

**STATEMENT OF THE
4th ASIAN YOUTH DAY**
Youth, Hope of Asian Families.
YMCA Youth Village, Hong Kong,
30th July - 5th August, 2006

Introduction:

Asia is home to about 60% of the world's young people. Youth are not only the future of the world but are the present precious treasures of the Church. The gathering of youth at the Federation of Asian Bishop Conference (FABC) Asian Youth Day IV (AYD IV), to reflect on the theme "Youth, Hope of Asian Families", is an affirmation of their gifts of youthfulness, strength and enthusiasm to aspire to a higher dimension as living symbols of hope. The theme of Asian Youth Day IV was inspired by the 8th FABC Plenary Assembly in Daejeon, Korea in August 2004 which had as its theme "The Asian Family - Toward a Culture of Integral Life".

Coming from Bangladesh, Cambodia, (mainland) China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Japan, Korea, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Taiwan, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, with guests from Belgium, France, Germany, Kenya and Tanzania and The Netherlands, the youth with their bishops, youth directors/animators immersed themselves wholeheartedly into the process of the meeting from 30th July to 5th August, 2006.

Experiences:

- The process of reflection started with sessions in the home country on the theme and the symbol of "rice" chosen to be the symbol of AYD IV. Rice being the staple food for most Asian countries is a reminder of the gathering around for a family meal and of God's blessings.
- On arrival in Hong Kong, youth coming from foreign countries were treated to a few days stay with a host family to help them experience life in a family/parish in Hong Kong. The experience of family hospitality helped the youth to embark on a journey of faith, cultural exchange and widen their vision of Asian people.
- Each morning the day started with prayer and the 'rice ceremony' where delegates poured a handful of rice brought from their own country into a big container as a sign of sharing the joy and blessings of their families with each other.
- The explanation of the working paper of the 8th Plenary Assembly of FABC presented the reality of the Asian family and the vision of the Church for the family. The national reports and the 'walk' through the exhibition halls of different countries helped deepen the experience of the reality of the Asian family, to share and feel their lights and shadows. It also helped the young people appreciate the diversity of cultures in Asia.
- "The Youth Walk", was an experience of prayer and reflection on various areas which helped to challenge the youth to be the hope of Asian families. Each group functioned as a quasi family becoming an instrument of bonding, love and care for each other.
- Lively animation at the start of each plenary session through action songs/hymns, kept the atmosphere charged with energy and enthusiasm.
- Thematic workshops and testimonies dealt with different areas of family life and faith helped the young people to get an insight into how they could become signs of hope in their own family.
- The sharing of inter-religious delegates helped the youth to know more about family life in other religious traditions
- The Taize prayer session provided a good environment for meditation and deep personal prayer.
- After a week of reflection, sharing, praying and communion during AYD IV, we realized that the young people can play an important role in the family so that relationships of love and

harmony can be cultivated. The daily celebration of the Eucharist reminded them of the importance of living the paschal mystery daily to becoming life giving to their families.

Insights:

- A family is a sanctuary of life. In Asian family children are cherished as gifts from God. Parents make a lot of sacrifices to provide for their children's welfare and education.
- The Asian family is struggling in the face of different kinds of difficulties like poverty, migration, political instability and environmental degradation in the context of economic globalization. Yet we believe that the source of our strength continues to be the family.
- The family is not simply the object of the Church's pastoral care, it is on the front line of the Church's efforts to bring the Good News to people.
- Families hold a very important place in Asian cultures. Family values like filial respect, love and care for the aged, the weak, love for children and harmony are held in high esteem in all Asian cultures and religious traditions.
- In urban areas, families do not seem to have time to spend together, to communicate and to care for each other today.
- No family can be said to be hopeless in the eyes of God.
- Marriage is a life long commitment and family is a sacred institution in which God is involved.
- Young people should not lose hope when they experience conflict and failure in their family journey towards renewal, their faith and prayer as well as the community can sustain them.
- Forgetting the presence of God in their lives, youth can experience much loneliness and hopelessness during family crises.
- A family must be united in their relationships and rooted in prayer.
- When the family is strengthened and nourished hopefully the common good is promoted and enhanced.

Challenges:

- To bring reconciliation and hope back to the family.
- To help initiate dialogue and communication in the family to enhance understanding.
- To cultivate the practice of family members spending quality time talking, listening to each other and in prayer.
- Promote gender equality in families.
- Motivate all youth to be instruments of peace and the seed of love in their family.
- To make the family a sanctuary of love, life and communion where every member feels accepted, cared for and appreciated.
- There is a need for families to network in Small Christian Communities, for formation, support, and mission proper to the family and to build a more just society
- Asian families are called to witness to the Good News of Jesus in difficult times and circumstances, when the family itself is threatened by an array of evil forces.
- Family members, especially youth, are challenged to live their daily life in the family with extraordinary love.
- With the power of faith and prayer, Asian youth have to rediscover their place and role in the family and society.

Recommendations:

We urge the local Church:

- To help and support our young people in their faith journey and prayer life.
- Conduct echo programmes on the theme of "Youth, HOPE of Asian Families" to help youth become "hope givers" in their families.

- To develop youth friendly parishes utilizing appropriate processes for reflection and inputs to inspire young people to strengthen family relationships.
- To use the internet effectively to provide assistance and guidance to young people who look for 'answers' while surfing the net.
- To simplify the social teachings of the Church so as to make them more readable and widely known to the youth.

Conclusion: We believe that there are seeds of faith in Asian youth. If this faith is nurtured well, they can truly be the hope of the Asian family. The youth present here return fired with zeal and determination to take up the challenge of becoming 'hope givers'. Even though our families in Asia struggle with a culture of death we see great possibilities for our youth to become a source of HOPE to help uplift their family. We commend our Youth in Asia to Mary our Mother, and pray that she be their refuge in times of trial.

We sincerely thank our hosts, the Diocese of Hong Kong for assisting the FABC Youth Desk with the organizing of this AYD IV, efficiently attending to the day to day smooth running of all the programmes. We pray that God bless the enthusiastic young people who volunteered to help with the organization by sacrificing their time, and offering their talents and skills for arranging the programmes of AYD IV. May God bless them abundantly for their generosity.