

FINAL STATEMENT
FABC Office of Laity and Family
BILA X on Laity
(10th Bishop's Institute on Lay Apostolate on Laity)
"The Role and Mission of the Laity in the 21st Century"
Asian Meeting on Laity on the 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council
Camillian Pastoral Care Center, Bangkok, Thailand, March 2 - 6, 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, the 43 participants from 9 countries of Asia (Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam) - (4 Bishops, 11 priests and 28 lay men and women) came together at the Camillian Pastoral Care Centre, Bangkok, Thailand, from March 2 - 6, 2015, for the 10th BILA on Laity. We thank the FABC Office of Laity and Family for organizing this event. We thank the Papal Nuncio in Thailand, His Excellency, Archbishop Paul Tschang In-Nam, who presided the opening Eucharist. Special thanks, too, to the Camillian Fathers' and Brothers' Community for their generosity and willingness to accommodate this event at very short notice after it was decided, with regret, to move this event from Dhaka, Bangladesh to Bangkok, Thailand.
- 1.2 This 10th Bishop's Institute on the Lay Apostolate focused on the theme "The Role and Mission of the Laity in the 21st Century - on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council".
- 1.3. We set out:
- 1.3.1. To assess, in view of the Second Vatican Council, the role and mission of the Laity; How we have done, where we are and where we should be going.
 - 1.3.2. To study the impact of the mission of the Laity on society;
 - 1.3.3. To study the impact of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), Family, Women's and Youth Ministries on the enabling of Laity to participate in the Mission of the Church;
 - 1.3.4. To propose recommendations for the mission of evangelization of the Laity.

2. EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 The Chairman of FABC Office of Laity and Family welcomed everyone present and laid out the work carried out by the FABC Office of Laity and Family since 1982. He also drew attention to the task of this 10th BILA on Laity and the objectives to be realized by the conference.
- 2.2 From the Welcome address and keynote address we realised how important the Second Vatican Council images of Church were for pastoral work related to the participation and formation of Laity for Mission and for changing structures and programmes.

- 2.3 On the question of the formation of the Laity, we came to understand the significance of: Small Christian Communities (SCCs) for the training of women in leadership roles; the education in the social teachings of the Church and the formation of youth in the Church.
- 2.4 From the outset we recaptured the empowering vision of the Second Vatican Council enshrined in its ground breaking teachings particularly on the nature of the Church and the Apostolate of the Laity, and we sought to glean the depth and breadth of the vocation of the Laity in the Church and in the World. We perceived anew the identity of the Laity deriving from their baptismal consecration in Christ where:
- The Spirit empowers them with specific gifts.
 - They are established as part of the People of God, and the body of Christ.
 - They have an inalienable share in the one, but diverse mission of Christ.
- 2.5 The voice of the Council that no part of the living body can afford to be passive re-echoed among us and in our hearts. That this lay vocation should be characterized by a specific spirituality and missionary commitment energized us. For in Jesus Christ the natural and supernatural, the secular and sacred have been integrated. In the course of our three-day reflection we sought to look more closely, in the light of the Council, into the concrete implications of this encouraging and empowering vision. We are convinced that the Council is not only relevant to our times, but it challenges us to be engaged with greater zeal in fulfilling the unfinished agenda of the Council contributing to the growth of the Church by more active participation as Laity in the one mission of Jesus.
- 2.6 We believe that the vision and mission of the Laity is not communicated adequately. More needs to be done in all our situations while being conscious of the limitations arising from our divergent contexts. An attitudinal change and change of mind-set are called for. The Laity need to be perceived as co-responsible fellow workers and not mere helpers. They need to be involved in designing and animating pastoral plans. We also came to see the specific responsibility of having to bear witness to Christ while living as a small number amidst people of different faiths.

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Identity of the Laity

We have become aware of the need to help lay people clarify and understand their role and mission in the church and in the world, especially in the Asian context today. This also challenges us to a change of mindset and conversion of heart.

3.2 Lay spirituality

We felt the need to have a common understanding of lay spirituality with its essential elements and one that is nurtured by the Word of God and the sacraments. The dichotomy between faith and life among many lay faithful is a sad reality. Many also seem to understand lay spirituality as merely serving in the different ministries in the parishes while forgetting that it also means engaging themselves in socio-economic and political arenas with a view to transforming these situations in the light of the Gospel.

3.3 Formation of the Laity

There is an urgent need to invest in the formation of the Laity in order to empower them to take up leadership roles in church and society.

3.4 Daily struggles in Family and Society

The lay faithful live in the world challenged by negative influences and an unreceptive environment where persecution is often a real threat. Family life is also undermined not only with the challenge of information technology but also of threats emanating from the negative aspects of globalization. Yet very often these laypeople, families and youth are left unaccompanied and unsupported as they face the real struggles in life.

3.5 The call to mission and evangelization

There seems to be a prevalent feeling of lethargy, complacency and lukewarmness towards evangelization.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above-mentioned challenges, we humbly present our recommendations to:

4.1 Our bishops, priests and religious

- a. to spare no effort to provide opportunities for integral (holistic) formation of the lay faithful – keeping in view their specific vocation.
- b. to train and engage more pastoral workers in the area of pastoral care and in establishing SCCs.
- c. to give priority to family and youth ministry, and their accompaniment.

4.2 Our lay faithful

- a. to commit themselves to the transformation of the secular world and the care of creation
- b. to support families so they can become the seedbed of evangelization and vocations for the service of the church.
- c. to grow in awareness and to own their role in the mission of the church and in the world.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Holy Spirit set our hearts on fire with renewed fervor and a sense of commitment as people of God to build a 'communion of communities' in the world today in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

5.2 As we go forth from here, may our Mother Mary, be our model and intercessor in our mission of proclaiming the Good News to our peoples by our transformed lives.