



The 3rd BILA (Bishops' Institute for Lay Apostolate) on Youth was organized by FABC-OLF-Youth Desk and it was hosted by the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu of Malaysia from Aug 3 to 7, 2015. It was held in Pace Bene Retreat Centre. The theme of BILA III on **Youth was Catholic Youth - Transformed by Christ and His Church, Transforming Asia** *Re-living the experience of the Samaritan Woman (John 4)*. The following were the objectives of organizing the BILA:

- **To reflect on and evaluate the changing needs and concerns of young people vis-à-vis the present realities of Asia in the context of pastoral youth ministry.** And the objectives of the AYMM are to further deepen the message of the AYD and to have sharing and exchange experiences and views among the Youth Animators of Asia.
- **To encourage the bishops and youth animators to commit themselves further to assist and accompany the youth towards a personal and growing relationship with Christ and His Church.**
- **To empower participants in motivating and shepherding young people as agents of the Gospel in the face of burning issues today** (e.g. moral relativism, religious discrimination, the poor and the marginalized, and globalization).
- **To identify resources and establish networks that will recognize and support pastoral workers in youth apostolate in Asia.**

Participants: There were about 95 delegates from 18 countries and some Catholic youth organizations of Asia, consisting of three (3) Archbishops, nine (9) Bishops, twenty two (22) Priests, five (5) Religious, two (2) Deacons, one (1) seminarian and forty seven (47) youth animators from the Youth Commissions and from the COYA (Catholic Organizations for Youth in Asia). The participating countries were Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

Day One: 3 August 2015 (Monday): After the formal registration at Pace Bene Retreat Centre, the conference began with a solemn concelebrated Mass and a grand welcoming ceremony at the Holy Rosary Church of the Kota Kinabalu Archdiocese. The delegates were welcomed by the parishioners, playing their traditional musical instruments standing on the road-sides, dressed with the traditional costume waving flags. His Grace Archbishop John Wong Soo Kau (Archbishop of Kota Kinabalu) presided over the Eucharistic Celebration with the presence of other Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, delegates from Asian countries, parishioners and faithful of the close by churches. and declared the conference open. After the Holy Eucharistic Celebration a cultural program was organized and the welcoming banquet was arranged. On behalf of the FABC-OLF-Youth Desk, Father Patrick Simon Gomes, Executive Secretary of the FABC-OLF-Youth Desk, warmly welcomed all the delegates. During this ceremony, BILA III on Youth was formally opened by Archbishop John Wong Soo Kau.

Day Two: 4 August 2015 (Tuesday) The day began with prayer followed by the Keynote address given by Most Reverend Bishop Leopoldo C. Jaucian (Bishop of Bangued and the Chairman of Episcopal Commission on Youth of the Philippines) who emphasized the 3 phases of the Story of the Samaritan Woman in our lives: **first**, *Jesus' passing through Samaria*; **secondly**, *the story offer Jesus as a source of New Life and* **thirdly**, *as the Samaritan woman transformed the villagers by being herself transformed, in the same way, transforming others by Asian youths has to be a fruit of their own transformation.*

After the keynote speech, the delegates were divided into many smaller groups to share their life testimonies. In the post lunch session, Ms. Marie Gutierrez representing COYA (Catholic Organizations for Youth in Asia) presented the statistics on the changing realities of young people of Asia. Basing on the keynote address and the statics presented, the delegates then were divided into regional groups (East Asia, South East Asia 1, South East Asia 2 and South Asia) for the sharing of experience of conversions. All the regions shared touchy stories of conversions through the assigned representatives of regional sharing groups in a plenary session.

The scheduled important program of the second part of the day was exposure and interaction with the youth representatives of five nearby parishes. It created an occasion for all the delegates to come to know youth realities like Islamization, forced conversions to Islam, addiction to alcohol. The youths of these parishes expressed their conviction to face these challenges being firmed in Christian faith. The BILA delegates were warmly welcomed by the parishioners with great hospitality. After the Eucharistic Celebrations in the respective parishes, the delegates joined a buffet fellowship meal and sharing of the culture, concerns and youth apostolate.

Day Three: 5 August 2015 (Wednesday): The day began with the Holy Mass followed by Sectional meetings. Being divided in sections, the delegates shared their strengths and weaknesses as bishops, as priests, as Religious and as youth animators. A plenary session gave floors to the appointed representative to share the results of the discussions in the Sectional meetings.

A report and highlights of the Asian Youth Days were shared by Father Patrick Simon Gomes. Then a briefing of Asian Youth Day 2017 was given by Father Antonius Haryanto and his team from Indonesia. They invited the delegates to participate in the next AYD.

In the post-lunch sharing entitled “Transformed by Christ” Archbishop William Goh of Singapore spoke about the youth today, their needs, expectations and ways of other people’s dealing with them.

Day Four: 6 August 2015 (Thursday): The theme of reflection for the fourth day “Transforming Church”. The Holy Mass, the very first activity of the day, created an atmosphere of deepening the theme. The talk on the topic: “A Transforming Church” was given by Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia who spoke about the church today and how she has been changing for the service of people. The participants were guided to their workshop groups on five topics related to and relevant for youth ministers:

1. Pastoral care for youth ministers (By Charles Bertille)
2. Stewardship of Creation (By Bishop Cornelius Sim)
3. Theology, methodology and skills of youth ministry (Mr. Dominic Lim)
4. Intentional Discipleship (By Mr. Henry & Mrs. Ann Hoo)
5. Moral Relativism (By Bishop Julius Gitom)

The plenary session in the evening gave an opportunity to hear synopsis of all the workshops. The drafting committee then presented the 1st draft of the statement of BILA III on Youth. With an intention of bringing all the discussions and reflections of the day in a prayer mode, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was designed prior to dinner. After a serious reflection all through the day of the fourth day, an attractive fellowship night was organized where everyone was made youthful through creative participation in different groups. Everyone dressed with the traditional and national costumes.

Day Five: 7 August 2015 (Friday): Bishop Joel Baylon, the In-Charge of the Youth Desk of the FABC Office of the Laity and Family presented an overall synthesis of the activities and presentations from a pastoral point of view. Then the 2nd draft of the statement of the BILA III on Youth was presented and the suggestions and opinions were sought for making the final statement.

The Commissioning Mass was the final official activity of BILA III on Youth. This concelebrated Mass was presided over by Bishop Joel Baylon, the In-charge of FABC – OLF Youth Desk. Bishop Baylon invited everyone to carry

home the inspiration from this BILA which might help the participants accompany the youths more effectively in their own countries. Bishop Joel Baylon also thanked everyone who contributed immensely to organize BILA III on Youth. He specially thanked Archbishop John Wong of Kota Kinabalu and the local team for generously helping the Youth Desk for running the show.

A written evaluation was done at the end of BILA III on Youth. There people said it was a very enriching experience for individuals as well as for country delegations, who “gained new dimensions to the youth ministry by sharing and learning from leaders from various other countries, along with the fellowship shared with everyone. The hospitality and food was yet another experience”. The delegates also shared their cultures evidently at the conference, which was an excellent exchange. It became a very good forum of sharing Christian faith and experience of youth apostolate. ‘BILA III on Youth gave us many friends who share the same faith and the same belonging and commitment’, some commented.

FABC-OLF/Youth Desk