

Sixth Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide

**CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN WORK AND PROFESSION**  
**– A SERVICE TO LIFE IN ASIA TODAY**

by

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**Introduction**

The Book of Genesis opens with God's own work in the creation of the world: earth and sky, land and water, light and darkness, flowers, trees, plants, the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, all other animals, and finally, man and woman made in his own image and likeness, called to be stewards of the world, to care for the earth and to harness its riches for their needs.

Today, at the frontiers of the 21st century, the advancement of humankind since Adam and Eve proclaims the stewardship bestowed on them. People learned to use fire for cooking their food and making their tools. They established complex societies, formed governments and socio-economic systems. They built bridges and majestic pyramids and skyscrapers, painted the Sistine Chapel, discovered cures for diseases, invented transnational communication networks, with computers and fax machines that can offer data from all over the world by one touch of a key. All these and many more, people achieved through work, wittingly or unwittingly, participating in the ever on-going creation of the world, co-creators with God.

Today's men and women enjoy the fruits of their ancestors' labors, even as they continue to strive for richer and better lives for their children.

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This discussion guide has been prepared for the workshops of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), convening at Manila, Philippines, January 10-19, 1995. The theme of the Plenary Assembly is: "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life."

The nature of work as people's stewardship of the world and as an act of co-creation lies at the heart of "Christian Discipleship in Work and Profession — A Service to Life in Asia Today."

How do Asia's people perceive their stewardship of the world and render service to life through their work and profession? We offer here some of the responses to a questionnaire sent to different parts of Asia or given by a group of professionals who came to share on the theme: "How to be of service to life in one's profession/work":

"In medicine, I am defending life from its beginning to its end. A lot of moral decisions are involved" — a doctor.

"In my work place, I am also very much involved in creating an alternative space for the physically, mentally handicapped persons" — an office worker.

"Being the president of a chain of companies, my one decision can affect the lives of around 350 families. Our employees have some of the best benefits in this line of business" — a businessman.

"In news assignments, I think I could further encourage writers to file more service-to-life related news stories, such as human rights problems and environmental issues" — a chief editor.

"I also have a say, from a Christian viewpoint, in various governmental consultation meetings in the fields of promotion of cultural affairs, issues of migrant workers, and others" — a media man.

"We have programs for the patients who are in the final stages of life, such as daily treatment, close attention to their pain, assistance to solve their mental or physical problems" — a hospice coordinator.

"Working in a parish allows me to be a part of directly forming the hearts and minds of people and to be part of the direct work of transformation of people and structures" — a parish social worker.

"In many instances, I give free consultation and medicine to those with financial problems" — public health doctor.

"I am able to help my students when they face difficult situations, so that they may be guided in life" — a teacher.

"Through my research and training services, I can contribute to the education of rural workers about human development, and it is a con-



crete way to enhance their lives" – a researcher.

"I contribute to change the situation in the factory so that there can be greater respect for human dignity for myself and my fellow workers" – a factory worker.

"To promote the concept of integral human development among professionals is one way" – a professor.

"I feel satisfaction when we have a chance to dispense justice at our level. We get to impart a little fear, a little respect so that the offender does not do it again" – a lawyer.

"Making good furniture to please our customers is for better living" – a furniture man.

### **What do our Church's Teachings Say About Work**

In his encyclical letter "*Centesimus Annus*" Pope John Paul echoes the call to be co-creators:

God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone. This is the foundation of the universal destination of earth's goods. The earth, by reason of its fruitfulness and its capacity to satisfy human needs, is God's first gift for the sustenance of human life. But the earth does not yield its fruits without a particular human response to God's gift, that is to say, without work. It is through work that man/woman using their intelligence and exercising their freedom succeed in dominating the earth and making it a fitting home (No. 31).

The process or the labor to unwrap "God's gift" we call work, following *Centesimus Annus*. As we participate in this "work" we succeed in "dominating the earth." With work through the centuries, we have shortened the distances even to the moon; we can speak in foreign tongues and be understood by all; and by a touch of a key we get connected to different parts of the world, to enumerate a few, showing how "work" has expanded God's creation.

But let us take note that in our Asian way of looking at life, it is not so much as man/woman "dominating" the earth, but rather calling the earth as "Mother Earth," and we see its cultivation as intimately connected with the cultivation of self. We are one with nature, as we also call ourselves "sons and daughters of the earth."

In this light, we can say that "work" is not so much to "dominate" but to "develop," as stewards of God's gift. It is in this attitude we can come to "recognize that through our work of every kind, we are participating in God's own on-going process of re-creating and transforming our world" (FABC IV, No. 3.7.1).

The same FABC final statement continues on to say: "A fundamental mission of the laity in the world of work is to recover the religious meaning of human work as an expression of human creativity and a participation in the work of the Creator" (FABC IV, No. 3.7.4).

Christian discipleship in work demands recognizing the dignity of every person, of every worker. On the 90th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II wrote the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, seeing the need the Church has for a re-viewing of human work. He stressed the fundamentals of the priority of labor over capital, and the primacy of people over things. Every person with his/her work has rights to share in the fruits of their labor. And in our present situation, where there is an increasing rate of unemployment, we also add to this that every person has the right to work. The biblical call to "subdue the earth" is addressed to all. *Laborem Exercens* stressed the need to link capital and labor in a productive manner.

Work, to be truly Christian, has to be done in the light of God's will, as all of creation is meant for.

The norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and allow men and women as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it. (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 35).

It is only in this constant search of what could be God's plan, while carrying out the duties in one's employment, the demands in one's own business, the inspiration for any art piece, or any kind of toil, can work be so transforming of society that it can be livable for all. Our modern world places a great challenge upon Christian discipleship, so that there can be greater justice and peace in the world.

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul notes the misconception about economic development, and how development itself can lead to the oppression of many:

The experience of recent years shows that unless all the considerable body of resources and potentials at our disposal is guided by a moral understanding and by an orientation towards the true good of the human race, it can easily turn against man/woman to oppress them (SRS, No. 28).



For lay people, their work and the practice of their profession are their specific contributions to carry out God's divine plan and contribute to bringing about a society that is more just. Vatican II has expressed this very clearly:

The laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order (that is in their work) as their own special obligation. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they must act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere. As citizens they must co-operate with other citizens with their own particular skill and on their own responsibility. Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice of God's Kingdom. The temporal order must be renewed in such a way that, without detriment to its own proper laws, it may be brought into conformity with the higher principles of Christian life and adapted to the shifting circumstances of time, place and peoples (AA, No. 7).

In the very work itself, all men and women are in themselves discovering their own growth and fulfillment. The co-creation with God starts with continuing and collaborating with him in what was begun in each one of us so that we all can arrive at the holiness meant for us.

Work is a good thing for every man/woman — a good thing for his/her humanity — because through work, man/woman not only transforms nature, adapting it to his/her own needs but also achieves fulfillment as a human being and in a sense becomes more a human being (LE, No. 9.3).

There is a distinctive way whereby lay people are able to exercise Christian discipleship through the witness of their lives in the world, with their families and friends, in all areas and sectors of profession, in business, in arts, in politics, at all times. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* says:

The laity fulfill the mission of the Church in the world especially by conforming their lives to their faith so that they become the light of the world as well as by practising honesty in all their dealings so that they attract all to the love of the true and the good and finally to the Church and to Christ (AA, No. 13).

In the workplace and in the profession, Christian discipleship, therefore, calls for both witnessing in one's life and active involvement.

## What are the Difficulties Encountered to Live Christian Discipleship in the Workplace?

Summarizing the responses received from our questionnaire and those shared during the Consultation, we cluster them into these four main categories:

### 1. The Dichotomy between Faith and Life

Lay people popularly associate spirituality with an enclave far, far away from the world of toil and daily demands, such as the solemnity of a church or a mountaintop retreat, wherein only God and creature are present amidst much prayer and silence. This image contrasts starkly with the noise of the "real world," often inhabited by many unscrupulous characters, where the demands of work, the needs of loved ones, and concerns for survival frequently give rise to the wish for more than God's allotted 24 hours in a day. For most lay people, the bulk of the 24 hours is devoted to work, but rarely do they relate what they do, for whatever motives they are doing them, to being *God's work*. Nor do they consider their work spiritual in any way.

Even among those who do attend Mass, many Christians remain unaware of the Church's Social Teachings. Even more sadly, churchgoers exist ignorant of the meaning of the Mass itself.

This separation of faith from life is often reflected in the decisions made by individuals. A scientist who does research says in our questionnaire that the Church has been "traditionally, separate from the technical field. There is very little influence of religion on science." He could just as well refer to the influence of religion on politics or on other fields, where every day there are Christians who choose corruption, i.e., gaining illicitly at the expense of others.

"In any of the ethical issues of science and technology, the Church is silent or the Church is applying a response that is no longer suitable to the new discoveries of science," a doctor says. Many of the new discoveries involve the beginning of life, directly sustaining it, and its ending. It is difficult to rigorously apply a black-and-white perspective to all the issues that arise from these new discoveries and practices in medicine.

"Because, my working place is very radically oriented," says an editor, "it is very hard to imagine that the Church has something to offer us directly." "In my parish, there is nothing for lawyers. They know we are around; there is no statement about lawyers, no support. Only those who join as lay eucharist ministers are recognized," a lawyer shared.



Most of our parish organizations are the spiritual type or the ones doing charitable works or sponsoring social projects. "I felt so alone when my workers went on strike, and I did not know to which group in my parish to go to discuss the situation. But I get letters for the fund-raising projects of the parish," comments one businessman.

While the field of teaching presents more obvious opportunities for evangelizing, in the fullest sense of the meaning of the word, teachers do not feel they get any recognition from the Church either.

The Church is absent in the workplace. Neither do workers, except perhaps parish workers, feel that they are present to the Church.

## **2. The Existing Socio-cultural Systems, Norms and other Structures that Condition us in our Workplaces**

We have different cultural patterns and understandings of justice (with both positive and negative effects), and they affect our quality of service to life. For us Asians our kinship systems and relationships with one another are strong factors that color the way justice is dispensed and service rendered.

In some countries, the red-tape and unnecessary requirements block advancement in the professions. Politics, as opposed to merit, places people in positions of authority.

Graft and corruption are deeply ingrained in our systems. This creates a kind of demoralizing atmosphere in the workplace. In such a situation, we often ask ourselves: "How can we sustain our idealism?" "How can we keep our Christian values?"

There are existing structures that deliberately perpetuate:

- unjust compensation of workers
- non-sharing of the benefits of work
- unsafe and unhealthy working conditions
- unfair treatment of migrant workers
- unequal compensation and poor working conditions for women
- child labor and others.

Among the structures of power in the world today, none is so firmly entrenched in the everyday lives of people as the media. Much have been said of the ills of media, its promotion of consumerism and shallowness, its sensationalism.

### 3. Economics at Work in the World

There exists another, even more powerful medium, aside from communications media, the medium of exchange for goods and services, and whatever else can be bought by money. Money is necessary to obtain the most basic of needs: food, clothing, shelter, water. While this system was instigated to facilitate the exchange of goods, an overvaluation of the medium of exchange itself has bred a pervasive materialism that affects all — the youth, the poor, the rich.

Profit-making is among the top aims, if not the first, in all endeavors for development and progress. It is expressed in many ways that cater to our human greed and selfishness. "Today's world of economy is directly against Christian teachings," says a professor. A journalist quotes: *Media-watch Magazine*, October, 1993, to say, "While society thinks of media as a source of information, media think of society as a source of profit."

"In research, it is the funding agency, with its own agenda, which determines the priorities and areas for research, not the people who are in the field who have surveyed the needs. It may be something not relevant, but we do it," comments a researcher.

"My own efforts to organize some humanizing activities in the company (where I used to work) were taken advantage of for the sake of greater goals in profit-making. So I left," reported a social worker, now parish-based.

### 4. The Crisis of Meaning

Different areas of profession and work are different vocations in life (aside from the vocation to the priesthood and to religious life). If we look at the numbers of graduates from universities, including our own Catholic universities, there is no crisis in numbers, but a crisis of meaning in the chosen professions. There is crisis in social work, in law, in journalism, in science, and in all other avenues of Christian service to life.

"The word 'service' is not attractive in our society nowadays," says a hospice co-ordinator.

There is also much confusion, a lack of the clarity needed to be true to one's Christian beliefs and values. Many Church documents are not known; nor are they in a readable language for the laity. "The homilies are oftentimes a 'reprimanding' of people about corruption rather than a giving of guidance," says one lawyer.

Counterwitness in the lives of Church leaders and Church institutions



can be very discouraging. "Our priests are also materialistic in their way of life," commented one doctor.

## **Some Areas Needing Greater Attention**

### **1. Formation**

Life is certainly much too complex to try to apply one set of norms to all cases when we are trying to look for the right answers. The more we are aware, the more we walk as partners and as a community, to build God's Kingdom, the more chances we have to become truly Christian witnesses and active doers in our societies. The responses given to the need for formation can be classified into three areas:

- A formation of lay people that is Gospel-centered, and drawn from the experiences of life, so we can make God's word live. It is the kind of formation that will help lay people to be strong enough to act in a Christian way in the many decisions that must be made in the ordinary practice of a profession and in the workplace. There is also a need for some specialized type of formation, so that lay people can be trainers and leaders for others.

- An involvement of lay people in the formation of future priests, especially on topics that concern life, like those affecting some moral issues where the priests do not have the experience or the scientific knowledge.

- A formation of youth which uses an approach that helps our young people connect life with the theories from books, and will prepare them and give them the strength to remain faithful in their convictions and ideals, when they are challenged by the greed and self-centeredness catered to in society.

### **2. Church Structures**

The sharing among the professionals during the Consultation especially focused on the parish level, where ordinary working men and women go on Sundays. Several voiced the need for sectoral types of lay organizations and for solidarity groups for mutual support, e.g., groupings of doctors, businessmen, factory workers, and others. There can also be lay ministers who will offer their presence and help in the workplace, in the business sectors, in government offices and other areas.

Others suggested that the homilies be a time for sharing and witnessing by lay people about how they gave Christian responses in difficult circumstances.

The Church is an influential body in society, and properly used, it can do much. Our Church institutions can also offer much support to the efforts of lay people in their chosen field of work and profession.

### **3. The Use of Media**

Those who work in print, radio and the audio-visual media are the gatekeepers of information and they wield control over what society sees and hears. Media transmit not only information but also values, reflecting and at the same time shaping current norms and priorities. The Church can use media in better and greater ways. Our Catholic radio and TV stations are not part of the mainstream media. More creativity can be done to make Catholic programs more attractive. There is a need to prepare and harness the talents of lay people to be of service to life and to God in media.

### **4. The Openness of Our Church**

This topic was discussed more in general but did focus on three areas.

a) An openness with regards to Church teachings in order to be able to assist lay people, particularly those who are in the sciences and technologies, including the medical field, to help them see the signs of God's presence and to respect life in the new scientific discoveries. Scientific research and other areas of development will go on whether the Church makes its presence felt or not. For Catholic professionals in this type of work, what can help most are principles and teachings that will guide them towards enhancing, respecting and protecting life. Church openness will therefore mean a more life-oriented outlook towards these discoveries, rather than a strict normative attitude which does not appear to listen at all.

b) An openness of our Church leaders, bishops and priests to recognize the ministry of lay people who are not directly working for Church but are working for the coming of God's Kingdom in the world of their work and practice of profession. There is so much dynamism in business, research, the arts, in the fields of sports and recreation, and other areas, and yet many lay people who are there do not feel or were not taught to consider their presence and contribution in those places to be part of the Church's mission and an important form of Christian discipleship.

c) In Asia, an openness to the reality that much service to life is also being done by believers of other religions. They are our colleagues, our employers, our close collaborators, our relatives, friends and neighbors. In our Christian teachings, there is hardly anything to prepare us so we can work more effectively with them.



We also wish to recommend the report of the first Asian Laity Meeting (Seoul, September, 1994), especially the section "An Appeal" addressed to Church leaders, and their "Message to the Lay People of Asia." (See appendix.)

## Conclusion

We wish to conclude this paper by recalling what the bishops of Asia said in the Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly (Bandung, 1990), and the challenge they posed to us to renew the Asian society.

This calls for a thorough education of Catholics in the social doctrines of the Church, as well as the formation of their hearts toward just and compassionate living in present-day Asian society. Christians formed in this manner will be evangelizers of their own — the young evangelizing the young, workers evangelizing workers, professional evangelizing professionals, government officials evangelizing government officials, families evangelizing families — and will be leaven for the transformation of Asian society (FABC V, No. 5, 2).

With adequate formation and constant support, we hope to be Christian disciples in the workplace and the professions serving life.

## SOME QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. How open is the Church to recognizing other forms of ministries, especially the ministry of lay people in the workplace? What changes need to be made in our doctrinal emphases and practices so that the lay people can be more conscious of their roles and are supported to be the "Church in the world," in work and profession?
2. What type of formation is needed for all: bishops, priests, religious, lay people, so that we become a more participative Church where all charisms and talents are recognized and accepted and put to use, so that God's Kingdom can come into our Asian society?
3. How much of Church resources is put into the formation of lay people so that they can be prepared to lead and to share Christian values in the workplace and be of service to life with a Christian perspective?
4. What concrete steps can be taken so that Church leaders at the parish, diocese, national and regional levels in Asia can encourage and assist the laity in establishing greater openness and more effective co-working with peoples of other religious beliefs in transforming our society through work and profession?

## **APPENDIX I**

### **FINAL REPORT ON THE FIRST ASIAN LAITY MEETING Aaron House, Suwon, Korea September 4-9, 1994**

#### **Background**

We, the participants of the First Asian Laity Meeting, representing 14 countries/areas of Asia, gathered here at the Aaron House in Suwon, Korea, from the 4th to the 9th of September, 1994, to reflect on the theme: "The Commitment of the Laity in the Church's Mission, with Special Reference to Implementing the Social Teachings." This meeting was co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, headed by Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' Office of Laity, and the National Lay Apostolate Council of Korea. Several members of the Korean Catholic hierarchy, including Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou Hwan, and bishops responsible for their national lay apostolate commissions, accompanied more than 60 lay delegates from Asian countries/areas who attended the meeting.

We were encouraged by the good wishes, message and blessing sent by Pope John Paul II.

We greatly missed our Asian brothers and sisters from Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Mongolia, North Korea and Viet Nam.

There has been a deepened awareness of the vital role of the laity in the life and mission of the Church in the last 30 years. This means standing up as Asian citizens and Christians, and taking seriously our responsibility to work with other Asian peoples in creating a better place for all to live. A consistent fact emerged in many group meetings: the Church's Social Teachings, which ought to be a source of inspiration in living out our Christian life and mission, are not widely known in our Christian communities.

We, therefore, hope to link the role of the laity and the Church's Social Teachings, in order to focus the attention of our Churches on the vital areas for evangelization in Asia, starting with the family, the workplace, and in dialogue with people of other Asian religions.



## **Objectives**

Our specific objectives for this meeting were:

- to deepen our knowledge of the Church's Social Teachings
- to understand the challenges involved in implementing the thrust of the Church's Social Teachings and fortify our own commitment
- to develop a methodology to make the Church's Social Teachings available to the majority of the laity
- to strengthen the links between Asian Churches.

## **Challenges**

Each delegation presented a national/area report which highlighted the challenges facing local Church communities. These reports showed the variety of difficulties that exist in Asia, ranging from extreme poverty to extreme wealth, from a threatened rural way of life to urban breakdown and chaos, from pre-industrialized situation to post-industrial societies. Unjust world economic orders which favor developed nations, social injustice, racism, poverty, illiteracy, armed conflict, child labor, oppression of minorities and exploitation of women are some of the vital issues which urgently call for an authentic Christian witness and response.

Within the Christian communities, the lack of knowledge about the Church's Social Teachings was a persistent reminder that challenged the participants to seek ways of making them more widely known in our local Churches.

## **Positive Experiences**

The participants were not discouraged by the huge difficulties facing them, rather were inspired by the many examples already taking place throughout Asia, by attempts of individuals and groups to respond to the needs of people who are in painful and difficult situations.

It has been revealed that lay people are involved in promoting education among the faithful to provide them with social awareness. To more effectively carry out their evangelizing mission, they are also encouraged to evangelize people through their actions rather than by words alone.

It has been noted with pleasure that the Christian faithful in the Asian countries have discovered their national identity, and are determined to

get their existence acknowledged as equal citizens in their respective countries. Many lay groups are busy in improving the socio-economic and political situations of their people, guided by the respective episcopal commissions.

Groups of Christian faithful have launched campaigns to stop the destruction of the natural environment. They are trying to motivate people to work for the rehabilitation/conservation of the environment. According to them, respect for nature is an outcome of respect for life.

Each evening there was an opportunity for cultural exchanges between the many different people represented at the meeting. Some insights were gained into the vast richness and depth of the Asian spirit, as expressed in poetry, song, dance, music, storytelling and drama.

### **Methodology**

The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (ASIPA) methodology, used throughout, challenged us to rely on our own experience of living our Christian faith within certain social conditions. Rather than listening to a series of lectures, we participated in practical workshops where we were involved and encouraged to share and learn from each other.

We had the chance to listen and discuss two ways the Social Teachings are lived in business and in a lifestyle that is caring for the environment.

Prayerful reflection on the word of God was a central part of the meeting. In our discussions on family life, social problems and inter-religious dialogue, our attitudes and behavior were constantly challenged by the power of the word of God. This methodology was both a formative experience for the participants and a helpful model that could be used in our local situations at home.

Our common prayer times and liturgies were an integral part of the meeting, (as we participated in the planning and conducting of worship), where the themes and questions of each day were reflected upon within a prayerful context.

In particular, our younger delegates showed an enthusiasm for prayer and other community activities that enriched the group and brought a new sense of life to all the proceedings.

### **Vision**

The meeting clearly identified the need for a wholistic approach to



the formation of lay, religious and clerical members of the Church. There is a need to bridge the gap between the personal practice of the faith and the expression of social concern. The papal documents on Social Teachings especially *Centesimus Annus*, *Christifideles Laici*, *Familiaris Consortio*, and *Redemptoris Missio* were part of the preparatory study and background materials for this meeting.

We examined the vision of the Church as a “communion of communities,” which was outlined by the Asian bishops in Bandung 1990, and we took part in practical workshops on how to implement this vision.

The need to appreciate the riches and gifts in other religious faith traditions was emphasized; and we discussed how to overcome mutual distrust and develop harmonious and more productive ways of relating and working together with people of other faiths in responding to the many social ills that surround us.

### **Our Commitments**

We commit ourselves.....

- To accept the principle that each human being is sacred, and uphold the values of love, dignity, and equality of all.

- To motivate people to promote life in all its forms and to work with the discriminated and oppressed in all fields of society.

- To increase awareness of the church’s Social Teachings among the laity, religious and clergy.

- To emphasize the importance of value education, together with formal education, to grow into more integrated and responsible human beings.

- To spend time in daily prayer, reflection, and meditation for a deep spiritual foundation, so that our commitment does not lose its original orientation.

- To actively participate and cooperate with individuals, organizations and political parties that have common concerns for social and civic needs. For example, liberation of the oppressed, vocational training, and assistance for food, shelter, medicines, and education.

- To respect the status and dignity of women and minority groups in order to create a just society.

– To listen to the voice of young people and the poor and involve them in our plans and actions.

– To establish social action groups in our areas to deal with local issues of importance.

– To respect the religion of others, make a comparative study of ideas, and work out practical solutions where problems exist.

– To remember that a collective and organized effort is better than an individual commitment.

– To live a simple lifestyle which is in harmony with nature.

### **An Appeal**

We humbly request that:

– Church leaders should actively involve themselves and facilitate/organize lay initiatives in social actions and people's movements directed to promote social justice and defend the basic rights of the poor and the oppressed. They should express open support for any good cause upholding truth, justice, equality and fraternity.

– The laity initiate programs in consultation and co-operation with their bishops, for the formation of the lay faithful to enable them to fulfill their active role as Christians.

– The bishop of every diocese, together with capable and responsible laity, should establish and encourage social-concern groups in each of their parishes for the implementation of Church's Social Teachings.

– The Church's Social Teachings, for example, in *Centesimus Annus*, *Laborem Exercens*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Rerum Novarum*, should be made a constitutive part of basic and on-going formation of lay leaders, seminarians, priests, bishops, and religious.

– Documents regarding the Church's Social Teachings and the papal encyclicals should be translated into local languages, both in their original form and in simplified versions, at the diocesan, national and regional levels.

– Each diocese should conduct vocational training programs for and with the poor/oppressed, and help in the placement of the unemployed and needy.



– More resources and attention should be given to in-depth study on the causes of social evils and the possible solutions.

– Regular newsletters, seminars, exchange programs, and other channels of communication should be established to facilitate the sharing of difficulties, experiences, and achievements of different countries/areas and dioceses.

– Follow-up meetings at the regional level in East, South and South-east Asia are to be planned for mutual exchange and support in carrying out our common commitments.

– The FABC Office for Laity should make an urgent call on all the bishops in Asia, together with laity, to study seriously this “new vision of the Church as a communion of communities,” and the importance of laity involvement in spreading and implementing the Social Teachings of the Church.

## **Conclusion**

The hospitality of our host and the Korean Catholic community, deepened old friendships and created new bonds of fellowship among the local Churches of Asia. After five days of mutually-enlightening experiences, we are returning home with a renewed personal faith, a commitment to the importance of community life in our families, parishes, workplaces and neighborhoods, and a deeper understanding of the value of the participation of all the people of God in the life of the Church.

Above all, there has been a growth in the conviction that we are all urgently challenged to witness to the love and compassion of Jesus Christ in the various concrete situations where we live and work especially for the poor and oppressed.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **MESSAGE TO THE LAY PEOPLE IN ASIA**

We the participants of the First Asian Laity Meeting, representing 14 countries/areas of Asia, have gathered here at Aaron House in Suwon, Korea, from the 4th to 9th September 1994 to reflect on the theme, “The Commitment of the Laity in the Church’s Mission, with Special Reference to Implementing the Social Teachings.” This meeting was co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences’ Office of Laity, and the National Lay Apostolate Council of Korea. Accompanying the Asian laity during this Meeting were Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, President of PCL, Cardinal Stephen Kim Su Hwan of

Korea and the bishops responsible for the national lay apostolate commissions in Asia.

The Holy Father's love and concern for the laity was expressed in his message and blessing for our gathering.

This Asian Laity Meeting was held with the hope of linking the roles of the laity and the Church's Social Teachings by means of a specific Christ-centered, participative methodology to be used with small communities. We focused our attention on three vital areas for evangelization in Asia: the family, our workplace and dialogue of life with peoples of other faiths.

We invite all the laity of Asia to join us in our commitment to:

- Promote life in all its forms and to work for the discriminated and oppressed, realizing that each human being is sacred;

- Listen to the voice of young people;

- Listen to the voice of the poor, especially the exploited, women and child laborers;

- Become more aware of the Church's Social Teachings and use organizations and BECs as the place for common reflection and study;

- Remember that we are called as a community centered in Christ to transform our society;

- Actively participate in the life of society, working in co-operation with people and groups with common concerns;

- Co-operate with our Church leaders to create opportunities for formation in the Church's Social Teachings;

- Strive to live simply in a way that leads to a more authentic human development which protects our environment.

During this meeting we have become more aware of our vital role in the life and mission of the Church. Let us stand up as Asian citizens and Christians, and take seriously our responsibility to work with other Asian peoples in creating a better place to live in.

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