis for teaching 'Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems' subject, a senior high school social science subject. By focusing on the Black Nazarene, this aims to provide students with in-depth insights into its contribution to the evolving

Filipino culture. By incorporating our framework, this will have provided the curriculum with a much-needed approach that would offer students a broader and richer perspective on how religion develops. Ultimately, this framework is designed to enhance student learning. The next step will be to approach school and explore the possibility of collaborating with educators that are willing to adopt and implement these frameworks incorporated into their educational programs. Lastly, the current body of literature on the Black Nazarene is often focus on historical and ritualistic aspects, but they fall short in capturing the personal narratives of the devotees and its cultural implication to the live of the devotees, to address this gap, this research aims to uncover the deeper cultural significance of the Black Nazarene in the lives of the devotee. By doing so, this research study will contribute to a new data about understanding the nuances of the devotion to the Black Nazarene.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the devotion to the Black Nazarene and its cultural significance in the lives of Filipino devotees through a

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narrative research approach. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. To explore the personal narratives and experiences of devotees of the Black Nazarene.
2. To analyze the meanings and motivations behind the devotion of Filipino devotees to the Black Nazarene.
3. To identify the cultural values, beliefs, and traditions reflected in the devotion to the Black Nazarene.
4. To examine how devotion to the Black Nazarene influences the identity, faith, and everyday lives of the devotees.
5. To develop an educational framework that can enhance the teaching of the evolution of Catholicism in the Philippines, particularly the devotion to the Black Nazarene, in the subject *Introduction to World Religion and Belief Systems*.

## **METHODOLOGY**

We all share narratives to comprehend our lives and give meaning to our

experiences, using stories to communicate that meaning to others. This study will employ narrative as a method, with narrative researchers collecting stories from individuals, documenting them, and engaging in group conversations about lived and told experiences (Cresswell, 2013). These stories can arise from narratives shared with the researcher, co-constructed between researcher and participant, or intended as performances to convey messages (Riessman, 2008). Narrative research often involves a collaborative aspect as stories emerge through interaction. Narrative inquiry, a form of qualitative research, uses stories as raw data to gain insights into culture, historical experiences, identity, and lifestyle (Butina, 2015). Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative study methods are flexible, with Riessman (2008) providing insights into data collection and analysis. Polkinghorne (1995) defines narrative inquiry as using stories to depict human action, where a narrative arranges events into a temporal unit through a plot. "Narrative configuration" integrates happenings into a temporally organized whole, and "emplotment" provides narrative meaning. Bruner (1985) distinguishes paradigmatic cognition from narrative cognition, focusing on particularities of human action. This study aligns with

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Bruner's analysis of narratives, collecting stories as data and using paradigmatic processes to identify common themes (Bruner, 1985).

The study participants consist of devotees of the Black Nazarene, acknowledging diversity across generations. Participants were purposively selected based on: (A) inherited devotion from family, providing cultural context; (B) maintained devotion for 5–10 years since the centennial celebration, reflecting long-term commitment; (C) consistent engagement in devotional practices such as Traslacion, Pahalik sa Poon, and novenas; (D) ability to articulate profound reasons for devotion. Interviews will be conducted via video conference for those outside NCR. This approach emphasizes qualitative flexibility and considers contextual variables influencing participants' experiences. The self-made questionnaire will collect data on cultural impact and devotion practices. Ten devotees were chosen using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with significant experience. Data will undergo thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase method: familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, defining themes, and writing the analytic narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes provide a framework for analysis and conclusions. Ethical rigor

will be observed with informed consent and audio recordings.

The following accounts are responses from those who were requested to provide a narrative about the specific devotional practices they engage in and explain how important these practices are in their life: Devotee A engages in daily praying the Holy Rosary, consistently cleans the image of the Black Nazarene, and regularly joins pilgrimages. These practices are important for expanding his spirituality. Devotee B's devotion has helped him discern right from wrong. In making decisions, he always asks for His blessings. Even though conflicts occur, his devotion taught him good relationships with others. Devotee C prays the Holy Rosary daily, attends novenas every Friday, and participates in scheduled nine-day novena masses. Without this routine, he feels incomplete. Devotee D attends mass regularly and volunteers for the rescue team. These practices are important, and he adapts to what he has to learn as part of his commitment to the Poong Nazareno. Devotee E prays and attends church regularly, which helps his family and lightens heavy problems. When he does not perform these practices, he feels heavy and challenged.

Devotee F attends mass every Friday, dedicates this day to Quiapo Church,

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participates in the annual Traslacion, prays the rosary, and receives church sacraments regularly. Devotee G is a member of Hijos del Nazareno and serves during masses and special events. For him, this service is a lifelong commitment. Devotee H prays the rosary, attends Novena Masses in person or online, and participates in Traslacion annually. Devotee I practices Traslacion, kissing the image, recollections, formations, novenas, and rosary prayers. These practices deepen his understanding of God and strengthen community ties. Devotee J participates in group activities like meetings and novenas, which help him understand devotion and connect with God.

These narratives show the impact of devotional practices. Devotee A emphasizes strengthening spirituality through praying daily, cleaning statues weekly, and regular pilgrimages. Devotee B uses devotion as moral guidance, seeking blessings and promoting relationships. Devotee C balances devotion through weekly novenas, church attendance, and volunteering. Devotee D values regular church attendance, daily prayers, and participation in activities, providing comfort to family and maintaining a spiritual connection. Devotee E engages in various devotional practices, which become important parts of life. Devotee F's involvement with Hijos del Nazareno shows lifelong commitment.

Devotee G prioritizes rosary, novenas, and annual processions. Devotee H finds joy in rituals and hesitates to stop them. Devotee I focuses on rosary, novena, remembrance, kissing the image, and Traslacion. Devotee J treats small acts of devotion as a daily connection with the Black Nazarene.

Devotees A, C, D, E, and G perform routine practices, including praying the rosary, attending church, and participating in novenas. Devotees D, E, and G value regular church attendance. Devotees A, E, F, and G also participate in processions and pilgrimages. Devotees B and D view devotion as moral guidance and comfort, while Devotees C and F balance devotion with other responsibilities. Devotee A focuses on cleaning statues and pilgrimages, Devotee B promotes interpersonal relationships, and Devotee F shows lifelong commitment to Hijos del Nazareno. These approaches highlight how devotional practices shape spiritual life, emphasizing both shared and unique aspects.

The narratives reveal transformative impacts on lifestyle, personal development, and avoidance of negative behaviors. Devotees A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I, and J experienced positive changes, overcoming harmful habits and fostering virtues. Devotees A and B prevented bad habits and

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were blessed with a child and stable job. Devotee C experienced health improvements and moderated drinking habits. Devotee D underwent personal transformation. Devotee E learned patience and avoiding conflicts. Devotee F grew in faith and appreciation of confession. Devotee G became resilient, connecting life struggles with the Black Nazarene's suffering. Devotee H accepted life's challenges, fostering resilience and community responsibility. Devotee I deepened understanding of God, attributing improved family health to devotion. Devotee J emphasized self-control and problem-solving through prayer. These impacts demonstrate the profound influence of devotional practices on the lives of devotees. Devotee A avoids spending too much time with friends to avoid misbehavior, while Devotee B finds moral directions and change of attitude by reading the Bible. Devotee C experienced a positive change in his character while growing his spiritual life, and Devotee D highlights how moral values united his family in times of conflict. Devotee E speaks about his character transformations and gain social awareness, and Devotee F discusses how he has discovery of himself and decided to come back to the church. Devotees G, H, and J have developed strong faith amid life's challenges and found devotion as an

avenue to cope. Devotee I focuses on how devotion is used in everyday life, illustrating it with thanksgiving through prayer. These narratives demonstrate how devotion to the Black Nazarene changes the disciplinary, familial, moral, and dealing aspects in the life of the devotee; each of them are unique and their stories tell how faith shaped them.

The research "Religiosity among Indigenous Peoples: A Study of Cordilleran Youth in the Philippines" by Del Castillo et al. (2023) explores the influence of devotion on personal and communal aspects in the Philippines. It aligns with the experiences of Devotees A to J, focusing on how devotional practice impacts behavior, community interactions, and personal identity. Del Castillo et al.'s findings emphasize that devotion provides a means for individuals to create personal spaces of transcendence through customized activities, leading to personal change and strengthened spiritual connections. These themes resonate with the devotees' reports of modifications in lifestyles, family relationships, and societal awareness due to faith. For example, the tangible benefits of devotion, such as family cohesion described by Devotee D, receive scholarly backing from Del Castillo et al.'s exploration of how religious practices lay a moral groundwork for family life and community engagement. Devotee F's

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experience of finding direction aligns with the study's observations on devotion guiding individuals through uncertainties. The comfort found in devotion amid challenges, shared by Devotees G and H, parallels the study's findings on faith as a coping mechanism.

These narratives emphasize how devotion affects personal discipline, life direction, character development, and encourages compassionate engagement in community and social life. Del Castillo et al.'s study highlights devotion's role in personal change, stronger community bonds, and social dynamics. It is also giving him a sort of routines for everyday life. His life has been setting a direction brought about by this devotion. Devotee B shared his devotional journey by simply emphasizing that church helped him to live his life accordingly. He is now more eager to serve the church. According to him, the church also giving them assistance in times of need. For Devotee C, this devotion influences him to be faithful through responsibly living out devotional practices because it helps him to further understand the church. He also mentioned having a good life with being aware of the guidance from above. Devotee D has improved his life as an impactful impact of his devotion. He promised to continue his devotion as it gives him a greater understanding of the

role of the church as an instrument of God. Devotee E finds a deeper meaning to his devotion. He realizes that in facing problems you should be closer to God. He promises to stand for what is right as he feels that God never leave him. Devotee F able to reshape his lifestyle because of his devotion. It includes regular church attendance as an important part of his weekly routine. Devotee G describes how he is now careful decision-making, and it was an influence by his devotion. But he is more confident than ever since his devotion serves as his guide. Devotee H expresses his desire to have a simple life. This devotion taught him that we are embraced by the church just like our mother. Devotee I experienced a severe illness which challenged his devotion and it cause doubt. However, support from his religious community became a source strength. For Devotee J, attending mass regularly is his way of communication with God. Deep devotion shared by Devotees A to J illustrate how it changes their lives, perspective, and actions. Faith through devotion brought happiness, purpose, and strength; active church involvement deepened their faith and relationship with others. Devotion affects morality, support, community, and spiritual growth, showing its transformative impact on personal and communal levels.

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**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the study, the following were drawn:

1. The stories shared by participants reveal a variety of devotional paths, each marked by evolving connections with their practice over time.
2. Several factors influence devotion, including as the well-being of one's family, the desire for ongoing commitment, and the pursuit of spiritual and personal growth.
3. Friends and family significantly shape individuals, molding their devotion and creating a feeling of group commitment.
4. Participants engage in diverse devotional practices, suggesting a customized approach that takes into account interpersonal interactions, spiritual development, and decision-making.
4. Devotion to the Black Nazarene leads to significant changes in social, spiritual, and personal aspects of life, enhancing relationships, lifestyles, and overall well-being.
5. Both individual and group devotional activities strengthen the strong bond that devotees share with the Catholic Church.
7. Devotees

report positive changes, improved spiritual development, and a closer bond with God, which influences how they face life's challenges.

6. Devotion encourages individuals to lead moral lives by promoting ethical behavior, moral insight, and wise decision-making.
9. Taking part in devotional activities strengthens ties that go beyond specific rites and promotes a sense of community and camaraderie within the Church.

**Implications in Teaching Introduction to World Religion & Belief System**

1. Highlight the impact that family, social circles, and cultural background have on an individual's religious experiences. Encourage students to explore how these factors influence religious practices and their societal implications.
2. The narratives highlight the importance of recognizing the diverse ways people express their faith. When teaching world religions, it's crucial to emphasize the variety of practices within each tradition, underscoring the richness and diversity of religious expression.
3. Emphasize the uniqueness of each person's religious journey and the personalized nature of devotional practices. Encourage students to study world religions with an appreciation for

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the range of life experiences that shape religious beliefs and practices.

4. Highlight how a devotee's family relationships, moral behavior, and decision making are influenced by their religious devotion. Draw connections between these abstract ideas and their practical applications

to help students see the real-world impacts of religious beliefs.

5. Draw attention to the commonalities among different religions and encourage students to identify similarities between them. Foster an environment that promotes respect and understanding among students of various religious backgrounds.

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop interactive and hands-on learning resources that enable students to engage with a variety of religious traditions. Incorporating field visits, guest speakers, or virtual experiences can improve understanding beyond theoretical knowledge.
2. Include personal narratives in the curriculum, such as the ones the study examined. Students can gain a more profound and accessible

knowledge of religious experiences by hearing personal accounts.

3. Encourage students to think critically about how religious practices are shaped by culture, family, and personal experiences. Assign thoughtful writings or organize debates to deepen their understanding of the external factors influencing devotion.

4. Employ multidisciplinary approaches that connect the study of world religions to fields like psychology, sociology, and anthropology. This integration can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and cultural dimensions of religious behaviors. Utilize various assessment methods to allow students to demonstrate their understanding in multiple contexts. Projects, presentations, and reflective journals can facilitate critical examination and creative expression.

5. Invite guest lecturers from diverse religious backgrounds to share their personal perspectives. Organize interfaith dialogue events to foster respect and understanding among students from different religious backgrounds.

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6. Train teachers in cultural sensitivity and awareness to ensure that the learning environment is inclusive and respectful. Introduce students to a broad array of religious practices to enrich their educational experience.

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