

FABC FOURTH PLENARY ASSEMBLY: WORKSHOP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TRUSTING, ENTRUSTING THE LAITY IN MEDIA

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“I know my own, and my own know me” (Jn 10:14)

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This discussion guide has been prepared for the workshops of the Fourth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' 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."

INTRODUCTION

Communication Ministry Illustrated in the Philippine Revolution of February, 1986: "I know my own, and my own know me" (Jn 10:14)

It was a radio S.O.S. that precipitated the onset of the crowds that peacefully gathered to eventually topple the 20-year old dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the non-violent revolution of February, 1986.

Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Fidel Ramos had just announced their defection from the regime. People hesitated to believe them. Was this just another trick of the government? Then came the radio message of Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila: "Go to Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo, and lend your support to our good friends Minister Enrile and General Ramos, and protect them. I do not wish a single drop of blood to be shed ..."

At a single call of their bishop, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, old and young, poor and rich, left their homes in the middle of the night. Risking their lives, they successfully prevented a bloody confrontation between the enemy camps of reformists and the loyalist troops. Armed only with rosaries, crucifixes, statues of the Virgin Mary, and offerings of food and flowers, they forced tanks and soldiers in full battle gear to turn back without firing a shot. People power was born.

People heeded the call because it came not from a stranger, but from the shepherd whose voice had grown familiar to them during the dark days of martial law and the darker days that followed from the Aquino assassination to the recent presidential election. Through brief messages to the Filipino people aired regularly over the Catholic radio station, Veritas, he had steadfastly supported them and encouraged all men and women of good will not to give up.

Thus, by the fateful night of February 22, 1986, strong communication bonds had already been forged between the bishop and the flock.

When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him because they do not recognize the voice of a stranger (Jn 10:4-5).

Speaking through the station that had become the voice of freedom, the most listened to, and the most credible because it alone dared to speak the truth—Radio Veritas, the Cardinal was listened to not only by the Catholics, but by all lovers of truth and freedom.

There was another providential communication event that preceded the revolution: the Philippine Bishops' workshop in communication. Less than three weeks after the seminar, the bishops met in an emergency session and produced a statement which became the nation's blueprint for action within the following days. The bishops called a press conference which was attended by 250 national and international newsmen. The great television and radio networks of the United States and Europe were pursuing the bishops, asking them the same kind of dynamic questions that the seminar trainers had asked in the practice interviews.

It is people, not media, who communicate and act. But the media can be very instrumental in amplifying the communication till it can generate people power. The non-violence of the February Revolution in the Philippines, which won world-wide acclaim, was due to the repeated calls to reconciliation and to dialogue among the factions made possible largely by radio and television, while the fearless alternative print media had laid the groundwork for its triumph in the hearts and minds of the people, long before they had finally taken to the streets.

1. THE CHURCH IS COMMUNICATION

No one today needs to be told of the influence and importance of the media of social communication for effectively proclaiming God's word to our peoples. We therefore wish to make it our urgent collegial concern as Asian bishops to place them more fully at the service of the evangelization, education and development of our peoples (FABC I, 34).

Since this message of the Asian bishops was given in 1974, the evolution of communication and information technology has proceeded at such a pace that today no one can afford to ignore the place of modern media in the lives of even remote villagers. In fact, the whole world faces an upheaval in civilization comparable only to the advent of history with the invention of writing.

As Christians, we need not "mystify" this phenomenon. We only have to situate ourselves in the tradition of faith to know that God speaks to us through events in our history. "The Church is to read the *signs of the*

times for these to reveal the message of God and indicate the unfolding of the history of salvation under Divine Providence” (CP, 122).

We are entering into a new culture of communication and an economy of information that may seem chaotic and incomprehensible to many of us. In the midst of such a world, we realize that we are gifted with a light which enables us to give an order, a harmony, and a meaning to all that happens.

Our faith is founded on Revelation. What else is Revelation but a communication? The core of the Christian Message is communion: the ineffable communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is into this communion that we are invited to participate by faith in Jesus Christ.

As Christians, then, we have a message of hope to propose to this new culture: the unique communication that saves is that which comes to us from the Father of Jesus, passes through him and returns to the Father in the plenitude of the Spirit.

To be credible in this mission to the modern world, to be *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is challenged to be itself a model of communication.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is at the very center of Christian communication. Hearing and living it and witnessing to it are the basic calling of all Christians and their churches. Christians, we could say, are those who communicate with God and with other people in the way Jesus Christ communicated with them (WACC, Six Guiding Principles of Christian Communication).

Vatican Council II was the effort of the Church to communicate *ad intra* and *ad extra*. The search for a greater self-understanding is reflected in the great document *Lumen Gentium*. And the parallel effort to make itself more intelligible to the modern world and to reach out to it in dialogue produced the remarkable *Gaudium et Spes*.

The total ecclesiology present in these documents forms the basis for the communication process in the Church. From the one Christian vocation flows the common task and full participation in the Church's saving mission. Clergy and laity are co-responsible in evangelization. There is no place for dualism between clergy as “experts in supernatural matters” and the laity as “experts in natural matters.”

The question is: How can the vocation and mission of the laity be lived out truly according to the teaching of the Council on the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church considered in this total ecclesiology? This requires a new and deeper reflection on the part of all, with reference to or based on the experience of the local Churches, particularly the rich experience of the laity in the Church (Lineamenta, 26).

2. THE CHURCH IN DIALOGUE WITH ASIA

The mission of the Church consists essentially in a saving communication: the proclamation and execution of the Word of God and his plan of salvation in this concrete world.

In the concrete world that is Asia, “the preaching of Jesus Christ and his Gospel ... becomes a task which today assumes an urgency, a necessity and magnitude unmatched in the history of our Faith in this part of the world” (FABC I, 8).

This preaching of the Gospel in Asia, continue the Asian Bishops, involves dialogue — dialogue with the great religions of Asia, with the people, especially the poor.

It is a two-way relationship between the Church and the world. For she is not only a teaching, but also a listening, a learning Church. To discover the “seeds of God’s word” in the religions and in the lives of Asian peoples and nations, to learn “what our faith in Christ leads us to receive from God’s word,” the Church must come into close contact with these sources. The means of social communications are a great aid for this.

The greater the extent to which the means of social communication reflect contemporary reactions to ideas and events, whether they be Catholic or not, the more do they contribute towards this knowledge required by the Church (CP, 122).

On the other hand, the Church through her preaching of the Gospel, seeks to enable the seeds of God’s word in the religions and cultures of Asia to come to full flower and fruitfulness. The Church needs all the help that the media can offer to mediate this dialogue.

2.1 Communication through Mass Media

Through modern media the Church has possibilities of evangelization that are greater than at any previous age.

The modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel, of allowing Christians even when they are far away to share in sacred rites and worship and in ecclesiastical functions. In this way they can bind the Christian community closer together and invite everyone to participate in the intimate life of the Church (CP, 128).

Hence, the Church sees these media as gifts of God which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men and women in brotherhood and so help them to co-operate with his plan for their salvation (CP, 2).

The Church, however, is not blind to the ambivalent and even multi-valent values of modern media which, for good or for ill, are so effective that Pope John Paul II has described them as the "No. 1 power in the world." This is because modern means of communication reach humankind in all their faculties and have the power to move the whole person. And yet, all too often, mass media are dominated by economic and political interests. Their commercialization and use for propaganda purposes contain a "de-humanising and de-civilising potential ... which is always a danger" (Australian Bishops' Pastoral Letter, 1972)

It is therefore inadmissible to perceive the media as simply a neutral channel through which to pass the Gospel message. The Church, in her more recent teaching, points out that the value choices implicit in mass media may even be in profound contradiction to Gospel values.

... we must denounce the control and ideological manipulation of these media of social communications exercised by political and social groups ... Exploitation of passions, feelings, violence and sex for consumeristic purposes constitutes a flagrant violation of individual rights. The same is true of indiscriminate use of messages, either subliminal or repetitive, which show little respect for the person—the family in particular (Puebla, 1069).

Even where government and social bodies try to control programs and set standards for the quality and use of mass media, another problem situation has arisen with the advent of video technology. In Asia, the VCR's are no longer a luxury for the rich. They are brought home by contract workers in the Gulf countries. The most pervasive use of the VCR is to watch Western media products made for European and American audiences, and therefore not well suited to the values and cultures of the Third World. Unfortunately, it is hardly possible to control this new kind of colonization through media.

Because of the indispensable role of the means of social communications in the carrying out of her mission to the world, the Church must lucidly assess the responsibility she bears for the direction and the use she is called on by God to take in regard to modern media.

It is urgently necessary that the hierarchy and pastoral agents in general, all of us, become acquainted with the phenomenon of social communications, understand it and gain a deeper experiential contact with it. In this way we can adapt our pastoral responses to the new reality and integrate communications into our overall, co-ordinated pastoral effort (Puebla, 1083).

In this effort which belongs to the larger task of evangelization, it is especially to the laity that the Asian bishops appeal:

The corporate responsibility of the People of God in evangelization calls for stressing the need for a much wider and more intense involvement of the laity in the life and activity of the Church. Recognizing the fact that they share in their own right in the Church's over-all mission we would wish the clergy to enlist fully their cooperation to foster among them a deeper awareness of their specific task, and to create conditions by which their charisms will flourish into various forms of ministries (BIMA II, 11).

An outstanding example of this involvement of lay people in evangelization through the mass media is that of UNDA/Thailand whose members are all lay media people. In a country where less than 1/2% of the 45 million population are Catholics, the relationship with the secular broadcasters has become vital part of the UNDA activities.

The situation was typically one where all that the radio and TV stations were interested in were "the largest possible audience for their shows, and the maximum income they could get from their programs." But Thailand, which is a Buddhist country, does not allow the Catholics to buy more than 1/2% of the air-time given to other religions.

The hierarchy alone will not be able to do much about the situation. The need for lay people has arisen. Lay Christians from all related fields — whether in radio, TV, newspapers, printing, advertising, public relations, teaching, or even social work—met and discussed the situation.

They were only a handful, but they planned an effective strategy of action.

We all agreed that the first thing to do is to make the public understand our work, and that we care for them. We care for what they are watching and listening to. While no one seems to care enough to do anything about the many rotten programs being shown on TV, it was UNDA/Thailand which first introduced the television awards for outstanding TV programs of the year ... When we made the announcement about the awards, we got excellent support from the public, especially from newspapers, TV and radio stations. Three months after the first awards, another television awards was held in Bangkok. This time, by the government.²

2.2 Communication through Alternative Media

The mass media are so all-pervasive that they have come to be looked upon as *the* means of social communication. It is very important to realize that communication is a larger and far richer reality, and may not simply be identified with mass or electronic media. It must not be forgotten that every culture has its own proper long-existing means of communicating. In many cases, they may still be the more effective because they allow greater participation and reach the deeper levels of emotion and symbol. There is need, therefore, to preserve and develop these folk media as a vital part of the cultural heritage of our Asian peoples.

The Pontifical Commission for Social Communications Regional Conference on Social Communications for Southeast Asia in 1974 came up with this recommendation: "We should not neglect those traditional forms of audio-visual expression—shadow plays, puppet shows, dance drama—which still have a strong appeal in Asia."

The Pan Asian Meeting on Social Communications that followed affirmed the above recommendation in even stronger terms:

We recommend that immediate attention must be paid to the use at all stages of the very highly developed, rich traditional forms of communications found in our Asian heritages: tamash, kathakalaksheba (wandering storytellers), music, puppetry, shadow plays, numerous forms of dance drama.

These cultural media build community because they enable all the people of a basic community to become involved in the production of their own means of communication. Moreover, with their high credibility, traditional media are apt channels for transmitting and preserving the cultural identity and values of Asian peoples that are being threatened by

cheap, mediocre foreign imports. They are a trusted source of information or entertainment that uses the language, symbols and styles of the local cultures. When allied with electronic media, as in the case of the video-taping of puppet shows or dance dramas, the high status of the VCR further enhances the communication value of the traditional media.

Communion and progress, which are the principal objectives of all communication (CP, 1), are also successfully achieved by the proper use of group media. They have proven to be appropriate for evangelization because they offer a conscious and responsible role for the individual and for the individual as a member of community.

Without neglecting the necessary and urgent presence of the mass-oriented media, it is urgent that we intensify our use of the media of group communication. Besides being less costly and easier to handle, they offer the possibility of dialogue and they are more suited to a person-to-person type of evangelization that will evoke truly personal adhesion and commitment [EN, 45-46] (Puebla, 1090).

Although group media allow for a greater and more horizontal participation in, and control of, media, it must be noted that group media can also be subject to manipulation.

Skills and tools alone do not constitute group communication, even when used by groups. It comes into existence only when these tools are used within a framework of values which recognize group activity as something worthwhile in itself.³

On the other hand, mass media can be used in a democratic manner. After the viewing of a film, for example, discussion in groups can follow according to the principles of group media. This would be an instance of an alternative use of the mass media.

Another development that has been triggered off by the growth of basic communities and the recognition of the local Church ecclesiology is the community radio. It should not be confused with local radio, which can be as vertically one-way oriented as a national network. The key to genuine community radio is participation, or at least the real possibility for both listeners and producers to have a say in the running of the station and the content and format of programs.⁴

Community radio is perhaps the only way in which 'education through the media' can take place, where culture can be lifted out of its consumer context, where people can learn once more to speak to each other, to do so publicly ... Few listeners would deny the fact that values embedded in community radio are close to the heart of the Gospel.

Conclusion: Communication Challenges to Asian Churches

From the preceding discussion of different forms of social communication, as well as from the vision of the Church as communication arising from its source of Trinitarian communion, there are pastoral corrolaries and consequences which emerge. These will oblige us to revise our priorities, our behaviors and our objectives. How shall we intervene as Christians and as Church in the development of the new electronic media cultures as well as in the preservation of the traditional cultures and their proper media? How are we to harness, in a creative and discerning way, the rich but ambivalent possibilities of communication and information technology so that the cultures of Asia may be challenged and affected by the Christian community, by the vision and meaning coming from the Gospel?

All these questions are the proper concern of a *pastoral of the media* which calls for the deployment of charisms that would enrich the communication ministry. The exercise of these gifts is needed for the Church's leavening presence in the mediated world of 21st-century men and women.

In its diverse forms, communication ministry is the special competence of the laity. In many countries of Asia, as in the case of Thailand cited earlier, only the laymen and women can penetrate the world of mass media and allow the Church, through the enlightened exercise of their profession, to be present with her inspired intervention.

In the current state of the world, it is up to them (the laity) to promote the indispensable alliance between science and wisdom, between techology and ethics, between history and faith, so that God's plan can be progressively carried out and with it man's true good can be achieved.

If one wishes to point out some important areas in need of the work of Christian animation on the part of the laity, we can mention ... mass media.⁵

Not least of the communication challenges to the Asian Churches is that of trusting the laity in media. How far are the bishops ready to entrust in spirit and in truth the communication ministry to the laity?

3. Pastoral of the Media

Communication creates community. True communication, in the image of the original Trinitarian communication, creates community. And in a real community, there is authentic communication going on.

The Church in her totality is engaged in a continual communication process and in the communication ministry because she is God's chosen instrument to gather all the nations into one. Today, more than ever before, community can no longer be limited to a local in-group to which one feels a sense of belonging.

It is the very survival of the human race that is at stake in the attempt to arrive through peaceful dialogues to a community of nations. The Church has a special responsibility in these efforts which engage all men and women of good will. The Good Shepherd impels her: "And there are other sheep I have that are not of this flock, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd" (Jn. 10:16).

Christian communities, under the leadership of the bishops, who are the shepherds of each diocese, form the nucleus of one communication environment among themselves. Through the judicious use of the appropriate media, the magisterium of the Church can effectively disseminate to all the faithful and to all who are interested the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Christian reading of contemporary events and issues.

Communication ministry can become a true ministry of the word. In language that is clear to modern men and women, using symbols that are the most apt to reach their hearts, the Church can create a communication environment where truly human and Christian values are fostered to strengthen family bonds, human dignity and solidarity as well as the cultural identity of peoples, while opening them up to the universal dimension.

The Church's total concern for the quality of a communication environment congruent with authentic human developmental goals needs to be translated into the details of reality. This is a challenge to the Christian imagination.

The contribution of Catholics who work in mass media circles cannot be limited solely to a denunciation, always useful of course, nor a rejection, sometimes necessary, of the negative elements of serious topics. It must stretch to penetrating, competently and seriously, the operational levels so as to offer positive initiatives of value.⁶

Where must the Church focus her communication ministry?

Realizing that it is *people*, not media, who communicate, the most basic resource of the Church for the future is the *human base* of:

- 1) media-literate users
- 2) professionally trained and committed communicators
- 3) producers/controllers of media with a sense of social responsibility

3.1 Media Education

It is generally agreed, but not often acted upon, that the pressing moral duty of education deserves pastoral priority. Educommunication is part of total human formation today in order to understand the structures of the real world, and grasp what is needed to create a new and better world.

Experts and professional communicators alike bewail its lack: "Without media education, the professionals and producers can do nothing." For as long as people remain passive media consumers, they will be vulnerable to commercial and ideological manipulation.

And yet, people everywhere spend so much of their time being exposed to media. In Thailand, for example, according to the Prime Minister's deputy spokesman, Thai children (as of 1980) spent an average of 1200 hours watching television — the same number of hours they spend in school in one year.

Given this tremendous amount of exposure to media and their impact on the total person, especially in the formation of young people, the Churches in Asia may well ask the same question that the Australian bishops were concerned about:⁷

Are our youth becoming inbred mass media addicts, lacking in a positive, critical Christian approach to these powerful influences in the world of truth, morality, culture and entertainment?

In view of this life situation, the bishops of Australia, united in conference, reviewed their priorities. As a result, they took the decision to put the stress on media education. They ordered that media education be extended to primary and secondary classes in Catholic schools. They asked universities to undertake researches on the way in which mass media influence Australian society. They recommended the creation of mass media study groups. Instructions were issued to seminary heads to organize immediately courses on the means of social communications.

In 1974, the Pan Asian Meeting on Social Communications recommended media education for all, from bishops to school children. Among the recommendations were:

VI. 1. Seminars for Bishops

- a) To promote proper understanding of the place and influence of media in society, and their value as an apostolic tool.
- b) For the personal use of the bishops, since they so often stand as spokesmen for the Church.

VI. 2. Media Education in Schools and Colleges

- a) To be discriminating about the mass media, to choose, to know why they have chosen, and because they know, to be responsible—today these processes of choosing and using the media must be part of the training of our students. How to read a newspaper, how to evaluate a film, how to react to public opinion, how to recognize propaganda—these are important areas.

The Pontifical Commission for Social Communications Regional Conference for Southeast Asia (1974) confirmed the FABC's stress on media education:

The FABC recommended the 'basic training in the principles and methods of mass communications ...' We recognize as a body the wisdom of this recommendation. We feel that in Asia, now, media education is our prime priority, our most urgent task.

Since 1977, the Church's international communication organizations have made mass media education or educommunication a top priority. The UNDA World President⁸ declares that "each year this effort becomes more vital as media continue to dominate people's lives. All over the world, people need help to appreciate both the power of media and their own power to use media creatively and influence the media world."

Parents—the first educators—have a serious responsibility for media education. The Australian bishops have a special word for them: "Educate your children to a responsible, active Christian approach to the mass media in all aspects, and help them to become articulate in expressing their informed judgments."

The Synod of the Family also addressed an appeal to parents on their duty to undertake the media education of their own children:

The media of social communications often have a striking influence on the formation of children. Parents need actively to ensure the moderate, critical, watchful and prudent use of the media by discovering what effect they have on their children, and by controlling the use of media ... to train the conscience of their children ... and guide them in the choice or rejection of programmes available (The Christian Family in the Modern World, 75)

Catholics cannot afford to sit idly by as simple consumers. They must also become more and more the protagonists of public opinion so that mass media will always be at the service of humankind and able to meet their real needs.

3.2 Media Training

As the French Bishops observed in their Directives for a Pastoral of the Media (1980), formation is a primary requirement. To participate, and help people to take part, in the great exchanges made possible by media, to perceive what issues are at stake, to intervene whenever human dignity is in the balance, good will does not suffice. There is need for competence.

The FABC recommended that "basic training in the principles and methods of mass communications be part of seminary studies, in preparation for their ministry in a world so profoundly influenced by communication in its myriad forms." What has happened since then? This plea has been echoed so many times, and lastly, by UNDA, for the study of com-

munications which is *not* going on in many of our seminaries. The young priest must be taught to proclaim the word of God in the language of our times.

It is not only for seminarians and priests that media training is a must, but also for all pastoral agents, since the communications ministry is a dimension of all ecclesial ministries.

The task of providing training in the field of social communications is a priority one. Hence we must train all the agents of evangelization in this field (Puebla, 1085).

Models are needed for this training. What works for the First World is not necessarily good for the Third World. An exchange of working models among Asian Churches would be very profitable.

What kind of training should be provided? An observation made by a UNESCO survey of communication education completed in 1975 is also relevant for the Churches of Asia:

If national mass media systems are to meet national needs and become the effective instruments of social change that they are expected to be, future media professionals must be given more than technical training. They must be fired with a sense of mission in terms of the wider purpose of their countries, and a sense of respect for the audiences whom they will serve.

People who are gifted for communications must be found and they must receive more specialized training. They will determine the future of the Church's presence in communications in the next century.

The Pan Asian Meeting on Social Communications stressed the advisability of local before international training:

- I. 2. We recognize that our great need is trained personnel.
 - a) We should make use of the training facilities—universities and training institutions—which are now available, at the local level, and we should help to develop these.
 - c) When local training facilities are lacking, only then should new centers be established.
 - d) Local training centers, within a region, should enter into mutual agreements on professional specialization and co-operation.

It also wished to assure a thorough kind of formation — not only skills training:

- I. 2. b) Where the Catholic dimension is felt to be lacking, in the existing institutions, the training should be supplemented by specific programs of education and theological formation.

This spiritual formation of communicators is indispensable, so that they may not get so caught up in the business of communicating that they forget the purpose of their communications — the service of the word, of the Incarnate Word, as Archbishop Foley remarked.⁹ Indeed, an ongoing spiritual formation is necessary to maintain their commitment and effectiveness, so that the salt of the earth may not lose its savor.

3.3 Christian Media

The Church has been entrusted with the Gospel of salvation. She may not keep this light hidden under a bushel, but do her utmost to diffuse it so that it may be brought to bear on people's reflection on, and understanding of, the events that affect their lives. For this, the Church may find it useful to have its own media centers. But on the condition that they have a true Christian identity. This is achieved not simply by religious programs, but especially by a manner of communicating that is unquestionably Christian.

Christian communication is the proper and responsible use of media. An accurate news broadcast would be a good example of Christian broadcasting, not because it happens to be religious, but because it speaks the truth.

In the Latin American situation, the CELAM deemed it necessary for the Church to have its own media:

The Church must take pains to have its own channels of information and news that will ensure inter-communication and dialogue with the world. This is all the more urgent to the extent that experience reveals the continuing distortion of the thoughts and deeds of the Church by various agencies (Puebla, 1092).

The Pan Asian Social Communications meeting, while endorsing the establishment of Catholic media centers, sees the pastoral advantage, in the situation prevailing in most Asian countries, of working closely with existing institutions.

- V. 12. Where necessary and advantageous, production centers should be part of the Church's activities. But some of our productions should be done at existing stations, because these contacts are pastorally valuable and productive, are occasions of an influential presence, and improve our own professional standards. This also conserves our scanty resources. Catholic religious programs and those for human development should be the work of our centers. Our centers should program for Radio Veritas. Studios and equipment have to be planned and provided.

The official Catholic broadcasting station for Asia is Radio Veritas. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences assumes full pastoral responsibility for its overseas services.

3.4 Christian Communicators

In October 1982, leaders of the Church's work in communication in Latin America met with representatives of media professional associations, communication scholars and policy-makers. What was it that impressed the latter most in the Church's communication work? Some Christian communicators had literally risked their lives to give a living witness of Christian values in communication. This witnessing was by far the most impressive thing for the secular media professionals.

The Church has an equally high esteem for her media men. Pope John Paul II said of them: "They are the spark of life and the animating spirit of the various modern instruments of communication."

The true Christian professionals have an enormous influence through their regular programs. Their Christian commitment will inevitably influence the content of their productions or their image as performers, even though their programs may seem to have nothing to do with religion.

Christian professionals are involved in a great proportion of the programming in many countries. So the Church has to reach such professionals to let them know how much she values them and their efforts to do good with the media.

This esteem and concern have to be translated into trust and compensation commensurate to their profession (and its risks). How much freedom of expression and decision-making power do they actually have,

even in Church-owned media? These are factors that will contribute to Christian communicators' perception of their work as a privileged and noble vocation.

Catholic media professionals in Asia have a missionary role to play. In Taiwan, there is a Catholic Artists Guild — a small but very active group that responds to all invitations anywhere in the country to witness to their faith. This is done through discussions or performances followed by witness talks, or speeches in universities. They have found it a successful formula to make their Christian message entertaining while leaving a deep impression.

Media awards sponsored by the Church can be an evangelizing presence in the world of media. The most prestigious media awards in the Philippines are the Catholic Media Awards. Professional communicators and artists value them highly because they know that there are no politics or bribery behind the honors — only the expert acknowledgement of excellence in the profession. It is significant that the Board of Judges enjoy complete trust and freedom:

The high point in the development of the Catholic Media Awards in the Philippines came when the Cardinal said to the Board of Judges: 'I will not censor your decision. I've chosen you because I have confidence in your judgment and in your integrity. I will listen to your decisions when they are announced, like everybody else. And I will support them, to the full!¹⁰

3.5 Professional Communicators

The pastoral approach to professional communicators is a necessary facet of the media apostolate. On them rests the principal responsibility for production and programming. The quality of a country's communication environment depends on committed media professionals with a deep sense of social responsibility. The Church is thus eager to open up more dialogue with them. This is best done by working with these professionals as professionals, on a peer to peer basis. Evidently, this is the domain of the laity.

The Church can offer its services to developing Asian countries in the field of professional training of media personnel. Recognition and incentive given to quality performance through media awards have proven to be very effective.¹¹ A pastoral relationship with media professionals would include looking after their spiritual welfare as well as professional development.

Church initiatives to organize professional associational associations are welcome among the media people who often work in conditions of isolation and even of danger.¹²

They provide a forum where opinions and experiences can be exchanged. They form a basis for organized co-operation. They help in coping with the sort of difficulties that are inherent in the communicators' task (CP, 79).

One important activity of these associations could be the formulation of their industry's own code of ethics on a basis of principle and experience (CP, 79).

4. THE CHURCH AND THE NWICO

The Church's pastoral involvement in media should reflect a sensitivity to certain current issues that are part of a global debate towards a New World Information and Communication Order, whose values are congruent with the goals of Christian communication.

4.1 The Right to Communicate

Freedom today is the right to communicate. This is a human right. Unfortunately, it is not yet universally recognized and is widely violated.

To be able to communicate is a precondition for realizing one's human potential as an individual and as a member of a larger community. Communication is thus an individual and social necessity, and therefore a universal human right. To deprive a person of communication or of the means to communicate, is a serious infringement of human development (WACC, Six Principles of Christian Communication).

The right to communicate is likewise necessary for the full development of groups and communities. Hence the Church must ratify this right to communicate, with its correlative obligations within an ethical framework that calls for respect for personal privacy and truth (Puebla, 1095).

4.2 Appropriateness of Media

The principal concern is to establish genuine communication. The secondary question is to find the best means of conveying the message and

the best means to get people to express themselves. This is why the Church often resorts to alternative media — group media, folk media. It is not a matter of using the latest electronic technology. But a more basic concern for what the people really need and how best to respond to this need (for information, entertainment, etc.).

Technologies are appropriate to the extent that they can be used by the people to meet their social, cultural and economic needs. *Appropriateness* in communication technology is the extent to which a device can be appropriated and used, not left to its own momentum and direction. What is needed is for local interests to take control of their cultural destinies and use whatever means (high technology, old and traditional) to do so.

An interesting model is the study made by the Carribean Conference of Churches and Intermedia which project the enablement of popular appropriation of technology, not introduction of technology for its own sake.

Communication ventures which have discovered ways of translating ideals of alternative communication into practice did not set out specifically to design innovative technology. They have thought *first* of the appropriate pattern of communication that responds to the needs of the people and the community. *Then* they have looked for a technology that fits into and strengthens this pattern of communication.

4.3 Democratization of Media

A serious effort towards genuine communication within the Church is the only way the Church can be credible when it advocates the NWICO's value of democratization of media.

This requires more and better communication within the Church — communication that is horizontal as well as vertical, participatory rather than authoritarian.

Catholics should be fully aware of the real freedom to speak their minds which stems from a 'feeling for the faith' and from love ... Those who exercise authority in the Church will take care to ensure that there is exchange of freely held and expressed opinion among the People of God. More than this, they will set up norms and conditions for this to take place (CP, 116).

Democratization of communication flows from the fact of co-responsibility in the mission of the Church. It effectively assures the full, mature participation of the laity in the Church's apostolate, which involves the growth of public opinion.

Since the development of public opinion within the Church is essential, individual Catholics have the right to all the information they need to play their active role in the life of the Church. In practice this means that communications media must be available for the task. These should not only exist in sufficient number but also reach all the People of God (CP, 119).

The normal flow of life and the smooth functioning of government within the Church require a steady two-way flow of information between the ecclesiastical authorities at all levels and the faithful as individuals and organized groups (CP, 120).

In Asia, there is a greater urgency for a freer flow of communication with the laity because of the particular situation of the Catholic Church in most of Asia:

It is primarily through the laity that the Church is present in the vast world of human affairs ..., hence it is imperative that they know and understand the viewpoint of the Church on vital issues which affect human society so that their witness will be more authentic and effective (FABC Papers, No. 40).

4.4 Advocacy Role

The Church exercises its pastoral media ministry to fulfill its prophetic calling for human liberation. Where people cannot express themselves freely, "the Church must become more and more the voice of the dispossessed, even at the risk entailed" (Puebla, 1094).

We unhesitatingly condemn such a brutal suppression of human rights and sympathize with the innocent victims of injustice. We will not cease from *using the media* at our disposal constantly to draw the attention of the peoples of the free world to these atrocities, in the hope that peace and justice may be restored (FABC Papers, No. 40).

To carry out this advocacy role in favor of the poor and the oppressed, Church communicators often need to detach themselves from oppressive structures and operate as alternative channels of communica-

tion. Such a stance against the powers-that-be may entail the risk of lives — a price which Christian communicators have been and are willing to pay.¹³

4.5 Women in Media

Of all the violations of human rights, the most systematic, widespread and entrenched is the denial of equality to women. Despite some progress in recent years, there is no country in the world where women have achieved full equality. Women need free access on equal terms to education, social participation and communication if they are to share rightfully in solving the problems of their societies.¹⁴

The Church may well extend its advocacy role on behalf of the dispossessed to the advocacy of women's rights. This is an area where the communication ministry is needed, in view of the blame laid by UNESCO on producers and editors for the condition of women in society.¹⁵

The images of women in the media which have been documented are productions of the people within the media organizations who conceive, create, produce and approve them. It is their ideas, attitudes, feelings and fantasies which ultimately determine how women appear in mass media content.

In what regards laywomen's role in media, there is no need to treat the topic separately. It has already been covered in all the texts concerning laymen in the Church and their particular importance in the area of communication.

5. PASTORAL STRATEGY

In the field of social communications, the Church relies basically on two texts: *Inter Mirifica* (1964) and *Communio et Progressio* (1971). In view of the technological evolution, a revision is needed. The Pontifical Commission on Social Communications has charged a group led by the bishop of San Jose, California, to prepare suggestions for drafting a supplement to *CP* which will respond to the new technologies and new needs.

The problem is that there exists a gap between even the un-updated recommendations and their programmed implementation on the level of the episcopal conferences. This may be traced in many cases to the absence of any pastoral strategy for communication.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, there is need for a real pastoral strategy for evangelization through the media towards a communication policy to be integrated into the overall pastoral program. It is so important that the PCSC has launched a world-wide consultation of National Offices of Social Communications towards the formulation of such a strategy to assure a greater presence of the Church in the evolution of communications between now and 2001.

5.1 Planning

In any organization, especially in such a complex area as modern communication, planning is indispensable. There is need for a pastoral plan to provide the guidelines for action. (At the national and regional levels, Catholic communication organizations at present are obliged to draw up their plans without a pastoral plan to orient and co-ordinate their efforts.)

While there is co-responsibility for the mission of the Church, the leadership of the bishop is a primary factor in pastoral planning.

A careful appraisal of the entire range of the communication media, a prudent and well-informed planning for pastoral work and in every apostolic enterprise, all this is the rightful province of the ecclesiastical authorities. They, in their turn, should depend upon the advice of experts in the different branches of communication ... this duty devolves upon every bishop in every diocese, upon a special commission of bishops or a bishop-delegate in each country ... (CP, 165)

In the instances where episcopal conferences (such as the Australian and the French) had drawn up guidelines for a pastoral of the media, effective steps for the exercise of the different forms of the communication ministry soon followed.

A more recent (1985) instance of pastoral planning for communication is the meeting of the Gabonese bishops "to contribute to a more effective overall pastoral action in the country."¹⁷ They began by discussing the various media in the country in the light of the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio*. Practical decisions were then made, such as the establishment of a better-staffed (with more laity) National Media Service and the preparation of Christian programs for national television.

Better planning may lead to more cost-effective investment in communication systems. Whatever the Church in each country adopts as its media policy would be the point of integrated planning. This would prevent the unnecessary overlapping and duplication of resources.

In the Church, communication policy would be basically oriented towards the use of all media for the transmission of Christian values and the preaching of the Kingdom of God. In the Asian context where a specifically Christian orientation may not be possible, planning would be geared to the promotion of all genuinely human values, such as those embodied in the New World Information and Communication Order. There has to be discernment between development and development. Critical planning processes will allow the Church policy-makers, laity and clergy alike, to determine whether the communication going on within the Church or in the Church's dialogue with the world truly deserves the name of "Christian communication."

5.2 Financing

Taking in earnest the pastoral of the media entails making concrete provisions to finance it. This cannot be left to chance. The Pan Asian Meeting of Social Communications recognized this when it integrated into its recommendations the statement of Zambian Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo:

Communication must not be left to survive as best they can on what little finance the Church can spare after all the other needs have been met. Rather, communications must have a high place in our priorities when we prepare budgets. As with money, so also with manpower.

In accordance with the principle of co-responsibility in the mission of the Church, it is the whole Christian community that is tasked with supporting the media apostolate (cf. CP, 133).

It should be added, however, that although it is often thought that financing the communication ministry of the Church may be costly (cf. Puebla, 1093), it does not always have to be so. In fact, it is one of the advantages of alternative communication that the very concept contains a rejection of the necessity of uniform, centralized, high-cost and highly-professionalized media.¹⁸

5.3 World Communications Day

The establishment of World Communications Day was suggested by Vatican Council II as a practical step towards realizing the possibilities inherent in media. *Communio et Progressio* specified further the meaning of this day.

Every man who believes in God is invited to spend one particular day every year to pray and think about the future and the problems of the media. He is also invited to friendly meetings with the different sorts of professionals. In this way it should be possible to explore what projects can be started and what initiatives encouraged, whereby the media can be used to further the progress of mankind. The People of God (both pastors and laymen) commit themselves, in the fulfillment of these duties, to give support to the initiatives of men of good-will everywhere so that the means of social communications may be used for justice, peace, freedom and human progress (CP, 100).

World Communications Day is an opportunity given each year to reflect on how well we are using the many means of communication available to us in the mission of the Church. In general, this chance is not yet exploited enough reflectively. To enable adequate planning for its celebration, the Vatican now presents the theme of WCD at least one or two years ahead.

The Pan Asian Meeting on Social Communications gave practical suggestions on what the occasion could be used for:

5.4 World Communications Day

- a) This should be used as an occasion to honor the professionals in the media, to encourage their co-operation, to educate the faithful on the importance of the apostolate of social communications, and to develop enthusiasm for the apostolate.
- b) A collection should be taken up in every parish on this day:
 - i. to develop a sense of local responsibility
 - ii. to help support the local apostolate

World Communications Day could become, in every diocese, the crystallization of the Christian community's desire to take active part in the mission of evangelization through the means of social communications.

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Footnotes:

1. UNDA/Thailand (now UNDA/Asia) President, Chainarong Monthienvichien-chai, "Secular Broadcasts," *UNDA General Assembly Proceedings*, Manila, 1980, p. 207.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
3. "Asians Explore Group Media," *Action*, WACC Newsletter, No. 103, Dec. 1985/Jan. 1986, p. 3.
4. Editorial, *Media Development*, Vol. XXX, 1983, p. 1.
5. Pope John Paul II, "Allocution to the Council of the General Secretariate of the Synod," May 19, 1984, cited in *Lineamenta*, Synod of Bishops. Rome, 1985, p. 12.
6. Cardinal Paul Poupard.
7. Australian Bishops' Pastoral Letter, in *UNDA Documentation*, Vol. II, No. 4, November 1978, pp. 8-13.
8. Fr. Anthony Scannell.
9. Archbishop John P. Foley (President of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communication), *UCIP Info*, June 1985, p. 3.
10. Fr. James Reuter, S.J., *UNDA General Assembly Proceedings*, Manila, 1980, p. 252.
11. A questionnaire was sent to several Catholic media professionals as a background for this paper. Felix B. Bautista, *Veritas* editor writes: "It is probably no exaggeration to say that 98% of all Filipino journalists are baptized Catholics. Almost all of them, however, are simply journalists who happen to be Catholics. In other words, they do not consciously consider themselves as Catholics who are serving God through mass media.
For the past nine years, Cardinal Sin has been trying to do something about this. In 1977, he instituted the Catholic Mass Media Awards, giving prizes to media men—journalists, television and radio broadcasters, movie-makers and advertising men—whose work most faithfully reflects Catholic ideals. Today, they are the most prestigious awards in the Philippines, and media men consciously strive to win the coveted trophy."
12. To the question, "Would you want to form a group or guild or club of Christian communicators," journalist Ceres Doyo gave this challenging reply: "I was (still am?) part of one, namely the Catholic Press Association of the Philippines (CPAP) which never seemed to have gotten off the ground. These past years, I expected the group to at least do something about the growing list of slain journalists (more than 20 in ten years, 15 of whom were killed last year). The secular press groups ... were much more active in this regard."

13. In the answer sheet that Felix Bautista, editor of *Veritas*, submitted for this paper, he quotes the citation for the UCIP Gold Medal for Press Freedom that he received this year: "This was ... for my work in upholding the ideals of press freedom. The citation, in fact, said that despite the fact that no less than twenty-four journalists had been killed by unknown parties during the past ten years for trying to tell the truth about the Philippine situation, I and my staff members had written fearlessly and at considerable risk to our liberty and our life, week after week, until the dictator was toppled."
14. UNESCO Report: *Mass Media: The image, role and social conditions of women*. Unesco: Paris, 1979.
15. XIII/6: 'Equal rights for women'. *Many Voices, One World*, Report by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. Unesco: Paris, 1980.
16. Anthony Scannell, O.F.M. Cap., "Report on the State of the Association," *The Wide World of UNDA*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, April, 1986, p. 9.
17. "Establishment of a National Service," *The Wide World of UNDA*, Vol. XII, No. 5, September, 1985, p. 3.
18. Jan Servaes, "Towards an alternative concept of communication and development," *Media Development*, Vol. XXXII, 4/1985, p. 2.

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