

**CHALLENGES TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1980s:  
RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH IN ASIA**  
The Sixth Bishops' Institute For Social Action

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**I. FOREWORD**

by Bishop Bunluen Mansap

We present here the results of BISA VI, the latest in the Bishops' Institute for Social Action series that has long been the premier program of our Office.

BISA VI took place a year after the evaluation of the previous BISAs was finished by the Asian Social Institute in 1981. Before proceeding with BISA VI, it may be useful here to see what were the evaluation results of the first five BISAs and to understand the context of BISA VI.

The Asian Social Institute sent a questionnaire to each of the 109 bishops who attended one or other of the first five BISAs. Of this number 80 were Asians and 29 were from the West and the Pacific Islands. The questionnaire tried to determine, to put it simply, if the bishops' thinking on social problems had changed in any way since 1970 (the start of the FABC foundation process), and if the types of social action programs in their dioceses had also changed.

On the subject of changes in the bishops' thinking on social matters, the evaluation concluded: "There have been big shifts of social thinking

which has taken into consideration a growing understanding of Asian realities. While there has been a wide array of influences on this development, it is encouraging to note that the BISAs, with their emphasis on a people-oriented perspective, have been one of the most effective contributory factors." In general we can say the bishops are more aware of the prevalence and structural nature of injustice.

A similar change was not noted in the type of social action program undertaken in the bishops' dioceses. According to the evaluation report:

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, one of the objectives of the BISAs was to redirect the structure of social action endeavors, that is, more emphasis on making people aware of the root causes of poverty, and on organizing them in their struggle for justice. The data at hand, however, do not warrant the conclusion that a significant change in emphasis has taken place. The bishops started a wide array of new projects of the welfare, developmental and conscientization type, with slightly more stress on educational and rehabilitation projects.

In general, the bishops did not seem to give special emphasis to programs of conscientization and people's organization that are especially fit to combat injustice.

The report offers some possible interpretations of this apparent gap between thought and action:

It may be that some of the bishops did not consider their conscientization and organization endeavors in the diocese as distinct projects, and thus did not report them as such. This contention finds some support in the earlier parts of this report, where the bishops report a definite shift in their social action thrust. What may be happening therefore is that conscientization is made an integral part of the social projects of whatever nature.

It is also possible that the bishops are convinced of the new thrust but that prevailing conditions in the country or diocese are such that convictions can only slowly be converted in action programs.

A third straightforward interpretation is that the bishops have not been convinced that a one-sided emphasis on conscientization and organization is the right approach. The reactions of some of the bishops who expressed apprehension of too much political involvement seem to point in this direction.

Finally, it is possible that all three interpretations are valid; each of them applying to a different group of bishops.

Before moving on, may I note that the 80 Asian bishops who attended BISAs I-V represent about 25% of the total number of Asian bishops. It is no small accomplishment of FABC that it has helped ("helped" is the key word) change the thinking of 25% of the bishops of the continent.

Based on these general findings of the evaluation, it was decided months before BISA VI to make it a very practical institute. Intellectually, we felt, the bishops know what the problems are today; their difficulties lie in knowing how to initiate the proper social action. We thought first of presenting case studies of successful social action dioceses, but these were not available, nor could they be prepared in time. We then thought to make the inputs of the resource persons very pragmatic and practical, but at the last moment the key resource person for this could not attend. We didn't worry about this, knowing God has his own pace and methodology for leading his bishops.

So BISA VI will seem, as you read the materials within, much like the other BISAs. Still, I think you will find it does cover new ground, for example, the talk of Cardinal Stephen Kim of Seoul with its reflections on a bishop's personal commitment to the poor.

We offer you these results of BISA VI with our deepest gratitude for all your help and assistance over the years.

BISA VI was the last task of Fr. Bonnie Mendes, our former executive secretary, before he returned to Pakistan. I think it only fair to single him out therefore for special thanks. I also thank everyone in all the countries, especially our hosts in Sri Lanka, South Korea and the Philippines, who made BISA VI a success.

## II. INSTITUTE WORKING PAPER

(This paper was given to all participants and observers before BISA VI to acquaint them with the background of the meeting.)

The Church, conscious of human aspirations towards dignity and well-being, pained by the unjust inequalities which still exist and often become more acute between nations and within nations, while respecting the competence of States, must offer her assistance for promoting "a fair humanism." Taking her place in the vanguard

of social action, she must bend all her efforts to support, encourage and push forward initiatives working for the full promotion of man. Since she is the witness of human conscience and of divine love for men, she must take up the defense of the poor and the weak against every form of social justice (Pope Paul VI, Manila, 1970).

This paper will give some background needed for understanding the theme of BISA VI and the methodology that will be followed.

#### **A. The Theme: The Challenge to Human Development in the 1980s: Response of the Church in Asia.**

The theme presupposes the insights the Asian Church has had during the 1970s into the components of the theme, namely, "human development," "challenges to human development," and "response of the Church." BISA VI builds upon these insights and it may be useful to recall them here. We do not mention here papal and other documents directed to the whole world.

*Challenges to human development!* From 1970 onward the Asian Church has seen as challenges or obstacles to human development the following: poverty, inequality between individuals and nations, injustice, oppressive structures, and atheistic communism and imperialism in their national and international dimension. (All mentioned at the Manila Meeting, 1970.) At its 1974 Taiwan meeting FABC more explicitly talked of unjust or oppressive structures. "For most of Asia is made up of multitudes of the poor. Poor, not in human values, qualities, nor in human potential. But poor, in that they are deprived of access to material goods and resources which they need to create a truly human life for themselves. Deprived, because they live under oppression, that is, under social, economic and political structures which have injustice built into them."

In 1978, at Calcutta, FABC listed as problems or obstacles to human development secularism, narrow materialism, consumerism and loss of the sense of God. BISA IV (1978) attempted the most coherent examination of the problems facing human development:

We bishops and our experts came to see the causes of this distressing situation. Because of colonialism and feudalism and the introduction of Western classical capitalism, the traditional economic texture of Asian society with its inbuilt balances has been disrupted. Often the economies of these are not geared primarily to

satisfying the requirements of the nation — but rather to responding to external markets, and, within the nation, not to the basic needs of people — food, housing, education, jobs — but to the demands of a consumer society.

The principal beneficiaries of this system are the foreign markets and investors and the local elites. The victim are the poor, who are the majority of the people. Since the poor will not suffer this situation voluntarily, they must be coerced: hence the authoritarian regimes, control of mass media, denial of basic rights and of free speech, intolerance of free people's organizations and participation. Concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few ensures that all the society's institutions will be biased against the poor, for example, education, housing, health care, jobs and law. Wittingly or unwittingly, the Church has been party to this arrangement (FABC Papers No. 24, p. 11, 4 and 5).

**BISA V again summarized the obstacles to development:**

The ever-widening gap between rich and poor; the great distance in some countries between people and government; the impact of non-democratic and martial law governments; the far-reaching presence of communism; the plight of refugees; the failure to meet the ecumenical and interreligious demands relating to human development; the lack of consensus in the Church as to decisions for action; the explosive situation of a youthful population becoming aware of a most uncertain future — these are some of the many enormous problems that posed a challenge to us (FABC Papers No. 24, p. 21).

### **Responses of the Church**

Since 1970 the Asian Church has committed itself to be “the Church of the poor,” to share the poverty of the Asian masses, to speak out for the rights of the powerless, to assist in education and organization of the workers and peasants and to work for land reform. (All mentioned at the Manila Meeting). In 1974 FABC called for a “dialogue of life” with the poor. They described this:

It involves a genuine experience and understanding of this poverty, deprivation and oppression of so many of our peoples. It demands working, not for them merely (in a paternalistic sense), but with them, to learn from them (for we have much to learn from them!) their real needs and aspirations, as they are enabled to identify and

articulate these, and to strive for their fulfillment, by transforming those structures and situations which keep them in that deprivation and powerlessness.

This dialogue leads to a genuine commitment and effort to bring about social justice in our societies. In turn this will include an operative and organized "action and reflection in faith" (sometimes called "conscientization"). This is a process which seeks the change and transformation of unjust social structures. Through it the deprived and oppressed acquire effective responsibility and participation in the decisions which determine their lives, and thus are enabled to free themselves. Through it those who (consciously or unconsciously) maintain these structures may be made aware of them, and hopefully be converted to justice and the freedom of Christian love for their brothers.

BISA IV supported all efforts being made to bring to this work the insights of the Gospel, so that the work will be truly liberating and human, free from all that can violate human rights and dignity.

We value the initiatives of people who organize themselves into self-reliant, participative, self-determining people's groups. These will enable the poor to become aware of their situation, realize their dignity and their human equality with anyone, whatever be his position of power, and give them an instrument with which they can secure what is their due.

BISA V addressed the problem: "What does it mean to be a Church of the Poor?", and said:

We found an answer in the way many churches of Asia are moving in the direction of greater and greater involvement with the lives of their people; their simply being with the poor, their attempts at working out programs of human development — integral, respectful of the people's dignity, attuned to their cultures, their standing with them in their hard struggle for justice and for self-empowerment; their insistence that the rich become themselves real members of the Church of the Poor by fulfilling their obligations in justice and charity toward the poor. The Church of the Poor must do all this (FABC Papers No. 24, p. 16).

They saw Basic Christian Communities as an important response of the Church.

In the evaluation made of the BISAs I-V it was found that most responding bishops are for projects that stress organization and conscientization rather than socioeconomic goals.

### **Human Development**

The Asian Church documents generally describe the obstacles to human development; they rarely describe human development positively. BISA V notes that Pope John Paul II says it is "man in the full truth of his existence." Working back from the obstacles to human development or its ideas on non-development, the Asian Church sees development positively, as does Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*.

Conditions that are more human: the passage from misery towards the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture. Additional conditions that are more human: increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, co-operation for the common good, the will and desire for peace. Conditions that are still more human: the acknowledgement by man of supreme values, and of God their source and their finality. Conditions that, finally and above all, are more human: faith, a gift of God accepted by the good will of man, and unity in the charity of Christ, who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men (No. 21).

### **Challenges of the 1980s**

Are there new, or old, and increasing obstacles and challenges to human development in Asia in the 1980s? Some experts see danger signals in the growing militarization of the continent and the increased dependence on the world-wide capitalist economy (free trade zones, agribusiness for export, export-oriented industry, heavy foreign indebtedness) which itself is in difficulties unseen for forty years.

The theme of BISA VI presupposes general agreement with the statements of the Asian bishops through the 1970s, both as to the challenges to human development and the appropriate Church responses. BISA VI will not go deeply into such matters once again. It will rather accept these statements and look to find ways to fashion concrete Church responses: it will be practical rather than theoretical (either in social examination or theology).

## B. The Methodology

There will be, as in past BISAs, two main parts to the program: an exposure program of four days and a general meeting, also of four days.

1. *Exposure.* Exposure will be made in Sri Lanka, Korea or the Philippines. During the four days the bishops will visit dioceses in these countries to see social action programs in which the Church is involved and to talk to Church people and others involved. The purpose will be to understand why these programs were started, how they help the people and what is the Church's precise role in them. Before going to individual dioceses there will be a presentation of an overall national picture.

2. *General meeting:* The meeting will be as follows:

*First Day* — Exposure reports by country and a socio-economic analysis of these reports by an expert, Godfrey Gunatillike, to help deepen and broaden the participants' understanding of what they have seen.

*Second Day* — A presentation by an expert, Jeffrey Pereira,\* of current responses to the challenges to human development by Church and non-Church groups. The bishops will have workshops to discuss what approaches or responses seem most useful.

*Third Day* — A pastoral reflection by Cardinal Stephen Kim of Korea on these approaches chosen by the bishops. A panel to offer additional points of view, both pastoral and social. Workshops according to interest groups to discuss approaches mentioned most often.

*Fourth Day* — Final presentation of working results.

### Some Additional Notes

1. Special care will be given to examining the religio-cultural dimensions of development which have often been neglected in discussions of development work. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, reminds us that what matters "is to evangelize man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et Spes*, always taking the

\* In the end Mr. Pereira was unable to attend.



person as one's starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God."

2. There will be hopefully bishops from Africa and Latin America at the meeting to share the thinking of their continents. They will be chosen by their respective federation and/or conferences. There will also be, as at BISA IV and V, First World bishops. Having bishops from all continents is to remind us that solutions to development problems require co-operation among Third World people and between them and the people of the First World. But particularly also, to provide us bishops with the possibility and opportunity to consider how we can collegially proclaim the social dimension of the Gospel and give it a collegial expression in concrete action to the world today.

### **III. REPORT ON THE SRI LANKA EXPOSURE**

(This report is included and not those of Korea or the Philippines because more bishops took part in it than in the other two exposures. Space does not allow us to use all the reports.)

#### **Preliminary Remarks**

The areas of exposure were limited to four and therefore are not adequate for a deep social analysis. The areas visited were the dioceses of Mannar and Jaffna in the north, Colombo in the west, Dehiowita in the diocese of Galle in the south and Badulla in the province of Uva in the southeast. The characteristics of these dioceses vary considerably from a mainly non-Catholic majority with an insignificant Catholic presence in parts of Badulla diocese to a sizable Catholic minority of 45% in the diocese of Mannar.

Secondly, the people who gave us lectures gave their own viewpoints. There was not enough time or opportunity to discuss with people of opposite viewpoints to come to a balanced understanding of most of the problems.

Thirdly, our report therefore is mainly impressionistic and not deeply analytical.

#### **I. Some Crucial Issues in the Sri Lanka Situation**

1. Poverty, which means lack of basic needs. This has to do with discrimination, low wages, lack of job opportunities, small land-holdings, lack of adequate productive equipment in the case of fishermen, shortage of water and irrigation facilities, inequality

between men and women regarding wages and in the structure of society itself.

2. Conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese. This has been caused by imposition of Sinhalese as the national language, quota system for university education, no citizenship for as many as 550,000 Tamils, government policies that are geared more to the south than to the north, discrimination regarding jobs, even in the army, the presence of military camps in predominantly Tamil areas of the north, unjust anti-terrorism laws, the burning of precious books and destruction of statues of Tamil heroes.
3. Caste system among the Tamils themselves in the north, and even among Tamils in the north and Tamil plantation workers from the south.
4. Brain drain of educated Tamils, as well as Sinhalese abroad.
5. Development processes favoring the more affluent and densely populated areas along the Colombo-Kandy axis, at the expense of development to the eastern sector of the island, development of tea estates and upcountry at the expense of low-country regions that suffer from acute water shortage.
6. The whole economic and government policies seem to be more interested in increasing national income rather than answering human needs and welfare of the masses of people. Government policies in the free trade zones and private sector are given all facilities in terms of infrastructure, communications and other services but very little is being done in the vast majority of areas where even drinking water and irrigation, roads and electricity are considerably lacking. Also, as there is demand for land in the city, people in slums are being shifted more and more to the fringes to make room for hotels catering to foreign tourists.
7. Refugee resettlement. Huge numbers of tea plantation workers from the south have been resettled in the north and given only a small bit of land but no other facilities, like drinking water, sanitation, schools, etc.
8. Illiteracy, where a number of villages do not have schools that provide even the minimum of teachers or adequate facilities. In one place, a chair for the teacher was absent.

9. The unhealthy and inhuman condition of workers in the slums, in the free trade zones.

## **II. Some Responses of the Church**

1. Social welfare, like refugee resettlement, beggars' home for the aged, digging of wells to provide drinking water and irrigation facilities, schools for the handicapped, leprosy rehabilitation.
2. Educational and conscientization responses
  - a. Teaching children in schools through formal education and non-formal education programs for creating awareness among people regarding deprivation of their rights, and organization of the communities, not only Basic Christian Communities, but basic human communities.
  - b. New techniques of conscientization through dramas, which were striking.
  - c. Leadership courses to youth who will become animators in their own societies, and preventive health training to answer the inadequately provided health needs of the people, are some responses in this area.
  - d. These responses are usually organized and coordinated from the diocesan social centers, but certain pioneer groups and frontier attempts are conspicuous by operating outside the traditional Church structures.
3. Some interesting important religio-cultural responses
  - a. These consist of bringing together people of different faiths, both Christian and non-Christian, that is, Buddhists and Hindus, to respond to the needs of all without discrimination of caste or creed. This is different from the usual Catholic responses to all people through the St. Vincent de Paul and Legion of Mary. One interesting religio-cultural response was the ministries' school in Badulla, where priests and those interested in Church ministries are being trained directly in the milieu in which they are going to working among people of different faiths, where they will become the catalysts. Although in fact very few priests are being trained, the purpose of this ministries' school was to train Christians for different ministries in their milieu.
  - b. The Basic Christian Communities', and more especially the Basic Human Communities', response is also conspicuous. As the

development of Basic Christian Communities is the thrust of the Colombo Archdiocese, the priests and Catholics set about trying to organize themselves. First, the archbishop and priests of the deanery came together to study the Basic Christian Communities' idea, not with an imported model in mind, but as it would grow out of the needs of people. Then they moved into their parishes to try and let these communities form, not like pious associations, but as new responses of the Church. One outstanding response in this direction was a group of lay people, who of their own initiative, formed a basic community center in Malabe. This center is responsive to the Christians and non-Christians of the area. Another is the building of human communities where priests and Buddhist monks work together in about fourteen villages outside of the parish structure.

#### **IV. Some Challenges Which the Church Faces Today**

1. There is a growing tension, even leading possibly to opposition, between pioneering groups who are involved in social action and some Church leaders who they feel are not supportive of their work. This rift is evident only in the southern Sinhalese part of the island but not at all in the Jaffna-Mannar areas where priests, bishops and clergy are united with the people in their struggle for justice.
2. Very few Sisters and priests are involved with groups in the tea and rubber plantations, free trade zones and in dialogue with non-Christians. Is this pointing to a lack of priorities or does it indicate a need that they be adequately prepared for this work? It demands a deepening of their Christian spirituality and ability to dialogue with non-Christians about human values.
3. Does this tension between pioneering groups and some Church leaders indicate the need to rethink our pastoral methodology in the light of a new understanding of the Church as the light of the nations, within the challenging new situation of strong, even aggressive, non-Christian religions and powerful socioeconomic, political factors?
4. There is a need of identifying ourselves with the Asian Church in its pilgrimage to fight against the powers that be, who use religion, ignorance of our people, connivance with foreign powers, under the guise of a development that maintains their supremacy and dominance along with an exploitation of the poor.

5. The Church should identify with the poor, to uplift, develop, conscientize the people, to animate and work with other religions to these goals. The Church should seek to correct unjust institutions, and voice the miseries of the oppressed before the powers that be.
6. The Church is challenged to strengthen and foster the community spirit of the people through the religio-cultural values which are being eroded by the processes of development and exploitation.

#### IV. REFLECTIONS ON BEING A BISHOP

by Cardinal Stephen Kim

When I was invited to speak to the Bishops assembled here for BISA VI, my first reaction was not to accept because I am neither a sociologist nor a professional theologian. I felt that there was nothing really specific that I have to offer. Even though I explained my feeling, I was still asked to come, and so I finally accepted. But since I am not a specialist, the only thing I can tell you is my own story, my own reflections on being a bishop. Perhaps these reflections may just be platitudes, or the repetition of an old story from the past. But I hope they may give you some kind of stimulus for your own thinking on the bishop's role in modern society, social justice, human rights and evangelization, especially in Asia.

#### My City

As the Cardinal Archbishop of Seoul, I live in a city of some nine million people, a half million Catholics, 116 parishes, 300 priests and 1,000 Sisters. We have schools all the way from kindergartens to universities and a major seminary. We also have the other institutions you find in most dioceses: hospitals, institutes, retreat houses, etc.

The Church in Korea is growing in numbers very rapidly, especially in Seoul. As the Ordinary of such a large diocese, I receive the respect and love of many people, and that, of course, is something I am happy about. But from time to time, I wonder: "Does this lifestyle of mine really correspond to the Gospel?" I feel that not only is it not evangelical poverty; and in fact, it is one of my favorite topics. But in reality, I don't live it. Sometimes I do some acts of charity for the poor. I also visit poor people — not so often — but I do visit them. What troubles me is that I do not share with them their poverty, their sorrows and sufferings.

Human rights and social justice are also issues on which I have deep convictions. Perhaps I have been able to do something for people who

are oppressed and in prison, but still, I am not *with* them. My lifestyle and my position as a bishop are very far from them.

Sometimes I have considered the possibility of moving out of my comfortable residence beside the diocesan offices in order to live among the poor people. But is it possible for me to do that and still be a working bishop? The demands of episcopal duties would continue. I would still need a cook, and also a telephone. Probably I would need a car and a driver. Because of meetings and necessary paperwork involved in running a large diocese, I would need people to help me. With more people comes the need for more space. Eventually, I would end up building another bishop's house in that poor area. Even though I settled down with the poor, I could not really be poor. I would end up being the Cardinal Archbishop of Seoul, just the same as now. And so I feel a paradox between the reality and the ideal, between the trappings of the bishop's office and the original call and mission of the bishop in the early Church. In the *Constitution on the Church* it is said that bishops are, in a sense, the vicars of Jesus. But I wonder how I can effectively represent the Jesus of the Gospels to my people, especially to the weak and poor.

Poverty is not something that I see as an absolute value in itself. But I believe that evangelical poverty is essential if I am to empty myself, become poor and serve my neighbors as a brother. In a word, I am convinced that true love of neighbor involves a life of evangelical poverty, just as Jesus emptied himself and became poor in order to make us rich. I have been pondering how such a spirituality of Jesus can be lived as a bishop, particularly in Asia, among the multitudes of the poor.

Somehow, I believe that as bishops we must witness to poverty in ways that will make the poor feel at ease with us so that in some way we may share their suffering and their fate. But the circumstances of life make it increasingly difficult. The consumer society today seems determined to make everyone *more* comfortable, and so there is the ready temptation to choose to be *comfortably* poor.

The core issue is this: love of men. Love is the quintessence of Christianity as described by St. Paul in Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians. Without love, our preaching, our teaching and our efforts for human rights and social justice — even the sacrifice of our lives — are all for nothing.

In view of the actual situation in today's world, love of others is crucial to our witness of faith. But it is the spirit of poverty that makes

our witness truly believable. As we all realize, modern society is very much influenced by materialism. Efforts have been made to achieve material development, and with varying degrees of success, people have become materially richer. But as everyone knows, this material prosperity has often been achieved at the expense and sacrifice of humanity. We witness dehumanization. And this dehumanization involves violations of human rights, all kinds of corruption, and social injustice.

As a direct result, mankind has become alienated, and this illness touches everyone. Mother Teresa has said: "There are medicines for T.B. and for leprosy, but where can we find a remedy for the alienation of man?" Modern man is again driven to ask: "What is man? What is the meaning of life?" Men today are deeply troubled by this existential *angst*.

Foreign visitors often ask me: "Why are so many people coming into the Church — in spite of Korea's visible material improvement?" They seem to imply that material development usually leads to a decline in religious interest among people. I have asked myself this same question, and I have some possible answers. One reason would be that Koreans are, by nature, very religious. Another reason might be that there were many martyrs in Korean history, and their blood has become the seed of the faith which is now blossoming. But this increase in believers is not just a Catholic phenomenon in Korea; it affects Protestants and Buddhists as well. Perhaps, then, the division of our country since the Korean War, and the subsequent constant tension, pain and sorrow, could be a partial answer. Maybe it can be explained as a kind of existential anxiety that results from an uncertainty concerning the future. All of these may be factors, but I believe that the strongest reason is precisely dehumanized material development. For the rich, rapid material prosperity increases their feeling of a spiritual vacuum, an emptiness, a hunger and a thirst. They are searching for something to hold on to, namely spiritual values for their inner being, for the human spirit. In the case of the poor, they are, on the other hand, seeking to escape their suffering. They seek a refuge and a place of solace for their hearts. They want to be recognized and loved as human beings. In a way, they are searching for their own identity as human beings in the midst of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, computerization and consumerism. In this milieu, men are looking for someone who is ready to accept them. Their plea is: "Recognize me. Accept me. Love me."

I recall an example of alienation that impressed me deeply. Some years ago, a private institution in Korea made a survey among newspaper boys, shoeshine boys and similar groups of underprivileged youth. One question asked was: "What do you want most?" Over 60% answered: "Recognition as a human being. I want to be treated as a human being." They did not feel that their first need was money or a better job or training in a skill. Even though these poor boys were very much in need of material help, they felt that what they first needed was recognition and love. Their answers indicated that they wanted to see a human and just society. At first glance that seems to be exactly what political dissidents have been saying, but for different reasons. In the case of the dissidents, their demand for a just and human society is a cause, and sometimes even a profession. In the boys' case, their cry comes from their hearts and their experience. They voiced the need, especially among the poor and the weak, for recognition of their human dignity. And this problem is at the core of all the others in today's world. All the other problems — political, economic and social — stem from this source: the lack of love.

When I reflect on the mission of the Church and the mission of bishops, I recall the words of St. Luke: to preach the Gospel to the poor, to give sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to free the captives (Lk 4). We can fulfill this mission only if we truly love our people, especially the poor, the weak, the oppressed, as Jesus loved them.

Recently a Sister who is living among the poor challenged me with the question: "How can you really get to know Jesus, how can you recognize him, when you live so distant from the poor whom he loved and whose fate he shared?"

The question that Sister asked deserves some thought. Does today's Church, the Church of which we are pastors, truly witness to love? And just how important to us is this question? As bishops, are we first of all, men who love others, especially the poor? Where is such love in our scale of priorities? What, in fact, are the things that fill my days? Let me put that question in the context of my concrete experience.

As I mentioned earlier, converts are growing rapidly in numbers in all the dioceses of Korea. Parishes are overflowing; seminaries and convents are overfilled. As bishops, we are concerned about ways to meet this flood of people. And so we must be involved in erecting new parishes, new seminaries, buying property and seeing to the construction of new buildings. Such matters preoccupy us. Of course, we are also very



much concerned about giving our people adequate formation in the faith, and so we organize programs, seminars, retreats, catechetics, study programs, and so on. But we seem less and less able to set our own priorities because events and priorities set themselves.

A big event on our agenda, for example, is coming in 1984 with the bicentenary celebration of the introduction of the Catholic faith into Korea. Intense efforts are being concentrated on celebrating this anniversary in a meaningful way. In our preparations we are stressing spiritual renewal, and the love of Jesus, saying that we must love each other as Jesus loved us. But sometimes I have the nagging suspicion that what we want most of all is to have a successful celebration and show the whole world how beautiful and prosperous the Korean Catholic Church is, instead of gearing all the efforts to present the image of Jesus, Incarnated Love, who became the Brother of brothers, the Brother of all people.

In actual fact, the Church in Korea has prospered and developed in numbers. We have also grown materially and become more rich. But the Church's very development makes us distant from poor people. The poor have less access to the Gospel. In the Church of poor people, the rich may find their place. But in the rich Church, the poor may find no place at all. In that sense, the development of the Church somehow seems to make us less evangelical. We are in danger from prosperity itself because it removes us from the poor.

If you ask people what first image comes to mind when they think of the Catholic Church, how will they answer? Will they say "It is a Church of love?" More probably they will say that they respect and esteem the Church as a powerful religious organization. But how many will say that its clearest and most distinguishing mark is *love*? There are various reasons why our image is not clearly one of love.

One reason, perhaps a chief reason, concerns us bishops. How do we understand our office, mission and call as bishops? What is our chief priority? To preach? To give witness? To govern? Indeed, we must govern, and yet somehow we must avoid reigning like kings.

Just a few days ago, some Young Christian Workers members came to talk with me. They said that they want a bishop whom they can easily meet and talk with as a brother. Frequently during Mass we address the faithful as *brothers*, but are we truly brothers? Or do we appear as monarchs, kings or lords?

As Ordinaries in our respective dioceses, we are the legislators and guardians of law. Our very title as "Ordinary" suggests that we are concerned about "order." I do not deny that one of our responsibilities is to keep order and to preserve our Catholic faith and tradition. But this duty sometimes seems to overshadow everything else. Do we really announce the joy of liberation and the forgiveness of sins as Jesus proclaimed the "good news" of the Gospel? In fact, the Gospel is "good news." It is important that we announce it in such a way that the People of God actually experience *joy*.

As Ordinaries we must see that there is order in the communities that make up the Church. But the joy which the Gospel brings can be overshadowed by fear if we stress rules and orders too much. I am afraid, that sometimes we present God to the people as *Deus Timoris* (the God of fear) rather than *Deus Amoris* (the God of love); then the result is that we diminish the essence of Christianity. We distort the image of Jesus Christ who came as man, lived, died and rose again out of love for us.

This brings me once again to the problem of evangelical poverty and the issue of lifestyles. Although we may not be materially rich, still, as bishops we have social status, honor, privileges and even power. Ordinarily we may use all of these things for the benefit of others. But they can also become barriers which separate us from the poor and the helpless. These things can prevent us from becoming their true friends and their brothers.

Between Jesus and the poor there were no barriers, no obstacles, no aloofness. Even the most abandoned, rejected and alienated man in his desperation could recognize Jesus as a friend and brother. Though God, Jesus emptied himself completely and became a poor man. He hung on the cross, a man totally despised and rejected. *Ecce Homo*. This is the Jesus we proclaim, and so does it not follow that we have to examine radically ourselves, our lifestyles, our values?

Let us take one more example — the question of power. As the Cardinal Archbishop of Seoul, I hold a position of power. In fact, most of the time I feel quite helpless, as I am sure, most bishops actually feel. Nevertheless, I have much power, *de facto*, and I am regarded by people as being a person of power. Regularly I am called upon to make decisions which involve thousands of dollars. And so I have economic power. I am able to call the faithful to any number of concerted actions, and so I have social power. I am recognized as the spokesman for the Catholic Church,

an international organization with the power of the Vatican behind me. And so I have what might be called political power. And yet, was it not precisely these kinds of power that Jesus completely rejected in the desert? The only power that Jesus accepted was the power of his Father — spiritual power — the power of love.

With his tremendous spiritual influence, Jesus could easily have gained social, political, and even economic power. But Jesus rejected all of the powers of this world and we as bishops must do no less. Isn't it acting against the spirit of Jesus when we accept them, and even seek them?

But what about Jesus' spiritual power. Surely, he had it on his own. But Jesus did not covet even spiritual power. He was obedient to the Father, even to the death of the cross. He emptied himself completely so that the will of his Father could work through him: *That* was his power. In Jesus, in his *kenosis* was his power. As bishops, we must be spiritual leaders. But even in this matter, aren't we tempted, consciously or unconsciously, to seek spiritual power in ways that are not those of Jesus? We may even experience a subtle temptation to dispense spiritual power like our personal riches.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say this. I feel the need to empty myself and to find ways to be freed by poverty so that I can respond, as Jesus did, to the needs of people. I want to be a real brother to people, especially the vast majority of God's children in Asia, the little ones. I want to be a part of the medicine which heals the wounds of dehumanization and alienation. Not only in my sermons, but especially in my lifestyle, I want to preach the Gospel as "good news," to free people, to liberate them, to take the burdens off their backs. I want to reject, as Jesus did, the social, economic and political power of this world.

I realize that it is my own sinfulness, weakness and fear that prevent me from identifying more with the poor and the powerless. But I also feel that bureaucratic aspects of our modern roles as bishops can sometimes present even greater obstacles to achieving these ideals. There seems to be the danger that we may become increasingly institutionalized men. We need to break out of the structured lifestyle which limits our contact with people and prevents us from being real brothers to our people.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to share with you my personal reflections on the mission we have as bishops. I realize that I

have not provided any new ideas or any light concerning the bishop's role in terms of social action. I admit that. I can only hope that my honest reflections about being a bishop might provide some stimulus for your own reflections in this meeting. Perhaps this kind of reflection has even a more basic value. It may be that one of the greatest obstacles preventing us bishops from a clear and active participation in the humanization of society is the image we give. Since Vatican Council II, much has been improved, but in certain respects our image as bishops may still give the impression of institutionalized men. I think that we need to liberate and free ourselves from any image which prevents us from truly being vicars of the Lord Jesus. In a word, we must search for greater redemptive brotherhood with the People of God, especially his poor.

## V. WHO IS JESUS CHRIST TODAY IN ASIA?

By Bishop Julio X. Labayen, O.C.D.

Yesterday, Bishop Saupin posed the question to us: "What does the Lord want of his Church in Asia?" I wish to follow through by asking this question: "Who is Jesus Christ today in Asia?"

The Office of Human Development under the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has been promoting the BISA (Bishops' Institute for Social Action) program in order to make us bishops aware of and committed to the task of human development as an integral part of evangelization.

Evangelization is basically the following of Jesus. This following of Jesus in the area of human development (social action) pushes us to face the challenge of changing today's world reality into a world that God, our Father and the Father of Jesus Christ, dreams of: "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1). It points us to "action in behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world" (Bishops' Synod 1971). It makes us face the stark reality of poverty, exploitation, oppression and repression. It engages us to the defense of human rights and the liberation of the victims of injustice.

Let me offer you some theological reflection on the following of Jesus in the field of human development. I feel that this following of Jesus demands of us to ask constantly the question: "Who is Jesus Christ today?"

At the final judgment (Mt 25:31-46) what is striking is the fact that both those who are saved (the sheep at the right) and those who are condemned (the goats at the left) ask the judge: "When did we see you, Lord?"

In response, the judge declares his identification with the poor: the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the homeless, the sick and the prisoner.

At the opening Mass of BISA VI our preacher called our attention to the story of the Good Samaritan, that we should be a neighbor (he who serves) to the needy along the way.

It is clear that Scriptures reveal to us that Jesus identifies himself with the needy and the poor and calls us to serve him in them.

The encounter of this world with the mystery of Jesus Christ has taken place in the Christ-event in Bethlehem and throughout the lifetime of Jesus in Palestine. But this encounter goes on today. It is an encounter that provides the answer to a search and at the same time opens vistas to a further search. It is an ongoing encounter that opens to ever broadening horizons. We can never discover enough the mystery of Jesus Christ. We can never stop asking the question: "Who is Jesus Christ?"

In the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians we witness an Israelite who boasts of having no equal in knowledge of the law and of zeal for the religion of Israel. On the road to Damascus we know what happened. He was knocked off his high horse by a blinding light and became blind. Beyond his erudition of the law and his well-motivated zeal new revelation dawned on him. He was persecuting Jesus himself in those whom he considered as subverting the religion of Israel.

Let me submit for our reflection two essential points in the following of Jesus: fellowship (community) and option for the poor.

God revealed his plan for the entire human race by means of the covenant: "I will be your God. You will be my people" (Ez 36:24-28; Jer 31:31-33). He desires to bring about a people he can claim as his own and a people who claim him as their God.

Pope John XXIII called our attention to a phenomenon of modern times: the social problem has assumed a global dimension. The late Barbara Ward talked about the economic problem in terms of a global village. Teilhard de Chardin spoke about the cosmos as the scope of salvation in Christ.

BISA makes us realize that the challenge to human development is not confined to Asia but is world-wide. The challenge to human development as part of our task of evangelization makes us conscious of our

collegial responsibility as bishops for the global mission of the Church, that we are a one *Church* with a one *mission* in a one *world*.

To work for fellowship and the building of the human community is an essential mark in following Jesus, who said: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me" (John 12:32), and who prayed: "that they may be one just as you (Father) and I are one" (John 17:11).

For this reason the Church is always conscious of its ministry of reconciliation: "to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head" (Eph 1:10). No wonder that "Reconciliation . . . in the Mission of the Church" has been chosen as the theme of the next Bishops' Synod.

This solidarity of the human race, I submit, underlies the aspiration of all peoples — regardless of race, color or creed — for peace. An aspiration that becomes clearer and more universal as the whole of humankind faces in the 1980s the precarious situation of a world threatened with global extinction by a nuclear war.

The second essential sign in the following of Jesus is the option for the poor: to follow Jesus in the poor. This option for the poor resounds wherever the Church seeks to follow Jesus truly.

Our own Asian Bishops' statements since 1970 in Manila to 1974 in Taipei ring out clearly: that God is calling the churches in Asia to become the Church of the Poor. BISA V in 1979 attempted to describe what this means.

Our brother bishops of Latin America, in their CELAM gathering in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, underlined their "preferential option for the poor."

In our reflections we become aware how the superpowers vie with each other for the domination of the world through military and technological superiority and through political ascendancy.

The great temptation for us — followers of Jesus — is to match such power with equal, if not superior, power; to do that would be to join the race towards a global holocaust.

We are called to a conversion to the poor and to its concomitant service. Such a conversion is an authentic sign of conversion to Christ.

The bias for the poor, service to the poor, is a message that consistently runs through Catholic tradition and teaching. The prophets of the Old Testament tell us that worship of God is in vain without justice and mercy for the poor and the needy. The concern of Israel for "the orphan, the widow and the stranger" runs through the Old Testament. The readings for Advent and Lent ring out the same message, particularly from Isaiah, Amos and Micah.

Unfortunately, to take an option for the poor is easily taken to be a sign of being a Marxist. This is our experience in the Philippines. But the concomitant task to bring about fellowship (communion and community) safeguards the option for the poor from becoming exclusive and from falling into class discrimination. The liberation of the poor is the forerunner and harbinger of the liberation of the human race from avarice, greed, selfishness, utter disregard of human dignity and of the human dimension of development. It announces, like the dawn, the advent of a new day.

Yesterday, our theological reflection concluded with the essential need of spirituality in our task for the promotion of human development. I would like to conclude this theological reflection on the same note.

If we are to follow Jesus in the poor we must follow him as the poor of Yahweh. Our hearts have to be poor: open, unconditionally surrendered to him, with no other hope outside of him. This is the poverty of spirit that liberates our hearts from falling into the temptation of placing the measure of our success on our good name, abundance of resources, the power of our institutions, the extent of our privileges.

"For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with him" (Phil 3:8-9).

Such poverty of spirit must be given an external sign in our lifestyle and in the means we employ for evangelization.

Here we are faced with the need to be evangelized regarding our material resources, particularly money. How do we harness and employ these resources in the service of God's kingdom? Do we not sometimes appear as competing with the empire of mammon in our use of money?

To invest in people, to make them masters of their own history and destiny, to conscientize them into becoming responsible architects of a

human and just society is a guideline that runs along the two essential marks in the following of Jesus.

To probe into the deepest aspiration of the heart of the poor will eventually lead us to discover the face of Jesus Christ in the teeming millions of our poor peoples in Asia.

Lest we ask at the final judgment "When did we see you, Lord," I submit, let us follow Jesus in the poor in view of bringing about the people our Father dreams of and for which Jesus was lifted up.

Please God, the Spirit of Jesus may guide and lead us onward through the maze of the complex and confusing challenges to human development of 1980s that we may discover the face of Jesus Christ in our poor in Asia and thus respond as ministers of reconciliation towards the full realization of God's covenant: "I will be your God. You will be my people."

#### **VI. STATEMENT OF THE SIXTH BISHOPS' INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ACTION**

##### **"The Challenge to Human Development in the 1980s: Response of the Church in Asia"**

At BISA VI 26 Asian and 4 non-Asian bishops composed the following statement. The Asian bishops were from Japan (3), Philippines (5), Taiwan (2), India (3), Sri Lanka (3), Malaysia (2), South Korea (3), Indonesia (2), Thailand (2), Pakistan (1). The non-Asian bishops were from the United States (1), Brazil (1), Mexico (1). Archbishop Jean Jadot, Pro-President of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, represented the Holy See.

They began their search for the "Challenges to Human Development in the 1980s: Response of the Church in Asia" with an exposure program from January 29th—February 3rd, 1983. Some participants visited Korea, others, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

The theme of BISA VI builds upon earlier BISA themes, such as "Social Dimension of the Gospel" (BISA I-III), "Search, Challenge and Collegial Response to Human Development" (BISA IV-V).

From 1970 the Asian Church has seen as challenges to human development the following: poverty, inequality among individuals and



nations, injustice, oppressive structures, and atheistic communism and imperialism in their national and international dimensions.

In 1974, at the FABC plenary assembly in Taiwan, the bishops spoke more explicitly of the poor as those deprived of access to material goods and resources by social, economic and political structures which have injustice inbuilt into them. BISA IV (1978) attempted a coherent examination of the problems facing human development.

Because of colonialism and feudalism and the introduction of Western classical capitalism, the traditional economic texture of Asian society with its inbuilt balances has been disrupted. Often the economies of these are not geared primarily to satisfying the requirements of the nation — but rather to responding to external markets, and, within the nation, not to the basic needs of people— food, housing, education, jobs — but to the demands of a consumer society.

The principal beneficiaries of this system are the foreign markets and investors and the local elites. The victims are the poor, who are the majority of the people. Since the poor will not suffer this situation voluntarily, they must be coerced: hence the authoritarian regimes, control of mass media, denial of basic rights and of free speech, intolerance of free people's organizations and participation. Concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few ensures that all the society's institutions will be biased against the poor, for example, education, housing, health care, jobs and law. Wittingly or unwittingly, the Church has been party to this arrangement.

### **Challenges of the 1980s:**

At BISA VI we asked ourselves the question: "Are there new, or old and increasing obstacles and challenges, to human development in Asia in the 1980s."

The new challenges that aggravate the old challenges to human development are the increasing militarization of the continent, the militant resurgence of traditional non-Christian religions like Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, and Asia's increased dependence on global economies. In fact, Asia is inextricably enmeshed in the global context of economic, political and moral imperialism. Asia has become the economic battleground of the big three political powers: the United States, the Soviet Union and China. The economic interests of the First World (the capitalist bloc) and the Second World (the socialist bloc) are

imposed on the economies of Asian countries by various forms of economic imperialism, such as, unjust trade and aid conditions, export-oriented industries and capital intensive technology, transnational corporations, agri-business enterprises and tourism. This economic imperialism is maintained and reinforced by a political imperialism akin to the National Security State ideology that crushes all kinds of people's organization, and is supported by increasing militarization which breeds increasing corruption in practically all the countries of Asia. The global centers of economic power manipulate the mass media in Asian countries to create artificial needs that promote the production of luxury goods. This results in a consumerism which subtly undermines the deep religious values of Asian cultures and erodes the moral fiber of the Asian peoples. Often, even religious and educational systems are manipulated in order to serve the ideology of this economic, political and moral imperialism. This pervasive imperialism presents a formidable new challenge to the lifestyle of people and to the religious institutions of Asia today.

### **Challenges Specific to Certain Religions**

While Asia's global dependence on First and Second World economies and manipulation by such power politics present one of the major challenges to human development in Asia in the 1980s, there are certain challenges that are specific to some Asian countries.

In the Far East, the ideological, political, and military manipulation of the super powers divides some countries. This becomes a threat to the peace and security not only of the region but of the whole world. The threat of a nuclear war is very real. Further, the continual increase of practical materialism in the region hinders not only the development of human dignity but also of evangelization. In South Asia strong separatist tendencies are an increasingly dangerous force for destabilizing the area. In some Asian countries militant movements among some non-Christian religions also present a serious challenge to human development.

### **Response of the Church**

1. Since the 1970 Manila Meeting an overriding concern of the Asian Church in its response to the challenges to human development has been to commit itself to be the "Church of the Poor." One of the greatest signs of hope in the Asian Church has been an increasing number of Church people trying to live the response called "the preferential option for the poor." This consists in a certain identification with the poor in lifestyle, and solidarity with the poor in their struggle for justice and a more human existence.

2. BISA V, when addressing itself to the problem: "What does it mean to be the Church of the poor?," saw Basic Christian Communities and Basic Human Communities (communities of non-Christians) as an important response of the Church. The proliferation of Basic Christian Communities and Basic Human Communities is a sign of hope that the Church will become the Church of the poor.

3. In Asia, where Christians are an insignificant minority in terms of numbers compared with the masses of the non-Christian religions, the dialogue of life with the poor referred to in the FABC Plenary Assembly statement of 1974 is paralleled with a dialogue of life with members of non-Christian religions. This dialogue studies the positive elements in these religions in order to make all people, both Christians and non-Christians, respond together to the poor, irrespective of caste or creed.

4. Yet another response of the Church to the challenge of human development in the 1980s is the reaffirmation of faith in the BISAs as an instrument for evangelizing bishops. Similar training institutes for priests, religious and laity need to be promoted.

5. The Church's social awareness training has helped Catholics respond immediately to human needs, for example, the refugees, with welfare services and developmental projects that promote self-reliance. This sensitivity to the needs of the poor must be further refined. The sensitizing of priests, religious, seminarians and laity, along with the bishops, has been effectively done in some dioceses by the Lenten Education Program. However, studies of the social teachings of the Church and awareness programs, though necessary, are not sufficient. They must be accompanied by actual involvement in the lives and struggles of the poor.

6. Serious study of the facts and figures relating to the burning issues of human development is a necessity. Centers of documentation and research are another important response of the Asian Church.

7. There is a need for a macro-ethic, that is, an ethic that is able to influence the decisions made at the centers of power — local, national, regional and international. Decisions made at these centers are often detrimental to the poor. It is imperative that this response get very high priority in the Church.

8. The Church has tried to use the mass media to emphasize essential values, such as, love, peace and justice. Its untiring efforts to

form the mentality of people in these values is a crucial antidote against moral imperialism.

9. Peace is the aspiration of the human heart today. In Asia we are sensitive to the harmony of the whole of creation, but at the same time we are aware of the antitheses of sin and grace, life and death, light and darkness. In the coming years, the gap between rich and poor countries will become wider and this will be a threat to world peace. The Church should use its spiritual and moral influence, especially in mass media, to form world opinion, in order to divert expenditure for arms into resources that foster integral human development.

10. In a world where human beings are treated with indignity, often for economic gain, the Church has stressed human dignity and human rights. Human rights are inalienable to every person and evoke corresponding duties from others. In some countries of Asia the Church has tried to defend human rights whenever these rights were abused. The emphasis now has often been on individual rights. This emphasis has the danger of breeding individualism, because it disregards corresponding duties towards others. Also in the context of Asia's cultural heritage of close family and community ties, the communitarian aspect of human rights needs equal emphasis.

11. The task of evangelization in the field of human development is not worthy of the name unless it is suffused with spirituality. This spirituality embraces the plan of God for the whole of creation. It is a spirituality that cannot be reduced to merely individual salvation but embraces the whole man and all men and the rest of creation. It is a spirituality that is relevant to the times and the needs of social actionists actively involved in the field; it is an involvement-spirituality that helps committed social actionists bring their faith values to their work and to have them enriched by their work and by reflection sessions and prayer. This spirituality cannot be inward-looking but must place the Church at the service of the whole human race and creation, towards the full realization of God's plan in Jesus Christ, who "came to serve and not be served" (Mk 10:45).

### **Conclusion**

We, the participants and observers at BISA VI, have felt the working of the Holy Spirit in and through us. His presence could be felt at various crucial points during our meeting. We can only turn to God in thanks for the presence of his Spirit among us, pray for the very many of our collaborators and benefactors who made BISA VI what it was, namely, another step in making the Church in Asia a sign and sacrament of the Kingdom of God.

## VII. THE PARTICIPANTS

### Participants

#### The Holy See

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Bishop Stephen Hamao

Bishop Aloisius N. Soma

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Bishop Patras Yusuf

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