



**Ruben Mendoza** (Winter/Spring 2020)

Immediate Past Chair of Theology

Member of Board of Directors, Ateneo Center for Asian Studies

Ateneo de Manila University

**Manila, Philippines**

Dr. Mendoza is a full-time faculty member in the Ateneo de Manila University's Department of Theology, which he also served as chair from 2017-19. In addition, he teaches graduate courses at the nearby St. Vincent School of Theology. His degrees include an MA in pastoral ministry (Ateneo), a PhD in anthropology (University of the Philippines), and a PhD and STL from KU Leuven. Since 2017, he has served as president of the Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines, known as DaKaTeo. He also sits on the International Review Board for the *Maryhill School of Theology Review* as well as the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board's Committee on Information Dissemination, Training, and Advocacy. He is the author of *A Journey to the Kingdom in the Spirit: Becoming a Dialogical Church for All the Peoples of Asia* (Claretian, 2014) and co-editor of "Doing Theology in the Globalized World," in *Hapag 12:1* (2015).

### **Research Interests**

- Theologies of religions
- Contextual theologies
- Asian theologies
- Peacebuilding and reconciliation

### **Research Focus While at CWCIT**

#### **"Navigating Religious Identity in the Currents of Mission: The Case of the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo"**

Located in the Southern Philippines, a predominantly Muslim region, Jolo is a town where Christians account for only 5% of the population. Understanding mission as *missio Dei*, the Catholic vicariate here prioritizes interreligious dialogue with Muslims; it envisions its mission as "building a community of communities" in which all ethnic groups and faiths are respected. However, the reality is complicated by religious tension, heightened by a rise in Islamic extremism. And in a context where Christian businessmen convert to Islam solely for the sake of furthering their business interests, Christian religious identity can become something to be negotiated. Using personal narratives from interviews he has conducted in Jolo, Mendoza explores the following questions: How does the interplay of Christian and Islamic traditions affect a Christian's identity? And what strategies does the Church employ to carry out its mission in a region where it is a minority?