

FOURTH PLENARY ASSEMBLY: WORKSHOP DISCUSSION GUIDE**LAITY AND MINISTRY TO YOUTH****Introduction**

The celebration of the International Youth Year in 1985 has given renewed impetus to the concern of our Churches for church ministry to youth. The 1987 convocation of the Ordinary Synod of Bishops with its focus on the laity will undoubtedly heighten our awareness of the mission of the laity. Bringing together these two focal points of the mission of the laity and ministry to the youth, this workshop enjoys a privileged responsibility for the pastoral mission of our Asian Churches.

The present workshop discussion guide attempts to provide sufficient background material, together with some points for reflection, to help the workshop participants proceed from an analysis of the situation of youth in Asia to concrete recommendations for pastoral organization and action.

The principal arena for the laity's involvement in youth ministry is obviously the local Church, something that the workshop discussion group should keep in mind. Nevertheless, with the interest of the local Churches at heart, and considering the need for vital links among local Churches within the Asian region, this discussion guide has been prepared for the participants of the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the FABC.

Four sections make up the contents of this guide:

I. The Situation of Youth

The situation of Asia's youth is presented from the points of view of demography, sociology and psychology. A situational analysis in the workshop is suggested for each of the local Churches represented.

This discussion guide has been prepared for the workshop sessions of the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences (FABC), convening at the Major Seminary, Tokyo, Japan, September 16-25, 1986. The theme of the Plenary Assembly is: "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia."

II. The Church's Response

As reminders of commitment already made by the Church in the area of pastoral care for youth, previous statements of the FABC are here recalled. Excerpts from Pope John Paul II's pastoral letter to youth are also included.

III. Youth Ministry in the Church

This section presents a general picture of youth ministry today, together with reflections on the youth minister. Youth ministry is seen as a multi-dimensional ministry and the youth minister is seen in the context of a collaborative ministry.

IV. Conclusions: Planning for Pastoral Action

This final section of the guide presents a number of questions which may help lead the discussion to some concrete recommendations. The questions look to three levels: the diocesan level, the level of the episcopal conferences, and the level of the FABC itself.

I. THE SITUATION OF YOUTH

A. From a Demographic Point of View

Various bulletins and brochures issued by different United Nations' agencies give the following data:

About 50% of the world's population is below 25 years of age. Close to 20 percent, or one inhabitant out of five, falls into the 15-24 year age group, which the United Nations defines as youth, without prejudice to national definitions. By the year 2000 this age group will increase by 60%. The youth in developing countries will double the present figure. In Asia, youth in this age bracket already constitute 60% of the total population.

The global youth population in 1980 was estimated at 857 million, an increase of 67% over the past 20 years. Current United Nations projections indicate that it will pass the one billion mark in 1991, but both the growth rate and the proportion of the total population comprised by youth are expected to decline slowly throughout the remainder of the century, as a result of the decrease in global fertility levels.

A majority of young people (665 million) lives in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where more significant increases are expected to occur. Projections for the year 2000 point to an increase by one-third, at which time 83.5% of all youth, or 893 million, will live in the developing regions.

A recent study revealed that the key words in the experience of young people in the present decade are probably "scarcity," "unemployment," "underemployment," "ill employment," "anxiety," "defensiveness," "subsistence," and even "survival" itself.

Particular categories of youth, such as women, rural youth, urban youth in marginal groups, disabled youth, and young refugees, are particularly vulnerable to the current social problems which are compounded by rapid economic and technological change. The effects of a concrete, structural crisis of chronic economic uncertainty, the destabilizing effects of an accelerating arms race and the growing threat to world peace are not confined to any single locality or nation.

The International Labor Organization predicts that developing countries will have to create 110 million new jobs by the end of this century if they are to absorb a projected 70 million new young workers. The youth population of developing countries is now 665 million and is expected to reach nearly 900 million by the end of the century. The young labor force is expected to grow from 365 million to 436 million.

B. From the Sociological Point of View

Doctor Mina Ramirez, president of the Asian Social Institute in Manila, presents some of the main issues affecting Asian youth to help us understand their situation. The perspective being taken is the social creativity of youth and the central role youth can play in development efforts. She states that because of the great diversity in Asia, a simple characterization of the situation of youth would be quite difficult. Hence a presentation of issues would be more helpful.

Issues Affecting the Youth

1. Impact of industrialization and technological change

This impact has given youth a special status. With the introduction of bureaucracies and mechanization, it takes more time in the modern era to accumulate job skills in both urban and rural economies. In contrast with early marriages of traditional societies where youth passed directly from adolescence to adulthood, the modern era has created prolonged youthhood. This is the psychological stage in which parents are expected to keep their children for a much longer period, through the educational process or the apprentice stage in preparation for adult roles in society. Prolonged youthhood has resulted in late marriages.

Concerns of the youth within this period of their lives are: (a) meaningful relationship for them within the family and community structure;

CONTINENTS MAJOR AREAS AND GROUPS OF COUNTRIES	AGE GROUP	ESTIMATED POPULATION					ANNUAL AVERAGE INCREASE	
		1980	1985	1990	2000	1980-90	1990-2000	
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	*A	1 164 442 000	1 208 240 000	1 249 906 000	1 328 956 000	0.7	0.6	
	0-4	91 441 000	95 180 000	96 320 000	96 650 000	0.5	0.0	
	5-9	90 831 000	91 151 000	94 933 000	96 156 000	0.4	0.1	
	10-14	92 454 000	90 891 000	91 206 000	96 426 000	-0.1	0.6	
	15-19	99 237 000	92 609 000	91 055 000	95 335 000	-0.9	0.5	
	20-24	98 436 000	99 336 000	92 773 000	91 861 000	-0.6	-0.1	
	0-24	472 369 000	469 167 000	466 286 000	476 428 000	-0.1	0.2	
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	*A	3 267 705 000	3 618 088 000	3 992 005 000	4 789 894 000	2.0	1.8	
	0-4	451 995 000	483 105 000	514 612 000	561 868 000	1.3	0.9	
	5-9	431 970 000	435 917 000	467 995 000	529 443 000	0.8	1.2	
	10-14	394 287 000	426 897 000	431 143 000	496 634 000	0.9	1.4	
	15-19	350 606 000	389 902 000	422 606 000	459 608 000	1.9	0.8	
	20-24	307 928 000	345 302 000	384 576 000	422 305 000	2.2	0.9	
	0-24	1 936 787 000	2 081 122 000	2 220 933 000	2 469 857 000	1.4	1.1	
ASIA (EXCLUDING ARAB STATES)	*A	2 530 071 000	2 757 262 000	2 990 065 000	3 457 657 000	1.7	1.5	
	0-4	317 580 000	327 645 000	339 122 000	350 649 000	0.7	0.3	
	5-9	322 637 000	308 220 000	319 226 000	341 639 000	-0.1	0.7	
	10-14	299 130 000	319 555 000	305 467 000	329 609 000	0.2	0.8	
	15-19	268 095 000	296 127 000	316 697 000	314 368 000	1.7	-0.1	
	20-24	239 866 000	264 317 000	292 396 000	299 777 000	2.0	0.2	
	0-24	1 447 307 000	1 515 864 000	1 572 907 000	1 636 041 000	0.8	0.4	

*A - All ages

Source : UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1984

(b) desire to be fruitfully employed; and (c) self-identity. A dilemma among the youth may be experienced because biological maturity as a result of better and improved diet and environmental conditions has come earlier, while the period required for acceptance as an adult has come much later. Moreover, the impact of the peer group and the mass media and the awareness of exogenous values are pitted against weakened societal and traditional patterns of authority and earlier forms of socialization.

2. The struggle for survival

Enormous efforts have been made to reduce the problems of survival in the world. United Nations has initiated two International Development Decades, which have led to greater awareness of the dimension and the urgency of satisfying needs beyond the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. Nonetheless the issues continue to daunt large groups of people including youth. Problems of survival are largely caused by a distorted concept of development which merely emphasizes economic growth or a strategy which argues that development should be from the top downwards. Aspects of development such as social betterment is rarely stressed.

The struggle for survival remains particularly grim in the rural areas. Rural youth in Asia are among the most disadvantaged sectors in the region. This is characterized by poverty, exploitation, lack of access to land, illiteracy, lack of stable work, isolation, unsanitary conditions and little participation in the decisions affecting the lives of the people themselves.

The kind of development pursued at the national and international levels little benefit the rural youth. On the contrary they perpetuate unjust economic structures like the land tenure system or create new problems like increasing landlessness. Hand in hand with the problems of poverty are the problems of exploitation growing out of the inequitable distribution of land, the lack of fairly remunerated jobs, and the long hours of work.

3. Unemployment, underemployment and migration

Unemployment and underemployment exist both in the urban and the rural areas. The causes are: (a) the rigidity of agricultural farming structures consisting of small plots and large estates which are unable to absorb the growth of population in the rural areas; (b) the introduction of technological innovations and mechanization; (c) infertility of the land; (d) the small size of plots, cyclical farming and a lack of credit with which to acquire the means to grow intermediate crops; (e) exceedingly low wages despite the fact that agricultural workers continuously work for

long hours. While traditionally the problem of underemployment was linked to seasonality, presently there are added problems of cashcropping and mechanization.

Because of the many problems found in the rural areas, many young people migrate in search of better employment conditions. Migration holds the hope that the young people and their children will have better opportunities for employment, education and health facilities. But with this, there is added insecurity, rootlessness and frustration.

The young rural migrants in the city, because they are newcomers and because they are young are the first victims of layoffs and long-term unemployment due to the following reasons: (a) detached from traditional support systems, they often have few resources to fall back on; (b) usually less educated and less skilled than their urban counterparts, they are relegated to a marginal position in the company; (c) they are exposed to the dullest and most monotonous tasks in the production line; (d) they are located in the lowest ranks of the industrial hierarchy and have little say on matters affecting their working life.

Urban unemployment in Asia is often related to issues such as the mismatching of skills and the disparity between social expectations and the types of jobs available, thus augmenting the existing pool of urban unemployed. Training and educational curricula have also been found to be less relevant than required by society and imbalances in the training or persistence of these features are seldom checked. Vocational guidance has not been given sufficient emphasis in the educational curricula, and most of the government's efforts in education have not included non-formal, non-institutional programs for skills development.

The issue of unemployment and underemployment is not merely an economic one, neither is it purely an educational one. There are also constraints in the legal, social and cultural sphere. More often than not, the working youth are not recognized by dominant groups in terms of decision-making roles, responsibilities within the workplace and their role within society.

4. Education and training

Literacy rate is low in many countries of the region. Most are found in the rural areas, and literacy rate of women is considerably lower than that of men.

In the past, the literacy rate was imparted through the school system. Thus, to be schooled is equated with "educated," "literate" and "privileged." This is due to the colonial powers including the missionary

schools. Through these, middle class values were instilled. Some were trained as administrators and technocrats. They served to nurture, strengthen and perpetuate the interests of those in power. The education imparted had little bearing on the lives and struggles of the masses and only succeeded in creating an elite often alienated from its own social and cultural background.

Despite the fact that school enrollment ratios have doubled in the last two decades, and in some countries (e.g. the Philippines) the literacy rate of the youth is as high as ninety per cent, the income gap between those people with basic education and those with higher education is widening and school drop-out rates are on the increase. In the labor-surplus countries of the region, schooling once seen as a major investment for good jobs is experiencing a crisis of confidence as the problem of the educated unemployed grows. Graduates cannot find jobs which once were done by people with lower levels of education. Graduates are asked to accept jobs and salaries below their level of training and skill simply to be able to live.

A large percentage of rural youth never attend school. In many rural areas, children still pass almost directly into the sphere of work at the age of 9 or 10 years owing to the depressed economic conditions of the farmers and the need for child-workers in the organization of agricultural production. While there is a greater need for practical agricultural training rather than schooling as found in the urban areas, the number of extension workers at the grassroots level is too small and their training too inadequate to provide for appropriate training of young farmers and young women.

The main cause of school drop-outs is the initial unpreparedness for school work of the children due to their home background. Poverty, language difficulties and the reflection of middle class values in urban schools often mean an added burden for children from low-income sectors of society. These children quite frequently experience school as a rejection of themselves. A vicious circle of poverty is hence established.

The need is for a relevant education which has the following features: (a) an awareness of the problems confronting their societies; (b) a critical education whose aim is to weaken the strong ties of dependency on foreign and solely urban educational models, with more indigenous models responding to local needs and where training for agriculture and rural life takes on great importance.

5. Youth, culture and mass media

The cultural system projected by the mass media is based on com-

mercialism and consumerism. The mass advertisements use slogans which talk of the "new and better life" based on the kinds of material goods one can buy, the brand of products owned and the indispensability of the money economy.

The youth in the rural areas are given a new awareness which sharpens the sense of their poverty and creates a deep feeling of inadequacy and inferiority.

The commercialization of leisure activities for the urban youth through the mass media transmits tastes, lifestyles and expectations beyond the reach of the urban poor.

There is also a virtually one-way flow of information from media producers to media consumers which tends to breed passivity and stifle creative activity among youth. It also transmits behavior patterns totally foreign to the realities of the local environment. Youth, if uncritical, may grow contemptuous of their own cultures or come to view their own societies as somehow inferior.

Mass media may produce tensions within the family and widen the existing gap between the traditional and the modern.

6. Family, community and religion

The phenomenon of the "information explosion" has oftentimes made the authority of the family a questionable subject. The spread and growth of new information have seriously challenged the parents' ability to reinforce traditional patterns of values and influences. Even among parents and the older generations, there is the possibility of confusion as they too try to sort out the impact of these changes.

The breakdown in traditional support systems has resulted in two peculiar problems: (a) They may not go back to the traditional family or community structures to seek answers to their problems; and (b) They may feel the need for further guidance, for while not lacking the capabilities for intellectual analysis, they still require counsel and the wisdom of the older generation. Caught in this dilemma, youth find themselves in the pursuit of various experimental activities from escapism to religious solace in the hope that something may provide a short-term if not a long-term answer to the need to reconcile themselves with the trials of everyday living.

Many religious organizations are caught unprepared to address current and topical issues. Their common solution has been to resort to religious orthodoxy or rigidity, because of which some solutions offered by

religious institutions are found to be unsatisfactory to the youth. This feature does not deny the important role which religion can play in contributing to societal stability nor the relevance of religious values to today's living.

7. Young working women

The competition for scarce resources in a largely male-dominated community sets severe limits on the participation of women in general, and in particular on young women in poverty groups.

In the agricultural sector, women's multiple roles are: gathering, processing and preparation of food for consumption, education, care and the socialization of small children, domestic chores including fetching of fuel and water, maintenance of livestock and trading of surplus products. Their efforts, particularly if they are young, are seldom recognized and their work remains unpaid, unrecorded, and neglected by planners.

The large number of young women are concentrated in the labor-intensive manufacturing sector and in the urban service sector. Even in occupations where women form the majority, the senior positions are held by men and working conditions are sometimes far from desirable.

In terms of education, school enrollment remains lower for girls than for boys at the secondary and tertiary levels; the drop-out rate is higher for girls than boys and the participation of girls in vocational and technical courses is limited. Women are stereotyped as dependents, "secondary earners." Culturally they are portrayed as traditional, graceful, smiling and docile.

8. Juvenile delinquency and drug abuse

The crime rate among the youth is still rising. The causes are: family disintegration, rapid urbanization and industrialization, inadequacy of educational opportunities, housing and employment opportunities, conflict between traditional and modern values, and meaninglessness of life and work.

Drug abuse affects youth of all strata. Deterrent measures are designed to treat the symptoms rather than the cause of the problems. The radical solution is slowing down of materialistic-oriented development in favor of a more balanced approach.

The preventive strategy is to try genuinely to understand youth aspirations and problems. As a start, the involvement of sympathetic youth

leaders and youth workers in such preventive schemes could be meaningful, as they could also exercise peer group influence among other youth.

9. Health of youth in poverty groups

The young are at the beginning of many roads, the beginning of their social and public roles and of their search for family life.

Poverty means few or no options to develop these beginnings and threatens the physical and mental health of young people, particularly in rural, semi-urban and shanty-town areas. Problems like lack of familial and social support, drugs, alcohol, early pregnancy also lead to widespread frustration, to social stigma and mental disorders.

The young poor are the most underprivileged in relation to primary health care. In many countries children and young people subsist on food rations which are often far below what is considered normal or adequate. UNICEF has estimated that 25 percent of children and youth in the least developed countries suffer from malnutrition.

The young should share the responsibility for their own health and well-being.

10. Problems of disabled youth

There is an estimated 500 million disabled persons in the world. Eighty percent are estimated to live in the developing countries; their disability was acquired mostly in their young years.

The causes of this disability are: (a) wars and the consequences of war; (b) a high proportion of overburdened and impoverished families; (c) overcrowded and unhealthy housing and living conditions; (d) populations with a high proportion of illiteracy and little awareness of basic social service, health and education measures; (e) stress and other psychosocial problems associated with the transition from a traditional to modern society; (f) the imprudent use of medications; (g) misuse of therapeutic substances; and (h) illicit use of drugs and stimulants and other indirect factors.

C. From a Psychological Point of View

Doctor Naomi R. Ruiz, an experienced parent-educator and guidance counselor at the College of Arts and Sciences of the Ateneo de Manila University, presents the framework given below to help us understand the various stages of human growth and development.

A Developmental View of Adolescence

Since adolescence happens to the family and not only to an individual child, it is important to see this period from two developmental frameworks — Erikson's Psychosocial Theory and the Stages of the Family Life Cycle. By superimposing the family life cycle framework on the psychosocial stages, we are broadening our perspectives and adding to the depth by which we can view the period of adolescence.

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Erikson describes life as consisting of eight stages from birth to death. At each stage of development a crisis emerges which may either be positively or negatively resolved. A positive resolution leads to the strengthening of the ego and therefore to greater adaptation. A negative resolution weakens the ego and inhibits adaptation. How a person resolves a crisis will have a lasting effect on one's view of self and society.

Basic trust vs. mistrust. During infancy which covers the period from birth to one year and a half, the first psychosocial crisis is basic trust vs. mistrust. This is the time when children are most helpless and dependent on adults. When the caregivers satisfy the infants' needs in a loving and consistent way, they will develop a feeling of basic trust. If, however, the caregivers are inconsistent in satisfying their needs and are rejecting, they will develop a feeling of mistrust.

Trusting children are optimistic and hopeful. Those lacking trust are fearful, anxious, and suspicious.

Autonomy vs. shame and doubt. At this stage, the toddlers have developed a variety of skills — walking, climbing, pushing, pulling, and talking. It marks the beginning of self-control and self-confidence. Children pit their wills against those of their parents. Hence, it is the first crisis of opposition. Parents, however, have to make their children experience freedom within a structure. They must be reasonably tolerant but firm enough to assure behavior that is socially approved.

Initiative vs. guilt. If at the previous stage, children learned that they were people, this time they begin to explore what they can become. Thus they ask endless questions and take toys apart. Parents then should encourage self-initiated activities and fantasies, so that children can leave this stage with a healthy sense of initiative. If, however, their self-initiated behaviors and imagination are ridiculed, then they will move on to the next stage with a lack of self-sufficiency and with a feeling of unworthiness.

During this period, the limits are also tested to find out what is permissible and what is not. Hence, parents need to provide supervision without interference.

Industry vs. inferiority. School children from six to eleven years learn the skills for economic survival which will enable them to become productive members of the community. Their most important lesson is the pleasure of completing their work by steady attention and diligence. It is from this lesson that the sense of industry arises.

At this stage, parents shifts from command to guidance.

Identity vs. identity diffusion. It is much easier for individuals to arrive at their identities if they had positively resolved the previous developmental crises. With basic trust on others and on self, self-sufficiency and competence, they will be more able to experiment with various roles during adolescence in developing mature individuality. Negative resolutions of the foregoing crises, however, result in either identity diffusion or negative identity. The former is characterized by the inability to choose a role in life thus prolonging their psychological moratorium indefinitely. The latter are all those things that children are warned not to become.

Stages of Family Life Cycle

The family with adolescents. It is at this particular stage of the family life cycle when both parents and children are undergoing major interlocking transitions in their development. The adolescents' shift of loyalty to the peer group coincide with their parents' midlife crisis. The teenagers own ambivalence towards independence makes it all the more confusing for parents. The latter cannot see clearly when the teens are making real efforts to move towards independence or when they are really looking for parental limits. At this moment in time, they feel ineffective and ineffectual. These feelings of futility and rejection prevent them from being available for help when really needed by their teenagers.

Adolescent children evoke memories of their parents own adolescent turmoil. If the latters' adolescence were stressful, they become less sure of their own parenting. For instance, if the father had dropped out of college, his son's poor performance in school may become a trying issue. Or if the mother had difficulty handling sexual issues during adolescence, her daughter's budding sexuality may turn out to be a tense issue. Thus there is a refocusing on tasks left uncompleted during the first stage of the family life cycle — the Unattached Adult.

ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Psychosocial Crisis	Age	Significant Relations	Contribution to Identity Formation	Favorable Outcome	Unfavorable Outcome
I. Basic Trust vs. Mistrust (Infancy)	C-1½	Mother or Maternal Surrogate	I am what I am given	Drive & Hope	Fear
II. Autonomy vs. Shame (Toddler)	1½-2½	Parents	I am what I will freely	Self-control & Will Power	Self-Doubt
III. Initiative vs. Guilt (Preschool)	3-5	Basic Family	I am what I imagine	Direction & Purpose	Unworthiness
IV. Industry vs. Inferiority (School Child)	6-11	Family, neighborhood School	I am what I can do	Method & Competence	Incompetence
V. Identity vs. Identity Diffusion (Adolescence)	12-20	Peer Group	I am I	Devotion & Fidelity	Uncertainty
VI. Intimacy vs. Isolation (Early Adulthood)	20-24	Partners in Friendship	We are what we love	Affiliation & Love	Promiscuity
VII. Generativity vs. Self-Absorption (Middle Age)	25-65	Family, Friends World Work	I am what I care for	Care	Selfishness
VIII. Integrity vs. Despair (Aging)	65-Death	Family, Friends Humanity	I am what survives of me.	Wisdom	Despair

Of both parents, though, the most affected is the mother since she is generally more in tune with the emotional ups and downs of family members than the father. If her self-esteem is based on how the children are doing, their struggle to separate will more likely be stressful to her. With a battered and empty nest staring at her, she raises the question: "Is this all that life has to offer?"

Indeed, these are difficult years for both the parents and the adolescents.

Discussion Guide I

My perception of the youth in my country

- A. 1. What do you think are the most pressing problems of young people in your country? Identify at least five problems and rank them according to their seriousness and extensiveness.
2. How would you explain the root cause(s) of the problems you have identified?
3. Have you in any way taken part in responding to the above-mentioned problems?
4. If you have not taken part, have other organizations (in government, private and Church sectors, etc.) responded concretely to these problems?
5. What organization(s) in your country are most involved with the youth?
- B. 1. What are the common ambitions of young people in your country? Mention and rank them according to what you consider as the most popular choice. What do you think is the reason for these ambitions?
2. What are the common interests/hobbies of young people in your country?
3. What do young people spend their money on?
4. How do young people spend their time outside of their home, school or office?
5. What media are young people exposed to? Rank them in the order of popularity.

6. In terms of media context (drama, musicals, sex/x-rated, detective, romance, action, comedy, horror, religious, current affairs, science fiction, etc.) identify five which appeal to young people.
 7. How many hours daily do young people spend with media?
 8. How often do young people read?
 9. What kind of books are a favorite with them?
 10. What are their top five values in life?
- C. 1. Are the young people close to the Church?
2. When they have problems, who of the following do they go to:
 - Teachers - Parents - Priests - Nuns - Friends
 - Others ... Specify:
 3. What Church organizations are most popular with young people?
 4. What do you think are the youth's expectations of the Church?
 5. How is the Church involved with the out-of-school youth (school drop-outs)?

II. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

A. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

At their meeting in Manila, on November 29, 1970, the bishops declared.

It is our resolve ... in this continent of the young, to become, in them and for them, the "Church of the young." We wish to be, in them and for them, a Church that they shall see as worthy of their devotion and hope; which seeks to understand and trust them; which is responsive to the needs and demands of men in contemporary society; a Church not "established" in the world and which lives out in deeds, day by day, the conviction of her faith and the imperatives of her compassion. We know this is the Church they seek, and with the courage with which Christ shall support our weakness, we shall endeavor to rise to this demand. (Message of the Asian Bishops' Meeting, No. 23)

Four years later, in 1974, when the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences held its first plenary assembly in Taipei, the bishops again underscored the importance of concern for the youth.

Above all, the apostle in Asia must understand those who are young. Asia has more young people than all the rest of the world put together. The average Asian in 1974 is seventeen years of age. By the year 2000 we will have as many Asians under seventeen as there are people in the whole face of the earth, right now.

Asia is young. And so the Church in Asia must be young. The apostle in Asia must speak in languages, and think the thoughts, and feel in his heart the emotions of those who are under seventeen. He must be patient when they are impulsive, and understanding when they are unreasonable. Above all, he must appreciate their real contributions: freshness of outlook, vitality, creativity, courage, compassion, integrity, generosity, their open heart, their willingness to learn. (FABC 1, Briefer Statement, Nos. 23-24)

B. Pope John Paul II

On the occasion of International Youth Year in 1985, the Holy Father wrote an apostolic letter addressed to the youth of the world.

Some of the salient points in this letter are the following:

1. Youth Is Hope

Since man is the fundamental and at the same time the daily way of the Church, it is easy to understand why the Church attributes *special importance to the period of youth* as a key stage in the life of every human being. You young people are the ones who embody this youth: you are the youth of the nations and societies, the youth of every family and of all humanity; you are also the youth of the Church. We are all looking to you, for all of us, thanks to you, in a certain sense continually become young again. So your youth is not just your own property, your personal property or the property of a generation; it belongs to the whole of that space that every man traverses in his life's journey, and at the same time it is *a special possession belonging to everyone*. It is a possession of humanity itself.

In you there is hope, for you belong to the future, just as the future belongs to you. For *hope is always linked to the future*; it is the expectation of "future good things." As a Christian virtue, it is linked to the expectation of those eternal good things which God has promised to man in Jesus Christ. And at the same time, this *hope*, as both a Christian and a human virtue, is *the expectation of*

the good things which man will build, using the talents given him by Providence.

In this sense the future belongs to you young people, just as it once belonged to the generation of those who are now adults, and precisely together with them it has become the *present reality*. Responsibility for this present reality and for its shape and many different forms lies first of all with adults. To you belongs *responsibility* for what will one day become reality together with yourselves, but which still lies in the future.

2. Youth, a Special Treasure

There are however reasons—and they are also *objective reasons*—for thinking of youth as a special treasure that a person experiences at this particular period of his or her life. It is a period which is certainly distinguished from the period of childhood (it is precisely the time when one leaves the years of childhood), just as it is also distinguished from the period of full maturity. For the period of youth is *the time* of a particularly *intense discovery of the human "I"* and of the properties and capacities connected with it. Before the inner gaze of the developing personality of the young man or woman, there is gradually and successively revealed that *specific* and in a sense unique and unrepeatable *potentiality of a concrete humanity*, in which there is as it were inscribed the whole *plan of future life*. Life presents itself as the carrying-out of that plan: as "self-fulfilment."

The question naturally deserves an explanation from many points of view; but to express it in a few words, one can say that the treasure which is youth reveals itself in precisely this shape or form. This is *the treasure of discovering* and at the same time of *organizing, choosing, foreseeing* and *making the first personal decisions*, decisions that will be important for the future in the strictly personal dimension of human existence. At the same time, these decisions are of considerable social importance.

3. Youth's Heritage of Culture

It is a question here first of all of *the heritage of being a human person*, and then of being one in a more precisely defined personal and social situation. Here even the physical similarity to one's parents plays it spart. Still more important is the whole *heritage of culture*, at the almost daily center of which is *language*. Your parents have taught each one of you to speak the language which constitutes the essential expression of the social bond with other people. This bond is established by limits which are wider than the family itself or

a given environment. These are the limits of at least a *tribe* and most often those of a *people* or a *nation* into which you are born.

In this way the family inheritance grows wider. Through your upbringing in your family you share in a specific culture; you also *share in the history* of your people or nation. The family bond means at the same time membership of a community wider than the family and a still further basis of personal identity. If the family is the first teacher of each one of you, at the same time—*through the family*—you are also taught by the tribe, people or *nation* with which you are linked through the unity of culture, language and history. ...

Writing to you young people, I try to have before my mind's eye the complex and separate situations of the *tribes, peoples and nations* of our world. Your youth, and the plan of life which during your young years each one of you works out, are from the very beginning *part of the history* of these different societies, and this happens not "from without" but pre-eminently "from within." It becomes for you a question of family awareness and consequently of national awareness: *a question of the heart, a question of conscience*. The concept of "homeland" develops immediately after the concept of "family," and in a certain sense one within the other. And as you gradually experience this social bond which is wider than that of the family, you also begin to share *in responsibility for the common good* of that larger family which is the earthly "homeland" of each one of you. The prominent figures of a nation's history, ancient or modern, also guide your youth and foster *the development of that social love* which is more often called "love of country".

4. Youth's Sense of Truth and Freedom

And in this sphere Christ's words: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free," become an essential program. Young people, one might say, have an inborn "sense of truth." And truth must be used for freedom: young people also have a spontaneous "*desire for freedom*." And what does it mean to be free? It means to know how to use one's freedom in truth—to be "truly" free. *To be truly free* does not at all mean doing everything that pleases me, or doing what I want to do. Freedom contains in itself the criterion of truth, the discipline of truth. To be truly free means *to use one's own freedom for what is a true good*. Continuing therefore: to be truly free means to be a person of upright conscience, to be responsible, to be a person "for others."

All this constitutes the *very kernel* of what we call education, and especially what we call self-education. Yes: self-education! For an interior structure of this kind, where "the truth makes us free,"

cannot be built only "from outside." Each individual must build this structure "from within" — *build it with effort, perseverance and patience* (which is not always so easy for young people). And it is precisely this structure which is called self-education.

5. Youth is Growth

The Evangelist Luke writes: "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.*"

Youth, then, is "growth." In the light of all that has been said so far on this theme, this Gospel passage strikes one as particularly *synthetical and evocative*. Growth "in stature" refers to an individual's natural relationship with time: this growth is as it were an "upward" stage in the course of a person's life. It is the time of psychophysical development: the growth of all the energies *through which* normal human individuality *is built up*. But this process has to be accompanied by "growth" in wisdom and grace.

Man today, especially in the context of highly developed technical and industrial civilization, has become the explorer of nature on a grand scale, often treating it in a utilitarian way, thus destroying many of its treasures and attractions and polluting *the natural environment* of earthly existence. But nature is also given to us to be admired and contemplated, like a great mirror of the world. It reflects the *Creator's covenant with his creature*, the center of which has been from the beginning, in man, directly created "in the image" of the Creator.

And so my hope for you young people is that your "growth in stature and in wisdom" will come about through contact with nature. Make time for this! Do not miss it!

I likewise hope that this "growth" will come about through contact *with the achievements of humanity*, and still more through contact *with living people*. How great is their richness and variety! Youth seems particularly sensitive to the truth, goodness and beauty contained in the works of humanity. Through contact with people on the level of so many different cultures, of so many arts and sciences, *we learn the truth about man* (so evocatively expressed also in Psalm 8), the truth which can build up and enrich the humanity of each one of us.

In a special way, however, we study the human person *through contact with others*. Being young should enable you to "increase in wisdom" through this contact. For youth is the time for new contacts, *new companionships and friendships*, in a circle wider than the family alone. There unfolds before us the vast field of experience, which is important not only in regard to knowledge but also in

relation to education and ethics. This whole youthful experience will be useful to the extent that it gives you the ability to make critical judgments and above all *the capacity of discernment* in all things human. Your youthful experience will be blessed, you will gradually learn from it that essential *truth concerning man*—concerning every human being and concerning oneself—the truth that is summed up thus in the famous passage of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: “Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”

In this way therefore we learn to know other human beings, in order to become more fully human through our capacity for “self-giving”: *for becoming* men and women “*for others*.” This truth about man—this anthropology—has its incomparable *culmination* in *Jesus of Nazareth*. Hence the great importance of his young years, when “he increased in wisdom ... and in favor before God and man.”

My wish for you too is a similar “growth” *through contact with God*. For this purpose, contact with nature and with other people can help indirectly, but the special and direct means is *prayer*. Pray and learn to pray! Open your hearts and your consciences to the one who knows you better than you know yourselves. Talk to him! Deepen your knowledge of the word of the Living God by reading and meditating on the Scriptures.

III. YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

Against the background of the situation of our Asian youth, and keeping in mind the commitment to youth already expressed by the Church, the reality of the Church's youth ministry can be discussed. As a point of introduction, however, it should be remarked that whatever has been said of this ministry in the past in official Church documents should not limit discussion. The analysis of the situation of youth may well lead to conclusions and determinations that go beyond pronouncements that have been made to date. As in so many areas of church ministry, youth ministry should challenge our *creativity*. There is something special about ministry to youth, and the response to the needs of youth must reflect that special nature in youth ministry. In a very real sense when we speak of youth ministry we are speaking of a ministry to a special culture (or sub-culture). Just as the demands of inculturation call for very creative responses, youth ministry likewise calls for responses that are appropriate for the youth culture.

How, then, should we describe just what youth ministry is in the

Church, and what do we look for in the youth minister? As a starting point for discussion, the following observations of Michael Warren in his book *Youth Ministry: A Book of Readings* (Paulist Press, 1977) may be helpful:

What then is youth ministry, as it is currently developing in the Catholic Church? Most briefly, it is a comprehensive effort on the part of the Church to serve a broad range of the needs of youth. It is a determination on the part of the community to be identified by young people as a community of care. It is a program to serve the total person and not just the doctrinal understanding of the adolescent. Another way of phrasing the aim of youth ministry: it is an effort on the part of the beloved community to welcome young people into the midst of a rich and enriching communal existence. Youth ministry is the community's stance of welcome toward young people, a stance characterized by gentleness and friendship. Eventually youth ministry will lead to deep commitments on the part of youth, but these commitments will emerge from the inner life of a community and will not be seen as alienating demands imposed by an impersonal organization.

Quite clearly the task of ministering to youth is an immense one that calls for an instinctive exercise of sympathetic caring, as well as an awareness of a certain professionalism. From the minister our youth will hopefully experience genuine affection that shows itself in very positive concern and understanding. At the same time today's youth minister should be alert and open to the contributions that have been made and are being made on various professional levels of psychology, sociology, religious education, etc.

It may be stating the obvious to say that any adult who is directly ministering to youth should manifest attitudes of sincere affection for the young people, but precisely because the adult is entering into a different culture when working among youth the observation does bear mentioning. *Mutatis mutandis*, one could say that just as the process of inculturation challenges the foreign missionary to enter into a different culture with very positive attitudes of apostolic love, so the youth minister is challenged to undergo a process of similar inculturation. A contrived but insincere stance will not do; our young people today are perceptive and will see through any pretense. They can and will detect very quickly those shepherds who come to them in the shepherd's clothing but without the shepherd's heart. The words of 1 Peter 5 can ring with special poignancy for the "elders" ministering to youth: "God's flock is in your midst; give it a shepherd's care. Watch over it willingly as God would have you do, not under constraint; and not for shameful profit either, but generously. Be examples to the flock, not lording over those assigned to you ..."

A further reflection on the image of the true shepherd (as opposed to the false or "phony" one) prompts the observation that the adult working among youth should be a person who is not using the youth for his/her personal needs. It has not been unknown that some youth ministers seem to need the young people more than the young people need them. Emotional stability and a suitable freedom from personal psychoemotional crises are necessary if the youth minister is to come across to the young flock as truly genuine. Often one senses a tendency towards possessiveness that betrays the false shepherd. Self-awareness on the part of the minister is an important ingredient for a ministry to young people who themselves are struggling to establish their own self-identities.

Youth ministers must be reminded of the basic importance of accepting the young people as they are and where they are. This reminder should not be interpreted as a suggestion that the young should not be challenged. Far from it. But it is a reminder that the problems that young people do not experience should not be forced upon them. (Again self-awareness tells the youth ministers that their "hang-ups" are not to be interpreted as the young people's "hang-ups").

Genuine understanding affection for the young will enable the minister to hear the cry of the young as it comes from the young people themselves, interpreted for what it really is.

The growth and development of the young person follows along patterned series of stages. It cannot be expected that the process of becoming fully adult can be short-circuited. The challenges presented to the youth, therefore, must be appropriate. *Gradually* they are led to the commitments that will mark their adult lives. The adult youth minister, as a good shepherd or as an adult companion for the young, will help to facilitate the process of growing commitment with understanding, patience, and with appropriate challenges that help to draw the young to greater maturity.

If it is true that formation for commitment involves the youth in a process that develops through stages of growth, the same is also true in the area of what may be called doctrinal formation. Those whose precise ministry to youth lies in the field of religious education are well advised to exercise the same patience and understanding as any other youth minister. Instruction which does not respect the capacity to assimilate instruction can be counter-productive from the point of view of a religious education that should be formative. Here again, professional studies and research on the content and methodology of religious education have much to say to the minister who is the teacher and who sincerely wants to educate the young people of today so that their lives will be based on truth and will witness to truth.

In more ways than one such a youth ministry calls for a sense of community. The youth minister has to be conscious of the fact that no one person can alone accomplish all that this ministry requires. The youth minister needs to work in community with other youth ministers. The young people themselves need to experience that they are not simply individuals but real sharers in the richness of community.

For the youth ministers, the simple fact that their ministry, when seen in its totality, covers such a wide spectrum of demands, is enough of an indication that their individual contributions must be supported and complemented by what others contribute. An obvious example of this would be the case of a parish priest who must be engaged in ministering to the young people of his parish. He cannot neglect his other pastoral responsibilities. He needs the help that other youth ministers can provide for the parish. He needs the help of professionals. He needs to be aware of the services that can be provided by other individuals and by groups and organizations that have charisms and expertise that he himself does not possess. It is important in this specialized ministry that the laity's role be not blocked by an attitude of clericalism. Here our focus should be on the contribution of the Laity in youth ministry.

In this context of community what is very striking is the need that young people themselves have for community. It is with and among their peers that young people assimilate and interiorize so much of what they receive. As important as a one-to-one form of ministry may be for youth, it is nevertheless an established fact that even a one-to-one ministry takes place within the context of a life that is lived significantly in peer companionship. Witness the number of youth groups and youth organizations that flourish today. They give the young people that very necessary sense of belonging. The power of peer relationships cannot be denied and should not be neglected in a meaningful youth ministry.

By way of parenthesis it should be noted that such a need for community on the part of youth makes a paradoxical demand on youth ministers. On the one hand the adult minister is asked to give a presence to the youth (with all of the understanding attitudes mentioned above), but on the other hand the same minister is asked to give the youth their own "space" where they can be by themselves. The friendship that the youth seek in their adult ministers has to be expressed in real togetherness with the ministers, but at the same time that friendship has to be characterized by a high level of trust by the ministers in the youths themselves. The effectiveness of such trusting friendship can be seen in the success that peer-counseling among the youth has achieved in so many places today. Thus, in the total picture of youth ministry, youth are seen not only being ministered to by adult ministers but also actively ministering themselves to one another, supported by adults.

The youth who experience community are desirous of celebrating in community. Liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations, designed especially for the young (and often by the young) are characteristically important for a total youth ministry. One cannot fail to be impressed by the variety of expressions that are integrated into so many youth celebrations: exuberant joy; intense prayerful silence; dance and song; openness to the word of God in Scripture and in the neighbor; reaching out in concern and support for one another; admission of sins and failings and a willingness to exchange healing forgiveness. Together, young people meet in groups to pray and give witness to their growing faith.

Youth ministry cannot be satisfied, however, if the community to which the young people belong is limited to the young themselves. The wider church community, while recognizing the need for the youth to experience peer-community life, nevertheless must present itself as a community in which the young people are truly welcome members who have their role to play. In the larger community, youth should be affirmed and encouraged with genuine care.

The youth minister is a friend, a guide, an organizer, a person who can understand and serve the many needs of the young. The youth minister is also a teacher who can lead and challenge the young. The youth minister is a person who gives sincere personal witness to faith, leading the youth to God in prayer and worship. The youth minister helps to bring out the best in the young as the young themselves experience what it is to love one another and to celebrate their lives in liturgy and other forms of praise. The youth minister is a counselor and a healer who affirms the young as they strengthen their own self-identity. The youth minister is a patient and sympathetic companion with the youth on their own road to mature faith shown in commitment and service. The youth minister is a concrete manifestation of the wider community's love and care for the youth. The youth minister is not just one person since no one person can be and do all that youth ministry demands. Hopefully the youth minister is a humble believer who rejoices that God has called him or her to be an instrument, according to the gifts God has given, of the special love of the Lord for the young. In a context of trying "to be all things to all," the youth minister is convinced in faith that whatever is done for the young ones is done for the Lord himself. The youth minister is a gift to today's youth just as today's youth is one of God's gifts to the Church.

Discussion Guide II

In the light of what has been presented, studied, reviewed and discussed in this workshop thus far, what would the workshop participants like to recommend as a statement or declaration of this plenary assembly of the FABC:

1. to the Asian youth in general?
2. to their youth ministers in particular?
3. to the local Churches as a whole?
4. to their respective bishops' conferences?

IV. CONCLUSIONS: PLANNING FOR PASTORAL ACTION

A necessary stage for any planning process for the development of an appropriate pastoral ministry is that of an analysis of the situation to which the ministry responds. For the most part the preceding sections of this discussion guide have attempted to sharpen that analysis. It is important, however, to go beyond the analysis to bring the discussion to its goal of recommending action.

While the discussion itself engages the episcopal shepherds of the Asian churches, the theme of the assembly is the vocation and mission of the laity. Whatever recommendations are made, therefore, should be such as to promote the participation of the laity in the area of youth ministry.

Three areas or levels conveniently present themselves for concrete planning and for the surfacing of recommendations for the general assembly. The first is that of the *diocese*, the second is that of the *episcopal conferences*, and finally the third is that of the *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences* itself.

On the level of each *diocese* a number of questions might be asked and these can serve as starting points for shaping concrete plans and/or recommendations.

1. Has an analysis of the situation of youth been made of the diocese? If not, can it be made? What steps should be taken to insure the reliability of the analysis?

2. In relation to youth ministry, what needs are indicated by an analysis of the situation in the diocese? How can these needs be met? Is there creativity in responding to the needs of youth? What specific pastoral ministries are called for? What structures are needed for the promotion of the appropriate ministries to youth? What are the resources which are available in the diocese? How can the laity be involved as participants in youth ministry? How is the youth ministry of the diocese related to the overall pastoral plan of the diocese? What are the needed structures for an ongoing evaluation of the youth ministry of the diocese?

3. Is there a program for the formation of the laity who are or will be ministering to youth? Are young people themselves incorporated into youth ministry and how are they to be formed as ministers to the youth in the diocese?

On the level of the *episcopal Conferences*, the commitment to youth ministry may well be expressed in the support and encouragement given to the various dioceses that are represented in the conferences. The presumption here is that it is on the diocesan level that the actual ministry to youth is organized and carried out. In areas, however, where the dioceses are unable, for one reason or another, adequately to implement an appropriate program of youth ministry, the responsibility will perhaps be that of the episcopal conferences. If such is the case, the questions posed above for the dioceses will be addressed to the episcopal conferences.

But even where the various dioceses do have flourishing programs for youth ministry, the episcopal conferences may have responsibilities with a view to supporting and strengthening what is done on the diocesan level.

1. What support can and should be given by the episcopal conferences to the dioceses? Should there be any coordination related to youth ministry on the level of the episcopal conference, and if so, what should it be? Does the episcopal conference have a role to play in the formation of lay leaders in youth ministry, and if so, what should it be?

2. In general, how can the episcopal conferences complement what is being done on the diocesan level? What are the needs on the diocesan level to which the episcopal conference can respond?

3. Are any structures necessary or desirable on the level of the episcopal conferences for the promotion of the youth ministry among the laity?

If it is true that the episcopal conferences serve to encourage and support, and perhaps to complement, what is being done on the diocesan level, all the more will it be true that the responsibility of the *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences* will be one of support and not one that replaces organizations responsible for local implementation. There are, however, some questions which may well be asked of the FABC in the context of youth ministry and the laity.

1. In view of the importance of youth ministry, should the FABC establish some sort of a task force or committee to serve the needs of youth ministry in the region? If so, how would the objectives of such a body be described? How would it relate to the episcopal conferences and to the

dioceses? In what way would it be able to give real encouragement to the ministry of the laity? How would it be organized? How would its members be selected?

2. Finally, in the context of this 1986 Plenary Assembly of the FABC, what statement should be incorporated into the general statement of the assembly with regard to laity and youth? What recommendations should be made by this discussion group for the assembly and what recommendations should be made by the assembly itself?

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