

A Presence that Challenges and Strengthens

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Introduction

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

We rejoice that it was on the soil of Asia that the Son of Man chose to break his **‘word’** beginning with the announcement “The Kingdom of God is at hand.”¹ And it was here again that he chose to break the **‘bread’** saying “Do this in commemoration of me.”² As we gather together in the Eastern part of the same great Continent, we recall these history-making events that took place on its Western side two thousand years ago, and we continue to break the bread and proclaim the **‘word’**, injecting new energies into the processes of history.

We Christians are no more than a **‘tiny’** minority in most countries of Asia.³ It is from partaking of Jesus’ **‘bread’** and sharing his **‘word’** that we receive the spiritual sustenance we need to fulfill our mission on this vast continent with dauntless courage: which means, pursuing in all earnestness those evangelically inspired causes we have before us, being prepared to pay any price in pursuance of this goal, translating into life the full message of the Gospel that we keep announcing with unlimited confidence, and thus contributing to the transformation of our society and the shaping of its future.

There is an intimate relationship between the **‘word’** and the **‘bread’**. For, it is God’s word that explains the mystery of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is the privileged moment for the announcement of the **‘word’**. *Dei Verbum* says, “The Church has always venerated the divine **Scriptures** just as she venerates the **body of the Lord**, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God’s word and of Christ’s body.”⁴ Therefore we must place at the centre of Christian life “the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy, which are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship.”⁵ They remain the source of our unflinching strength.

1. Presence

The Psalmist keeps wondering about God's presence in his life. He says, " You are all round me on every side... If I flew away beyond the east, or lived in the farthest place in the west, you would be there to help me (Ps 139:5-10).

Indeed, Jesus is present in our lives; he is the source of our strength. That is why the "little flock" in Asia need not have any fear;⁶ even if it means being constantly ready to face persecution.⁷ For God has a wonderful plan for them. If the people of Israel could have an unshakable confidence that God was going to use them as active agents in history and shapers of the future, we ought to have even greater confidence. For our Master is with us; he is called Immanuel, "**God-with-us.**"⁸ And he has given us an assurance, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age."⁹

This wonderful **presence** that Jesus has promised comes true very specially in the **Eucharist**. It is called 'real presence'. He abides in our midst in thousands of tabernacles, in the big cathedrals and little shrines, in village churches and convent chapels; he moves to the hospitals as *viaticum* to heal the sick: he remains close to us to urge, to chide, to comfort, and to challenge. While he sustains the energies of a worn-out missionary, of a weary mother and an over-worked labourer, he also breathes a word of correction to the young man inclined to alcoholism and drugs, the corrupt judge, the exploiting landowner, and the adolescent beginning to question everything and distance himself from the believing community. The **presence** that corrects is also a presence that sustains. He assures us "Do not be afraid, it is I."¹⁰

There is another form of **presence** that provides us with spiritual energy, youthful dynamism, inspiration and motivation: Jesus present in the 'Word'. In fact, he **is** the 'Word'. His name is "The Word of God."¹¹ He identifies himself with the Gospel when he says, "...for my sake and for the Gospel."¹² He is the Gospel. Where the Gospel is welcomed, he is welcomed. As the Gospel penetrates every heart, culture and society, he makes his way into the deeper dimensions of everyone's life to challenge, "To uproot and to pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."¹³ And he makes "all things new."¹⁴

Jesus comes to remain. He wants to forge an unshakable bond between himself and us, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you..."¹⁵ That stands for mutual belonging. The small Christian communities that gather round the word of God and are faithful to practices like *Lectio Divina*, experience the sustaining presence of Jesus in their midst.¹⁶ They are vibrant with faith. They are rich in good works.

2. A Life-giving Presence

"You are the source of all life, and because of your light we see the light" (Ps. 36:9).

The people of Israel ate manna, but ultimately they met with death. But those who eat the bread that Jesus gives will not die. They will live for ever. The Eucharist is the **source of life**. The Lord says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will **live for ever**. The bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I give

so that the world may **live**.”¹⁷ Our prayer today is, “Give us this bread always.”¹⁸ Mahatma Gandhi used to say that it is really in the form of bread that God would be intelligible to the poor. How actual life confirms this perception! Mother Teresa followed up this perception.

Just like the Eucharist, the word of God is the source of **life** as well. The son of the official received **life** only because he believed in the ‘word’ of Jesus.¹⁹ The man at the pool received a new lease of **life** because he too believed in his words;²⁰ and so with the blind man²¹. For, he says, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and **life**.”²² “Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will **live**.”²³ Jesus continues to offer us the words of eternal life even in our own times.²⁴

Very sadly, the louder message we hear today is not about life, but about **death**. News of war, ethnic conflicts, genocide,²⁵ suicide,²⁶ communal clashes, bomb-explosions and domestic violence reaches us day after day, until we have come to the point of considering such things normal. People are least disturbed hearing of **abortion** accounts, especially of the girl-child, of dowry-related deaths, **euthanasia**, tampering with life-related systems, abuse of the life-sustaining **processes of nature**, addictions that eat away the life-forces of individuals,. They devalue the immense worth of human lives.

However, there is a form of **renunciation of life** for a greater cause that is greatly esteemed in Asia. Some of the Gospel statements that would sound paradoxical to the modern mind make a profound impression on Asian people. Unless the wheat falls to the ground²⁷ ... he who lays down his life will save it. ²⁸There is no greater manifestation of love for one’s friends than to lay down one’s life for them.²⁹ Martyrs in Japan, China, Vietnam, and in India in recent months, have shown that Christian believers could go to such great extents to manifest their love for Christ.

3. A Presence that is a Call to Intimacy

“I call you friends” (Jn 15:15).

God admitted Moses to close intimacy with him; he spoke to him face to face.³⁰ A greater privilege is given to us. The gift of the **Eucharist** is an invitation to the closest possible intimacy with Jesus, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”³¹ There could not be a closer bond. The ‘**word**’ too has a similar purpose: that we may remain in him.³² For, Jesus says, “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our **home with him**.”³³ Thus divine intimacy becomes complete.

This nearness to Jesus in fact is an invitation to holiness. It is our obedience to the word that makes us his true disciples. Jesus says, “If you continue in my **word**, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”³⁴ We are set free from the binding grip of evil, our sins are forgiven and we are purified and transformed. His **word** cleanses us,³⁵ all that is evil is wiped out. It is for this that his **blood** is “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”³⁶

Let us therefore “be completely holy by living in awe of God.”³⁷ For, he wants to bring us “holy, pure and faultless into his presence”.³⁸ That is why our personal life is important.³⁹ “The scripture says, ‘Be holy because I am holy.’”⁴⁰ The most eloquent evangelizer is the one who has translated the word into his own life.⁴¹ The true theologian is a saint.⁴²

4. A Presence that is a Call to Unity

“God...made known to us the secret plan he had...This plan ...is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head” (Eph 1:10).

There is a call that goes out to every person who is born into this world, “Come.” “Come, all you nations! Gather round and listen. Let the whole earth and everyone living on it come here and listen.”⁴³ “Come everyone who is thirsty—here is water! Come, you that have no money—buy corn and eat.”⁴⁴ And you answer, “I will come, Lord.”⁴⁵ This is an invitation to unity in the Lord that goes out to the whole of humanity.

John tells us that Jesus died not only for the Jewish people, but “also to bring together into one body all the scattered people of God.”⁴⁶ Jesus speaks of **one flock** and one shepherd.⁴⁷ He prays that “they may all be one.”⁴⁸ This unity comes true precisely through the breaking of the ‘word’ and sharing of the ‘bread’. All are brought together, all are **made equal**, all belong to one family. The image of the **family** is so dear to the Asians. Walls are broken down: between Greeks and Hebrews, different castes, tribes, ethnic groups, classes, genders, political interests, nationalities, commercial alliances; people from the North and the South, East and the West!

Early Christians assiduously “devoted themselves to the apostles’ **teaching** and **fellowship**, to the **breaking of the bread** and the prayers.”⁴⁹ They were **one in mind** and heart.⁵⁰ They were “**completely united** with only one thought and one purpose”,⁵¹ because they gave importance to love “that binds all things together in perfect unity”.⁵² This charity has great communicating power.⁵³

If we are carriers of a message that invites the whole of humanity to be one, it ought to make us aware of the need for being open to all people. Years ago the FABC spoke of the triple-dialogue with the poor of Asia, with its cultures and religions. We show respect to other people when we respect their cultures and have sincere appreciation for what is good in different ecclesiastical and religious traditions. In this way we try to foster a **sense of common belonging** and shared destiny among people of diverse heritages, and work with them for common good. We feel an obligation to build up communities of solidarity and fellowship;⁵⁴ for, ultimately we are to form “parts of one body”.⁵⁵

The ‘word’ and ‘bread’ give us the spiritual stamina needed to engage ourselves in conversation with other traditions, e.g. ecumenical endeavours;⁵⁶ and to work for unity;⁵⁷ to strive for reconciliation with Muslims;⁵⁸ even in the midst of sufferings, kidnappings, and new forms of martyrdoms.⁵⁹ For, we have the experience that even from opposition we can derive strength,⁶⁰ when we respond to it in true Christian spirit.

5. A Presence that is a Call to Fruitfulness

“I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures” (Jn 15:16).

Isaiah compares the **word** of God to the rain and the snow that waters the earth and produce fruit.⁶¹ A person open to God’s word is like a palm-tree that always remains green and strong and produces **abundant fruit**;⁶² for a good tree produces good fruit.⁶³ Similarly, seeds that fall on good soil produce even a hundredfold; ‘the good soil’ are those who hear the ‘**word**’ and understand it.⁶⁴ Likewise, those who eat **Jesus’ body** and drink his blood become **fruitful in an abundant measure**.⁶⁵

Bringing the ‘**word**’ closer, we must make sure that the Church’s social teaching is brought effectively into Church life. It should begin with ensuring fair dealings within the believers’ fold itself, e.g. attending to fair wages, responsible administration and conscientious stewardship of Church property.⁶⁶ The same concern reaches out further, hastening to come to the defense of the poor, the marginalized, and those of humble classes and castes;⁶⁷ always making a preferential option for the more humiliated and less privileged.⁶⁸

We cannot stand by and watch child labour, bonded labour, trafficking in human persons going on around us, “To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1397). **See Appendix I**

6. An Urge to Communicate

*“God gave me this privilege of **taking to the nations the Good News** about the infinite riches of Christ, and making all people see how God’s secret plan is to be put into effect...by means of the Church. In union with Christ and through our faith in him we have the boldness to go into God’s presence with all confidence. I beg you, then, **not to be discouraged**...” (Eph 3:8-13).*

We have said that intimacy with Jesus in the **word** and the **Eucharist** stirs us into action, that it grows into a relationship that is performative. It is **communicative** as well. Peter and John could not help “but speak of what they had seen and heard”.⁶⁹ We notice a similar relationship between the breaking of the bread and sharing of the Good News.⁷⁰ This fact becomes most evident in the **Emmaus** account: 1) Jesus interpreting for the disciples all the scriptures, beginning with Moses and the prophets, 2) the disciples recognizing him only at the **breaking of the bread**, and remembering that their hearts had been burning within them while he talked to them on the road and opened the scriptures to them. 3) and two disciples rising that same hour and returning to Jerusalem to **speak of what they had seen and heard**.⁷¹

Probably it is in this area that the Fathers of the Synod had much to say. I will limit myself to some of the Asian perceptions and longings. Someone spoke of an ‘**Asian way of reading the Bible**’, by which he meant giving special attention to the spiritual dimension;⁷² to be open to the ‘word’ like Mary.⁷³ Others emphasized the need of **theological formation** in order to interpret the scriptures responsibly.⁷⁴ It was affirmed that formation in faith is the responsibility of several groups of persons in the Church: first of all of parents, then of catechists and teachers.⁷⁵

Some urged that Bible reading habits be cultivated⁷⁶ that a **'Bible-culture'** be created. Others encouraged scripture reading in basic ecclesial communities,⁷⁷ that young people evangelize their peers, that we use the most effective ways of teaching the Bible, e.g. the family quiz,⁷⁸ and the electronic media.⁷⁹ It was also pointed out that the effective communication of the message should go beyond homilies, to the fields of politics, economics, universities, media, sport, entertainment and other **secularized areas**.⁸⁰

Joy was expressed that even in the most difficult situations, people in Asia respond to the 'word'. The sacred 'word' has power. **Ethnic minorities** seem particularly open to the Gospel in different parts of the continent; because the seeds of the 'word' seem to be already present in tribal cultures.⁸¹ The Bible teaches us how **power can be clothed in weakness**, wisdom can appear in the form of simplicity, and glory that of humility.⁸²

Others spoke about the need to come down/ or rise up to the level of the listeners.⁸³ Others still stressed the importance of adopting a manner of communicating the Gospel that **attends to the cultures** and life-situations of the hearers. When someone offers the Good News in a way that is sensitive to the culture of community, people become attentive. To give a small example, the remembrance of the dead is something dear to the hearts of the Vietnamese, and it is very close to Catholic traditions as well.⁸⁴ Attention to the Chinese culture is of special importance in the Chinese context.⁸⁵

In the Asian context I have often referred to "**whispering the Gospel to the soul of Asia**". Whispering, not because we are apologetic about the message we carry, but because in Asia the most sacred words are whispered; the most precious secrets are whispered; the most intimate sharing is through a whisper. However, in order that the whisper may be effective, we have to come close to the 'soul' of a community, enter into an intimate relationship with its inner identity, catch something of its inner vibrancy and rhythm. That is where we so often fail. However, some missionary geniuses have negotiated their way through the inner world of a community, touching its core values and ways of self-expression, and have found acceptable utterance in an amazing manner, leading entire societies closer to the Gospel. The expression 'whispering' does not intend to deny the duty of "announcing from the housetops" where such a strategy is possible and relevant. But in every case, one should know, what, where, and how. What is important is that the message goes across.

I have also often spoken about **'non-threatening' ways of evangelization**, meaning that we should **never go against the selfhood of a community**. While Jesus at times had strong words for his own intimate friends and members of his own community ('woe to you', 'get behind me satan') to emphasize a point, dealing with other communities he seems to be gently trying to come on their wavelength and drawing them to reflection, e.g. with the Samaritan woman, Syro-Phoenician woman, Roman officer. We find Paul too consistently trying to build bridges across to the people of Greco-Roman world, emerging courageously, but always with a great sense of responsibility from the Hebrew world.

We can never enter into a serious discussion on sharing the Gospel in Asia without the topic of **'Culture'** coming up for consideration. Stereotyped concepts of inculturation do not help; and from experience we have learned that pilfering of cultural elements from other communities will be resented. We need to go much deeper into such issues before we can interpret the inner genius of a community, touch the core values of a culture, and contribute towards enriching the inner identity of a society. For undertaking such mighty tasks we need persons who are 'deep'.

7. We need God-experienced Persons today

“Keep your root deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught” (Col 2:7).

Amazingly Asians seem to esteem persons of depth. By ‘persons of depth’ we do not mean merely persons of intellectual acumen, but those who are **deep in their spiritual perceptions**, human relations, and commitment to values and to the common good. This sort of depth comes from true **God-experience** and is characterized by **authenticity**, sincerity, deeds matching words, capacity to endure for common causes, gentle joy and religious seriousness. Such profound persons command respect on this continent, they win a hearing. Evangelization is safe in their hands. Can we rise up to these levels?

In this globalized world where ‘utilitarian values’ seem to count most, where people are caught into a network of superficial relationships, where achievement is measured in terms of possessions and success in mutual manipulation, where increasing number of people are only claiming their rights and are indifferent to their responsibilities, we eagerly look for ‘**deeper persons**’, persons society can count on. Such are the persons, who, through diligent self-cultivation in true Asian fashion, have come to represent the genius of this ancient continent, with an emphasis on a search for harmony, non-violence, religiosity and a strong sense of belonging; with pride in their past heritage and sturdy confidence in their ultimate destiny. They hold out hope. The future of human history depends on them.

But alas, even firm believers are at times swept off their feet by the *Tsunami* of **secularization**. We all run the risk of becoming inwardly superficial and shallow, and of slipping towards consumerism, crass materialism, and indifference to the transcendent. If we plunge ourselves into struggle for justice leaving no room for God, or are radically committed to the cause of the development of people with no concern for the spiritual hunger of the communities concerned, we contribute to building up a **godless space** in human society. It is in such cases that the exploited easily become exploiters, and the underdeveloped become reckless consumers, totally indifferent to the needs of the less privileged. Or, in outright reaction, some turn to the ‘**sects**’ in search of spiritual consolations for which their subconscious is ardently longing. This is happening right before our eyes. Yes, it is in this context that we would speak of the need for ‘deep persons’, persons who have spoken to God ‘face to face’, persons who have sought guidance from his ‘**word**’ and enjoyed his intimacy in the **Eucharist**.

8. They will Run and not get Weary (Is 40:31)

“And those who have taught many people to do what is right will shine like the stars for ever” (Dan 12:3).

We know that Asia is astir today. Our societies have experimented with various sorts of **imported social philosophies and ideologies***, which have been confronting each other on the Asian soil. Some of their native versions relate with indigenous movements in chaotic fashions that defy definition. For example, the different forms of **fundamentalisms** in Asia do not fit in with the traditional definition of ‘Fundamentalism’. However, what is essential for us to note is that both our evangelizers

and social activists will have to rub shoulders with such fundamentalists of various categories (religious, cultural, market), **cultural nationalists**, xenophobes, fascists of various colours, *Senas* of diverse persuasions, *Bajrang Dals*, *Falung Gongs*, Maoists and Marxists of unique self-description. They will have to deal with authoritarian governments, discriminating officers, callous members of the dominant community, biased press, and possibly an insensitive neighbourhood. They will also have many opportunities for joining hands with people of good will of every persuasion and find so many things in common. They will look to their cultural roots and hold on to the values that their communities have cherished for centuries.

* Making dogmas out of alien ideologies that do not correspond to the cultural realities of Asia would be a mistake, especially in this era in which culturally conditioned meta-narratives are being questioned.

But in all circumstances, the carriers of the Good News will have to keep their **Christian vision** clear and respond to the needs of each local community in an **existentially realistic manner**, paying attention to local cultures, situations, and compulsions, and not merely dictated by the prescriptions of alien ideologies. Paul used to call challenging situations opportunities, “Be wise in the way you act towards those who are of other persuasions, making good use of every opportunity you have. Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the **right answer** to everyone”,⁸⁶ answers that turn into committed action! And when more difficult days will come, believers will seek to derive inspiration and strength from the ‘word’ of God and build up their sturdiness from the ‘bread’ they will break. They are never totally unprepared; for, Jesus had already given this warning long ago “You will be arrested and persecuted...This will be your chance to tell the Good News. I will give you words and wisdom...Stand firm.”⁸⁷

Deep persons discern a design even in a chaotic situation. “Below the surface of cataclysmic calamities, wars, revolutions and conflicts of every kind, there is a quiet **presence**, there is purposeful divine action. God stays hidden in the world, in society, in the universe...and reveals his plans through the ‘**word**’, showing how he draws good out of evil both from the little events in our personal lives and the great happenings of human history. His ‘**word**’ makes known the ‘rich and glorious’ plan of God, which says that he frees us from our sins and that *Christ is in you*.”⁸⁸

Only persons who have depth in themselves (sages, *gurus*, masters, teachers, prophets, priests, consecrated persons, evangelizers, ardent but responsible activists, dedicated women, committed youth), will be equal to this immense task. Today we look for such persons of **convictions, spiritual stamina and unction**, persons who have the ‘**word**’ of **God as lamp** to their feet and the light for their path⁸⁹ persons who ponder over the ‘word’ as **Mary** did;⁹⁰ recognize the need to be intimately **united with the Master** to draw strength; for he had said, “Remain united to me and I will remain united to you...Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me.”⁹¹

In God they trust. It is about such persons of depth that Isaiah had spoken long ago, “Those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and **not get weary**; they will walk and **not grow tired**,⁹² for, they have spoken to God ‘face to face’ and have sought his guidance in his ‘word’

and enjoyed his intimacy in the Eucharist...such persons will change the face of Asia, and of the world. **See also Appendix II**

Appendix I

Solidarity with the needy is central to any work at the service of the 'word', of the Gospel. One should consider it the path to egolessness and to God. A true evangelizer seeks to keep close to the suffering, the sick, old, handicapped, prisoners, exiles, migrants, slum-dwellers, orphans. He/she attends to alcoholics, drug-addicts, AIDS victims. He/she enjoys the mysticism of generous service. Vincent de Paul experienced ecstasy in being centred outside himself in the poor. He considered it a true encounter with God. He said, 'In this the Father will be glorified, if you produce abundant fruit' (Jn 15:18). He encouraged his sisters to take a rented room for their cell in order to be close to the people and to consider the streets of the city as their cloister. "The poor are our patrons", he would say, "they are our kings. We should obey them." Mother Teresa used similar expressions.

As you will find individuals in special need, so you will also come across communities that are under undue stress. St. Francis Xavier came to the aid of fisher-folk who were being exploited, Fr. Lievens to the rescue of Chotanagpur tribals who were losing their land. Today *dalits* and tribals are under great pressure: loss of land, weakening of tribal identity, damage to their culture, diminishment of dignity, alienation from tradition, sense of rootlessness, marginalization in society, lack of space in economy, a sense of being used by the powerful as a tool for their own ends. The announcer of the 'word' cannot remain indifferent before such a situation of tribal/*dalit*/marginalized people's helplessness.

People crowding into the great cities of Asia call for attention and assistance. The new economy is enslaving them. These people, uprooted as they are from their own specific culture in the villages and being herded together into urban agglomerations, have a psychology of their own. Hungering for the solidarity that they miss, they tend to re-create a 'village' in their urban surroundings. In the same way, *Migrants* (some called 'illegal') in search of better fortunes, land up in similar situations of helplessness. They too seek solidarity and guidance. The Christian worker can help them in their effort to eke out an existence and struggle for justice. Political *refugees*, likewise, need encouragement and assistance.

Among the other pressing needs that call for special attention in Asia are: peace initiatives in contexts of inter-ethnic and communal tensions; education to prejudice reduction; ecumenical collaboration; inter-religious dialogue and collaboration in local issues; building up the self-esteem and self-confidence of marginalized communities; activities of advocacy; assistance to neighbourhood schools and health centres that do not function properly; intervention for government action, against corruption, state violence, abuse of human rights, kidnappings, extortion; promotion of prisoners' rights; strengthening of civil society (to make sure that state-system works); defense of life, opposition to euthanasia; work for gender equality, struggle against abortion, female foeticide and infanticide, child marriage, dowry system, domestic violence, trafficking in women; care of unwed mothers and neglected children; service in schools, hospitals, old age homes, social centres, literacy centres, places of prayer; education to ecological concerns like deforestation, extermination of living species, pollution, disposal of toxic wastes, global warming, deterioration of the ozone layer; cleanliness drives; assistance to AIDS/HIV patients; care of street children; assistance to physically and mentally challenged persons; counselling for those suffering from depression, victims of violence, persons who attempted suicide; literacy programmes, slum work, self-help groups, micro-financing schemes, economic empowerment; promotion of culture.

There are also various forms of struggles: freedom struggle, anti-caste struggle, human rights struggle, justice struggle. However, such struggles should not lead to actual hostility which ends up in conflict. For, we must remember that **"The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible.** She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to

the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas Est*, 28 a).

Similarly, zeal for doing good should not lead us into exaggerations: e.g., during the early colonial period over-zealous people went in for conversion by force or for holy wars; during late colonial era colonial propagandists justified imperialism with the professed intention of ‘civilizing’ the ‘natives’ through conquest and imperial rule; currently human rights and democratic principles are invoked to camouflage various forms of egoism, personal and collective; self-interested leaders lead their communities astray and take them in the direction of violence voicing justice claims, leaving no room for compassion and with the exclusion of the transcendent.

And finally, the evangelizer’s intervention in behalf of communities differs from that of the social worker. He/she feels the power of God acting through him/her. He/she seeks to be an **icon of God’s love** for His people. He/she dialogues with the thinking and dynamic element in a community and **addresses the Gospel to its soul**.

Appendix II

“Every continent and doubtless every ethnic group has added a part, no matter how small, to the accumulated store of human knowledge and experience. Possibly the people of Asia have even contributed the lion’s share. While it might be said that Asia lost the lead with the commencement of the Renaissance, the age of discovery and later the industrial revolution, the people of that continent have already begun to meet the challenges of the modern world. There is no way of predicting in what directions and to what lengths their creative ingenuity may carry them, particularly if they **heed the admonitions of many of the teachers and sages of Asia’s great civilizations**. Many times in the past the people of Asia have taken the leadership. There are signs that they could do so again in the future” (Gordon T. Bowles, *The People of Asia*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1977, pg 378). Is not Christ one of the greatest sages of Asia?

¹ Mk 1:15

² Lk 22:19

³ Bp. Nicephorus D’Cruze, Bangladesh

⁴ DV 21

⁵ SC 56

⁶ Lk 12:32

⁷ Abp. Ramzi Garmou, Iran

⁸ Mt 1:23

⁹ Mt 28:20

¹⁰ Jn 6:20

¹¹ Rev 19:13

¹² Mk 10:29

¹³ Jer 1:10

¹⁴ Rev 21:5

¹⁵ cfr. Jn 15:7

¹⁶ Bp. Rayappu Joseph, Sri Lanka

¹⁷ Jn 6:51

¹⁸ Jn 6:34

¹⁹ Jn 4:50

²⁰ Jn 5:1ff

²¹ Jn 9:6-7

²² Jn 6:63

²³ Jn 5:25

²⁴ Jn 6:68

²⁵ Bp. Armash Hagop Nalbandian, Syria

²⁶ Sr. Apollinaris Shimura Yuriko, Japan

²⁷ Jn 12:24

²⁸ Mt 10:39

²⁹ Jn 2:13,23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28-39;19:14
³⁰ Ex 33:11
³¹ Jn 6:56
³² Jn 15:10
³³ Jn 14:22-23
³⁴ Jn 8:31
³⁵ Jn 15:3
³⁶ Mt 26:28
³⁷ 2 Cor 7:1
³⁸ Col 1:22
³⁹ Bp. Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun, Laos
⁴⁰ 1Pet 1:16
⁴¹ Abp. Joseph Mitsuki Takami, Japan
⁴² Bp. George Punnakottil, India
⁴³ Is 34:1
⁴⁴ Is 55:1
⁴⁵ Ps 27:8
⁴⁶ Jn 11:52
⁴⁷ Jn10:16
⁴⁸ Jn17:21-23
⁴⁹ Acts 2:42
⁵⁰ Acts 4:32
⁵¹ 1 Cor 1:10
⁵² Col 3:14
⁵³ Abp. Charles Maung Bo, Myanmar
⁵⁴ Abp. Orlando Quevedo, Philippines
⁵⁵ Rom 12:4-5
⁵⁶ Bp. Felix Toppo, India
⁵⁷ Abp. Major Baselios Cleemis Thottunkal, India
⁵⁸ Cardinal Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir, Lebanon
⁵⁹ Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly, Iraq
⁶⁰ Bp. Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh, Vietnam
⁶¹ Is 55:10-11
⁶² Ps 92:14
⁶³ Mt 7:17;Jn 15:2-5
⁶⁴ Mt 13:23
⁶⁵ Jn15:1-8
⁶⁶ Thomas Hong-Soon Han, Korea
⁶⁷ Bp. Antony Devotta, India
⁶⁸ Abp. Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo, Indonesia
⁶⁹ Acts 4:20
⁷⁰ Acts 20:11-12
⁷¹ Lk 24:13-35
⁷² Bp. Arturo M. Bastes
⁷³ Abp. Tomaz Peta, Kazakhstan
⁷⁴ Bp. Guy-Paul Noujaim, Lebanon
⁷⁵ Pro. Rafael Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, Thailand
⁷⁶ Agnes Kam Leng Lam, China
⁷⁷ Bp. Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil, Thailand
⁷⁸ Elvira Go, Philippines
⁷⁹ Bp. Anicetus Bongseo Antonius Sinaga, Indonesia
⁸⁰ Abp. Thomas Menampampil, India
⁸¹ Bp. Charles Soreng, India
⁸² Bp. Pabo Virgilio S. David, Philippines
⁸³ Cherian Aniankunju Ponpuzhakotayil, India

⁸⁴ Bp. Joseph Vo Duc Minh, Vietnamese

⁸⁵ Cardinal Zen Ze-kiu, Hong Kong

⁸⁶ Col 4:6

⁸⁷ Lk 21:12-19

⁸⁸ Col 1:27 (Via Crucis of Pope Benedict XVI, at Colosseum, 2009).

⁸⁹ Ps 119:105

⁹⁰ Lk 2:19

⁹¹ Jn15:4-5

⁹² Is 40:31