

WHICH CHRISTIANITY? RETHINKING THE PHILIPPINES AS A CHRISTIAN NATION

Date/Time: 9 February 2026, 4.00pm-5.30pm

Venue: Research Division Seminar Room, NUS AS7 06-42

Register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/gBJxh4jYEP>



This talk interrogates the long-standing claim that the Philippines is a “Christian nation” by asking a critical question: which Christianity? While Catholicism has discursively defined the national identity, this talk argues for a broader understanding that accounts for the growing influence of diverse Christian groups. It begins by reaffirming Catholicism’s dominant position but highlights emerging patterns that challenge its public authority. These include the rise of new denominations, from the Iglesia ni Cristo to evangelical megachurches. Collectively, their presence signals an increasingly plural Christian landscape.

The discussion frames this diversity in terms of “Christianities.” Apart from diversity, I will emphasize two other key dynamics: the global character of these churches, shaped by migration and postcolonial aspirations, and their militant tenor, marked by triumphalist and fundamentalist theologies that also inform their political engagements. These developments suggest a competitive yet predictable religious landscape, where progressive theological visions are marginalized.

This talk will draw on my work as a sociologist of religion and my current role as the director of a national government agency that invests in youth and education. I conclude with a reflection on how education can foster inclusive understandings of what it means to be Filipino—religious or otherwise.

Speaker Bio



Jayeel Cornelio is the Director of the Science Education Institute, a national government agency under the Department of Science and Technology of the Republic of the Philippines. He is concurrently Professor at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he was Chair of the Department of Development Studies and Associate Dean for Research and Creative Work. He is the author of *Being Catholic in the Contemporary Philippines: Young People Reinterpreting Religion* (2016) and lead editor of the *Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society* (2022). In the past decade, he has published extensively on religion and public life, paying attention to some of the most divisive issues in the Philippines, including the war on drugs, the legalization of divorce, the reinstatement of the death penalty, and the struggle for gender equality. For his scholarship, Professor Cornelio has received several national awards, including the Outstanding Young Scientist Award from the National Academy of Science and Technology. He has also led projects funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 Programme, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the British Academy. Professor Cornelio received the PhD in Sociology (2011) from the National University of Singapore as a scholar of the Asia Research Institute and was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity.