

PEOPLE EVERYWHERE: OPEN THE DOOR TO CHRIST!

The Asian Congress on Evangelization
Manila, Philippines, November 16-20, 1992

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I. WELCOME ADDRESS

by

Bishop Carmelo Morelos

‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel (1Cor 9:16). Our Holy Father Pope John Paul repeats this cry of St. Paul, and in the name of the whole Church calls upon us all, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, to commit ourselves to the service of the mission of Christ, the Redeemer. The moment has come, he says with a great sense of urgency, to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes*. For this is our supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all people.

This Asian Congress on Evangelization affords an opportunity to the Churches in Asia to come together, pray together, reflect together and to discern together on how best to comply with this duty. For it is a duty that springs from the very nature of our being Church. Our Christian vocation demands that we be evangelizers. And our times offer the Church new opportunities for a revitalized evangelization, a new evangelization, for the teeming millions in Asia. This is the purpose of our gathering today and for the next few days.

This congress has adopted as its rallying cry the Pope’s invitation: “People everywhere, open the door to Christ!” It gives me great joy and an immense honor to open the doors to this congress, in the name of the organizers, to all delegates from different countries in Asia and from the Philippines. Welcome to the Asian Congress on Evangelization!

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May the Holy Spirit, the primary agent of mission, preside over its deliberations. May St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, inspire a sense of the urgency of this evangelizing mission on all its participants. And may Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, and Mother of the Church, inspire all to fulfill the Church's evangelizing mission.

Welcome. The Filipino people opens the door of their hearts and homes to you all.

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER

The Most Reverend Cirilo R. Almario
Bishop of Malolos
Asian Congress Executive Chairman

The Holy Father was pleased to learn of the Asian Congress on Evangelization which will take place in Manila from November 16-20, 1992, with participants from many different countries. He asks you kindly to convey the assurance of his union in prayer. Fully conscious of the essential nature of the Church's evangelizing mission, which obeys the Risen Lord's parting command to his apostles at the moment of his return to the Father (cf. Mt 28:19), His Holiness invokes an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all of you — bishops, priests, religious and laity — that you may be renewed in mind and heart for an ever more effective ministry and apostolate.

Among the tasks before you, one is of particular significance for the future of evangelization in Asia, namely, to reflect on how to ensure that the transcendent dimension of evangelization and the necessary attention to human development accompany and sustain each other, without unilateral emphases that might hinder the Church's saving mission. All evangelization stems from faith and communicates faith. Its source, its truth, its object and the strength which sustains its heralds, is the very person of Jesus Christ present in his Church through the Holy Spirit. In every age and place the essential duty of the Church is to continue, in and through her members, the work he initiated during his public life on earth.

It is therefore necessary for the Church herself to be continually evangelized by a constant conversion to her Lord and by genuine renewal in the Holy Spirit (cf. *Ad Gentes*, no. 5). This means that all her members, especially her pastors and their close collaborators, are called to measure their lives day-by-day against the standards of the Beatitudes and the example of Jesus' self-giving love, most clearly evident at Cal-

vary. Only where there is genuine union with Christ through grace can there be convincing witness and effective evangelization.

The transformation of society according to the demands of justice and solidarity, for which the Church in Asia must continue to work with commitment and wholehearted dedication, flows from what the Lord has revealed about man and his destiny. When the Scripture speaks of "making all things new" (cf. Rev 21:5), the newness in question cannot be divorced from repentance, conversion (*metanoia*) and evangelical holiness of life. As the Holy Father has stated in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*: "It is not the Church's mission to work directly on the economic, technical or political levels, or to contribute materially to development ... a people's development does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behavior" (no. 58). It is the laity in particular who must endeavor "to affect and, as it were, to recast the criteria of judgment, the standard of values, the incentives and life standards of the human race which are inconsistent with the word of God and the plan of salvation" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 19). The formation of lay Christian leaders, and the continuing formation of the clergy and religious who guide and sustain them, must therefore be priorities of the Church in Asia.

Deeply aware of the great challenges which lie before the Church in Asia, the Holy Father wishes me to express his encouragement to the members of the Office of Evangelization of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and to all taking part in the congress. He is confident that this gathering will give fresh impulse to the evangelizing work of the ecclesial communities of your respective countries. He commends your efforts to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, model of that love which should inspire all who cooperate in the Church's apostolic mission for the rebirth of humanity (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 92). As a pledge of abundant light and strength in our Lord Jesus Christ he imparts his Apostolic Blessing to all present.

With personal good wishes for the success of the congress, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A. Card. Sodano
Secretary of State

III. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONGRESS

by

Bishop Thomas Menampampil, SDB

About 2000 years ago there lived in the extreme west of the continent of Asia a man who gave a definite turn to the march of human history. His name was Jesus, the Christ. Twenty centuries later, we gather in his name on the extreme east of the same continent, to ask ourselves whether this mighty man's message is still relevant. Whether the glorious dead who died to carry his teachings to the ends of the earth have died in vain. Whether the millions who made him and the Good News he preached the center of their lives have left us a heritage worth carrying forward.

If anyone has hesitations about the answer, we have none. The message of Jesus, the Gospel, is relevant at all times and in all places, and very specially today in Asia. We proclaim his message with confidence because, as the bishops of Asia have said, "... the Gospel is leaven for the transformation of society. Our Asian world needs Christ in order to bring about development, justice, peace and harmony for which the people of Asia long."

However, it is in absolute humility we engage ourselves in this noble task, for we respect the rich religious traditions of this ancient land. "For us Christians in Asia, to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbors of all faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace" (Asian Bishops).

Announcing the Good News of Christ in the complex of world today is a complex task. We need to remain attentive to the evolution of society and keep responding to actual human needs. For as the bishops of Asia have said, "mission is to be with the people, responding to their needs." But at the same time, "we shall not be timid when God shows the way for us to proclaim explicitly the Lord Jesus as the Savior and the answer to the fundamental questions of human existence" (Asian Bishops).

We thank the Holy Father for his powerful statement: "I deeply share the conviction that this is a significant hour for the Church in Asia; an ever greater commitment or evangelization is imperative for all the Asian local Churches."

We thank him for his passionate appeal to all believers, in *Redemptoris Missio*, to take up once again the glorious task of evangelization with utmost enthusiasm. This congress is Asia's response to his call. We thank him for personally sending a message for this congress.

As the chairman of the Office of Evangelization of the FABC, I would like to thank the Church in the Philippines for so generously and so enthusiastically hosting and organizing this congress in Manila. My special thanks to Bishop Cirilo Almario and the organizing committee for all the sacrifices they have made all these recent months in preparation for this great event. I also know how much interest the rest of the Filipino Church has taken in the congress that we are beginning. The personal interest that Cardinal Sin has taken, Cardinal Vidal, the bishops, priests and religious, and all the people. I thank each one in the name of the Church in the rest of Asia. The Philippines alone could make this event so historic.

My dear friends, we have not come here to formulate new theories, but to deepen our missionary commitment and to renew our dedication more by sharing experiences than by conducting abstract discussions. It is our great desire that we may return to our own places in Asia with redoubled enthusiasm to carry the Good News of Jesus to every person, every human activity, and every level of society and every level of human consciousness. May the Asian Congress on Evangelization, 1992, be a veritable Pentecost, and may the "ENDS OF THE EARTH SEE THE SALVATION OF OUR GOD."

IV. ASIA'S NEED FOR CHRIST

by

Cardinal Stephen Kim

1. Dear sisters and brothers in Christ. These days spent in community together have been full of beautiful moments of prayer and sharing. Now, nearly at the end of this assembly, I am here to speak to you on "Asia's Need for Christ." First, though, I want to think with you about "our need for Christ." We can only talk about Asia's need for Christ as Asians who have experienced that need in our own lives. We should also not forget that our need for Christ, as individual Koreans, Filipinos, Indians, Chinese ... is no different from the need for him experienced by Africans, or Europeans, by every human person. We all need Christ, I believe, every one of us needs him. That is a matter of faith, and of experience.

"If we go back to the beginnings of the Church, we find a clear affirmation that Christ is the one Savior of all, the only one able to reveal God and lead to God" (RM, no.5). All of creation, humankind included, was created by God through Christ and for Christ (Col 1:16). All things have their foundation in Christ, and tend towards him. When human sin destroyed this basic order, bringing death and the ruin of nature,

Christ offered himself for our redemption, gaining for all humanity the forgiveness of sins, the hope of resurrection, the promise of eternal life.

Nearly 20 years ago, in 1974, when we, the bishops of Asia, met for our first FABC plenary assembly in Taipei, we issued a statement in which we stressed that it is "only in and through Jesus Christ and his Gospel, and by the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, that the quests of our peoples can come to realization." We went on to say: "We believe that it is in him and in his Good News that our peoples will find the full meaning we all seek, the true liberation we strive after, the brotherhood and peace which is the desire of all our hearts."

2. What this means is that God's love in Christ is strong and effective. As Christians, we have recognized our need for this love, the love of God made visible in the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus. Does Asia need this love? Surely, yes! Surely, every person in the world needs this essential love which forgives, heals, and restores the dead to life. God is love, and what person in the world does not long to encounter the absolute reality of love? In every human heart there is a thirst for God, a dissatisfaction that keeps us searching, until our souls at last find their true rest in God.

Asia has many different religious, cultural and moral traditions; it has a very rich heritage which has influenced the whole world. Every one of the great religions now found in the world began in Asia: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, to name only the most famous. Yet this has not made Asia into an earthly paradise. Asia is divided, divided by religious, cultural and racial differences. To this, recent history has added new divisions, as economic inequalities and differences of ideology have raised walls between and even within nations. I think especially of the tragic division of our own Korean Peninsula, and of the difficult relationships between the Communist People's Republic of China on the mainland and the Republic of China in Taiwan.

All these differences have given rise to tensions, even to physical conflicts, to wars, that have left deep and difficult-to-heal resentments and wounds. Besides, how many millions in every part of Asia live in great poverty, or in the pain resulting from disease and from natural disasters? How many have lost all hope of living truly human lives? Who will show them a way forward or give meaning to their lives? If Asia, indeed the entire world, is to advance towards peace and reconciliation, these are questions that need to find answers.

3. Who or what can bring this kind of peace? Or heal the wounds resulting from so many conflicts and divisions? What can bring about forgiveness and reconciliation? At one time, many people looked towards Marxism and Communism for the fulfilment of such hopes. With the collapse of the regimes of Eastern Europe, it has become clearer that this was a false dream, betrayed by those announcing it, although certainly the idea, the ideals, of a united world and of a just and equal division of wealth have by no means lost any of their meaning. They spring in fact from people's unfulfilled thirst for the Kingdom of God.

I also believe that there is no way in which capitalism can heal the wounds in Asia resulting from conflict and division. If properly controlled, capitalism, with its principles of economic development, might be able to promote the economic development of the whole region, and so reduce the gap between poor and rich countries. But it, too, has no answers to our basic questions: Where did we come from? Where are we going? Why should we do good and avoid evil? Why is there suffering and death? Capitalism has no vision of humanity, no worldview, no system of values. It offers no redemption.

4. We might venture to ask whether the religions and religious cultures of Asia have any answer to these questions? In almost every country there are forms of popular religion, to which the poor especially turn in times of need: Taoism in China, Shamanism in Korea and elsewhere, Shintoism in Japan. Often they have deep value for those who practice them, yet they have no universal appeal, no outreach beyond a particular area, no message of living hope for all human beings.

It is a different matter when we turn to Confucianism or Buddhism, to Hinduism, or those other religions that have developed sacred writings and rituals which are widely studied and practised in a variety of nations, having over the centuries until today exercised a deep influence on their moral philosophy and religious thought; these clearly reveal the depths of human existence and facilitate virtuous living, so that insofar as they evoke a longing for eternal life they may be considered helpful for the achievement of salvation in Christ.

The virtue of benevolence taught by Confucianism, the compassion found in Buddhism, are worthy to be compared with the Christian doctrine of love. The Taoist notion of Tao, meaning "the Way" in Chinese, seems to have depths of meaning close to those of the "Logos" in Christianity. Yet no one has ever said that Confucius, or the Buddha, or Lao-tzu, was "true God and true Man," or "Emmanuel, God-with-us." They themselves never claimed to be that. We may see

in them guides and teachers, in some ways leading us towards God, preparing the way to Christ who is the true Life.

5. 200 years ago, Catholic Christianity came to Korea. It came in a very significant way: not through missionaries sent to teach, or because colonial powers imposed their own culture, but because Korean Confucian scholars happened to come across Matteo Ricci's book written in Chinese, *The Real Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Those scholars were not only deeply grounded in the Confucian traditions; they were also well acquainted with the values of Buddhism. But as soon as they discovered the Church's teaching about God, heard about and met Christ, they felt that they had at last found the way, the truth, the life that they had so long been searching for. Since then, others like them have made the same discovery. I am thinking of someone like Choi Nam-sun (1890-1957), a prominent scholar very well-known in Korea, who died less than forty years ago. He had penetrated the depths of both Confucianism and Buddhism. Then he became a Catholic, and wrote to explain why. Only the faith of the Catholic Church is eternal and universal, he said; only it has the truth of salvation that all people seek. And that truth, of course, is the living, risen Christ.

6. That is true everywhere, not just in Korea. Asia needs Christ, as the Holy Father has recently stressed in *Redemptoris Missio*, no.55, where he says: "I recently wrote to the bishops of Asia: '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' ... 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.'"

7. In Christ, God is present to every person, humbly waiting for their hearts to open to the offer of his love. Christ, too, is a model of humility; for our sake he emptied himself, took the form of a servant and became like us in every way (Phil 2). He charged himself with the world's sins, conquered death by his death, and rose to restore us all to life. The living Christ is the constant companion of every person, even the poorest, even the most sinful. A few years ago, Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical *Redemptor hominis* (no.14) these words:

the human person — every person without exception — has been redeemed by Christ; because Christ is in a way united to every human person — every person without exception — even if the indi-

individual may not realize this fact. Christ, who died and was raised up for us all — for every human being and for all human beings — can through his Spirit offer man the light and strength to measure up to his supreme destiny.

God so loves the world that he came down in order to experience it directly, and shared our life, our pains, our dying; so he became their true meaning. Christ becomes the friend, the brother, of every person who suffers: “Truly he bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53; Matthew 8).

Thus, Christ reveals to us the wonder of the compassion of God. The word “compassion” comes from the Latin; it means “to share the suffering of one who suffers.” In his own suffering, Christ shows us the Father, and allows us to understand that God suffers with all who suffer, because of his love for them. Pain is never sent by God; his will is that all be united with himself in eternal joy.

8. There is very much suffering in Asia! Poverty and disease, oppression and exploitation, ignorance and violence. Yet, when we see how the very poorest of our Christians come with so much love around the Cribs, the “Belen,” as you call them here in the Philippines, that are set up in churches and chapels at Christmas; when we see their tears during the Way of the Cross, or as they venerate the death of Jesus on Good Friday, we realize that for them, God is really present, with them in their sufferings. For the poor in the Church, God’s love is experienced as the heart of their daily struggles for dignity and human rights.

I want to read to you what the German evangelical theologian Jürgen Moltmann has written about this presence of Christ:

The Christ who loves us with a passionate love, the persecuted and lonely Christ, the Christ who suffers over God’s silence, the Christ so utterly forsaken in his dying for us and for our sake, is the brother, the friend, to whom one can entrust everything, because he knows everything and has suffered whatever can happen to us, and even more (J. Moltmann, “The Theology of the Cross” in *His God and Hers*, 1991).

Yes, we can entrust everything to him, when we feel overwhelmed by the thought of our own limitations and weakness; we know that “God’s power is made perfect in weakness” (2Cor 12:9). Salvation comes from the cross of Christ, not from us.

Compassion also means asking, "What can I do to help?" Mother Teresa has taught us that it makes all the difference to dying persons, if someone is simply holding their hands, loving them as they die. Even when there is almost nothing we can do, there is always something we can do, to bring alive the loving presence of God to those around us.

As members of Christ's Church, we have experienced our own need for Christ, the joy and fulfillment his presence brings; and if there has once been a true meeting with him in our lives, we will want to echo the words St. John wrote near the beginning of his first letter:

Life has revealed itself! We have ourselves seen, we witness and announce that eternal life which was ever in the Father, and has now manifested itself. We proclaim to you the things we have seen and heard, so that you may share in this treasure with us. That treasure is union with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. I am writing this to you so that we may have joy to the full.

9. Christ is not far away from us, he is very near; he is never absent, even from those who do not know his name or his story. But his loving presence only comes alive by being recognized and responded to by each individual. Christ longs to be known. That is why the Church, why we all, must speak of him to those who do not yet believe, in order to enable all people to enjoy the happiness of living in Christ, the way, the truth, the life, accepting the Good News of redemption from this world. If only the Church can enable all to live united in one faith, one hope, one love, all sisters and brothers as children of the one Father, so that by love, more human and more beautiful communities can come into being, in peace, until at last all become one with Christ, all made like him, united in his Body!

Caritas Christi urget nos! The love of Christ compels us! (2Cor 5: 14) We must announce the Gospel, because by it people are brought from darkness into light, from death to life, from ignorance to sure knowledge. People need this Christ, they long to hear his Gospel; Asia is thirsting for Christ; Asia needs Christ; we need Christ.

10. Then we must not delay; here is our most urgent task. Its name is evangelization. The Church, each one of us, must first be evangelized again and again by Christ. He must fill our hearts with the message of his love, his compassion, his life. The Church in this part of the world must become Christlike in terms of Asia, a shining-through of Jesus. The Church is the visible sign, the sacrament, of Christ's presence in the world today. Like Christ, the Church here in Asia has to set out on

a humble pilgrimage, discovering how to proclaim the Good News to the poor, embrace the small and weak, heal the sick, bring joy to those in need, and take away the burdens of sin by the power of his death on the Cross.

See, Lord Christ, the sufferings of Asia:
the children injured in their innocent trust,
the women abused, the poor despised,
so many who walk in darkness and sin.
Our lands might become a paradise of peace
if only the cruelty of the world would yield
to the gentle wonder of your Compassion.

Open our eyes, the eyes of all who wait,
longing to catch even one brief glimpse
of a new dawn of hope. Come to each one
of your Asian children and through your Church
make your love known to them all.

Open our hearts to your love
and our lips to your praise,
because all around us are souls thirsty for God.
We too, Christ Jesus, are thirsty for the day
when your love so overflows in our lives
that people will know that our message is true:
God is love,
and his Compassion is everlasting joy.

V. THE NEED FOR A NEW EVANGELIZATION

by

Bishop Teodoro C. Bacani

Introduction

Pope John Paul II has been speaking repeatedly of a new evangelization (most recently on October 12, in Santo Domingo, before the fourth assembly of the bishops of Latin America), and has been asking Catholics to participate in it in view of the coming third millennium.

Why do we need a new evangelization? Certainly not to proclaim a new Gospel. For the Gospel is not only a word or an action but Jesus Christ himself who remains the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). The central message of this Gospel remains the same: God loves his people (FC, no. 12). No, we are not allowed to proclaim a new

Gospel. Were we to proclaim a new Gospel, we would at the same time be pronouncing the death sentence on our evangelization.

What we need is to proclaim the self-same Gospel but with new methods, new expressions, and a new fervor (Pope John Paul II, Haiti, 1983). Evangelization is the permanent task of the Church. But today we can speak of the need for a "new evangelization," which means both the first evangelization of non-Christians, missionary activity *ad gentes*, and the re-evangelization of non-practising Catholics or of groups of baptized persons "who have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel" (RM, nos. 33-34). Pope John Paul II, while, pointing out the difference between missionary activity properly so called, pastoral care and re-evangelization, nevertheless points out that the boundaries between them are not clearly definable. And his insistence is not only on re-evangelization but on first evangelization or missionary activity proper. RM, no. 34).

A new evangelization is called for because of a change in the situation of the addressees of evangelization, and because of changes in the condition of the Church itself. Evangelization needs to be renewed according to the condition of the Church and according to the situation of those to whom the Gospel must be preached.

A Changed Situation

What has changed in the situation of the addressees of the Gospel and in the condition of the Church that warrants and demands a new evangelization?

Plenty. Asia has not been spared by the swift winds of change that have been blowing over the whole world in the past quarter of a millennium.

There are *economic changes*. Asia is the land of the new economic dragons, the newly-industrialized countries, and of countries aspiring to belong to these categories. The Asian Pacific region is predicted to be the boom area of the third millennium. And yet this prosperity, attained at tremendous human and environmental cost, has not lessened but widened the gap between the rich and the poor in the Asian countries.

There are also *sociopolitical changes*. Authoritarian regimes have been set up and have helped safeguard economic prosperity in some countries, while causing the economic deterioration of others. But every-

where people are asking for participation not only in the burdens but also in the rewards of living together in community. Asia is experiencing a strong wave of democratization, fueled largely by the aspirations and activities of the young people and of workers intent on wresting power from the domineering economic and political elite, or at least on sharing that power. Communism has considerably weakened, with a resultant relaxation of its repression of the Church. Suddenly, the real possibility of evangelizing another billion people looms in the horizon.

There are *cultural changes*. Women are demanding equality and indeed, are even assuming positions of leadership in society. They are rebelling against exploitation whether past (the comfort women), or present (prostitution and unequal treatment of women). The poor and exploited masses are being conscientized and politicized, though they very often still allow themselves to be manipulated and fooled. The youth are getting the benefit of more widespread formal education, but (perhaps even more significantly) are subjected to the influence of mass media. Mass media itself has been a factor in changing the cultural face, mind and heart of Asians. Communication has been revolutionized and Asians of one country become next-door neighbors of other Asians.

There have also been *religious changes*. There is a ferment of religious renewal and revival in Asia. Fundamentalist movements have arisen with their divisive intolerance. In the Church mission and evangelization have taken on new vigor. The Churches have been acting as catalysts for change and have defended human rights. There is a growing trend towards an integrated spirituality that unites faith and life, the mystical and political, the personal and the societal dimensions of human life. There are also very strong aspirations for the inculturation of the Gospel and of the Church.

The description of Asia drawn by the Asian bishops in their first meeting in 1970 at Manila still largely holds true. Asia today is still the continent of the teeming masses, home to two-thirds of mankind; Asia whose face is "largely marked with poverty, bruised by suffering, troubled and restless." It is the continent of the young and of the ancient and diverse cultures and religious traditions.

But while in 1970 the bishops described Asia as "in its hour of awakening," today it is fully awakened and brimming with aspirations.

There is first of all *the aspiration to full humanity*, full human dignity, total human development: well-being not only in some future time beyond this world, but well-being today; prosperity not only for an elite but for all.

There is also *the aspiration for justice and freedom*. Precisely because people know now that their condition is not their fate but is the result of human decisions, of human history and of unjust systems, they aspire to bring about change not only on the personal level but on the societal level. They seek for a change in attitudes, surely, but they also are starting to demand a change in social structures that oppress them.

There is, thirdly, *the aspiration for human community*, on the level of base communities, on the level of the nation, and on the level of the region and the continent. Despite the economic, sociopolitical, cultural and religious divisions that separate them, and even lead them to war with each other, people do want peace within their nation, and with their neighbors.

And fourthly, there is the growing *aspiration for the integrity of creation and harmony with creation*. The wanton destruction of the environment and of the earth's life-support system, and the awareness of the limitedness of the earth's resources are jolting people into the realization that the earth is not to be exploited but cared for, and that we should work to save not only people but also the world itself.

These aspirations are blocked at every turn by oppression, cultural attitudes and social structures and by animosities originating from the greed for money and power, and sometimes legitimated or fueled by religious attitudes. Conscious of the ambivalence and even conflict among the different trends and movements in Asia, the participants of the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC, meeting in Bandung, declared: "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."

And precisely because we stand at a new and critical moment of history with possibilities of sin and grace — and great possibilities at that — then the Church must proclaim the Gospel anew, launch a new evangelization.

We must, however, without boasting recall that for us here in Asia the clarion call to a new evangelization was sounded already in 1974 by the First Plenary Assembly of the FABC meeting in Taipei. Here are the words of our Asian bishops:

We know that in the hearts of our brothers there are these quests today: to find new meanings in their lives and endeavors, to over-

come destructive forces and to shape a new integration in our societies, to free themselves from structures which have created new forms of bondage, to foster human dignity and freedom and a more fully human life, to create a more genuine communion among men and nations.

It is our belief that only in and through Christ and his Gospel, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that these quests can come to realization. For Christ alone, we believe, is for every man "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6) "who enlightens every man who comes into the world" (Jn 1:9). We believe that it is in him and in his good news that our peoples will finally find the full meaning we all seek, the liberation we strive after, the brotherhood and peace which is the desire of all our hearts.

It is because of this that the preaching of Jesus Christ and his Gospel to our peoples in Asia becomes a task which *today assumes an urgency, a necessity and magnitude unmatched in the history of our faith in this part of the world* (emphasis added). It is because of this that we can repeat the Apostle's word, and repeat it joyfully, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel," (1Cor 9:6), for it is "the love of Christ which presses us" (2Cor 5:14) to share with our peoples what is most precious in our hearts and in our lives, Jesus Christ and his Gospel, the unsurpassable riches of Christ (cf. Eph 3:8).

The FABC plenary assembly participants in Bandung reiterated that call in July, 1990 when they said, "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*" (emphasis added).

From this Asian congress on evangelization that call must sound again with our even more numerous voices and with even greater urgency.

A Changed Church

The change in the condition of the Church also founds a renewed call to evangelization.

It has been pointed out that Christianity in Asia has been con-

sidered a foreign religion. This is not because Christianity is different or because it originated outside Asia, for Asian peoples cherish diversity, and Christianity was born in Asia. The main reason why Christianity has been viewed by Asians as alien "is because the local Churches in the countries of Asia have, by and large, kept themselves aloof from the mainstream of the life of the people, their history, struggles and dreams" (Fr. Felix Wilfred).

For Christianity to take root in the Asian soil and soul, and to be accepted as native to the continent, local Churches must relate in a vital way with the peoples of Asia. Hence, without diminishing the necessity and centrality of the proclamation of Christ, the Asian bishops point to dialogue as the essential mode of mission in Asia: dialogue with the poor, dialogue with the local culture, and dialogue with other religious traditions.

This dialogue is not in opposition to proclamation. In fact, ... 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 to do his deeds by the power of his grace. Proclamation through dialogue and deeds — that is the first call to the Churches in Asia (FABC V).

In their efforts to enter into this dialogue by deeds, the local Churches have become more deeply involved in the lives, the aspirations, the strivings, the sufferings, the disappointments and the victories of the people in whose midst they are and to whom they know they belong.

Consequent upon this involvement is another very important change in the Churches of Asia. They now see themselves truly as local Churches, that is, Churches that are indigenous and inculturated "in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions — in brief, with all the life realities of the peoples in whose midst they have sunk their roots deeply and whose histories and lives they gladly make their own" (FABC I, adapted).

Without separating themselves in any way from the universal communion of the Churches with its visible Petrine center, the Asian Churches are assuming their own identities and want to take responsibility for their own lives. They want to contribute to the worldwide mission of the Church as well. They no longer see themselves as only

administrative units of a worldwide religious organization, or as wards and living imitations of the Western Churches. They see themselves as local Churches, different from Western models but endowed with a richness that is not to be apologized for but to be cultivated as their contribution to the Church's catholicity.

And they see themselves also not only as receivers of missionaries and mission aid but as missionary themselves, sharing in the responsibility of the Church to make disciples of all nations. Mission is no longer seen as a one-way traffic from the Western Church to Asia. Mission is an exchange. Asian Churches are willing to share in mission responsibility out of their poverty.

In their evangelizing work, the Churches in Asia have been moving from a sense of the Church as institution and hierarchy towards a sense of the Church as the whole people of God participating in the mission of Christ not only for the expansion of the Church but for the life of the world. The lay faithful are contributing their share mightily to the life of the Church and its evangelizing mission. The Church in Asia is an increasingly participatory Church.

All this shows that the Churches in Asia, despite their smallness in relation to the total population of the continent, are now coming of age. They realize that their time has come.

Thus, the International Mission Congress, held in Manila in 1980, could speak daringly about a new age of mission through which the Holy Spirit is readying the local Churches "for a true renewal of mission in Asia and throughout the world" (Message of the Delegates, no. 13).

And so we see that both the Asian situation, with its manifold changes, challenges and even crises, and the condition of the Asian Churches coming to mature selfhood, demand that the Gospel be proclaimed anew with renewed vigor and fervor.

A Springtime

Certainly, in Asia the Churches are not experiencing any winter of faith or loss of missionary zeal. We are already witnessing the springtime of a renewed proclamation of the Good News. Perhaps better still, we stand before the dawn of the first evangelization of the vast majority of the Asian peoples.

These might seem to be overly optimistic if not boastful words. But consider these facts: the Catholics of Asia constitute 2.4% of the total Asian population. If we exclude the Catholics of the Philippines, Catholics in Asia do not even make up 1% of the total population. They come up to only .8%. Surely, the field for the first evangelization of the Asian continent is vast! In Asia, mission is still only beginning (cf. RM, no. 1).

And that field is fertile. The 1990 statistics show that in Asia, Catholics increased by 5,334,000 in 1990 compared to 2,347,000 in 1989. In South Korea the Church grows by a phenomenal 5% yearly. The number of priests and seminarians has also increased considerably. But what is most heartening is the increase both in number and quality of lay people who have put themselves at the service of the Church's evangelizing mission.

I may be pardoned by our brothers and sisters from other countries if I cite primarily Filipino examples of evangelizing initiatives.

Evangelizing Initiatives

In Metro Manila, there is a phenomenon which I would like to call "the Church of the office" or "the Church in the place of work." On weekdays the Eucharist or at least a prayer service is celebrated in many government and private offices or places of work during the noon break, with many employees and workers participating. These Eucharists and prayer services are usually celebrated upon the initiative of lay people, veritable apostles in their places of work. In the Central Bank of the Philippines, the Eucharist is celebrated in three places daily. In Makati, employees go by the hundreds to the Greenbelt Park to participate in the noonday Eucharist.

An organization called "Couples for Christ," an offshoot of a charismatic group, has been growing marvelously. When I first spoke to their national convention in 1988, I was told that they numbered 1,000. When I was asked to speak to them again two years ago I was told that there were already 20,000 couples. They recruit members by personal invitation and form them through a prolonged series of seminars.

One of my truly great surprises was when I heard a vendor who sells fruits in front of our church, with a language handicap which makes it very difficult for him to speak, give testimony for twenty minutes before a class of the Couples for Christ. When I expressed

my surprise to his wife who sells fruits with him, she in turn narrated to me the great change that has come upon their life since they joined this particular association.

Once I was invited by a classmate of mine to address his basic ecclesial community leaders in a Southern Tagalog province. They came to the diocesan center in procession — more than 2,000 of them — walking in their rubber slippers or rubber shoes. It was evident to me that this was the Church of the poor. In the crowded hall, as I was listening to one leader delivering a talk, my former classmate, Fr. Ciriaco Sevilla, remarked to me that before that leader was trained, he was a “no-read, no-write.” But there he was, speaking with assurance before his fellow leaders.

In the archdiocese of Manila we started a Catholic Lay Evangelization (CLAYE) program under the direction of a dramatically-converted and very dynamic layman, Lito Urgino. Since its inception four years ago, the program has trained thousands of lay evangelizers who go from house to house and knock on doors to bring the Good News to Catholics and non-Catholics alike. In my parish, these lay evangelizers were first thought to be Protestants, because as one woman said, “Catholics do not go house to house evangelizing.” This lay evangelization program has been brought by its graduates to other countries as well.

One of the most satisfying developments is the success the program has reaped in the schools of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters. All their school administrators and superiors took the CLAYE program. This was followed by the evangelization of all the sisters and school personnel. Then, all the students were asked to undergo the program, which is ongoing up to now. And now evangelization is being carried out for the parents of the students in their respective communities.

Because of the many fruits of the CLAYE program, its graduates no longer speak of an evangelization explosion but of evangelization conflagration.

In one very poor but thickly populated parish in Manila, a parish priest, who is also a professor of Scripture, conducts a weekly Bible study for his parishioners. Attendance ranges from 500 to 700 regularly. Both young and old, educated and non-educated participate in the sessions enthusiastically.

Every Sunday, a charismatic lay evangelist preaches for one and a half hours before an assembly of El Shaddai numbering from 50,000 to

100,000. These people come from different places, sometimes very distant ones, and spend the whole evening till early morning praying, singing, listening, and celebrating the Eucharist, rain or shine. They also practise a system of mutual help.

Certainly, one of the finest examples of evangelization in the Philippines is the experience of the God's Little Children Covenant Community. This group, started 15 years ago with 90 people forming a prayer group, has now 500 core-group members and a total membership of 3,000. They have been fired by the ideal of holistic evangelization. While they have carried out the work of developing the Christian spirituality of people, and have remarkably promoted the practice of prayer among the poor, they have also ventured into numerous livelihood projects. They have gone so far as to establish two housing projects for the poor, one urban and one rural. They are in charge of the evangelization program of their archdiocese, and spearhead the biblical apostolate through the Living Word Archdiocesan Bible Center. They run a school for nursery to grade six children — 1,700 of them — and it is now rated as the best elementary school in their region. All the school personnel are community members, and the school itself was built through the labor of community members. They also run a retreat house which can accommodate 200 people. Aside from retreats, they hold leadership training programs. With all this, the community still does outreach work outside their archdiocese.

A final example, but of a very different kind. Seven lay persons, knowing of the great need to safeguard the honesty and peacefulness of the election process decide to form a group which was later named the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting. Under the able direction and contagiously-enthusiastic leadership of its president, Mrs. Tita de Villa, the organization grows to 250,000 at election time and affects positively the election process by conscientizing the voters and guarding the polls as volunteers. This lay organization continues its work today and maintains its network in order to help people live their faith through the exercise of responsible citizenship.

The examples can be multiplied almost indefinitely. One only has to think of the basic ecclesial communities, the traditional Catholic organizations, the catechists, both volunteer and professional, the personnel of Catholic schools and universities who are rarely handsomely paid, and the men and women engaged in the social action apostolate. The great grace of the Asian Church, certainly of the Church in the Philippines, is the number, the holiness, the spirit of inquiry and selfless service of committed evangelizers and of lay persons who carry out

the work of evangelization, either alone or with others, either in informal groupings or in organizations, both in the Church and in the world.

Motivations for Evangelization

What motivates these persons to spread the Good News? I am sure that God touches the hearts of people in countless ways. But from my personal dealings with many lay apostles and with priests and religious, the strongest factor seems to be a deep sense of gratitude for a personally-experienced grace of God. I remember vividly a woman who wanted to establish a chapter of a charismatic group telling me that she was moved to do this because her husband was cured of cancer of the tongue through the prayers of the leaders of that group. Then, there is this woman who is tireless in her anonymous benefactions, especially to the poor, telling me that what she is doing is really nothing compared to the goodness of God to her. Once she donated the money for a video camera to be used in the production of TV programs with the words, "that money will be worth it if that camera helps save even one soul." Another person, in dire straits and in prison, told God he would dedicate his life to his service if God extricated him from the many lawsuits against him. And God did so. Now, that person is one of the most zealous and credible lay leaders around.

Still another who is now dead but gained a certain notoriety or fame is worth recounting. This is a woman named Dolzura, an AIDS victim whose sad story was serialized in one national newspaper. She contracted the disease through loose sexual living. According to a doctor who visited her before her death, she got converted to the Lord and came back to her Catholic faith which she had abandoned for another religion. She had confessed and prayed the rosary with the image of Mary beside her. While alive, she begged this doctor, Dr. Bullecer, "Doc, bring me to the radio and TV stations so that I can bring even only one out of that pit (life of prostitution). Let them only see me."

All of these and countless others are only exemplifying what the FABC Fifth Plenary Assembly in Bandung states: "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 life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God."

There are other reasons for evangelizing which are closely related to the psychological reason I have just pointed to. We evangelize be-

cause we belong to — indeed, we are — the Church to which Christ gave the mandate to preach the Gospel to all creation and to make disciples of all nations (Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19).

We evangelize also because as Pope John Paul II insists: “The missionary thrust belongs to the very nature of the Christian life (RM, no. 1). The FABC V assembly in Bandung laments that “for many Catholics faith is only something to be received and celebrated. But they do not feel it is something to be shared.” And it points out “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.” That is why Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, stresses that “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” (EN, no. 24).

Not the least of the reasons for evangelizing is the Gospel itself, which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Rom 1:16). The present pontiff explains that this Good News, which is really newness of life in Christ, is destined for everyone and all have a right to know it and approach it freely. And he adds: “The Church, and every individual Christian within her, may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God’s bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind” (RM, no. 11).

Pope Paul VI offers a comment that demands reflection:

... men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God’s mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame — what Saint Paul called “blushing for the Gospel” — or as a result of false ideas, we fail to preach it (EN, no. 80)?

From properly motivated Christian hearts, new evangelization will follow. Generally, this new evangelization begins with witness.

Necessity of Inculturated Evangelization

But witness is only the beginning. The oral proclamation of the faith, the announcing of Jesus Christ with a view to leading people to faith in him must not be neglected when the Spirit opens the door for such a proclamation. And indeed the witness of those who have been

touched by the grace of God seldom stops at wordless deeds. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Lk 6:45), says the Lord. "Because we believe, therefore, we speak" (2Cor 4:13), adds St. Paul. Yes, "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Both in silent witnessing and in oral proclamation inculturation is necessary. The Gospel is always the power of God for salvation. It is no less powerful now than it was at the time of the apostles. But it must be witnessed to and spoken in a way suited to those who are addressed by it, in such a way that they will welcome it not only in their minds (cognitively) but also in their hearts (affectively). One of the great deficiencies of evangelization in the past was the inadequacy of this cultural translation due to a certain cultural imperialism. There is a need to liberate the Gospel from this cultural imperialism in order that it may truly speak to the Asian peoples through Asian expressions.

This task of inculturating the message so that the message may truly and fully be communicated is a risky undertaking, but the risk is necessary. We must allow the young Churches to rediscover the Gospel, to re-express it perhaps in initially groping but authentic ways. There is a need to trust the Spirit and the inner dynamism of the Gospel, as well as the God-given capacity of a people not only to receive the Gospel but to re-express it in their own way. Unless the Gospel is inculturated, it is not effectively proclaimed and genuinely assimilated. There is a need for a new evangelization but not for a simple repetition of the gospel. If St. Paul could be a Jew to the Jews, but all things to all persons (1Cor 9:20-23), certainly the Church and the Gospel today should become Filipino to Filipinos, Chinese to the Chinese, Indonesian to the Indonesians, Asian to Asians. Then it is that Christ will be all and in all in this Asian continent where he was born and to which he now seems so alien.

Some Proposals

Allow me, to conclude with some suggestions.

I propose that this congress issue a call for a new evangelization to be read in all churches in Asia.

The first necessity for a new evangelization is a renewal of the motivation for mission. That is why both FABC V in Bandung, Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* take great pains to explain the motivations for mission. We must do the same with our people until we all realize that the name "Christian" is synonymous with "evangelizer."

Second, we must recognize and make use of evangelizing resources available to us. To take one example, in *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II calls our attention to “a new development occurring in many Churches.” He is referring to “the rapid growth of ‘ecclesial movements’ filled with missionary dynamism.” And he asserts: “When these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for new evangelization and for missionary activity properly so-called.”

It is no secret that many ecclesiastics and other Church leaders have been slow in accepting such ecclesial movements, preferring to stay only with their accustomed organizations and ways. This has resulted in the loss of much evangelizing potential. Thus, we must heed the Pope’s recommendation “that they (the ecclesial movements) be spread, and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelization, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves” (RM, no. 72).

We cannot pass over in silence the important missionary resource that migrants are. Forced by economic or political necessities to migrate to other lands, migrants, when duly prepared and evangelized, can become effective missionary witnesses in the lands where they migrate.

Thirdly, we must seek for models of true evangelization, especially those that involve whole communities, and having found them, let us disseminate the news regarding these models, so that they may serve as sources of inspiration, instruction and imitation for other communities.

And fourthly, we must all work for a true inculturation of the Gospel and the evangelization of our cultures, so that there will be no dichotomy between our respective cultural identities and our Christian life. It is of the utmost importance in Asia for people to see that they do not have to abandon what is best in their culture in order to embrace the Christian faith, but that the Gospel affirms the best in their culture while it challenges those cultural elements that dehumanize people.

I am aware that the process of real inculturation is attended by many risks of error and aberration. The local Churches will have to take the risk, and Rome will have to allow them the exercise of their Christian freedom, and encourage the process of inculturation with the utmost sympathy. Such risk-taking is a prerequisite for growth, and freedom is the condition of the children of God (LG, no. 9).

I wish to end with the words of Pope John Paul II, which should embolden us to take those risks and to do whatever else is required by evangelization:

Today, as never before, the Church has the opportunity of bringing the Gospel, by witness and word, to all people and nations. I see the dawning of a new missionary age, which will become a radiant day bearing an abundant harvest, if all Christians, and missionaries and young Churches in particular, respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time (RM, no. 92).

VI. A SPIRITUALITY FOR EVANGELIZATION

by

Father Raniero Cantalamessa

With What Power

When Jesus began preaching after his baptism in the river Jordan, what most impressed those listening was the authority with which he spoke rather than what he actually said. "What is this? A new kind of teaching — with authority! When he gives orders even the unclean spirits submit" (Mk 1:27). And again: "Where does he get this wisdom from, and these mighty works?" (Mt 13:54).

The people were astonished by the authority which emanated not only from his teaching but from his very presence. "They were astonished at the way he taught, for he taught them like a teacher who needed no authority other than his own, and not like the experts in the law" (Mk 1:22).

In reply to the question of his enemies, "By what authority are you doing these things?", Jesus clearly distinguishes two kinds of authority: one that comes from heaven, that is to say, from God, and another that comes from man, and he clearly claims for himself the first kind (Mk 11:22 f.). Jesus was conscious of a direct and immediate authority — a transcendent authority which set him above parties and at times even the law." (cf. J.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, London, SCM Press 1988, p. 77).

The Synoptic Gospels describe this power as *charismatic*, in the sense that it wasn't of Jesus but was given him by the presence and action of the Spirit and the power of God that was in him. However, the Fourth Gospel adds an important detail that cannot be overlooked, as sometimes happens. The authority of Jesus does not come only from

the action of the Spirit within him at that moment, nor only from his “unconditional dependence on and openness to God” (Dunn, op. cit., p. 78 f.), but also from the fact that he was “sent” by the Father, that is, it depends on his divine “mission” in the world (cf. Jn 20:22). It doesn’t derive only from his baptism in the Jordan and from the fact that he acts in the Spirit, but also from his incarnation and from the fact that he is from God and is God.

Now, the Gospels clearly tell us that before leaving this world, Jesus gave this same power and authority to his disciples and the Church: “Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (Lk 10:19). “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore ...” (Mt 28:18 f.). This power or authority is not abstract power that is only nominal and juridical. It is effective power and is identified with the Holy Spirit: “I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:48). And again: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

It was at Pentecost that this real power came upon the Church and she began to preach the Gospel to the world “by the power of the Holy Spirit.” St. Paul tells us how he lived this experience in his life: “My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1Cor 2:4).

Therefore, together with the mandate to preach the Gospel to all men, the Church has also received the power to do so, which is the Holy Spirit. This is the real basis of all evangelization, the condition that makes it possible. I am sure that we are all convinced of this. What must be clarified is, instead, the nature of this power and how we can obtain it. Two fundamental answers emerge to this query which, for convenience sake, we shall call institutional and charismatic. This makes us see evangelization in two different ways: the traditional Catholic way and the Protestant way, especially that of the Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

These — who held a congress on world evangelization right here in Manila, in this very building, in July 1989 — believe that the power to evangelize is almost exclusively charismatic, that is to say, it is based on the power of conviction and the gifts which the Holy Spirit, or faith, confers *hic et nunc* on certain people in view of proclaiming the Good News. They talk of a “power evangelism” and of “evangelism with signs and wonders”.

In the past, and also as a reaction to this, the Catholic Church gave greater importance to the institutional aspect of this power, the mandate and promise that Christ gave his Church, which, in turn, through the ordained ministry and the *missio canonica*, gives it to individual preachers of the Gospel. The repeated formula was taken from the letter of Pope Clement I: "The Apostles preached the Gospel sent by Jesus Christ, who, in turn, was sent by God. Therefore, Christ, from God and the Apostles from Christ ... These, in their turn, appointed bishops and deacons" (*Letter to the Corinthians*, 42:1-2).

In this light the power of evangelization depends on being sent by the Church and in being in communion with her. It is true that the personal holiness of preachers has always been stressed but this wasn't directly connected with the power problem. The "effective power" of the New Testament was in danger of being reduced to simple juridical power, and authority to simple authorization, that is, to being authorized to preach.

Vatican Council II made a new interpretation possible by insisting not only on the hierarchical and sacramental dimension of the Church but also on her charismatic and pneumatic dimension; and it did so especially where it states: "It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1Cor 12:11), he also distributes special gifts among the faithful of every rank" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 12; cf. also the *Decree on the apostolate of lay people*, n.3).

We are called to put into practice this new awareness of the Church by uniting and not contrasting prophecy and institution, charisms and ministries. This is also a way towards that ecumenical evangelization, often spoken of by the Holy Father, that should lead all Christians to proclaim in fraternal accord — each one respecting his own tradition and in obedience to the authority of his Church — Jesus Christ as the only Savior of the world, in preparation for the third millennium of his coming. It is the program expressed by our Protestant brethren on the occasion of the congress they held in this very place: "The whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world."

An evangelization based only on the concept of *divine mandate* and *institution* would risk being a dead evangelization, guaranteeing apostolic succession but not apostolic success. On the other hand, an evangelization based only on *charismatic power* and the preacher's personal faith could easily lead to chaos. The "born-again Christians" re-

sulting from this kind of evangelization are in danger of being like children born from free love, out of wedlock and therefore without a real family by which to be welcomed and helped to maturity.

The *ideal evangelizer* is therefore one sent by the Church, who speaks by the power of his office, in continuity with the Apostles, in ecclesial communion, and who, at the same time, speaks by the power of the charism he has received and nourished; and who is prophetically able to make his listeners feel the presence of God's power because he himself is open to the Holy Spirit. That, we have seen, is what Jesus, the first evangelizer, was like.

When he was leaving his disciples, Jesus told them to stay in the city of Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high and baptized in the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4). Today, he is saying the same thing to us: do not move, do not undertake a new evangelization without first having been clothed with power from on high, as in a new Pentecost. It has rightly been said that "without the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is simply an organization, authority a matter of domination and evangelization a matter of propaganda. But with the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is the power of life, the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity, authority is a liberating service, and the evangelization is a Pentecost" (Ignatius of Latakia, *The Uppsala Report*, 1968, Geneva, WCC, p. 298).

"Eat This Book"

At this point I would like to concentrate on the precise question of how we can enter into and stay in contact with that divine power and authority on which the whole question of evangelization depends. How can we become a "live wire" of the divine energy that manifested itself in Jesus of Nazareth and is now in his Church? How can we find again some of that prophetic power that filled Peter's words on the day of Pentecost when, for the first time, he cried to the world: "Jesus of Nazareth: you have killed him. God raised him up. Repent and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 2:22 ff.).

And this is where the theme I was asked to talk about fits in. In fact, to speak about "evangelization and spirituality" means to answer this question: Under what conditions do that power and authority show themselves in the life and words of an evangelizer? How do we prepare ourselves to become preachers of the Gospel?

The answer is in a name and that is Jesus Christ. We must imitate

him, "learn from him" (Mt 11:25), "think and act like Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5 f.). There is no other way. It was to him that all power was given and it is in the degree to which we are united to him that this power comes to the Gospel preacher.

We can find an image in the Bible which in itself is worth whole treatises on spirituality for evangelization. It is the image of the book, or scroll, that was eaten. God showed a scroll to the prophet Ezekiel and said: "Son of man, eat what is offered to you ...; fill your stomach with it" (Ezek 3:1-3).

First and foremost, we must eat and make part of ourselves the message we are called to give to others. We must live as it requires, assimilate it, or better, let ourselves be assimilated by it. There's an abyss between a book that has been read and studied and one that has been "eaten." This book, it is said, "is sour to the stomach." And this is so because the word, like a two-edged sword, prunes and judges all that is contradictory to the message in the preacher. Instead, it tastes "as sweet as honey" in the mouth (cf. Ezek 3:3; Rev 10:10). It is also sweet to others, to those listening to him preach, because it brings life.

This is the meaning and aim of a spirituality for evangelization. First, we must eat the book, fill the very depths of our soul with it, experience what we are called to preach to others, at least negatively, that is, we must become aware of how far we still are from fully living the message.

Then God can say to us what he said to Ezekiel: "Mortal man, go to the people of Israel. Speak my words to them"; or what he said to John in the book of Revelation: "You must prophesy about many peoples, nations, languages and kings" (Rev 10:12).

Giving Up Impiety

Now I wish to stress certain aspects of the imitation of Christ which I feel are most closely linked with the ministry of evangelization. I call the first of these aspects "giving up impiety," and I shall try to explain what this consists of. At the beginning of his letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them ... So they are without excuse, for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened" (Rom 1:18-21).

To us who have studied theology, these words are almost exclusively bound to the thesis of the possibility of a natural knowledge of God's existence. Yet, in the context, this is a totally marginal problem. The Apostle's words contain another, more important, message. They contain one of those God's thunders that are capable of breaking even the cedars of Lebanon (cf. Ps 29:5). The Apostle's intent is very clear: all are sinners and no one is excluded. On this point he divides the world into two categories: Gentiles and Jews, and that is, pagans and believers; and he begins precisely with the pagans' sins. He indicates impiety as the fundamental sin of the pagan world and says it is an assault on truth. Not just any truth but pure and simple truth, the truth of all things. And he immediately explains what he means. The pagans, he says, could have known about God and, in fact, they did know, more or less clearly, that there is a God. But they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him as God deserves. And that was the sin that made them "inexcusable." They preferred to glorify themselves rather than God. They *knew* God but did not *acknowledge* him as God. In the Bible to know God doesn't mean to know a lot about God, but just to know that God is God. To know means to "acknowledge," and that is to accept, honor, thank and submit to him in love and obedience.

The Apostle then goes on to describe the consequences of this sin. From *impiety*, he says, *idolatry* comes by which, instead of adoring God, we adore our own work, which means ourselves, for at the basis of all idolatry is self-worship, the cult of self, man's self-glorification. Man does not accept God as he is but creates his own God. It is man that decides. Idolatry, in turn, leads to *moral disorder* which the Apostle describes in all its manifestations (cf. Rom 1:24 ff.).

Up to this point we could say that St. Paul is giving the evangelizer an excellent outline to denounce the sin and impiety of the world. But let us see what comes after: "Therefore, you have no excuse, o man, whoever you are, when you judge another; for in passing judgement upon him, you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things ... Do you suppose, o man, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgement of God?" (Rom 2:1-3).

I never read this passage without thinking of the scene where Nathan is standing before David: "Whoever did this deserves to die," shouted the king, after listening to the wrong done to a poor man in the city who had only one sheep. And the prophet, pointing at him, exclaimed: "You, o king, are that man!" (cf. 2Sam 12, 1 ff.). That's what St. Paul says to us. You are being spoken of here! You are the impious man.

The man in the context turns out to be a Jew, in the sense of a non-Greek, a non-pagan. He indicates a stereotype. He is the pious type of man and believer who, in possession of a revelation and of clear moral principles, judges the rest of the world and, in judging, feels safe. We Christians today are this type of man. Origen used to say that it was above all bishops, priests and deacons, the spiritual guides of the Church, that are under attack here (cf. *Comm. in Epist. ad Rom. II*, 2, PG 14, 873).

In fact, how could we not see ourselves described in the Apostle's words: "If you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of your relation to God, and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — you then who teach others, why don't you teach yourself?" (Rom 2:17-21).

What then does the Apostle specifically accuse the pious and religious of? He accuses them of doing the very same things they judge others for. What does he mean by the "very same things"? Is it that they materially do the exact same things? This is also sometimes true, for lust, pride, envy and all the other pagan vices are often present in believers. But he is especially talking about the essence which is impiety and idolatry. If idolatry is worship of one's own works, if it is putting the creature in the place of the Creator, then I am idolatrous when I place the creature — I mean my creature, the work of my hands — in the place of my Creator. My creature might be the church I built, or guide, the order I have founded, the position I hold, the office I manage, the book I wrote, the lecture I am giving...

If it is impiety to know God and not to glorify him alone but to glorify oneself, then I am impious when I am more taken with my own glory and others' opinions of me than with God's glory. We are so small-minded that we can make the good serve our own self-affirmation and even the service we give God. Even God!

To come back to us and the real problem of evangelization, we might ask what all of this so far has to tell us. It tells us that if we want to convince the world of sin, we must first let God's word convince us of sin. Peter could cry out strongly to the crowds, "You crucified Jesus of Nazareth!," because he had first cried it to himself and had wept "bitterly" (cf. Lk 22:62).

The world rightly deserves to hear the Gospel preached by a Church that is humble, a Church of contrite and humble heart. If, in order to bring the Good News on earth, Jesus humbled himself even to kneeling to wash the Apostles' feet, we too must do the same to those we preach the Gospel to. He was without sin and we aren't. Certain Christian groups have a way of evangelizing which in no way reflects this humility. Mankind is superficially divided into two categories, the "saved" and the "unsaved," the "saints" and the "lost ones," and evangelization becomes the way they, the saved, address the others. Instead, we should imitate St. Paul who said: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the worst of them" (1Tim 1:15).

That is what the Council meant when it spoke of a Church *semper paenitens* and *semper reformanda*. The world must feel that our preaching is not a part of mankind judging and correcting the rest, but that God is judging each man to save him. It must feel our solidarity also in sin. This does not diminish the authority of the word but, rather, increases it beyond measure.

If (as I attempted to demonstrate in my book *Life in the Lordship of Christ*) the Letter to the Romans is the ideal tool and guide for the new evangelization, this first part teaches us how important it is to evangelization to be first evangelized, to "eat the book" and feel its sourness in the stomach.

I call all of this the *preacher's kenosis*. It is written that Christ "emptied himself" (*ekenosen*) (Phil 2:7) to bring life to the world. The preacher must do likewise. To "empty oneself" means not to live "for oneself" but "for the Lord" (cf. Rom 14:7-9). It means not to place oneself at the center of everything. It means not talking, thinking or writing for one's own glory or interests but purely for Christ. St. Paul expresses the fundamental law of Christian preaching when he cries: "What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord!" (2Cor 4:5).

He who lives for himself can only preach himself. His preaching is distorted. We cannot expect it to "pierce hearts" or manifest "the Holy Spirit and his power," who acts only where the old self has been "crucified with Christ" (Rom 6:6).

It is not always within our power to eradicate impiety once and for all. Impiety is "the sin that dwells within us," which even St. Paul felt in himself (cf. Rom 7:20). What we can do, as Scripture tells us, is to "renounce impiety" (Tit 2:12), that is to say, to be aware of its

constant presence in us, keep it constantly under God's judgement, humble ourselves and ask forgiveness for it. Then it is no longer impiety but is transformed into "piety," to God's glory. There's a sort of secret in this; God more willingly uses a preacher who constantly acknowledges his impiety to convince the world of impiety.

I suggest a simple way to evangelizers to win this battle: let them convincingly and often repeat these words of Jesus: "I seek no glory for myself!" (Jn 8:50).

I cannot terminate this first point without recalling Mary. Personally, I often think of her with wonder and shame when I am sent somewhere to preach God's word, as I am doing here now. If, at times, I feel I have a strong effective message to communicate, what a struggle it becomes to remain sober, allowing the word to act on its own, and how often I am defeated in the effort! Mary truly gave "the whole Word to the whole world" and yet remained so sober and humble and so reserved. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II speaks of Mary's kenosis, of her deprivation beside her Son (cf. no.18). Let us think of Mary during the public life of Jesus. We see her deprived of every right and privilege and advantage that could have been hers as the Messiah's mother. Yet there was even an occasion when she had to beg to be able to see her son. In fact, others went to Jesus and said: "Your mother is outside, asking for you" (cf. Mk 3:32). Let us ask her to be able to imitate her in our service to God's word.

"There Are Some Who Do Not Marry for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven"

We cannot talk of "spirituality and evangelization," especially in Asia, without mentioning prayer. Prayer and spirituality in general is, here in Asia, more than a preparation for evangelization; it is an essential part of it. Twenty-two years ago Paul VI spoke here in Manila of "the natural inclination of the Asiatic spirit of prayer," saying that "we must honor and cultivate this deep and innate religious sense, which is the hallmark of the soul of the Eastern world; we must defend the spirituality proper to these peoples" (Discourse to the Bishops, November 29, 1970).

But this time I shall not deal with prayer, as I was able to talk about it two years ago, at the last priests' world-wide retreat held in Rome (whose proceedings are now available under the title *Fishers of Men*). Instead, I wish to talk about celibacy and what it signifies in view of evangelization.

Today, we risk turning celibacy into a problem or a topic of discussion, forgetting that it is first and foremost a charism, Christ's gift to his Church, and given precisely in view of the kingdom of heaven, and therefore of evangelization. I have no intention here of defending obligatory celibacy for priests. I just wish to show how, when freely chosen and lived, it can become an important factor for evangelization.

We already know the motives Jesus gave for this state of life at the moment he instituted it: "There are some who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:21). It is from the very nature of the kingdom, that we must start in order to understand the nature and *raison d'être* of this new way of life. Now, the kingdom of God has a characteristic expressed today as "already and not yet." It is already here, it has come, it is present; and yet, in another sense, it has not yet fully come and that's why we pray "your kingdom come" in the "Our Father."

Since the kingdom of heaven has "already" come and since through Christ final salvation is already at work in the world, it is possible that some people, called by God, choose to live from now that final state of the kingdom where, as Jesus says, one no longer marries but lives equal to angels (cf. Lk 20:34 ff.). In this lies the *prophetic dimension of celibacy and virginity*. By its very existence this way of life shows what man's final state will be, the one destined to last forever.

From this prophetic character of celibacy and virginity we can understand the ambiguity and falseness of the thesis which claims that this state goes against nature and prevents men and women from being fulfilled as man or woman. This doubt deeply troubles young people and is one of the reasons that holds them back from answering God's call to the total service of the Gospel.

Knowledge of man has always been based on an analysis of his "nature" and on what is "natural" for him, meaning by nature what man possesses from his "birth." The Bible, instead, is more interested in the concept of "vocation." Man is not only what he is at birth but also what he is called to become through the use of his freedom in obedience to God. If only nature existed, there wouldn't be sufficient reason to go against natural tendencies and impulses, but there is also a vocation. In a certain way, we could say that virginity is man's most natural state because we are not called to live as a couple forever but we are called to live with God forever. God — and not a human partner — is destined to be everything to us forever (cf. 1Cor 15:28).

To a friend who was convinced that the choice of chastity would mean being cut off from real life, P. Claudel answered with these illuminating words: "We still live with the old romantic prejudice that supreme happiness and interest, the only romance of life, consist in our relations with a woman and in the satisfaction of the senses. There's one thing we forget; the soul and spirit are realities that are just as strong, just as exacting, as the flesh — they are even more — and if we give in to all the desires of the flesh, it is to the detriment of other joys, of other wonderful realities, that will be forever barred to us. It would be like drinking a glass of bad wine in a pub or a salon and forgetting this virginal sea that others contemplate at sunrise" (P. Claudel, *Correspondence with J. Rivière*, Paris 1926, pp. 261 f.).

This, therefore, is the motivation for celibacy and virginity, based on the fact that the kingdom is "already" with us. But, we have said, in another sense the kingdom of God is "not yet" here, but is coming. It has to come in intensity within us and in the Church herself (how much still remains to be evangelized in ourselves!), and it has to come in extension in the world (how many nations and continents still remain to be evangelized, like Asia, for example!).

Now let us see the motivation that springs from this. Since the kingdom of God has not yet come, but is coming, there is a need for men and women who dedicate themselves full-time and wholeheartedly to the coming of the kingdom. And this brings us to the *missionary and apostolic dimension of celibacy and virginity*. It would be difficult to imagine what the Church would be like today if there hadn't been throughout the centuries, ranks of men and women who renounced home, wife and children (cf. Lk 18:28) for the kingdom of heaven. The proclamation of the Gospel and the missionary work has largely been on their shoulders.

Clearly, therefore, virginity and celibacy do not signify sterility. On the contrary, they signify the greatest fertility, obviously on a different and higher level than the physical one. Today, we talk a great deal about the *quality of life*. Many believe that the most important thing is not to increase the quantity of life on earth but the quality. But this quality has a spiritual aspect which is the most important one for it concerns man's soul and spirit. Virgins for the kingdom of heaven are called to spend all their energies elevating this spiritual quality of life, without calculating that they have worked and work more and more generously to elevate also other aspects of the quality of life, such as health and living conditions, and culture; in short the human quality of life, as Mother Theresa does. Christian people have always grasped this mean-

ing of virginity and celibacy, honoring priests and religious people with the title of Father or Mother.

Besides Matthew 19, there's another important text on virginity in the New Testament and precisely in chapter seven of the First Letter to the Corinthians. Let us take a quick look at this text with evangelization in mind. The Apostle starts by saying that he would like to see his followers "free from anxieties" (*amerimnous*). Here we can see how the Gospel contains the religious and ascetic values present in other religions but transcends them, placing these same values in a broader frame. Asiatic religions too, and especially Buddhism, know monastic life and celibacy. But, as far as I know, celibacy has here an almost exclusively ascetic and subjective dimension. Its aim is to free the person from worldly desires and passions and to lead him toward inner unity and liberation. St. Paul too says that the unmarried man or woman can live a life free from worldly matters, with undivided heart and mind. This, however, is not an end in itself but is aimed at a superior cause which is the kingdom. Celibacy is more for the sake of the Lord than of the subject. It has an objective value and not only a subjective one. In fact after saying that he would like to see everybody "free from anxieties," the Apostle goes on to say that the unmarried man must be "anxious about the affairs of the Lord" (1Cor 7:32).

Even celibates must therefore "have anxieties" but for the affairs of the Lord. This is not an ideal for a tranquil life or for the faint-hearted. Certainly not. It is a life without worldly anxieties to be free to worry about the Lord's affairs. The affairs of the Lord are the souls for whom he died. It is the kingdom. And celibates and virgins exist so that there is someone in the Church and in the world who thinks only of the Lord's interests.

It is not exact to say that these people don't marry, for they do! But not to another human being. There was a great man who had to live his celibate life outside any schema or institution, in the hostile environment of Lutheran Protestantism. He was engaged to a girl called Régine whom he loved as only someone with his mind and heart could. (We are talking of S. Kierkegaard, the great philosopher). When he realized that his real mission in life was to witness to the truth, he painfully broke the engagement, thus exposing himself to all sorts of suspicions and criticisms. Towards the end of his life, he explained the reason in his *Journal*: "God wants celibacy because he wants to be loved ... Infinite Majesty, even if you were not love, even if you were only infinite Majesty, I could not help loving you. I need something majestic to love" (*Journal XI, 2A 154*). And that's the reason he hadn't

married the girl — he needed to love and marry something majestic. I think that's how a vocation to celibacy or virginity manifests itself at first. A boy or girl realizes, maybe even after experiencing love, that a human person, a family, children, would not suffice them. They feel too "hemmed in," and need something infinite, something majestic to live for. They discover all this in Jesus and the kingdom and decide to "marry" Jesus and the kingdom.

At about the time of St. Paul, there lived a Jewish rabbi, Simeon ben Azzai, a devoted scholar of Mosaic Law. He defied the mentality of his time and refused to marry, and he gave this reason: "My soul is in love with the Torah. Let others think about the continuation of the world!" (*Genesis Rabbah*, 34, 14a). With what great right can a Christian celibate and virgin appropriate these words and say: "My soul is in love with Jesus Christ; let others think of the continuation of the world!"

This is precisely the significance of chastity in view of evangelization. It gives rise to a unique relation with Jesus. He becomes not only the object of one's preaching but the sole object of one's love, our share in the inheritance in this world. A new evangelization has first and foremost need of people full of love and enthusiasm for Jesus Christ. Before Jesus entrusted his sheep to Peter, he asked him: "Do you love me?." He always does this.

Only a person who loves convinces and even overwhelms. Kierkegaard, when talking about the bond he felt with Abraham, wrote something we can apply to our bond with Jesus. The God, who created man and woman differently, also created two different categories of persons: the hero and the poet or orator. The poet and orator cannot do what the hero does. They can only admire, love and rejoice with the hero. The poet is happy anyway, for the hero is like his better essence, what he is in love with. Actually, he delights in not being himself the hero for he can express his art in pure admiration. And so he goes from door to door, singing or proclaiming that all must admire the hero as he does and be proud of the hero as he is (cf. S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*). To be convincing evangelizers, we should all be poets and admirers who go from door to door and from town to town, proclaiming Christ, the unique hero of the world. Unique because he is also God.

One of these poets and admirers was Paul VI, when in his famous discourse at Quezon Circle, here in Manila, he cried out: "Jesus Christ: I feel the need to proclaim him. I cannot keep silent. I must bear witness

to his name. He is the Teacher of mankind, and its Redeemer. He was born, he died and he rose again for us. He is the center of history and of the world ... I could never finish speaking about him" (Manila, November 29, 1970).

Another of these great admirers is John Paul II who started his pontificate with the cry: "Open the door to Christ! Open the door to the Redeemer!"

What joy if, at the end of our lives, we could look back and say with Tagore, the great Asian poet, or, better, if Jesus could say of each one of us:

This little pipe of cane
I have carried up hill and down dale,
and through it I have breathed
melodies eternally new (Tagore, *Gitanjali* 1).

The eternally new melody which we are called to carry everywhere is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is Love!

There now remains one last point which, however, is the most important one for the theme of this congress, the evangelization of Asia. Asia needs to discover God's love; or rather, that God is love! This must be the pivot of Asian evangelization.

From the religious point of view, Asia is still at the point where the whole ancient religious world was when Jesus came. All that Greek philosophy had understood about God was that man must aspire to God and love him, on condition however that he should expect no requital. "God moves the world insofar as he is loved," Aristotle said (*Metaph.* XII, 7, 1072b). Not, let us note, insofar as he loves but insofar as he is loved. He is the "unmoved mover." Such a God cannot love because he is not a person. He is "the law of all things, the justice and supreme principle of compensation of the cosmos." Or, according to another great philosopher, Plato, he is the idea of the good. But law and idea do not love. If God loved men, he would diminish himself because he would enter into the vortex of their mutability and passions. "God — we read in a writer of that time — must not be subject to any temporal sentiment of hatred or love whatever, and therefore he cannot feel either anger or mercy; he must not be perturbed by sorrow, nor allow himself to be a prey to impatience but, free from all passion, he cannot be subject either to sorrow or to joy" (Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis*, 12).

It's like reading a description of the divinity in certain Hindu or Buddhist texts. Even then, there were protests against this "inhuman" image of God. Some people protested against this idea of God saying: "You say, no God takes part in human affairs. Who, then, shall I pray to? Who shall I pay my offerings to?" (cf. Apuleius, op. cit., 4-5). We know that ordinary people tried to fill the gap between themselves and God by creating a host of so-called "intermediary" divinities, closer to man and his needs. In practice, through idolatry.

Now, from the little I know about them, this is what happens also in the main Asiatic religions, and especially in Hinduism. This is based on a theoretical monotheism practised by a few superior spirits, but in practice split into an endless number of particular and local divinities, presiding over the most varied aspects of life.

But let us see what happened when Christianity appeared in the Greek religious world. St. John proclaimed: "God is love!" (Not law or idea or absolute power but absolute love). And again: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us ... We love, because he first loved us" (1Jn 4:10-19). A complete upheaval. Asia is full of truths about God; what its philosophy lacks is the knowledge that God is love. In fact, St. John writes: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world" (1Jn 4:9). Therefore, before preaching Jesus as "teacher," we must preach him as the sign of God's love for the world, or rather as "the love of the Father made flesh" (*Gospel of Truth*, 2nd century A.D.). This is what the "Asian need for Christ" is based on, which will be spoken of on another occasion in this congress.

There is an interesting phenomenon in Asiatic religions which I can only briefly mention here for lack of time. We know that in classical Hinduism what we call God is seen as the law governing all things (*Dharma*), or as the absolute (*Brahman*), and not as a person. Towards the 2nd-1st century B.C. a religious trend appeared, the *Bhakti*, which the poem *Bhagavad-Gita* admirably expresses. It was like a new breath. Salvation is no longer so much based on refined ritualistic or ascetic techniques as on the goodness of one's God. One of these texts reads: "Why do you wash yourself in the river Ganges? ... Why do you ceaselessly repeat the six Vedanta? Why do you torment yourselves with so many hard penances? Why don't you eat meat and gaze at the sky? Liberation is only for those who everywhere invoke the name of the God of all" (text cited by R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, London 1966). Later, the greatest Hindus, including Gandhi, followed this trend.

A somewhat similar phenomenon also took place in Buddhism and Islamism. In *Buddhism*, a similar effort to overcome the strict initial view that rejected any idea of love and compassion appeared with the so-called doctrine of the "Great Vehicle" and the ideal of *bodhisattva*, that is, the illuminated one, who for love of man renounces his personal nirvana and places himself at the service of others so that they too might reach salvation.

Finally, in *Islamism* the view of the God of the Koran gave way to the later school of *Sufism*, which substituted loving admiration and mystical contact with God for the fear of God and the idea of wrath to come.

In Christianity there has never been a reform that tried to perfect the founder's ideas of God and men. Christianity cannot be perfected (S. Kierkegaard). This happened in Asiatic religions.

However, we are more interested in seeing the results of these reforms. All three are characterized by a *search for a way of love*, to create a certain solidarity between God and man, a more "human" image of God. A search that shows up the insufficiency of the various ways based either only on the fear of God (as in the Koran) or only on the knowledge of God (as in Hinduism and Buddhism).

And this leads to the crucial question for us: Have these reforms achieved their aims? We are not talking of their practice. We must frankly admit that the works of the followers of these religions are often better than their doctrine, just as those of many Christians are worse than theirs. We shall just keep to values and principles. And we have to say that those reforms did not achieve their aims. What they were unconsciously seeking was not to be found in their religions. The new factor, love, appears estranged from the basics of these religions and incompatible with them. The *Dutch Catechism* (which certainly cannot be accused of being too *apologetical*) was right when, some years ago, it affirmed that: "While the attitude of joy and love in *Bhakti* has no basis in the fundamental idea of Hindu philosophy, it has so in Christ's message. The *bodhisattva*, in its turn, hints at a love for man which has no basis in Buddha's doctrine. Islamic doctrine has no foundation whatever for the mysticism of love of the *Sufis*. Whereas we believe that this is contained in Christ's message."

From the Asiatic religions, therefore, a silent urgent appeal to Christ rises, which the Asian Churches must increasingly endeavor to respond to. The Christian preacher can face the Asiatic religious world

with these words used by St Paul in the Areopagus of Athens: "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (cf. Acts 17:23). The Acts of the Apostles narrate how the Gospel first arrived in Europe. St. Paul was in Asia and one night he had a vision; a man of Macedonia, that is a European, was standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" (Acts 16:9). "Come over to Asia and help us" is also the cry of the immense Asian populations who still do not know Christ and we must be ready to listen to it. May the risen Lord who sees into hearts hear this cry and answer as only he can! May the Christian message come back with great force to the continent of its origin.

I must explain how what I have said so far about Asiatic religions concerns the question of "evangelization and spirituality." It concerns it precisely because the evangelizer himself must have first grasped and experienced the God-love so as to be able to give it to others, not only in theory but in practice too. We Christians also run the risk of losing the significance of the overwhelming novelty of the Gospel and inadvertently going back again to placing the law before grace, fear before love; we could go back to talking of our duty to love God before talking of the gift of God's love for us. Unfortunately, this has often happened in the past.

In my opinion the basic difference between Christianity and other religions lies in grace. Buddha sketched a way of liberation, leaving those who wish the chance to follow him. Jesus, too, said: "I have given you an example" (Jn 13:15) but he went further. With the example he also gave us the ability and strength to follow it by giving us his own Spirit. In the evangelization of Asia, we must never tire of talking about grace, love and the "gentle compassion" of our God.

All this brings us back to the Holy Spirit. It is through him that "God's love has been poured into our hearts" (Rom 5:5), and we can make the life-changing experience of it.

Conclusion

I wish to conclude precisely with the testimony of how my own life was changed by the grace of the Holy Spirit circulating in the Church today, which made me an unworthy but happy preacher of the Gospel. I was a professor of the history of Ancient Christianity and head of the department of religious sciences at the Catholic University in Milan. In 1977, after much hesitation and struggle, I decided to accept the so-called baptism in the Spirit in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

Let me say immediately that the rapid development of this reality in the Catholic Church is, in my opinion, an answer to the need, stressed at the beginning of this talk, of supporting the institutional dimension of evangelization with a charismatic dimension; a providential answer to the need for that "effective power" that comes only from the sovereign and direct action of the Holy Spirit. An answer to the prayer of Pope John XXIII for a new Pentecost in the Church.

Before opening my heart to this grace, one of the objections I had to overcome was this. I'd say to myself: But I'm a priest ordained by a bishop; so I have already received the Holy Spirit. Why should I, therefore, ask for the laying on of hands again, and by laypeople in the bargain? I was given the answer in a simple theological reflection on the Gospel. I seemed to hear the very voice of Jesus saying to me: "Look at me. Wasn't I consecrated by the Father and sent into the world? Didn't I have the fullness of the Holy Spirit from my Incarnation? And yet, I accepted baptism from the hands of John the Baptist, who was a layman too!"

I understood that all I had to do was renew my baptism and religious profession. To choose Jesus as my Lord in a new, personal and responsible way, and completely hand over the reins of my life to him.

Therefore, I received the baptism in the Spirit. All the biblical readings on that occasion spoke of evangelization, and even of the new joy I would experience in devoting myself to God's word. And that is what happened, together with many trials obviously, as Jesus warned us. At that time I was still a university professor and my preaching was limited to the Sunday homily.

Some months later, an event changed my whole relation with God's word and which I believe came from the grace of the baptism in the Spirit. I was praying in my room when I had an inner image, very simple and ordinary, but nevertheless decisive for me. It was as if Jesus was passing by with the same attitude he had when, on returning from his baptism in the Jordan, he was starting his public ministry. His voice resounded within me: "If you want to help me proclaim God's kingdom, leave everything and come!"

I set out for Rome to submit the question to my superior general and he told me to wait another year to verify if it was really God's call. A year later, I went back to him and after prayer and discernment, he told me that it was God's will and I could leave the university and become an itinerant preacher of the Gospel in the style of my founder St. Francis of Assisi.

That day in the Liturgy of the Hours there was a passage from the book of the prophet Haggai. It was the passage where the people of Israel stop busying themselves with their own houses and begin to rebuild the temple. God is pleased with this and sends again his prophet with this message: "Now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, and to work, for I am with you, says the Lord" (Hag 2:4).

Shortly after that, I was in St. Peter's Square. It was a misty October day and the square was empty. I suddenly felt an impulse to look up at the Holy Father's window and cry out in a loud voice: "Take courage, John Paul II, high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, and to work, for I am with you, says the Lord!" It wasn't I who was crying out, it was the prophetic word itself that was shouting from inside of me.

But this was not all. Three months later I was appointed preacher to the papal household. When I stood in the presence of the Holy Father, the cardinals and bishops of the Roman curia for the first time, I couldn't help telling them what had happened beneath the window and again exclaiming the same words: "Take courage, John Paul II; take courage, all you cardinals and bishops of the Catholic Church, take courage all you people of the land ... !." And I experienced there the creating power enclosed in God's words after thousands of years.

Now I dare to repeat the same words to you, while acknowledging that I possess no title or authority to do so: "Take courage, all you Asian bishops and priests; take courage, all you people of this immense continent, and to work, for I am with you, says the Lord!"

VII. THE MESSAGE OF THE FABC ASIAN CONGRESS ON EVANGELIZATION

Filled with faith and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world, who is for all human beings the only way that leads to the Father and fulfills the longings and aspirations of the human heart, we came to Manila to participate in the Asian Congress on Evangelization. Gathered together from diverse cultures and occupations, we celebrated our common faith and realized more intensely that God in his mercy chose us to belong to Christ not only so that we might be blessed in him but that we might reach out and share him and all his blessings with all of our brothers and sisters in Asia, who journey with us as partners in the same human pilgrimage to the Father.

Now our grateful hearts burn with a passion and commitment to make Christ known, loved and followed. His mandate rings in our hearts and in our midst: "Go, ... make disciples of all the nations" (Mt 28:19). "Woe to us if we do not evangelize!" (1Cor 9:16). We must proclaim to others this Jesus, whose unsurpassable riches fill our hearts (Eph 3:8). For us in Asia, "to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbors of other faiths, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace" (FABC V, Bandung). Evangelization entails for us a dialogue with our Asian neighbors in the concrete situation of their lives, with their religious traditions, their cultures, and so often, their material poverty and deprivation. In this dialogue we realize how rich are the cultures of our peoples despite their deprivation, how close to God they often are and how much we can learn from them. Often they already share the values of Christ that we strive to bear witness to.

But we cannot be satisfied merely with silent witness and wordless deeds. Our very love for Christ and for our brothers and sisters in Asia impels us to tell his story and the great things he has done for us. "Because we believe, therefore we speak" (2Cor 4:13). We know that our evangelization is incomplete until we proclaim Christ as the offer of God's grace inviting people freely to believe in him. And we cannot rest until he is proclaimed to all our Asian brothers and sisters, because every person and every nation needs the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can bring us to the fullness of humanity, human community and harmony with all creation. Yes, we "may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God's bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind" (*Redemptoris Missio*, no. 11).

We are not daunted by the magnitude of our task, the smallness of our numbers and resources, and the sacrifices that our mission entails. For the Lord has sent us. Weak and sinful though we be, he is with us. He has poured forth upon us his Spirit who is the power from on high (Lk 24:49). This Spirit lives in the hearts of the faithful and in the Church. He is already active in the hearts of all persons to whom we proclaim the Good News. The Spirit it is who emboldens us to speak, supplies us the words, strengthens us to endure, and makes our work bear fruit. If we welcome him in prayer, he will turn even our weaknesses, sufferings and death into life for the Kingdom of God.

We want to share this passion for evangelization with you, our brothers and sisters of the Church in Asia. Let us all receive anew the Gospel in our hearts and let it shape our lives. Let us together join in the grand enterprise of new evangelization which has its origin in the

love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2Cor 13:14). With boldness and a creativity born of the Spirit and dictated by love, let us all together witness to the Gospel anew with a new fervor, with new methods and new expressions that will reach and touch the hearts of our fellow Asians. Let us trust that the Gospel remains as ever "the power of God for salvation to every-one who has faith" (Rom 1:16).

Mission is only beginning in this great continent which is home to two-thirds of humankind and the birthplace of the Savior and his Church. We stand at the dawn of a new missionary age! The harvest is great and awaits us. Let us respond "with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time" (RM, no.92).

We beg Mary, star of evangelization, the first to be evangelized and the first evangelizer, to obtain for us from her Son the grace to proclaim him to our nations and to lead our nations to him, until with all redeemed humanity we are gathered into God's Kingdom.

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