

**THE EMERGING CHALLENGES TO THE CHURCH
IN ASIA IN THE 1990s: A CALL TO RESPOND**

The Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of
Asian Bishop's Conferences, Bandung, Indonesia, July 17-27, 1990

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I. LETTER TO THE DELEGATES
by Pope John Paul II

1. It is with great joy that I address you who have gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, for the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC. Through you I cordially greet all the bishops, clergy, religious and laity of the Church in Asia. In the words of the First Letter of Peter, I pray: "May grace and peace be multiplied in you" (1:2).

As pastors who are called to read "the signs of the times," you intend during your meeting to discuss the subject, "The Emerging Challenges to the Church in Asia in the 1990s: A Call to Respond." After a preliminary study conducted with pastoral sensitivity, you now wish to give a joint response to common problems. As the Church's Universal Pastor, I too wish to open my heart in a spirit of collegial affection and concern in order to reflect with you on the Church's earthly pilgrimage in Asia. I offer you my fraternal encouragement and support, and I do so in the confident hope that your assembly will offer clear and concrete leadership from which your local Churches will derive inspiration and strength for the future.

2. What are the *challenges* faced by God's people in Asia as they seek to follow Christ in the world today? A principal challenge is found in *secularization and materialism*, two distinct but interrelated phenomena which increasingly permeate the thinking of ordinary people in their quest for a better life, as well as programs introduced by governments and cultural institutions. I share your concern that a growing number of young Asians, especially in the more developed countries, tend to measure happiness and success by material possessions. Given the rich and ancient spiritual traditions of Asia, it would indeed be tragic if in our day the people of the continent failed to achieve their full and authentic realization as human persons as a result of increasing disregard for the transcendent and religious dimensions of life.

Another serious challenge is posed by the fact that many countries of Asia are still under the oppressive sway of *Communism*, with a consequent loss of human freedom. In lands traditionally known as places of harmony, Communism has introduced a shocking disharmony. It hinders integral human development by demanding a break with traditions, often violently imposed, and subjects large numbers of people to great suffering, including hunger, through unrealistic economic plans and misguided priorities, such as costly armaments.

A further cause of grave concern is the *violation of human rights* in certain parts of Asia. Within this context we find the tendency on the part of some to dismiss as foreign to local cultures the aspirations of those who seek recognition of the inalienable rights of persons.

The question of human rights prompts us to note the signs of *religious intolerance* manifested in some Asian countries. Under the pressure of particular groups, for example, certain governments in nations where there are many followers of Islam have assumed postures which seem not in keeping with that tolerance which is a part of the venerable Islamic tradition. Attempts are sometimes made to change legislation, introducing policies which effectively deny the rights of religious minorities. The intransigent attitudes of some, which leave no room for other religions, recognize as authentically Asian only that which can be expressed within their own religious categories. The regrettable phenomenon of intolerance is not however restricted to any single religious tradition.

Finally, an especially alarming problem which the Church cannot ignore is *widespread poverty*. While some Asians are experiencing the benefits of technological developments, others are being forced into modern forms of slavery. I am thinking of the exploitation of workers, the

exclusion of vast numbers of people from the benefits of an advanced society, the lack of social assistance, illiteracy, the use of drugs and other “artificial paradises,” the spread of gambling and violence, the corruption to be found in the great cities, and the inhuman living conditions which millions of people are forced to endure in the teeming outskirts of urban centers. To these many social ills we have to add the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources and the pollution of the environment at the behest of influential economic interests, to the detriment of the peoples which are technologically least advanced.

3. Dear brothers, your deep pastoral concern for the difficult social and economic conditions in which so many of your people must live — conditions which defy easy solutions and which are often reinforced by evils and injustices which in some cases have become permanent “structures” of society — is already a stimulus for you to renew your commitment to the task of evangelization. As bishops you know that your principal task is not only to denounce evil, but also to *proclaim a message of conversion and hope*.

As men of faith, you firmly believe that the Gospel’s power to overcome evil is rooted in a living person who is the Savior of the world. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, “only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). Christ is that “perfect man” (*ibid.*) who in a certain sense united himself with every human person and restored in all of Adam’s children — regardless of nation or culture — that likeness to God which had been disfigured by sin. Accordingly, it is *the light of Christ* which enables you to proclaim boldly the dignity and fundamental rights of each and every person in the face of great injustices. It is *the love of God revealed in Christ* which leads you courageously to apply the Church’s social teaching to the real-life situation of the peoples of Asia and to foster social progress and a wider material and cultural development. It is *service of Christ* which sustains your educational and charitable institutions, and which summons even more of your faithful to follow the example of people like Mother Teresa of Calcutta in ministering to the needy and downtrodden.

At the same time you know that the search for meaning and wellbeing must also be a *quest for salvation*. The salvation with which you are concerned as bishops is the salvation achieved and offered by Christ: *the salvation of the whole person*, a salvation that is complete and universal, unique and absolute, full and all-embracing. The Christian apostle is not just a social worker; nor is the Christian faith merely an ideology or a humanistic program. The Church must always and everywhere strive to

lead people to the realization of their eternal vocation in Christ, a call to personal communion with the Living God. Even when engaged in the work of human development, Christians should be ever mindful of the words of Saint Paul: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 8:16).

4. On the eve of the Third Christian Millennium, an ever *greater commitment to evangelization is imperative* for all the local Churches in Asia, which, though small, have shown themselves to be dynamic and strong in their witness to the Gospel. Their special challenge is to proclaim the Good News where different religions and cultures meet, at the very crossroads of social, political and economic forces in today's world. In the light of this fundamental duty, your meeting is an opportunity to seek new ways of strengthening awareness in the local Churches of the need for first evangelization.

Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all men, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6; cf. *Nostra Aetate* 2). We should not forget Pope Paul VI's teaching on the matter: "Neither respect and esteem for these religions nor the complexity of the questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 53). The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people (cf. *Ad Gentes* 7). It is a contradiction of the Gospel and of the Church's very nature to assert, as some do, that the Church is only one way of salvation among many, and that her mission towards the followers of other religions should be nothing more than to help them be better followers of those religions.

5. The mission of God's people, dear brothers, is twofold: to bear witness to Christ and "the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1), and to be a leaven of love and goodness in the affairs of this world until Christ returns in glory. Today, *Christian lay people* in ever greater numbers *wish to share in this mission* and to do so with ever greater commitment. We welcome this sign of the times and recognize the indispensable role of lay men and women in spreading the Good News.

As pastors and leaders of the faithful of Asia, you will find it necessary to respond to the desires of the laity, expanding their *participation in accordance with that distinction of roles* which has its foundation in a decision made in apostolic times when, under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles said that "it would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food ... we shall continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word" (Acts 6:4). Thus the clergy, freed from many administrative tasks undertaken to meet supplementary needs, can be models of a deep spirituality, witnesses to transcendent values expressed in prayer and contemplation, and ever attentive to the presence of God in the lives of those whom they serve.

In conformity with their specific ministry, priests should be particularly active in the *Christian formation of lay people*, whose irreplaceable vocation is the sanctification of the world in all of its temporal realities. Lay men and women are called to be courageous in expressing their Christian convictions in the public forum at the service of the common good. Yet educated Christians often suffer from the dichotomy of being experts in their professional fields but having an inadequate religious formation. Nevertheless, the history of evangelization, in Korea and Vietnam for example, as in ancient Rome itself, testifies to the excellent work of evangelization carried out by members of the laity. The Church in Asia today is increasingly blessed with the deep faith and infectious enthusiasm of lay people from all walks of life who serve the Church's mission successfully and convincingly, yet often in a discreet and unobtrusive manner.

The relationship between clergy and laity is above all one of complementarity. The Church in Asia owes an immense debt of gratitude to those courageous and dedicated missionaries, both men and women, who implanted and have sustained the Church on your continent out of love for Christ and his Gospel. As the number of priests in particular decrease, there is a temptation to think of the growing participation of the laity as a replacement for priestly ministry, especially where vocations are few. But this way of thinking both hampers the work of evangelization and impoverishes the Church from within. Priests are absolutely essential for the continuation and fruitfulness of her life and mission. I therefore urge you to make every effort to continue to promote vocations to the priesthood among your people, with trust that God will shower his blessing on so important an endeavor. As the experience of some of your local Churches has shown, the participation of a dynamic and active laity, far from diminishing priestly vocations, serves rather to increase them.

6. Dear brothers, I deeply share your conviction that this is a *significant hour for the Church in Asia*. Your hopes and aspirations for the growth of your local Churches are my own, and I present them daily to the Lord of the harvest in constant prayer for you all. May your meeting in Bandung resemble the scene in the Acts of the Apostles, when the Apostles were gathered before the day of Pentecost, "continuing with one mind in prayer with ... Mary, the Mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). May she who is Mother of the Church obtain a further outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon you all.

Accept this expression of my spiritual union with you, and my encouragement in your pastoral responsibilities. With my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 23 June 1990.

Joannes Paulus II

II. WORDS OF WELCOME

by H.E. Mr. Munawir Sjadzali

First of all, on behalf of the Republic of Indonesia and on my own behalf, I would like to join the Indonesian Bishops' Conference in welcoming you all, the participants of the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences at Lembang, Indonesia.

Furthermore, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, as well as to the Federation, for inviting me, representing my Government of Indonesia, to inaugurate the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC, a major step which is essential for FABC's development in the next five years.

I am equally grateful to God the Almighty for allowing me to accept this friendly gesture and honor, and which is at the same time a testimony of close and cordial relationship between the Government of Indonesia, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Catholic Church.

Indonesia is indeed a large country with more than 13,000 islands and inhabited by over 180 million people, of about 250 ethnic groups and languages, who adhere to a number of different religions and faiths, mainly Muslims, Protestants, Catholics, Hindus and Buddhists.

With those diversities the country requires a state basic philosophy, or a way of life, acceptable to all, which would be able to keep all Indonesians united regardless of their convictions and faiths, and whereby the political stability of the country will be preserved and the people will prosper and be highly developed both physically and spiritually. We found that basic philosophy in *Pancasila*, or the Five Principles:

1. Belief in the One and Only God
2. A just and civilized society
3. The unity of Indonesia
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberations of the people's representatives
5. Social justice for all Indonesian people.

How do we find *Pancasila* at work? Allow me to quote the words of His Holiness Pope John Paul II addressed during the general audience on 18 October 1989, in the Vatican City, when he gave a review of his pastoral visit to the Far East (Korea and Indonesia) and Mauritius.

“... At present it (Indonesia) is a great country of about 180 million inhabitants, and it has been able to create its own model of society, with respect for the ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism of its citizens. An expression of this model is the philosophical system of *Pancasila*, that is, the five principles which are the pillars of Indonesian society and culture. Among these principles monotheistic religion stands out in relief in the first place; then humanitarianism which characterizes the initiatives aimed at favoring the peaceful living together of all the citizens.” “Christians in Indonesia,” he continued, “have the same rights as Muslims, even though the latter are much more numerous. In these conditions the Church’s mission and activity develop harmoniously.”

What a beautiful remark! We are both grateful and proud. But the religious harmony should not be taken for granted. We got to work for it and to be determined to have it preserved and developed. It can be preserved and developed through mutual understanding and mutual respect. In *Pancasila* we find equality as God’s creation in this land, and also a similar call and aspiration on how to live together as a nation.

Since the state philosophy is *Pancasila*, and though most Indonesians adhere to Islam, Indonesia is not an Islamic state and is neither a secular nor a theocratic one, but a *Pancasila* state, in which each religion enjoys equal legal rights, to enable people of different religions to live together

in harmony, with government's interest in the people's material and spiritual welfare.

So, the task of every individual, every citizen, every institution or organization in this country, is to keep and to guarantee that the harmonious living together among the people is well preserved, and to give space and time for national development. In this regard I fully realize the important and decisive role of religious leaders and organizations in Indonesia. It is not an exaggeration to say that no development project can be successfully done unless it enjoys the support of the formal and the informal leaders, including religious leaders. May I call upon you all to take this task of keeping up harmony among the people with whom we live as a nation, regardless of their religions and faiths, and through their faiths to encourage full participation of the people in national development.

I fully support the theme of this assembly: "The Emerging Challenges to the Church in 1990's: A Call to Respond." We in Indonesia, as well as in other Asian countries, have mainly the same challenges: how to manage to keep up our religious life in a religious pluralism of societies vis-à-vis the rapidly changing world, and at the same time to give shape and value to our progress.

I wish this assembly success, and may it give invaluable contributions not only to the Catholic Church in Asia in particular, but also to all the nations in this region, for their physical and spiritual wellbeing.

I wish you all a pleasant stay in Indonesia, and have a successful conference.

III. WORDS OF GREETING

by Cardinal Ricardo J. Vidal

I wish to begin my few words by extending in the name of the Catholics of Asia their condolences to the people of Indonesia in this time of sadness on the death of so many of your countrymen in the recent tragedy at Mecca. We pray that the compassionate God will bring them quickly into their eternal happiness, and comfort their relatives and friends in their sorrow.

1. After we have all been welcomed so wholeheartedly and greeted so warmly, I can assure you that my task is now made comparatively easy.

From the little knowledge of Italian that I have learned an “inaugural address” should be as easy as saying “*Tanti Auguri!*”

As the Convenor of FABC. I wish you all the “*Tanti Auguri*” necessary to effectively — and affectively — participate in this Fifth Plenary Assembly.

We have come from far and near to work and work hard, and to pray even harder. This is “God’s work” we are doing, after all.

From Taipei to Calcutta ... to Bangkok ... to Tokyo ... and now to Bandung ... each FABC Plenary Assembly has always been expected to be a “working experience,” or better still, a “praying experience.”

Year after year we have been confronted with deep-seated problems and long-standing questions, and when FABC would meet every four years, the bishops would always try “kneeling” more often and more openly.

2. It has been said, and it is true ... that, wherever we go, whatever we do, “we see what we look for.” In this Fifth Plenary Assembly FABC is looking for pastoral approaches, and therefore is “faith-based.”

Even when we answer questions or question the answers in the field of politics or in the area of economics, it is the “faith dimension” that we look for, and see all realities from.

We are all aware, I presume, of the hard and harsh realities of Asia. They are all written on its “face” in bold and block letters. And the Church in Asia has to read them as sincerely and as seriously as she knows how.

Reading and reflecting on the “signs of the times” has never been easy. But then I am always reminded of that little girl who asked her father: “Daddy, how do you eat an elephant?” And Daddy replied: “Darling, you eat an elephant one bite at a time!”

I would like to think that every four years FABC, in its plenary assembly, “eats” the big “elephant of Asia” “one bite at a time.”

We may not, in our generation, “finish” the entire problem and the whole question, but humbly we must “face” it all and “fight,” by telling the truth to ourselves and to others, and trust in God all the time.

3. Like the “Undaunted Farmer” in Our Lord’s “Parable of the Sower,” let us pray for patience and perseverance, let us not lose hope.

For the sake of our people and for our own, “concerned” as we already are about what is going on around us, let us be more “convinced” of what we believe in, and let us be more and more “committed” to the “cause of Christ” and of his Church.

As long as we “do everything that he tells us” to do, as Mary, his Mother so instructed the servants at Cana in Galilee, we can rightfully expect our “water” of “hard work” and “harder prayer” to change into his “wine” of joy and peace and life everlasting.

In the meantime – “*Tanti Auguri a Tutti!*”

IV. CHRISTIAN MISSION IN ASIA TODAY Inaugural Address by Cardinal Jozef Tomko

1. Introduction

By any counts this is an important gathering of the Church in Asia. In a certain sense, the whole Church of Asia as represented by you is gathered together here. In you I meet the whole Church of Asia, its priests, Religious and all the faithful; in you I greet all of them with love, respect and affection. With you I share their problems and concerns. In you I meet and greet also all the peoples of Asia and their leaders, with all the ancient and extraordinary patrimony of their cultures, religions and philosophies.

This is also a historic moment, as we are at the beginning of the end of the last decade of this millennium. Your common reflection, deliberations, insights, recommendations and decisions will certainly influence the life of the Church in Asia and its peoples well into the next millennium. Speaking in general, and with some exceptions, we are also at the end of the first five centuries of Christian mission in and to Asia. For all these and other reasons, this is a significant gathering of the Church and peoples of Asia. And in a wider sense it is significant also for the universal Church who looks to you at this moment and follows your efforts with interest and prayer. This has been made evident especially by the message that John Paul II, the Pastor of the Universal Church, has addressed to you.

It gives me true Christian joy to join you, my brothers in Asia, and

to be with you, to reflect with you and to address you on some of the problems and concerns of the Church and peoples of Asia and the Church's mission here.

You have appropriately chosen as the central theme of your conference: "The Emerging Challenges for the Church in Asia in the 1990s: A Call to Respond." If well understood and seriously grappled with, this theme can throw new light upon the Church's mission in Asia and set in motion new initiatives towards its fulfilment. In every age and place the Church must rethink how she is to carry out her mission and discover new ways and means to be employed, the intellectual, cultural and theological presuppositions which are involved, and the manner of articulating the permanent mission entrusted to her by Jesus Christ, her way, truth and life, in short: "to listen to what the Spirit has to say to the Church ..." (Rev 2:7) and to read the "signs of the times."

2. The Emerging Challenges of Asia and the Challenge of Evangelization

In a rapidly evolving world, Asia, too, and perhaps even more than other continents, is in the throes of many and radical changes, which create new tensions and call for new approaches and solutions. I am sure that the various speakers will deal with these changes, problems and tensions which have been created, as well as with the accompanying challenges to the Church which they entail in the fulfilment of her mission, and with the different ways in which the Church is to respond to them.

Thus, the speakers will deal with the challenge of modernization, industrialization, the process of secularization, the radicalization of religious beliefs by fundamentalist groups, the challenge of widespread poverty, exploitation, child labor, the emancipation of women, communalism, casteism, the challenges posed by emigration, by refugees, by migrant workers, the challenges of religious pluralism, dialogue, inculturation, etc.

Apart from the sociological, economic, cultural and religious challenges, and, even in some ways above them, there is the question of the challenge of evangelizing the immense continent of Asia which the Church here faces. It is the challenge of Christian mission to Asia, the challenge of proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Savior of all, and the gathering together of believing communities of Christian disciples. I am sure this theme will receive the serious attention which it deserves.

The Asian Church must reflect upon the situation of Christian mission and the work of evangelization, their successes and failures and the ways of proclaiming Jesus Christ to the people of today.

Let us be realistic. The Church in Asia is almost everywhere a small minority, at times microscopic, hardly 2.5% of the entire population, and in some countries even less than 1%. Its growth has slowed down for a number of *external* reasons, such as the difficulties and obstacles of a political and cultural nature, the aggressiveness of the fundamentalist groups, the lessening of the number of missionaries, as well as the obstacles that are being placed on their entrance or permanence, etc. But there are also *internal* reasons for the slowing down of its growth, such as current discussions on the very nature of "mission," different shifts — at times almost exclusive — in regard to the missionary effort, or concentrating on the economic and social development of the people, or on an interhuman dialogue rather than an interreligious one, the refusal to engage in conversions, as if this were a kind of negative proselytism or a moral constriction placed on one's conscience, etc. — all of these being theorized by some as a new and improved "missiology" or theology of mission! Moreover, the Church in Asia, notwithstanding its promising fermentation of reactions, still runs the great risk either of being overcome by an inferiority complex rather than by its being a small minority, or of falling into a sort of stagnation renouncing the effort to grow, or even again of becoming a ghetto, or some sort of administrative and static Church of one kind or another.

In this task of evangelization it is important to have a balanced mission theology, which will recognize the positive values, without undervaluing the very idea of proclaiming Jesus Christ and the need for the formation of communities of believers.

How can the Church in Asia, which is truly a *pusillus grex* — an extremely small flock — respond to the immense challenges which face her? By purely human efforts, or by instruments and methods which are purely natural? Certainly this would not be a sufficient or adequate response.

The Church in Asia is in a very similar situation to that of the first ecclesial communities formed by Jesus Christ in the midst of a world that was religiously pluralistic. Her hope must be placed in divine strength, in the divine gift she brings to humanity. And this gift is the person and message of Jesus Christ.

a) Jesus Christ God Made Man

The Christians in Asia have to present themselves to their brothers and sisters with their own proper identity. It is not sufficient to say that we are “believers in God.” Those belonging to other religions are also believers. We are believers in *one only God* “who in many and various ways spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets. But *in these last days* he has spoken to us by his Son ... through whom also he created the world” (Heb 1:1-2). We believe in one God the Father who “so loved the world that he sent his only Son to save the world” (Jn 3,16) with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the Son of God on this earth, the incarnation of God, is a *unique fact, wholly singular*, a mystery central to our faith and deeply important in and for the history of humankind. That fact must be preached, manifested and proclaimed to all. The Christian and the Church can never renounce the uniqueness of the event of the Incarnation.

The Incarnation is a fact and at the same time a mystery; even more, the Incarnation is a person — incomparable and unique. We believe that no prophet (no founder of a religion) has ever been like him — “something greater than Jonah is here” (Lk 11:32). There is no other wisdom equal to him — “something greater than Solomon is here” (Lk 11:31), simply because in Jesus Christ “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).

This is the main reason for the urgency and priority which must be given to the “announcing of Jesus Christ and of his mystery.” “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1Cor 9:16).

This proclamation is the continuation of Christ’s mission for the salvation of the world. Jesus Christ has given his own life and by means of his death and resurrection has brought salvation to *all* the world and to *all* mankind. This is a matter of faith, and not of an opinion to be discussed, that “he is indeed the Savior of the world” (Jn 4:42; cf. Jn 11:52; Acts 4,12). He was sent by the Father “... not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3:17). Salvation is therefore the work of the love of the Father and of the Son in the Holy Spirit — “He has so loved the world as to give his only Son” (1Jn 4:9).

Have we ever asked ourselves why he came to save the world when there were already various great religions, including the Jewish? Have we ever asked ourselves whether this salvation is perhaps less necessary in

today's situation? Or whether perhaps today the general plan of God has changed? That today, also, God desires all men to be saved and *come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1Tim 2:4)? I would like to draw your attention to two things in this Pauline text: "*that all might be saved,*" and "*that all might come to the knowledge of the truth.*"

Moreover, the Pauline text (which is Sacred Scripture and not any book of theology!) continues describing Jesus Christ as being "the only mediator between God and mankind" (1Tim 2:5). There is no salvation in any other name, "for there is no other name by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Once more, this is a matter of Catholic faith we are speaking about, not a mere question of opinion. Our response, which is more essential to the needs of humanity and of Asia in particular, must be centered and based in that faith which constitutes our identity. We are Christians because we believe "in *only one God*, the Father Almighty ..., in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the *only begotten Son of God* ..., who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, who by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made man."

He is the true "light illuminating every human being" (cf. Jn 8:12). He is the best gift we can give to humankind, as well as to the two billion persons of Asia. "The very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself ... It is therefore through Christ and in Christ that light is thrown on the riddle of suffering and death which, apart from his Gospel, overwhelms us" (*Gaudium et Spes* 22). He is the true challenge of Asia. He unveils the mystery of God and the mystery of man with such depth, such truth, such fullness that we can be sure that he is the answer to the challenges of Asia! He is *the* answer because he is the incarnate God, because he has risen and lives and works in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is as *actual* today as yesterday — *Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula* (Easter Vigil Liturgy).

b) Sources of Our Mission

To return to the sources of our faith and our mission is very actual at this moment even in Asia. "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (*Ad Gentes* 2).

When leaving this earth, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, sent his disciples in mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you"

(Jn 20:21). And he left to his Church a solemn mandate: “All *authority* in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all that I have *commanded* you; and I am with you always to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18).

Thus the mission is *universal*, directed to “all the nations” (Mt), “to every creature in the whole world” (Mk 16:15), even “*to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:3).

The contents of the mission and mandate are: “to teach,” “to make disciples,” “to baptize” (Mt 28:18), to teach them “to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20) “to preach the Gospel” (Mk 16:15), to preach “*repentance* (or conversion) and the *forgiveness* of sins” (Lk 24:47); “to preach and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42).

My dear brothers and sisters, these truths, so elementary and so well known, have to be *realized* in the everyday context of Asia. They are very actual since they echo concepts, or ideas, that are much discussed today: baptism (and the sacraments), conversion, forgiveness of sins, the commandments. There is need of confronting these realities with other ideas (such as the values of the Kingdom, other ways of salvation, proselytism, etc.) and see if this central basis of our faith is to be found in your mission.

3. Evangelization: Proclamation and Other Aspects

But how are we to bring Jesus Christ and his Gospel to *Asia*? How are we to evangelize Asia?

a) Proclamation as Center and Summit

What is evangelization? The post-synodal Exhortation of Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi* — one of the best post-conciliar documents — describes evangelization as a rich, *complex and dynamic reality* (EN 17). Many elements and aspects are contained therein: witness, dialogue, proclamation, catechesis, conversion, baptism, insertion into the ecclesial community, implantation of the Church, the formation of the local clergy, inculturation, integral human promotion or development or liberation, etc. The same document warns against a partial and fragmentary definition of evangelization which risks impoverishing and even distorting it (EN 17).

In the midst of these multiple elements, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* strongly emphasizes the proclamation of Jesus Christ and of the salvation he offers to *all* human beings. As the document states: “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed” (EN 22).

Evangelization will also always contain — as the *foundation, center* and at the same time summit of its dynamism — *a clear proclamation* that in Jesus Christ, the son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy (cf. Eph 2:8; Rom 1:16) (EN 27).

b) Evangelization and Human Promotion or Liberation

Between evangelization and human advancement — development and liberation — there are in fact profound links ... They include links of the eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity: for how, in fact, can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man? (EN 31).

At the same time, however, the Church gives a serious warning:

We must not ignore the fact that many, even generous, Christians who are sensitive to the dramatic questions involved in the problem of liberation, ... are frequently tempted to reduce her mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project. They would reduce her aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material wellbeing. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupation, would become initiatives of the political or social order ... But if this were so, the Church would lose her fundamental meaning (EN 32).

Thus while “the Church links human liberation and salvation in Jesus Christ, ... she never identifies them ... She knows too that in order that God’s Kingdom should come it is not enough to establish liberation and to create wellbeing and development” (EN 35).

Already the Second Vatican Council has warned that “we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress from the growth of the Kingdom of Christ” (*Gaudium et Spes* 39).

In the light of these teachings, there is need for examining well the direction evangelization in your countries is taking; to verify whether the image which the Church projects among your peoples is that of a social and philanthropic agent rather than of the “sacrament of salvation”; to take care that certain profoundly theological concepts, such as the “values of the Kingdom,” are not reduced to purely earthly and sociological realities, etc.

c) Dialogue with Non-Christians

In many countries Christians are living in the midst of many religions which do not recognize Jesus Christ. Vatican Council II has taken up again and repeated the biblical and patristic tradition which acknowledges in these ancient religions “elements which are true and good,” “precious things both religious and human,” which “may sometimes serve as a guidance towards the true God or as a preparation for the Gospel” (AG 3, 9, 11, 15; *Nostra Aetate* 2; GS 57, 92; *Lumen Gentium* 16).

Towards the followers of other religions, therefore, the Church and the Council assume an *attitude of respect* which becomes concrete in open, sincere and patient *dialogue*. Such dialogue, however, must be one “which can lead to truth through love alone” (GS 92). The first condition of a dialogue is that there are *two*, that each has and professes one’s own identity and speaks with respect, clarity and frankness: *veritatem facientes in caritate* (Eph 4:15).

Evangelii Nuntiandi takes up and pinpoints this attitude of the Church very clearly when it states that “the Church respects and esteems these non-Christian religions because they are the living expression of the soul of vast groups of people ...” But then it adds with emphasis:

We wish to point out, above all today, that neither respect and esteem for these religions, nor the complexity of the questions raised, is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, the Church holds that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ — riches in which we believe that the *whole of humanity* can find, in *unsuspected fullness*, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth (EN 53).

The Holy Father, John Paul II, is very clear in teaching that *both the proclamation of Jesus Christ and interreligious dialogue are necessary*:

“There can be no question” — as he strongly affirmed at the Plenary Assembly of the Secretariate for Non-Believers — “of choosing one and ignoring or rejecting the other. Even in situations where the proclamation of our faith is difficult, *we must have the courage* to speak of God who is the foundation of that faith, the reason for our hope, and the source of our love (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 1, 1987, p.1450).

Can we affirm that non-Christians without conversion and outside the Church are not saved? In the face of theological attempts, not always successful, to confront this question, it is important for us today to recall the answer given by the Second Vatican Council:

Christ himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5) and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church, which men enter through baptism as through a door. Hence those cannot be saved, who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded through Jesus Christ, by God, as something necessary, still refuse to enter it, or to remain in it. So, although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6), the Church, nevertheless, still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize. And so, today as always, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity (AG 7; LG 14: cf. EN 53, 80).

The fact still remains that the Son of God has come for the salvation and redemption even of non-Christians and their religions, notwithstanding the fact that nearly all these religions already existed. This fact is a sign that these also needed the salvation of Christ yesterday, as they do today: “And yet, if his Son came, it was precisely to reveal to us by his word and by his life, the ordinary paths of salvation” (cf. EN 80).

d) Conversion, Baptism, the Church

Witness (dialogue, proclamation) can bring the inquirer to interest himself in the Christian religion and, with the grace of God, even to conversion, in the sense of accepting Jesus Christ. For us Christians it is an unshakable principle that the act of faith (as well as that of conversion) must be entirely *free*, otherwise the Church will not accept it. With the same strength of conviction we also affirm that the freedom to profess, diffuse and also eventually to change one's own religious convictions constitutes a *fundamental human right*, and thus not only for the Church which solemnly affirmed it during the Second Vatican Council in the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, but also for the international community.

We therefore consider conversion and baptism to be a human right of the person concerned, even before they constitute a divine right of the Church. Consequently, we feel obliged by the solemn mandate of Jesus Christ to *baptize* those who accept his Gospel. And to baptize, as we well know, means to be inserted into the mystical Christ, into the Church of Christ. To bring someone to the faith, to baptism, into the Church, is unique primary activity. It is the mandate of the Lord and our inseparable mission.

Therefore, one cannot justify theological theories that, with the excuse of not falling into “ecclesiocentrism,” do away with the Church, baptism, conversion, and terminate with abandoning the clear proclamation of Jesus Christ, Son of God Incarnate for the salvation of all.

e) To Preach the “Kingdom of God”

The Kingdom of God is an important reality in the mission of Christ and of the Church. It is a very rich biblical concept. But there are some who would seem to overemphasize it, while at the same time limiting its richness only to some aspects. There is even a “Kingdom-centered” theology which proposes as an ideal a Church whose aim is to serve the Kingdom, that is, to construct a new humanity. The Church must practice a “kenosis,” to be only “for others” and to promote the so-called *values of the Kingdom* (peace, justice, fraternity, non-violence), as well as a *dialogue* between nations, cultures and religions, for a mutual enrichment and union, leaving aside what divides. There is need, therefore, to abandon an “ecclesiocentrism,” and a “Christocentrism” in favor of a “theocentrism,” since Christ cannot be understood by those who do not have the Christian faith, while the unique divine reality, whatever its name might be, can unite different cultures and religions. The mystery of creation is therefore to be insisted on. One does not speak about Jesus Christ and the mystery of redemption. The Church is considered just a sign, even an ambiguous one, of the Kingdom.

Over and against these positions, however, and basing ourselves on revelation and on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (LG 4, 5; GS 22), we know that the Kingdom of God has not only been proclaimed as a doctrine by Jesus Christ, but also manifested in his person. Therefore, one can say with the Second Vatican Council that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Christ, and that the message of the Kingdom, proclaimed by the Gospels, becomes the message of Christ in the Church. The Holy Father has strongly affirmed this in his discourse to a group of bishops from India, given on April 6 1989, on the occasion of their *ad limina* visit:

The Kingdom is inseparable from the Church, because both are inseparable from the person and work of Jesus himself. He established the Church to be the revelation and instrument of the Kingdom. It is not possible, therefore, to separate the Church from the Kingdom as if the first belonged exclusively to the imperfect realm of history, while the second would be the perfect eschatological fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation. Nor can the Kingdom be considered a purely interior or spiritual reality, in contrast with the Church considered as a historical and social realization of Jesus' intention to establish a community of faith and salvation. Consequently, it is not possible to relativize the Church's role in bringing all to union with Christ" (cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly English Edition, April 16-17, 1989, p.3).

4. Some Priorities of Christian Mission in Asia

Let us now turn our attention to some of the priorities of Christian mission in and to Asia. These have already been highlighted in several of the FABC plenary assemblies and commission meetings during the past years. Much has been said and written about dialogue, inculturation, witnessing, being a Church of and for the poor, simplicity of lifestyles, Asian forms of prayer, etc.

You will see how to translate them into action. You have enough documents exhorting you to do what you have deliberated upon and accepted as your course of action. Where else can you start acting upon your statements if not at the level of Christian leadership of Asia as represented by you? Let us be examples to the flock that God has entrusted to us, as Peter said to his fellow elders: "I who am an elder myself, appeal to the church elders among you. I am a witness of Christ's sufferings, and I will share in the glory that will be revealed. I appeal to you to be shepherds of the flock that God gave you and to take care of it willingly, as God wants you to." (1Pt 5:1-3).

a) Priority of Christian Witnessing

The credibility of our Christian mission depends not only on our dogmas, theologies, history, apologetics, but especially on the credibility of the witness our Christian living. God's revelation and salvation are more than words. They are a life, an experience, and must become transparent to others in the face of the Church in Asia, transparent in the lives of all Christians, but most of all in its shepherds and pastors.

May I be permitted to recall this thought to my brother bishops? Our primary task as successors of the Apostles is to bear witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit as the first apostles of Jesus; in word, that is, in proclaiming Jesus Christ to all, and in deed, that is, in all our actions, decisions and the witness of our life itself: *eritis mihi testes usque ad ultimum terrae* (cf. Acts 1:8). Apostolic succession must first of all be a spiritual and missionary succession, that is, you must be constantly aware of your being “apostles,” sent on and with a mission to the people of Asia to preach the death and resurrection of Jesus to all, to be his witnesses. Like Paul, we must be always conscious of the fact that we are “set apart” for the Gospel to the world of today. Without an apostolic succession that is spiritual and missionary, the sacramental and juridical succession will have little effect and little fruitfulness.

b) Priority of Proclamation

While all that the Church does forms part of its evangelizing work, evangelization as proclamation of the death-resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which the gift of repentance and forgiveness are offered to all by God through the Holy Spirit and the sacraments should receive priority in our planning, action, catechesis, preaching and teaching, allocation of personnel and in the distribution of resources. We must not allow the Church in Asia to become stagnant and lose the evangelizing momentum of its great missionaries and apostles of the past centuries in each of your countries — their heroic lives witnessing deep love for the people of Asia, and in many cases even to the witness of martyrdom. We need only to think of St. Thomas the Apostle in India, Garcia Gonsales, St. Francis Xavier and the Japanese martyrs, St. Andrew Kim and the Korean martyrs, Blessed Carvario and his companions in China, St. Theophane Venard and other Vietnamese martyrs, St. Lorenzo Ruiz and Philippines martyrs, and the recently beatified martyrs of Thailand, and their contribution to the people of Asia and to the growth of the Church.

May I express my congratulations to all the bishops and episcopal conferences who have regarded during these last years the work of evangelization as their missionary and pastoral priority, organizing seminars and preparing concrete programs for evangelization.

c) Priority of Prayer

Jesus' mission to the world depended as much on his prayer as on his preaching and ministry. Those who carry out the mission of Jesus today cannot but do likewise. The successors of the apostles today should not be

carried away by the heresy of activism, but rather give up excessive activism to devote time “to prayer and the work of preaching” (Acts 6:4).

As successors of the apostles our primary task is to proclaim Jesus Christ, and all other tasks, like administration, should be subordinated to it or delegated to others — “And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables’” (Acts 6:2). This calls for adequate space for prayer, study and reflection on the Scriptures in our daily schedule so that we can be spiritual leaders and teachers among our collaborators and people.

Your acquaintance with Asian cultures and spiritualities developed by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and other religions of Asia should be deep enough so that no one can accuse you of being spiritually and culturally foreigners in your own lands.

You need especially to develop a spirituality for a minority Church, which, notwithstanding its smallness in numbers, still has to be a strong, dynamic Church like that of the first Christians. Your Christians today also need to have a strong sense of the value of presence, of the need for the virtues of courage, perseverance and fortitude, together with a conscious witness to eschatological realities, as well as with a continual readiness for dialogue and proclamation, maintaining always and everywhere an unshakable faith and hope in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, at once our Savior and our Emmanuel — “God with us.”

d) Spiritual and Moral Ascendancy

Though Jesus held no title to any special social, political or religious authority in his time, he spoke and acted with the authority of God his Father. What made his claim to be the unique Son of God and the only way to the Father credible — an extremely strange claim — was his transparent holiness of life and the spiritual and moral authority that accompanied it. The success of Christian mission in Asia will depend on the spiritual and moral ascendancy of its leaders, as it was in the case of Jesus and his apostles and first disciples.

Such spiritual and moral ascendancy will keep them from succumbing to the dangers of the institutionalization of their prophetic and sanctifying office and mission, or becoming only agents of socio-economic development or liberation, or mere administrators of small Christian communities, which prevents the effective proclamation of the word.

Like the first disciples of Jesus, we must give priority to the mission of proclamation: "It is not right for us to neglect the preaching of God's word in order to serve at tables" (Acts 6:2).

A total dedication to the mission of Jesus Christ will also help us to avoid an excessive preoccupation with ritualism, tribalism, racialism and casteism within the Christian communities, that is, a preoccupation with the advancement of one's own particular race, tribe, caste, to which as Church leaders we may belong, or a giving in to subtle and emotional exploitation of our linguistic or cultural affiliations and loyalties out of fear or weakness. It will also help us to rise above the interests of narrow nationalism and communalism. The signs of such tendencies, deleterious to the mission of the Church, are not entirely absent in the Asia of today and in other continents too.

e) An Obligation to the Universal Church

As the Church in Asia becomes more and more incarnate in the cultures of Asia, and enters into dialogue with its religions, and gets acquainted with the prayer forms and the mystical experiences of its peoples, it can and should contribute to the Universal Church the benefits of its encounter with the ancient and rich cultures of Asia, the depths of its prayer and contemplative experiences, and other elements of spiritual and mystical symbolism.

The Asian Church and Asian bishops may be teachers and guides, especially in meditation and the spiritual life, as well for other continents. Western youth, not sufficiently evangelized, is looking for the religious mysteries and mysticism of the East. Will the Christian East abandon its love for prayer, meditation and the proclamation of the mysteries of the faith and of Jesus Christ?

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A NEW EVANGELIZATION OF ASIA

As I come to the end of this discourse, let me once again appeal to you to put Jesus Christ in the center of your ministry, the center of your preaching and pastoral activities. Inspire priests and Religious to do the same. Help seminarians and others in formation to put on the missionary spirit and have the missionary heart of Jesus. Form your lay leaders, catechists and faithful to bring the Kingdom of Jesus Christ into the life of the family and of the society.

The Greco-Roman-Jewish world into which the apostles and the dis-

ciples of Jesus were sent was no different from ours. They struggled with the idea of how to proceed with the preaching of Jesus Christ and the question of baptizing the Gentiles. But these did not prevent them from preaching Jesus Christ and forming Christian communities.

In today's Asia, too, there are areas and groups of people who respond to the proclamation of Jesus Christ and are baptized into his body, the Church. There is also resistance, opposition, rejection, subtle discrimination, suspicion, denial of religious freedom, and even open persecution and hatred shown to the Christian message in some parts of Asia. Frequently, the reactions are caused by ignorance, or prejudice, or politics, or history, or cultural fears, or vested interests. We need to be aware of them and make our proclamation credible and transparent with our holiness of life, sincerity of purpose and great love and respect for all. There are also other situations in Asia that create problems and opportunities for Christian mission. Thus, there is the problem of urban and rural mission, refugees and boat people, migration and migrant workers, of terrorism, violation of human rights, drug abuse, exploitation of the poor, ecological and environmental destruction, abortion, destabilization of the family, etc. Certainly, we Christians have to occupy ourselves seriously with these social problems also, but with the spirit and love of Jesus Christ, using them as an occasion for witnessing to our faith in action, and without ever abandoning the priority-task of proclamation.

Diverse episcopal conferences or their associations in Europe, in Africa and in America, in a true and real synodal spirit and effort (*synodos*: walk together) are preparing pastoral plans to respond to the challenges of our time (cf. John Paul II, Discourse to the bishops of Brazil, OR, 6.7.1990). How will the Church of Asia respond to the challenges of this continent?

May the Holy Spirit, who came down on the first disciples of Jesus, come down on us as light and fire and help us to proclaim Jesus Christ fearlessly to all. May he enlighten our minds and inspire our hearts. May the same Spirit be the Spirit of communion and mission: communion within the Christian communities of Asia and communion with all the peoples of Asia and mission to all. May Mary, whom Jesus gave as mother to his apostles and disciples and who was with them in the Cenacle awaiting the missionary outpouring of the Holy Spirit, be with you, accompany you and help you to make this last decade of the second millennium of evangelization a new Pentecostal experience for you, a period of new evangelization, for the scattered Christian communities of Asia and all our brothers and sisters of this great continent.

V. JOURNEYING TOGETHER TOWARD THE THIRD MILLENIUM

The Final Statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly of FABC

Bandung, Indonesia, July 17-27, 1990

1.0

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gathered together at Bandung, Indonesia, for the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, from the 17th to the 27th of July 1990, we, the bishops, priests, Religious and laity, experienced a communion which resembled our Asian Church in miniature. We were united in prayer, asking for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all the Church, imploring his grace also for those who were not able to be present. In an atmosphere of mutual sharing and dialogue, we considered the theme: "The Emerging Challenges for the Church in Asia in the 1990s: A Call to Respond." We reflected on the time in which we find ourselves in Asia, and tried to see the way on which we must walk as the Church in this vast continent. The time, the way and the place are deeply related to the mission of Christ which we as his Church must continue.

1.2 We sought to understand and appreciate the critical importance of the present time and to hear what God is calling us to do as we complete the last decade of the second millenium and come to the threshold of the third, remembering that all times are embraced in the hour of Jesus.

1.3 Being at Bandung, we remembered that it was here that the Non-Aligned Movement was born 35 years ago as a Third Force in between the first world of capitalism and the second world of communism. And today, with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, symbolizing the dawn of new era, we see an opportunity opening up for the Church to present its social doctrine. We feel even more the challenge to work for a new and just international order, where even the small states can make a contribution, and all nations can participate with dignity, and live in peace with one another. We discussed the theology and motivation which should inspire us at this critical time.

1.4 We searched together for a way along which the Asian Church must walk. A father of the Church has said: "Walk in man and you will arrive in God." This is possible because the Word of God became flesh and called himself the Way (John 14:6). As Pope John Paul II says in *The Redeemer of Humankind*: "This man is the way for the Church — a way that, in a sense, is the basis of all the other ways the Church must walk, because with man — every man without exception whatever — Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it."

1.5 Finally, having regarded this huge land mass of Asia and our “teeming millions,” we tried to understand our Asian realities. This is the context of God’s creative, incarnational and redemptive action, the theater in which the drama of Asia’s salvation is enacted.

1.6 We then tried to see the new way of being and becoming Church in Asia and also the spirituality which must inform it.

1.7 We regret that there are many situations and structures, groups and persons in Asia where justice and peace, love and compassion, equality and brotherhood, and religious freedom do not always find a sufficient place for existence. Our challenge is to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: to promote justice, peace, love, compassion, equality and brotherhood in these Asian realities. In short, it is to work to make the Kingdom of God a reality. We wish, then, to share with our Asian sisters and brothers and with all men and women of goodwill the journey in faith that we experienced in these days when we were together at Bandung. Our challenge is to cooperate with all people of goodwill in God’s action in the world in the service of justice and peace.

2.0 II. CHALLENGES AND HOPES

2.1 A. The Challenge of Ferment and Change in Asia

2.1.1 The past year has been a time of extraordinary change and desire for change. The face of Eastern Europe appears transformed. There is new hope for a just society in Southern Africa. Here in Asia, popular movements for participation in society are emerging.

2.1.2 We are conscious that the Asian reality is increasingly part of the global reality. Our world is becoming progressively interdependent, with mutual interests and concerns. This situation holds out great opportunities. The old order dominated by the two power blocs has broken down. A new order is emerging, in which even the smallest nation can play its role, Asian countries influencing, as well as being influenced by, the rest of the world.

2.1.3 Change is the most constant factor in our societies. Some changes are clearly beneficial — we think, for instance, of the disappearance of many old animosities between nations. Other changes are full of promise but of the uncertain outcome — we think of the growing desire for participation in society, dramatically apparent in the democracy movement which has made itself felt in a number of Asian countries.

Other changes again are at best of ambiguous value. There is new economic prosperity in many of our societies, but typically it has benefited mainly a tiny elite — old power structures remain substantially unchanged.

2.1.4 A striking change in many of our societies is the breakdown of the nation-state. Typically, the nation-state in Asia was usually the creation of the colonial powers; boundaries were set up with little regard for traditional ethnic and cultural groupings. Hence, it is not surprising that we now witness a variety of “secessionist” movements, and, tragically, widespread ethnic and communal conflict and violence.

2.1.5 One reaction to this situation is the growth of “statism” — the imposition of artificial harmony through oppressive state power. Elsewhere, the struggle for power spawns militant fundamentalism, by which a majority group or a powerful minority imposes its values on the rest of society. Religious fundamentalism has its attraction for some believers for primarily religious reasons. But such an attraction is too often exploited by persons and groups whose motive is political power and social control, or economic greed. Here we see how valid Pope John Paul II’s analysis of social problems is in his encyclical *On Social Concerns*. He points out that the desire for profit and the desire for power are the root causes of social problems all over the world.

2.1.5 Modernization offers bright promise for our future. Even so, the whole process of modernization is fraught with ambiguity. Modernization often leads to social and cultural dislocation. Traditional values and attitudes are called into question. Traditional symbols lose their power. The beneficiaries of modernization are too often infected with secularism, materialism and consumerism. In some countries there has arisen a new middle class which is highly consumeristic and competitive, and in general insensitive and indifferent to the overwhelming majority of poor and marginalized people.

2.2 B. The Challenge of Continuing Injustice

2.2.1 We are deeply conscious, therefore, that within our context of change there is the unchanging reality of injustice. There remains in Asia massive poverty. Hundreds of millions of people are debarred from access to natural resources. Exploitation of the environment destroys precious resources and thus destroys the material and spiritual habitat of many of our peoples. Militarization involves the wasting of scarce resources on armies and armaments rather than the using of these resources to meet

genuine and pressing human needs. Traditional patterns of discrimination against women continue in force. In situations of poverty and injustice it is usually women who suffer the most. We see this in the flourishing of exploitative tourism, where women and children are driven into prostitution — this is both a matter of sexual morality and also a matter of structural injustice. Poverty likewise drives both men and women to become migrant workers, often destroying family life in the process. Political conflict and economic desperation have driven millions to become refugees, to living for years in camps that are sometimes in effect crowded prisons. Within many Asian societies, graft and corruption remain a source of serious injustice.

2.2.2 Asia is home to vast numbers of young people. But too many of them face a future of unemployment and consequent frustration. The most basic and fundamental human right to life is denied to the unborn child by the practice of abortion. Child labor (even bonded labor) is still prevalent. Our youth, who are 60% of the Asian population, tend to be influenced by an education, the media and social pressures which perpetuate this reality of injustice, and youth themselves are often victims.

2.2.3 Connected too with these injustices are other violations of human rights. We see forms of cultural imperialism, with the imposition of majority values, or of values of an assertive minority, on the rest of society. Access to education and employment is denied or limited on the basis of religion, caste, political stance, economic status, or ethnic origin. Those in these societies and elsewhere who speak and act in the name of justice are subject to imprisonment and other forms of punishment. All of these injustices are interconnected. Taken together, they amount to a crisis of survival.

2.3 C. Hope at the Crossroads

In the face of the massive problems engendered by social change and in the face of massive injustice, we can discern, however, many signs of hope.

2.3.1 There is a new consciousness on the part of the marginalized that the situation is not an inevitable fate but something to be struggled against. Coupled with this is a new consciousness of solidarity — people are not isolated in the struggle against injustice. The growing desire for and growing sense of solidarity cross national, ethnic and class boundaries, boundaries of religion and sex — indeed, the boundary between the human and the rest of creation.

2.3.2 We see, in other words, the promise of movements for democracy, participation and human rights, of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, of the women's movement, of ecological movements, of the search for spirituality and spiritual values. We see the vitality of our young people and the potential that they provide for positive change. These movements converge in a desire for community which at its best is a desire for inclusive community, community which seeks to cross boundaries, to break down walls rather than artificially strengthening itself by building barriers.

2.3.3 The desire for solidarity is present on both sides of the old boundaries. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, for example, has come about because both Christians and those of other faiths desire to learn from one another, to search together for a better understanding of the meaning of life, to work together for a new world which is at once more human and more divine. It is an enterprise full of hope and also of challenge. We are all being challenged to appreciate the other, to learn from the other, even to be corrected by the other — and at the same time to remain faithful to what is best in our own tradition. By doing this we run counter to all forms of fundamentalism.

2.3.4 Dialogue between religious traditions, the ecological movement, and aspects of the women's movement offer hope for a more holistic spirituality. This hope and desire is present within, and beyond, the Catholic community. We live in Asia, the home of great contemplative traditions. The Catholic Church is often perceived as not sharing in these contemplative traditions, as being primarily concerned with the external, with rituals and festivals. Central, however, to the Catholic tradition is incarnation, sacramentality. And genuine sacramentality is the antithesis of empty ritualism. It is about finding the mystery of the Divine in everyday reality — a deeply contemplative task — and then celebrating that mystery. At the heart of the ecological movement, likewise, can be found a theology of creation, or better, a spirituality of creation — creation as the divine handiwork and the place of divine presence. Desire for spirituality, for the contemplative, on the one hand, and the possibility of convergence of the sacramental tradition, of the contemplative tradition in other faiths, of concern for the environment, of respect for the feminine, on the other — these for us are great signs of hope.

2.3.5 They are instances where those who are blessed with power and wealth are animated by the spirit of the Gospel, work to promote the common good and are generous in sharing their gifts and talents.

2.3.6 A further sign of hope is the desire for community. We have spoken of this at the global level as the desire for solidarity. More locally, it is seen in the growth of Basic Ecclesial Communities, of neighborhood groups, of groups that come together to defend human rights, or that come together for prayer or Bible-sharing. Of course, these groups overlap and interlock. In part, they are motivated by a healthy reaction to the breakdown of traditional structures of community. and more positively, they stem from a concern with human persons rather than with impersonal structures, a concern above all with those who are small, neglected or despised. In cities, the caste system is gradually weakening.

2.3.7 Desire of community goes together with desire for dialogue. It goes together too with desire for participation, the longing to share in shaping one's personal and communal destiny. We have noted this desire in society. It is felt passionately too in the Church, and is beginning to find its flowering in greater lay involvement in the Church's life and ministry.

2.3.8 We can, therefore, speak of a time of "crisis" in the Asian continent, a moment of history opening out to both danger and opportunity. The very same historical situation holds out possibilities of sin as well as grace. It is up to the local Churches in Asia to walk with their people, to accompany them in their journey toward a world that is more Spirit-filled. For in all this ferment we sense the stirrings of the creative Spirit, a Spirit sometimes disturbing, but ever surprising, challenging and hope-giving.

2.3.9 We began by looking at the changing face of Asian societies, change with much danger of dehumanization. The danger is all too often realized. But the signs of hope that we have discerned offer the potential for humanized and humanizing change. The truly human can, moreover, never be divorced from the rest of divine creation. And when the truly human is discovered and deeply contemplated, it reveals to us the mystery of the Divine, of that creative Being who loves all creation in ways beyond even our deepest hopes and imaginings. So, though there may be negative and dangerous things occurring, the movement in Asia toward modernity calls for a joyful response from the Church as it accompanies our Asian people, as partner with them in all positive movements of the human spirit. The challenge for the Church is to work for justice and peace along with the Christians of other Churches, together with our sisters and brothers of other faiths and with all people of goodwill, to make the Kingdom of God more visibly present in Asia.

3.0 III. THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN CONTEMPORARY ASIA

The vastness of the Asian continent, the number, complexity and tenacity of its problems could cause in Christians a paralyzing discouragement. But seen with the eyes of faith, these difficulties, together with the signs of hope that accompany them, are as so many challenges to mission. God speaks to us from the travails and the progress of our countries, and bids us from the contemporary challenges of our world to renew our sense of mission.

3.1 A. A Renewal of the Sense of Mission

3.1.1 1. A renewal of our sense of mission means, first of all, renewal of our faith that God so loved the world that he sent his Son to be the savior of all. This Son, through whom all things were made (Jn 1:3; Heb 1:2), became like us in all things, sin alone excepted (cf. Heb 4:15). He went about doing good and healing all who were in the power of evil (cf. Acts 10:38). Filled with the Spirit, he preached the Good News of the Kingdom of God, and commanded his disciples to do the same. Lifted up from the earth, he draws all peoples to himself through his Church, and through other ways unknown to us. He is the light that enlightens every human being (Jn 1:9). He has imprinted traces of his revelation in the world which exists in him (Col 1:16), and in the "seeds of the word" found in cultures and in other religious traditions. The Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, and ever-present and active in the Church, in the world and in the human heart, leads all to their unity and fulfillment.

3.1.2 From this perspective, mission, being a continuation in the Spirit of the mission of Christ, involves a being with the people, as was Jesus: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Therefore, mission includes: being with the people, responding to their needs, with sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing and word. Mission will mean a dialogue with Asia's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions (FABC I).

3.2 2. Renewal of a sense of mission will also require a renewal of our motivations for mission. There has been perceived in some a weakening of these motivations so necessary to persevere in this demanding task. Why indeed, should we evangelize?

3.2.1. a) We evangelize, first of all, from a deep sense of *gratitude to God*, the Father “who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3), and sent the Spirit into our hearts so that we may share in God’s own life. Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God.

That is why it is so important for us Christians to have a deep faith experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39), that love which has been poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). Without a personal experience of this love received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish.

3.2.2 b) But mission is also a *mandate*. We evangelize because we are sent into the whole world to make disciples of all nations. The one who sends us is Jesus, who has been sent by the Father, and to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). He sends us on a mission which is part of the epiphany of God’s plan to bring all things together under Christ as head (Eph 1:9-10). We cannot fulfill this mission apart from him (Jn 15:4-5). But he assures us that he will remain with us all days till the end of time (Mt 28:20), and he has sent us his Spirit so that we may be his witnesses to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

3.2.3 c) We evangelize also because we *believe* in the Lord Jesus. We have received the gift of faith. We have become Christians. “The Christian vocation is by its very nature a vocation to the apostolate (Vatican Council II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 2). That is why Pope Paul VI emphatically states: “It is unthinkable that a person should accept the word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn” (*Evangelization in the Modern World*, 24).

Unfortunately for many Catholics, faith is only something to be received and celebrated. They do not feel it is something to be shared. The missionary nature of the gift of faith must be inculcated in all Christians. All must be helped to realize that God has called us to be Christians not only so that we may be saved but that we may collaborate in the work of the world’s salvation, and invite those whom God draws to the Church to share in our faith.

3.2.4 d) We evangelize also because we have been *incorporated by baptism into the Church*, which is missionary by its very nature because it is the result of the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Vatican Council II, *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity*, 2). The Church

exists in order to evangelize (*Evangelization in the Modern World*, 14); and each member, by virtue of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, has received the right and duty to the apostolate from the Lord himself (Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 33).

3.2.5 e) And finally, we evangelize because the Gospel is *a leaven* for liberation and for the transformation of society. Our Asian world needs the values of the Kingdom and of Christ in order to bring about the human development, justice, peace and harmony with God, among peoples and with all creation, that the peoples of Asia long for.

3.2.6 Yes, for Asia and its teeming millions also we must affirm: "The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of humankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations" (Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 45).

3.2.7 We look forward to the day when daughters and sons of the Church, imbued with these motivations, will see in their evangelizing mission not only a duty that they must fulfill but a privilege they can be thankful for, and a right they will faithfully safeguard. Christians formed in a missionary spirituality will be joyful witnesses of the values of the Kingdom, and of Christ whose disciples they are.

3.3.1 3. The renewal of our sense of mission will mean, thirdly, that the acting subject of mission is the *local Church* living and acting in communion with the Universal Church. It is the local Churches and communities which can discern and work out (in dialogue with each other and with other persons of goodwill) the way the Gospel is best proclaimed, the Church set up, the values of God's Kingdom realized in their own place and time. In fact, it is by responding to and serving the needs of the peoples of Asia that the different Christian communities become truly local Churches.

3.3.2 This local Church, which is the acting subject of mission, is the people of God in a given milieu, the whole Christian community — laity, Religious and clergy. It is the whole diocese, the parish, the Basic Ecclesial Community and other groups. Their time has come for Asia.

3.3.3 Hence, we can see from the point of view of mission how vital is the formation of *fully participatory* Christian communities where people experience that they "belong" and that together they are the Church. On the other hand, such communities become fully Church only

when they accept their share in the Church's mission.

4.0 B. The Mode of Mission in Asia

4.1 Mission may find its greatest urgency in Asia; it also finds in our continent a distinctive mode. We affirm, together with others, that "the proclamation of Jesus Christ is the center and primary element of evangelization" (*Statement of the FABC All-Asia Conference on Evangelization*, Suwon, South Korea, August 24-31, 1988). But the proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means, first of all, the witness of Christians and of Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, a *proclamation* through Christlike deeds. For Christians in Asia, to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbors of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace. Proclamation through dialogue and deeds — this is the first call to the Churches in Asia.

4.2 Mission in Asia will also seek through *dialogue to serve* the cause of unity of the peoples of Asia marked by such a diversity of beliefs, cultures and socio-political structures. In an Asia marked by diversity and torn by conflicts, the Church must in a special way be a sacrament — a visible sign and instrument of unity and harmony.

4.3 But we shall not be timid when God opens the door for us to *proclaim* explicitly the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior and the answer to the fundamental questions of human existence. We shall proclaim the Gospel in the manner of the Lord Jesus, who expressed his mission in these terms:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18-19).

4.4 Despite the goodwill and sometimes heroic efforts of evangelizers, our deeds have often proven inadequate. What was lacking?

4.5 It seems to us now that in confrontation with Asian realities we have preached about values which ought to be pursued, but have often failed to follow through with *effective actions* that would help dismantle structures of sin oppressive of our peoples. We now recognize the need to plan and do appropriate deeds consequent upon dialogue and prayerful discernment.

4.6 Our minority status should not deter us from patiently working out in collaboration with Christians of other Churches and peoples of other religions and persuasions the steps needed to liberate our people from the bondage of sin and its societal manifestations, and to inscribe the values of the Kingdom in Asian society. For the Lord assures us: “Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased the Father to give you the Kingdom” (Lk 12:32).

5.0 C. The Role of the Lay Faithful

5.1 The renewal of Asian society which the Lord bids us to accomplish in dialogue and collaboration with peoples of other religious traditions and persons of goodwill requires the effort of the whole Church. While bishops and priests should be active in the Christian formation of lay people (Pope John Paul II, *Message to FABC V*, Bandung), the lay faithful should take upon themselves as their specific responsibility the renewal of Asian society according to the values of the Gospel. They are the primary evangelizers of culture and of cultures, and of the whole fabric of life in society. Hence, there must not be in Catholics what Vatican II has described as a “pernicious opposition between professional and social activity on one hand and religious life on the other” (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 43).

5.2 This calls for a thorough education of Catholics in the social doctrine of the Church, as well as the formation of their hearts toward just and compassionate living in present-day Asian society. Christians formed in this manner will be evangelizers of their own — the young evangelizing the young, workers evangelizing workers, professionals evangelizing professionals, government officials evangelizing government officials, families evangelizing families — and will be leaven for the transformation of Asian society.

6.0 D. The Face of the Church in Asia

6.1 We have up to now emphasized deeds. But mission is more than deeds. It involves the very being of the Church.

Therefore, we ask: “What should the Church *be* in and to this changing Asian world marked by so much diversity, poverty, suffering and injustice, and with so many movements for social transformation?”

6.2 The Christian community, it seems to us, must live in *companionship*, as true *partners* with all Asians as they pray, work, struggle and suf-

fer for a better human life, and as they search for the meaning of human life and progress. Because the human person, created in Christ, redeemed by Christ and united by Christ to himself, is the way for the Church, the Church must walk along with him/her in human solidarity.

6.3 But it is as *servants of the Lord* and of *humanity* that we Christians share the same journey with all the Asian peoples. The Church was not sent to observe but to serve — to serve the Asian peoples in their quest for God and for a better human life; to serve Asia under the leading of the Spirit of Christ and in the manner of Christ himself who did not come to be served but to serve and to lay down his life as a ransom for all (Mk 10:45) — and to discern, in dialogue with Asian peoples and Asian realities, what deeds the Lord wills to be done so that all humankind may be gathered together in harmony as his family. As servant of Yahweh and of humanity, the Church will seek above all faithfulness to God and to the Asian peoples, and will also invite to full participation in the Christian community those who are led to it by the Spirit of God.

6.4 This service will be done in *compassion*, the compassion of Jesus himself who, like the good Samaritan, came to bind the wounds of humanity. It will be a compassion that makes the Church weak and powerless with those who are weak and powerless. But it will be a compassion that will denounce, in deeds, if it is not possible to do so in words, the injustice, oppressions, exploitations and inequalities resulting in so much of the suffering that is evident in the Asian situation. Such compassion will see as fellow members of the one human family under the Fatherhood of God all exploited women and workers, unwelcome refugees, victims of violations of human rights, and in fact every needy human person. This compassion will see even deeper, and will welcome in each human being — but especially the poor, deprived and oppressed — the very person of Christ who has united himself to every human being, though he/she may be unaware of it (*The Redeemer of Humankind*, 14).

6.5 Such a Church will not boast of human power but will serve with the power of the Lord Jesus who emptied himself and took the form of a servant (Phil 2:7), but is, for all who believe, the Wisdom and Power of God (1Cor 1:23-24).

6.6 This Church, witnessing by its very being and deeds to the values of the Kingdom of God, will then be credible when it proclaims with its lips that Jesus is the Savior of the world and the answer to all its longings.

Our Process

7.1 Our reflection on the Asian situation in the light of our mission of evangelization has led us to realize the enduring validity of a process of: (a) *dialoguing* with the realities of Asia from within; (b) *discerning* the movement of God's Spirit in Asia; and (c) *translating into deeds* what the Spirit bids us to accomplish. This process has to be the general approach for our total response as Church in Asia.

7.2

A. Pervading Pastoral Imperatives

At the Level of Discernment

From our sharing of experiences and reflections, six pervading pastoral imperatives have constantly emerged:

1. The necessity for Christian mission to keep *Christ at the center* of our proclamation, behavior and relationships.

2. The imperative of considering with the utmost concern and sensitivity the relationship and interaction between the mission and pastoral thrust of the Church and the *pluralism* of Asian societies.

3. The imperative of *empowering people* for mission, ministry and the task of integral liberation.

4. The need to encourage, initiate and facilitate *micro-level initiatives* with ripple effects, especially at the grassroots level.

5. The indispensable necessity for the Church in Asia to be *credible* in its lifestyle and deeds in proclaiming its faith and in acting for justice and human rights.

6. The imperative of *re-envisioning and replanning* formation processes, with particular attention being given to cultural values and structural factors.

7.3

B. Specific Pastoral Directions

At the Level of Doing

Having discerned the way the Holy Spirit is leading us to respond to the challenges emerging in Asia, for specific pastoral initiatives and processes we urge:

7.3.1

Proclaiming the Faith

1. That appropriate formation processes for mission and proclamation be developed, with emphasis on the laity's participation.

2. That an integral catechesis and the promotion of Bible study and reflection toward the building of word-centered communities be undertaken.

3. That serious concern and care, through intensive inculturation and catechesis, be given toward a meaningful and joyful celebration of the sacraments and liturgy, especially the Eucharist, that would be creative of fellowship and community.

4. That effective measures be taken by episcopal conferences to develop and communicate a process of regular faith discernment that everyone could easily use and share in.

5. That the content and programming of Catholic media implement a "ministry of compassion" for the sick and poor of Asia, thus making itself a more effective instrument of evangelization.

6. That a commission for the Biblical Apostolate be set up in every episcopal conference to promote an understanding and a love of the Scriptures among our people.

7.3.2

Serving Asian Societies

7.3.2.1

Mediated by the Social Doctrine of the Church

1. That social analysis be integrated with cultural analysis, and both subjected to faith discernment.

2. That the social doctrine of the Church be part of formation in faith for everyone, at all levels of laity, Religious and clergy.

3. That the formation of a faith-inspired social conscience be a priority task in catechesis, media, schools and other apostolates of formation.

4. That the Church, consistent with its social doctrine, investigate and remove from within its own structures and practices whatever obstructs human rights and justice.

5. That, wherever possible, specialized institutions be set up to provide, from a faith perspective, competence for lay persons in the socio-economic and political field, including the civil service.

7.3.2.2 In Quest of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

("There is no peace without social justice, and little social justice without peace.")

1. That episcopal conferences effectively incorporate into their Justice and Peace programs a vigorous defence and promotion of human rights, especially those of women and children born and unborn.

2. That Catholic schools integrate into their curricula the formation of values necessary for peace and social transformation, and study how Gospel values can positively influence culture, science and technology.

3. That the Justice and Peace commissions of episcopal conferences develop and implement a program of forming men and women dedicated to the Gospel value of active non-violence, and facilitate the organization of peace groups (e.g., peace cells, zones of peace) at the grassroots level.

4. That FABC set up contacts with other regional associations of episcopal conferences in order to raise and discuss both the interlocking character and also the moral dimensions of issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

7.3.2.3 In a Situation of Pluralism

1. That episcopal conferences develop a formation process for clergy, Religious and laity toward the formation of "persons of dialogue," who would be sensitive to other faiths and persuasions, and to social and cultural diversity in the Church and in the world.

2. That the collaboration of the appropriate FABC Offices to facilitate at the grassroots level ecumenical and interreligious dialogue for integral development be continued, and that such dialogue be further promoted by episcopal conferences in their own areas.

3. That the episcopal conferences identify cultural attitudes and grassroots structures, including interchurch and interfaith groups, and set up leadership-training programs that would promote ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

4. That episcopal conferences explore closer relationships with international Catholic organizations and with government and non-government organizations to promote integral development.

5. That efforts to have a dialogue of life at the grassroots level be facilitated and promoted so that people of different Churches, religious traditions and persuasions, becoming aware of shared human and spiritual values, may act together for the common good.

6. That the Church, as the sacrament of unity of all humankind, promote communion within the Church, and peace and harmony in the world, especially when pluralism becomes a cause for division.

7.3.3 Deepening the Faith

1. That episcopal conferences promote the establishment of centers of prayer; and the development of seminaries into centers of deep spirituality for priests and other ministers of the Church.

2. That episcopal conferences promote the development of the spiritual depth and possibilities of pilgrimages, which could also serve as events of ecumenical and interreligious encounter.

3. That episcopal conferences foster the inculturation of the sacraments and liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist.

4. That the ways of prayer be integrated into all catechetical programs, especially of Christian initiation.

5. That episcopal conferences explore approaches to a spirituality that would be relevant to youth.

6. That religious orders and congregations in Asia exercise leadership in living the Gospel prophetically and radically, thus providing depth and spiritual inspiration for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ.

7. That events and experiences which would help bishops come into deeper contact with the inner journey of the Spirit be planned and promoted.

8.0 C. A New Way of Being Church in the 1990s

Response at the Level of Being

(For principal features of this "new" way of being Church, see *FABC III, 1982, "The Church: A Community of Faith in Asia"*; and the *FABC Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church, 1977.*)

8.1 The above recommendations of the Fifth Plenary Assembly envision alternative ways of being Church in the Asia of the 1990s. But these alternative ways share some major dimensions.

8.1.1 1. The Church in Asia will have to be a *communion of communities*, where laity, Religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as sisters and brothers. They are called together by the word of God which, regarded as a quasi-sacramental presence of the Risen Lord, leads them to form small Christian communities (e.g., neighborhood groups, Basic Ecclesial Communities, and "covenant" communities). There, they pray and share together the Gospel of Jesus, living it in their daily lives as they support one another and work together, united as they are "in one mind and heart."

8.1.2 2. It is a *participatory* Church where the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to all the faithful — lay, Religious and cleric alike — are recognized and activated, so that the Church may be built up and its mission realized.

8.1.3 3. Built in the hearts of people, it is a Church that faithfully and lovingly *witnesses* to the Risen Lord Jesus and reaches out to people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life toward the integral liberation of all.

8.1.4 4. It is a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a *prophetic sign*, daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.

9.0 D. A Spirituality for Our Times

Response at the Focal Point of the Spirit

(For major features of this spirituality, see *FABC II, 1978, "Prayer — The Life of the Church of Asia"*; and *FABC IV, 1986, "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia."*)

9.1 At the center of this new way of being Church is the action of the Spirit of Jesus, guiding and directing individual believers as well as the whole community to live a life that is Spirit-filled — that is, to live an authentic spirituality. It is nothing more and nothing less than a following of Jesus-in-mission, an authentic discipleship in the context of Asia.

9.2 If people are convinced more by witnessing than by teaching, this is most true of the peoples of Asia whose cultures hold the contemplative dimension, renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence in the highest regard. We would have a message for Asia only when our Asian sisters and brothers see in us the marks of God-realized persons. Credibility is the fruit of authenticity. The sharing of what are our lived spiritual experiences is of incalculable necessity and importance in the tasks of evangelization and integral development.

9.3 Our spirituality has, therefore, to integrate every aspect of Christian life: liturgy, prayer, community living, solidarity with all and especially with the poor, evangelization, catechesis, dialogue, social commitment, etc. There has to be no dichotomy between faith and life, or between love and action, unless we wish simply to be like clanging cymbals, noisy and distracting, without depth and direction. In all things, we need to have a profound sense of the holy, a deep sense and awareness of God, his presence and mystery.

9.4 We require a return to the very sources of Christian life, to the Scriptures, to the living traditions of our Church, to the spiritual wisdom of our ancestors. And this return would have to be in dynamic interaction with a pervasive sensitivity to the aspirations of all, and especially of the poor peoples of Asia.

9.5 For the spirituality of the new way of being Church is the spirituality of those who place their complete trust in the Lord. It is the spirituality of the powerless, of the *anawim*. Renunciation and simplicity, compassion for and solidarity with all, and especially with the poor, meekness and humility — virtues promoted by active non-violence — are some of the significant features of the spirituality we need, and these Gospel values resonate deeply with the cultures of Asia. It is a spirituality of harmony. It expresses our intimate communion with God, our docility to his Spirit, our following of Jesus, as we challenge the disharmonies of our Asian world. It moves us away from images of exterior organization, power or mere secular effectiveness to images of simplicity, humble presence and service.

9.6 Its depth prepares us for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. It stirs up in us a faith and hope in the Lord of history, a sense of wonder at his mighty work, a hunger for the saving message, and beckons all to share in the ultimate goal of all human striving, which is the inner life of God.

9.7 By itself, then, such spirituality is already a living proclamation of Jesus, the Lord and Savior, unequivocal in its meaning, powerful and far-reaching in its impact.

10.0

V. CONCLUSION

10.1 We began by emphasizing *deeds* as a response of the Church to the challenges of Asia and we have ended by pointing out that responding with the very *being* and *heart* of the Church has primacy over *doing*. This must be so, for effective doing can only result from the very depths of the Church's being and authentic living. The Church has to become what it really is for the doing to begin, for the Church in Asia "to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

10.2 With a prayer on our lips and a hope in our hearts, we entrust ourselves to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. She is our guide for the Way. She will help the Church in Asia to keep on the right *path* even if this proves to be the Way of the Cross. She will assist us to be faithful to God's plan for the Church in Asia till the *time* comes when her Son will return to take us to that *place* described by Isaiah:

On this mountain, he has destroyed the veil which used to veil all peoples, the pall enveloping all nations: he has destroyed death forever. Lord Yahweh has wiped away the tears from every cheek; he has taken away his people's shame everywhere on earth, for Yahweh has spoken" (Isaiah 25:7-8).

"I Will Turn their Mourning into Joy" (Jer 31:13)

VI. REPORTS OF THE WORKSHOPS OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

(Please note: Each workshop had a discussion guide which was published and sent to the participants before the convening of the plenary assembly. These guides provided part of the background for the workshop activity. The report gives only some of the highlights of the discussions. We refer the reader to the more detailed discussion guides.)

1. WORKSHOP: THE CHURCH BEFORE THE CHANGING ASIAN SOCIETIES OF THE 1990s

A. Introduction

1. Asia, as we see it today, is an Asia with a huge population in deep poverty, with illiteracy, underemployment and unemployment, corruption on a large scale, money and power becoming an all-encompassing goal for most of the people, conflicting ideas of development, varieties of cultures and traditions in tension, with the problems of refugees, a mobility of people internally and externally to some extent, etc. In the meantime, Asia is going through a swift and far-reaching transformation; it is a continent undergoing modernization and profound social change, together with secularization, which have resulted in the break-up of traditional societies. Industrialization and its consequences violently threaten the peoples of Asia with irreparable alienation and the disintegration of patterns of life and social relationships built up over the centuries.

2. The hopes of development, which in this continent of suffering humanity were two decades ago so lively, seem to appear today very far from being realized (SRS 12). It is with this Asia of today that the Church is called to share the immense wealth of the experiences she has gained through committed involvement, so that an authentic and integral human development can be offered to the struggles of the Asian people.

3. On the other hand, the challenges facing the Church herself in Asia are immense. The first being the fact that she is a tiny minority, that is, just 2% of the Asian population. However, the influence that she wields in this vast continent surpasses all statistical proportions and is so high that it cannot but be a powerful leaven to make Asia a happy abode for its people.

4. Our workshop decided to begin its collective reflection and sharing of experiences in two ways:

a) First, we asked: How do the Asian Churches respond to the ever-growing challenges emerging from the changes in Asian societies? How can evangelization become concretely meaningful in Asia today? And finally: How do we get the faithful truly involved in witnessing relevantly to the Gospel amidst the current problems in Asian societies?

b) Then, we accepted that the Church also brings home to the minds of the people the reflection of the image and beauty of God in this creation. It is into this created world that his own Son descends, taking the

nature of man in the Incarnation. With this background in mind, the Church appreciates Asia as the *locus theologicus* of her life.

The following represent some of the principal reflections.

B. A Basic Mentality for Our Response

1. First of all, the Church must be imbued with a basic mentality of making all development integral, authentic and human.

2. Reflecting Christ's own life, the Church, by her humble service offered willingly and selflessly, lays the foundation of this basic mentality. Together with fellow Asians, the Church never stops searching for a common destiny. In this search, which is a process of accompanying our fellow Asians, the Church must allow herself to be questioned.

3. By her heroic and courageous proclamation of the Good News and her witnessing to Christ, the Church acknowledges that God is the principal agent of human development.

4. Though there are many religions in Asia, it is the Church that has consistently offered an ethical framework within which the secular concerns of our world can be integrated; and the Church should try now and always to cooperate with believers of our many religions in Asia to search for commonalities in the pursuit of human development in Asia.

C. The Church: Ad Intra (Life Within)

1. Conversion to Dialogue

a) There is a need for an ongoing conversion to dialogue within the Church (e.g., between the hierarchy and the laity), as well as with the others (e.g., with the poor through a "dialogue of life"). There is a gap experienced between the need for this dialogue, articulated in previous Church documents, and its actual practice or implementation.

b) Some causes of this gap are found: in cultural factors, e.g., authority-centeredness; an excessive concern for harmonious interpersonal relationships, etc., which makes it difficult for the laity to engage in dialogue with the hierarchy and other religious authorities; in social factors, e.g., the caste system; in a clerical mentality that keeps Church leaders from being open to learning from others through dialogue; in a know-it-all mentality.

The Church in varying degrees in different places has tried to make this dialogue a reality. While these efforts have to be acknowledged, the gap between the ideal of dialogue and its reality has to be accepted.

- c) Some needs identified to foster dialogue are:
- i. structures at the grassroots level that will promote this dialogue, e.g., Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs);
 - ii. changes in cultural attitudes and mentalities that will support these structures;
 - iii. “men and women of dialogue” who will create and/or sustain these structures, and will personally embody these cultural attitudes and mentalities.

2. Empowerment of the People

This means awakening them to their human dignity and to human rights; helping them to organize themselves so they can harness their potentials; and make decisions affecting their lives. It implies an approach that gives people the chance to make mistakes. It means working with people and not simply for them.

3. The Use of Cultural Analysis

This is done, in addition to social analysis, to determine the causes of poverty and injustice in cultures. The values discovered by such an analysis are then discerned in faith.

4. Collaboration with Development Agents

We need to develop close collaboration with the International Catholic Organizations (ICOs), government organizations (GOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the integral development of Asia and not simply when resources are lacking.

5. A Spirituality Adapted to Technological Changes

In the face of a growing “fast food” mentality, there is a need to develop a spirituality that allows for the contemplation of creation.

6. Formation Programs

- a) Appropriate formation programs for different sectors and groups,

which will prepare our people to cope with the changing realities of Asia today, need to be formulated.

b) There is a need for a seminary formation for the clergy that is geared towards helping them become "men of dialogue." To begin this formation when they are in the ministry seems inadequate.

c) The methodology and content of our formation programs must be rethought in terms of equipping them with orientations and skills that will enable them to take responsibility for building up a Church that is responsive to modern day challenges. Cultural factors that hinder such a formation must to be given particular attention.

d) In view of the growing consciousness in Asian societies of the situation of women, there is a need for formation programs that will conscientize both men and women regarding the dignity, the rights and the struggles of women vis-à-vis oppressive situations.

7. The Role of Catholic Schools in Social Transformation

a) This needs to be reaffirmed with even greater vigor. We recognize both the immense contribution of Catholic schools to evangelization in Asia, as well as the tremendous difficulties they are faced with: financial difficulties, pressures from the state and society.

b) Catholic schools need to reflect seriously on the Gospel values they communicate — how these values can influence culture, science and technology, and on the means by which these values can be communicated.

D. The Church: Ad Extra (Life for the World)

1. The Political Sphere

a) In the political sphere the Church in Asia has had a somewhat tenuous relationship with the powers that be. On the one hand, the Church, especially those of the faithful who are conscientized, is at times rather critical towards the dominant power structures. At other times, the Church as an institution appears slow to take a stand even where moral values are violated and peace and justice issues disregarded, adopting a "wait and see" attitude, as if afraid to "rock the boat." Furthermore, there are those among the faithful who feel the political sphere is of no concern to religion, and thus, to the Church.

b) In our search to find an appropriate role in relation to the wielders of power and still be genuinely rooted in the lives of the people, we believe that the Church can relate in critical collaboration with the State in the development of Asian societies. This means being open to the positive contributions of the State, while maintaining a critical distance so that the Church is able to exercise its prophetic role in the threefold task of annunciation, denunciation and renunciation, which witnessing to the Gospel demands.

c) The motivation for this critical collaboration should not be to safeguard the property and position of the Church, which should be ready to be sacrificed if the Church is persecuted. Rather, it stems from our faith that for the goal of an holistic human development in Asia we must collaborate with all people of goodwill.

d) In this regard, we see the need for the Church to be actively influencing the various institutions in our countries: political structures, educational institutions, the media, etc. Already we find in a number of countries in Asia a significant number of lay faithful in positions of leadership in civil society, although Catholics are only a tiny minority of Asia's peoples. We believe this is an arena where the laity can exercise their vocation and affect the policy-making process of Asian countries.

2. The Military and Militarization

a) First, a justification for the presence of the military forces would lie only in the self-defense of nations. Second, a military build-up can be a form of intimidation of neighboring countries. Third, and most alarmingly for Asian countries, we have seen the military turn against its own citizens. The military, with its own logic and weapons, are then a symbol of prestige, a glorified instrument of death.

b) The Church has promoted peace and justice as integral components of authentic human development for a long time. However, in Asia the emphasis has been on issues of socio-economic justice, while the issues of peace and disarmament have been relegated to the background.

c) We believe that the decade of the 1990s demands a faith response to the militarization of Asia, including the question of compulsory military service and the role of the military. This is a faith response that will create conditions where peace and brotherhood can grow, promoting structures that will serve the people.

d) For the military personnel, faith in Jesus Christ can provide the framework for reflection amidst an attack on their sense of morality.

3. The Economic Sphere

a) In the economic field we find a system where production is not planned with the needs of people in mind; and harmony and order are desired for the sake of the economy. It is a system based on a materialistic notion of life.

b) The main problem for the Church in this sphere, then, is how she can contribute to a development that will lead to the eradication of poverty without fostering materialism.

c) The two ideologies of our age, namely capitalism and socialism, have been unable to provide for the masses of our people who are hungry, unemployed and illiterate. We have to move away from ideological dogmas in our search for a model of development that will meet the needs of the Asian people. This may require contributions from both systems for a more just distribution of wealth and resources and towards a more meaningful human life.

d) As the Church, we also need to re-examine our work to see if we are truly helping to eradicate poverty or merely alleviating it.

e) At the cultural level, we acknowledge that there are many who do not have as their goal the acquisition of goods. In its place is the value attached to human relationships. We can draw from and promote such a counter-culture to the powerful persuasion of materialism.

f) The Gospel of sharing needs to be emphasized, even as we help the poor to attain a higher level of economic life. Christians can be motivated to work not so much to meet their own needs only but so that they can share with those who have less in life, in communion and solidarity with the human community.

g) To neutralize the negative aspect of materialistic modernization in the world of work, the Church should stress the fundamental value of human work as participating in the Lord's creativity (*Gaudium et Spes* 37).

4. Science and Technology

The Church has in recent pronouncements expressed an openness to the findings of science and an appreciation of the benefits of technology, while at the same time denouncing its inhuman effects. Nevertheless, from surveys conducted in various Asian countries it has been found that in most of them many Asian scientists and technologists have not been able to find a true synthesis in their life of faith and their professional activity. Some have become agnostics, and some experience a kind of dichotomy in their lives, unable to harmonize their religious beliefs and their scientific work. The Church needs to pay urgent attention to this problem.

5. Mass Media

a) We see the power of the mass media in generating the materialistic lifestyle in Asian societies. Its effects are both direct and subtle, portraying a particular vision of the "good" life to be aspired to, and attacking the subconscious and unconscious so that behavior is modified.

b) We can promote critical thinking towards the media and its various messages in schools, seminaries, as well as in informal settings, especially among the young people in their formative years.

c) We also need to form persons who can be communicators. i.e., who can use the media creatively with a moral sensibility. We can go further to form persons who know how to respond to the issues arising in this field, such as pornography.

d) Other means by which we can put the media to alternative use is to bring it into the liturgy. To reach out to the lonely, the alienated and to those who hesitate to go to the clergy, we can consider the telephone ministry.

e) In the context of Asia, where millions are illiterate, the radio and television media in particular have an important role in the promotion of an authentic human development. Publications, including the Catholic press, can also have an important influence among the educated of Asia, e.g. *Kompas* in Indonesia.

D. Recommendations

1. That FABC before the next plenary assembly undertake a pro-

cess (surveys, evaluations, etc.), at the Asian or regional levels, aimed at enabling the Asian Churches to see the efforts that have been taken to implement past FABC resolutions, to learn from these efforts and to identify possible future directions.

2. That the next FABC plenary assembly focus on the youth, the hope of the Church in the coming millenium.

E. Conclusion

The participants of this workshop wish to emphasize that the Church can do much for an authentic human development in today's Asia by offering spiritual and ethical values at all levels. The Church can be the Holy Spirit's instrument in permeating the socio-political areas of Asia, as well as providing a faith perspective for a continuing discernment regarding the authenticity of the values, both of tradition and of modern culture, and of their relevance for an integral human development in our times.

2. WORKSHOP: THE CHURCH IN ASIA AND MISSION IN THE 1990s

A. The Challenge Today of Motivation for Mission

1. Our principal focus of discussion was on how to motivate Christians in Asia to a zeal and enthusiasm for mission, so that the Church in Asia may be more dynamic rather than static. With this choice of focus we wish to indicate that the key to self-understanding by the Church is in her missionary activity.

2. We note these concerns regarding Asian Catholics:

a) A weak sense of religious experience, and thus a lack of realization of that debt of gratitude for God's love which is the motivating source of mission. This is true of clergy as well as of laity. "Be evangelized first before evangelizing others." Christian ministry should be seen as mission, not as career.

b) A lack of conviction that mission is a mandate of him who has authority to send forth, the Lord Jesus Christ. At the basis of mission is a sense of transcendent mystery greater than myself.

c) A lack of appreciation of the nature of faith and of the Church as essentially missionary.

d) An individualistic attitude and approach toward mission. Mission arises from incorporation into community of faith.

- e) An inward-looking Church concerned primarily about preservation or survival rather than for sharing and mission.
- f) An alienation from one's culture; a lack of exposure to the life of the poor.

B. Formation for Mission

1. Formation of the Christian person and of the Christian community is crucial. We must structure formation approaches which build the missionary dimension into the very meaning of Christian living. Attention must be paid both to preparation for baptism and motivation of those already baptized. It should be stressed that mission is a privilege and responsibility for all.

2. The draft of the Universal Catechism should be improved and strengthened. It seems to stress faith believed and faith celebrated but neglects faith proclaimed and shared. Furthermore, there should be an "Asian supplement" to the Universal Catechism for purposes of inculturation and a stressing of the role of the local Church in evangelization.

3. The sacramental and prayer life of Asian Christians should be revitalized. In many cases these have fallen into dull routine.

4. The great potentials of the laity for mission as urged by *Christifideles laici*. How to harness the enthusiasm and idealism of the youth?

5. Promote the missionary potentials of the family, schools, hospitals. Evangelization is basically done through a living witness of fraternal love.

6. The evangelizer must strive to communicate to those being evangelized a deep sense of the newness and power for transformation of the values of the Gospel and the experience of sharing in the Trinitarian life.

C. The Christological Foundation of Christian Mission

Our reflection focused on various significant trends and developments for mission in Asia at the turn of this new century, and what responses they might call for on the part of the Church which is essentially missionary.

1. We acknowledged instances of some Asian theologians (in agree-

ment with Western counterparts) who propose a full-blown pluralistic theology of religions whose "bottom line" is finally a parity of all religions and a consequent questioning, or even denial, of the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus Christ as Savior.

a) Some historical background: Vatican II's attitude of openness to the world in which there are many religious persuasions led to a renewed self-understanding not only of Christianity but also of the role of other great religious traditions. For some this has led, in turn, to the development of theological positions of radical pluralism which are open to mediators of salvation other than Christ. Sometimes, proponents of this pluralism go so far as to say that, considering their superiority in numbers and membership, other religions — not Christianity — are the ordinary way to salvation.

b) All this has had a debilitating impact, as far as a not-insignificant sector of the Church is concerned, on the motivation for mission, as well as on missionary vocations themselves. Seminarians studying theology are also affected.

2. What has been the real pastoral impact these theological considerations have had on the Church in Asia. ("Theologians tend to talk only to themselves, anyway.") Is the problem so widespread as to merit an FABC-wide response? It was the consensus that, allowing for the wide diversity of situations in Asia, the problem is indeed serious. These theologians may be in the minority, but they are a vociferous minority. The inner inspiration, the driving force, the motivation for Christian mission — which are inseparably connected with the affirmation of the uniqueness and centrality of Christ as Savior — must be safeguarded.

3. What is the existential reason why these theologians are ready to let go of the conviction regarding Christ's unique mediatorship? Apparently there is a praiseworthy desire for a total openness in dialogue, for a total acceptance of the other. But this is seen to be a mistaken and, eventually, a harmful graciousness and kindness. Ultimately, any true dialogue cannot be based on the putting aside of one's radical identity or of one's fundamental convictions.

4. Does this mean that the uniqueness and centrality of Christ must be indiscriminately proclaimed by the missionary regardless of time, place, person or circumstance? *Ad extra*, as a matter of practical prudence in evangelizing, the missionary can, and indeed must, adjust and respond to the situation. But *ad intra*, in principle, we reaffirm that the missionary

hold fast to the faith conviction (entrusted not only to the individual believer but to the community of faith) that Jesus Christ is the unique mediator and savior, and that it is only in his name and in ways known to the Spirit alone that all are to be saved.

5. We accept as our own response in this plenary assembly the earlier collegial and official FABC affirmation that: "The proclamation of Jesus Christ is the center and primary element of evangelization, without which all other elements will lose their cohesion and validity. In the same way, evangelization will lead to gathering together a believing community, the Church" (FABC All-Asian Conference on Evangelization, Suwon, South Korea, 1988).

D. Dialogue and Proclamation

"Dialogue and deeds" are the specifically Asian understanding of the universal mandate to proclaim the salvation that is to be found only in the name of the Lord Jesus. "Dialogue and deeds" are complementary rather than contradictory to explicit oral proclamation. All previous plenary assemblies of the FABC have spoken about the poverty of the millions in Asia and of the missionary imperative for the Church in Asia to show a preferential pastoral option for the poor. We are called again to act and to make what may prove to be hard decisions.

1. Unjust structures and institutions are intertwined with the root causes of poverty and exploitation. If the Church in Asia should decide to take a stand and strive to transform them, she must be ready for opposition and persecution. She must also be ready to lose donors and benefactors in our own countries.

2. Some initiatives on a "micro" level were enumerated to encourage many more such projects, e.g., 30% of the Sunday collection and a percentage of the yearly Lenten campaign reserved for the poor; some religious personnel always reserved to run schools for the poor, while the religious congregation runs schools for those better off financially.

3. In Catholic schools, the biblical notion of stewardship and the social concern expressed in papal encyclicals should be strongly communicated to students.

E. The Formation of Laity Imbued with a Sense of Mission to Transform Society

1. A long, serious period of formation is doubtlessly necessary. In this formation, the approach described as Dialogue-Discernment-Deeds should be found to be very helpful.

2. The emergence of lay ministries should be backed up by a renewed ecclesiology.

3. The development of a spirit of social concern and of skills in the promotion of the common good should constitute a significant part of lay formation.

4. Lay missionaries are sought not because there is a shortage of priests and Sisters but because they have a specific Christian charism of their own.

5. The practical approach to lay formation is both short-range and long-range. We must strengthen already existing structures as well as initiate new ones.

F. The Pastoral Problems of Migration, Refugees, Urbanization in Asia

1. These are socio-political phenomena which are both pastoral problems and missionary opportunities. Our theological reflection must flow from the perspective of faith which sees these as special moments of grace, *kairos*, in human history.

2. The Church in Asia has responded better to the needs of "people on the move." Some inspiring examples of pastoral care were given in response to these problems of migration and urbanization. In Taiwan priests follow their parishioners who have migrated to the city to work there. In India, special pastoral care for students and professionals is developing. In the Philippines, mass media are used more now to reach people who would otherwise be deprived of instruction in the faith.

3. In Korea, they would wish to give emphasis to the formation of lay missionaries who would bring the values of the Gospel into public life.

4. What can Asian Churches do to show solidarity with those nations, e.g., Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, which are in special need?

5. We should do all we can to push a religio-theological approach to the reception of refugees. That is to say, receiving countries should welcome refugees as brothers and sisters of the same Fatherhood of God. They should go beyond a merely natural human hospitality.

6. Racism is an obstacle to be overcome in any search for a solution to the problem of refugees.

G. Recommendations

1. "Motivation for mission" has become for the Church in Asia the most challenging concern, and at the present moment, the most enervating, sapping the apostolic vitality of the Church's members.

a) The Church in Asia must reach out to its theological experts to encourage theological research and professional discourse among themselves and with the Church's apostolic workers in the Vineyard on the Church's reasons for its dynamic preaching of the Gospel, always with a faithful and loving adherence to the Church's magisterium.

b) The bishops' conferences must seek all means to disseminate the apostolic vision of the Church to all our pastoral co-workers, and in particular to the laity.

2. We in Asia must set up structures which will make it possible for us to be ready and alert to take advantage of missionary opportunities in Asia as these present themselves. We note with joy the number of Asian missionary institutes now being established and the increasing number of Asian missionaries.

3. We note sadly, as well, the phenomenon of priests migrating to the First World ("priest drain") to seek better standards of living.

4. We see the local Church as the primary agent of the dynamism and all the initiatives of mission. We encourage a continuing reflection on the meaning of "local Church," and the implementation of these doctrinal and theological insights in our local Churches of Asia.

3. WORKSHOP: A SPIRITUALITY FOR OUR 1990s

A. Introduction

Our workshop worked on discovering a form of spirituality that will answer the challenges of the coming decades. It looked at the whole person, in keeping with the holistic tradition of Asia and the Christian vision of the totality of man, trying to integrate every aspect of Christian life: liturgy, prayer, community living, solidarity, evangelization, catechesis, dialogue, social commitment, etc.

B. The Asian Context

1. The Multireligious Situation

We were quick to note that we would have to live out this spirituality in the multireligious context in Asia, a continent of very rich religious traditions. A genuinely religious person wins ready respect in Asia, and people flock to holy places. Prayer, fasting and various forms of asceticism are held in high regard. Renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence are considered great values.

2. Contemplation

a) We should not be too surprised, then, that those who grew up amidst such spiritual wealth should consider us Christians, at times, somewhat superficial, excessively action-oriented, content in our external efficiency, lost among our very impressive works. We would have a message for our non-Christian brothers and sisters only when they can see in us the marks of a God-realized man. For the Asian, our logic and our lengthy dissertations are not as important as the sharing of our lived spiritual experiences and the perception we have of God and religious realities. Hence, the absolute importance of the contemplative dimension in our life. The whole of Christian tradition confirms this importance.

b) Our group noticed that, though the Asian is contemplatively inclined, our own Christian communities do not show a proportionate *enthusiasm for contemplation*. Christian communities, too, that enthusiastically take part in communitarian events like processions, pilgrimages and various forms of popular devotions not rarely manifest what may be interpreted by others as a lack of depth when it comes to personal prayer and mediation. Is it that our communities were eliminated from the main stream of Asian religious experience during the period of foreign mis-

sionary effort so that they do not vibrate with the rest of our Asian brethren? Is it that evangelization has not always taken people forward in their spiritual pilgrimage but has made them predominantly activists?

c) On further search, we found that there is great depth to the Asian soul, a profound sense of the holy and an awareness of God. Our task is only to help the Asian to discover in him/her-self what he/she already has. Modern movements like Taizé and the Focolare reveal the veracity of this conclusion.

3. Inculturation

Even in our efforts for *inculturation* we may have failed, in the sense that we have limited ourselves often to adapting mere externals, led mostly by theoretical expertise, and by not delving into the depths of the Asian psyche, and by not seeing what makes for meaning to him/her at that level.

4. Evangelization

People who are known to have some spiritual depth, like the guru, the sannyasi, the holy person and the healer, and the places they sanctify, like the ashram, and the center for *vipasna*, continue to draw Asian crowds. It is in such a situation that the Christian message grows loud and acquires convincing power.

C. The Socio-Economic Context

1. Social Corruption

Moving on to another area where our spirituality faced a challenge, we made note of a world of corruption, poverty, underdevelopment and injustice. While we may try to root out corruption by confronting it through conscientization and similar efforts, ultimately society can be changed only through the fostering of genuine values and a return to the ideals that were cherished in the ancient Asian cultures, like honesty and uprightness. Here again, we have to fall back on the strength that comes from our religious beliefs.

2. Poverty

a) Poverty is not God's plan for mankind. But the poor person who has often been in biblical tradition a symbol of a person who trusts in God

has much to teach us, as Mother Teresa often says. Even as renunciation is an outstanding feature to the Asian of a man of God, a poor life and commitment to and solidarity with the poor are other significant features of a holy person. Compassion is very much in the religious traditions of Asia.

b) We do not advocate a form of spirituality that will encourage the poor always to remain poor, but something that will draw him away from everything that is unworthy of man, and lead him to the sufficiency that God provides for the one who seeks it.

c) It is in this context that we hold in high regard the dignity of labor. When we work, we become more like unto God who continues his work of creation and redemption; and we fulfill the task that he has given to us to bring created realities to their perfection. Hence, the obligation of man to work, to be conscientious and efficient in his activities, and to build up a world in accordance with the plan of God.

3. Injustice

In our struggle for justice on behalf of the poor we should keep in mind not only our goals but also the means we adopt in accordance with the Gospel. We do not drive one group against another. The Gospel norm, "resist not the aggressor," has an Asian tone. One thinks of Gandhi who, spent a lifetime in struggle for his people, but never turned anyone against anyone else. In our own days, we may think of the Dalai Lama who, though acutely conscious of the suffering of his people, has never grown bitter, has preserved his serenity, and is absolutely confident of ultimate success.

D. The Context of Rapid Changes

Moving on to another point, we took note of the rapid changes that were taking place in Asia due to modernization: industrialization, urbanization, etc. There is an explosion of information by which the individual (especially in the anonymity of the cities) is rendered helpless in making the right choices in his/her newly acquired freedom. Used as he/she was to the support that came from his/her traditional community, he/she finds him/her-self impersonal, lonely, isolated and insecure. It often makes him/her greedy, selfish, even to the point of threatening the interests and the lives of others (violence).

E. The Church's Response

1. It is in this situation that the Church presents herself as a community of persons who have profound concern and warm love for each other. She shows compassion to the needy, offering solidarity, giving assistance and sharing life. She provides a sense of belonging even to those who are new members of the Church.

2. In a rapidly changing situation, she helps people to discern the meaning of events and study the direction of history (e.g., the lessons to be learned from the happenings in Eastern Europe, or nearer home, in our own countries and our own immediate situations).

3. The Church must seek to preserve values that are permanently valid, reject whatever is a negative value in the old tradition, acquire new motivation for upright living.

4. She fosters respect for people, for the poor, the foreigner, the refugee, and respect for life, even for the unborn child.

5. She announces the Good News to those who are hungering for the saving message. She stirs up a sense of wonder at the mighty works of God. She leads them to the inner life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, a mystery that finds concrete expression in Christ.

F. Conclusion

Asia is the land of religions, mystery, mysticism, love for peace, respect for life, harmony with the rest of creation. Our Christian spirituality has an enormous source to draw from; we keep returning to the Scriptures, to Christian tradition and to the spiritual wisdom of our ancestors.

4. WORKSHOP: ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF BEING CHURCH IN THE ASIA OF 1990s

A. Identification of Challenges

1. We identified a few challenges for our specific tasks in the workshop, namely to discern some alternative ways of Church being Church. These challenges are:

a) Need of moving from human life to God — from the humanum to the Transcendent.

- b) Contemplation is an outstanding feature of Asian culture.
- c) God's design (plan) for Asia has to be discerned from within.
- d) Need of moving from the local to the universal situation.
- e) There is a resistance to institutionalized religion.
- f) The goal of alternative ways of being Church is the proclamation of the Gospel.
- g) Need of human promotion and integral liberation.

These challenges served us as the background and points of reference throughout our search for alternative ways of being Church in Asia.

2. The methods that we have used in our workshop are as follows:

- a) Input by the facilitator.
- b) Lumko pastoral programs as guides for reflection.
- c) Prayerful sharing of the word of God.
- d) Personal and group sharing with the help of stimulating questions.
- e) Actual experience of some sessions of Lumko pastoral programs and group evaluation of them.
- f) Sharing of pastoral experiences of the participants.

B. Principal Reflections

1. Alternative Ways of Being Church

In the beginning of the workshop, we were led with the help of posters to dream of an ideal Church. This ideal Church could be called a "communion of communities," where people accept each other as brothers and sisters, meet in neighborhood groups, make Gospel-sharing their spiritual basis, support each other and work together and are united with other groups in the parish and the Universal Church.

This model calls for a participatory Church with active involvement of the whole community in living out Christian belonging and in fulfilling the common mission of the Church.

2. In actuality, however, we may find ourselves in other models of the Church, which may be called:

- The Provided – For Church
- The Pastoral Council Church
- The Awakening Church
- The Task Group Church

3. In our search for alternative ways of being Church we did not look for a Church with changed structures, but we concentrated on different pastoral approaches for forming the Church into a “communion of communities,” which is able to answer the challenges of the Church in the Asia of the 1990s.

4. For this purpose we studied in brief and went through in a few sessions the Lumko pastoral programs of formation.

The sessions moved around six topics:

a) Catechetical sessions and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (compiled in such a way that groups can do it themselves without the presence of a specially-trained expert).

b) Gospel sharing with the “Seven Step Method.”

c) Amos Programs for Christian social analysis and commitment.

d) Awareness programs for renewal and growth.

e) Small Christian Communities. By actually doing some exercises in these areas we discovered new approaches that can be used in our pastoral ministry for evangelization and for making the Church a “communion of communities.”

f) Sharing of different images of the Church by participants:

i. Image of the Church centered on promotion of the word of God as found in Sacred Scripture and Divine Tradition (Philippines).

ii. Image of the Church among Christian youth and young Christian workers.

iii. Image of the Church getting ready to face the challenges of living in Communist countries by receiving deeper formation in Christian faith to meet new cultural situation and their critical attitude towards the Church (Hong Kong).

iv. Image of the Church being deprived of its institutions and structures and most of its priests being killed in war — but at the same time committed to rebuilding the Church — not in its buildings but in Christian communities around the word of God. It is a Church being built

in the hearts of people who live in a Communist situation.

v. Image of the Church which leaves behind its ghetto and launches out to people of other religions with a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and collaboration (Bangladesh, Indonesia, etc.).

vi. Image of the Church where the hierarchy has confidence and trust in the laity and where all live and work together with team spirit (Indonesia, Korea, Sri Lanka)

vii. Image of the Church which is an instrument and sign of God's Kingdom and which witnesses that Kingdom to all people in all walks of life and work situations.

C. Experiences and Convictions

These sessions were more of an informative and prayerful sharing type, along with practical exercises. The sessions were very reflective and experiential, and we discovered deeper meanings of the actual method and questions, as well as the convictions on which they are based. These principal elements emerged:

1. A deepening of our own call as priests and bishops when we reflected on the call of catechumens to the Christian faith.

2. The *sensus fidelium* is a reality, because Christ meets his people through his living word, which is Christ, the Risen Lord himself, who has promised to remain in their midst until the end of times. The task of theologizing belongs to all.

3. People discover God's salvific plan within their own life situation and culture — the foundation for inculturation.

4. Contemplation is indispensable for Christian life and ministry for bishops, priests, Religious and the laity.

5. Active participation and involvement of the total community for proclamation of the Gospel.

6. Bible sharing as sharing of life. Life cannot be taught but is communicated through personal sharing.

7. With active participation of the laity the role of the bishops and priests is not diminished but made clearer. They remain the ministers of

word of God and sacraments and also play the role of coordinator, facilitator, animator and enabler. They journey with the people on the way to Emmaus.

8. As bishops and priests, they are constantly called to be like "children," the "little ones of Yahweh," and servants, after the example of our Master Jesus Christ.

9. The need of promoting and developing more lay ministers in the Church.

10. New ways of using the Sacred Scriptures which become a quasi-sacramental presence of Christ in the Christian community.

D. Recommendations

In the light of our discussions, experiences and convictions we recommend the following:

1. That the FABC arrange one-month-long workshops for different regions in Asia on "the new way of being Church," with the help of Lumko staff.

2. That the FABC undertake initiatives to promote skills and materials like that of Lumko, which are meaningful and effective in the context of Asia.

3. That the national conferences of bishops in Asia encourage the promotion of the biblical apostolate for the building up of Christian communities.

4. In the process of building small Christian communities the formation of Christian families be taken seriously, since they are the "domestic Church."

5. WORKSHOP: THE CHURCH AND PLURALISM IN THE ASIA OF THE 1990s

A. Introduction

The procedure followed by our workshop was to relate our experiences of Church and religious pluralism in Asia, and then analyze those experiences in the light of our Christian faith, to identify the challenges of pluralism to the Church. Out of these came a number of pastoral recommendations. The following is a summary of our efforts.

B. Our Experiences

The range of experiences reported by our participants covered encounters and relationships — some extending over many years — with all the major religious traditions and with the social, economic and political forces in Asia. When relating these experiences we naturally included the attempts of Christians to respond to these traditions and forces.

C. Analysis

As we examined our experiences the following trends, both hopeful and disturbing, emerged:

1. The growing pressures, and even oppression, which dominant groups within Asian societies are imposing on weaker minority groups. Such pressure and oppression usually include manipulation of the economic, political and even legal systems within the society, including the religious feelings of the groups involved. The manipulation often opens the way to fundamentalism and even fanatical tendencies within the religious traditions. In most cases it produces aggressive proselytizing as well.

2. There is a loss of shared societal values which has led to widespread dishonesty and corruption in public and private life.

3. Where the followers of different faiths come into conflict we found that the real causes of the conflict were economic, social or political, as well as the lack of understanding and fanaticism in the religions. In many cases we found that in spite of the conflict the leaders of the religions involved could work together for peace, or to protect the rights of the oppressed group.

4. There has been a steady growth in the dialogue of life at the grass-roots level and, where the influence of Catholic schools, hospitals and other social programs has been felt, an openness to dialogue has resulted at official levels of civic and religious life. Other Churches and faiths have also contributed to this trend.

5. In some parts of Asia there is a tendency for the Church to become a predominantly middle-class Church, while in other parts the Church is composed of predominantly tribal and outcast groups. Both these trends limit the Church's ability to influence the whole of society.

D. Pastoral Recommendations

In the light of the above analysis we offer the following pastoral recommendations:

1. There is a need to deepen the awareness of pluriformity within the Church. This should become evident in greater respect for cultural values and customs, in an active openness to all classes within a society, and in understanding and cooperation among the Churches of different rites.

2. Whenever possible we should enter into partnership with people of other faiths to protect the rights of the victims of oppression and discrimination, and to provide for their temporal welfare.

3. Through the practice of contemplation we must rediscover the depth dimension of our own faith commitment in order to attune ourselves to the movement of the Spirit within ourselves and our pluralistic societies, and to learn from the deep interiority of the religious traditions of Asia.

4. We should work together with other believers and people of goodwill to develop a vision of what Asian societies could be. This vision can be based on shared human and spiritual values and an understanding of the common good. In this way the followers of all faiths and people of goodwill can work together to create an atmosphere in which disputes and grievances can be faced and solved before they become intractable.

5. An improved formation of laity, Religious and clergy for creative apostolic encounters with the pluralism of Asia is urgently needed. This formation will be aimed at nurturing a deep sensitivity to the cultural and religious identities, feelings and needs of all Asian populations, especially minorities and oppressed populations. This sensitivity will be such that it will lead to an appropriate evangelization of Asian communities.

6. WORKSHOP: A SUBJECT OF DIGNITY AND RIGHTS: THE EMERGING INDIVIDUAL IN ASIA

A. Introduction

1. From our reflections we realized that human rights are grossly violated in various ways, especially in Third World countries.

2. Such violations take place no matter what form of government a country has.

3. Some of the factors that contribute to this state of affairs are: in-

dividualism, greed for power, money and position, egoism, industrialization, modernization, caste system, conflicts between the “macro” and the “micro,” materialism, consumerism, competition, overemphasis on one’s own rights, among others.

4. Greed for staying in power by politicians by using any means, even unfair ones, and corruption at all levels have either curtailed or destroyed the human rights of the citizens of different nations.

5. In this context, our workshop recognized a number of challenges that the Church in Asia has to face in our times.

This report contains three parts: the basis of human rights; the responsibility of the State; and the Church’s response.

B. The Basis of Human Rights

Some challenges to the Church arising from the infringements of human rights in some of the Third World countries are the following:

1. First and foremost is the challenge to proclaim, uphold and be committed to their Christian foundations for any articulation of human rights and responsibilities.

2. From a faith perspective this foundation is God’s gratuitous creation of the universe. Within it the essential relationships of the Trinity are incarnated in the dynamic and creative interdependence in the world of eco-systems and varying forms of life, culminating in the global solidarity of humankind.

3. Created in the image and likeness of God, all human persons have a dignity, which is now generally accepted in the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

a) The almost-universal acceptance of the dignity of all human persons shows differences in practice between countries and even between countries in Asia. These differences are primarily due to the varying degrees of consciousness of the common good, and of an acceptance of human dignity, as well as to the cultural factors that form a faith perspective, which are infected by human weakness evident in “structures of sin.”

b) However, within the pluralistic societies of Asia, this Christian perspective should be capable of dialogue with other religious foundations for human dignity, thus enabling mutual enrichment.

c) Human persons are not gifted with human rights by the UN Declaration, national constitutions or legal codes. The appreciation that these are articulations of already pre-existent human rights and responsibilities must progressively grow in clarity and focus, for example, of the human rights of children, women, workers, and others.

d) These articulations of human rights must be geared always towards building local community and global solidarity.

C. The Responsibility of the State

1. The Church, as a community of believers, exists within various kinds of society and under varied forms of organizations.

2. The State is one form of social organization that people live within. By its very nature the State is tasked with the protection and promotion of the common good, which is the sum total of all that is necessary for the authentic development of every person and of the whole person, in marriage and the family, in the arena of politics, in the field of economics, and in the area of culture.

3. Other challenges to the Church have arisen from violations of human rights within and by some States.

4. Disregarding the human rights of children, some systems of education push children too hard in school and out of school to strive for excellence even at the risk of unhealthy competition, sometimes resulting in eventual suicide. Other systems of education do not provide sufficient time for rest and holidays, due to too much homework, military drills, and/or civic and community activities. Still others overemphasize the importance of diplomas or certificates for purposes of marriage and/or employment, at times offering curricula/courses which are irrelevant to the economic conditions of the locality.

5. Since marriage must be open to the transmission of life and to its development in all its stages, State laws that allow abortion practices violate the human rights of the unborn. And they must be deemed anti-life.

6. Man, with his family, lives in a political community, and his rights and responsibilities as a citizen must be recognized and respected.

7. Human rights are violated when politics make use of religion and

its instrumentalities, and vice-versa, to oppress or suppress minority groups, religious or ethnic, or simply to stir up conflicts, military or civilian. When a minority group feels endangered, and is frustrated in its efforts to preserve itself, it may be pressured to dissent, even to the extent of terrorizing others in some violent form or other.

8. In a pluralistic society “national security” must mean the same thing for all citizens in the public and private sectors.

9. In the field of economics, a sovereign State is related to and interdependent with other States in matters of production and exchange of goods and services.

10. Multinationals, however, have been observed to have caused some serious disturbances in the local economy.

11. Migrant workers are forced to leave home and family, and to feel anonymous and lonely. Like the refugees, they may not be welcomed into the locality for racial or religious reasons.

12. The State is mandated to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the people, and develop its natural resources for all people, especially the local people.

13. It is to degrade a nation’s culture to develop tourism at the expense of women’s dignity, the rising costs of land, etc.

D. The Church’s Response

The Church, as People of God, fulfills her mission by proclaiming the Good News. She does this “in season and out of season” in all countries in various ways.

1. One of the “constitutive elements” of such proclamation is the protection and promotion of human rights.

2. The Church should defend human rights whenever and wherever they are violated.

3. Therefore, the following proposals are made:

a. The promotion and defence of human rights must be declared as a “demand of the Gospel” and should be “central to the ministry of the Church in Asia.”

b. In the various Asian cultures, the Church can discover the natural and practical wisdom of being human, and must therefore exercise discernment in this regard.

c. The social teachings of the Church should now be made part of the faith formation of people by simplifying them and translating them into the vernacular languages.

d. Such teachings should be studied and shared not only within the Christian communities but also with other peoples.

7. WORKSHOP: RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND REVIVALISM

A. Introduction

One of the most challenging forces facing the Church in Asia today is the ever-increasing threat of a militant fundamentalism emerging as an aftermath of liberation from colonial rule.

In order to make our evangelization more effective and relevant, we must understand the nature of this new threat, its origin, its strategy and its objectives. Religious fundamentalism has been classified under three headings:

1. Groups outside the Christian community;
2. Groups claiming to represent a particular Christian tradition;
3. Groups or individuals within the Catholic Church having fundamentalist attitudes.

B. The Origin of Religious Fundamentalism

1. In general, it may be stated that fundamentalism is a collective response to remedy a situation of religio-cultural and socio-political dislocation. In most Asian countries the transition from colonialism to independence, leading to the creation of a nation state has caused serious upheavals in society and provided a fertile ground for the rise and growth of fundamentalism.

2. In some countries, capitalism imported from the West only strengthened the existing unjust feudal structures, and these in turn were radically threatened by the advent of industrialization. The dislocated feudal barons deprived of their power and challenged by a new class of industrial tycoons exploited the existing religion as a rallying force to recover their lost status.

4. An ideological vacuum conducive to the growth of fundamentalism is also created when the concept of a nationalized ideology fails to meet the needs of the people.

5. An additional characteristic is the assertion of the majority will on the minority, and this often degenerates into a theocracy where the majority imposes its religious practices on the minorities.

C. The Nature of Religious Fundamentalism

1. Specific to fundamentalism is a common trend, a movement back to its origins, from where it hopes to draw inspiration to meet the challenges of a changing society. The golden past of that religion interpreted in a selective manner is held up as an ideal to which society must return to meet onslaughts against its survival. Religions not existing at that time are treated as newcomers and aggressors and labeled foreign. Religion and culture are identified and so are religion and patriotism. Minorities not professing the religion of the majority are often termed anti-national.

2. Modernization has brought in its train an inevitable industrialization and this in turn has caused profound upheavals in society. Urbanization involving large migrations from the rural areas to towns and cities has posed a real pastoral challenge, with overcrowded slums, and resultant tensions caused by struggles for facilities like housing, water and electricity, to name a few. Services like education and medical care are totally inadequate.

3. Technology introduces people to new relationships and eventually contributes to the emergence of a new culture, which is conducive to creating attitudes of independence and aggressiveness to nature, totally at variance with the previous harmonious approach to the created world. There is a definite trend to control the forces of nature and master time and space. New values and attitudes, symbols and myths tend to replace older ones. In this interaction, religion fails to supply meaning to life and human events.

4. As a result, some religious leaders feel that their authority and influence are gradually diminishing in the field of human affairs. They think that religion itself is threatened; so there is a reaction, often of a violent nature, and an effort is made to return to the origins, thus paving the way.

5. Fundamentalism easily finds a foothold in this chaotic state of affairs, and attempts to bring unity, stability and security into society,

thereby assuring its own future survival.

D. Fundamentalism within Christianity

1. Fundamentalists claiming to represent a Christian tradition have already made their presence felt in many of the countries of Asia, in particular where the Catholics are numerous. Heavily backed by financial assistance from their co-religionists and right-wing political groups in the affluent nations of the West, they have made deep inroads into the Catholic communities in the cities, and even in the rural areas, weaning away thousands from their traditional faith.

2. A critical analysis of the strategy employed by these groups, have led us to believe that the main causes for their numerical success are:

- a) The deficient catechesis of the Catholics affected;
- b) The undeniable attractive elements in the fundamentalist approach;
- c) The tremendous zeal and personal efforts of its members.

3. Their manifesto of action contains negative and positive elements born out of opposition to the existing Catholic faith:

a) They reject the hierarchy and the sacramental system, and rely completely on the Bible as the only source of revelation and the only infallible immediate guide for faith and life. There is a strong insistence on justification by faith alone.

b) They insist on a complete re-conversion (being "born again"), a constant renewal of the personal commitment to Jesus Christ as a personal savior and the necessity for personal preaching.

c) In the absence of a hierarchy and ministers every individual who is "born again" is immediately assigned to the task of preaching, and this not only provides personal satisfaction but also confirms the convert in this new situation.

d) They are ready to provide a supportative Bible-centered community to their followers, thus strengthening the bonds of fellowship.

e) They exploit any area where the Church is weak, and very often offer remedies for outdated parish structures and catechetical methods.

f) They often gain an entry into the Catholic community by offering to join forces with the Catholic to counteract the anti-God campaign, to fight Communism or champion human rights.

h) In actual practice they take advantage of the lack of personal visits and attention by the pastoral clergy, which has become quite common due to the scarcity of priests and the fast-growing parish communities resulting from urbanization.

i) The fundamentalists are not burdened with administrative responsibilities, nor do they have large communities to care for, hence they enjoy the freedom to give personal attention to individuals and to families within the Catholic fold, enticing them also with material benefits like land, houses, free education.

E. "Catholic Fundamentalism"

1. Trends of fundamentalist attitudes are also affecting some sectors of the Catholic communities in Asia, though admittedly not on such a large a scale as in the West.

2. The so-called Catholic fundamentalist has a distorted view of Catholic doctrine, albeit with the best of motives. In this frame of mind the magisterium of the Church is treated in the same manner as the Protestant fundamentalist treats the Bible.

3. Catholic fundamentalism takes a literal ahistorical interpretation of papal pronouncements and sees in them a safe refuge from the claims of science, the values and symbols brought about by the modernization of society, and the constant threat of religious relativism.

4. It does not recognize that there exists a hierarchy of truths, nor does it distinguish the theological note of various papal pronouncements, clothing all with the cloak of infallibility. Many of these fundamentalists recognize only the magisterium of Rome, that is the Pope and the Roman congregations, and in doing so they ignore the existence of authority vested in the local bishop by divine right. These attitudes do more harm than good to the cause of proclaiming the true nature of the magisterium, and make it appear like a system of doctrinal dictatorship.

F. Pastoral Guidelines for Renewal of the Catholic Community

If the Church is to be true to herself, if the Church is to preach the Gospel to all peoples, in all times, she must continually renew herself time and again. This renewal will assume an added urgency in the face of rising religious fundamentalism. Renewal of the Church implies the complete renewal of every individual member, and this will not only make the Church what she should be, but will provide an immediate antidote to the threat of fundamentalism.

1. Information

Pastoral action becomes ineffective if there is no accurate information regarding the existence and activities of fundamentalist groups. Very often we are not aware of these events and as a consequence are unprepared to meet the challenge or the crisis when it confronts us. We require a network of information at every level. At the parish level, the diocesan, regional and the national, we should make use of existing institutes of research, analysis and interpretation, or where necessary, establish such institutes.

2. Interpretation and Preparation

a) Since fundamentalism thrives in situations of instability brought about by conflicting forces, or modernization, and by its new values and symbols which challenge traditional ones, we must develop a theology of change, and equip our people with criteria to discern these values in the light of the gospel.

b) Available skills should be provided to individuals and groups to prepare them to face these situations of crisis.

c) In these situations of change, values related to marriage and family life are often called into question. In our catechesis and pastoral practice we need, therefore, to stress renewal of family life, support for fidelity and life-long commitment in marriage, and respect for human life in all its stages.

4. Formation of Supportative Groups

a) Where Catholics exist in large numbers, the immediate formation of basic ecclesial communities is recommended as a pastoral priority.

b) Where the community is a minority, the Church must identify individuals or groups who indicate a sincere concern for bringing about a just order, and after discernment, work along with them for achieving this objective.

c) It may also be useful and necessary to make an effort towards formation of groups based on an interchurch or interfaith relationship.

d) Since fundamentalism often brings violence in its train, we should form our people in the practice of active non-violence, through which the

Christian not only shuns the use of violence, even as a means of self-defence, but makes an option for the exercise of self-sacrificing love by taking on his or her person the violence of the aggressor, hoping to bring about not only a change in the situation but a complete change of mind and heart. Active non violence has its roots in evangelical love by which Christ laid down his own life for the human race.

G. Lessons to be Learnt From Fundamentalism

1. One cannot deny that fundamentalists are often dedicated to their mission, and their zeal is accompanied by an organized strategy. They are also imbued with a spirit of self-sacrifice, loyalty and solidarity. They have a strong sense of fellowship, supporting one another not only at the local and national level but also on the international plane.

2. We strongly recommend the acceleration of efforts to establish an authentic local Church through the process of inculturation. This will demonstrate that the Church can be truly at home in any country without ceasing to be Catholic.

3. In this connection a study must be made regarding the image projected to the public about Christians, e.g., being labeled as anti-nationals, non-patriotic, the ideological explanation of Christianity, e.g., depicting Christianity as a colonial religion. We need to study the ways and means employed by others to propagate these false images.

4. A proper action of service of others needs to be initiated concerning the above in order to introduce the true picture as a positive factor.

H. An Integral Catechesis

1. We strongly recommend that immediate steps be taken to form Bible-centered communities through the use of existing methods, like the Bible-based seminars, Bible facilitators seminars, Bible group seminars.

2. Priests should be encouraged to attend Bible-based retreats, and our catechists should be trained to lead communities in the prayerful reading of the Bible.

3. At the parish level we should identify potential lay leaders, men and women, to conduct regular Bible-based meetings in the families and local groups.

4. Parishes and dioceses should plan and implement a Bible year or at least a Bible Sunday.

5. Existing Biblical programs in audio and video cassettes should be used to intensify the Bible apostolate.

6. Episcopal conferences should establish Bible commissions, if they have not done so as yet.

7. At the level of the FABC we encourage the strengthening of the existing link between the Offices of Laity and Evangelization with the Catholic Biblical Federation so that the Bible will become one of the main sources for the adequate formation of the laity.

8. Our preaching should concentrate not so much on exhortations to "do" a number of things but should emphasize the fact that the unconditional love of God has already saved us in Christ, and, as a consequence, our response should impel us to proclaim this to others with joy. Christ then becomes our personal Savior and the center of our personal lives. This preaching should be followed up by identifying promising lay men and women, and giving them a special formation, so that opportunities will be created for them to undertake this ministry, even on a full-time basis. Along with this, we should seriously make arrangements for utilizing lay ministries at the parish and diocesan level.

9. The riches of the Catholic tradition of sacramental life need to be more fully available to our people. This will involve:

a) A more meaningful celebration of the sacraments, assisted by a well-prepared catechesis, greater emphasis in our preaching on the presence of the divine in people, things and events of everyday life.

b) The social doctrine of the Church should be presented in a popular form and made available to the laity to serve as a sure guide in their apostolate of seeking the Kingdom of God.

I. Conclusion

In the next decade which will bring us to the threshold of the third millennium the Churches in Asia will be confronted with the threat of militant religious fundamentalism which will seriously hamper our mission of evangelizing this continent if we are unprepared. Discerning the signs of the times, we must initiate immediate programs for an integral renewal involving every member. Every local Church must not only be

inculturated into the lives of the Asian people but it must become a Spirit-filled community united in the bonds of faith, hope, love, witness and service.

8. WORKSHOP: JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION IN THE ASIA OF THE 1990s

A. Introduction

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation issues are interlocked.

The process we agreed upon had for its objective: how the Church in Asia is to face these challenges, as Church, from the perspective of the faith.

It was a threefold process under the following headings: the realities of the Asian situation; the reflections of the Asian Church on the realities; the responses the Asian Church proposes to make.

B. The Realities of the Asian Situation

1. The disharmony because of the ecological crisis.
The disharmony because of the political and military crisis.
The disharmony because of the spiritual and cultural crisis.
2. The conflict because of geopolitical reasons (e.g., Afghanistan, Cambodia);
The conflict because of national fragmentation (e.g., Punjab, Sri Lanka);
The Conflict because of societal discrimination (e.g., landowners in the Philippines, castes in India)
3. The powerlessness of the Church because it is a minority, and therefore, limited, marginalized.

C. Reflections of the Asian Church of the 1990s

The Church should find its identity in the realities of the Asian situation.

1. Disharmonies in all the spheres should inspire the Church to be a herald and sigh of hope to complement compassion and kindness with Christ's love, the *Caritas Christi*.

2. The Church should be the prophet in action. Very often she is voiceless. Therefore its lifestyle should be prophetic in denouncing evil and announcing good.

3. The Church in its powerlessness is, on the one hand, to renounce aligning with the powerful, and, on the other, to follow the path of the Suffering Servant, the humility of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. The Church of Asia has to walk in pilgrimage with all the Asian peoples in their existential situations. However, always with the perception of faith. The pilgrimage follows the Paschal Mystery and the assurance by the Risen Lord of the company of his Spirit.

5. The Church has to adopt:

- i. a way of life and spirituality which is both self-emptying as well as transformative;
- ii. a way of life that is imbued with prudence, courage, collegiality and credibility;
- iii. a way of life lived in small groups: BECs, cause-oriented movements, popular movements that transcend religion, ethnicity and social status;
- iv. a way of life which encourages a gathering of people of goodwill, working in partnership;
- v. a way of life which is unashamedly self-critical, while at the same time, courageously evangelical;
- vi. a way of life that seeks reconciliation, harmony, solidarity, while never compromising truth, justice, life;
- vii. a way of life which has as its leitmotif — peacemaking.

D. The Challenges Pose Questions

Questions we can put to ourselves:

1. What pastoral strategies can we have to promote the integrity of creation:

- at Church level: inter-diocesan links, FABC links, ecumenical-Church links?
- at country level: national, Asian, international?

2. a) How should FABC promote a theology of harmony or a theology of peace? Can the FABC Theological Advisory Commission assume the task?
- b) What are the elements of such a theology; the non-violence of Gandhi; the Tao of Confucianism; the *Caritas Christi*? Can we initiate a study at conference level, as well as at FABC level?
3. Can FABC recommend the setting up of cells for peacemaking (Peace Committees of Citizens) in all the dioceses of Asia?
4. Should FABC encourage and promote popular movements for justice, development, peace and the integrity of creation?
5. Should FABC encourage BECs and micro- or grassroots-level groups, for justice, development, peace and the integrity of creation?

E. Reflections and Recommendations

“There is no peace without social justice; there is little social justice without peace.”

1. The Church is both weak and powerful. The Church, when it exercises power and is powerful, would always be imbued with concerns for justice, development, peace and the integrity of creation.

2. The Church is another social organization among others. The Church is well-known for its services. We appear and are recognized to be good people but not spiritual people. We are known to be law-abiding, loyal but uncritical members of society. We are educators, social workers but not recognized as evangelists.

3. We must be and seen to be authentic peacemakers, not simply a people which avoids conflict. Conflict is not opposed to peace. However, conflict which breeds hatred, bitterness, persecution is wrong.

4. We cannot be peacemakers if we are not at peace with ourselves, harmonious beings. Then only shall we radiate peace, the *shalom* of God.

5. Peacemaking must be learnt.

6. We therefore endorse and subscribe to *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Holy Father's Peace Day Message 1990, the Ecumenical Statement at

Basle on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, and the Statement of the World Council of Churches at Seoul.

7. We recommend increasing contacts and linkages with the North American and European bishops' conferences, and encourage an international networking on these issues: North-South, East-West, but especially North-South. Through these contacts we wish to discern the moral implications of international policy on the Third World and the world in general.

8. We are heartened by the early efforts and studies of Catholic social philosophers who have paved the way to the building of a Europe based on Catholic social doctrine in which industrial growth has been balanced by a fair distribution of wealth so that all citizens were beneficiaries.

9. The setting up of institutions for the training of experts and people aspiring to work in politics, industry, education and the civil service, who would also be thoroughly knowledgeable in the social teachings of the Church, is herewith proposed to the Asian bishops' conferences, for implementation in their own countries.

10. We recommend greater participation of women in the seminars for justice, peace, development and the integrity of creation.

11. We strongly recommend peace education as a part of the curriculum in our schools, and also an education in the use of non-violent approaches to replace violent confrontation.

12. We encourage the FABC Office of Human Development to have a section for the promotion of peace.

13. We encourage the banning of war toys for children.

14. Bishops can undertake studies in their areas on the effects of wanton destruction of nature. Their statements will arouse public interest and public opinion.

15. Children in schools should be educated in the care of nature, its conservation and protection.

16. The Office of Human Development should take up the initiative of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" and sponsor a study of the place

of the *Caritas Christi* in all our works in the social apostolates.

17. We encourage the FABC Theological Advisory Commission to undertake a study of the meaning and implications of the phrase "the Church of the Poor," with a view to rediscovering the motivating force, means and goals of Catholic social action — its transcendental thrust, its faith dimension and divine empowerment, its eternal goal.

F. A Special Recommendation for a Special Anniversary

1. It is said, with more than just a grain of truth, that the social teachings of the Church are some of her "best kept secrets." In fact, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education has deemed it necessary to issue a document on the formation of seminarians in the social teachings of the Church.

2. One of the more serious problems of the Church in Asia is its apparent inability to inspire and influence popular movements through the Church's social teachings. The Christians among such popular movements often lack the inspiration of the Gospel and the riches of the Church's social teachings, and thus they succumb easily to temporal ideologies which are not open to the transcendent.

3. There is, moreover, a lack of a Church program to disseminate effectively our social teachings to lay people who must assume leadership in the socio-economic and political spheres.

4. The centenary of *Rerum Novarum* in 1991 provides us with a very timely opportunity to investigate the realities cited above, to plan and implement programs that would respond to the challenges that Asia presents to the Church.

5. An Asian congress (or symposium), toward the second half of 1991, would be a very useful mechanism to confront these challenges.

6. To such a congress, the reflections and plans of the bishops' conferences (which as a prerequisite should have had participation and consultation at grassroots and diocesan levels) could be brought together.

7. The congress would:

a) investigate at the Asian level the interlocking issues related to justice, peace and development, with special focus on the condition of workers in Asian Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs), taking note of development after *Rerum Novarum*;

b) focus the light of the Gospel and the social teachings of the Church on those issues;

c) plan and form Asia-wide programs and linkages so that the Church in Asia can respond more effectively to these challenges.

8. Our workshop proposes that FABC approve and sponsor this congress and commission our Office of Human Development (OHD) to organize it.

9. If the proposal is approved, it is further suggested that OHD, acting within its mandate, assist the national episcopal conferences in holding their own national consultations.

VII. GROWING COLLEGIALLY: SHARING IN PRAYER, CONCERN AND MUTUAL SUPPORT

A Sense of Community

A note of all FABC meetings is the sense of community that pervades its gatherings in all its parts. Archbishop Henry D' Souza, the secretary general, set the tone in his report, when he said that the participants were joined in a solidarity to bring the Church into a transforming contact with all the peoples of Asia as they searched for a modernity, while holding fast to their traditional values, a modernity which would involve everyone and would also challenge everything in the Asian Catholic experience. The participants together took up this mandate with a seriousness worthy of the charge given them.

A Prayer-Filled Assembly

From its beginning FABC has tried to make its plenary assembly more than a meeting, but also a "prayerful experience," and this has become a FABC tradition. Every morning the participants walked the few minutes along the main highway through a small village to the little monastery of the Discalced Carmelite Sisters for the daily Eucharist, with each country taking turns leading the celebration. The Sisters from behind their grille sang along with the participants, and the seminarians accompanied the singing with Indonesian instruments. During the day two brothers of the Taizé Community led the prayers according to their special contemplative usage, also bringing into the hall groups of local students to join the participants in prayer.

The Sunday Eucharist brought thousands of Catholics from the parishes of the diocese to a Bandung sports center to welcome the bishops and other delegates, to pray together, and to bear a common witness to the universality of the Church. It was a moving experience as well to see included so many expressions of the national culture within the liturgy. The bishops were introduced by country to the congregation. After the Eucharist the Catholics of the diocese provided a dinner at the university, followed by a performance of various styles of Indonesian dancing.

Continuity with the Synod of Bishops

The plenary assembly took place in July; the World Synod of Bishops was to take place in October. The Federation recognized that the proposals of the Asian bishops gathered together in formal assembly would be valuable for the Synod itself. A day of the assembly was set aside for the consideration of formation for the priesthood in the 1990s. The FABC Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy presented a set of recommendations which represented the discussions of three regional meetings of seminary rectors and spiritual directors sponsored by FABC, and of the consultations of the bishops' conferences. The recommendations were made for the consideration of the Asian bishop-delegates to the Synod. The assembly delegates reviewed the recommendations and discussed various aspects of the topic, focusing mainly on seminary issues. They authorized the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy to redraft the statement, and that it be communicated to the Asian delegates to the Synod.

Business Meeting

The plenary assembly is also a time to conduct the business of FABC.

The Secretary General, the bishop-chairmen of the six offices and the executive secretary of the Theological Advisory Commission made their reports to the bishops. During the week the Central Committee of the presidents of the conferences also met three times to review the policies of the Federation, appoint office-holders, and examine the reports of the Offices. Individual Offices also called together their committee members to continue their planning for the implementation of some of the assembly's deliberations.

Changes in the Federation's statutes and by-laws were approved to make them consistent with new Code of Canon Law and more current with recent developments in FABC. In some cases, terms of office for

FABC officials were extended; membership in the plenary assembly enlarged; responsibilities defined.

The Open Forum

The Open Forum has become a vital part of the plenary assembly. It provides the bishops with an opportunity to bring any item to the floor for discussion.

In forming the agenda for the Open Forum each bishops' conference — and then every bishop in Asia — was invited to submit beforehand, individually or in groups, topics they would wish to see placed on the agenda. In the assembly itself each delegate could make additional proposals. The Steering Committee made the final decisions on what proposals time allowed for discussion.

A fundamental problem arose during the Open Forum: "Who speaks for the member conferences?" FABC is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences, and no decision binds the individual conference. The bishop-participants came to a consensus that any statement of the plenary assembly expresses the mind of the plenary assembly and establishes FABC policy. Any decision can be received later by each member conference as it should decide to or not.

The topics chosen for the Open Forum pertained mainly to pastoral problems relevant to Asia. A presentation was usually made by experts; the subjects were discussed; and in some instances the bishops came to agreement, while some topics were received with interest without any action either being required or taken. In this short report only the resolutions are given.

1. Radio Veritas Asia

Responding to the announcement of an immediate reduction, and an eventual phasing-out, of German Church funding for Radio Veritas Asia (RVA), the Catholic shortwave broadcasting center in Asia, the delegates reaffirmed the absolute importance of RVA for evangelization in Asia, and agreed to exercise greater overall responsibility for the station, its funding and its programming. They urged the bishops of Asia to provide more funding according to specific guidelines. The agreement of the delegates and the proposals for support were formulated in a FABC Covenant on Radio Veritas Asia, and a Declaration of Intent was approved by the delegates and subsequently signed by the presidents of the conferences, or their representatives.

2. Ecumenical Cooperation

Consultation and collaboration have been developing through the past ten years between the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). A new step was taken at CCA's Asian Mission Conference, held in 1989 at Cipanas, Indonesia, when the participants proposed to their parent organization of CCA: "to invite the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences to join with CCA in appointing a task force comprising five persons named by each body, to explore the possibility of Catholic membership of CCA or a successor Asian ecumenical structure, and to report back with recommendations to the two appointing bodies."

The general assembly of CCA, which was held in May 1990 at Manila, unanimously voted to accept the recommendation, with an amendment, and appointed the members and alternates to the proposed task force.

The FABC plenary assembly accepted the proposal, "that FABC, in view of the CCA proposal, appoint a committee of five as members of a joint task force, to explore ways of closer structural association within one organization."

The Central Committee appointed the five members, adding to the resolution the recommendation that in the process of consultation the task force also seek out other areas of cooperation for proposal to the respective associations.

3. Human Rights for Children

The assembly expressed support for the Holy See's ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and agreed to encourage Asian governments to do the same. It also urged every local Church in Asia to support the rights of children with solid programs and actions.

4. Human Rights' Day

An initial proposal to designate an annual Human Rights' Sunday was rejected after discussion revealed that many bishops feel too many "special" Sundays disturb the usual liturgical celebrations. However, the assembly accepted a proposal that the member conferences have a Human Rights' Day in Asia every December 10, the anniversary of the

United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights, with appropriate prayers in the Eucharist, posters, articles in journals and newspapers, etc.

5. Aid to Refugees

The Fourth Plenary Assembly in 1986 had registered its support for expanding aid to refugees. In this assembly the delegates reviewed an appeal sent by Church workers and approved a statement expressing the bishops' concern and willingness to collaborate with organizations that serve refugees in Asia. The statement also asked final asylum countries to be more generous in their admission process and to quicken the process, and urged countries of origin to resolve development and peace problems, which are "major causes" of refugee problems.

6. A Pan-Asia Colloquium on *Rerum Novarum*

Mindful of the coming centenary of the encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII on workers' rights, *Rerum Novarum*, the delegates decided that an Asia-wide congress should be held to mark the event and highlight the social doctrine of the Church.

The assembly also urged that these social doctrines be rendered into simpler versions and translated into Asia's vernacular languages, so that they can be more widely known and appreciated.

7. The Roman Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China counts one-half of the population of Asia, and the Catholic Church in China has more than five million members. China, then, if only by reason of numbers, must represent a special concern for the Catholic Church in Asia.

A presentation by Father Beda Lui Chia-Cheng described China's movement towards modernization and what social upheaval is involved. He posed the question to the assembly: "Can the Church in Asia, which is called to be with others and for others, render some significant service to our Chinese brothers and sisters in this critical situation of their history of modernization in the hope that it may be directed towards an integral human development?" A pastoral vision in itself! Sister Maria Goretti Lau described the "formation of new Church leaders in China," and the struggle for improvement of formation for the priesthood by the seminaries in China, and suggested ways of helping seminary development in a way chosen today by Church leaders in China.

Finally, other issues were proposed for discussion. In most cases the lack of time required that discussion be postponed for later meetings; in some instances the issues were withdrawn by their proposers.

VIII. PARTICIPANTS

The Holy See

Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
The Most Rev. John Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications

The Papal Representatives in Asia

The Most Rev. Piero Biggio, Myanmar, Bangladesh
The Most Rev. Luigi Bressan, Pakistan
The Most Rev. Francisco Canalini, Indonesia
The Most Rev. Ivan Dias, Korea
The Most Rev. Alberto Tricarico, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, Thailand

(Voting Participants)

Bangladesh

The Most Rev. Michael Rozario, Archbishop of Dakha, President
The Most Rev. Francis A. Gomes, Bishop of Mymensingh
The Most Rev. Patrick D'Rozario, Bishop-elect of Rajshahi

Hong Kong

Cardinal John B. Wu Cheng-Chung, Bishop of Hong Kong

India

The Most Rev. Alphonsus Mathias, Archbishop of Bangalore, President
The Most Rev. Marianus Arokiasamy, Archbishop of Madurai
The Most Rev. P.C. Balaswamy, Bishop of Nellore
The Most Rev. Raphael Cheenath, Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar
The Most Rev. Peter M. Chenaparampil, Bishop of Alleppey
The Most Rev. Cyril Mar Baselios, Bishop of Bathery
The Most Rev. Joseph Powathil, Archbishop of Changanacherry

Indonesia

The Most Rev. Julius Darmaatmadja, Archbishop of Semarang, President
The Most Rev. Darius Nggawa, Bishop of Larantuka
The Most Rev. Martinus Situmorang, Bishop of Padang
The Most Rev. Leo Soekoto, Archbishop of Jakarta

Japan

The Most Rev. Peter S. Shirayanagi, Archbishop of Tokyo, President
The Most Rev. Peter T. Jinushi, Bishop of Sapporo
The Most Rev. Joseph H. Matsunaga, Auxiliary Bishop of Nagasaki

Korea

The Most Rev. Angelo N.-S. Kim, Bishop of Suwon, President
The Most Rev. Peter U.-I. Kang, Auxiliary Bishop of Seoul
The Most Rev. Victorinus K.-H. Youn, Archbishop of Kwang Ju

Laos-Cambodia

The Most Rev. Yves Ramousse, President of the Bureau for the Cambodian Apostolate

Macau

The Most Rev. Domingos K.T. Lam, Bishop of Macau

Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei

The Most Rev. Gregory S.N. Yong, Archbishop of Singapore, President
The Most Rev. John F.Y.Y. Lee, Bishop of Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia
The Most Rev. Dominic H.C. Su, Bishop of Sibul, Malaysia

Myanmar

The Most Rev. Nicholas Mang Thang, Auxiliary Bishop of Mandalay

Nepal

Father Anthony J. Sharma, Superior of the Mission

Pakistan

Cardinal Joseph Cordeiro, Archbishop of Karachi, President
The Most Rev. Paul Andreotti, Bishop Emeritus of Faisalabad
The Most Rev. Anthony Lobo, Auxiliary Bishop of Karachi

Philippines

- The Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, Archbishop of Caceres, President
- The Most Rev. Teodoro C. Bacani, Auxiliary Bishop of Manila
- The Most Rev. Teodoro J. Buhain, Auxiliary Bishop of Manila
- The Most Rev. Angelo Lagdameo, Bishop of Dumaguete
- The Most Rev. Carmelo F. Morelos, Bishop of Butuan
- The Most Rev. Ramon B. Villena, Bishop of Bayombong
- The Most Rev. Orlando Quevedo, Archbishop of Nueva Segovia

Republic of China

- The Most Rev. Paul K.S. Shan, Bishop of Hualien, President
- The Most Rev. Joseph T.C. Lin, Bishop of Chiayi

Sri Lanka

- The Most Rev. Nicholas Marcus Fernando, Archbishop of Colombo, President
- The Most Rev. Edmund Fernando, Bishop of Badulla
- The Most Rev. J. Kingsley Swampillai, Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa

Thailand

- The Most Rev. Michael Praphon Chaicharoen, Bishop of Surat Thani
- The Most Rev. George Yod Phimphisian, Bishop of Udon Thani

The Standing Committee of the Federation

- Cardinal Ricardo J. Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu, Philippines, Con-venor
- The Most Rev. Leobard D' Souza, Archbishop of Nagpur, India
- The Most Rev. Gabriel Lee, Bishop of Pusan, Korea
- The Most Rev. Michael Bunluen Mansap, Bishop of Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand
- The Most Rev. Thomas Savundaranayagam, Bishop of Mannar, Sri Lanka

(Non-voting Participants)

The Bishops of Indonesia

- The Most Rev. Carlos F.X. Belo, Bishop of Dili
- The Most Rev. Hieronimus Bumbun, Archbishop of Pontianak
- The Most Rev. A.G. Pius Datubara, Archbishop of Medan

The Most Rev. Aloysius J. Dibjokarjono, Bishop of Surabaya
 The Most Rev. Donatus Djagom, Archbishop of Ende
 The Most Rev. Alexander Djajasiswaja, Bishop of Bandung
 The Most Rev. Isak Doera, Bishop of Sintang
 The Most Rev. Francis X. Hadisumatra, Bishop of Sorong
 The Most Rev. Paschalis R.S. Hardjasoemarta, Bishop of Purwokerto
 The Most Rev. Ignatius Harsono, Bishop of Bogor
 The Most Rev. Andreas Henrisoesanto, Bishop of Tanjungkarang
 The Most Rev. Gregorius Manteiro, Archbishop of Kupang
 The Most Rev. Yulius Mencuccini, Bishop of Sanggau
 The Most Rev. Hilarius Moa Nurak, Bishop of Pangkal-Pinang
 The Most Rev. H.J. Pandoyoputro, Bishop of Malang
 The Most Rev. Kerubim Pareira, Bishop of Weetebula
 The Most Rev. Fransiskus X. Prajasuta, Bishop of Banjarmasin
 The Most Rev. Blasius Pujaraharja, Bishop of Ketapang
 The Most Rev. Edward Sangsun, Bishop of Ruteng
 The Most Rev. Anicetus B. Sinaga, Bishop of Sibolga
 The Most Rev. Andreas P.C. Sol, Bishop of Amboina
 The Most Rev. Joseph H. Soudant, Bishop of Palembang
 The Most Rev. Joseph Suwatan, Bishop of Manado
 The Most Rev. Joseph Tethool, Auxiliary Bishop of Amboina

The Offices of the Federation

The Office of Human Development

The Most Rev. Stephen F. Hamao, Bishop of Yokohama, Japan,
 Chairman
 Brother Anthony Rogers, Executive Secretary

The Office of Social Communications

* The Most Rev. Paul Shan, Bishop of Hualien, Taiwan, R.O.C.
 Chairman
 The Rev. Jean Desautels, Executive Secretary

The Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy

* The Most Rev. Anthony Lobo, Auxiliary Bishop of Karachi, Chair-
 man
 The Rev. Vicente G. Cajilig, University of Santo Tomas, Manila,
 Executive Secretary

* Listed Above

The Office of Evangelization

The Most Rev. Thomas Menamparampil, Bishop of Dibrugarh,
India, Chairman
The Rev. Sebastian Karotemprel, Executive Secretary
The Rev. James Knight

The Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

The Most Rev. John B. Manat Chuabsamai, Bishop of Ratchaburi,
Thailand, Chairman
The Rev. Albert Poulet-Mathis, Executive Secretary
The Rev. James Channan, National Commission for Christian-
Muslim Relations, Faisalabad, Pakistan

The Office of the Laity

The Most Rev. Joseph Ti-Kang, Archbishop of Taipei, Taiwan,
R.O.C., Chairman
The Most Rev. Alan de Lastic, Bishop of Lucknow, India
* The Most Rev. Martinus Situmorang, Bishop of Padang, Indonesia
* The Most Rev. Angel Lagdameo, Bishop of Dumaguete, Philippines
The Rev. Tommy Murphy, Executive Secretary
Ms. Cora Mateo

The Theological Advisory Commission

The Rev. Felix Wilfred, Coordinator

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The Most Rev. Henry S. D'Souza, Archbishop of Calcutta, India,
Secretary General
The Rev. Edward F. Malone, Assistant Secretary General

Fraternal Delegates**The Australian Episcopal Conference**

The Most Rev. William J. Foley, Archbishop of Perth

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Most Rev. James MacDonald, Bishop of Charlottetown

The Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE)

Cardinal Godfried Danneels, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels,
Belgium

* Listed Above

The Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC)

The Most Rev. Anthony S. Apuron, Archbishop of Agaña, Guam

The United States Conference

The Most Rev. John S. Cummins, Bishop of Oakland

Special Participants

Ms. Esperanza Abellana, Asia Social Institute, Manila, Philippines

The Most Rev. Cirilo R. Almario, Jr., Episcopal Commission for the
Biblical Apostolate, Philippines

The Rev. Michael Amaladoss, General Administration of the Society
of Jesus, Rome, Italy

The Rev. Yvon Ambroise, Caritas India, New Delhi, India

The Rev. Robert Astorino, Union of Catholic Asian News, Hong
Kong

Professor J. Kirti Bunchua, Religion and Culture Research Centre,
Bangkok, Thailand

Dr. André Van Chau, International Catholic Migration Commission,
Geneva, Switzerland

Mrs. Theresa Ee Chooi, Catholic Research Centre, Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia

The Rev. George Crespín, Ethnic Apostolate, Diocese of Oakland,
California

The Rev. Msgr. Achilles Dakay, Commission for Mass Media, Arch-
diocese of Cebu, Philippines

Mr. Darmawan, Bandung, Indonesia

The Rev. Francis X. Masakatu Fukamizu, Tokyo, Japan

Dr. Thomas Hongsoo Han, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies,
Seoul, Korea

The Rev. Robert Hardawiryana, Pukat Kateketik, Yogyakarta,
Indonesia

The Rev. Redemptus Hardaputranta, Institute of Social Research
and Development, Jakarta, Indonesia

The Rev. Msgr. Norbert Herkenrath, Misereor, Aachen, Federal
Republic of Germany

The Rev. Oswald Hirmer, Lumko Missiological Institute, Delmen-
ville, South Africa

Sister Jeannette, AMOR Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

The Rev. Msgr. Valentine Kartosiswoyo, Bishops' Conference of
Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

The Rev. Msgr. Bernd Kaut, Missio, Aachen, Federal Republic of
Germany

Mr. Karl Kampermann, Misereor, Aachen, Germany
 The Rev. Geoffrey King, East Asian Pastoral Institute, Manila, Philippines
 Mr. H.A.J. Kruijssen, Cebemo, Oegstgeest, Netherlands
 The Rev. Antonio Lambino, Loyola School of Theology, Quezon City, Philippines
 Sister Maria Goretti Lau, Holy Spirit Study Centre, Hong Kong
 Mr. Anselmo Lee, International Movement of Young Christian Students, Hong Kong
 Rev. Beda Liu, Tien Centre, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.
 The Rev. J.B. Mangunwijaya, Diocese of Yogyakarta, Indonesia
 Dr. Hubert A. Monteiro, Bombay, India
 Mr. Felix Mulyono, Commission for Laity, Semarang, Indonesia
 Sister Julma Neo, Province of Daughters of Charity, Manila, Philippines
 The Rev. Adolfo Nicolas, Jesuit Theologate, Tokyo, Japan
 Mr. Jakob Oetama, Jakarta, Indonesia
 The Rev. Hugh O'Sullivan, International Movement of Young Christian Workers, Asia-Pacific, Hong Kong.
 Mr. S. Samyodrai, International Movement of Young Christian Workers Asia-Pacific, Hong Kong
 The Rev. Lucien Schmitt, Missio, Aachen, Federal Republic of Germany
 Drs. Frans Seda, Jakarta, Indonesia
 The Rev. Desmond de Sousa, Development Research, Goa, India
 Miss Teresa Teo Mui Gek, International Young Christian Students Asia, Hong Kong
 The Rev. Luke Tsui Kam Yiu, Catholic Institute for Religion and Society, Hong Kong
 The Rev. Cleto Tuderti, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Vatican City
 Mr. A. Frans Tumiwa, Christian Conference of Asia, Jakarta, Indonesia
 Mr. Alex Walalangi, Commission of Laity, Ujung Pandang, Indonesia

Liturgical Committee

Rev. Sebastian Karotemprel, Sacred Heart College, Shillong, India
 Brother Charles, Taizé
 Brother Ghislain, Taizé

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The many members of the Indonesian clergy, religious congregations
and laity who have given of their time and talent.

A Statement of Gratitude

The plenary assembly expresses its special gratitude to the People of God in Asia, and in particular to the Catholics of Indonesia, to the bishops of Indonesia, and to the Bishops' Conference, for their enthusiastic support of this collegial enterprise of the bishops of Asia.

Only through the generous contributions of many Catholic agencies in Europe and Asia has this plenary assembly come to be. We all pray that with God's blessing it will be a significant moment for the Church in Asia and for our Asian world, and a contribution to the Church Universal.

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- The Most Rev. Francis X. Kaname Shimamoto, Japan
- The Most Rev. Angel Lagdameo, Philippines

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The Rev. Felix Wilfred, Coordinator

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The Most Rev. Henry S. D'Souza, India

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