

LIVING THE EUCHARIST IN ASIA

IX FABC Plenary Assembly

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I. FINAL DOCUMENT: "LIVING THE EUCHARIST IN ASIA"

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the IX Plenary Assembly of the FABC is "Living the Eucharist in Asia". It was attended by the Papal Envoy & the Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 66 Bishops including 6 Cardinals from 17 Episcopal Conferences and 6 associate members. There were 5 fraternal representatives from 5 non-Asian Episcopal conferences. Invited were the Bishop-Chairmen of the FABC Offices, priests, men and women Religious, and representatives from the laity. The choice of this theme, which is of perennial and crucial importance for the Church, situates this assembly within the context of significant developments in the Church since the VIII Plenary Assembly in Daejeon, South Korea in 2004.

On April 17, 2003, Holy Thursday, John Paul II published the encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* to help the Church appreciate again the life that she draws from Christ in the Eucharist. On October 7, 2004 he issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Mane Nobiscum Domine* where he declared the Year of the Eucharist to be celebrated from October 2004 to October 2005. He convoked the XI Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2005 to close the Year of the Eucharist. The theme of the Synod was "The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church." Upon his holy death, his successor, Benedict XVI promoted the preparations for the Synod, presided over it and issued the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* on February 22, 2007. Hence the following reflections which constitute the Final Document of the IX Plenary Assembly of the FABC benefit from a wealth of insight and teaching from the papal magisterium. The Episcopal conferences of the FABC and its associate members contributed their valuable observations and comments. Studies on the theme of the Assembly by various offices of the FABC provided valuable information and theological-pastoral insights. Finally the workshops in regional and interregional groups and the lively discussions at the plenary sessions, significantly enriched this Final Document.

Building on the Church's Magisterium, this Document aims to help Episcopal Conferences and dioceses. We commend it to our Priests and Religious in Asia for their on-going formation on the Eucharist. We also endorse it to diocesan ministries related to the Liturgy, Catechesis and Faith Formation, the training of lay leaders, the formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities and other faith communities. We believe that this Final Document would be a very useful guide in reflecting and acting on how the Eucharist might be better understood, celebrated, and lived in the context of Asia.

For this reason each section includes contextualized pastoral implications that Christian communities would find helpful towards living the Eucharist in Asia.

General Asian Pastoral Context

The reflections of the IX Plenary Assembly arise from the realities transpiring in various parts of Asia. From one perspective, these phenomena could be interpreted as the Asian search for life, the Asian celebration of life and the Asian struggle for true life. We rejoice to see in Asia signs of vibrant life in the fecundity of creation, the wealth of cultures, the depth of religious and ethical traditions, the strength of new economies, the progress in technology, and the promotion of human dignity and peace. We discern the Holy Spirit's lively presence in the religious, social, cultural, political and economic movements that safeguard the rights of the poor, children, women, migrants, laborers and the integrity of creation. But we are also deeply aware of the ambivalence of some developments that at first glance promise life, but ultimately deal death. The increasingly open economies, with concomitant rapid industrialization, have

devastated rural agricultural communities. New forms of poverty have caused migration and the break up of families. With the unrestrained flow of capital came the unabated entry of information, new mindsets and priorities that are altering the cultures of Asia, especially the youth, but not always for the good. In many parts of Asia, political power still remains a tool to dominate rather than to serve. We lament the merging of repressive politics with economic prowess, and of religious affiliation with cultural chauvinism. In the midst of the ruins of life brought about by wars, violence and displacement of peoples, we are amazed at the Asian capacity to celebrate life and to hope for a better life. The Church journeys with the peoples of Asia as they search for true life.

Rooted in the living Tradition of the Catholic Church, especially in the recent papal magisterium and the realities of life in Asia, our reflections will focus on living the Eucharist in the context of Asia. "Living the Eucharist" springs from and in turn nurtures "believing in the Eucharist" and "celebrating the Eucharist". Our discussion on "living the Eucharist" is deliberately set within the framework of a living faith and a living celebration. Although Church teachings and liturgical sources are not always quoted in this document, they serve as the wellspring for the Eucharistic form of life proposed to believers and the Church. But far from neglecting the concerns of life in Asia, we bring and relate them to our faith in the Eucharist and to its celebration. We never leave behind the dreams, hopes and pains of our people when we come to the Eucharist. In fact, our communion with Jesus in the Eucharist renews our engagement with the realities of life in our world and gives form to Christian life in the world. Thus our present reflections attempt to follow the methodological "circularity" of life-belief-celebration-life.

A. THE THEOLOGICAL-PASTORAL FLOW OF THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

1) The Eucharist: The Life of Jesus as our Life and Communion

Living the Eucharist is not a mere appendix to Eucharistic faith and celebration. The Eucharist is the very life of Christ given to us to become our life. In the Bread of Life discourse in John 6:22-60, Jesus declares that he is the Bread come down from above. He is the *gift* of the Father, with the *mission* to give *life*, eternal life. His gift is the very life of God being shared with humanity.

But this requires from us a response of faith inspired by the Holy Spirit. In "eating his body and drinking his blood," we forge a *communion of life* with the Triune God, a new *covenant* in the blood of Christ (cf Lk 22:20). In Asia, where the characteristic mode of the Church's existence is that of dialogue, the Eucharist is a unique experience of God's dialogue with us and our response to God: a dialogue of life, a dialogue of love.

This dialogue of life and love takes on a liturgical form in the Eucharist. We see, hear and touch the life of Christ and its dynamism in the celebration of the liturgy. Its various parts enable us to share in the rhythm of Christ's life offered for our salvation. We realize that the Eucharist is not a sacramental memorial of only one part of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. His whole life, culminating in the Paschal Mystery of His suffering, death, resurrection and final glory, was a pleasing sacrifice or offering of love to the Father for the salvation of the world. His sacrifice is both an act of obedience to the Father and compassion towards weak sinners. His was a sacrifice of adoration and service. His life was Eucharist.

Every Eucharist embodies in a sacramental way the life of Jesus so that we who celebrate it may live as Jesus lived. The Holy Spirit frees our hearts so that Christ may live in us as we

journey towards the fullness of the Reign of God. We give thanks to God for making us share in Jesus' life in the Eucharist.

Following the flow of the Eucharistic celebration, we shall look at the Eucharistic life offered to us by our Eucharistic faith.

We recognize that in Asia there are major ancient eastern Eucharistic rites, such the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara, both of which we celebrated during the Plenary Assembly. For purposes of simplicity and pastoral understanding this Final Document follows the sequence of the Latin Eucharistic celebration.

B. INTRODUCTORY RITES

1) Gathered as a Family in God: A Countersign to Divisions

The first moment in the Eucharist is the gathering of a community or a family. We believe that it is the Lord *who* calls, invites, and convokes. The initiative belongs to God. Therefore, we acknowledge that the coming together happens in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is God who "hosts" this sacrificial meal, the memorial of Jesus' saving Pasch and the pledge of the heavenly banquet in the Reign of God. As evidenced in the life of Jesus, meals were one of the privileged occasions to gather a people, not just to taste food but also "to taste" the Reign of God.

God's invitation, unlike ours, gathers for the Eucharistic meal people from different economic, social, political, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds and even of different geographic and time zones. A new family of God's children, constituted by grace and faith, happens in our midst. This is *ecclesia*. The fruit of God's encompassing love is a community of brothers and sisters, sharing the common dignity of being God's children. God's presence in grace generates brotherly and sisterly presence. This is a foretaste of the new humanity that we are longing for. We become a family because we are responding to a call beyond us. The Eucharist teaches us that if we are able to go beyond our petty concerns, if we only heed the call beyond us, then maybe we can communicate with one another a neighborly, brotherly and sisterly presence.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

One of the strong characteristic features of Asian cultures is belonging and loyalty to one's family, clan, community and ethnic group. This is celebrated most often in meals. Never only about food, meals in Asia foster and renew bonds that last for generations. Significant moments in life like birth, naming, marriage and farewells are marked by meals through which the community shares in these "life moments". The practice of Buddhist monks of begging for food and sharing it with the community conveys values worth emulating.

As communities gathered in the Eucharist, Christians are called to live as a gathering rather than as a scattering community. We are to contribute to the strengthening of community life in Asia amidst the threats to it. Individualistic and pragmatic lifestyles inhibit frequent family meals and their capacity to generate community. In some Asian cultures, meals reflect a rigid caste system that prevents sharing of food and life with people of another caste. Loyalty to family, ethnic group, nation or faith community has often led to rejection of, discrimination and violence towards "outsiders". Migrant workers, refugees, and multitudes of displaced peoples search for welcoming communities as much as for food.

Living the Eucharist involves a new way of coming together as a family because it is God who gathers. We commend and support small Christian communities, basic human

communities, ecclesial movements, religious communities, parishes, dioceses and other committed people that sustain the Eucharistic life of gathering God's children in situations of fragmentation. Formation in Eucharistic faith and spirituality needs to highlight the community-forming aspect of God's action in the Eucharist and to avoid a narrow individualistic view of participation in the Eucharist. Priests are called to live their Eucharistic faith by developing a sense of family in the communities they are serving so that the faithful, especially the poor and neglected may find a home in the Church. Religious communities, by their international character, are to witness to the power of the Holy Spirit to gather peoples of different nations, tongues, and cultures.

2) Recognizing God, Acknowledging our Sinfulness (Penitential Rite)

Born anew as a response to God's call and grace in the Eucharist, the Church is the icon of the Trinity: the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. But the grateful recognition of this reality intensifies our sense of being a community of sinners. Even during Jesus' ministry, it was God's love manifested in Him that made people like Simon, Levi and Zacchaeus realize their sinful situation. Much like the prodigal son in Luke 15, we also waste our inheritance.

So we come back to the Father, bearing the burden of sin, as we say, "I confess to Almighty God..." "Lord, have mercy." We admit our sinfulness, however, not only to God but to our brothers and sisters as well. We appeal to them "to pray for us to the Lord our God". No one pretends to be holier than the other. We recognize our participation in the common brokenness of humanity. Ours is a community of needy supplicants before God and each other. We are all poor. We all need God's mercy. We all need our neighbors' prayers. We dialogue with God and neighbors in humility.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

The Asian soul is often characterized by its search for the Divine and for life. Such a search, present in the religious and philosophical traditions that originated in Asia, is at the root of humility, non-violence, non-aggression, patience and harmony. An ethic that covers relationships, governance and lifestyle flows from the wisdom of these traditions. But we are also fully aware of the temptations posed by delusions of power and deceptions of self-righteousness. The violence, discrimination and wars that are destroying the natural and human landscapes of Asia show how much we have succumbed to lies and pretensions. When we start thinking of ourselves as the source and guardian of goodness while viewing "the others" as the cause of evil and error, we are deluded. Domination starts replacing the sense of community.

Living the Eucharist includes seeing the presence of God's action and grace in other people. Given the plurality of cultures and faiths in Asia, the Eucharist opens our eyes to the manifestations of truth and goodness among those who are different from us. At the same time we rejoice at the truth that has been entrusted to us.

Prejudice has no place in a Eucharistic life. It does not follow, however, that truth is to be sacrificed in a facile accommodation of others. On the contrary, we hold on to truth but in charity and humility, with the awareness that in spite of the truth we profess, we also have contributed to the misery and problems of the world. So we will not ruin each other. We will not be agents of discrimination. We will share our blessings as we share our sorrows. We will extend mercy as we plead that it be given to us. Ecclesial communities and movements that untiringly promote reconciliation and dialogue in conflict-laden parts of Asia disclose a vital aspect of the Eucharistic life.

A community that lives up to the call to be the seed of redeemed and reconciled humanity renders fitting praise to God: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth." A community fully alive gives glory to God.

C. LITURGY OF THE WORD

1) Listening to the Story of Jesus

The gathered community will now be fed with the Word of God for "human beings do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." The Bread of Life, Jesus, is received from the table of the Word and the Eucharist (cf. DV 21). It comes as no surprise that the Eucharist involves listening to the Word of God. Jesus, during his public ministry, taught and preached the Word of God. He continues to instruct us and we listen to Him, the Son of God who possesses the words of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:68-69).

At this point we ask: what does the Word of God awaken in us? It is faith. Faith is born out of and strengthened by listening to the Word of God. St. Paul states: "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:17). In an age where the printed word and "visual" word of mass media and information technology play a significant role in shaping beliefs, opinions, mentalities, trends and lifestyles, we should all the more explore the power of the Word of God in generating a life of faith.

In 2006 the Asian Mission Congress held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, dwelt on "Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia" as a mode of mission. We can, therefore, consider the Liturgy of the Word as a storytelling moment of the Eucharistic memorial. God speaks. God always initiates a dialogue. God tells God's story of love for us. God's Word acts. God's Word is alive. God's Word effects life. In the Liturgy of the Word, the story of God's revealing and saving action in history is proclaimed through the readings from the Old Testament, the New Testament and especially the Gospel of Jesus who is the fulfillment of God's revelation.

The response to the living memory contained in God's Word is faith. Faith is needed to encounter the Risen Lord in the sacramental signs and in ordinary life. But it is only in the Holy Spirit who guides us into truth (Cf. Jn 16:13) that we come to faith in Jesus as Lord (cf. I Cor 12:3). Human wisdom is insufficient for us to come to faith in the Word of God. We need to realize that faith involves listening to the Word, accepting it in one's life, allowing it to transform one's life, acting on it and sharing it with others. Faith goes beyond intellectual assent. *It is equated* with obedience to God, an obedience that entails radical conversion. Faith changes one's life. It becomes one's life.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

In Asia, the sacred writings and books of various religions are never treated merely as reading materials. They are meant to draw from one's heart a response of adherence at the very least. The reverence with which sacred books are approached and listened to reveals a belief that more than human words are involved. This Asian character blends well with the openness to the Word necessary for the Eucharist to become a true experience of living faith. But even outside of their religious usage, words mean a lot to Asian peoples. People are expected to be true to their words. When uttered with sincerity, words evoke trust and foster relationships. In the same way, the Word of God proclaimed especially at the Eucharist is meant to strengthen the bond between Christ and the Church. When the attentiveness to words characteristic of Asian peoples is brought to the liturgy of the Word, then hearts would be rekindled in faith and love (cf. Lk 24:32).

Moments of silence can help the community be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit as the Scripture readings are proclaimed. Contemplating the Word of God, the minds of the faithful are transformed by spiritual wisdom. Time for reflection and thanksgiving can allow the heart to savor the faith that is renewed by the God's Word. Formation in faith should inculcate the spirituality of listening to God's Word that leads to acts of justice and goodness.

Readers or lectors should also be formed both in spirituality and skills so that they could serve the Word of God and the community in a worthy manner. We also praise God for the growing numbers of small or basic Christian communities centered on the Word of God. In their neighborhoods or gatherings, they do not only pray the Word of God but they also make it the principle of discernment for personal and communal action.

The homily is a matter of urgent concern for the faithful. They rightly expect to be nourished by the life-giving Word through the homily. The preacher *is engaged* in the dialogue between God and the community. In some sense, the homily is the preacher's dialogue with the community after he has listened to God's Word. A fellow believer to whom has been entrusted a pastoral charge, the preacher presents a testimony of faith. Prayer, study, reflection and familiarity with the situations of life encountered by the community must go into the preparation and preaching of the homily. The preacher's witness of life can never be divorced from the effectiveness of his preaching.

As the evolving cultures of Asia are bombarded with words promising life, a good and easy life, the most vulnerable victims of empty promises are the youth and the poor. Our Eucharistic celebration teaches us to be attentive so that we may be able to discern from the many words around us what word we would choose to live by. Through the homily, the Table of the Word can become a school for discerning the life-giving Word from words that deal death.

2) Building a Common Memory (Retelling the Word)

The Scripture readings at the Eucharist come back according to cycles and feasts. After a certain period of time, the readings become repetitive. The recurrence of the same texts might bore some of the faithful. But the repetition is necessary for the faith. The recounting of the story of God's action in salvation history is not meant to be a sheer transmission of information. Rather it is a living memory that is passed on with the Holy Spirit as sure guide. When the hearer freely accepts the living Word in faith, he/she becomes a part of the Church's living memory of God and God's saving action.

The Eucharistic memorial is not confined to the narrative of the Supper. The Liturgy of the Word is keeping memory as well. Every time the story is told, we are invited again to respond to the God who has loved and saved us. And by remembering, we are united by the Holy Spirit with the communities of the past who remembered before us and transmitted their memory to us. By the same token, we are in communion with Eucharistic communities all over the world that remember God's marvelous deeds through the same Word. We are also already in union with the future generations of Christians who, by listening to the Word of God, will remember the same things.

The faith generated by the Word of God is not simply personal and individual. It is also communal faith. As we receive and transmit memory, we constitute our community as a community of faith. Social scientists emphasize the vital role of common memory in the survival and strengthening of families, clans, communities, nations and even business corporations. It is interesting to note that people are usually gathered in family or community meals, on which occasions their stories are also gathered into a "reservoir" of common memory. So the Word of God does not only evoke faith in the hearts of believers, it also makes of

believers a community of faith centered on common memory of the good things the Lord has done.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

The traditional societies of Asia put value on the telling of stories and narration of epics. Aside from fostering cohesion among the members of a clan or tribe, these memories are effective bearers of community identity, values and belief. The initiation of adolescents into adulthood often includes long hours or days of listening to the living memory of the community. But due to various social factors and constraints, members of the same community do not hold the same memories anymore. The infrequency of family meals, the massive migration of peoples, the dispersal of victims of armed conflicts are just a few phenomena that have greatly hindered the flow of stories into the communal stock of memory. There are many people whose personal stories will never be shared. People who do not become part of a community's memory lead lonely lives.

3) God's Authorship of the Word

Every Eucharistic community can find joy and solace from the common memory that it shares with past and present generations of Christians. Thanks to the Word of God, no Christian is alone. This consolation, however should lead to Christian sensitivity towards people who have been erased from the memory of the world, those who are not remembered and cannot remember. Our memory of God's graciousness impels us to live in solidarity with the forgotten, so numerous that we wonder why they do not come to mind. Our faith proclaims they will always be part of God's story and memory. Far from being mere sentimentalism, remembering the forgotten is an act of living faith in God in whose saving memory they always remain.

We believe that the Sacred Scriptures are truly God's Word consigned into writing through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God, the story of God's action in salvation history comes in the form of human words and stories. So the Psalms, the Book of Isaiah, the letter of Paul to the Philippians are truly God's Word. After the proclamation, we do not hesitate to respond, "Thanks be to God!" But there is no denying that it was David, Isaiah, Paul and other human authors who put the Word of God in written form. So real is their authorship that the writings bear the marks of their unique circumstances, styles and temperaments. It is faith that makes us see God's authorship in humanly composed writings. The Church's faith, guided by the same Holy Spirit of scriptural inspiration, has led her to discern God's true authorship. We are before the mystery of divine communication here. God communicates His word through simple human instruments and their stories.

4) Suppressing Stories in Asia

This important experience of faith teaches us to listen constantly to God's communication through the stories of other people. The faith that comes from listening involves the human stories and words through which God speaks. In some parts of Asia simple but threatening human stories are being suppressed. The truth they contain frightens those whose self-interests might come to an end if the truth prevails. Suppression of stories takes various forms like dictatorial rule, crackdown on media, arrest and killing of those branded as subversives, alteration of the results of elections, and revision of history books. But what do we fear in those stories? We are afraid of what God wants to communicate. The Eucharistic faith gives us the courage to listen to and even welcome these stories into our common memory. Listening to God speaking to us in the signs of the times, we discern how God's story is unfolding before us through these human stories.

5) A Joyful but Risky Act (Professing a Common Faith)

The Lord has spoken. We now respond. On Sundays and solemnities or feasts, the recitation of the Creed follows the proclamation of the Word and the homily. There is no better response. The profession of faith has a Trinitarian structure, the focus of which is the mystery of Jesus Christ. The formula highlights the economy of salvation already revealed in Scriptures. It nurtures the living relationship of the believers with the God who saves. Doctrinal precisions present in the Creed reflect the discernment that the Church has undergone through the centuries in order to settle and propose the authentic content of the Christian faith. The Creed therefore is also another form of the Church's common memory that binds us to the communities of earlier ages. In union with the Church of generations past and with the believers of the future, a Eucharistic community joyfully professes its faith in the Triune God. By such a confession of faith, they also hold on to a renewed understanding of the world, of human beings and of human destiny.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

The Creed as a response in faith to the Word of God and as a bearer of the Word of God should be taught to the faithful, particularly to children and the youth, not only as a set of formulations of truth to be believed in but also as a vision of life arising from one's faith. Presented that way, catechesis on the Creed would integrate content with worship and ethic.

It is unfortunate that in some parts of Asia, professing one's faith can be a dangerous act. Aside from facing the rejection coming from relativism that denies an objective basis to faith or from various forms of practical atheism, we encounter disquieting incidents of religious intolerance, disrespect for religious freedom and outright persecution of Christians. The Asian martyrs and missionaries from other lands who met martyrdom in Asia on account of their profession of faith in Jesus Christ witness to the extraordinary strength that faith could give. The Christian communities would be greatly enriched by getting to know their lives and testimony.

We address to regimes that suppress the Christian faith and to religious groups that discriminate against people of religions different from theirs an appeal to respect this most fundamental of human aspirations and rights, namely to profess one's faith openly in word, worship and life. To Christians and people of other religions who face persecution, rejection and discrimination, we send a message of hope and solidarity.

6) Imploring God Who Listens (Prayers of the Faithful)

The community now addresses God with its prayers for the needs of the Church, of the world, of suffering and poor people and of the community itself. The spiritual tradition of the Church, rooted in Sacred Scriptures, extols the prayer of petition as an act of faith. It expresses our faith in a God whose Providence continues to guide creation, humanity and history towards the fulfillment of God's saving design. At the same time, it articulates our self-understanding as creatures in constant need of God's love and protection. We unite ourselves with the whole of humanity in turning to the source of life for the sustenance of that very life. The petitions, uttered in the spirit of adoration and acknowledgement of the true God, express our communion with all peoples whose needs we make our own. Finally, in the prayers of the faithful the Church declares its belief that God does not only speak but also listens, especially to those in need and to those who are not heard in society. God is truly a God of love-in-dialogue.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

One of the alarming situations in Asia is the systematic silencing of people's voices coupled with a deliberate self-imposed deafness on the part of those who should hear. Living the Eucharistic faith involves the Church's listening to the voiceless the way God listens to them with predilection. The readiness to listen to the poor manifests the Church's preferential love for them.

Furthermore, the Church should lend its voice to be the voice of the muted peoples of Asia. Through her their cries and petitions reach the ears of the God who can accomplish more than any human being could. The Church should not tire of invoking God's help to make the power brokers of society hear the weeping of the weak. But the Church should realize that before she could be the voice of the voiceless, she should be a good listener to them. Then the prayers of the poor become the prayers of the Church.

7) Signs of Hope in a World of Injustice (Offering of the Gifts)

The Bread of Life, Jesus, has fed his community with the words of everlasting life. The Eucharistic celebration now moves to the Table of the Body and Blood of Christ. We will link this portion of the liturgy from the Preparation of the Gifts until the closing Doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer with living in hope.

Christian hope concerns the fulfillment of human life and creation in the Reign of God. In the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are certain that our quest for life and meaning will not be in vain. The victory of God over sin and death has been sealed in Jesus Christ. Our hope is not based on a wish or an empty promise. We can hope because what we hope for is true and is at work now. Absurd and meaningless situations are often the privileged settings for living and witnessing to the virtue of hope.

The preparation of the gifts celebrates hope in Jesus' transforming power for creation and human labor. Holding the bread, the priest says, "Blessed are you Lord God of all creation! Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, fruit of the earth and work of human hands. It will become for us the Bread of life." A similar prayer of thanksgiving is rendered for the wine, "fruit of the vine and work of human hands that will become our spiritual drink."

As bread and wine are prepared, we recognize them as the fruits of creation and work of human hands, all signs of God's continuing gift of life. In the power of the Holy Spirit, these symbols of creation and human labor will become the Bread of Life and the "Work of Salvation" that would inspire us to share these gifts to humanity. The Eucharist brings to the fore a world filled with gifts. God the Creator shares His gift of love concretely through bread and wine. But it is not only the God of creation that is acknowledged. The earth is God's partner in providing us with bread and wine. The human hands that worked to transform the fruit of the earth into bread and wine are incorporated as well into the great action of love and sharing of gifts.

The simple bread and wine we use at the Eucharistic celebration do not deserve to be present on tables prepared for exquisite dining. But we are gathered around a different table. The Eucharist is the proper place for the purity of the gift present in plain bread and wine to shine forth. Scripture attests to the workings of God's grace in small and ordinary persons, people or events, bringing hope to the lowly and the poor (cf. Lk 1:46-55). The transformation that the Holy Spirit will effect on these simple gifts brings sure hope to creation, to the earth and to laborers. Their gifts will become the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ that re-creates the world and humanity.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

The Eucharist opens our eyes to the giftedness of existence. Living in the Eucharist impels us to retrieve this key vision. In Asia, as in many parts of the world, the mindset of commodity has replaced that of gift. Human beings, relationships, work and meaning

have been subjected to untold suffering due to the “commodification” of life. Helplessness and meaninglessness often result from this tragedy.

Creation and human labor have become victims as well. The Eucharist restores belief in the Creator and respect for creation and human labor as gifts, not as commodities to be manipulated for consumerist goals. Disrespect for creation and human labor leads to destruction and death. Only in the recognition of their giftedness will they become truly signs of the Creator’s life and love.

Greed has robbed creation of its mystery. Profitability has supplanted a sense of awe before the grandeur of God’s work in nature. Human labor does not command the respect due to God’s partners in administering the world. One of the most abused sectors of society is that of the laborers. Denied just wages and dignified working conditions, workers are sacrificed on the altars of avarice and revenue. The earth cries out to God. Laborers cry out to God. In the Eucharist, we are certain that God hears them and through the Holy Spirit’s re-creating action, God will transform the earth and human work again.

Paradoxically bread reminds us not only of the gift of food but also of hungry and malnourished people, of scandalous gaps in the lifestyles of the rich and the poor, of exorbitant prices of goods beyond the buying capacity of the poor, and of the helplessness of working parents to provide a bright future for their families. It is puzzling that wine, sign of the festive character of life, calls to mind images of wild drunkenness, of wives beaten up by alcoholic husbands, of victims of intoxicated attackers and of families going bankrupt due to vice.

But there is hope in the Holy Spirit’s action and in our appreciation of simplicity. There is hope in the healing of creation through the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Mary is a witness to hope. God looked upon her lowliness. Through the grace of His presence, she would be called blessed by all generations.

An urgent concern for the Christian churches is how to bring stewardship of creation to the core of Christian spirituality and discipleship. While caring for the earth is universally recognized as necessary for the survival of the planet and the human race, it is often perceived as nothing more than a worthy cause. Catechists, biblical scholars, theology professors, spiritual directors, pastors, religious communities and basic ecclesial communities should work together to provide formation in stewardship of creation as constitutive of Christian discipleship. The way we deal with creation influences our dealings with human beings too. There is much to learn from the wisdom and practice of other faiths with regard to caring for the earth.

D. THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

1) The Institution Narrative: From Betrayal to the Sacrifice of Self-Giving and Service

The Eucharistic Prayer is ushered in by the Preface and hymn to the triple holy God. This is a fitting introduction to the great Thanksgiving prayer of the Church where we recall the Supper Jesus took with his disciples before He died. It is in the Holy Spirit’s power that we remember and “remind the Father” of the sacrifice that has made our peace with Him. Jesus is our peace! By the same Holy Spirit, the gifts of bread and wine become the gift of Jesus’ abiding presence among us. The Supper sheds light and meaning on the death of Jesus.

What do we remember? The Church is admirable in its courage to remember. She could have glossed over embarrassing details but she chooses not to. So we declare, “On the night he

was betrayed, he took bread... ” (cf. Eucharistic Prayer III). The Eucharistic Memorial is an invitation to humanity to a healing and purifying remembrance so that we can foster true communion among peoples. Humanity is wounded. It wants to forget its wounded past. It suppresses memories that disturb. The Eucharist teaches us to bravely confront even painful memories. For in every dark memory, we see the action of God transforming nights of betrayals into dawns of reconciliation. Neglect or denial of shameful memories does not make them disappear. Rather they erode our peace and hope.

Remembering Jesus’ commitment to and perseverance in His life-giving mission, we are filled with “memories of the future promise”, already begun but awaiting fulfillment. The Eucharist enables us to confront the darkness of the past with the hope provided by the victorious love of God in Jesus. Betrayal and death can be the spring of life for oneself and for others, if like Jesus we offer a sacrifice of life acceptable to the Father.

The world is torn apart by betrayals. The race for more wealth, power and might makes traitors of people and nations. Blinded by false promises of life, we cease to see the gift of friends. The victim is tempted to retaliate. But the swift satisfaction that it brings quickly turns into bitterness that in turn breeds future betrayals.

In the Supper before he died, Jesus transformed the betrayal of his life into a gift of life. His gift was not an object or thing but His very body and blood. He was teaching the disciples that His humiliating death on cross was truly a loving offer of life. True life and salvation comes from self-giving, the sacrifice of self-donation so that others may live. Betrayal kills others while self-gift makes other truly live. Self-giving, however must be life-giving to the giver himself or herself. This happens only when there is full freedom and love in the giving and a worthwhile cause to which one gives. “No one takes my life from me. I lay it down freely,” Jesus says (Jn 10:18). The Eucharistic faith affirms that the way to life is not to sacrifice others for one’s ambitions, but to freely and lovingly offer one’s life as a living sacrifice to God and the good of others. We see in Jesus’ sacrifice of self in freedom and love the ethic of non-violence. Love does not victimize, but transforms victimization into self-donation. Victimization stops because love has conquered it.

At the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, we re-enact or memorialize the washing of the feet recounted in the Gospel of John (cf. Jn 13). During the time of Jesus, the lowliest of slaves performed this act not out of love but out of a duty *sometimes* brutally imposed on them. Jesus, however, did it freely. His giving of His Body and Blood was not only a deed of love but also a deed of service. His death was the culmination of His earthly service. Jesus, the Teacher and Lord, transformed Himself into a servant so that His disciples may also be transformed into servants washing each other’s feet (cf. Jn 13:13-15).

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

The Institution narrative of the Eucharistic Prayer enables us to live in hope: hope for those oppressed by bitter memories and for victims of betrayals. Jesus has shown the way. The histories of Asian peoples and nations speak of greatness, valor, wisdom and self-sacrificing love. We should keep these memories alive. We should proclaim them from generation to generation. Yet, we also need purification or healing of memories especially between Asian nations that have had experiences of betrayals and conflicts. We cannot allow bitterness to dictate human and international relations and public policy. Christians who live in Eucharistic hope can serve as catalysts in such healing. The good will generated by regional and continental gatherings of bishops, priests, religious and youth, ecumenical meetings and inter-religious fellowship is like a balm that soothes wounded memories. Small Christian and human communities that forge sentiments of peace among neighbors give us hope. We call on Catholic schools and institutes of learning to help in the healing of memories through a truthful yet balanced

teaching of history to the youth. Ultimately our witness to Jesus' self-giving, non-violence and service would rekindle hope that the seeds of a more humane society already exist on Asian soil. Transformation can happen because it has happened and continues to happen.

We need to mention the disturbing spread of violence all over Asia. Homes, schools, streets, places of worship and recreation spots have not been spared. As a cult of youthfulness and beauty spreads, their disciples delay aging and death at all cost. Yet, the arms race, poverty, abortion, domestic violence, illegal drugs and environmental pollution deal death with incredible ease. Living in hope in Jesus who died so that others may live, the Church must defend life in all its stages and untiringly work so that an ethos of life may pervade our land.

We also lament the growing sex tourism, sale of body organs, unbridled experimentation, prostitution, human trafficking, and mail-order brides that desecrate the human body. Equally abhorrent is the mutilation of the body as a method of criminal investigation. People with a missing arm or foot or eye remind us of the inhumanity of war. Jesus showed that the dignity of the human body is in its being a gift for the life of others. Our Eucharistic hope urges us to resist all forms of objectification of the human body, especially that of women and the girl-children. The Church's educational and catechetical ministry should form among the faithful a deep conviction about the noble vocation of the body. We gladly share it with the wider public so that legislation and media practice could benefit from it. Church communities should intensify its ministry to the differently-able. Lest we become arrogant, we remind ourselves that in all of these endeavors it is the Holy Spirit's action that effects transformation.

2) Communion with the Living and the Dead

We invoke the Holy Spirit twice in the Eucharist Prayer. The first instance is over the bread and wine so that they will become the Body and Blood of Christ. The second moment is when we call on the same Spirit of Jesus to transform the community "nourished by the Body and Blood Christ" into "one body, one spirit in Christ." The Church cannot become the communal Body of Christ through its own efforts alone. Helpless in effecting that transformation, she relies on the initiative of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2) who showers various gifts on the members for the good of the one body (cf. I Cor 12). The communion that is generated by the Holy Spirit is not confined to the local congregation. By virtue of the one Eucharist and the one Spirit of the one Lord, a local community is brought into the communion of the Universal Church. Our unity goes beyond ethnic, cultural, economic, or political identities. The mention of the names of the Pope and local ordinary testifies to that universal communion.

The Eucharistic Prayer includes a memorial of the living and the departed. The belief in the communion of saints comes to mind. We remember the saints who now share in the triumph of Christ's resurrection. Our remembrance of them inflames the hope that our earthly journey will find its completion in Jesus. By remembering the departed, we hope in God that they may share in the reality of Christ's resurrection as the saints do. Our Eucharistic communion transcends human boundaries, even those set by death.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

As we have indicated earlier in this document, Asia continues to search for a new way of being one people amidst diversity. The danger of turning diversity into an occasion for division and conflict is real. Living in Eucharistic hope means, living by new standards inspired by the Holy Spirit in fostering community. Christians add to despair if we are

party to the divisiveness in Asia. A living hope sustains our efforts in ecumenical, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. If Christ's resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit could surmount even the barrier set by death, we can hope for a transformed community in the continent.

In remembering the dead we need to be aware that many of the victims of different forms of violence in Asia are unnamed and forgotten. The Eucharistic memorial of the departed is our invocation of God's mercy and justice for the victims who will be buried in oblivion. Eucharistic hope refuses to forget especially those who are united with Jesus in suffering. He transformed victimization into victory. We have reason to hope for those Jesus died for. God remembers them and will restore justice on earth. We are sustained by our remembrance of the saints of Asia who suffered yet by their fidelity attained to the joy of God's presence.

In hope we cry out, "Amen!" to the Father who deserves all glory and honor for the new life that is offered to us in Jesus the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

E. THE RITE OF COMMUNION

1) Love is Communion and Peace (The Lord's Prayer and Exchange of Peace)

The climax of the next moment of the Eucharistic celebration is the reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. The Table of the Word and of the Body and Blood leads up to the singular grace of receiving Jesus' gift of Himself so that we would live in communion with Him. Communion is love. As a prelude, the community addresses God the Father in the words Jesus taught us. In the Latin rite, the giving of peace follows the prayer. The exchange of peace retains its full significance as an act of communion and love even when it is located elsewhere as in the liturgy of other rites.

Addressing God as 'Abba' was a distinctive mark of Jesus. It caused scandal to people who believed that reverence precluded a familiar approach to God. Yet Jesus was expressing the reality of who He was in relation to God. "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30). They belong to each other. They give of themselves totally to each other in their mutual love called the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God as their Father too (cf. Mt 6:9-13). But we cry out, "Abba" only by the Spirit of adoption that makes us children in the Son Jesus (cf. Rom 8:15-16). The reception of the Body and Blood of Christ is the fruit of our being brought into the inner life of the Trinity who is the God of love, of self-giving, of communion.

We address God as Our Father. We believe that God is the Father who will provide for our needs, especially our daily bread. Jesus is our daily Bread who will soon be given to us in communion. But belonging to the Father means belonging to the other children of God in God's family and breaking bread with them. Baptized into the one faith in Christ Jesus, we become one body of Christ, brothers and sisters to each other (cf. Gal 3:26-29; I Cor 12). There is no true love of the Father without a genuine love of our neighbors. St. Paul says that receiving the Body of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrificial meal without discerning the presence of the Body of Christ in the community is eating and drinking judgment on oneself (cf. I Cor 11:29).

The sign of peace after the Lord's Prayer puts in symbolic action the love of the Father that binds us to one another. Peace is the gift of the Risen Lord. He gives us His peace so that we could give it to others too. Receiving peace from the Father and from neighbors prepares us to receive Jesus who is our peace (cf Eph 2:14-16). The peace of Christ reconciles us to God and to one another. He breaks down the barriers of hostility that keep people apart (cf Eph 2:14).

i.) Contextual Pastoral Implications

To live the love that we believe and celebrate in the Eucharist is to live in communion. There is no communion without peace. There is no peace without reconciliation. The quest for this type of love begins in the home. We stand on a sturdy tradition of family life in all cultures and faiths in Asia. The efforts in and outside the Church to strengthen the Asian family are signs of the Father's love at work in us.

But we are fully aware of forces that undermine the home. Poverty, war, abusive parents, and vices destroy loving communion. Even in the wider home of society, we see aggression, rivalry, competition and intolerance. There is a dire need for reconciliation, mercy and forgiveness in Asian societies so that we may finally live in peace. The Church lends its resources to peace building in Asia, urged on by the love of the Father who seeks to reconcile humanity to Him and to each other.

2) Superabundant Love (Receiving Communion)

In the Lord's Prayer we asked the Father to give us our daily bread. The Father gives us Jesus, the Bread of Life, our daily Bread in our journey to the Kingdom yet to come. So we dare to approach the Communion Table, but only after confessing that we are not worthy to receive Jesus. We rely on His invitation, on His word of mercy and compassion to gain the strength and courage to approach Him. His welcoming love increases our desire to be one with Him by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. No loftier desire exists in our hearts than that of welcoming the life of Jesus Christ to be our life. He first loved us. We love Him in return and love our neighbors with His love in our hearts.

This communion is more than what we deserve if the norms of strict justice were to be observed. We taste the extravagant love of God in Jesus who gives to His very life. This gift we do not deserve. As gratitude wells up from our hearts, we thank and adore the God who is love. Thanksgiving deepens our desire to love in return. Fed by Jesus, the Bread come down from the Father, we share Jesus with others, especially those who are deprived of love.

Asia has been blessed with bountiful natural and human resources. The lack of bread is due to the insatiable greed of a few that imposes poverty on the many. The cry for daily bread emanates from many homes and parts of Asia. Eucharistic love makes us hear and act on it the way the loving Father would. But as we work for a just society, we do not retreat from our duty to share the word of God as bread for those who are constructing a loving and compassionate society. Motivated only by love, we will not hesitate to critique the misguided desires of our times and the cravings for bread that is poison underneath.

We know that no amount of success and achievement would satisfy the hunger of humanity for love. Many affluent people in Asia hunger for love and companionship. So as we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we also welcome Him who is present in the poor, the lonely, the lost, the weary, and the persecuted. Like Jesus, we give to them not only what is due to them but also what is truly ours - our love and life.

3) "Amen!" To the Bread of Love: Commitment to Mission

After the closing prayer of thanksgiving, the liturgy is brought to its conclusion. The rite is not just a declaration that the liturgy is over. Neither is it simply a dismissal of a group. It is a sending. This is a beautiful development in liturgical theology where a simple rite has become a "missionary moment." God sends missionaries into His harvest. It is significant to note that the God who gathers a new family now sends this same family as His workers in the vineyard, for indeed the harvest is rich.

We can draw inspiration and insight from the sending of the apostles to the lost sheep of Israel, to the sick, the dead, those afflicted with dreaded skin diseases and those possessed by demons (cf. Mt 10:6-8). This is the great harvest of the apostles of Christ: the poor, the neglected and the lost. They are the true wealth of the Church. Every Eucharistic community is

driven by the Holy Spirit to go to them for the Kingdom of God is promised to them. Like the apostles who were chosen to go forth and bear fruit (Jn 15:16), so is the Church sent to bear much fruit.

But this will happen only if we remain in His love (cf Jn 15:4). The one who is called to abide in God is sent by God. This is the mystery of mission: abiding as we go and going as we abide. It is not a "separation" from Jesus but a companionship achieved through participating in His mission.

Living the Eucharist in Asia calls us to a more attentive listening to the God who sends us as witnesses to His saving design. It requires, however a zealous availability to respond and a joyful going forth wherever God sends us. With eagerness, we go to the bountiful harvest of the teeming masses of the poor, the tired and the lowly in the vast world of Asia. All their lives, they hear only bad news. They experience bad news. Some of them consider their lives as bad news. To them we bring the Good News of a God who saves in Jesus who became poor out of love for us. We are saved by love – that is the Good News. But does our Eucharistic faith make our hearts burn with missionary ardor? Does mission move and inspire us, especially our youth? To what worthy "causes" do we make ourselves available? Are Christians in Asia more enamored of the "harvest" promised by individualist and materialist systems than the "harvest" of the blind recovering their sight, the cripples walking again, the lepers getting cured, the deaf hearing once more, the dead being raised to life and the poor having the good news announced to them? (cf. Lk 7:22).

We state clearly that worldly conquest or ambition is not the motivation for the Church's engagement in mission. Eucharist is mission. The Eucharist is the presence of Jesus. It is Jesus himself loving and serving. The Eucharistic offering of himself, the joy of having found life in Jesus and the duty to share it to others – these impel us to mission.

4) A Mission to Witness to Jesus Christ

Jesus sent his disciples in order to witness to the Gospel of the Reign of God. John the Apostle epitomizes the mode of such testimony when he wrote, "This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched – we speak of the word of life" (I Jn 1:1). The apostle can witness to Jesus only if he has first seen, heard, touched him. During the Eucharist, we have gathered and touched the presence of God in the community. We have heard God speaking to us the Word of life and hopefully have made it part of our memory. We have looked with awe at the hope offered to creation, human labor and painful memories by the sacrifice of Jesus' self-gift. We have tasted the Bread of Life full of love and peace. What we have seen, heard, looked upon and tasted, we now witness to. Participation in the Eucharist brings with it a mission of testifying in word and deed to the life we have been graced to experience. Spirituality, contemplation and mission meet. The Good News experienced in the Eucharist begs to be shared. The gift we have received brings with it the responsibility to share with others the Lord we have encountered.

i.) Contextualized Pastoral Implications

Every Eucharistic celebration renews the Church in its missionary calling. By its very nature as the bearer of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Church is missionary. Only by being true to its mission can it remain true to its identity. In the Eucharist, we receive Jesus who sends us as the Father has sent Him for the life of the world (cf. Jn 20:21).

Even as a small minority in most of the Asian countries, the Church continues to share the gift of Jesus with others. That is her life. And the celebration of the Eucharist nurtures the Church's missionary life. Where explicit missionary activity is forbidden,

the Church can and must witness to Christ even in her silence. The quality of our joy, simplicity, compassion, and communion testifies powerfully to the truth of Jesus.

There is no chaining the Word of God. There is no stopping the fire of the Gospel and the Presence of Christ from emanating even from weak and frail witnesses. We are in great awe and deep gratitude for the heroic witness of many Asians who in many difficult political and religious situations suffer silently for the sake of the faith. Their testimonies speak of the power and the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. Through spiritual communion or through secret celebrations, the Eucharist comforted and strengthened in their incredible witness of the Christ.

Many peoples and communities in Asia are in need of witnesses to the truth that in Jesus their quest for life will not end in vain: the migrants separated from their homes, women and children living in constant terror, broken families, those imprisoned and detained for crimes they did not commit, the differently-able and mutilated, and people contemplating suicide. The Church is sent to them. The Church, renewed as the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, bears Christ to them. Every member of the Body shares in the common mission of witnessing to Christ. We can mention a few examples: parents are witnesses of Christ's love to each other and to their children; the youth are missionaries to their fellow youth of the joy of having found Christ; public servants must witness to the humble service of love that Jesus exemplified.

Called to missionary witnessing, the Church in Asia must examine its credibility as a witness to Christ. In a continent where the consistency of wisdom and life is highly valued among teachers and religious institutions, the Church needs to review the quality of its communal witnessing to Christ. A Church community should become what it celebrates and receives in the Eucharist. The Church learns true mission in the Eucharist.

5) A Gift and Promise of Presence

When we go to fulfill the mission entrusted to us, we believe that Jesus goes with us. He promised to his first disciples: "Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!" (Mt 28:20). The pledge of His abiding presence in the Church's mission is the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species that remains even after the liturgical celebration. The rite may end but the gift of presence endures. Thus Holy Communion could be given to the sick after the rite and the community that has celebrated can continue to adore the Blessed Sacrament. The promise of presence in mission already happens as a gift of presence in the Eucharist. We are consoled by the fact that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist already fulfills His promise of presence to those whom He sends out on mission. In Eucharistic spirituality, adoration goes hand in hand with mission. Genuine mission leads to adoration. Authentic adoration leads to mission. This gift and promise of presence sustains the Church as she charts rough roads and stormy seas.

The abiding presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in mission reminds us of His presence in our neighbors, especially the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the sick, the prisoners, the lonely, the abandoned and the victims (cf. Mt. 25:31-46). The Spirit of the Risen Christ hovers over creation and the events in history. As we testify to Christ's presence, we also discover and behold Him present in the poor, in creation, and in history. Mission is never without contemplation. But the more we engage in missionary contemplation, we realize that the presence of Christ is often "veiled" by the very signs that cannot fully capture the mystery they convey. The sinfulness of the world and of humanity, including the followers of Christ, also clouds the manifestation of Christ's life. Our mission and adoration happen in the tension of the

“veiled presence” that makes us long to see the full revelation of the Reign of God and of the freedom of God’s children (cf. Rom 8:19). In the meanwhile, we press on to make the gift and promise our own (cf. Phil 3:12), strengthened by the presence of Jesus - a gift already given and a promise waiting to be fulfilled.

F. CONCLUSION

The Church as the Body of Christ makes present in signs and mission the saving presence of Christ in history. In Asia, the missionary witness of the Church is a way of living the Eucharist. Living the Eucharist involves 1) becoming God’s family as a counter-witness to divisions, 2) recognizing God as we acknowledge our sinfulness, 3) listening to the story of Jesus in human stories, 4) building a common memory, 5) professing the faith in joy in the midst of risks, 5) listening to the voiceless in the way God listens, 6) celebrating the gift of creation in a world of commodification and injustice, 7) transforming betrayals into self-giving and service, 8) being in communion with the living and the dead, 9) living in peace, 10) being deeply grateful for Jesus’ superabundant love, 11) working as missionaries in God’s bountiful harvest, 12) courageously witnessing to Jesus and 13) confident journeying in hope towards the fulfillment of promise of the Everlasting Banquet. This is the form of life we receive in the Eucharist. This is the life that we pray and work for in Asia. The dynamism of the Eucharist becomes the rhythm of life of the followers of Christ. The Eucharist forms the Church. The Eucharist is the life of the Church.

Mary, the bearer of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, experienced Christ’s life in her and lived as a disciple of her Son. Hailed as the ark of the New Covenant, she is the exemplar of the Church. Listening to the Word and acting on it, she is the Woman of the Eucharist who followed her Son until the end with much love and hope. She now lives with her Son in the glorious presence of the Father. She adores the Triune God, intercedes for the Church and the world until we all share in the Banquet of Eternal Life. Mary lived a Eucharistic life because Jesus was her life. Mother of Life and Mother of Asia, pray for us now and always!

G. SOME PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) Formation towards Eucharistic Life

- 1.1. Programs of integral catechesis, faith formation, and liturgical formation on the Eucharist and its implications for daily living should be conducted at the diocesan, parish, and BEC levels;
- 1.2. Where such tools of social communication are readily available, TV or radio should be set up in village chapels for catechesis and faith formation;
- 1.3. Basic ecclesial communities or Small Christian Communities should be formed as Eucharistic communities that share with one another with the wider community in a service of transforming love.
- 1.4. In seminary formation, Eucharistic life and lifestyle must be emphasized.

2) The Celebration and Adoration of the Lord

- 2.1. The faithful should be trained in *Lectio Divina* with lessons in silence and contemplation;
- 2.2. The custom of having adoration chapels and Holy Hour should be widely promoted;
- 2.3. At an appropriate early age the faithful should be taught to demonstrate reverence before the Blessed Sacrament and deep sense of the sacred;

- 2.4. The inculturation of the Liturgy should be promoted according to the instructions of the Magisterium with the wise guidance of the local Bishop;
- 2.5. With the guidance of their pastors and facilitated by liturgical committees, parishes should make the celebration of the Eucharist more attractive and beautiful;
- 2.6. Bishops and priests are to improve the quality of the preparation and delivery of the homily;
- 2.7. Prayers of the Faithful are to be contextualized and inclusive of the wider community.
- 2.8. Instructions should be given with respect and kindness on the reasons for not giving Holy Communion to non-Catholics when Holy Mass is celebrated with them present, as in weddings; an alternative gesture of welcome could be given;

3) Living the Eucharist

- 3.1. Bishops and priests should instruct the faithful on doing the traditional corporal works of mercy as the fruit of the Eucharistic celebration;
- 3.2. Part of the collection from the faithful at Masses should be allocated for charitable purposes;
- 3.3. The formation of parish communities of forgiveness, reconciliation, and equality help significantly towards the living of the Eucharist;
- 3.4. Priests are to be models of the Eucharistic attitude of welcoming to all, of being for all people and of living a Eucharistic life of love and service;

4. Missionary Orientation

- 4.1. Catechetical and faith formation programs should incorporate modules of value formation to combat individualism, materialism, prejudices, and inequalities;
- 4.2. Diocesan and parish ministries should collaborate in defending and promoting life from conception to death;
- 4.3. The pastoral care, including counseling, of victims, abused women, children and youth, the lonely, the desperate, the poor, and the elderly should be given adequate attention;
- 4.4. The special needs of the youth require a corresponding pastoral care in listening to them and speaking their language;
- 4.5. Episcopal conferences should actively promote peace-building and reconciliation in the wider society with special attention to ecumenical and inter-religious collaboration;
- 4.6. We should appeal to leaders of nations to stop the arms race;
- 4.7. Episcopal conferences and dioceses should establish pastoral programs focused on the stewardship of creation.

II. FINAL MESSAGE

We, the 117 participants – Catholic Bishops of Asia, together with the Papal Envoy, Francis Cardinal Arinze, Archbishop Robert Sarah, the Secretary of the Congregation of Evangelization of Peoples and the fraternal delegates from other Conferences of Bishops (Australia, Canada, U.S.A, Spain and the Federation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Oceania), and FABC Offices and representatives of our funding partners (Missio, Misereor and Stichting Porticus), Christian Conference of Asia – gathered in Manila for the IX Plenary Assembly of the FABC (August 10 – 16). With great pastoral concern, we came together to

celebrate, pray, reflect and discern, and to provide pastoral orientations and recommendations on the theme: “Living the Eucharist in Asia.”

Call to Community

The theme of the Plenary Assembly is of great importance for the entire Church in Asia, for our life and mission. Therefore, every effort must be made to have on-going reflection on its significance. This, we hope, will result in a new fervour to make the Eucharistic celebration first and foremost an encounter with Jesus, the Risen Lord, leading to communion. Active and prayerful participation by hearing the Word and sharing in the breaking of the Bread will lead us to that personal and intimate encounter.

In this sacrament, the God of unity comes to permeate and envelope our life – personal and societal, bringing the gift of union with him and with one another. We should also keep in mind that Asia cherishes family, common meal and community celebrations to foster and promote unity. The Eucharist, both sacrifice and meal, was first referred to as the “Supper of the Lord”, and then as the “breaking of the Bread”. These names express two important demands (dimensions): intimacy with Jesus and family-like union among those who share the bread. Our celebrations should generate in everyone the courage to build authentic communities that reconcile, forgive, minister to the poor and the marginalized.

Love made perfect in self-sacrifice by Jesus, and renewed in the Eucharist, calls forth nothing less than a life-style of sacrificial love. This alone can bring about true harmony and peace. Asia’s soul thirsts for universal harmony. The Eucharist responds to this quest. Each and every Christian and every community must become what they celebrate: unity in diversity. St Paul shows the gift and the task that the Eucharist is in these memorable words: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). The Eucharist should indeed be the school where we grow in harmony and are empowered to promote it.

We cannot celebrate the Eucharist and at the same time maintain, practice or tolerate discrimination based on religion or race, culture or language, caste or class. If we are grafted into the Eucharistic Lord, we will reach out and become bridge-builders in a world that is becoming increasingly divisive.

Call to hear the Word

To celebrate the Eucharist is **to live in faith**, a faith planted, nurtured and nourished by the Word. It demands that we become contemplative listeners and ponderers of the Word, like the Virgin Mary, our Mother. Our brothers and sisters of other religions in Asia have great devotion to their sacred books, and they chant and interiorize the Word. This culture of listening is a further invitation to become men and women who cherish and devote themselves to the Word and to the breaking of the bread. Such listening will certainly issue forth in living in the light of the Word. An ideal context where intense listening to the Word can take place is the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) that dot the map of the Church in Asia. We remind all those who are entrusted with the ministry of animating the Eucharistic communities, especially priests, that they have a great responsibility to make the Eucharist a transforming event, by adequate preparation, and effective celebration, and in particular by relevant and nourishing homilies.

There should be devout listening to the Word every day at home as a family, especially on the eve of Sundays to prepare for the Eucharist by reading and praying the Word to be proclaimed on the Day of the Lord. Such a practice will certainly bear fruits of renewal of Christian life. It will bring about a culture of listening to the Word in our parishes and communities.

Call to faith and hope

We are pilgrims on earth, walking in lights and shadows, journeying with anxieties and uncertainties, pains and sufferings, oftentimes, imposed upon on us. We cherish the Eucharist, for in it we receive the Word of life and light that opens our eyes and the Bread of life that warms up our hearts. The unity of the Word and Bread in the Eucharist invite us to treasure and live both these aspects.

Without this gift we would be just groping in the dark, walking through a tunnel without even a glimmer of hope. With both these gifts we shall discover, like the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13f), the deeper meaning and the divine call to hope in the midst of all that we go through in life: sudden economic chaos, increasing global warming, natural disasters, persecutions, untold sufferings of people every where, especially of women and children, refugees and of those deprived of freedom in different countries of Asia.

To those who experience life as meaningless and (worthless) not worth living, we must bring the memory of Jesus crucified and risen, the memory made alive in the Eucharist, a memory capable of healing the trauma of hopelessness. The Paschal mystery contains the power to interpret our life experiences. For in Jesus not only God is revealed, but also the meaning of our human life with all its richness and vulnerability. His Word can enlighten every experience we go through.

Call to mission

Asian celebrations are marked by joy, simplicity and participation. Asian heart is energised by **contemplating** beauty in nature. Our Eucharistic celebrations need to touch the hearts of Asians who love colour, flowers, symbols, music and contemplation. Asian symbols, Asian melodies, and even more Asian values, should make our celebrations create a resonance in the depths of Asia's heart. How great a witness of our faith - Christ has come not destroy but to perfect- would such a celebration of the Eucharist be! The appeal of Pope John Paul II to show forth the **Asian face of Jesus** to our brothers and sisters echoes afresh in our ears. (*Ecclesia in Asia*)

We are convinced that meaningful, contemplative, experiential and prayerful celebration of the Eucharist has the potential to render the Christian communities of Asia powerful witnesses of Jesus, witnesses who are bearers of his presence, his love, and his healing power. The celebration of the Eucharist end with the call to mission: "Go, you are sent forth." The Eucharist must be lived by becoming communities of loving concern, hospitality, selfless service to the poor, the excluded, and downtrodden. The breaking of the Bread must continue. That is the sign that we live the Eucharist (Jn 13:1-17).

Mary is the "woman of the Eucharist" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*). To her, on the Feast of the Assumption, we entrusted the Church in Asia. May she accompany us in our commitment to live the Eucharist in Asia.

16TH August, 2009 - Manila, Philippines

III. APPENDIX

A. Letter of the Holy Father to the Papal Envoy

To Our Venerable Brother

FRANCIS OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH CARDINAL ARINZE

Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh' (Jn 6:51). Jesus

thus shows that he is the bread of life which the eternal father gives to mankind" (*Sacramentum caritatis*, 7).

We have learned that all the sacred prelates of Asia, in order that the faithful may understand in a deeper way and love this divine Sacrament, have wisely chosen to meditate on the theme "Living the Eucharist in Asia", in the next Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, and that they will also take the inspiration from our Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*.

In order, therefore, that such a big event be celebrated with the greatest solemnity and that it may bring very abundant fruit to so many people and cultures of the whole Continent, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, has asked to send an eminent Prelate to represent us and to express our mind. We thought therefore of you, our Venerable Brother, because we consider you fit to carry out this mission, since earlier we already know your active solicitude for the good of souls, and especially for the proper celebration of divine worship in the whole Church.

Therefore, moved with great trust and love, we name you OUR SPECIAL ENVOY to the IX Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences to be celebrated from 11 to 16 August this year in Manila in the Philippines. You will take care to transmit our teaching and desires diligently to the assembly. Our particular mind is that all Shepherds teach their Christian faithful to take part in the Eucharistic Celebration especially on Sundays, to be purified in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to be fed there in the word of God and at the sacred banquet. We exhort them to esteem their priests greatly, because these are elected by the Lord and constituted ministers of the Eucharist. They should support the spiritual ministry of the priests with fervent prayers and oblations and promote new vocations to this sublime ministry, and especially now celebrate with the whole Church the Year of Priests.

We shall support your important mission with our prayers, while we even now wholeheartedly commend you, Our Venerable Brother, all our Brothers in the Episcopate there gathered, and all the followers of Christ the saviour in all Asia to the most loving protection of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary assumed into heaven and also to all the Saints who have promoted the work of evangelization in this continent. Finally, we lovingly impart to you Our Apostolic Blessing, to be communicated to all to whom you are now sent.

From the Vatican Building, on the XXIV on the month of June, in the year MMIX, the fifth of Our Pontificate

BENEDICTUS PP XVI

B. "Meeting Jesus in the Holy Eucharist in Asia"

- *Homily at Opening Solemn Mass of the IX FABC Plenary Assembly, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect-emeritus, Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, 11 August, 2009, Manila Cathedral*

It is most fitting that the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has chosen for this IX Plenary Assembly the theme: "Living the Eucharist in Asia". As the Mystery of Faith, the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the "fount and apex of the whole Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). "The other sacraments, as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are linked with the Holy Eucharist and are directed toward it. For the most Blessed Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ himself, our Passover and living bread" (*Presbyt. Ordinis*, 5).

It matters, therefore, a great deal for the life of the Church in Asia how the ineffable mystery of the Holy Eucharist is believed, celebrated and lived in this vast continent in which more than 60 per cent of humanity lives. I bring you the greetings, good wishes and blessing of

our Holy Father, Pope Benedict. As you can see, Venerable Brothers, from this Apostolic Letter appointing me as his Special Envoy to this important ecclesial convention, the Holy Father rejoices at your choice of theme, and he prays that this Assembly be celebrated with great solemnity, and that it bring abundant fruit for the peoples and cultures of the Asian continent. He requests the Bishops in particular to teach Christ's faithful the importance of participation at the Eucharistic Celebration especially on Sundays, and of receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Priests, being ministers of the Eucharist, are to be greatly esteemed and supported and vocations to the priesthood to be promoted especially in the year for Priests.

This Plenary is going to reflect on sub-themes such as the following:

- The transforming power of the Holy Eucharist;
- The Eucharistic Meal in the Service of Communion;
- Rooted in the Eucharist, we meet other believers;
- Eucharist and Solidarity;
- Eucharist and Evangelization.

A thought on each of these can help our prayer in offering to God this Eucharistic Sacrifice.

1. Transforming Power of the Holy Eucharist

On the Cross Jesus Christ offered himself to the Eternal father as a sacrifice for the redemption of all humanity. He did so with love and obedience. In the midst of the intense suffering, he forgave those who were crucifying him and mocking him.

In the Last Supper, the night before he suffered, Jesus gave to his Church the inestimable Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. He ordered the Apostles, and through them the Church, to celebrate this memorial of the paschal mystery of his suffering, death and resurrection in remembrance of him. The Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one single sacrifice because "the victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different" (*Council of Trent*, in DS 1743). In the Eucharistic Sacrifice "the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1368).

In the midst of tremendous economic and technological development, Asia also has her poor and suffering people, her oppressed and repressed, her homeless and needy. The Church in Asia lives in this context. To live the Holy Eucharist here means to bring Jesus to all the poor of Asia, the Incarnate Word who did not disdain to take on human nature and to undergo pain and poverty, suffering and persecution and eventually even death on the Cross. Jesus teaches us to be willing to sacrifice ourselves, to forgive those who have offended us (cf Lk 23:34) and to live in harmony with our neighbour. The Holy Eucharist, lived authentically transforms us and leads us to share this effect with others. Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkata and her Sisters serving the poorest of the poor are serving Christ and living the transforming power of the Eucharist. Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe, giving his life for his brother, was powerfully following Christ who washed the Apostle's feet and taught us that "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:30).

The Eucharist also transforms us by leading us to seek ways in which to help the poor to get out of their condition of poverty and live a more dignified human life, as far as possible. The Gospel of Jesus Christ preaches conversion of heart, brotherly love and the universal destination of earthly goods, in the sense that God does not want few people to grab most of the good things in this world and thus become an oasis of enjoyment and overspending, while the majority remain a desert of want and misery (cf *Gaudium et Spes*, 69).

In his latest Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI has given us the most up-to-date directive of the Church on the promotion of integral human development.

The Eucharist, therefore, empowers us to live more worthy human lives., whether we are poor or rich in things of this world. If we continually allow ourselves to be transformed by the Holy Eucharist, we shall grow as followers of Christ.

2. The Holy Eucharist creates and fosters Communion.

The Holy Eucharist is a culmination of all the sacraments because it perfects our communion with God the Father by identification with his Only-begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit (cf *Eccl. de Euch.*, 34). The celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the reception of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist presuppose that this communion already exists. Invisible communion with God is the life of grace by which we become “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet 1:4) and practice the virtues of faith, hope and charity. That is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recalls St. Paul’s warning also repeated by the *Council of Trent* (cf DS 1647, 1661) that, “anyone conscious of grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Communion” (CCC, 1385; cf also C.I.C. canon 916; *Code of Canon of the Eastern Churches*, can 711).

Communion has also a visible dimension. It entails communion in the teaching of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the hierarchical order of the Church. “The Eucharist, as the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church, demands to be celebrated in a context where the outward bonds of communion are also intact” (*Eccl. De Euch.* 38). This explains why the names of the Pope and of the Bishop in whose diocese a Mass is being celebrated are always mentioned in the Eucharistic prayer.

All this emphasizes the importance of unity and communion between the Pope and Bishops, between the Bishops themselves, and between the Bishop, his priests and his laity and consecrated people. “Whoever receives the mystery of unity without preserving the bonds of peace” says St. Augustine, “receives not a mystery for his benefit but evidence against himself” (*Sermo* 272: PL38,1248).

3. Rooted in the Eucharist, we meet other believers.

Catholics in Asia live with other Christians who do not yet share with us full Catholic unity, and with yet a greater number of people who have other religions. Relations with other Christians and relations with other believers have to be considered separately, especially with reference to the Holy Eucharist.

In relations with other Christians, careful note has to be taken of the fact that the Eucharistic celebration is a celebration of the family of faith that is the Catholic Church. It demands full ecclesiastical communion. It is not an ecumenical service. It is not therefore possible to celebrate together the same Eucharistic liturgy until the bonds of communion are fully re-established (cf *Eccl. De Euch.* 44). “The more painful the experience of divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return” (CCC, 1398). As to the rare possibility of giving Holy Communion to an individual Christian whose religious family does not fully adhere to the Catholic fold, the stringent and demanding conditions laid down by the Church have to be present (cf C.I.C., can 844; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, can 671; *Eccl. De Euch.* 45-46; CCC, 1401).

When it is a question of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and other believers, it is clear that the absence of faith in Christ and of Baptism fundamentally renders a reception of Holy Communion impossible. But it is also important to consider that Asian cultures put a high value on a sense of the sacred, respect for guests and desire to share with them. It is for the Church in Asia to carefully work out how to explain our Catholic faith and its demands to other believers, whether there is a risk in inviting them to the Eucharistic celebration when due explanations are

nit made, and what would be acceptable gestures of welcome and sharing which do not obscure or contradict the Catholic faith.

Aware that we can best be of help to other believers when we carefully keep our Catholic identity and propose our faith to those who willingly desire to share it, Catholics may find suitable ways and moments to share with other believers that Jesus is the living bread which came down from heaven and that he who eats his flesh and drinks his blood will live in Christ and Christ in him (cf Jn 6:51,56). By the paschal mysteries celebrated in the Holy Eucharist, God “has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14).

4. Holy Eucharist and Solidarity.

The Holy Eucharist is a Sacrament of love, a bond of charity, an invitation to harmonious living. Jesus loved his chosen ones “to the end” (Jn 13:1). He washed their feet (cf Jn 13:1-15). He taught them forgiveness and reconciliation by word and example (cf Lk 23:34). He told them that by their mutual love, the world would recognize them as his disciples (cf Jn 13:35).

Asia has its poor and marginalized people. There are occasionally natural disasters. There are always populations, which without words are calling for solidarity. Genuine Christianity does not just tolerate interdependence between people. It accepts interdependence as a fact; it welcomes it and strives to live it. So accepted and lived, interdependence becomes solidarity, another word for Christian charity. Other people, especially the needy, are my brothers and sisters in the pilgrimage that is life’s journey on earth.

The Holy Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brothers and sisters (cf CCC, 1397). St. John Chrysostom does not mince words: “You have tasted the Blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother... You dishonour this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal... God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful” (*Hom. In I Cor. 27,4: PG 61, 229-230; cf Mt 25:40*).

Pope John Paul II says that the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebration can be judged by what we do for the needy (cf *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 28). Pope Benedict XVI puts it this way: “A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 14). Every diocese or parish can ask itself how far its Social Services Commission succeeds in being close to people in need.

May God bless the FABC and the whole Church in Asia for all the initiatives taken to promote Christian solidarity.

5. Eucharist and Evangelization.

At the end of Mass, the deacon, and in his absence the priest, send the people home with the greeting: “Go, the Mass is ended”. This means, “Go home to live and share what we have celebrated, listened to, meditated, received and prayed.”. According to the desire of the 2005 Synod of Bishops, the Holy Father approved the addition of three alternatives to the “*Ite Missa Est*”. They are: “Go and announce the Gospel of God”, “Go and glorify God by your lives”, and “Go in Peace”. These are meant to reflect more clearly the missionary dimension of the Eucharistic celebration.

C. “Living the Eucharistic Mystery”

- *Homily at Closing Solemn Mass of the IX FABC Plenary Assembly, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect-emeritus, Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, 16 August, 2009, Pius XII Center*

We give thanks and praise to God that these past six days, we in this Plenary Assembly of the FABC, have done our best to hold “steadfastly to the Apostles’ teaching, and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42). At this Eucharistic Sacrifice we beg God to accept our efforts, to bless them, to correct what needs to be modified, to fructify what has been well done, and to bring us all home ready to live and share what we have received.

May I single out five elements from the many and rich contents of this ecclesial event:

- Eucharistic Faith and Reverence;
- Ars Celebrandi;
- Word of God and Eucharist;
- Eucharistic Celebration and Inculturation;
- The Role of the Bishop.

1. Eucharistic Faith and Reverence.

In the Gospel of this 20th Sunday in the Year, Jesus tells us: “I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever... For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him” (Jn 6:51, 55,56).

The discussions and prayers of this past week have helped to strengthen us in our Catholic faith in the Real presence. In the most Blessed sacrament of the Holy Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained” (*Council of Trent*, DS 1651; *cf* also CCC, 1374).

“That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that cannot be apprehended by the senses”, as says St. Thomas Aquinas, “but only by faith which relies on divine authority” (*S.Th.* III, 75,1; *cf* Paul VI: *Mysterium*

Sight, touch and taste in you are each deceived;

The ear alone most safely is believed:

I believe all the Son of God has spoken,

Than Truth’s own word there is no true token”

(Adoro Te Devote)

This faith demand the surrender of our will, the sacrifice needed in order to believe or not to trust in the sense. Freed from doubt and pride, we are made free for the light of faith. We are ready to adore. “Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Saviour who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the ‘King of Glory’ (Ps 24:9-10), respectful silence in the presence of the ever greater God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of Love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications” (CCC, 2628). “The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the Sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated Hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession” (Paul VI: *Mysterium Fidei*, 56). Eucharistic Adoration Chapels extolled by many participants.

Adoration manifests itself in such gestures as genuflection, deep bow, kneeling, prostration and silence in the presence of the Lord. Asian cultures have a deep sense of the sacred and transcendent. Reverence in Asia to civil authorities sometimes shows itself in clasped hands, kneeling, bows, prostration and walking away while facing a dignitary. It should not be too difficult to bring and elevate this cultural value to honour our Eucharistic Jesus. The fashion

in some parts of the world of not installing kneelers in churches should not be copied by the Church in Asia. The Holy Eucharist is the summit of the sacred in our worship.

2. Ars Celebrandi

Faith, adoration and reverence, lead on to the correct *ars celebrandi*. The 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Holy Eucharist dwelt much on this. The *ars celebrandi* is the art of proper celebration. It is a fruit of faithful adherence to liturgical norms in all their richness by clergy and assistants. When the

3. Word of God and Eucharist.

This FABC Assembly appreciates the important place, which the Word of God has in the Eucharistic Celebration. The last Synod of Bishops celebrated in October 2008 understandably gave much attention to this. Its Proposition 14 focuses particularly on the Word of God in the liturgical celebration.

The Eucharistic assembly is the people of God convoked by the Holy Spirit to listen to the Word of God proclaimed and to celebrate the memorial of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. The Mass is the most privileged place where the Word of God is proclaimed, explained, listened to and adopted as a guide to life.

It is therefore clear why the Synod gave clear directives and indications for action. There should be a place of honour reserved to the Bible in the church building. The Lectionary and especially the Gospel Book are to be of dignified size and shape. The latter is carried in solemn procession. Readers are to be well trained. The microphone and acoustics need attention. The homily is to be based principally on the Holy Scripture. Moments of silence for reflection and personal prayer are to follow the readings. Good translations of the Bible are to be promoted by the Bishops' Conference and the lectionary needs *recognitio* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

It is the tradition of the Church that during Mass the readings are taken only from Holy Scripture. Not even the writings of the Saints or Founders of Religious Orders are admitted. It is clear that the books of other religions are excluded, no matter how inspiring a particular text may be.

4. Eucharistic Celebration and Inculturation.

The Second Vatican Council calls for healthy inculturation also in matters liturgical. "Even in the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community. Rather she respects and fosters the spiritual adornments and gifts of the various races and peoples" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37).

Asian cultures have many values highlighted in our discussions in the past six days; such as a sense of the sacred and the transcendent, contemplation, mysticism, silence, a sense of living tradition and organic development and gestures and postures, which enhance celebration. The Colombo Liturgical Convention of September 2008 already mentioned gives importance to this question in paragraphs 1 to 6 of his final statement.

Liturgical inculturation is demanding. The Bishops' Conferences of the country in question has first to set up a multi-disciplinary study committee of theologians, liturgists, biblical scholars, musicians, ethnologists and experts in literature which ponders over a cultural question indicated by the bishops and eventually makes a recommendation to the Bishops' Conference. After adequate study of such a document, the Bishops see if they can gather at least two-thirds of their votes in favour. If the outcome is positive, then the Bishops bring the entire matter with their proposals to the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the

Sacraments. Only when this Congregation gives its *recognition*, may the cultural elements in question be introduced into sacred worship.

The major documents that give directives on how inculturation is to be made are *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37-40, the 1994 *Instruction: Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, and Chapter IX of the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*.

If these directives are followed, the local Church will be spared questionable or downright mistaken innovations and idiosyncracies of some enthusiastic cleric whose fertile imagination invents something on Saturday night and whose uninformed zeal forces this innovation on the innocent congregation on Sunday morning.

Dance in particular needs to be critically examined because most dances draw attention to the performers and offer enjoyment.

People come to Mass, not for recreation, but to adore God, to praise and thank him, to ask pardon for their sins, and to request other spiritual and temporal needs. The monasteries may be of help in how graceful body movements can become prayer. As the Colombo Statement quoted above remarks: "When pastoral zeal combines with cultural and religious sensitivity, new ground is broken. On the contrary, hasty and un-reflected changes weaken or damage this religious significance and life-transforming power of worship" (*Colombo Statement*, 6).

5. The Role of The Diocesan Bishops.

The Diocesan Bishop, says the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, is the "chief steward of the mysteries of God in the particular church entrusted to his care; he is the moderator, promoter and guardian of the whole of its liturgical life" (GIRM, 22; cf. also *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 41: *Redemptoris Sacramentum*, 19-25). The Colombo Liturgical Convention of September 2008 insists that local Ordinaries and National Conferences of Bishops should carefully ensure the proper observance of liturgical norms, and that Bishops are responsible for the liturgy celebrated in their dioceses, including those held in the houses of religious men and women, ashrams and religious movements (cf. *Colombo Statement*, 13).

To carry out this important and sacred ecclesial trust, Bishops will find help in Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, if the members of such commissions love the Church and are well informed on her liturgical books and norms. Since many liturgical abuses are based on ignorance rather than bad will (cf. *Redemptoris Sacramentum*, 7,9), it is clear that on-going courses on liturgical formation are important and helpful (cf. *Colombo Statement*, 13, 14, 15).

May God guide, bless and reward all FABC Bishops for their promotion of the Sacred Liturgy, especially Eucharistic celebration and veneration.

Venerable Brothers, as we conclude this IX Plenary Assembly of the FABC, we kneel in adoration, praise and supplication before our Eucharistic Jesus. May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, "woman of the Eucharist" (Eccl. De Euch.53) intercede for us, for all dioceses in Asia, and for the FABC, that we may all grow in the knowledge and the love of the ineffable mystery of the Holy Eucharist, live this mystery with increasing commitment each day, and share it with our brothers and sisters with faith undaunted and joy untarnished.

D. MESSAGE delivered by Archbishop Robert Sarah, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Dear Brothers in Christ:

1. Greetings

On behalf of His Eminence Ivan Cardinal Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and on my own behalf, I warmly greet you. Being here with you, Representatives of the FABC, what comes spontaneously to my mind are the beautiful words of the Psalmist: "*Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum*". How good and

delightful it is to live together in harmony as brothers! ... It is like the dew of Hermon, falling on the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord bestows his blessing, everlasting life" (Psalm 133, 1.3.).

In fraternal and ecclesial communion, I am privileged to be here with you to personally express my affection and appreciation, as well as to listen and share your concerns and your hopes, your pastoral choices and solicitude for the people of God entrusted to your pastoral care and missionary service.

The theme chosen for the IX Plenary Assembly of the FABC, "Living the Eucharist in Asia", opens our minds and hearts to the many dimensions of life and mission of the Church in Asia, and I wish to reflect upon some of them together with you.

2. In communion with the Universal Church

The theme chosen for this Assembly clearly reveals that your heart deeply lives a sense of ecclesial communion with the entire Church, sharing the same rhythm and walking at the same pace with her. Indeed from the beginning of the Millennium, the path of the Church has been profoundly marked by the Eucharist, Sacrament of God's love for humanity.

The Jubilee Year 2000 which began the Third Millennium was enriched by many celebrations, among which I would like to mention the International Eucharistic Congress that took place in Rome. In 2003 the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II published the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, followed by the apostolic letter *Mane nobiscum Domine* to mark the beginning of the Year of the Eucharist, celebrated by the whole Church from October 2004 to 2005, which ended with the Synod of Bishops, convoked by Pope Benedict XVI to reflect upon the theme "The Eucharist: source and summit of the life and mission of the Church". Based on the reflections of the Synod, our Holy Father then wrote to the whole Church his apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*. It is worth here mentioning also the two Eucharistic Congresses celebrated in 2004 at Guadalajara, Mexico, and in 2008 in Québec, Canada, without mentioning the numerous Eucharist Congresses and special days of the Eucharist celebrated in all the continents, at a national, diocesan and parish level.

By choosing the theme on the Eucharist, the plenary Assembly of the FABC makes its own the very choice of the whole Church, rendering it alive and incarnated in the Asian context. By living in ecclesial communion, the local Churches in Asia will be fortified and at the same time contribute to make the Universal Church grow in a spirit of communion, becoming the seed and the yeast of communion and unity for the whole world (cf. LG 1). And this is certainly a precious contribution, worthy of praise, at a time when our world is torn by discord, division, conflicts and wars.

3. The missionary call of the Church in Asia

Your presence here as qualified representatives of the local churches of the FABC in Asia opens our minds and hearts to the immensity, in terms of territory and population, where the Church is simply a little flock. In many countries Catholics do not even reach a percentage of 1%. This situation recalls the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10, 16)", and "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn, 12,32).

These words of Christ, when confronted with the reality of the church in Asia, must make the local Churches feel their missionary call in a very active and real way, as confirmed in the FABC documents. We can for instance recall the Declaration of the I Plenary Assembly, where we read: "Today the preaching of Jesus Christ and His Gospel to our people in Asia has become an urgent task, more necessary and greater than ever in the history of our faith in this part of the world ... We can say with joy the words of the Apostle: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the

Gospel”, because it is ‘Christ’s love which drives us’ to share with our people what is most precious in our hearts and in our lives: Jesus Christ and His Gospel”.’

This missionary consciousness was very alive in the Bishops’ interventions during the Synod of Bishops for Asia, which were taken up again by the Servant of God Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*: “As the Synod discussion of the complex realities of Asia unfolded, it became increasingly obvious to all that the Church’s unique contribution to the peoples of the continent is the proclamation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the one and only Saviour for all peoples (Propositio n.5). What distinguishes the Church from other religious communities is her faith in Jesus Christ, and she cannot keep this precious light of faith under a bushel (cf. *Mt* 5:15), for her mission is to share that light with everyone. ... Those who are incorporated in the Catholic Church ought to sense their privilege and for that very reason their greater obligation of “bearing witness to the faith and to the Christian life as a service to their brothers and sisters and as a fitting response to God’s (EiA 10).

4. Mission as an answer to the challenge of God

Many and complex are the situations that the Church in Asia is called to face at this time, they all appear to be grave and urgent, and each one of them requires total and immediate attention, tending to monopolize the Church’s commitment and to close the horizons of the minds and hearts of the evangelizers (*FABC, Evangelization of Asia today, I Plenary Assembly, Declaration, n.8*). In this perspective, a fundamental question could be asked regarding the mission of the Church in Asia: Where do we begin and how do we deal with these challenges, so that the presence and service of the Church may truly be an authentic mission, showing the face of a loving God who is revealed in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of humanity?

The answer to this fundamental question can be found, I believe, precisely in the theme of this Plenary Assembly that is by “*Living the Eucharist*”.

The challenges facing the Church in mission today are many but they could be re-grouped in a triple challenge or triple “dialogue” as they say in Asia: the challenge of the poor, the challenge of religions, and the challenge of cultures. (*2FC Evangelization of Asia today, I Plenary Assembly, Declaration, no.9, 13, 19.*) Without reducing the importance of these challenges, however, in the mission of the Church in Asia, I see above all the *challenge of God*.

Given that the Church in Asia is dealing with difficulties that seem insurmountable we can also witness, with great joy and hope, the unmistakable signs of God’s presence which saves and gives life, overcoming any kind of obstacle of any nature. Such signs are, for instance, the presence of many priests, religious men and women and lay people involved with zeal and generosity in God’s service, the courage, or better the joy and fidelity of many Christians to Christ and His Gospel, despite the seductions of the modern world, the dangers and the humiliation endured for the sake of the Gospel. Among the many witnesses, I would like to recall here the one given by a catechist from Asia: “We are helping our dioceses by bringing them religious books, means and objects necessary for the evangelization. Our work is very risky ... In one of my travels, I escaped from danger twice. God closed the eyes of the policemen so that they could not see the books. If they had discovered them, I surely would have a heavy penalty. In the same line we are glad to be able to do something for the Church ... Despite the many difficulties we had to face during these travels, we also experienced a little bit of the happiness experienced by the martyrs. What a joy to be received by the Lord in Heaven”. (*Jess S. Brefia, Lay Spirituality Today. Volunteer Lay Apostles Promotion and Training Center, Kuangchi Press, Taiwan, 1990, pp. 154-155*).

Another witness in the person of Mons. Joseph Nguyen CM Linh, more recently shared during the last Synod of Bishops on the Word of God is the following: “One thing must be cited so as to show that the Word of God continues to sustain the Catholic Church in Vietnam. I am referring to the mass conversion of thousands of peoples belonging to ethnic minorities,

shortly after the canonization of the 117 Vietnam Martyrs in 1988. What is interesting is that many admitted to have listened to the Protestant Radio in Manila, in the Philippines, but they converted to the Catholic Church in Vietnam. So the Protestant, sow and the Catholics reap. The Word of God, reaching them from afar, has become a source of hope for these scattered people in the mountains, lacking everything and without a future". (4S.E. Mons. Joseph Nguyen Cllinb, *Intervention in the Hall of the Synod, Bulletin of the Synod of Bishops, 14.10.2008*).

These facts clearly witness the presence of God. We can say that in Asia we can touch God with our hands and see Him with our eyes. God does not allow himself to be influenced by the situations, the socio-political systems or the barriers of borders, cultures and religions, God is present in the world to save it and give it His life. He can reach the heart of every person and draw them to Himself, or as the above text of St. John says: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn 12,32).

This does not mean, in any way, to ignore the various grave problems but rather one must go to the root of the mission, look at the situation from that perspective and act accordingly. As a matter of fact, the true and deepest reason for the Church's mission is not the problems of the world, but the heart of God searching for humanity with its problems, in order to save it and offer it his life, even if rejected by humanity. It was God who took the initiative to offer His salvation to us (cf. Gen. 3, 14-15). Therefore, the mission of the Church is above all an answer to God's desire, or in modern terms, an answer to the challenge of God's Love.

But what expression of love can be compared with that of the Eucharist? Every expression of love touches the heart of the one who is attentive and sensitive. The total love and radical gift of Christ in the Eucharist can break through the doors of a double locked heart and hence the Eucharist possesses a unique missionary strength. I would like to quote one more witness, from Ranchi in India: "The local Church in the tribal territory in India, which currently counts more than 2 million people, represents one of the most remarkable success stories in the mission of the Catholic Church. In just 130 years 12 dioceses were created from the Archdiocese of Ranchi, 23 Bishops were ordained, many priests and thousands of religious came from there. I believe this dynamic growth of the Church was due to our particular devotion to the Eucharist that constitutes our very 'identity'. Since the tribal people welcomed the Gospel, the 'real presence' of the risen Lord in the Eucharist made them free, offered them salvation and transformed them in a 'new creation' in Christ" ('S.E. Card. Telesphore Placidus Toppo, *Intervention in the Hall of the Synod, Bulletin of the Synod of Bishops, 04.10.2005*).

5. Beginning afresh from the Eucharist

The Eucharist is truly the centre and the source of the Church's life and mission. The Church's life should centre around the Mystery of the Eucharist both in the liturgical celebration and Eucharistic Adoration. During the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist in 2005, many Asian Bishops strongly proposed, at times insisting categorically to introduce perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in their dioceses and some of them stated that there where Eucharistic Adoration took place, greater reconciliation, peace and communion were experienced. This is possible because Jesus is present in the tabernacle as a *magnetic pole* "attracting an ever greater number of souls enamoured of him, ready to wait patiently to hear his voice and, as it were, to sense the beating of his heart" (*Mane nobiscum Domine*, ii. 18.).

In formulating the theme "Living the Eucharist in Asia", putting a clear emphasis on the verb "living", the Assembly should not only focus on theory, but should be able to lead the faithful to fall in love with Christ in the Eucharist, from whom one can draw strength and enthusiastic love for the world. In this way the Church in Asia will be able to overcome the modern world's temptation of excessive activism and emphasis on activity and techniques, and at the same time will be able to live and nurture its very culture. Asians usually look at religion with a very existential, practical and

experiential attitude. Before the Mystery, the Asian mentality tries not only to know and to comprehend the Mystery but mainly to stand in its presence, to experience the mystery and be communicative with the mystery.

When an Asian person listens to a message, he or she instinctively looks at the life of the messenger according to the same experiential mentality. Therefore, in order to accomplish her mission in Asia, the Church who adores the Eucharist must reflect in her life the very spirit of the Eucharist; not only some aspects of her life but her entire life must be imbued with the Eucharistic spirit. Sometimes it is said that Catholics in Asia are very much appreciated for their generous involvement in the fields of education, health care and charitable works, but they are not always considered as men and women of God. By being rooted in the Eucharist as the source of her life, the Church will make appear God's presence in her life, and moulded according to the spirit of the Eucharist, again the Church will be able to dedicate herself totally and make Jesus known through her so numerous services.

6. Conclusion

At the end of this brief reflection, my wish is that from the common reflection, fraternal meetings and time spent in Eucharistic Adoration or contemplation, this assembly will be set in a blaze and awakened to Eucharistic awe and firm faith like the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24, 30-35), in order to inflame the hearts of the faithful of the Church in Asia with the fire of love which comes from God, and the courage to break every barrier and share with everyone the joy of their meeting with the Lord: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life - for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us - what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete" (1Jn 1, 1-4).

E. FABC: FROM DAEJEON TO MANILA AND BEYOND: Report of the Secretary General to 9th FABC Plenary Assembly

- Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI, Archbishop of Cotabato

Introduction

This presentation attempts to provide a perspective from which to view our present 9th FABC Plenary Assembly in the context of the previous eight Plenary Assemblies.

I hope to do this in terms of a continuum of renewal that began at the 1st FABC Plenary Assembly in Taipei and is continuing today in the 9th Plenary Assembly here in Manila.

From that same continuum perspective, I shall present a summary of the activities of the FABC Offices since the 8th Plenary Assembly in Daejeon, Korea in 2004.

Finally I would like very briefly to suggest how Episcopal Conferences in Asia could move forward in the task of Church renewal.

A VISION OF A RENEWED CHURCH-IN-MISSION

Gathered in Taipei 35 years ago in 1974 at their First Plenary Assembly the Asian Bishops articulated what today remains as the overarching pastoral vision and direction of the Church in Asia.

It was a vision of renewed Church in a mission of integral evangelization. Its locus is the continent of Asia with a distinctive three-fold characteristic:

- Asia as a vast continent remarkably enriched with a brilliant mosaic of ancient cultures that had to a substantive extent determined their civilizations;
- Asia as the cradle of ancient religious and philosophical traditions of the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam);
- Asia as the continent of teeming millions living in massive poverty, where two thirds of the world's poor mightily struggle for life.

In this Asian context the Asian Bishops envisioned the mode of mission as dialogue, in fact, a three-fold dialogue: dialogue with the cultures of Asia, dialogue with the religions of Asia, dialogue with the peoples of Asia, particularly the poor. The mission of proclaiming Jesus, the Lord and unique Savior of all, is through a living and dynamic conversation and interaction with these three Asian realities.

The fundamental components of a renewed Church-in-mission that have emerged repeatedly in various FABC plenary assemblies, institutes and formation sessions could be integrated in the following vision:

The Church in Asia is in a renewed mission of telling in word and deed the story of our unique Savior, the Lord Jesus, to all Asians. As a community of faith led by the Spirit of Jesus, it is rooted firmly in the cultures of Asia and in dynamic dialogue with other religions. It is a Church-in-mission, a communion of communities and the humble herald and servant of the Gospel, accompanying the peoples of Asia towards full life in the Reign of God.

Such a vision of the Church-in-mission is translated into the primary pastoral focus of the FABC, so remarkably articulated by the Asian Bishops in 1974. In this age of materialist secularism and relativism many people are losing sight of the fundamental relationship between universal truths and their particular expressions or have somehow drifted away from communion and solidarity. It is well for us today to recall in full that magnificent 1974 vision of a local church:

To preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our people. The primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time of our history, is the building of a truly local Church

For the local church is the realization and the enfleshment of the Body of Christ in a given people, a given place and time.

It is not a community in isolation from other communities of the Church one and catholic. Rather it seeks communion with all of them. With them it professes one faith, shares the one Spirit and the one sacramental life. In a special way it rejoices in its communion and filial oneness with the See of Peter, which presides over the universal Church in love.

The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions – in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meaning and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs and its artistry. – Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For

so did God's Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin) so that He might make it truly His own, and redeem it in His paschal mystery (First FABC Plenary Assembly, Final Statement, 1974, nos. 9-12).

How many of us Asian Bishops have taken our inspiration for Church renewal from this grand vision of Local Church! We have reflected deeply on its fundamental components: incarnation, triple dialogue, communion, transformation. We have discovered their challenges and implications. How formidable they are!

The building of a local church is truly an enormous and daunting task of renewal, a thoroughgoing renewal that encompasses the renewal of mission, of faith and prayer life, of community, clergy, laity and religious, of church structures and ministries, of leadership styles, etc.

Renewal in Asia has been guided, I believe, by the following key principles: co-responsibility, participation, committed engagement in mission with its constitutive dimension of social transformation, contextualization, authenticity and credibility.

Again and again these key principles are cited in FABC assemblies, Bishops' Institutes, programs and plans. Again and again they are identified by scholars who have written doctoral dissertations on various pastoral themes developed by FABC through the years.

In the light of the above vision and key guiding principles, the 7th FABC Plenary Assembly in Samphan, Thailand nine years ago (2000) identified the movements of renewal that the Church in Asia is still undergoing, namely:

1. A movement towards a Church of the Poor and a Church of the Young;
2. A movement toward a "truly local Church;"
3. A movement toward deep interiority;
4. A movement toward an authentic community of faith, a communion of communities of authentic participation and co-responsibility;
5. A movement toward active integral evangelization and a new sense of mission.
6. A movement toward "empowerment" of the laity in the mission of the Church, requiring a spirituality of discipleship;
7. A movement toward active involvement in generating and serving life in the light of death-dealing forces in Asia;
8. A movement toward the triple dialogue - with other faiths, with the poor and with cultures.

It is within the framework of a movement toward a renewed Church-in-mission or toward the building of the Local Church, that I propose a perspective of considering the meaning of the Plenary Assemblies in Daejeon and Manila.

Daejeon described a movement of forming the family as the focal point of evangelization toward a culture of integral life in Asia.

Our Manila Plenary Assembly would present, I believe, a movement towards rooting Christian life in Asia firmly and dynamically in the Word of God and in the Bread of Life, the Eucharist.

Renewal is a continuum of movements that might have different beginnings but has no end. Church renewal is today and always. There are periods of dormancy and periods of awakening, periods of decline as well as periods of intense sustained renewal. Church renewal is a process of continuous beginnings, moving two steps forward, one step backward, three steps forward and one step backward. There are also long periods of staying in comfort zones, not wanting to risk going forward into the uncertainties of transformation.

Would this be the experience of Local Churches in Asia? I believe so.

Thus we need to see the Daejeon Assembly and our own Manila assembly in the next few days within that continuum of renewal.

The questions may be: where can a Bishop locate his local church in that continuum of renewal? How can the FABC Offices be of assistance to the episcopal conferences in their striving to towards a renewed Church-in-mission? Or from another angle, how have the FABC Offices contributed to towards a renewed Church-in-mission since the Daejeon Assembly in 2004?

To respond to this last question that I would like to provide a summary report of the activities of the FABC Offices, the details of which will be presented by the Offices during this Assembly.

THE FABC OFFICES SINCE DAEJEON CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS A RENEWED CHURCH-IN-MISSION

In the movements of Church renewal in Asia, several principles are fundamental: the FABC vision of a renewed church-in-mission, requiring the primary pastoral focus of building the Local Church-in-mission; the renewal of clergy, religious and laity in view of that vision and task; and the principles of communion, co-responsibility and participation.

In the light of these elements of Church renewal and of the general mandate of the FABC to assist the Episcopal conferences, the FABC Offices have organized and conducted assemblies, institutes, meetings, conferences, and symposia.

■ Renewed Mission in Asia

With the active collaboration of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Thailand, the FABC Office of Evangelization organized and conducted the First Asian Mission Congress in Chiang Mai, Thailand, October 18-22, 2006. [In fact the Office of Evangelization had already organized two Asia-wide assemblies on the mission of evangelization: (1) The Congress on Evangelization in Manila on November 16-20, 1992, inspired by Pope John Paul's encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio*; (2) The Symposium on "Evangelization in the Light of *Ecclesia in Asia*." held in Pattaya, Thailand, Sept. 3-7, 2002].

More than 1000 delegates from all the Episcopal conferences and from most of the associate members of the FABC, including observers, participated in the Mission Congress in Chiang Mai.

The theme was "Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia." It was inspired and guided by John Paul II's post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*. It developed what the Pope had written in EA:

- that "dialogue is a characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia" (EA 32);
- that proclamation must be "joyful, patient, and progressive" (EA 2) that could finally lead to the full explicit proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ;
- that proclamation in Asia has to use "evocative pedagogy" (EA 20), like that of the Sacred Scriptures, through concrete images and stories of Jesus, taking seriously the concrete life-situation and cultures of Asian peoples;
- that in many places in Asia, "the silent witness" of authentic Christian life "remains the only way of proclaiming God's Kingdom" (EA 23).

In this light the Mission Congress dealt with telling the story of Jesus through personal experiences and testimonies in various religious and cultural contexts, thus recalling the triple dialogue of the 1st FABC Plenary Assembly in Taipei - inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and "integral liberation." It dealt with special emphasis on "journeying" with the youth of Asia towards authentic discipleship and "entrusting" them with "active participation" in a Church-in-mission. Finally the Congress emphasized the necessity of evangelizing the tools of social communications and harnessing their immense potential for mission.

This presentation of the 2006 Mission Congress is in fact a summary of the concrete work that has been done by the FABC Offices since Daejeon, Korea to address the vision of FABC and its pastoral focus in the light of the multi-religious and multi-cultural context of Asia.

■ **Theology at the Service of the Church in Asia**

The work of FABC is basically pastoral. It is the task of the Office of Theological Concerns to deepen theological reflection on issues faced by pastoral work. Thus, following the suggestion of many Bishops at Daejeon in 2004, the Office of Theological Concerns held a Bishops' Institute for Theological Animation (BITA III) on the issue of inter-faith marriages in Hong Kong from May 8 – 12, 2006. 24 Bishops participated in this theological-pastoral reflection. Some of the papers presented at BITA III were published as FABC Paper, no. 118. The topic was further deepened by OTC in its second paper "A Few Theological and Pastoral Perspectives of Inter-Faith Marriages (FABC Paper, no. 127).

In addition, OTC also produced a reflection paper (FABC Paper, no. 120) on "Respect for Life in the Context of Asia" to deepen our understanding of the Daejeon Final Document on the "Family towards a Culture of Integral Life." The striving for integral life is especially impacted by our own understanding of Christ in the context of Asian realities. Thus, in 2005 the OTC published the papers that had been presented at the OTC Theological Colloquium a year before on "The Asian Faces of Christ." It also issued a reflection paper on "Religious Freedom in the Context of Asia" (FABC Paper, no. 112)

But it is not only the Office of Theological Concerns that does theological-pastoral reflection on the issues that confront the mission of integral evangelization, the vision of Church in Asia, and the primary pastoral focus of building the Local Church. When the other Offices organize their own Bishops' Institutes, symposia, and assemblies, competent resource persons help the Bishops through reflection papers on the issues.

■ **Faith Formation and Education in an Asian Context**

The mission of the Church in Asia and formation for mission are the concerns of the Office of Evangelization and the Office of Education and Faith Formation (earlier called the Office of Education and School Chaplaincy). Since the Daejeon Assembly, the Office of Education and Faith Formation has taken the values of Asians as its fundamental theme. This theme on values is based on the 8th Plenary Assembly's vision of the Family in Asia whose values are under siege by the values of an emerging secular, materialist, consumerist and relativistic culture.

The Office has also dealt with dialogue on moral and religious formation in Education, instilling gospel values through family catechesis to meet the challenges of inter-religious marriages, single parenting, migrant workers, etc. as well as through dialogue-encounter with various religions.

■ **Renewal of the Clergy and Religious Towards a Renewed Local Church**

The vision of a renewed Church-in-mission ("a new way of being Church") and the pastoral focus of building the Local Church evidently require the renewal of Clergy and Religious. Therefore, the FABC Office of Clergy and Office of Consecrated Life have the task of assisting Clergy and Religious in their renewal towards a new way of being Church.

In its series of seminars for Bishops and for Priests the Office of Clergy provided reflection papers on: Asian Challenges to the Human Formation of Priests, the Identity and Vision of the Priest in the Asian Context, Bishops' Role in Caring for Priests, Asian Families and Vocations to the Priestly and Religious Life, Priestly Spirituality. These reflections have been published as FABC Papers.

In turn the Office for Consecrated Life in its first seminar in July 19 – 23, 2005 explored the Role of Religious in the Building Up of the Local Church.

102 Bishops, Women and Men Religious, and Lay people from 20 Asian countries participated in this important seminar which took up the “primary focus” of the mission of evangelization – the building up of a truly local church.”

■ **Renewal of the Laity towards Participation**

The FABC Office of Laity and Family (earlier called the Office of Laity) targets the formation and renewal of the laity towards participation in the mission of the Church. Directly addressing the Daejeon theme, the Office organized a Bishops’ Institute for the Lay Apostolate (BILA) on “Avenues and Approaches to Respond to the Challenges in Pastoral Care of Families in the 21st Century.” Thirteen Asian countries participated in the Institute.

The AsIPA desk (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) of the Office concentrates on the building of Basic Ecclesial Communities (or Small Christian Communities). AsIPA is a significant pastoral approach towards building the Local Church as a Church of Communion. The AsIPA desk focuses on the Family as the nuclear cell of BECs or SCCs. The Daejeon Plenary Assembly had considered the Family as the “focal point of evangelization.” As well as publishing training modules for community building, the desk continues to organize training sessions in collaboration with Episcopal conferences to train community facilitators and leaders. These efforts towards a “new way of being Church” have already attracted some members of the Church in Germany, bishops, religious and lay people into personally observing SCCs in Korea and adapting the AsIPA method in a highly secularized context.

The Women’s Desk in turn assists in the empowerment of Asian women in responding to challenges facing the Family, the Church and society. For this purpose it has organized seminars for women, particularly one on the discipleship of women in the Asian context. Especially notable was a very helpful dialogue in 2008 between bishops and women theologians.

Finally the Youth desk continues its work of helping the youth programs of Episcopal conferences and other youth groups in forming Asian youth leaders and ministers. The purpose is to help them gain the confidence and skill to become active evangelizers and community builders. The 4th Asian Youth Day in Hong Kong in 2006 was especially significant. The theme, “Youth, the Hope of Asian Families,” connected the Daejeon theme to the role of Youth. Young people from at least 18 Asian Episcopal conferences with their bishop-representatives, including observers from 4 European countries and two African countries, participated in this great gathering of Asian youth.

■ **The Task of Integral Liberation in Asia**

The Office of Human Development is the oldest Office of the FABC, even predating the official establishment of the Federation. It has also been most active in organizing seminars to enable Bishops to know and respond to the pastoral challenges in the Church’s dialogue with the poor towards integral liberation. Poverty, justice and development are the main issues that the Office deals with. Such challenges are reflected upon in the light of the Social Doctrine of the Church. In its work the Office of Human Development collaborates with other religious groups, with civil society and various non-government organizations and most especially with the Justice and Peace Commissions and/or Caritas organizations of Asian Episcopal conferences.

Thus, together with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand, the Office presented the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church to 157 Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Clergy, Religious and Laity in 2007. In the past five years the Office has also focused on the plight of Asian migrant workers, one of the major pastoral priorities that had been identified by at least two FABC Plenary Assemblies.

■ **The Task of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

Finally the FABC through its Office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs reaches out to brothers and sisters of other faiths and religions in the mode of dialogue. It has dealt with

formation towards inter-religious dialogue. For this reason, the Office conducted for its staff an orientation seminar on inter-religious dialogue in 2008.

In 2005 in Pattaya, Thailand the Office organized an important consultation with Episcopal commissions in the FABC that deal with ecumenical and inter-religious affairs. The topic of the consultation was on relations with those Churches and ecclesial communities that have not taken part in the ecumenical movement, particularly Evangelicals and Pentecostal Christian communities.

The Office continues to collaborate with the Christian Conference of Asia and has expanded its collaboration with the holding of a Conference of Theological Students, already thrice held in 2000, 2005, and 2007 exploring such themes as contextualized theological method, feminist theologies, and Islam.

With the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, the FABC-OEIA participated in a Colloquium in 2006 together with Bishops mostly from East and Southeast Asia. It identified different priorities such as formation for ecumenism, common witness, and common prayer in order to promote better relations.

Finally it collaborated with the CCA in 6th Congress of Asian Theologians last February, 2009 in Iloilo, Philippines/ The Congress saw the need for mission in Asia in humble solidarity with the poor and the oppressed and many other deprived groups.

Finally we have to take note that to many assemblies and consultations organized by the other Offices observers and resource persons from other faiths and religions are invited in order to present their own reflections.

■ **Social Communication at the Service of the Church and of FABC**

The power of social communication to influence cultures and foster a new culture has been frequently seen from its negative side – that today the tools of social communication are eroding the treasured values of Asians and introducing into Asia a culture of materialist secularism, of hedonism, and relativism.

The work of the FABC Office of Social Communication has looked at the positive side – at the vast potential of social communications for the mission of evangelization.

We take for example the work of Radio Veritas Asia. Many Bishops do not know that the FABC and its member Episcopal conferences are also responsible for Radio Veritas and that it is our task to help support it.

When asked, what is Radio Veritas Asia really doing? The simple answer is: "Immense!" It broadcasts religious programs and news to the remotest corners of Asia in their own language, especially where the Good News is especially needed.

In addition, the Office of Social Communications has conducted Asian Bishops' meetings on "Asian Spirituality for Communications" (Hua Hin, Thailand, 2005) and on "Managing Communications for Bishops' Conferences" (Taytay, Rizal, Philippines, 2006). It organized a Round Table discussion seminar on "Social Communication in Religious Traditions of Asia" (Bangkok, 2005). It also devoted its Bishops' Institute for Social Communication (BISCOM) in 2004 to the theme of "Inter-Religious Dialogue as Communication."

Thus the Office continues to develop the various concerns of the FABC vision of a renewed Church-in-mission in terms of social communication, significantly contributing depth to these concerns while trying to place the tools of social communication at the service of the Church.

■ **The FABC Offices Preparing for the Manila Assembly**

While the Central Committee of the FABC chose the theme of the present Plenary Assembly, the FABC Offices spent considerable time together to work out the fundamental sub-themes of "Living the Eucharist in Asia." They gave suggestions to the drafting group, the

Office of Theological Concerns, on what should be considered and treated in the working document for the Plenary Assembly.

Last year, the Youth Desk of the Office of Laity and Family drew up and administered a Youth survey on the Eucharist in order to help the catechetical ministry of Episcopal conferences in the faith formation of the youth. At the same time, the Office of Education and Faith Formation did a consultation on the "Eucharist and Education in Asia." Finally, the Office of Social Communication organized a meeting of Bishops on the "Eucharist and Communication."

The general shape of this Plenary Assembly and its daily activities are due to the work of the FABC Offices. In our Plenary Assembly the Executive Secretaries will be at the service of the Bishops to serve as facilitators and reporters of the various workshops.

BEYOND DAEJEON AND MANILA - SOME SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A RENEWED CHURCH-IN-MISSION

In the light of what I have so far presented, I hope that the following have become quite clearer: the vision of a renewed Church in Asia; the primary pastoral focus of building the Local Church; the dimensions of a continuum of renewal from the 1st FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974 to the present 9th Plenary Assembly; and the role of the FABC Offices in assisting Episcopal conferences.

Looking beyond Daejeon and Manila, may I respectfully present to our Episcopal conferences and associate members the following fundamental suggestions on Church renewal:

1. Use the FABC vision of a renewed Church-in-mission and its primary pastoral focus of building the Local Church as an inspiration and guide for renewal.
2. Begin with the profound renewal of clergy and religious as servant leaders and authentic prophetic witnesses. They are the main collaborators of Bishops and, given the cultural context of Asia, no significant renewal of the Church can take place without their leadership and witnessing.
3. The renewal of the laity and their formation to communion and participation has to take place in tandem with the renewal of clergy and religious. Only with a committed and participatory laity can church renewal be enduring and lasting;
4. The new way of being Church in Asia is best expressed at the grassroots level through the building of Basic Ecclesial Communities or Small Christian Communities. They are to be built as believing and praying communities of the Lord. Centered on the Word and Bread of Life they are committed to dialogue with cultures, religious traditions and with the poor.
5. In all the above we have to be aware of the possible assistance of the Episcopal Conferences. Today you might have become better aware of the assistance that the FABC Offices can offer through their Bishops' Institutes, consultation and training sessions, formation modules and publications.

CONCLUSION:

The continuum of renewal enables a local church to begin anew when renewal has become moribund, to retrace its steps when a foundation block of renewal has been weakened or has become dormant, or to move forward in the process of renewal as inspired and led by the Spirit of God.

To live the Eucharist as our present Assembly enjoins is a peak moment in the continuum of renewal for the Church in Asia. It is a moment that we all strive to reach and, when reached, it is a moment to be perseveringly sustained. Sustaining that graced moment towards a renewed Church-in-mission can only be realized through the grace that comes from the Eucharistic Lord.

Renewing and sustaining the Local Church for mission -- that is our dream and our prayer.

F. CITATION GIVEN TO FR. CATALINO G. ARÉVALO, SJ - "FABC'S PREMIER THEOLOGIAN"

"Without a vision, the people perish." This brief quote from the Book of Proverbs (29:18) enables us to understand the pivotal role that the person we are honoring today has played in the assembly of the local churches of Asia. Father Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J. has served the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) since its beginnings in 1970. In November of that year, when Pope Paul VI visited Manila and gathered together 180 Asian bishops, Father Arévalo already served as peritus (resource person) for this first-ever Asian Bishops' Meeting. From this organizational gathering, the FABC would soon emerge — with a wide vision of service for all God's peoples of Asia.

In 1974, at the First FABC Plenary Assembly in Taipei, Taiwan, Father Arévalo was the principal writing consultant for the first statement of the Federation, entitled *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*. This visionary document has served the local churches in Asia so well; it remains the single most influential articulation of the "vision and mission" of Asia's churches in the post-Vatican II era. The depth of theological, pastoral, and missionary insight of this programmatic document has enabled Asia's missionary local churches to understand and implement a vision of integral evangelization through dialogue. It has facilitated the reception of the Second Vatican Council in the Asian continent. Indeed, today FABC can properly be called "Asia's Continuing Vatican II."

In fidelity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and in communion and filial oneness with the See of Peter, the FABC has pioneered a "new way of being church" in Asia. As expressed in FABC I, "To preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples. The primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local church" (9). "The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions [of Asia]" (12). The validity of this "triple dialogue" vision, enunciated in 1974, has been repeatedly reaffirmed at subsequent FABC Plenary Assemblies as well as in the pastoral praxis of Christian communities across Asia.

As an integral part of his service as theological advisor for the FABC bishops (1970-1995), Father Arévalo was named in 1985 the first convener and founding member of the Asian Bishops' Theological Advisory Commission (TAC). In 1986 the FABC:TAC met in Hong Kong to begin treating the subjects of the local church in Asia and interreligious dialogue. Participating in the conference were theologians of the different member countries of the FABC who had been appointed by their respective bishops' conferences.

Renamed the FABC Office of Theological Concerns in 1997, the basic aims of this FABC office are the following: (1) to foster Asian theological reflection on issues which are of special interest for the Asian Churches; (2) to be of assistance to the FABC in conceptualizing and making policies for missionary and pastoral action; and, (3) to bring relevant contemporary theological thinking into dialogue with "Asian" theological reflection emerging from within the FABC countries and then to mediate the results to the wider Church.

Father Arévalo shepherded the TAC for a decade. During this period several insightful and in-depth studies were produced: *Theses on Interreligious Dialogue* (1987), *Theses on the Local Church* (1990), and *Asian Theological Perspectives on Church and Politics* (1992). In 1994 the FABC sponsored the first FABC International Theological Colloquium with the theme: *Being Church in Asia: Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life*. These profound studies had as their central focus the development of an "ecclesiology of the Asian churches." Along with

the plethora of FABC theological reflection, these materials are a privileged locus where the voice and experience of the local churches of Asia are heard.

The committed involvement of “Father Revs” (as he is known by his many students and friends) spans a wide spectrum of activity. He was the first and for many years the only Asian to serve on the Pontifical International Theological Commission. Through appointments by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, he served on that commission for twelve years. He was executive coordinator and program director for two major theological conferences held in Manila, the International Congress on Mission (1979) and the International Conference on the Alliance of Two Hearts (1987).

In 1997 His Eminence, Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, Archbishop of Manila, conferred upon him the award *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* and identified him as “the Dean of All Filipino Theologians and the Godfather of hundreds of priests.” When he received the degree of Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa, from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1998, Father Arévalo was identified as “Father of Asian Theology,” owing to his more than 9,000 pages of theological writing “with an Asian emphasis.” Speaking of his own prodigious theological output, Father Arévalo simply says: “All this writing has been done, I trust, in the service of the Church. My Jesuit vocation places my life completely at the service of the Church: her people, her communities, her leadership, her works.”

Father Arévalo has always remained involved in pastoral ministry in a variety of apostolates. Former Philippine President Corazon Aquino has revealed that he has been her family’s spiritual confidant since the assassination of her husband Ninoy Aquino in 1983. She related that during that time she prayed at a church in Boston for a Filipino priest with whom she could talk. The following day, she said, Father Arévalo was at her doorstep. When Corazon “Tita Cory” Aquino was finally laid to rest on August 5, 2009, Father Arévalo preached her funeral homily — fulfilling her and her family’s personal request.

Thus, with sincere appreciation, the IX FABC Plenary Assembly is pleased to recognize the invaluable and visionary contributions that Father Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J. has made both to the Filipino nation and, through the FABC, to all the peoples of Asia. In profound gratitude and prayer, we lift you, your loved ones, your intentions, your life and priestly ministry to the Father of Mercies. Father Arévalo, to you we extend our sincere, heartfelt thank you. Maraming, maraming salamats! Together we pray: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*. Forever I will sing the mercies of the Lord. Amen.

** On August 16, 2009 during the closing ceremonies of the IX FABC Plenary Assembly, Father Catalino Arévalo was recognized for the outstanding contribution he rendered to the FABC; this citation was read by Father James Kroeger and a plaque of appreciation was presented by Archbishop Orlando Quevedo OMI, Archbishop of Cotabato and FABC Secretary General, to thank Father Arévalo for his many years of generous service.*

G. A TRIBUTE TO FR. EDWARD F. MALONE, M.M.: “BUILDING THE ASIAN CHURCH” – Fr. James Kroeger, M.M.

“An FABC Servant”— these were the simple yet accurate and appropriate words used to describe Father Edward F. Malone, M.M. when he retired after more than three decades of missionary service in Asia. Father Malone had been an integral part of the growth of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) from its early years. Assigned to Hong Kong in 1971 (after nearly twenty years of education-formation ministry in the United States), Malone began work with the FABC in January 1972.

This enthusiastic missionary did “the needful” as South Asians are fond of saying, to nurture and develop the FABC in the position that was eventually defined as “assistant secretary

general.” In the nascent phase of the FABC, this meant that Malone was “the work-horse, planner, fund-raiser, coordinator, publisher, jack-of-all-trades.” Malone employed his considerable skills as theologian, pastoral planner, and visionary to promote a vibrant sense of fraternity among the Asian bishops and their local Churches. He worked hard, but made it appear easy—loving dedication generated great energy and enthusiasm.

Over three decades as the nine distinct FABC offices were created, Father Malone was present and offered his judicial advice. He was the only person to have attended all eight FABC plenary assemblies (1974-2004). In 1976 he conceived and began publishing the *FABC Papers* which have now reached Number 120; if one counted all the sub-papers, the total would be 185 substantial booklets, exploring a variety of issues relevant to the Church in Asia and her mission of evangelization. Over a decade ago, Malone initiated the much-lauded Pastoral Management Training Workshops for bishops throughout Asia.

The Asian participation in the various international synods held in Rome was facilitated by Malone, who operated out of the Philippine Embassy to the Holy See located near Saint Peter’s Basilica. Malone himself was a delegate to the 1998 “Asian Synod” where he spoke on the missionary task and potential of the Asian local Churches; he urged the establishment of a missionary society in each Asian Church (see *Ecclesia in Asia* 44d). On September 30, 2000 during the Philippine National Mission Congress, Father Malone was honored by the University of San Carlos in Cebu City with a doctorate degree *honoris causa*; specifically the award was given “for his unique contribution to the FABC and the Church’s mission of evangelization in Asia.”

This “FABC Servant” was always a congenial and welcoming host at the FABC gatherings; he had a great ability to make everyone feel at home. He loved a good laugh and cajoled bishops (as well as theologians, religious, and lay faithful) into dedicating themselves to the task at hand. This gift promoted a great sense of fraternity, especially among the bishops—all to the benefit of the FABC and the Asian Churches. Malone also reached out to bishops from outside Asia and invited them to attend FABC Plenary Assemblies. This initiative encouraged the FABC to realize its pivotal role in Asia and to spread its insightful vision of Church to a wider audience.

To bring the diverse local Churches of Asia into a pan-Asian federation that would serve the needs of all was no easy task. It meant taking a vision for “a new way of being Church” in Asia and conceiving concrete means to implement it. Today, nearly four decades later, the vision has become reality. Currently, the FABC, a transnational episcopal structure, brings together bishops’ conferences from twenty-eight Asian countries; the FABC grew out of the historic gathering of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops with Pope Paul VI during his 1970 visit to the Philippines.

In addition, aside from a modest central structure, there are nine FABC offices, which carry out many concrete initiatives and projects. The offices, purposely scattered among various Asian nations, are focused on evangelization, social communication, laity, human development, education and student chaplaincy, ecumenical and interreligious affairs, theological concerns, clergy, and consecrated life.

The FABC has been the most influential body in the Asian Church since the Second Vatican Council. It has strengthened the bonds of communication among the bishops and local Churches in the region and has contributed to the development of a shared vision of the Church and her evangelizing mission in Asia. Collaborating closely with Church personnel all across Asia, Malone was a key player in this Spirit-led development. One can validly assert that the FABC today is truly “Asia’s Continuing Vatican II.”

Father Malone, a New Yorker who was born in 1925 and ordained in 1952, now lives at the Maryknoll medical-retirement residence in New York. Though diminished by age and illness, he daily spends hours in prayer at the Eucharist and in saying his breviary.

Characteristically, he loves visitors and always welcomes them warmly; everyone gets a handshake and the characteristic “Malone smile”— one of his trademarks that endeared him to so many Asians.

During the 2004 VIII FABC Plenary Assembly in Korea, after Father Malone had taken sick and returned to Hong Kong, the participants compiled a “Hearts for Father Malone” booklet which contained scores of messages hand-written by cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and laity. This effervescent outpouring of appreciation confirmed the unique awareness of many Asian Church leaders that “FABC” and “Ed Malone” were almost synonymous in many respects.

Archbishop Paul Grawng of Mandalay, Myanmar noted that Father Malone “loved the Church in Asia and brought up the FABC with loving care.” Auxiliary Bishop John Tong of Hong Kong wrote that Father Malone is “a man who truly loves the Church. He dedicated all his time and energy working for the Church he loves, and we truly treasure his friendship.” Ursuline Sister Mary Walter Santer wrote from Thailand saying that Father Malone has a “deep love for the Church, especially the Church in Asia. He used all his wonderful talents in serving Christ and His Church selflessly all his life. The FABC might not be what it is today had it not been for him.”

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