

“This book takes an insightful journey into the mind and heart of Cardinal Luis Tagle, one of Asia’s youngest and most dynamic Catholic leaders and a figure who looms large on the church’s horizon. It is a compact but revealing volume, with rich biographical detail and thought-provoking personal reflections. In Tagle’s vision, the modern church must engage people through humility, simplicity, and, as the book’s subtitle states, ‘learning by listening.’”

—John Thavis

Author of New York Times best-seller, *The Vatican Diaries*

“As head of the Rome Bureau of the world’s premiere English Catholic News Service, Cindy Wooden has written a brilliant biography of one of the great lights of the Post-Conciliar Church. Cardinal Tagle has said: ‘A person will always be deeper than any label. And no person, especially when talking about deep mysteries of love, marriage, relationships, can ever be labeled.’ But when you finish reading Wooden’s story of Chito, you cannot help but label him ‘good.’ Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle is a shepherd who not only has the smell of the sheep and the mind and heart of the Good Shepherd but the manner and courage of the Bishop of Rome. Francis and Chito are cut from the same cloth. Of all the WITNESS interviews I have ever done for our TV network, the moments with Cardinal Chito were among the most powerful and beautiful.”

—Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB

CEO, Salt + Light Catholic Media Foundation, Canada
English Language Attaché, Holy See Press Office

Luis Antonio Tagle

Leading by Listening

Cindy Wooden



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Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
<i>Chapter One</i>	
School Years	9
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
Vocation	20
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
Humility and Simplicity	33
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
On Being a Bishop	46
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
Shaped by Vatican II	62
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
Lessons of Listening	78
Notes	95
Bibliography	99
Index	100

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Father Joseph Komonchak and Jesuit Fr. Daniel Huang also put up with my questions, answered them, and provided direction for other areas to explore.

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In addition to interviews with the cardinal, I attended so many speeches he gave in Rome over the course of two years that he may have thought I was stalking him. But I also have

cited comments Cardinal Tagle made in a wide-ranging interview with Basilian Fr. Thomas Rosica of Canada's Salt and Light Television (<http://youtu.be/eu4ooS5H8sA>).

Further information came from the websites of the Archdiocese of Manila (www.rcam.org), the news site of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (www.cbcnews.com), the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin (www.iec2012.ie), and the Vatican website (www.vatican.va) for texts of Cardinal Tagle's speeches at various gatherings of the Synod of Bishops and at the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec.

Introduction

Luis Antonio “Chito” Gokim Tagle’s road to the red hat was paved by a strong extended family, a solid education, the kindness of strangers, and a priest who tricked him into taking the seminary entrance exam. Seriously. It bothered him so much when he failed that exam, he began daily Eucharistic adoration to discern whether his vocation was as a doctor—as he and his parents had planned—or as a priest.

Much of this book is based on hours of interviews with Cardinal Tagle conducted in February, May, and October 2014 in Rome and in January 2015 in Manila. The interviews followed several conversations over a period of months aimed at convincing the cardinal that his cooperation would not be presented as an attempt on his part to gain attention or, worse, to show off. In fact, he agreed to speak to the author only on the condition that a biography would reflect his belief that anything he has accomplished and anything he has learned about living the Christian life is the result of being loved and taught by special people and listening to the poor.

His nickname, Chito, is a constant reminder of his status in his family and in the world, he said. The nickname is so much part of his identity that it is included in the Italian

2 *Luis Antonio Tagle*

version of his official biography on the Vatican website's section on the College of Cardinals. It's a diminutive of *Luisquito*, which in turn is the diminutive of *Luis*. His mother, *Milagros*, always called him *Chito*, but sometimes, he says, his grandmother would call him *Luisquito*, and that meant trouble because in his house, the long form was never an endearment. The little "ito" suffix on names is common in the Philippines, a land of people known by their nicknames. With its constant use, he said, "you never grow up. You're always the diminutive. It's a reminder that you are a child."

Gokim, which he also insists on using, is his mother's maiden name. The Chinese surname is a strong part of his identity. His maternal grandfather traveled with a relative from China to the Philippines at the age of thirteen, decided to stay, and eventually married. He worked for a cigarette company in the Philippines, traveling often as he brought cigarettes and cigars from Manila to the country's northern districts. "He was not a person of high education," the cardinal said, "but he made sure all of his children—nine of them—went to university. He died a poor, simple person, not owning anything, not owning property, but he had his dreams fulfilled."

The cardinal never met his paternal grandfather, *Florencio Tagle*, who was a teacher. During the Second World War, a bomb fell near the family's home, but it did not explode. *Florencio* tried to move it to keep the family safe, but it exploded and killed him immediately, leaving his wife to raise their five children on her own. To support the family, she and her sister opened a *carinderia*, which is a small restaurant. *Florencio's* son, *Manuel*—the cardinal's father—was thirteen years old at the time. Eventually his four sisters went to work in the *carinderia*, and *Manuel*, the only boy, was the only one of the children to go to university.

At his installation as archbishop of Manila in late 2011, Tagle told the congregation, “As I embark on my new ministry as archbishop of Manila, I feel deeply united with the many beloved disciples who have taught me to recognize the Lord: my loving parents, Manuel and Milagros, and brother Manuel Jr. They have always provided a haven of love and commitment for me; [and] my aunts, uncles, cousins, and clan who never fail to nurture me.” He also spoke of each teacher he had from grade school through grad school, the people he worked with on commissions and councils of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, and the people at the Vatican. And also his “former students, seminarians, the religious and the poor, the beloved poor, who have taught me to be more sensitive to the presence of Jesus who calls me to mission. Your love has enabled me to see the Lord.”¹

Born in Manila on June 21, 1957, Tagle grew up about fifteen miles south of the city in Imus in a house owned by his paternal grandparents and shared with his father’s four sisters and their families. The rest of the extended family would gather there for holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries because his grandmother and great-grandmother lived there too.

With fourteen family members in residence, plus two women who helped care for Chito’s great-grandmother, the house sounds like a mansion. But Tagle said it was just a regular house. It had one kitchen and one living room where the family would gather. For most of his life, the house also had only one bathroom, which meant that morning schedules were carefully organized and strictly adhered to. As for the bedrooms, Chito and Manuel Jr. slept on the floor of their parents’ room. His three unmarried aunts shared a room. His married aunt, her husband, and three children shared another room.

Today a search of YouTube, the internet video site, returns dozens of results with clips of the cardinal singing everything from show tunes to hymns. Music and singing, while perfected and formalized in the seminary, also began at home. One of the women who helped in the house when he was growing up taught Filipino folk songs to him, his brother, and his cousins at a young age. “People saw that I could follow rhythm and music,” Tagle said. “If I don’t have the time or energy to walk or engage in more physical exercise, if I’m too tired, what relaxes me is music.”

The cardinal’s parents, both retired bank employees, live today in the same house in Imus. His brother, Manuel Jr., who is five years younger, lives and works in the state of Virginia. A little girl was born to the family a year after Chito was born, but she lived only a few minutes.

Chito already was in school when his little brother was born, and he was in high school when Manuel Jr. was in grade school. Chito entered the seminary as his brother was finishing grade school, “so the time we had living together in the same house wasn’t that long,” the cardinal said. When Chito went to The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, for his doctoral studies, Manuel Jr. was working in Chicago, but he and a cousin then moved to Virginia for work and that geographical proximity enabled the brothers to solidify a new relationship as young adults. “And now, since we have our parents to—uh, uh—monitor,” he said, smiling at how he found a word that his parents wouldn’t find offensive, “we have this common concern. You engage in common discernment and common decision making and that helps in forging a deeper relationship.”

After dinner at his parents’ house not long ago, he said his mother thanked him and Manuel Jr. for bringing new friends into their lives. She said people know that she and

Manuel Sr. are alone in Imus and offer help and support for them out of admiration for their sons.

Having moved from a family home with sixteen residents directly to the seminary with dozens, living alone was not part of the cardinal's life experience. Even now he lives with two priests and two sisters who manage the residence. He said, "I've never lived in an apartment by myself; I've always lived in community." Growing up in a house shared with so many people "taught us discipline, respect for each other's space and each other's needs. The family experience taught me how to be sensitive to differences and how to handle conflicts at a very early age. Since the people involved were family, you would not allow conflict and differences to lead to divisions; you had to face those conflicts and handle them for a higher good, which is the family."

His family history, both the ethnic mix as well as the strong extended family ties, are very much the Philippine norm. "We assimilate others, and we get assimilated so quickly that sometimes we can be confused. What does it mean to be a Filipino?" he commented. "My mother is half Chinese. My grandfather was born in China, a convert to Christianity, and got married to a Filipino-Chinese woman in the northern part of the Philippines. I don't even understand the language of my mother," a dialect from her home province of Pangasinan. "When she speaks with her brothers and sisters, we're outsiders."

Like many other bishops of Asia who work together in the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Cardinal Tagle insists the ability to dialogue is a key feature of being a Catholic in Asia where the Christian community is a small minority and where people of different religions, languages, cultures, and ethnicities mix on a daily basis and often intermarry. In Filipino families, he said, "You experience real

intercultural dialogue, even interreligious dialogue to some extent. Dialogue must happen in the family, not just in academic circles.”

Dealing with differences within the family forces parents to ask serious questions and find solutions that, while affirming the Catholic faith, demonstrate respect for the faith that is a part of the other’s identity, he said. Couples of different religions must make decisions about how they will raise their children. “There is a Catholic tradition that is afraid of eclecticism, but if you are a child of a Christian mother and a Hindu father, how do you avoid the eclecticism?” the cardinal asked. “And how do we equip people who will enter into interreligious relationships and family life? Canonically, it’s easy: the non-Christian partner signs a document saying, ‘I will not hinder the Catholic partner from raising the children. . . .’ But in day-to-day life, what will we eat, what practices will we follow, what schools will our children go to, what feasts will we celebrate? Which holidays? How often should the children go to the grandparents who are Hindu? When they visit the Hindu grandparents are they allowed to offer flowers? These are daily concerns that cannot be captured in a few formulae.”

Although Cardinal Tagle’s Grandfather Gokim was never “a fanatic Buddhist” and converted to Catholicism before he married, throughout his life he maintained some traditional Buddhist practices, including “on certain occasions, offering food and incense to honor the ancestors. He never went back to China; he never saw his mother again or his grandparents. He stayed in the Philippines. So on those once-a-year occasions, he had a photo of his mother and food there and incense.”

When the young Chito entered the seminary, his cousins wondered how he would react to his grandfather’s ritual

and if he would continue to take part. He said he told them, “I know our grandfather, I know he is not committing idolatry here. This is maybe the child in him that wants to express a certain reverence and connection to his mother, who he hadn’t seen again since he was thirteen years old. So why wouldn’t we join him.” The cardinal said that when he was growing up, the ritual was that his grandfather would prepare a plate of food to honor the memory of his mother and would prepare separate plates for his grandchildren. “He was very strict, and would warn the children, ‘Don’t take any of the food offered for your grandmother or you will get a stomachache.’”

In an interview for this book, the cardinal said his family’s history and the living reminders of it, which are on display at every family gathering, keep him from becoming “proud and mighty and lofty.”

His family and his connectedness to them are also part of his more academic presentations. At the Asian Mission Congress in 2006, while he was still bishop of Imus, he focused on the importance of stories and the power of personal witness in spreading the Gospel.

Stories reveal personal identity and people and events that shaped that identity. As I tell my little stories, my fundamental life story is revealed not only to the listener but also and primarily to me, the narrator. I make sense of myself. But I realize in the process that the story is not simply about me. It is also always about other people, my family and friends, society, culture, the economy, or what we call “the times.” My story is not developed in a vacuum. I am what I am because I am immersed in other people’s stories and the stories of my time. If I neglect or deny them, I have no personal story to tell. In telling my story, I make sense also of the world I inhabit.²

CHAPTER ONE

School Years

Chito's parents believed he was ready for school before his sixth birthday, and the principal of the local state-run elementary school in Imus agreed. But some parents, whose children were not accepted, found out that a five-year-old had been admitted and they complained. The cardinal says his parents did not want to create trouble, so they began looking for another school for their son. They began with schools nearby, gradually widening their search. In the end, Chito ended up at the private St. Andrew's School in Paranaque, more than sixteen rough-road miles from home. The school was run by Belgian members of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, commonly known as the Scheut Missionaries. At the time, the education system in the Philippines was organized around six years of elementary school followed by four years of secondary school. Students generally graduated at the age of sixteen.

Not attending the local public school turned out to be "providential," the cardinal said, "because in addition to what I received from my parents, I got formal religion classes. And early on, the Belgian missionaries instilled in

us discipline; focus; frugal, simple living; and a missionary spirit. And I'm very thankful for that foundational formation we got from them."

As a senior, Chito was fifteen years old. "I was in my final year of high school when martial law was declared and, painful as it was, the priests cancelled the junior-senior prom, cancelled all the fancy clothing for graduation—we just had Mass in our school uniform—and of course we rebelled. But we were called to a meeting and the priest explained these are hard times, we don't know where the country is heading, we don't want to impose on your parents additional burdens. So you should learn how to support your parents and your country. For adolescent minds, you know, it was one of our big days, and they were depriving us of it. But they were firm."

Almost until the very end of high school, Chito was convinced that his future was in medicine. He says he was a good Catholic boy and went to Mass every Sunday. But partly because he went to a Catholic school in another town, he was not particularly involved in the life of the Imus parish. "Then came the invasive intrusion in my life! Toward the end of my third year in high school, the Knights of Columbus council in my local parish started the Columbian Squires—kind of the junior members of the Knights of Columbus." His father was a Knight and the elder Tagle and other members of the Imus council decided their sons would be the first Squires. "I was forced to join it," the cardinal said. He knew the names of some of the other boys, but he was not friends with them since he did not go to school with them. "I was an outsider. I knew that I would not have fun. But it was expected of us, so I joined. I think the group saw how I was withdrawing from them, how I dragged my feet to meetings; they elected me president! And I accepted and

I took it seriously. It was a good move on their part. It was also in a way an action of God; it allowed me to get out of my shell and be creative.”

The spiritual director of the Squires was a newly ordained priest, Fr. Redentor Corpuz, whom the cardinal describes as “young, energetic, and adventurous.” Just eleven years older than Chito, Corpuz was into music and sports, and the young Squires quickly formed a bond with him. “Since he was the spiritual director and I was the president, we spent a lot of time talking to each other,” the cardinal said. “I would say he was my first adult friend.”

Involvement in the Squires added a new dimension to Chito’s parish life and his connections to his peers in Imus. The Squires helped with parish fundraising projects and “we got involved in programs for the street children and the children of informal settlers, the squatters, in the slums; we would organize Christmas parties for them. We also organized sports and cultural events for the youth.” In a short span of time, the Squires became friends and Chito’s fear “that I would remain an alien” was put to rest.

Chito’s parents, whom he describes as “bank employees, who were able to gain some promotions through hard work,” would have been able to afford the tuition at St. Andrew’s; nevertheless he always was awarded scholarships. “My whole educational journey was marked by people helping me through scholarships—from grade school to the doctoral level. I was always on scholarship, and they came from people who I do not know.” The donors “didn’t want recognition, they just wanted to help.” The cardinal said he tries to repay them by imitating their generosity in continuing to teach at the archdiocesan seminary in Manila and at the Loyola School of Theology where he had earned his master’s degree. Jesuit Fr. Jose V. C. Quilongquilong, president of the

school of theology, said the cardinal's classes are popular and always full. He also said that while everyone knows the cardinal has an impossible schedule, Tagle always sends a formal note asking to be excused from the faculty meetings he cannot make. Quilongquilong said he has told the cardinal repeatedly that such notes are not necessary, but the cardinal insists that as a faculty member he will follow all the rules in the faculty handbook, including formally asking to be excused from those meetings. Asked why he continues to teach and how he manages with his schedule, the cardinal said, "I am the product of so many generous people, why would I not allow that gift to be given to other people? I realize that what I am now is the fruit of the common effort of so many people—my family, my teachers, and so many people I do not know—forming one community of love and service."

Some of the scholarships he received came from the Knights of Columbus. In 1973, when he was about to enter the Ateneo and the seminary, the Knights awarded him a scholarship for four years. Attending his first-ever Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus in 2012, he told the thousands gathered in Anaheim, CA, "My belonging to the group brought me closer to the church and to the call to mission."

While the Squires were active in parish life and striving to be good Catholics, they still were normal young men. When asked if Chito had a girlfriend in those years, the cardinal responded, "I had friends. Of course I thought I would get married and have children." Describing life outside school and church, he said, "We were always in disco houses. I was part of a gang of girls and boys. We would sneak out of the house to go to the discos and parties. But, really, nothing serious developed in those years. You can

call it group dates. We were fourteen, fifteen years old.” Interestingly enough, while there were some flirtations between members of the group and chatter among members about the potential for various couples ending up together, no marriages ever occurred between group members. “It was like we treated each other as brothers and sisters. In the end, after all the teasing and pairing, it was really like an extended family. It was like there was an unspoken rule: no one should get married because you are like brothers and sisters. We had a gathering a few years ago and we laughed and laughed because those that we thought would end up together—that there were possibilities—didn’t.”

Asked if his mother is disappointed he didn’t become a doctor and get married and give her grandchildren, or if she is proud that he is a cardinal, he responded, “One thing that I appreciate even now is that even though my parents had their own dreams for me and my brother, they fully respected our decisions. Especially my mother, she has that spiritual side to her that makes her see God’s hand in something that is not in accord with her plans. She can accept it as maybe God has another plan.”

Jesuit Fr. Daniel Huang, regional assistant for Asia-Pacific at the Jesuit headquarters and former provincial of the Philippines, first crossed paths with Chito at the Ateneo’s commencement ceremonies in 1973 when Chito graduated with his bachelor’s degree *summa cum laude* and Huang was a first-year university student. He said, “For graduations there is a custom of having a younger student as an usher. You go on stage and get your medal, then you go to your parents and the usher carries the medal and your parents put it on you. I was his usher. But we didn’t know each other then.”

That changed in 1979 when Chito was doing his graduate theology studies in Manila and Danny was a pre-novice, about

to enter the Jesuits. “I was assigned to a poor parish near the Ateneo, St. Joseph the Worker in Marikina. He was directing the choir, and I was training the basses. We became friends.” At the time, neither had been ordained to the priesthood.

President Ferdinand Marcos’s imposition of martial law was part of the environment as the two studied and engaged in pastoral work. Both were involved in social action to the extent that their superiors approved. But the work in the parish was “pastoral action rather than political action. We both had our different political involvements, but the parish was about working with and learning from the poor,” Huang says. “One of the things I learned from Chito from that experience was the value of humor and presence, being with and sharing life, making friends. Our work was the normal parish task of working with the choir but Chito wasn’t just teaching music, he was visiting homes, making friends, having no differences, being close to people—and always with humor—sharing jokes and sharing meals. My own background was not like his; at that time I was discovering for myself what being close to the poor meant. I came from a more sheltered background, and Chito was very good about helping me bridge the cultural divide.”

Chito was ordained to the priesthood in 1982. Huang said, “I was a novice, and I remember crying because my novice master wouldn’t let me go his ordination. I was twenty-two years old. He was such an attractive personality.”

Three years after his ordination, armed with his bachelor’s degree in philosophy from the Ateneo and his master’s degree in theology from the Loyola School of Theology, Fr. Chito was sent in 1985 to The Catholic University of America to earn his licentiate and doctorate in theology.

One of his professors in Washington, the one who would become his doctoral director, was Fr. Joseph A. Komonchak,

now professor emeritus of theology and religious studies. The professor said of his former student, “I found him very open, obviously a very young priest. He was somewhat shy I would say. Humble. Never paraded around, but also one of the most intelligent and bright students that I had in forty-five years of teaching.”

Although supported by scholarships and grants, Chito also was a work-study student. Komonchak said, “Catholic University isn’t the wealthiest university around,” so when money got tight, Chito “went over to the library and got a job. He also worked in parishes and for the Filipino community—he was all over the place giving talks for them.”

On the evening before Archbishop Tagle became a cardinal, Jesuit Fr. Catalino Arevalo, his mentor as a theologian and the person who referred him to Catholic University, told the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* that because his protégé did not introduce himself as a priest when he went to the library, he was assigned to do “dirty work,” carrying books and boxes until they found out he was a priest and gave him a less physical job. “When his mother found out, she cried. The Tagles are not very wealthy but they have some money. Both mother and father worked for Equitable Bank. They could have sent him more money” or his brother who was working in Virginia could have helped, “but Chito did not tell his brother. He did his work quietly. He did not want to burden other people. Later on, while I was talking with him, he said he found it quite hard doing his studies while trying to earn the money he needed. This is the kind of person he is,” Arevalo said.

Arevalo also identified Huang as a promising theologian and convinced the young priest’s superiors to send him to Catholic University as well. “So I arrived in 1989—and this is just a little sign of who Chito was—he was in Brescia

[Italy] doing his research, but he had arranged that his brother would take care of me,” Huang said. “I, of course, was with the Jesuit community, but he asked his brother to make sure that I got good Filipino meals and that I be introduced to their family and network of cousins in Washington, DC. It was just a little thing, but so thoughtful; he wanted to make sure that I would be welcomed.”

“One of the things that struck me very much, even when he was studying, was his simplicity. He didn’t have a religious order to take care of him, and the diocese he was from wasn’t a wealthy diocese, so he had to work in the library part-time. He made so many friends there. For his ordination as a bishop and when he received his *pallium* (at the Vatican as archbishop of Manila), people from Catholic U came. He had this amazing gift for making friends and creating loyalty,” Huang continued.

In addition to studying and working in the library in Washington, “he made it a point to work at Mother Teresa’s shelter for AIDS patients. He regularly volunteered there in addition to all the academic stuff and the pastoral work we would do with Filipino families. He did it quietly, without fanfare. It was just him. He insisted that somehow there would be some connection to the poor” even while working on his doctorate. The pressure of academic work, earning money for his keep, and engaging in ministry did not seem to be a problem, Huang continued. “Chito is very disciplined, extremely disciplined. He did his work and pastoral work as well. It’s clear your main work is your studies and Chito did that very well; he was very focused. But he did the pastoral work to keep alive his priesthood, to keep in touch with people. It was a disciplined way of life: you study and, to make sure you don’t forget what you are a priest for, you do other things.”

Komonchak said he was not surprised in 1997 when Pope John Paul II gave Fr. Tagle a five-year appointment to the International Theological Commission, a body that advises the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Pope Benedict, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, was president of the commission when Tagle served on it. “I wasn’t surprised because I knew how talented he was,” says Komonchak, who believed his student should use his talents as a professional theologian. “When he went back to the Philippines after he finished his doctorate, he was given several jobs, any one of which would have tired a normal person out,” he said. In fact, Chito’s former doctoral director said, “I was about to write to Cardinal Sin in Manila and tell him, ‘This man has the chance of being the best theologian in Asia and one of the best theologians in the world. In order for him to do that, he has to have time to read and write and do research. And he’s got so many jobs.’ And besides that, he was being asked to go talk to every convent of nuns. I said, ‘He has to be given the time to do this.’ Before I could write the letter, I got notice from Chito that the apostolic delegate had told him that the pope wanted to make him a bishop.” His appointment as bishop of Imus was announced in October 2001, and Tagle was ordained a bishop on December 12 by Cardinal Sin.

Komonchak said, “Chito’s first reaction was, ‘I never wanted to be a bishop.’ And I said that the true meaning of vocation is the church calling you to something. He didn’t really have a choice I suppose. You don’t turn that down. But it was never his plan for himself. He was never an ambitious man.” While Chito is not the academic theologian his mentor thought he could be, Komonchak said that what the cardinal does “is pastoral theology in the best sense. Pastoral theology is the study of how the church comes to

be and how it acts and that's what he's engaged in. He's helping the church be something different by the way he preaches and what he preaches about."

Huang, who taught with Tagle at the Loyola School of Theology, says that as a professor, his friend always received the best evaluations. "The thing is, he's got depth; he's got clarity. Theology is *scientia et sapientia*—knowledge and wisdom. He reads, is prepared, but he also has *sapientia*, which bridges theology and life, doctrine and life, the mind and the heart. So in his teaching, he is very clear about history, about concepts; he has the scientific aspect, but at the same time, he's never forgotten the wisdom aspect, which is: What does this mean for life? How does this truth touch the heart and transform the life of the person hearing it? I think it's always been something of that sort with him. I think it's partially because his natural environment is a pastoral one. The fact that he's not a university-based theology professor does not mean that he's any less rigorous, but it means his typical audience is different, which has shaped the way he's communicated. He's not arguing with academics primarily—although he can do that very well—but his primary audience has always been the people of God. The locus of theology in Asia is not primarily at the university at this point—maybe we need more of that—but the locus, at least in the Philippines, is the people. A lot is shaped by whom your conversation partners are. And the theologians are trying to do theology for the life of the church, rather than for academic journals. So that's why I think his theology is closer to the fathers of the church than to the university," Huang said. The material that forms the basis of patristic theology consists of the homilies and pastoral letters the early church theologians wrote as instruction and inspiration, not as isolated reflections on theological questions. He continued,

“You cannot say the theology of the fathers of the church is any less theology, it’s just a different mode.”

While heading an archdiocese the size of Manila is already more than a full-time job, Cardinal Tagle continues his weekly television reflection on the coming Sunday’s Mass readings and serves on several Vatican councils. And the cardinal continues to teach theology “because he loves it, first of all,” Huang said. “And he’s a great communicator. I think it’s also partially to keep himself mentally alert in being forced to prepare and to read and to think. It’s where he’s able to maintain and keep alive that intellectual aspect of his life. He likes teaching. I think other people play golf or basketball to relax, and he teaches. But I also think it gives him a chance to think.”

Archbishop Tagle told Canada’s Salt + Light Television in a 2012 interview, “Good theology has a pastoral thrust; good theology isn’t meant to satisfy the curiosity of the theologian. It is not just a way to test one’s talent and creativity. Theology is at the service of the faith of the people. If theology is distant from the concerns of the people, their questions, their world, I don’t think it will be good theology. And good theology should be understandable to people and it should aid them, help them deepen their encounter with the Lord.”