

Sixth Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide

**INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND
JUSTICE FOR PEACE AT THE SERVICE OF LIFE
IN THE CONTEXT OF ASIA**

by
ANTHONY ROGERS

PREAMBLE

The purpose of the workshop discussion guide is to enable the participants to have an insight and an overview of the developments within the Church in Asia with reference to integral human development and justice. We have, therefore, attempted to incorporate and summarize the numerous personal writings, official statements and reports that have been published over the past twenty-five years.

INTRODUCTION

Since the Asian Bishops' Meeting in Manila in 1970, many events have happened in Asia. We are aware that Asia has experienced many changes in the past twenty-five years but at the same time the basic problems of poverty, injustice, inequality and violence have not changed. In the midst of all these, the whole Church in Asia, especially the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, has attempted to live out the dream of the Asian bishops as articulated in 1970 towards integral human development and the promotion of justice.

As part of the reflections at this Sixth Plenary Assembly, it may be helpful:

1. To take a cursory look at some of the basic reflections that were

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articulated in 1970 on becoming the “Church of the Poor” in the context of Asia.

2. To have an overview of the realities of Asia today, after twenty-five years.
3. To look at some of the underlying moral and cultural dimensions of the realities of Asia in the context of the modern world.
4. To trace the major themes that have emerged, and to make a critique of the responses in the area of integral human development and justice and peace.
5. To examine the implications of integral human development and the promotion of justice in the context of “A New Way of Being Church.”
6. To outline some of the concrete responses of the Church in Asia.

PART I

Looking Back at 1970 — the Asian Bishops’ Meeting¹

1.1 The overwhelming majority of our people are poor. But let it be clearly understood what we mean by “poor.”

- Our people are **not** poor as far as cultural traditions, human values and religious insights are concerned. In these things of the spirit, they are immensely rich.
- But our people are poor in this sense: the overwhelming majority of them is deprived of access to the material goods they need for a truly human life, and even of access to the resources they need to produce these goods for themselves.
- We use the word **deprived** deliberately. Our people are deprived of the goods and opportunities to which they have a right because they are **oppressed**. They live under economic, social and political structures which have injustice built into them.

1.2 What does this mean for us as pastors of the Church in Asia?

- It does not mean merely to work **for the poor**, as it were from the outside or from above, like a beneficent institution or an administrative agency;

— It does mean to work **with the poor**, and therefore to be with them, and so to learn from them their real needs and aspirations, to enable them to identify and articulate those needs and aspirations, if they are as yet unable to do so.

1.3 For many in the Church in Asia, the Asian Bishops' Meeting of November, 1970, has been the watershed of the formulation of a new vision of the Church in Asia. Its inaugural statement identified the core of the mission of the Church in Asia. This mission was to be at the service of the people of Asia and in the context of their political, socio-economic and religio-cultural realities of their lives. The Message of the Conference, no.14, states this very clearly:

... we ask ourselves how we may more truly be at the service of our peoples. We ask how we may fully engage ourselves in the common task wherein all people of good will must be joined, of building up within our nations and societies which respond to the deepest aspirations of our peoples, as well as to the demands of the Gospel: societies "grounded on truth, guided by justice." Motivated by charity, realized in freedom and flowering in peace.

1.4 With this in mind, we will attempt to trace the numerous insights that have been developed over the past twenty-five years within the Church in Asia. We also need to examine more closely the responses of the Church in the area of the ministry for charity, development and justice and peace, and to note the changes and growth. We can begin our reflections with an overview of the Asian Reality.

PART II

The Reality of Asia Today — New Phenomena in Asia as Challenge and Possibility²

2.1 As Asia moves into the 21st century, new and exciting developments are overtaking Asian countries. The phenomenon of the technological age has truly made our whole world a global village. The emergence of freedom and justice in one corner of Asia catches the attention of countries in the other continents in a matter of seconds through the communication media. This vast world has become a village where encouragement, inspiration and hope can quickly be communicated to people who suffer disasters. Knowledge is exploding beyond our imagination. The secrets of the universe are captured in small electronic gadgets that make learning more accessible, serving and loving others more readily given.

- 2.2 The phenomenon of women's movements is yet another positive development. They are increasing in Asia, making women aware of their potentialities and resources, challenging centuries of subordination to men, enabling them to claim their rights and full participation in public life. The Spirit of God is present in these developments. From a biblical point of view of ongoing creation, we could attribute all these wonders to God and exclaim with the Psalmist: "How marvelous are your works, O Lord!"
- 2.3 Developments in science and technology and economics are facilitating various movements that past FABC assemblies (see FABC V, Bandung) have noted: the movement toward participation and striving towards a deeper sense of the divine. Hopeful, living movements that speak of Asia's struggle towards a fuller life.
- 2.4 Yet our optimism has to reckon with the undeniable ambivalence of the changes that are taking place. Let us, therefore, look more deeply into the Asia reality.
- 2.5 Economic Growth and Industrialization**
 - 2.5.1 The phenomena that we read or hear about almost every day are in the economic field — the dream of economic growth.
 - 2.5.2 An inexorable process of industrialization is taking place in Asia. It is strongly linked to and dependent upon a process of economic globalization. The flow of foreign capital both from the West and the more developed East Asian countries allows for methods of production and introduction of technologies way beyond the present capabilities of some of our Asian countries to absorb without trauma.
 - 2.5.3 As a result fundamental changes in work patterns, in the basic structure of our economies, and in the very nature of relationships among individuals and communities are occurring. People become a mechanical part of the production process and, as a result, work becomes exploitative and dehumanizing. This is especially true of women workers. Atrocities committed on women, their lives, their work and on children are intensified. Women are often the first to feel the impact of economic retrenchment and inflation as they are often the last to be protected and cared for.
 - 2.5.4 Although the majority of our economies are still rural and agricultural, the gross neglect of this sector has an obvious negative and devastating impact on the lives of individuals and communities. The

rural sector remains stagnant.

2.6 Modernization and Secularization

2.6.1 Together with the process of industrialization has come the need to modernize the commercial sector. The process strengthens the consumeristic lifestyles into which even now the poor are being initiated. Through the commercialization of education and the control of mass media, economics has become the dynamo of all aspects of life. Just as there is no "value-free" technology, there is no value-free media. Through the dissemination of information and entertainment, media is creating values both good and bad and promoting a whole new way of looking at life. A serious discernment is needed on this. The children and the youth of Asia are the most exposed to these "alien" notions of the meaning of life itself. The image of women as portrayed in the media maintains and reinforces the view of women as inferior to men and objects of pleasure. Accompanying the thrust of modernization is secularization. The traditional close-knit relationships within Asian families are beginning to erode but new forms of intimacy are being explored and fostered. The deep religious and community sense that characterizes most Asian peoples, is indeed, dissipating.

2.7 Politics and People's Participation

2.7.1 We perceive the dominant role of industrial and business conglomerates that virtually control major portions of the economy, especially those closely related to traditional oligarchies, modern industrialists with political connections, as well as those closely affiliated to the military in most of our countries. A subtle repression of the rights of individuals and communities to participate meaningfully in processes of decision making is tragically taking place. On the pretext of national security and political stability human rights are being curtailed. Sadly, politics is for power to dominate and not for service to the vast majority. Religious resurgence is taking place in many countries of Asia and is often a very positive movement. However, the merging of religious fundamentalism and narrow ethnicity is creating new forms of violence, hatred and divisions.

2.8 The Impact of these New Phenomena

2.8.1 Expected changes in almost every facet of life in the 21st century, concomitant with and perhaps because of developments in sciences, technology and the communications media, will surely have a signi-

ficant impact on the cultures and peoples of Asia for good or ill. People need to be rooted in the deeper meanings of life, if they are to be truly human. Should these roots be weakened (or worse, destroyed), cultural dislocation and dehumanization take place.

2.8.2 Mass production, made possible by high technology, will democratize the availability of a bewildering multiplicity of goods and services. Sophisticated means of communication will offer new possibilities of sharing and coming together of peoples of different cultures and religions. But the formation of a mass society will most likely be also characterized by the dissolution of traditional links, by anonymity and marginalization. This trend needs to be critically assessed in the light of the freedom and the cultural identities of peoples.

2.8.3 In Asia the politically-powerful elite, who are usually in the minority, are the bearers of a dominant sub-culture. Popular sub-cultures are those of the poor and politically-marginalized majority. The foreseen societal changes leading to globalization in the 21st century will probably impoverish and further weaken the sub-culture of the poor.

2.8.4 The above projections are now being confirmed. In our view progress and advancement of the few have created false hopes among the people who believe that "abundance" will trickle down to the whole of the Asian community.

2.8.5 The once self-sustaining economies and rural communities, both traditional and tribal, are the most affected by these trends. The depreciation of the rural economy and the decreasing dependence on the primary commodities of foreign exchange have depressing implications for the future of rural communities.

2.8.6 Even as individuals and entire communities become victims of this process, so also do the environment and nature. The destruction of rain forests and the pollution of the environment are just two of the negative consequences.

2.8.7 The nature of work in the modern industrial sector has also affected family life and health. New patterns of work relationships are attacking the unity and stability of the family. Women and children become the most obvious victims. Already the victims of the myth of male superiority, women are subject to new forms of violence and cultural alienation.

2.8.8 The obsessive drive towards economic and material achievement, the quest to satisfy created by media and the new technological culture are subtly leading people to a life without moral and religious roots.

PART III

The Crisis of Modernity in Church in Asia³

3.1 What is really "modern" about the modern world? The term could be understood very simply as meaning "contemporary." In this sense, every age feels itself to be modern with reference to the ages preceding it. But when one speaks of modernity in cultural discourse one refers to certain approaches like the Enlightenment's insistence on rationality or elements like science, technology and communications that have revolutionized life in the world. One could also speak of a new age of global relationships in history that starts with the discovery of the New World and of new routes to the old, and the type of commercial and economic, supported by political, contacts that these discoveries made possible.

3.2 In the age of Enlightenment, a new worldview gave rise to a new praxis and a new way of life. This first aspect of modernity can be looked at, for the purpose of analysis and brevity, through five of its elements: science, technology, technology, industrialization, urbanization and the media of communication.

3.3 Modern science affirms the principles of rationality and immanence. Rationality demands that observable phenomena are explained in terms of causes that can be understood and verified by reason. Immanence supposed that the phenomena are looked at in themselves and extramundane causes are not evoked to explain them. In this manner science discovers the laws of nature, which facilitate prevision and control. Science demythologized nature and purified religion from magical tendencies. In the last century the social sciences too have developed on the model of the physical sciences. But rationality in the sciences can lead to a rationalism that denies the reality of phenomena that cannot be measured or verified by observation and experiment. This scientific approach has no place for the Transcendent.

3.4 Technology develops the mechanical means that make possible control and production, using the laws discovered by science. It promotes material development in various ways, taps resources, controls diseases, etc. But it can also be used to produce arms of mass destruction. As a matter of fact, defense production seems to have provoked most

of the contemporary improvements in technology. Technological advancements can give people a feeling that they can control everything and lead to the manipulation of nature that causes ecological destruction or promotes questionable bio-technologies.

3.5 *Industrialization* facilitates mass production, supported by the accumulation of capital. It can be used to satisfy the needs of the poor. It can also lead to the creation of needs through advertisements for commercial purposes. It promotes consumerism. Beyond the real needs of people, profit becomes the main motive for production and commerce.

3.6 Modern *urbanization* is the offshoot of industrialization and commerce with the consequent devaluation of agriculture and the movement of populations looking for more profitable employment in the cities. There is in this process of migration an element of social mobility and freedom from social control which people seem to find attractive. But the social fabric of relationships, particularly of the family, is affected, and there is rising individualism and competition leading to egoism, manifested both collectively and individually, and a speed of life that is self-destructive.

3.7 Finally the *media* have improved communications with regard both to rapidity and extension. They can promote information, relationships and networking in a global village. But they can also aid consumerism and commercialism through advertisements, favor alienation and evasion through entertainment, and facilitate control through propaganda and misinformation.

4.0 The Moral Dimension

4.1 While looking at the positive and negative aspects of the various elements of modernity one must understand the moral dimension of choice and the possibility of abusing a good thing. People are ultimately responsible for being individually and collectively selfish, for giving in to the temptations of plenty and becoming consumeristic, for absolutizing the autonomy of political, and especially commercial, structures, for cultivating an attitude of self-sufficiency that has no need and no time for the transcendent dimensions of the human and the divine. In this context one sometimes speaks of *secularization* which has a double dimension. There is a worldview that is immanent, rationalistic, self-sufficient — that ignores both the Transcendent God and the transcendent aspect of the human. But it goes together with a moral choice that favors a selfish, consumeristic, individualistic way of life. These two dimensions mutually support each other.

4.2 The second aspect of the modern world is the actual global order with its radical division between rich North and poor South. It had its origin five centuries ago. History is full of wars and movements of populations. But what started five hundred years ago as commercial development has led to a colonial system involving systematic exploitation of one part of the world by the other, supported by armed political domination. Today, the visible political framework may have disappeared. But the economic and commercial system, in which the rich had become rich at the expense of the poor and in which the rich became richer while the poor become poorer, continues. Individuals and peoples may not be aware of this underlying system that supports their lifestyle. But the system is no less real.

4.3 Once again, at its root, it is a moral issue. It is a system that is created and maintained through collective selfishness, supported by political and military-industrial complexes. People may not be unaware of these practical consequences, since the gap between the rich and the poor is growing not only between the North and the South, but even within the North and the South itself. A new world order will not be the gift of the remaining super-power or of the Group of 7 (G-7) or of the European Community or of the UN Security Council. None of them will be able to go beyond the enlightenment of their narrow national vote banks. Is some conflict inevitable, though it should and could be non-violent, if it is to be creative?

5.0 The Cultural Roots

5.1 Behind this moral dilemma, however, are the cultural elements — a worldview and a system of values and attitudes — that contribute to the problematic situation. The insistence on technical reason has highly developed the rational aspects of the human person. But the emotional side of the human personality, expressed in symbol and nourished by the arts, remains underdeveloped. These remain marginal in human society, confined to a few specialists, who make it even more exotic than it need be. Among the young, it may take counter-cultural forms. Or one may seek easy compensation in drugs or violence or fundamentalists' movements.

5.2 The modern human attitude to nature is exploitative. It does not really respect the identity of nature, its rhythms, its need for regeneration, the global ecological cycle, etc. The relationship to nature is not one of harmony, but one of domination and control. The ecological problem is not merely that a few are exploiting the resources of nature that are meant for all, or that the present generation is destroying na-

ture irreparably without any concern of future generation. The basic issue is that the human is a spirit-in-a-body. To respect the integrity of the human person is to respect the body and its relationship to nature. To harm nature is ultimately to harm the body and harm human life. It is to jeopardize the quality of life. Nature is the mediation of relationships with God and others. By exploiting and destroying it for their own selfish ends people are harming their own integrity as persons in the world.

5.3 In a network of technical and commercial relationships people become objects, instruments to produce a certain quality of work. They are not respected for their dignity as the images and children of God. There are in-groups and out-groups, citizens and strangers, discriminations according to caste, color, race, etc. The problem of refugees and the growing populations of immigrant labor highlight the fact of the people being used as pawns in the economic and political game of the Elites.

5.4 In a highly-competitive world the other is seen as the enemy or an instrument to be used for one's own advancement. Such individualism makes a mockery of human relationships. Families break up, children are neglected or abandoned. And yet, a human person can grow only in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. A breakdown in relationships, therefore, is not only detrimental to community but also to the individuals themselves in their human development.

5.5 The contemporary feminist movement has made us realize the contribution of the masculine and the feminine in the complex make-up of the human person. The man-woman difference is not merely biological. It has become also cultural and social. The culture of modernity has supported the growth of characteristics that would be considered masculine, like aggressivity, domination, enterprise, rationality, etc. The women feel rightly oppressed. It is not merely a question of liberating women and affirming an artificial and mechanical equality but of discovering the masculine and the feminine in each person and culture, and promoting a balanced interaction, development and growth for the benefit of all.

5.6 The problems listed above are not so much moral problems as cultural ones that condition one's worldview, value system and attitudes. But they are detrimental to the balanced and integral growth of the human person in community. There is not only a crisis of meaning. But existential and emotional tensions. On the other hand, movements like the New Age feed and seek to thrive on all the dichotomies of the modern world with its stress on reason, immanence and self-sufficiency.

5.7 It is also interesting to note that in an increasing “homogenized” society as a result of the process of globalization there is also the crisis of identity. With the curtailment of democratic political processes and the suppression of human rights, it is obvious that people are being deprived of the exercising their own right and freedom to make decisions for themselves. In the context of modern life people are given few decision-making powers in their daily lives. It would seem likely that with the increasing “take over” of their whole lives by the politicians, the business corporations and the media moguls, people acquire the mentality of being mere followers and not subjects of their own lives and destiny. This dependency on the benevolence of those in power makes people, especially the youth, lose their identity as persons and, thus acquire the tendency to be easily influenced by peer-group pressure. The “inner power” has not been allowed to be developed and, thus they become victims of the negative trends in society.

5.8 The underlying economic, political and social problems of the modern world is a crisis of meaning and value, a crisis of culture and moral choice.

6.0 The Final Statement of the “Colloquium on the Social Doctrine of the Church in the Context of Asia,” held in January 1992, addresses the above problems and realities in Asia. The denunciation called for and the challenges that need to be taken up point clearly to the thrust and orientation of the Church in Asia:

6.1 We denounce:

1. the economic system which through its primacy of money and market constitutes a violent aggression on the rights of the Asian poor to live with human dignity as the sons and daughters of God;
2. the political system and powers which for vested interests compromise the life and the freedom of the Asian poor to grow into full human persons;
3. the consumeristic culture that gives primacy to anti-Gospel values, and looks at persons and the environment as objects of consumption, thus depersonalizing people and destroying human life and life-support systems;
4. the violation of human rights not only of individuals but also of communities in the name of law and development, or religion and race.

6.2 We see the need:

1. to keep questioning the model of development that pervades the world and has been imposed on our Asian societies, with its damaging effects on our values, traditions and ways of life;
2. to see the unity of human beings with the whole of created reality, the presence in it of God, and the responsibility of human beings to respect, revere and care for the earth;
3. to be in touch with our cultural heritage to discover therein values that are truly human and can serve as basis for alternative models of authentic development;
4. to adhere to Gospel values as the final norm of judging all development models.

PART IV

Major Themes in FABC Documents on Integral Human Development and Justice and Peace in the Context of Asia

7.0 A process of discernment within the FABC on Asian realities has resulted in the emphasis of certain key social teachings, as providing both the bases and directions of the struggle towards justice, peace and liberation in Asia. They regularly recur in discussions on poverty and development. These key themes are all linked one to another and cannot be separated from each other. They point to the unity of vision that is emerging in linking the holy and the secular, the material and the spiritual in order to make life more meaningful and human in the context of Asia. A brief enumeration of these may be helpful.⁴

7.1 Integral Evangelization and Integral Liberation

The operative work in “integral.” The Church in Asia is most especially concerned about inserting the social message of the Gospel, the promotion of justice and the transformation of the world as central to the meaning of evangelization. It is indeed the mission of the Church to be involved in the transformation of the Asian society and the liberation of Asia’s multitudes from every oppressive situation, most of all from sinfulness. It considers these two enterprises as two sides of the same coin.

7.2 Human Dignity, Solidarity and Human Rights

These values press the Church in Asia to denounce violations of human rights in the continent, to defend pro-democracy movements, and to promote movements of community building among peoples of different faiths. Likewise, the Church is pressed to seek the solidarity of sister Churches in the First World in exploring the interlocking character and the moral dimension of justice and peace issues in Asia.

7.3 Preferential Option for the Poor

The vision of the Church to become the "Church of the Poor" is also a dialogue of life with the poor. And since most of Asia is poor, a bias for the poor should be a feature of development plans. On the other hand, opting to defend the dominant economic system with its apparently built-in partiality towards power concentration in the hands of the few would neither be evangelical nor transformative. This preference is also the result of a "renewed compassion" and a greater sensitivity to cries of the poor which cannot be left unheeded.

7.4 Change by Way of Peace

With the increasing magnitude of the organized violence, the Church has to be the oracle of peace and active non-violence in order to bring justice that will result in true peace. The Asian bishops never tire of insisting that social transformation has to be by way of non-violence. This is not only evangelical but also in accord with the Asian cultural value of harmony. Even as *metanoia*, a change of heart, is a fundamental as structural change, both kinds of change must be brought about not through an ideology of violence, but by way of peace.

7.5 Grassroots Orientation and Empowerment

In recent years the move towards a grassroots orientation and empowerment that perceptibly began at the 1982 Bangkok Plenary Assembly received increasing attention and emphasis. In 1982 the theme of the assembly was "The Church — A Community of Faith in Asia." The thrust toward the promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) was explicited (*For All the People of Asia: FAPA*, p. 63). This movement towards the grassroots level was fostered notably by the Office for Human Development and its BISA series. By the time of the Bandung Assembly in 1990, the bishops could extend the thrust even beyond the BEC. As a pastoral imperative, they saw "the need the encourage, initiate and facilitate micro-level initiatives with the ripple effects especially at the grassroots level" (*FAPA*, p. 284). In fact,

many of the resolutions of the assembly explicitly specify this downward thrust (see FAPA, p. 286).

Yet it is not simply a downward movement. The presence of the Church in a process of dialogue is also one that helps to bring new dimensions and insights to all in the Church, thus becoming genuine partners with the people in their process of empowerment.

7.6 Formation of a Social Conscience

A deeper faith formation that promotes a social conscience among the People of God follows from the vision of an entire Church engaged in integral liberation. And thus plenary assemblies regularly call for the formation of the laity that does justice, the formation of a conscience in the ways of the integral Gospel with its social message. No one is exempted from such formation. We do not just live in the world for ourselves but as Church we become responsible "for the life of the world," and thus the urgent need to also recognize sinful structures, attitudes and values that need to be changed.

7.7 Prophecy as Transformative

It is said that the Church in Asia is not prophetic enough. Being a minority in a predominantly "non-Christian" continent may have been the reason for our "voicelessness." A non-confrontational attitude in presenting "Christian" views regarding business, politics, human rights, graft and corruption, etc. is, therefore, deliberately chosen in order to prevent a backlash. This attitude of non-confrontation is especially true in Islamic countries.

Still, the FABC documents are replete with prophecy on major aspects of life. As the prophets of old, so today's Asian bishops speak out against the increasing impoverishment of the poor, the exploitation of women and children, the alienation of youth, the concentration of economic and political power in the elite, their control and manipulation of mass media, graft and corruption. They also speak out against ecological degradation in Asia, the unjust structures of Asian societies, the unbalanced and inequitable political and trade relationships between Asian countries and the First World. There simply has to be both the wisdom to denounce and a call to a change of heart and a change in ways of behaving, of relating, of living (including the structures that perpetuate the old).

The bishops' stance is prophecy that is transformative. Their words at the 1990 Bandung assembly are programmatic: "Our challenge is to

proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God: the promote justice, peace, love, compassion, equality and brotherhood in these Asian realities" (FAPA, p. 275). For them the Church must be "a leaven of transformation and a *prophetic sign* daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come" (FAPA, p. 288).

7.8 Prayer and Spirituality

Asian bishops are not only well aware of the Asian contemplative tradition but also of its relationship to integral liberation. Prayer is the meeting place of interreligious dialogue. It is the environment within which the Church's mission takes place. Citing *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Asian bishops in 1978 said:

...Prayer commits us to the true liberation of persons. It binds us to solidarity with the poor and the powerless, the marginalized and oppressed in our societies. It is prayer which brings us to the understanding of how injustice is rooted in the selfishness and sinfulness of men's hearts. It is prayer which will help us to discern the tasks and deeds which can call on the Spirit to create with us both the courage and the love to bring conversion in men's hearts and the renewal of societal structures (FAPA, p. 33).

It is this experience of prayer that led the Asian bishops to speak of a particular spirituality for Asia in its struggle for the justice and peace of the Kingdom. Such spirituality, variously called in the documents as a "spirituality of dialogue," or "spirituality of the *anawim*," "incarnational spirituality," or "spirituality of discipleship," has been constantly in the forefront of FABC thinking.

8.0 The recent Faith Encounters in Social Action (FEISA), a program of the Office for Human Development of FABC, states this need for contemplation and compassion as the basis of a new spirituality:

Amidst the poverty and suffering, we saw signs of hope both among the people and the religious leaders. We were able to experience the sincere commitment and search to realize their aspirations which are based on a spirituality arising out of their lives of "contemplation and compassion" (No. 3.1).

Some experienced the "stirring" of the Spirit in the total dedication to a simple life with a non-acquisitive mentality that fostered a deep respect and appreciation for the Creator, the neighbor and nature. Social involvement and ecological concerns were intimately linked to lives of self-giving, sharing and fellowship. There was

an integration of their religious life and their commitment to resolving the social and economic problems of the people. The poverty and faith in the people raised many questions about our own priorities in life. Many of us also pointed to the warmth of their hospitality, the authenticity of their willingness to share and even enter into dialogue. Others experienced a village community where religious rituals form the rhythm of life as intoned by the local religious leaders. We also noticed that the Church that had already been actively involved in numerous interfaith and social development programs in some countries was becoming a credible witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (No. 3.2-3.3).

PART V

Integral Human Development and the Promotion of Justice in the Context of "A New Way of Being Church in Asia"

8.0 The Bandung plenary assembly of 1990 envisioned alternative ways of being Church in Asia (FAPA, p. 287). In order to identify priorities and to trace general directions, it may be helpful to briefly have an overview of the component parts of the New Way of Being Church:

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

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

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

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

9.0 Implications of these Key Themes for the Life of the Church ⁵

It is therefore imperative that, if the Church in Asia is to be relevant to its mission, it has to clear about its options, which will have to be implemented with firm determination and constant commitment. We recognize very clearly three central pillars for the building of the Kingdom in Asia, namely, an Incarnated Church, a People in Dialogue and Witnessing Missionaries.

9.1 An Incarnated Church

It is becoming fairly obvious that the Church in Asia can no longer allow history to pass by without addressing the fundamental challenges and problems posed by society today. It is this total immersion in the realities of our people and nations that will move us from being an **"Imported Church"** to an **"Incarnated People of God."** Our wanting to bring transformation to the world and the emergence of the Kingdom of God depend on the extent to which we become aware of the need for the local realization of the Church within the milieu in which we live and work. The local Church sends its roots into the ground to lay the foundations for the growth of the Kingdom of God in our lands and among our people.

9.2 A People in Dialogue

This process of incarnating Christ and his Gospel involves a process of **"Triple Dialogue"** — with the people of other faiths, with Asian cultures, and with the poor. Incarnation implies God taking the form of the human person, made in the image and likeness of the Creator. The starting point has to be the working of the Holy Spirit within the human person and the presence of Kingdom values within our religious-cultural heritages. It is the new incarnated Christ in our lives and in our communities that will be brought to perfection in his time and through his ways, and as a result of our interaction with the Kingdom already present among us.

Redemptoris Missio, No. 20, puts this very clearly: "It is true that the inchoate reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live 'Gospel values' and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills."

The various statements of the Asian bishops constantly bring to the Church in Asia the need to be involved in the process of what we call

the triple dialogue: With the Poor of Asia, With Peoples of Other Faiths, and With the Diverse Cultures of our Peoples. At the center of this dialogue is the Incarnation of the Jesus Message.

Our mission theology has as its starting point our journey as Church in a joint pilgrimage with "others," building together the Kingdom of God, which, though already present among us, must continue to grow unto its fullness in the end of time. The Document of the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC in 1990, on "The Evangelizing Mission of the Church in Contemporary Asia," defines this mission as, "being with the people, responding to their needs; and sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing and word. Mission will mean a dialogue with Asia's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions" (3.1.2).

9.3 Bearing Credible Witness

The Second Vatican Council states that "one of the greatest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith that many profess and the practice of their daily lives... The Christian who shirks his temporal duties, shirks his duties towards his neighbor, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation." There is a growing awareness that the gap between faith and witness has to be bridged. *Redemptoris Missio* brings this again to the consciousness of Christians by saying: "It makes us understand that we are missionaries above all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life is unity in love, even before we become missionaries in word or deed." This calls for credibility of witness, a narrowing of the gap between what we profess and how we act, especially in the area of justice and promotion of human rights. It is this credible witnessing that transforms the Gospel into the yeast, salt and light that Christ preached about. This is the greatest challenge for the Church today in the modern world, and thus every facet of Church life has to be re-examined and given a new orientation. To fully witness to Christ and his Gospels is to be involved in mission and by being evangelizers we are also witnesses to Jesus.

Evangelization is communicating our experience of the divine in Christ. Jesus' deep intimacy with the Father and the resultant commitment in compassion to the poor would readily evoke a positive response in the Asian sensitivity to the Divine. Hence, credible evangelization demands from us Christians in Asia a life of authentic contemplation and genuine compassion (FEISA 94: No. 7.4.1).

Articulation of our Christ experience in the process of the common

pilgrimage would take many forms — words and symbols — which would resonate with the Asian psyche. Hence, we should avoid all sorts of exclusivistic claims and cultural superiority, both of which betray the message of the divine kenosis. Only an ego-emptying and consequently powerless Christian community has the credibility to proclaim the folly of the message of the Cross. Such a process of evangelization fosters a culture of dialogue in Asia. Insofar as “the breadth and the length, the height and the depth” of the mystery of God’s love revealed in Christ continues to be a mystery for us, we have to journey with others in quest for the light and truth of the Divine (FEISA 94: 7.4.2).

PART VI

Concrete Responses of the Church in Asia in the Area of Integral Human Development and Promotion of Justice

- 10.1 Since the Second Vatican Council and the setting up of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, there is no doubt that dramatic results have been achieved in many facets of Asian society. With the formulation of an *Integral Vision* and the strategies covering areas of pastoral formation and involvement in mission, there has been a growing recognition of what can possibly be achieved. The thirty years of ferment, involving gradual evolution of not just theology but also pastoral imperatives in all aspects of the life of the Church in Asia, are a result of genuine searching.
- 10.2 The setting up of relevant structures and institutions at the level of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences and at the national and diocesan levels have gone a long way to bringing this vision to fruition. These structures have facilitated greater involvement in the areas that have been identified as core needs. This includes the promotion of alternative development models based on community participation through socio-economic programs, literacy, promotion of credit and marketing cooperatives and the development of basic infrastructures.
- 10.3 Although many of the programs have been initiated by the Church, attempts have always been made to work together with and in a participatory manner with peoples of other faiths. Dialogues with Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists have been carried out towards the promotion of the common good in the political, economic and social spheres. A constant openness to their deeper aspirations related to their faiths and cultures has been the foundation of peace and harmony. Many of the programs and projects currently being

implemented have as our partners these peoples among the leaders, staff and the poor themselves. This is the meaning of inter-faith dialogue — a dialogue to alleviate the dehumanizing conditions of the millions of Asia's poor.

10.4 It is also clear that one of the greatest contributions of the numerous Christian-inspired groups has been in the area of offering a new participative methodology. One of the essential elements of this methodology is the ability to hand over power and decision making to local groups and organizations that will be autonomous, but at the same time forging new networks of communication and collaboration. The Church in Asia has learnt to journey with them and not "lead" them in their search for freedom, dignity and self-worth. This is what it means concretely in the context of Asia to become a Church that is at the service of the Kingdom that is already present among our people.

10.5 It is fairly clear that being handicapped with our historical past in our relationship with people of other faiths calls for genuine clarity within the Church. This means that our involvement with them is not the second round of "conversions" that we are out to make through modern humanitarian means. Indeed, recent experiences have shown that many in the Church in Asia committed to integral development, justice and peace have earned the confidence of their fellow brothers and sisters of other faiths.

Implementation of this Vision and Priorities

11.0 It is in the context of the above that the many of our national commissions and offices for Development, Justice and Peace see the need to be more involved in the following areas of concern:

11.1 Ecology and Environment and issues related to tourism and land development.

11.2 Industrial Workers

11.3 Human Rights and Advocacy

11.4 Sustainable Rural Development

11.4 Cultural and Tribal Minorities

11.5 Women's Concerns

11.6 Urban Poor, Youth and Children

11.7 Migrant Workers

11.8 Farmers and Fisherfolk and Agricultural Workers

11.9 Victims of Disasters and the Poor in general

11.10 Participation in Democratization and Lobbying for Policy Changes

The Need for Strategic Pastoral Planning and Integral Formation

12.1 What is needed is a clarification of both the common goals for the Church in Asia and the adoption of a methodology that will bring these goals to reality. We cannot any longer hope to find solutions through divided and dissipated efforts and programs. There is an urgent need to work more closely at the national, regional and international levels. We cannot any longer depend on traditional partners who may have their own goals and mechanisms for implementation. This calls for a genuine on-going process of dialogue at all level. Such a process for consultation, that involves greater participation of all and not just those with financial and human resources who do not see the need to work in a participative and collaborative manner. This throws numerous challenges for all in the Church in Asia.

12.2 We also saw the need to work out these plans in the context of both our respective governments' plans and other regional programs for poverty alleviation and for initiating a process of democratization.

12.3 There is the need to examine in depth the role of peoples' organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations in this process of national development and regional development. The new mode of mission for the Church in Asia is dialogue with people of other faiths. The forging of new partnerships and a new sense of solidarity for the promotion of justice has to be radically altered in the context of Asia.

12.4 One of the most serious challenges for the Church in Asia and for our relationships with the peoples and governments of Asia is the role of the "Christian World" in the continued poverty and oppression of the people of Asia. The new models of development associated with the international monetary institutions, trade and investment policies and multinationals, all question the sincerity of the Church in Asia claiming to want to be on the side of the people.

They are well aware that underdevelopment in Asia is directly related to the "superdevelopment" of the industrialized West. The generous so-called development assistance will only serve as stop-gap measures, if there are no concomitant measures to redress global economic injustices.

The credibility gap for the Church in Asia is ever widening! People find it difficult to make a distinction between the contradictory roles of the "de-Christianized" West, on the one hand, and the Christians who are themselves divided in terms of vision and perspectives in Asia. There is a dire need for an on-going dialogue within the Universal Church, especially with the Church in the First World, for further discernment of the involvement of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the "development" plans of our nations. We also need to analyze the underlying principles and workings so that we can also be involved in advocating policy changes and in proposing alternatives. This calls for greater "South-South Dialogue" and also increasing critical dialogue with the First World. This seems to call for expanding our avenues for solidarity with new partners in the First World.

Principles of Integral Human Development

- 13.0 Through and in the process of working for the integral human development of persons and communities, certain principles have emerged that have become the guidelines for all those involved in working with the poor and marginalized groups.

Integral Human Development has thus to mean:

- 13.1 Development of partnership relationships with partner organizations, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, not purely based on funding relationships.
- 13.2 A vision of integral human development with a strong spirituality. This has to be the result of a greater awareness of the importance of the religio-cultural values of the people and the conscious attempt to make this a part of the formative process of both individuals and the community.
- 13.3 Pro-poor and pro-people orientation and empowerment. To place all our financial and human resources at the service of the poorest and most deprived sectors.
- 13.4 Integral and holistic approach to development, that seeks to adopt

an approach that gives priority not just to creating awareness but of being concretely involved in a socio-economic development based on alternative values and methodologies.

13.5 Ecology-friendly and future-oriented. These include not just the local-based projects but also those with the workers in the industrial sector on matters related to health and environmental safety.

13.6 Gender-sensitive and integrative rather than gender-divisive. Recognizing the need for the existence of women's groups and facilitating an on-going dialogue and forging new forms of partnerships at the personal and institutional levels.

13.7 Regional and global consciousness for the common good, rather than narrow nationalistic and ethnic-oriented ends. This has to mean moving away from partnerships that were forged because of history or tradition and to expand our partnership to others. New forms of association have to be created with those who are willing to enter into new dialogue with us. Justice and not just charity has to be the foundation for this new global consciousness.

13.8 Focusing on poverty alleviation rather than growth-oriented development. Besides the setting up of credit cooperatives, small-scale business and industry, income generation projects, there is a need for alternative financial and investment opportunities available to the poor. This, together with managerial skills, will serve to make communities more self-sufficient and reliant.

13.9 Maximization of locally available resources and materials.

13.10 Adoption of a methodology that gives priority to engendering local participation and formation of leaders.

13.11 Priority to democratic leadership, which is also financially accountable and responsible.

13.12 Setting up of alternative channels of information exchange, skills-training and resource networking.

CONCLUSION

It is in this context and with these guiding principles that the Church in Asia will be able to move into the 21st century. Its efforts to become truly an "incarnate Church" in order to fulfill its evangelizing mission will have to be the fundamental perspective. The triple dialogue with cultures,

people of others faiths and with the poor is central to this process.

The Church is being called to be embodiment of compassion, mercy and charity and justice. The journeying of the New People of God into the 21st century is one that is led by the Spirit of Jesus in every single member of the Church. An integral faith formation and the inculcating of an integral spirituality within the community serve as the point of departure of involvement in the life of the world. The vocation and mission of the laity in the world of work, in the socio-economic and political arena and in professional involvement, are indispensable to bringing to reality the new mission of the Church.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Reality of Asia Today

- 1.1 To what extent do the Asian reality and analysis described reflect the conditions in your own country?
- 1.2 What are the other trends and events that need the urgent attention of the Church in Asia in general and in your country in particular?

2. A New Way of Being Church

- 2.1 What is the level of awareness and understanding of the Vision of "A New Way of Being Church" among the People of God? What have been the obstacles to the attainment of this Vision?
- 2.2 What are the pastoral programs being initiated to link our prayer and sacramental life to our involvement and participation in society today? What have been some of the methodologies employed?
- 2.3 Has there been sufficient integral formation of all in the Church, especially of the laity, for an integral spirituality and participation?
- 2.4 Discuss some concrete programs towards "A New Way of Being Church" in the context of your country and the region. What have been the obstacles? What resources are needed?

3. Ministry of Integral Human Development and Promotion of Justice

- 3.1 What are the obstacles towards achieving an Integral Human Development in your country?
- 3.2 To what extent has the Church been involved in a process of interfaith

dialogue in the areas of IHD and justice? What have been the obstacles? Share some experiences that clarify some of the principles that have been articulated in the Discussion Guide.

4. Dialogue with the Universal Church

- 4.1 What do you think is the role of the Church in Asia with regard to the universal Church for the promotion of IHD and justice?
- 4.2 What can be the response of the Church in Asia to the impact of “globalization”?

5. General

- 5.1 In the context of Asia, what is the relationship between Integral Human Development and Justice and Evangelization?
- 5.2 What is the relationship between prayer — contemplation and participation in the transformation of the world?
- 5.3 What should be the priorities of the Church in Asia towards the 21st century?

FOOTNOTES:

1. Excerpts from the Asian Bishops' Meeting with Pope Paul VI in Manila in 1970.
2. “Being Church in Asia: Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life” — Final Statement of the First FABC International Theological Colloquium, Pattaya, Thailand, April 10-16 1994, Nos. 5-21.
3. This section is from the paper of Fr. Michael Amaladoss, S.J., entitled “Church in the Modern World,” (*SEDOS*, 1993).
4. These reflections on the key themes are by Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, O.M.I., in his paper entitled, “Understanding the FABC View on Poverty and Development,” presented at the International J. Maritain Institute Symposium, on February 22, 1994.
5. These parts of this section are from the paper entitled, “The Church in Asia Towards the 21st Century,” by Brother Anthony Rogers, FSC, published in *SEDOS*, 1994.

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