

**CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN ASIA TODAY :
SERVICE TO LIFE**

A SUMMARY REPORT

The Sixth Plenary Assembly

of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

Manila, Philippines

January 10-19, 1995

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This report presents the principal events of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), which convened at Manila, Philippines, January 10-19, 1995. The theme of the Plenary Assembly was: "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life."

INTRODUCTION

In November 1970, Pope Paul VI joined the Asian Meeting of Bishops, which brought together about 180 bishops of Asia — an historic “first.” It was then that the proposal to found a federation of bishops’ conferences in Asia was first voiced formally and approved by the bishops. Now, cardinals, archbishops and bishops, representing 14 bishops’ conferences and four associate members in 20 Asian countries, joined together in the Sixth Plenary Assembly, January 10-19, 1995, at the San Carlos Formation Complex in Manila, on the theme “Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life.” 227 participants were registered for the assembly, which included the voting delegates, along with more than 60 priests, religious and laity, representing many parts of the Asian Church’s apostolate. Fraternal delegates from the world regional associations of bishops’ conferences also took part in the deliberations. Many Asian bishops who were attending the celebration of World Youth Day also took part, as time permitted.

Pope John Paul joined the silver jubilee celebration. In a talk to the assembly on January 15, the Holy Father congratulated FABC for all it had achieved since it began 25 years ago, and encouraged the Asian Church to revitalize its commitment to proclaim Jesus as the fullness of life and to offer services that advance the cause of human development. The Holy Father also clarified that, while evangelization continues to be the highest priority of the whole Church, “evangelization must never be imposed.”

The priority of evangelization was also reiterated on January 11 in the assembly’s keynote address by Cardinal Jozef Tomko, prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

The Cardinal acknowledged that Christians account for less than 3% of Asia’s population and that “in the midst of an ocean of other religions,” the Asian Church must dialogue with peoples of other faiths “as a first step.” However, he repeatedly emphasized that evangelization remains the Church’s priority. He also urged Asians to depend less on foreign missionaries by assuming a more active role in proclaiming Jesus Christ within their own continent.

Two position papers on the assembly theme, “Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life,” had been sent to all the delegates and special participants before they came to Manila: “Jesus Christ: His Service to Life,” by Father Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines; and “Asia: The Struggle for Life in the Midst of Death and Destruction,” by Father S. Arokiasamy of India.

After the authors reviewed the main points of their respective papers in plenary sessions, the participants broke up into 13 workshops, each focused on a specific aspect of the overall assembly theme. The workshops probed various dimensions of the theme over the next two days, using the background papers that experts had prepared in advance on each topic. The workshop reflections were presented in detailed reports in plenary sessions, and clarifications or changes were recommended by the participants. The assembly also heard from several experts making special presentations on major Church concerns, including bioethics, migrant workers, ecology and non-violence for social change. Insights gained from workshop reports and the special presentations contributed to the Assembly's conclusions, which are contained in a final statement, a shorter summary message and practical recommendations for follow-up action. The Assembly approved the document's contents, with the direction that the FABC secretariat would publish them after final editorial polishing.

Cardinal Jan Schotte, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops of the Holy See, also made a lengthy presentation about the Synod of Bishops. Cardinal Schotte reported on how the Church has recently conducted or plans to conduct such special synods in other continents, and explained Pope John Paul's wish that a special synod for Asia also be held in the near future.

The delegates also voted on and approved two amendments to the FABC statutes.

Follow-up on the assembly through specific programs and activities would be formulated when the bishops holding official FABC positions met later in April, in Thailand, with the members of the FABC staffs for joint planning sessions.

I. WELCOME OF THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES

by

The Honorable Teofisto Guingona, Jr.

Executive Secretary to the President of the Republic

It is my honor to welcome you to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. This occasion also marks the 25th-foundation anniversary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

I am doubly proud to speak before you on this very significant occasion because the holding of this event in the Philippines is a symbol — a symbol that the Philippines is the center of Christianity in Asia. Twenty-

five years ago in November, Pope Paul VI joined the first bishops' meeting in the Philippines. It is only fitting that the 25th anniversary be celebrated here. This affirms that Christian discipleship is alive and burning, being strengthened — with the Philippines at the forefront, leading the Christians in Asia.

I find the theme of the assembly — service to life — very relevant to our nation's goals and objectives. The Filipino today, the Ramos administration, values life and upholds the basic tenets of life. We not only cherish life. But we also aim for "a better quality of life for the Filipino" — now and beyond, here and hereafter.

In the context of our socio-economic and financial planners, service to life entails poverty alleviation, promoting ecological balance, sustainable development, human development and employment, social services, education.

In the context of our religious beliefs, the government also recognizes and upholds the principle of life eternal, the profession and proclamation of our faith and grace. The government, in its moral recovery program, stresses the power of spiritual values, the reality of religion and the internalization of spiritual beliefs and principles, not only in form but more so in essence and actions.

In the spirit of the papal visit, I welcome and enjoy, on behalf of the President and the Filipino nation, the participants gathered here — bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful — to resolve to serve life, to guard and uphold the sanctity of life, to give life to life.

Thank you and God bless.

II. WELCOME OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE PHILIPPINES

by

The Most Rev. Carmelo Morelos

President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

I greet you with the peace of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

This morning I have a limited but pleasant duty to perform.

Firstly, in the name of my brother bishops, I welcome you all — delegates, fraternal guests from other conferences, FABC benefactors and guests — to our country. With exceeding joy and exuberant gladness we

open our arms to you in the warm embrace of fraternal communion and solidarity. The Church in the Philippines is honored that on its twenty-fifth year the FABC returns to our shores, where it had its beginnings.

Secondly, the FABC silver jubilee is a golden opportunity for the Asian bishops to gather once more around the Bishop of Rome, our Holy Father and Supreme Pontiff. In 1970 it was Paul VI; now it is John Paul II, two of this century's great popes.

Indeed, it is time that we come together. After all 25 years have elapsed! It is time to build new friendships, renew old ones. In fact, of the sixty or so bishops of the Philippines who were present in 1970, only about eight of us are still in active ministry. Many have retired. Certainly, there have been changes in your respective conferences as well. While bishops meet in the many seminars, symposia and consultations organized by various FABC Offices, this is one occasion where we can all be together.

Again in the name of my brother bishops, I thank you for accepting our invitation to come for the Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Since the first plenary assembly in Taipei, the Churches in Asia have walked hand in hand in a pilgrimage of faith in service to God's peoples. This plenary assembly is but another station on the way. May your stay be pleasant and the work of the assembly fruitful.

May Mary our Mother's comforting presence abide with you during all these days.

III. WORDS OF GREETING

by

Cardinal Jaime L. Sin

Archbishop of Manila

It is with a full heart that I welcome you, in the name of the Archdiocese of Manila, and in my own name, to this Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). My heart is full, because so many bishops and other pastoral leaders from Asia and from all over the world have gathered here in our home city, to proclaim our common faith and hope in Christ Jesus, in that *catholica unitas* which is the one Church of the Lord.

This assembly is something of a home-coming. We know that the FABC was "conceived" here in Manila, in December of 1970, during the visit of the greatly beloved and greatly revered Pope Paul VI.

Most of the small nucleus of "Founding Fathers" of FABC have gone ahead of us into the peace of the Lord, among them, Cardinal Gracias of Bombay, Cardinal Darmojuwono of Semarang in Indonesia and Bishop Francis Hsu of Hong Kong. (We welcome their successors instead). Yet we rejoice that a few remain with us here below, notably Cardinal Stephen Kim of Seoul, who has been a strong pillar of FABC from the start, and our own Archbishop Mariano Gaviola, who served as FABC secretary general during its first ten years, and is truly a benemeritus of the Federation.

It was my privilege to take part in the first of the plenary assemblies, held at Taipei in 1974, and its second, at Calcutta, four years later. Since then the assemblies have traveled: to Bangkok, to Tokyo, to Bandung in Indonesia, and now we have come full circle, back to Manila, to meet — for the first time — with the Holy Father. True, the First Asian Journey of the Roman Pontiff, in 1970, marked the hour of FABC's conception, but never before the present gathering of FABC had the plenary assembly the joy and honor of having the Roman Pontiff address it. Thus, Manila 1995 marks a "first". What a gift it is, my dear brothers, that there should be so many of us here assembled, humble successors of the Apostles of Jesus, with Peter in our midst, to confirm our faith, as the Lord commanded Peter to do, and to summon us to greater hope and deeper love, with the Lord's own words: "Be not afraid!"

The FABC documents attest that from the very beginning our hope was that FABC would create human bonds, bonds of mutual knowledge and friendship among the bishops of Asia. In and through them, too, bonds of mutual knowledge and communion would thus come into being among the local Churches, the Catholic communities in this part of the world. We know, my dear brother bishops, that this expectation has been wonderfully fulfilled. We come to FABC assemblies looking forward to meeting old and dear friends, and sharing our experiences and hopes with them. The Lord be praised for this gracious gift! In this and many other ways, FABC has helped mightily to make the Church in Asia truly a communion of communities, a communion of local Churches, one people of God in the midst of such rich diversity! In this way too, another great hope, cherished from the Bishops' Meeting in 1970, has been realized. This *catholica unitas* has helped to bring Asian peoples together. I think I make no extravagant claim when I say this. FABC has been like the "first fruits" of this growing reality of Asian "family-ness," this coming together of peoples which is — we believe — a gradual "reversal of Babel." *Lumen gentium* had already so splendidly said it: The Church is meant to be a kind of sacrament of the oneness of all peoples among themselves and with God who is the Father of us all."

FABC's final statement at Taipei renewed the prayer of Blessed Angela of Foligno: "Let thy love embrace all thy peoples." As we begin this Sixth Plenary Assembly, let us with joy and gratitude make that prayer once more our own.

Perhaps I may be allowed for a moment to wonder what the significance of this 1995 plenary assembly might be; why, providentially, the theme, "The Church in Asia: A Community of Discipleship in Service to Life," has been chosen for our reflection. "Service to life" is such a vast theme! And yet, are we not told that this part of the world is emerging as "the center of world history," just as the third millennium begins? That this continent of ancient cultures will emerge as the dominant area at this crucial point in the "Story of Man"? If this is in some sense true, then the Church in Asia faces its greatest and most crucial challenge ever: How can the Church bring the Gospel of Jesus, the life of the Spirit of Jesus, into the mainstream of this new era in human history? This portentous future is emerging — can anyone doubt it? All around us; we see with our own eyes vast, almost incredible changes taking place everywhere. Whether this "Asian Age" will be built with the Gospel, or without the Gospel, with Christ, or without Christ, depends in good measure on how the People of God in Asia will listen to the Spirit, be obedient to the Spirit and be empowered by the Spirit. It will depend in no small measure on how we, as those "chosen by the Spirit to lead the Church of God," shall be faithful disciples and courageous apostles, true servants of the Good Shepherd who is also the Lord of History. God grant us the grace to respond to this *kairos* with the wisdom, the largeness of heart, and the readiness for labor, that the challenge of the time demands of us all!

Once more, we bid you welcome. *Mabuhay* and God Bless! May these days be filled with joy and blessing, so that when the time comes, you will leave with happy memories, and come back to visit us many times again.

IV. WORDS OF GREETING: REFLECTIONS ON TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

by

The Most Rev. Michael Rozario

Archbishop of Dhaka

Convenor of the FABC Standing Committee

The Second Vatican Council, among others, has given impetus to the Church to think and act with others as one in mind and heart, not in isolation. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has been for the Churches in Asia a very concrete and effective base and forum for that

kind of solidarity, mutual understanding and cooperation.

FABC, through its various offices and commissions, has helped us understand the very different situations and problems of each local Church, all together and in global vision. This reflection together of our problems and situations, as also of our aspirations, has helped us to understand them with more accuracy and depth, and thus also to take more accurate decisions. In this process of walking as one Church in many nations we have discovered that our difficult moments, our aspirations, our joys and sorrows are basically the same. We no longer feel isolated, but can depend on the help, advice and support of the whole Church in Asia. The problems of each one of us, which seemed too big to handle or bear, no longer have a discouraging effect on us, since through mutual sharing we are strengthened by the wisdom, courage and fortitude of one another. In this process we have become in Asia truly a communion of Churches, one in mind and heart in the Lord.

Our Federation has been for us a very concrete and effective forum for sharing our Asian way of thinking about the implications of the Gospel of Jesus for all the peoples of Asia. More aware of ourselves as that "Little Flock" of the Lord in this large continent, we have been drawn by the Lord to pray lovingly for and to contemplate the life of the peoples of other religions and cultures in Asia, and so better to understand our mission among them, that they too may come to love Jesus. Thus, inter-religious dialogue has been one of the key themes of FABC for our missionary reflections and action. Drawing from our common experiences with so many different peoples, we have been able to understand and be better conscious of the central, unifying issues of the variegated religions and cultures here. We have become ever more aware that "to worship God in spirit and truth" is the common hunger and thirst of all peoples, and that the Church here is called to a service of the Spirit of the Lord for all the peoples of Asia.

And so we ourselves are called to a more authentic life in the Holy Spirit, to a more authentic Christian living, so that we can have a more meaningful and mutually enriching dialogue with all the peoples of Asia from a more authentic Christian spiritual experience. In the coming years, indeed, as we move into the Third Millennium, a search for and living of this more authentic Christian spirituality in our communities and dialogue and sharing of this spirituality with peoples of other religions in Asia should become very important themes in our Asian Church.

During these past two and a half decades of FABC, we have studied, reflected upon and taken certain decisions on various social, political, ecumenical and spiritual situations in Asia. Perceiving the situations in a

global fashion we realize, as seems to be the realization throughout the world, that the central task before us is to build a society of harmony and of communion of mind and heart among all peoples. This is the spiritual task ahead of us, for which we need to develop the methodology and structures for study, reflection and action.

We thank our Heavenly Father for bringing our Churches in Asia together, and also our Churches and the peoples of Asia together, through our Federation. We thank the Holy See for its inspiration and guidance for our work in FABC. We thank all our friends and benefactors. We express our love for one another for having journeyed together all these years in FABC.

**V. THE CHURCH IN ASIA AT THE SERVICE OF LIFE
IN JESUS CHRIST
Inaugural Address**

by

Cardinal Jozef Tomko

Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

GREETINGS

It is a joy and privilege for me to greet the Church in Asia represented by you, remembering the Apostolic Churches of Western Asia, the Churches of Central, Southern and Eastern Asia, the Churches established all over Asia by great missionaries like St. John of Montecorvino and St. Francis Xavier, Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto De Nobili and John de Britto, Constant Lievens and Costantino Vendrame in India, Andrew Kim in Korea, Theophane Venard in Vietnam, Joseph Vaz in Sri Lanka, and the many other Churches that have produced thousands of martyrs and saints, in Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines, like Blessed Elias Kuriakose Chavara, Blessed Alphonse and Saint Lorenzo Ruiz.

It is an added honor for me to express the gratitude and appreciation of the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, which has had special concern for Asia since its inception as Propaganda Fide in 1622, for the great work you do for the spread of the Gospel in the midst of the great religious, social, economic and political problems and difficulties of Asia.

I greet in a special manner the whole Church in the Philippines which is celebrating the 4th centenary of the establishment of the Metropolitan See of Manila in 1595 and of some Dioceses; I greet my brothers Cardinal Jaime Sin and Cardinal Ricardo Vidal, and all the bishops, clergy, religious and laity of the Philippines.

I also want to express my deep appreciation of the work done by FABC during the last 25 years to enlighten, animate and guide the Church in the work of renewal following upon Vatican II, in many areas like proclamation, dialogue, inculturation, human promotion, social communications, youth, laity and, most of all, evangelization through its various offices. We remember with gratitude all the past secretaries general, as well as the present secretary general, Archbishop Oscar Cruz, the Standing Committee, especially the assistant secretary general, Fr. Edward Malone, the chairmen and executive secretaries of all the offices who have carried and still do carry on the burden of FABC, along with other works.

And we express our best wishes for the prosperity of FABC as it reaches the age of full maturity. I would like to offer you some thoughts and remarks on the theme of this plenary assembly, remarks prepared from the point of view of evangelization before I received the two position papers. Of course, I have chosen only some specifically Christian aspects of such a complex theme, on which your contributions will more assuredly be based through concrete experience.

Introduction

The story of creation in Genesis begins with the Spirit of life hovering over everything. With the creation of man, God breathed his Spirit, the Spirit of life into man and he became a living being (Gen 1:1). The story of redemption ends in the Book of Revelation on a similar note with the imagery of living water, the river of life and the tree of life (Rev 22:1-2).

God creates to bestow existence and life in due measure upon every creature, but most of all on human beings, as *Lumen Gentium* states: "The eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of his wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe, and chose to raise up men to share in his own divine life" (LG, 2).

God has created beings of different kinds and he has also created life in various degrees and quality. At the summit of his earthly creatures he created man: "in his own image, male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). The life of man and woman, therefore, has a distinct, a special quality. For in man alone the Creator has delighted in a special way: "*et erat valde bonum*" ("and it was very good") (Gen 1:31), while acknowledging the other creatures as "good." And it is only to man that the Creator gave the command to "subdue" the earth (Gen 1:28).

Created in the image of God, man is capable of an even deeper and new quality of life, which is a participation of the life of God himself.

1. Life: Gift of God

1. God's Offer of Life

When we ask what God offers us as his life, it is to be understood as his own life that is communicated to us. And that life is a Trinitarian life. God can offer his own life only in the way he is, that is, trinitarian. We call it "eternal life." What is really meant is that it is sharing in God's own life. "It is eternal life, participation in the life of God himself, which comes about in the eternal communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The dogma of the Holy Trinity expresses the truth about the intimate life of God and invites us to receive that life" (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 72).

God did not abandon man when sin and death threatened to extinguish the flame of life in man. He ceaselessly offered life to man, in anticipation of Christ the Redeemer, through the covenants. In the fullness of time God sent his Son to give man the fullness of life by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of life, the fountain of water springing up to eternal life (cf. Jn 4:14; 7:38-39). To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through him, until the day when, in Christ, he raises to life their mortal bodies (cf. LG 4).

God's self-communication reaches its summit in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit who "in the absolute mystery of the Triune God, is the Person-love, the uncreated gift, who is the eternal source of every gift that comes from God in the order of creation" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 44). This is how John Paul II calls the gift of life in the Spirit: "The mystery of the Incarnation constitutes the climax of this giving, the divine self-communication" (*Dominum et Vivificantem*, 50).

The Father, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, has made him the source of life for all: "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (Jn 5:26).

God is a God of life and he is the author and donor of life. His love for man impels him to share his very life: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

The community of the disciples of Jesus Christ, the Church, is made manifest by the outpouring of the Spirit of life. It is a community that is called to participate ever more deeply in the very life of God, as Vatican II has so well said: "Hence the universal Church is seen to be a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (LG 4). The Church is a community of life in the Triune God and

its only mission is to share that life in all its forms with every one.

Jesus made giving life to all the central goal of his own life and mission: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Fullness of life is the scope of all his works of healing ministry. All the gospels, especially that of John, make giving life the main theme of Jesus' mission. John concludes his gospel as follows: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31).

Jesus declared himself to be the source of life: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25-26).

Jesus became the source of life for all, through his death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit. As John puts it, he understood his death to be a life-giving act: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11). This is also the reason why the Father loves him all the more, because through him, he can offer life in all its fullness to everyone: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life" (Jn 10:17).

1.2 Newness of Life in Jesus Christ

There is something very special about the life that God offers to human beings in Jesus Christ. When Jesus spoke of life, he meant a life with a new dimension altogether. His works of feeding the hungry, liberating those under the power of evil spirits, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, opening the ears of the deaf, curing lepers, the paralytic, the crippled, and raising the dead to life were all acts of service to life. Yet, they were also signs and symbols pointing to a new dimension of life not dreamt of by those who came to him for fullness of life. They pointed to a radically new life. As *Redemptoris Missio* puts it: "The whole New Testament is a hymn to the new life of those who believe in Christ and live in his Church" (RM, 7).

The life offered by Jesus was the very life of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. It is the communication of the Trinitarian life, which at the same time is man's salvation to be received in faith as *Dives in Misericordia* has put it: "It is love which not only creates the good, but also grants participation in the very life of God: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. For he who loves desires to give himself" (no. 7).

There is something radically new in this life which Jesus offers. All other expressions of life gain their ultimate meaning and validity from this new life Jesus offers. On the other hand, without them, the new life would

lose its credibility. The new life in Jesus Christ transcends all its symbols and partial expressions. It cannot be reduced to its socio-economic and ecological dimensions, however praiseworthy, urgent and important to Christian mission.

1.3 A Proclamation of New Life

Christian disciples who have received the new life through faith and the sacraments, which are truly channels of divine life, are called to share it with others. Proclamation of Jesus Christ is truly proclamation of the New Life offered by God. "*Haec est autem vita aeterna: ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum et quem misisti Iesum Christum*" ("And this is eternal life, that they know you who are the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent") (Jn 17:3). In Jesus Christ new life is no more an abstract or verbal label. In him new life becomes a concrete historical person, the incarnate Son of God. This is the reason why we proclaim Jesus Christ to all. "The urgency of missionary activity derives from the radical newness of life brought by Christ" (RM, 7).

On the very day the first disciples of Jesus received the outpouring of the new life, the Holy Spirit, their first task was to proclaim Jesus as "the author of life" (Acts 3:15). The purpose of the proclamation of Jesus Christ was to offer him as the source of new life to everyone willing to accept him in faith and model one's life accordingly. If anyone is thirsty for God, henceforth he must drink from this source of living water. Jesus continues to invite all to come and drink of him in faith: "If any one is thirsty, let him to me come and drink..." (Jn 7:37).

2. The Church at the Service of Life in Jesus Christ

2.1 Bread of Life

Another symbol used for life is bread. Bread in the Old Testament gradually assumed a comprehensive messianic significance. It signified the fullness of life and the Messiah was to give all the bread of life in the end times. Thus we can understand why Jesus offered himself as the "Bread of Life." Before doing this, Jesus multiplied bread for the hungry people who had come out to listen to him. All the evangelists recount the story of this miraculous event.

The multiplication of bread for hungry people was surely an act of love but it was not the last end in itself. Jesus could not and did not solve the problem of the hungry with one act of multiplying bread. He declined to be a social or political messiah to Israel. He had in mind a higher, a radically-new bread. The multiplied and broken bread pointed to it. But the crowd failed to see its true significance: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the

loaves" (Jn 6:26).

For Jesus, the breaking of the bread and distributing it were very important. The breaking was to symbolize his death on the Cross. By his death he became the "bread of life" for all. He is the bread that came down from heaven and yet had to be exalted on the cross to be seen as such. Only then did his words, "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:34), become a reality.

2.2 The Church's Service to Life in Asia

Jesus did ask his disciples to give the people who came to listen to him bread to satisfy their hunger. The Church in its mission has always been concerned with the poor and their needs. Despite limitations of time, theological backgrounds, compromises with the world and lack of true discernment in particular cases, places and times, all admit that the Church has been making an enormous contribution to the needs of the poor in distributing "bread" to people in the form of education, health care, development works, and in the struggle along with the poor for human rights and dignity. This is true of Asia in a special manner.

Today the Church must struggle for new forms of "bread," as service to unborn life, liberation of exploited children, women, ecological integrity, etc. It has, at times, to enlarge its horizon of service to life in its manifold forms in the Asian context, as will be seen in the various papers to be presented here in this assembly.

The ultimate purpose of Jesus' multiplying bread in the wilderness was to lead people to the acceptance of himself as the true "Bread of Life." Neither the people nor the disciples of Jesus saw the real significance of Jesus' deeds and words. Only with the coming of the Spirit did it become clear to them that Jesus himself was man's bread of life.

In the same way, today the disciples of Jesus in Asia must be engaged in distributing "bread" in all its concrete historical forms, and yet go beyond to the distribution of the "bread of life," Jesus Christ, through proclamation and the formation of communities of believers.

The Church in Asia can only offer what Jesus offered and in the way he did it. To separate one from the other is to weaken both, the offer of bread and the bread of life. True discipleship of Jesus in Asia calls for such a twofold engagement.

2.3 Discipleship and the Bread of Life

Jesus became the Bread of Life by his self-emptying on the Cross. To be of true service to life in Asia, the disciples of Jesus must also become

bread of life for others. This calls for a true kenosis, not in words, but in deeds, individually and collectively. Only by "being broken" did Jesus become the "bread of life." The disciple must also "be broken" in service, to be bread for others. Only then can his message of Jesus as the "bread of life" become credible. Only when the Church, the community of disciples, learns to identify itself with the Master in his "becoming bread" can the disciples give bread in all its forms, including the Bread of Life.

The disciples have received the Spirit of life, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Spirit that "stands by," as the word "Paraclete" signifies (*parakletos*, called to stand by). They learn to stand next to Jesus by becoming like him, and to the people deprived of the fullness of life or threatened with death in so many different forms by their willingness to love, suffer for and serve them.

The disciples of Jesus in every age must continue to do what Jesus did. This is the ultimate meaning of being disciples of Jesus. Their task in Asia today cannot be different. This is true in a very particular manner for Asia, where so often life in all its forms is threatened, diminished or even destroyed. Their specific contribution to Asia, which no one else can and will make to Asia, as disciples of Jesus, is to offer him as the "Bread of Life." Then, Jesus can be their source of truth, goodness, love, dignity, communion, and fullness of life.

The disciples of Jesus must place this task at the center of their service to life in Asia. They will do this in the spirit of Jesus, and in the way he did it. God sent his Son into the world because he so loved the world, not to condemn the world but so that it might have life in all its fullness. The disciples of Jesus must have a genuine love and appreciation of its peoples, its cultures and religions. They will follow not the way of rejection or condemnation but of love, dialogue, inculturation, communion, participation.

The disciples of Jesus will have fresh motivation and urgency for their mission to the world of Asia, and methods of approach. But at the heart of everything is the offer of Jesus Christ as the bread of life. God's offer of life to man in all its varied forms did not suffice for man to attain to fullness of life. Hence, he sent his Son to give him the fullness of life. Likewise, the Church's service to life in its varied forms is insufficient, if there is not at its center the offer of Jesus Christ as the bread of life for "the life of the world."

Abundance of earthly bread is no guarantee of a true and full life, as the contemporary situation of developed countries in the West and even in Asia shows. The disciples of Jesus cannot forget the source of life offered by the Father in his Son Jesus Christ, through the outpouring of the Holy

Spirit. They will guard against the danger of being involved exclusively with the distribution of ordinary bread and against forgetting or being silent about the bread of life. They would then cease to be true disciples of Jesus. It would be to reduce God's offer of Jesus Christ as the bread of man's life to socio-economic and ecological concerns and exercises (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 29, 34-35; *Redemptoris Missio*, nos. 58-60).

2.4 Being Disciples in Asia in the Third Millennium

FABC is an Asian community of the disciples of Jesus Christ gathered here in Manila, supported by many other disciples in Asia and elsewhere. It can use this forum to conscientize and animate the whole Asian Church towards a new era in evangelization by offering Jesus Christ as the source of fullness of life. It is obvious that Asia remains a great challenge to evangelization for various religious, philosophical, historical and cultural reasons. In many parts of Asia the Christian presence is less than one-half of one percent of the population.

In this situation, if our documents are to have any effect, there must be disciples to carry out the gigantic agenda of service to life in Asia. The offer of Jesus Christ as the source of new life in Asia will be accompanied by the response of faith, for we know the Spirit of God is at work in the hearts of peoples, cultures and religions, and some will respond positively to the offer. Disciples must make disciples. "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).

This ultimate call-testament of Jesus Christ resounds also today in the world. The Spirit of the Risen Christ, living and present in our epoch, makes it resound in the Church in every continent in a visible manner. Evangelization and the new evangelization is the theme of the recent continental assemblies: the European Synod, the Synod for Africa, the General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America in San Domingo. John Paul II, in his recent Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, considers it opportune to hold a synod of a continental nature for Asia: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." To make disciples means to give life in Jesus Christ to others. This is the mission of the Church; this is the meaning of evangelization.

Asia is the continent in which Christ was born and lived, where most of his Apostles worked. Christ is not a stranger in Asia, his Church is not a foreign Church in Asia. Go therefore and make disciples and give the life in Jesus Christ to others. This call is the more urgent in Asia, not only for theological reasons, but also for practical reasons. In large parts of Asia, the Christian presence is simply not there. If there are not disciples to carry out the service to life, our documents will have little effect on the actual

situation of this continent. Hence, the Christian mission of service to life, especially life in Jesus Christ, needs to be given priority. The appropriate answer to the Asian situation is not doubts or crises about our missionary identity but to follow the guidance of the Spirit and seek all the possible ways of first and new evangelization.

In the situation of being a minority and of facing various difficulties, do not lose heart: "*nolite timere, pusillus grex, quia complacuit Patri vestro dare vobis regnum*" ("Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom") (Lk 12:32). Do not be worried about when to gather in the harvest. The Lord has commanded us to sow, not to reap the harvest, — "One sows and another reaps" (Jn 4:37).

The time of harvest will come also for Asia. We do not know when, but it surely will come because one never sows in vain. Let us only have faith and hope.

CONCLUSION

We are at the threshold of the third millennium of redemption in Jesus Christ. The Jubilee Year 2000 has two dimensions: social and spiritual. Jubilee in the Old Testament was a call for an emancipation of all the dwellers on the land and of land itself: "The jubilee year was meant to restore equality among all the children of Israel" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 11-13; Ex 23:11; Lev 25:1-28; Dt 15:1-16), offering new possibilities of freedom, dignity and peace.

Jesus in his proclamation of the Kingdom in the synagogue at Nazareth introduced a new dimension to jubilee, a spiritual, salvific dimension of freedom from sin and dignity as children of God, through divine adoption, sharing his very life now and the life of the resurrection in the hereafter with his disciples. He called it a time of the "favor of the Lord," an acceptable time.

The two dimensions of the Jubilee Year offer the Church in Asia an opportunity to be at the service of life in its socio-economic and temporal concerns and in its mission of offering life and salvation in Jesus Christ to the people of Asia.

Let me exhort the whole Church in Asia, especially bishops, theologians, priests, religious and laity, to give the service of life in Christ to the people of Asia the highest priority, seeking ever new ways to speak to the cultural, religious and social heart of Asia, "that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

VI. PASTORAL PRESENTATION TO THE HOLY FATHER

1. WORDS OF WELCOME

presented by

Most Rev. Michael Rozario

Archbishop of Dhaka, Bangladesh

FABC Convenor

Your Holiness,

As convenor of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, I have the great honor to welcome you to our Sixth Plenary Assembly. The first and foundational meeting of our Federation took place in this very country, twenty-five years ago, and it was graced by the presence of your predecessor of beloved memory, Pope Paul VI, on his first visit to this country.

These twenty-five years of existence have shown us the importance and pastoral fruitfulness of local churches thinking and acting, not in isolation but with one heart and with one mind.

Considering the Holy See's mission to foster and protect the unity of the Churches in the communion of charity, we see the existence of our Federation as a service to the universal church. FABC has been for us a very concrete and effective form for sharing our Asian way of thinking about the implications of the Gospel of Jesus for all the peoples of Asia. As such, it can also be considered as a very direct instrument available for the Holy Father, and we humbly place this plenary assembly and all its activities at Your Holiness' disposal.

The assembly theme is: "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life." We have been considering different aspects of this central theme in the light of the Gospel and the experiences of the varied Asian cultures from which we come. Drawing from our common experiences with so many different peoples, we have been able to understand and be more conscious of the central unifying issues of the many religions and cultures present in our continent. We sincerely hope that our deliberations on the theme of life may contribute to a more marked Catholic presence, through its vision of life in the great Asian continent as we approach the Third Christian Millennium.

And now, may I present to Your Holiness our assembly's submission on three important topics: proclamation, life, and ecology.

2. PROCLAMATION
presented by
Most Rev. Anthony Lobo
Bishop of Islamabad - Rawalpindi

Holy Father:

Asia has changed radically since the Manila visit twenty-five years ago of your predecessor of holy memory, Paul VI, an event which also occasioned the birth of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — the FABC. In the Sixties, Asia was a sleeping economic giant whose peoples' daily life was bounded by the slow rhythm of village culture and ancient traditions.

Today, in the Nineties, Asia is the growth center of the world. Technology has captured the Asian soul, transforming peasants into slum dwellers and migrant workers, alienated from their cultural and spiritual roots. The economic impulse has introduced into Asian societies what your Holiness has termed as "economic, financial and social mechanisms" which accentuate the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest.¹

We who stand at the threshold of the Third Millennium must ask ourselves how to proclaim the Gospel in the face of a new world economic order that has replaced *orbis christianus* with a technocratic society. It is a technical civilization which unleashes new forms of poverty and slavery — a poverty which corrupts the human spirit in a degradation worse than material poverty. It is a slavery which chains man to unbridled passions that threaten to destroy families and cultures. Indeed, Asia has awakened, but its journey towards growth can lead to a highway of despair, if it is not at the same time also a spiritual advance.

True, Asia is home to ancient religions, the "living faiths of mankind,"² which also reflect the divine light of the hidden Christ in our midst. But historical reality leads us to recognize the limits of their spiritual capacities to heal the schisms in the soul of Asia and to satisfy the deeper yearnings of its peoples.

This, then, is a picture of the Asian Areopagus. Like the Apostle, we must proclaim the Unknown God,³ to peoples who worship the gold and silver of untrammelled material progress. To a generation possessed by the spirits of consumerism and secularism, we must proclaim with clarity "Jesus, the God-Man, crucified and risen,"⁴ as humanity's hope.

FABC has tried to meet this challenge of a New Evangelization by trying to understand who Jesus is in the Asian context.⁵ Who is this Christ

whose death can ignite the hearts of Asia's martyrs in Vietnam, Korea, Japan, China, the Philippines, Thailand and India? Who is this Son of God whose words can inspire an increasing number of Asian-born missionaries and religious to give him undying fidelity? Who is this Jesus whose personality is so attractive to Asia's youth in search of a model on whom to pattern their lives?

Our search for an answer to this question brought us to encounter the Lord in his poor. Like the Baptist, we were directed to find the Christ among the rejects of society, the despised misfits of a technocratic order. And once again we hear the mandate of the Master to proclaim the Good News to the poor.⁶

But proclamation will not produce commitment and renewal unless accompanied by prophetic witnessing. The evangelizer's own life must give splendid testimony to the moral truth and value of his or her message. The ancient sages and spiritual guides of Asia were renowned for their practice of detachment and asceticism. Shall we, children of God's light, instead be like reeds swaying in the breeze, leading undisciplined and luxurious lives? As you stated in your homily two years ago in Denver, the Gospel must be proclaimed through the power of one's witness.⁷ And the strength of that witness depends on the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ — this is the same Lord whom we have heard, whom we have seen, whom we have touched in the midst of his chosen poor. Thus, it is in Christ's total giving of himself for suffering mankind that our discipleship finds its meaning and mission.

Holy Father, because of your arduous apostolic journeys and because of your personal sufferings which served to unite you more closely with the mystery of Christ's cross and with suffering humanity, you have become our principal evangelizer. Your words and your life help us to understand the mentality and attitude of modern Asia and how to illumine our people with the clear and vigorous proclamation that the Lord Jesus Christ is our saviour and the answer to Asia's search for unity and meaning.

1. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no 16.

2. *Toward a New Age in Mission*. International Congress on Mission, Manila, December 2-7, 1979, vol. I-II, p. 35.

3. Acts 17 : 23-28.

4. *Inauguration of the African Synod*, Pope John Paul II, no. 5.

5. *Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life*, FABC, April 1994, no. 25.

6. Lk 7 : 22-23.

7. *Mass with Youth Forum Delegates*, Denver, August 14, 1993.

3. LIFE
presented by
Most Rev. Joseph Ti-Kang
Archbishop of Taipei

Holy Father:

One of the hallmarks of Christian civilization is respect for life: human life — this is the second pressing concern of the FABC. The student of history will agree that the presence of the Church in Asia ushered into its cultures the life-giving values of compassion, self-sacrifice and loving mercy. The proclamation of the Good News in its frontiers by courageous missionaries opened a new chapter in Asia's history which, till then, only knew ancient creeds with their tendency towards self-centered and passive religiosity. With Christianity came hospitals and orphanages, colleges and schools for the poor, congregations of religious men and women dedicated to charity. They served not only to heal broken bodies but to give Asians a new vision of values and practices leading to "a civilization of love"¹ and life.

Yet we can ask today: "Is Asia home to cultures of life based on love?" For, as Asia surges forward towards industrialization, there are increasing signs of practices hostile to life. These the FABC enumerated in its Fifth Plenary Assembly as: militarization, exploitative tourism, discrimination against women, unjust treatment of migrant workers, and the continuing pervasive poverty.²

Living in Asia, we have also become aware that, as the use of the instrument of violence declines in international affairs, it gains greater appeal at the national level. This is confirmed by the media's glorification of violence, by the alliance of criminality and politics, by the promotion of abortion in the name of selfish prosperity. Our streets have become zones of danger, our children are brutally abused and, while the value of our properties increases, that of human life is diminished.

But our study should not stop with statistics, no matter how startling they are. We should study the causes of the phenomena we experience in accordance with the proverb of your country: "Do not punish a blind sword, but rather the hand."³ Both in your interview in *La Stampa* and in your homily inaugurating the Synod for Africa, your Holiness has pointed out that the cause of the serious social and human problems facing the world today is the anti-life culture of unbridled capitalism.⁴

This, then, is the Leviathan against which we must struggle. In its degenerate form this economic system readily sacrifices the human spirit at the altar of efficiency and progress. Its ensemble of technical and psychological instruments can reach every town and village in Asia, changing behaviors, poisoning imaginations, controlling relationships, thereby creating a new culture where death rather than life triumphs — not death merely in its grosser forms of murder and assassination, but a death which drains the human spirit of its nobility and destiny. It is a death daily experienced by street children in our polluted environment. It is a white death endured by Asia's poor who are forced to adopt "practices hostile to life" in favor of economic systems "which serve the selfishness of the rich."⁵

The struggle for Asia's soul is between two cultures — one which brings in its wake, death, and the other, life. We must therefore be involved in a cultural transformation. This is brought about by inserting Gospel values to guide the criteria by which Asians make decisions, to reorient the educational systems which influence their children minds, to humanize the processes by which they are governed.

In this struggle, our faith assures us that ultimate victory belongs to those who defend life and who act in the service of life. He who said: "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10) will not be denied full realization of his prayer to the Father. It is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life that is our best response to the culture of death that has surfaced in the Asian continent.

Holy Father, in this perilous journey towards life, we have in you a compassionate and understanding brother-pilgrim. You understand us, for you yourself come from a country which fought hard for its freedom, a country subjected to the influence and aggression of its neighbors. It is no wonder that your heart spontaneously reaches out to side with the poor, the defenseless, the marginalized. We make our own your prayer of thanksgiving:

"Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for life ... Thank you, thank you for the life you gave us and that you are giving us, you are permitting us. Thank you through your Mother, our Lady ... Amen."⁶

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1. Prayer for Archdiocese of Denver, August, 14 1993.
 2. Held in Bandung, Indonesia, July, 27, 1990, under the theme: "Journeying Together Toward the Third Millennium."
 3. By the Polish poet, Mickiewicz, which the Pope quoted in his *La Stampa* interview, *L'Osservatore Romano*, November, 17, 1993, 6/7.

4. *L' Osservatore Romano*, November, 17, 1993, 6/7.
5. Homily inaugurating the Synod for Africa, Pope John Paul II, no. 3.
6. Final Homily to Youth, Denver, August, 15, 1993.

4. ECOLOGY

presented by

Most Rev. Anthony Soter Fernandez

Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur

Holy Father:

Our third concern is for ecology. The thread which unites this concern with the first two, namely, proclamation and human life — is the theme of God's gift of life: supernatural life as proclaimed by the Church, human life given us by the Creator, and now, planetary life linked to the integrity of creation. Placing these three concerns under one unifying theme is in itself an indication of our new awareness of their essential inter-relationship. We have come to realize that the achievements of the human community must be used to heal and nourish the earth rather than to denude or destroy it.

Asia was once a vast biological treasure-house whose environmental riches have been subjected to massive levels of destruction. For example, in our host country, the Philippines, there used to be 17 million hectares of rain forests. Today there remain only 984,000 hectares, or the equivalent of only 5 years of wood supply.¹ The extent of the ecological damage all over Asia was outlined by a 1993 FABC Colloquium on Faith and Science. Its participants noted what they termed as "serious distortion of the cycles in the entire ecosystem"² namely: deforestation, depletion of non-renewable energy resources, destruction of coral reefs, contamination of food by pesticides, loss of fertile land through excessive use of chemical fertilizers.

The Church in Asia has come to the defense of our beautiful but fragile planet, from whose seasonal changes our liturgy draws some of its insights on birth and death, on decline and regeneration. Some of these initiatives are the following: early in 1988, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral letter on ecology under the title: "What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?" In 1989, the Indonesian Bishops' Conference issued its own pastoral letter entitled: "Promotion of Underprivileged Development: to Respect and to Develop Environment." And in 1993, the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincies of the FABC organized a colloquium which called for replacing the concept of

humanity as “master of the universe” with the “concept of stewardship.”

The Church is not alone in this concern. The Eastern religions have made contributions to increasing our awareness of our harmony and unity with nature. Ecumenical groups have formed solidarity movements between industrialized Japan and its neighbors to promote environmental protection.

But on this vital issue, we might once more run the danger of seeing only symptoms rather than of searching for their root causes — we might then be “punishing the sword and not the hand.” The problems of the environment will not be solved merely by funding campaigns to save the ozone layer, or to use environmentally friendly products instead of plastics. We need a serious moral shift in favor of an integral rather than a fragmented approach.

Towards this direction, we found guidance in the 1990 World Day of Peace Message of Your Holiness. This message, entitled: “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation,” clearly situated the ecological crisis as a moral problem. We quote: “When man turns his back on the Creator’s plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of created order” (no. 5).

Among these disorders are the immoral application of technology in a manner that leads to disrespect for life, that promotes the reckless exploitation of natural resources, as well as to indiscriminate genetic manipulation. In Asia, we still recall the more than 3,000 persons in Bhopal, India, who died 11 years ago in an industrial accident that could have been prevented.

What moral responses can we give to the actuations of a Leviathan guided not by moral principles but by blind technological factors? Here, your message gives us a formula to follow. It cautions us against repeating the errors made in the past by the industrialized economies. It urges us to address the structural forms of poverty. It inspires us to adopt a more simple, moderate and disciplined way of life.

In the face of a culture of profligacy and destruction, we must with courage and faith put forward a counter-culture of sacrifice and compassion.

In conclusion, Holy Father, we thank you for your fraternal patience and solicitude in listening to our contemporary concerns. Your journey has not only traversed the many miles from Rome to Manila; it has routed you deeply into the centers of the Church in Asia, which you have illu-

mined with the radiance of your faith and love. Beloved pilgrim, our foremost evangelizer whom Christ chose to bring his Church to the next millennium — from the hearts of all Asia — thank you !

1. *Business World*, December, 26 1990.

2. "Root Causes of the Environmental Crisis," FABC Colloquium, January 31-February 5, 1993, Tagaytay City, Philippines.

VII. THE ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Dear Brother Bishops,

1. In preparing for this meeting with the pastors of the Church in Asia I have prayed to be an apt instrument of the Holy Spirit, who at all times and in every place gives life to the Church and, according to Christ's promise, leads her into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13). I have prayed to be able — in the words of the Psalm — to sing "his praise in the assembly of the faithful" (Ps 149:1). It is certainly with a song of praise and thanksgiving to God in my heart that I join you in marking the happy occasion of the *Silver Jubilee of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences*.

I have been deeply touched by Archbishop Rozario's warm words of welcome and I also wish to thank the other bishops for their thoughtful remarks on the vital questions of proclamation, life and ecology, which form the subject of your reflections during these days.

2. The assemblies of your Federation — of which this is the sixth — not only provide a forum for exchanging pastoral experiences and discussing issues of common interest; but more significantly, they give expression to the profound *ecclesial communion and affective collegiality* which unite the bishops of South, Southeast and East Asia with one another and with the See of Peter. Together with our brother bishops throughout the world we feed the one flock which Christ has redeemed with his precious blood (cf. 1 Pt 1:19). With one accord, therefore, let us give thanks to God for the "bonds of unity, charity and peace" which link us with each other under "the chief Shepherd" (1 Pt 5:4), whose servants we are.

Our meeting is taking place against the background of the Tenth World Youth Day, which has just concluded. We are all witnesses of the generous response of the young to the Church's summons to take up the pilgrim Cross of Christ. In this case, tribute must be given to the Filipino

bishops who gave close attention to the spiritual preparation of the young people taking part. Yet, in a real sense it is these young people, and others like them all over the world, who are calling the Church — inviting the pastors of the Church — to ever greater efforts to present Christ to them in the fullness of his grace and truth. My words, therefore, are meant to be a fraternal encouragement, exhorting you as Saint Paul exhorted Titus: that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete the gracious work of his ministry (cf. 2 Cor 8:6). It is your ministry as bishops, and the situation in which it is exercised, that is the underlying theme of these thoughts which I share with you.

3. Since the establishment of your Federation twenty-five years ago, rapid technological progress and economic growth have *revolutionized the face of Asia*. While affirming the benefits of this development, the Church must nevertheless make a realistic assessment of the price paid for this modernization and confront those aspects which pose “an immense threat to life: not only to the life of individuals but also to that of civilization itself” (*Letter to Families*, no. 21). Even more striking than Asia’s recent material progress has been the *transformation of the spiritual landscape* of the continent. Religious indifferentism and exaggerated individualism now threaten the traditional values which, generally speaking, bestowed meaning and harmony on the life of individuals and on the communities they composed. The forces of secularization tend to undermine your rich religious and cultural heritage. *This great continent is at a spiritual crossroads.*

Such a moment can only confirm the Church’s resolve to carry out her *primary mission*: the proclamation of Jesus Christ, and the promotion of the values of God’s Kingdom (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 34). And in cooperation with every force for good, Catholics on this continent should feel the urgency of building up “*the civilization of love*, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty, which find their full attainment in Christ” (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 52).

4. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, Crucified and Risen, is the hope of humanity. He is the foundation of our faith, the reason for our hope and the source of our love. The Incarnate Word, the *Savior and Mediator* between God and man (cf. 1 Tim 2:5), is “the only one able to reveal God and lead to God” (*Redemptoris Mission*, no. 5). And Christ alone can fully reveal the ultimate grandeur and dignity of the human person and his destiny (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22). The mystery of God’s saving love revealed in Jesus Christ is a doctrine of faith, not a theological opinion. *And this Good News impels the Church to evangelize!* It impels bishops to foster evangelization as a primary task and responsibility of their ministry.

The *magna charta* of Evangelization remains the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI, with the complement of the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, which I wrote in 1990 in order to defend and promote the concept of “missionary evangelization” (no. 2), or the mission *ad gentes*, which seemed to have lost appeal and even validity in the eyes of some.

Paul VI’s notion of evangelization faithfully restates Christ’s teaching, the Church’s tradition, and the insights of the Second Vatican Council. It is a comprehensive notion which avoids the pitfall of overemphasis on one or other aspect of this complex reality, to the detriment of others. In Pope Paul’s view, evangelization includes *those activities which dispose people to listen to the Christian message, the proclamation of the message itself, and the catechesis which unfolds the riches of truth and grace* contained in the kerygma. Moreover, evangelization is directed not only to individuals but also to cultures, which need to be regenerated by contact with the Gospel. Human development and liberation are integral parts of this evangelizing mission, but they are not identical with it, and they are not the end of evangelization. Paul VI was clear about the fact that evangelization cannot be reduced to a merely temporal project of human betterment. It must always include a clear and unambiguous proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior who brings that “abundant life” (Jn 10:10), which is no less than eternal life in God.

5. Allow me to make some general remarks about evangelizing this continent. A first requirement of this ecclesial task is *the renewal of the Catholic community at every level* — bishops, priests, religious and laity — so that all may contribute to spreading the faith in which we stand. Our prayer must be that the priests, religious and laity in your pastoral care will never lose heart in accomplishing the *prophetic mission entrusted to each one*. “Every disciple is personally called by name; no disciple can withhold making a response: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16)” (*Christifideles Laici*, no. 33). Indeed, to repeat something I once said to the Italian Bishops, the new evangelization “is not born of the will of those who decide to become propagators of their faith. It is born of the Spirit, who moves the Church to expand” (*Address to Italian Bishops on a Liturgical Course*, February 12, 1988). Everyone who has received the Spirit, every person who is baptized and confirmed, is called to be an evangelizer.

Without forgetting other important components of this renewal, “the signs of the times” urgently call for *enabling the laity to assume their specific role* in bringing the truths and values of the Gospel to bear on the realities of the temporal sphere. In fact, when we try to imagine the future of evangelization on this continent, do we not see it as the *irradiation of a vi-*

brant, living faith practised and declared by individual Christians and Christian communities, big or small, which, with few exceptions, form a *pusillus grex* in the midst of numerically superior "hearers" of the word?

To "irradiate" the faith implies the highest standards of Christian living — a rich life of prayer and sacramental practice, and moral integrity — on the part of everyone. To proclaim to others "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23) demands of each member of the Church the holiness and integrity of one for whom "to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21). Proclamation becomes credible when it is accompanied by *sanctity of life*, sincerity of purpose and respect for others and for the whole of creation. The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* exhorts the Church's members: "You must be like the first Christians and radiate enthusiasm and courage, in generous devotion to God and neighbour. In a word, you must set yourselves on the path of holiness. Only thus can you... relive in your own countries the missionary epic of the early Church" (no. 91).

Herein lies a great challenge which confronts each bishop, as the principal teacher and guide of the faithful in truth and holiness of life. But here too we have the source of our certain hope and of our optimism. The Church's future will not be *solely* the result of our human efforts but, more fundamentally, the result of the workings of the Divine Spirit, whom we must not impede but assist.

6. A further consideration is the cultural framework in which evangelization in Asia has to be carried out. The religious traditions of very ancient cultures remain powerful forces in the East, and present you with particular challenges. The Church esteems these spiritual traditions as "living expressions of the soul of vast groups of people. They carry within them the *echo of thousands of years of searching for God*, a quest which is incomplete but often made with great sincerity and righteousness of heart" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 53). While the Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in the great religions (*Nostra Aetate*, no. 2), she can only hope that one day this preparation for the Gospel will come to maturity in ways which are fully Christian and fully Asian. As bishops of the Churches in Asia, part of your concern must be to stimulate the growth of the seeds of truth and goodness found in those religions.

Under your pastoral supervision efforts are being made to increase understanding, respect and cooperation between Christians and followers of other religious traditions; and in many cases, in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, various forms of dialogue are now taking place and bearing fruit. *Interreligious dialogue* should not remain only a matter of theological discussion. Where possible, it must reach to the grassroots, correcting misunderstandings which communities

have of one another, and fostering solidarity in the building of a more just and human society. This "dialogue of life" must go forward with balance, sincerity and openness (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 57), always in the conviction that authentic dialogue is achieved only by "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

7. Furthermore, as bishops you have the demanding task of accepting Saint Paul's invitation to become "all things to all men (1 Cor 9:22), identifying yourselves with the life and traditions of your people so that *the perennial truth of Revelation can be expressed in ways that are meaningful and convincing*. On you rests responsibility for fostering with wisdom and fidelity the most suitable means for communicating the Gospel to the various Asian cultures. The more you take into account the questions, religious formation, language, signs and symbols of those whom you wish to lead to Christ, the more effectively you will serve the cause of evangelization (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 63).

However arduous this task of authentic inculturation, we can take consolation from the experience of the early Church. Although the preaching of Christ Crucified and Risen ran counter to the religious culture of those to whom the Gospel was first preached, the Holy Spirit guided the Church's growth. Beginning at Pentecost and continuing from generation to generation, the Spirit of Truth has ever accompanied the Church's proclamation, leading its hearers to the "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:6), which has then purified and elevated their way of life, imbuing customs and behavior with a Christian outlook and spirit.

8. Another recurring aspect of your pastoral activity is *the relationship between proclamation and human development*. Briefly, let us acknowledge that no human need, no human suffering can leave Christ's disciples indifferent or insensitive. Yet, the Church does not have and cannot claim to have a "technical" solution to all the ills which afflict humanity. Rather the Church herself, like a pilgrim in a foreign land, presses forward amid the difficulties and even persecutions of the world, strong only in the consolations of God (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8). At the same time it is her duty always to seek to make her voice heard in the conscience of individuals and the consciousness of society, defending the dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and upholding the principles and values of faith, truth, freedom, justice and solidarity. She knows that the terrible evils which affect humanity have their source not only in man's injustice towards man but in man's radical injustice in the sight of God. In fulfilling her evangelizing mission, therefore, the Church cannot neglect the needs of the poor, the hungry, the defenceless, the oppressed and the culturally-deprived. But those involved in that mission must know that their responsibility goes far beyond healing the

wounds of this life. They must also communicate the "new life" which comes through the grace of Jesus Christ. The Church's mission and destiny is to save man, the whole man. At this level there is no distinction of persons, neither Jew nor Greek (cf. Rom 10:12), neither rich nor poor. All are offered God's word and the grace of redemption, because all are sinners (cf. Rom 5:12).

9. Dear Brother Bishops, if ever you feel discouraged by the seemingly impossible task of a more effective evangelization — perhaps due to the fact that some Asian cultures seem disinclined to listen to the Gospel message — I urge you to remember that, when you proclaim "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24), "it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:20).

At the same time, you have to make it clear that the act of faith, and reception into the communion of the Church through Baptism, must always be entirely free (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 160). *Evangelization must never be imposed.* It involves love and respect for those being evangelized. While ever insisting on the Church's right and duty to proclaim with joy the Good News of God's mercy, Catholics must carefully avoid any suspicion of coercion or devious persuasion (cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 4). On the other hand, accusations of proselytism — which is far from the Church's genuine missionary spirit — and a one-sided understanding of religious pluralism and tolerance should not be allowed to stifle your mission to the peoples of Asia.

10. Before I end, I wish to appeal to you to do all you can to foster what is generally called the mission *ad gentes*. Despite the fact that some try to minimize this holy duty, the Church cannot renounce her vocation to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). She can never be content as a small minority or an inward-looking community. Indeed, the Church firmly believes that every person has "the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ — riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 53). As the dawn of the Third Millennium draws near, it is "particularly in Asia, towards which the Church's mission *ad gentes* ought to be chiefly directed" (*Redemptoris Missio*, no. 37). The mission *ad gentes*, which often implies the idea of setting out toward new lands and new peoples, today implies above all setting out towards new areas of *Asia's human geography*: towards those sectors of society made up of the urban poor, migrants and their often abandoned families, refugees, young people, and the modern areopagus of the media of social communication.

I ask you to pay careful attention to missionary evangelization in all

your pastoral planning: in catechesis, preaching, priestly formation, the training of religious, the apostolate to families and youth, the allocation of personnel, the sharing of resources, and in the prayer which Christians must always offer for the propagation of the faith. All individuals, associations and communities should ask themselves if there is more that they could do in order to open wide to Christ the doors of Asia.

11. In these years of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, your particular Churches are fully committed to giving a fresh *impulse to the evangelization of Asia*. Just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a *great harvest of faith* will be reaped in this vast and vital continent. If the Church in Asia is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority.

The Church must face all these tasks with the means which the Second Vatican Council has given us, one of which is the Synod of Bishops. In the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* I have mentioned also a "plan for a continent-wide Synod" for Asia. I urge you to give serious consideration to such an event which could greatly help to lead the Church in Asia more firmly into the next millennium.

In your work you are strengthened by the example and intercession of the *great host of Martyrs* who have given life to the Church in Asia through the shedding of their blood. Ablaze with love of Christ and his Church, those great men and women — from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam and elsewhere — were baptized "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Lk 3:16). With your missionaries and the Saints who have borne witness to the Gospel, they became the seed of Christianity in your lands.

In closing, I make my own the memorable words spoken by Pope Paul VI twenty-five years ago here in Manila: "Jesus Christ is our constant preaching; it is his name that we proclaim to the ends of the earth (cf. Rom 10:18) and throughout all ages (Rom 9:5). Remember this and ponder on it: the Pope has come among you and has proclaimed Jesus Christ" (Homily, November 29, 1970).

To you dear Brothers, this grace has been given in South, Southeast and East Asia: "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). I entrust you, your pastoral endeavors and all your people to Mary, Mother of the Redeemer and Star of the New Evangelization, and I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

VIII. THE REPORTS OF THE WORKSHOPS*

1. Workshop: Prayer, Contemplation and Holiness,

The Church, Community of Christian Discipleship in its Service to Life

(Consult FABC Papers No. 70 and No. 72a)

A. The workshop is meant to take up the theological basis for the final statement of the plenary assembly itself. Its discussions are meant to indicate what points of emphasis we would recommend from:

1. Fr. Tagle's paper (FABC Paper No. 70): "Jesus Christ: His Service to Life": Discipleship in the Spirit of Life"

2. Cardinal Jozef Tomko's inaugural address, "The Church in Asia at the Service of Life in Jesus Christ"

3. Fr. Arevalo's paper (FABC Paper No. 72a): "Prayer, Contemplation and Holiness: the Church, Community of Christian Discipleship in its Service to Life"

4. This last paper (FABC Paper No. 72a) was intended to link up Fr. Tagle's text and its themes to the experience of prayer and the Christian life.

Prayer is here understood as FABC II (Calcutta) understood it:

— as *Christian* prayer, and thus *communion with the Trinity*, in and through *Christ Jesus*;

— as, therefore, *ecclesial*, prayer offered from *within* the life of the Church;

— thus, *centered on the Eucharist*, the presence of Christ in the Church and in the world;

— flowing, finally, into *deeds of loving commitment* to others; into self-giving to our brothers and sisters, especially those in need.

5. FABC II wanted to meet the oft-voiced complaint in Asia:

Catholics are known as people who run schools, clinics, social service and social action centers, and people turn to them for these services. But Catholic communities are not known for their prayer

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

lives. Rarely is a priest or religious sister sought after as a person of deep prayer and contemplation as guide in the life of prayer.

The workshop felt that the theses of FABC II needed to be reemphasized at the present moment in the life of our local Churches.

B. The workshop thus insisted on the need to give a strong, ringing re-affirmation of some theological bases which undergird our "service to life" to Asian peoples. For example,

1. From Fr. Tagle's paper:

For the disciples of Jesus, life is communion with Jesus' life, death and resurrection. For the disciples of Jesus, life is living in God's presence within the community of the disciples. It is a life of relationship, in Jesus, in the Spirit of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus share in this sacrifice.

The main contribution of Asian Christians to the quest for fuller life for Asian peoples is our living experience of the Trinitarian God of Life. In turn, this is lived out in the whole of their lives, in their action and praxis, in terms of prayer and suffering.

2. Also, from Cardinal Tomko's inaugural address:

Today the Church of Asia must struggle for new forms of bread as service to manifold needs in the Asian context. Thus the disciples must be engaged in distributing "bread" in all its concrete historical forms. But they must yet go beyond to the distribution of the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, through proclamation and the formation of communities of believers.

The Church in Asia can only offer what Jesus offered and in the way he did it. To separate one from the other is to weaken both, the offer of bread and of the Bread of Life. True discipleship of Jesus in Asia calls for such a twofold engagement.

Jesus became the Bread of Life by his self-emptying on the Cross. To be of true service to life in Asia, the disciples of Jesus must also become bread of life to others. Only by being "broken" did Jesus become the Bread of Life. The disciple must also be "broken" in service, to be bread for others. Only then can this message of Jesus as the Bread of Life become credible.

C. In the discussions the following realities, both positive and negative,

emerged for reflection:

1. Without doubt, in many parts of Asia, there is a real hunger for God, for authentic contact with God, for the experience of the Living God.

We see this among significant numbers of young people, among communities of the poor, among wealthy and influential Christians, professionals, people in government, etc. We see this also among followers of other religions.

We see in all this a true presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who very often moves in the hearts of peoples, sometimes without much support from us, pastoral leaders.

If we ourselves do not pray more and more deeply, how can we respond to this "sign of the times?"

2. In some Asian countries, material prosperity is growing, and we witness a decline in prayer life, sadly, among priests and religious too. The laity, in whom the desire to know God is felt, often cannot find reliable guides to help them in the ways of prayer, as well as in the ways of deeper reflection, theological and spiritual.

Secularization, which accompanies technological progress and growing material well-being, often becomes an all-surrounding atmosphere, weakening and dissolving the spiritual life of the young and often even their elders. In countries with "tiger economies", this is an increasing phenomenon. We in the Church must attend to this "sign of the times" with a sense of urgency.

3. One bright point. We sometimes see among those committed to living and working among the poor as disciples of Jesus a remarkable deepening in prayer, in authentic self-giving and self-sacrifice, and genuine experience of God, given as gifts of the Spirit. (Perhaps a new spirituality is being born here?) Whether in charitable works (as with Mother Teresa of Calcutta), in shared lives of poverty and powerlessness, in the exercise of other works of mercy — corporal or spiritual, many Christians are finding a new integration of compassion-and-commitment, on the one hand, and contemplation-and-communion, on the other, of prayer and praxis. Both sides of Christian life and ministry must be reaffirmed, again and again. There is a path, a pedagogy of Christian practice and self-giving here which we must discern, celebrate, and foster. Asia needs this spirituality in the various diverse contexts wherein the Church lives today.

elix In the recent past, some have tried to insist on social and political involvement as separated from the pursuit of prayer and interiority. Almost universally, such a “divorce” eventually ends in abandonment of both praxis and prayer, the end of Christian commitment and/or religious or priestly perseverance.

4. We must review, or reconsider, our pastoral attitudes regarding devotional life and its practices, among Christians, especially among Catholics.

Our post-Vatican II piety is rightly:

- more biblically-rooted
- more liturgical in its expression
- more conscious of doctrinal content

True. But we must not destroy forms of devotional practice which the faithful draw nourishment from, largely because they spring from the need for symbols in human lives and culture. And this, not only among illiterate or poorly-educated sectors of society, but among intellectuals, influentials, professional people, among youth. The Spirit has used and surely still uses these as vehicles of Christian experience and of Christian faith-life. Careful discernment must be exercised on this point.

Popular religiosity must be seriously reevaluated in our diverse Asian contexts. We must do this for Asian situations, so vastly diverse. (A suggestion is here made to the FABC Theological Advisory Commission.)

E.g., devotion to our Blessed Mother (so important and so dominant in the Philippines, and in most Catholic communities in Asia); the *totus tuus* entrustment to Christ, with Mary; the cultus of the Heart of Jesus, pilgrimages, novena prayers ... They must be purified, deepened, related to the theology of baptismal vows, to the active practice of love of neighbor, to social commitment — yes. But not unthinkingly set aside, because they still bear life, the life of faith, hope and love. A wise pastoral pedagogy must accompany them. Priests and other Catholics who have grown in deeper ways of prayer can help others re-discover these forms of popular religiosity in depth.

5. Asian Catholics (and other Christians) can probably help to renew the understanding of the Cross and the Paschal Mystery — in the universal Church.

How? Through a living out of the Beatitudes as they can be realized in Asia, in so many situations:

- the suffering of Christians under repressive political regimes, in the

crossfire of fratricidal conflicts, in poverty, in refugee situations, in exile due to economic hardships; — in minority situations of powerlessness, frustration, proximity to death.

Christians must live out what Colossians 1:24-27 says: to rejoice in our sufferings, because thus we make up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ for his body the Church. — The great Christian truth of dying with Christ bringing forth life in his Spirit. Thus, Paul says, "It is my joy to suffer for you."

We suffer, we "die daily," not for the life of the Church only, but also *pro mundi vita*, for the life of the world. Our suffering is the seed of hope. The secularized world sees only negativity in suffering; we Christians rejoice to unite our suffering with Christ's, and we know it is the seed of life for the world, the true seed of hope for all of human history.

6. Asia is less than 3% Christian. We are in the midst of an immense "missionary situation," truly a small island, a tiny minority, in the midst of a vast ocean of humanity of other religions.

This is a situation, not for frustration, but of fearless hope. Past missionary efforts were from "positions of power": missionaries came from powerful nations. Now, in Asia, we return to the "little flock" of Jesus and his Apostles — poor, powerless, humiliated by our insignificance, no longer rich and strong in many Asian countries. "Do not fear, little flock, for my Father has promised to you the Kingdom!" (cf. Cardinal Tomko's talk). We can sow in lowliness and poverty, as Jesus did. We may ourselves not reap, but we sow in hope, in humbleness, in joy. "*The time of harvest will also come for Asia.*" "Surely it will come. Let us only have faith, and hope."

D. Other points were noted that cannot be developed at length here

1. The need of a strong Trinitarian theological base for our reflection: God the Father of mercy, the redeeming Son in whom alone all humanity has its hope, the life-giving Spirit. (Three of the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II.)

2. Not only individuals, but communities must learn to pray, to share, to give of themselves in love, to join their lives to the sacrifice and dying of Jesus. How do our communities pray as communities? The need of smaller faith-Scripture study-prayer groups.

3. Renewing our Eucharistic life in communities. The Eucharist cre-

ates community, empowers sharing and sacrifice, “sends forth” to mission. How are our Eucharists celebrated? Can they feed experiences of God?

4. We must challenge ourselves and our communities to deeper spirituality — this is our greatest, most crying need — a spirituality that is an authentic following of Jesus, a discipleship of his cross, a discipleship which gives hope.

5. Regarding charismatic communities: it is felt that these may be initial phases in a conversion-experience, which need to move forward to maturity in the future.

Our priests and bishops must accompany such communities, foster their catechetical or theological instruction. Left to themselves, they can turn fundamentalist, or be led into wrong ways.

Priests themselves need formation to lead/guide these communities.

7. TIME magazine’s article on Pope John Paul II as “man of the year” quotes Mother Teresa on the Pope. She says he is “a man of profound faith, unceasing prayer, unshakeable hope: a man deeply in love with God.” The Pope’s Manila visit shows the *power of holiness* to draw people to Christ and to God. Holiness itself is a way of evangelizing.

8. By way of example, Australian young people, coming to the Philippines for World Youth Day, have been moved and questioned by the manifest faith and Catholic culture of Filipino young people they have met — indications of a sense of the sacred and a pride and joy in Catholic identity and Catholic life.

9. The workshop as a whole seconded Cardinal Tomko’s remarks on the need for a renewal of spirituality as people’s faith is confronted with contemporary issues: development work by Christians; preferential option for the poor; action for justice and human rights; ecological concerns.

10. “Community prayer, community spirituality”: How are these to be fostered in practice? Present and future priests need instruction and formation on this point; developing skills for this important work.

E. Pastoral Recommendations

1. To the FABC Theological Advisory Commission: Place the themes of “popular religiosity and piety” and “Asian spirituality” as topics for future discussions and publication. An Asian reflection, from data gathered in Asia. How should Asian pastoral leaders regard ways of popular piety? (Even in other religious traditions?)

2. The need for direction in prayer for seminarians ... Further formation is nowadays almost indispensable. Since Asian sensibilities, etc., differ from those of other countries, there is need to have local priests get the appropriate formation for this priority concern. (Bishops, please note this!) To help seminarians who will work in parishes, we need priests who have had that experience and can pray. Question: Do we have, as a first step, a good introduction of our seminarians to prayer? In classes of spiritual theology? Are retreats often held in silence, so they can be helped to pray better? Are faculty members men of prayer, of contemplation, so they can serve as role models?

3. Some planned reflection on FABC texts to see what truth there is in the reproach that FABC is unilaterally "social activist." If this is false, it might be helpful for a FABC paper to take up this point. (Fr. Jacques Dupuis' FABC Paper is a beginning of this defense of the balance in FABC texts.) Why is there an impression that FABC texts are predominantly biased towards social action and socio-political activism? Perhaps a plenary assembly needs to be newly resurrected!

2. Workshop: Dialogue at the Service of Life (Consult FABC Paper No. 72b)

A. Different Attempts and Experiences of Dialogue

1. Taiwan: Catholics and Buddhists have had joint seminars and study sessions to reflect on their responsibility in relation to the problems of their society, and have decided to collaborate on social projects.

They also discussed family values which are being eroded by modernity. As a result of this dialogue they have developed mutual trust and respect, to some extent.

2. Indonesia: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims have come together with the conviction that they can work together, and they resolved to defend moral values in society.

- They made a joint declaration about the war in Bosnia.

- They discussed the family in the context of UN-sponsored Cairo conference on population control.

- They came together for sharing and mutual enrichment and built up friendship.

- They held seminars for youth.

- They exhorted people to live in harmony.

- Protestants and Catholics have celebrated Christmas and Easter together.

3. India: In some regions a core group organized friendship houses: people of different religions meet in these houses to pray together and share their common social concerns and their religious beliefs. When there are Hindu — Muslim riots they hold prayer meetings in such places.

— In places where there are ancient communities of different religions good relations are fostered, religious festivals are celebrated together.

— Joint committees are formed to tackle common problems.

— Live-ins of leaders of different religions are successfully organized wherein they pray and share their religious and common concerns.

— Ashrams welcome people of different faiths and help them in prayer life and God-experience.

4. Japan: A Christian ashram is situated in the property of a Buddhist monastery; and it is an open house for both Christians and Buddhists. They visited mainland China in a spirit of reconciliation and set up a hospital there.

5. Philippines: Catholics and UCCP (United Churches of Christ in the Philippines) jointly tackled certain common issues, like gambling, justice, family, etc.

B. Challenges of Dialogue

The workshop addressed the following challenges which require our joint effort in the dialogue of life:

— Economic policies of governments and poverty

— Exploitation of people

— Child prostitution and child labor

— Religious fundamentalism

— Abortion

— Ill-treatment of women

— Violence

— Ecology

— Use of resources at the service of life

— Erosion of family values

— Human dignity and human rights

— Tourism

— Formation of conscience

— Refugees and migrant workers

C. Requisites for Dialogue

— One should be solid in one's faith. (Vague universalism that

we can work together is not enough.)

- One should have adequate intellectual formation for dialogue.
- One should be open to sharing. (One should go with an open mind, accepting one's vulnerability.)
- Willingness for mutual enrichment by sharing with due respect to the other party.
- Sensitivity to look for things that unite rather than divide the parties.
- Living an authentic life according to one's own religion.
- Collaboration in tackling human problems
- Simple lifestyle
- Be prepared to share fully our faith at the appropriate time.
- Hospitality, sincerity, humility, respect, patience, adaptability, etc.

D. Obstacles and Benefits of Dialogue

Certain religious groups feel threatened because of historical reasons in the past, and those historical incidents continue to be obstacles to religious harmony and respect.

Dialogue helps to remove misunderstandings about religions and dispels fear, prejudice, suspicion, etc., and enriches one's knowledge about the inner faith life of the people. Each partner in dialogue has much to learn from the other.

E. Proclamation in Dialogue

Proclamation in dialogue has to be done in a dialogical spirit, i.e., if the other party is responsive. We share further about Jesus Christ and his Good News. If not, we leave it at that. It may happen that one is converted in this process of sharing, reflection and prayer together. Hence conversion is not excluded in dialogue, though not primarily intended.

F. Conclusions

1. In response to the challenges of the contemporary world, religions have to play a prophetic role by offering in the name of the Ultimate a new vision of life with freedom, fellowship and justice, and challenging the limitations and oppressions of the present social order.

2. In a society that is religiously pluralistic, in which members of different religions share the same socio-cultural and economic political order, religions can effectively fulfill their role of prophecy only in collaboration (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 60; FABC Plenary Assembly Statement,

Manila, 1970 (p.5 and 9); also Bandung, 1990, p. 279,).

3. Since the religions, as is the Church, are at the service of the world, interreligious dialogue cannot be confined to the religious sphere but must embrace all dimensions of life: economic, socio-political, cultural and religious. (cf. Third Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs, Nov. 1982, p. 120.)

4. By dialogue at a religious level Christians promote specifically Christian values and witness to them. Pope John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* says the following:

In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself to take on the specifically Christian dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbor is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbor must, therefore, be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren (cf. Jn 3:16) (no.40).

5. Dialogue of life at the human level can create an ideal climate for a dialogue at a more *strictly religious level* wherein Christians can witness and proclaim their own beliefs in the fullness of life that Jesus has brought to humanity, and their own vision of the Reign of God that Jesus proclaimed and realized.

G. Pastoral Recommendations

1. We recommend an education for an attitudinal change towards dialogical, harmonious living among believers of various religions through schools, pastoral circles, etc. In each diocese, dialogue should be promoted among priests, sisters, leaders of Catholic movements, and directors of schools and institutions. Formation in the faith is a necessary background for fruitful dialogue.

2. Promote hospitality, familial living together by friendly visits at joyful and sorrowful times, and the exchange of gifts on appropriate occasions.

3. In order to create and promote mutual understanding and trust among followers of different religions in each area, Basic Human Com-

munities should be formed, wherever possible.

4. FABC should communicate experiences of movements, dialogue in Asia: efforts, methodology, successes and failures, through information and periodic reflection.

5. Encourage common programs for social and integral development of people.

6. In every diocese, there should be a number of committed Christians — clergy and laity — whose principal ministry is to foster collaboration with the followers of other faiths on common human concerns.

7. Explore the possibilities of working together with the followers of other religions to combat serious evils in society, such as exploitation of women and children, the spread of drugs and alcohol, and the practice of abortion.

8. 1995 is the U.N. Year of Tolerance. We should undertake programs in each country aimed at supporting and encouraging the goals of tolerance and mutual respect.

3. Workshop: The Protection of Human Life

(Consult FABC Paper No. 72c)

A. The Challenges

The Social Apostolate is part and parcel of the characteristic of the Catholic Church. So, the protection of human life is seen under the aspect of the Social Apostolate of the Church. We would see this under headings:

1. Demographic: In our group, the majority of us feel that population is a problem in our countries. The people in general and the governments are facing it by following contraceptive methods that are made available to all.

2. Economic: It is noted that whatever gains we made through economic advancement, are consumed by population gain.

Where there is imported labour, the workers are generally badly treated.

3. Cultural: It was noted that as a general rule there is respect for life in Asia.

But all the same, on close observation, we noted that this respect for life is very discriminatory according to class, race, religion, caste and other

considerations.

4. Political: In some countries family planning with all contraceptive methods are promoted.

In some, although the authorities are against it, family planning methods are condoned.

In some countries abortion is legal.

B. Pastoral Recommendations

1. It should be pro-life.

Since the NFP method is the current Church teaching, an all-out effort must be made by the Church to promote this method as a means to reduce population growth. Into this promotion should also be added value education.

Nota Bene: Pastoral experience shows that many have difficulties in following Church teaching. Some have their own convictions and as a result reject Church teachings.

2. The Church should in addition to emphasizing equal distribution of wealth, emphasize increasing production.

3. Value education and formation at grass-roots levels must be very much encouraged to see life as precious irrespective of who that person is.

4. Where freedom of the press exists, people must be encouraged to protest against disrespect for life, and ways must be found to promote pro-life through mass media.

Where there is no freedom of the press, other ways must be found to promote pro-life attitudes.

5. Pro-life efforts must also be made at ecumenical and interreligious levels.

6. Even in a country like the Philippines, with a big Catholic majority, efforts must be made to operate at ecumenical and interreligious levels.

7. At the community level every discipline must be brought in to face the issues and find solutions.

8. We would strongly recommend the promotion of Basic Ecclesial

Community formation through which the whole community would grow in value education and formation and the resolution of problems.

4. Workshop: A Life-Giving Spirituality for the Service of Life (Consult FABC Paper No. 72d)

A. Life-Enhancing Elements

The Church's mission in Asia has been marked with much fruitful apostolic activity. Along with mission, an emphasis on spirituality is needed.

1. In our Asian Church the apostolic life (*diakonia*) is more evident and convincing than is our discipleship (life with and in Christ), i.e., our inner spiritual life. Active life is more prominent than prayer/contemplative life.

Historically, the Church's mission in Asia began and progressed with great emphasis on the apostolic aspects; the contemplative and spiritual aspect received less attention.

2. In our inculturated/incarnational attitude we need to be one in mind and heart with Asian peoples, in a spirit of being servants rather than masters among them.

We need the witness of holy persons, along with holy places and liturgy.

3. Theology, religious life and the study of spiritualities of Asian religions and cultures will help create trust and oneness of mind and heart among Asian peoples.

4. Special attention is to be given to the spirituality of the poor who are many in Asia. The simple life, a simplicity of lifestyle as manifested among the poor, is a very authentic area of inculturation in spirituality.

5. Forgiveness and compassion, as practical and down-to-earth expressions of Christian love, need to be more positively present in the Church, both in the lives of individuals and in our Christian communities. A forgiving and compassionate community/society helps us to grow in spiritual life.

6. Spirituality is to be considered both for individual and for the community. Definite structures and programs for spiritual life are needed for spirituality to be manifested in the community as a whole.

7. Various FABC assemblies have dealt often and deeply with the theme of spirituality.

FABC V has a very comprehensive spiritual statement which has not been widely implemented up to now. But spirituality has become a very dominant topic in FABC countries. What is needed now is a wide implementation. Bishops especially are called to inspire and lead all toward a deeper spiritual life.

B. Life-Destroying Elements

We see the destruction of life through widespread selfish and competitive (rather than "communitarian") socio-political and economic systems which have anti-life policies and practices. Religious and ethnic animosity also promotes such attitudes and practices. All these contain anti-spiritual elements. These wound both the body and the spirit of humanity and creation. In all these, spiritual healing is needed.

C. Key Aspects of Spirituality in Asia Today

While Christian spirituality is one and the same, since founded on Jesus, the Asian situation now calls attention to the following areas in a special way:

1. Integrated. A spirituality affecting both the spiritual and secular aspects of life should be the object of faith-formation of clergy, religious and laity alike.

Our entire inner self needs to be filled with the presence of God, creating the spiritual inner environment and enabling us to see God's presence in all creation.

2. Scripture-based. All religions have their scriptures at the center of inspiration and devotion. We should have a very much Scripture-based spirituality, as expressed in Church tradition and teaching. Liturgical and prayer-life formation are to be based on the Bible. Homilies need to be explanations of the Scriptures and its application to the lives of the hearers.

3. Communitarian. By nature itself, human persons are in communion with one another and with all creation. This is especially imaged in our Asian traditional cultures. The Blessed Trinity, as a communion of Persons, is the source of this communitarian spiritual life; and Christ is calling his disciples to be "one." In this journey, above all, we are called to be in

communion with God.

The disciple of Jesus in Asia is called to be one with the heart of Asian people. Community-forms of prayer-life and community-expressions of spiritual life are needed.

4. Inculturated: Christian spirituality needs to consider the cultural and religious heritage of peoples in Asia among whom it is situated. We are to be attentive to authentic popular devotions.

5. A spirituality of the "poor." Discipleship must emphasize the essential place in Christian spirituality of "kenosis," i.e., abnegation and the suffering servanthood of Jesus. In this we are to be especially attentive to the life of the "poor" who are many in Asia.

Forgiveness and compassion, as very down-to-earth expressions of love, are more extensively needed in our life as individuals and as community.

D. Formation

Both academic and practical formation is essential to this purpose; and concrete structures and programs are needed to achieve it.

E. Pastoral Recommendations

1. The FABC, through the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy, should study to see how major seminary curricula and programs can have a basic orientation in spirituality.

2. From the assembly floor these recommendation were made:

— Emphasis should be given to popular devotions and spiritual exercises.

— The bishop has a particular and effective role in inspiring priests, religious and laity toward areas of spiritual life.

— spirituality needs to be based on the Scriptures, and also on the Church's magisterium and authentic Church traditions.

5. Workshop: The Integrity of Creation and the Formation of Life

(Consult FABC Paper No. 72e)

A. Pressing Concerns of Justice

1. Tribal peoples and other groups, affected by mega-dams projects and security projects

2. The priority given to tourism
 - Local resources diverted towards tourism
 - Exploitation of local people, especially women and children.
3. Concerns about GATT
 - The rich and middle-class would benefit at the expense of the poor.
4. Exploitation of women and child labor in the workplace
 - e.g., carpet factories
 - brick kilns, factories.
5. Migrant workers
 - lacking basic benefits, security, human rights
6. Injustices within countries, especially the oppression of ethnic and religious minorities
7. Widespread corruption in public life, affecting adversely the poor
8. Role of the military in exploitation of people
9. Lack of religious freedom in certain countries
10. Concern about injustice within the Church.
 - area of not paying decent salaries
 - position of certain people, especially women, within the Church.

B. Concerns About Peace

1. Human rights abuses against religious, or ethnic minorities, or migrant workers
2. Concern about the use of scarce resources for procurement of arms
3. Military abuses against people in many countries

C. The Integrity of Creation

(Cf. FABC Paper No. 72e for developed considerations.)

D. Pastoral Recommendations

1. For the Integrity of Creation
 - The Office of Human Development of FABC can be expanded to include the integrity of creation; or a new office for the integrity of creation be established.
2. For the development of awareness about creation at the parish/diocesan/national level.
 - The Church should promote a new catechesis on the integrity of creation.
 - Seminaries should teach courses on the integrity of creation.

— Catholic schools should be encouraged to promote an awareness of integrity of creation.

— Symbols and prayers within the liturgy of the sacraments should be sensitive to the ecological issue.

— Each conference of bishops should produce a statement on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation within two years, so that an Asian-wide statement may be available to the next plenary assembly.

— One day a year be set aside for promoting concerns of the integrity of creation.

3. The proposed office should be concerned about the extinction of species in Asia and work with other groups to preserve creation and promote bio-diversity.

4. For a new lifestyle Christians should be encouraged to live simply, so as not to abuse the resources of God's creation.

5. A concern be developing sense of concern for preserving nature particularly in church premises.

6. Church institutions are encouraged to use natural resources in non-wasteful ways, and promote recycling, whenever possible.

7. The Church should explore what specific contribution the Catholic Church can make to the contemporary task of living in a sustainable way.

6. Workshop: The Family and the Child: The Asian Family's Struggle for Life (Consult FABC Paper No. 72f)

A. How do you experience the family as a unit in your diocese/country?

1. The general consensus of the group is that in the Asian setting the family is still experienced basically as a unit.

2. In the rural areas, it is still fairly well-knit. There is an intimate relation between husband and wife, parents and children. Even though they generally live a simple and frugal life, their mutual love, care, concern and sharing of the responsibilities keep the family atmosphere peaceful.

3. However, forces of disintegration and dehumanization which are very common today in the urban areas have begun to creep in also in the rural areas.

B. What are the forces that you see that lead to the disintegration and dehumanization of the family?

Such forces as:

- poverty
- urbanization, migration
- seeking better employment opportunities/better income
- divorce, abortion, contraceptive mentality
- working parents leaving children unattended
- placement of aged parents in homes for the aged
- pressure from multi-national organizations like UNESCO, UN-FPA, World Bank, and the likes
- negative pressures and policies of government

2. Highly-industrialized countries, like Japan, are of course not affected by material poverty. But moral and spiritual poverty is the cause of the disintegration and dehumanization of the family set-up in countries such as these. Here, the main reason, among others, of the emergence of the nuclear family and the breakdown of the well-knit family structure are:

- insufficient space for housing
- expensive education
- greed for more money, pleasure, etc.

C. What are the challenges to family life today?

1. Unity and stability of family life in the process of modernization.

2. Deepening of the faith of the people in Asia who are becoming more and more exposed to technological progress and a consumeristic lifestyle. This deepening has to take place mainly through catechesis/age-group catechesis.

3. Keeping abreast with new methods of catechesis and faith formation to be able to meet the challenge of the technological lifestyle.

4. Reinstating the practice and value of family prayer. The context of this challenge is this: due to the process of modernization, there is a weakening of prayer life. Family prayer is replaced by modern forms of entertainment, e.g., television.

5. Acceptance of Natural Family Planning (NFP) as a major pro-life program, and more importantly, as a way of life.

6. Education of the individual and families with regard to human sex-

uality as God's gift for celebrating love (unitive aspect), and for life (the procreative aspect).

7. The rightful place of children in the family and recognition of the plight of children at risk.

8. The recognition of the rightful place of women as partners and co-creators.

9. To directly engage in awareness and action with regard to population control so as to prepare families to meet these challenges on a strong footing (micro/macro level approach). E.g., Trials of harmful contraceptives banned in First World countries are not to be carried out in the Third World countries.

10. To influence tourism industry to be effectively an ecology tourism rather than for prostitution.

D. How can we form persons, Christians and other believers, for their life in a technological society?

Contemporary times are characterized by the "throw-away mentality" as immediate solutions to problems. In this situation, the acknowledgment of the dignity of the human person from the moment of conception until natural death should be reinstated in law and upheld.

E. Pastoral Recommendations

1. FABC, in union with Pope John Paul II, should very strongly assert the sanctity of the person from the moment of conception till natural death, and that this basic truth *ought to be actively promoted* on both national, diocesan and parish church level.

2. This Manila FABC plenary assembly, in union with Pope John Paul II, should strongly condemn the abortion and contraceptive mentality which has been spreading in society and government policies.

3. FABC, in union with Pope John Paul II, should strongly recommend the active promotion of NFP (Natural Family Planning) as a way of life on both the national, diocesan and parish church level.

4. This Manila FABC plenary assembly should strongly recommend that FABC set up, as early as possible, preferably within a year, an office for the family and children, based on the reality that discipleship in service to life means promoting a culture of life as the very sanctuary of life itself,

i.e., the family, by affirming life, promoting life, defending life and engaging in the dialogue of life. (This office must be on par with the other offices of FABC)

In keeping with the recommendations above each national bishops' conference should establish a commission for the family, with the same goals.

The various existing international and national centers and voluntary organizations for the family and children should be recognized as partners in service to life in the family.

In the same spirit, it is recommended that each diocese in Asia establish a center for family and children through which education in responsible sexuality is promoted, and priests and seminarians properly oriented to such catechesis as a part of their pastoral care for families and children.

5. Technology should be at the service of the person, and the person should never be a victim of technology. For this, the formation of both the family as a unit and the individual as a member of the family is indispensable.

This formation should take place at the spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional and physical levels. For this, several programs are suggested to bring about such formation, and these are:

- Christian Family Movement
- Marriage Encounter
- Basic Christian Communities
- Pre-Cana seminars
- Catechetical formation
- Marriage preparation course
- Follow-up programs for married couples
- Family prayer
- Family dialogue
- Respect for children/youth
- Pastoral care of single parents

7. Workshop: The Struggle for Life — Asian Youth

(Consult FABC Paper No. 72g)

A. Youth Reality Today

1. Members of the workshop reflected on the situation and reality of youth today. It was found that there are many life-giving elements to be

seen. Youth are thirsting for God, and express their spiritual and moral needs. They need to be part of the process, and yet experience the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them because first-hand experience is seen as an invaluable learning agent. In this context the experience of togetherness and community atmosphere provides a support mechanism.

2. At the same time our workshop members saw that in the social and pastoral set-up of today youth feel alienated and feel that they are treated as cheap labor in the churches, but can be rejected for being problematic when they try to contribute their ideas and insights to the apostolate. Youth themselves experience the pressure of their peer groups and the changing social norms which challenge their family values. The minority complex is a reality, except in the Philippines.

3. We recognized values in and among the youth which are signs of hope and life. Of these, hospitality, cooperation, friendship, participation and a democratic spirit, freedom, justice (personal and social) and equality are noteworthy, as they have an impact on youth life and initiatives. Youth value love and fulfillment, understanding and appreciation. They look for honesty and authenticity and are seen to be generous in their own way. Much can be learned from their courage and sense of vision as well as the pragmatic lifestyle of living in the present, not burdened by shadows of the past nor fears of the future.

4. However, some elements of darkness and death are also present among them, negating the positive values. These are materialism, competitiveness, consumerism and the seeking of love or attention by any means.

On the part of Church leaders and pastors, too, despite many years of involvement in youth apostolate and many pronouncements that youth are precious treasures, it was felt that youth are very difficult to understand and that many of them are outside the sphere of influence of the Church apostolate.

B. Dreams and Hopes

The participants felt that youth have many dreams and hopes which are common, irrespective of social or religious distinctions. The most common dreams were of a better life and for a better quality of life; for a good job and a happy family; for stable employment; and for fidelity in relationships. These, animated by a meaningful spirituality, lead to a certain fulfillment. Analysis and our own experience led us to understand the obstacles which impede the fulfillment of these dreams. We saw the presence of a dehumanizing consumeristic culture influenced by TNC (trans-

national corporations) controlled media, a lack of vision and continuity in involvement and commitment, and a lack of ideological oneness. Obstacles to progress in the apostolate and movement life of youth were the paternalistic attitude of their elders, domination by the clergy, lack of authenticity on the part of their leaders, who also cling onto power and position, thus creating a dependent mentality within the organization. Elements which destroy the spirit and goodwill within organizations were a lack of trust, democracy and shared-responsibility, the leadership compromising their principles, and the lack of exemplary role models.

C. How to Realize the Dreams

1. In order to create a climate or space where these dreams can be realized we felt that a strong effort should be towards creating a counter-culture rooted in the traditions and values that youth based themselves on or in Gospel values which youth can relate to from their own backgrounds. This would call for a more community-oriented formation, which would also help to create a collective and social consciousness. Formation, while being in line with the ideas relevant to youth today, should also seek to be oriented towards values which could enhance the ideals of the youth themselves.

2. Youth need space to share and to be themselves. Thus, the importance of building small communities for life formation is important. Exposure immersion helps to take them beyond their own boundaries and set lifestyles. The outreach of youth to youth is an essential element of realizing the dreams of apostolate to youth.

3. All over Asia, from the sharing of the participants, we could gather the experience of youth being full of life. A vitality that could contribute to opening out the field of involvement and apostolate of the Church. However, it was also a youth world under great pressure in Asia today from forces of repression and materialism, forces of degradation of human dignity, forces which create loss of identity and instability in the youth and lure them into false visions of security and happiness. This presents a great challenge not only to the youth themselves but to all churches and to all in the Church who are involved in creating life and light. Youth who will be the light of the Church in Asia are also seeking that light which will nourish life in them. This is the challenge the Church and FABC are called on to respond to in the sphere of youth apostolate.

D. Pastoral Recommendations

1. Youth apostolate should be geared towards value formation.
2. Formal and informal methods of youth catechesis should be deve-

3. Youth need to be understood, accepted and their needs responded to.
4. There is a need to create alternate formation modules outside school curricula and to propagate those already existing.
5. Apostolate to youth is to be seen as an accompaniment on their life-journey (to be with and to share with them).
6. A need for education through action and an openness to collaborate with other movements.
7. Work towards an integral development, forming communities of love, concern, understanding and forgiveness.
8. Continuity of and in the apostolate should be ensured.
9. The training of trainers has a multiplying effect and so should be encouraged and supported.
10. Since youth are such a large percentage of the population, the formation of an FABC Youth Office is strongly recommended.
11. The Office of Laity and the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy should take responsibility for formation for youth chaplaincy.
12. Value-oriented formation programs should be held for chaplains and youth leaders.
13. We recommend an integrated pastoral program for every diocese, and full-time chaplains to be made available at national and diocesan levels. Chaplaincy can also be exercised by religious and lay people.
14. Youth should be involved in the process of decision-making at all levels in the apostolate that affect them.

8. Workshop: The Struggle for Life — Asian Women (Consult FABC Paper No. 72h)

A. Introduction

1. As we look to the 21st century, the Church in Asia is confronted with the ongoing dehumanization of women. We are appalled at this reality, as it is in contradiction to Jesus' promise of "abundant life." We, as Christian leaders in Asia, cannot be passive spectators of a death-dealing situation, which is the experience of women.
2. We are grateful that FABC has in its various documents since 1986 made very meaningful statements about the situation of women. But we are deeply distressed by the fact that these statements have not been concretized into action-oriented programs. Therefore, we need to be aware of the contradictions that are gnawing away at the very fabric of life. Glaring at us are the most poignant, dehumanizing and violent situations.
3. The burning issues raised in our workshop covered the most violent

situations imaginable experienced by the girl child and the woman. The whole of Asia is groaning under the pain of atrocities inflicted on women. Even before birth, violence manifests its horror when unborn female fetuses are wrenched out of their mother's wombs; and new-born female babies are killed because of their sex (as documented in China and India). The girl child, (and in some instances even the boy child as in Sri Lanka), in many Asian societies are not valued, as is evidenced by the growing evidence of mental, physical and sexual abuse. The female adult/child also experiences discrimination in education, health care, and exploitation in the work place.

4. Women are increasingly becoming victims of domestic violence—battering, marital rape, alcoholism and drug abuse. Sexual exploitation in the form of rape, prostitution, and in some countries, the problem of mail-order brides, continue to grow. Women in India are burnt to death because of dowry, or often driven to suicide. In addition, they are doubly oppressed under the atrocious caste system.

5. We are seriously concerned that if women are continually subjected to these death-dealing evils, it will spell death for entire societies in Asia. This is indeed a tragedy! Therefore, it is time — *kairos* — for a change of heart — *metanoia* — for conversion of self, resulting in new attitudes towards women, as partners in God's plan of salvation.

6. However, though this is the reality, we see signs of hope as women and women's groups are increasingly raising issues, and voicing concerns pertinent to their own lives and the lives of their families. Today, they are calling a halt to these tragic situations. Therefore, we urge FABC and its various offices to concretely address these issues and stand in solidarity with the women struggling to preserve and foster life in its fullness.

B. Pastoral Recommendations

Hope gives us a new vision and, therefore, with a deep sense of urgency and commitment we make the following short-term recommendations:

1. For more immediate action:

— That the FABC Offices of the Laity and Human Development give top priority to action-oriented programs that deal with child prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, AIDS, domestic violence and the plight of women migrant workers, beginning in 1995.

— That all FABC offices make a definite policy to move toward a 50% representation of lay women and men in all programs by the year 1997.

— That FABC sponsor a women's delegation to the forthcoming 1995 International Conference on Women at Beijing, and to study, support and implement its action plan.

— We further reaffirm the recommendation made by the 1993 FABC Consultation on Women, with some minor modifications, that FABC:

— Sponsor an Asian-level conference in 1995 on the "Role of Women in Church and Society towards the 21st Century" to:

— deal with gender issues and raise women's consciousness about their situation

— promote women's spirituality and theology

— reflect and discover the feminine perspective in the Bible

— network with women's groups, and religious women's groups

— Promote genuine partnership between women and men in the family, Church and society

— Create awareness about:

— gender sensitivity in our everyday language pertaining to songs, prayers, and in the division of roles, tasks and responsibilities in the Church:

— foster priestly formation in terms of gender ideology

— educate male seminary teaching staff to be more open to women teachers of theology

— initiate gender studies in the seminaries and religious institutions

2. For longer planning:

— That the Offices of Laity and Human Development:

— Fully support the Women's Desk and encourage the national bishops' conferences to do the same, with the following objectives:

— promote encounter, dialogue and partnership between women and men in the Church for effective leadership and decision-making

— affirm and facilitate networking among women groups

— promote awareness of the women's situation through information sharing.

- That the Office of Social Communications:
 - develop communications and dialogue at all levels about women's issues
 - evaluate and analyze the abuse of women in the family, workplace, media, and contribute to awareness building on these issues.
- That the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy:
 - promote a reeducation and reformation of Christian families to safeguard authentic religious, moral and spiritual values
 - analyze existing teaching materials and textbooks and encourage the development of new ones from the gender perspective.
- That the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs:
 - dialogue with major patriarchal religions, and network with ecumenical and interreligious groups on how respective religions oppress women.
- That the Theological Advisory Commission:
 - develop a theology of compassion for the Asian Churches and invite women theologians into their commission, encourage the inclusion of women programs of theology in our seminary curriculum, and women lecturers on seminary staffs.

Conclusion

We, the participants of this workshop, once again hear the cries and the pain of the women of Asia. As Christian leaders we cannot turn a deaf ear to their sufferings. Like Jesus, we act with compassion in life-giving service towards all the women of Asia. We share the Spirit present in this moment — *kairos*. Fidelity to the Spirit demands that we act.

9. Workshop: Consecrated Living at the Service of Life (Consult FABC Paper No. 72i)

Introduction

Caught up in the dynamic tension between the life-giving and the death-dealing realities of their context, religious in the countries represented in the workshop have continually attempted — in varying degrees — to respond to the pastoral challenges posed to them by these situations.

A. Some of these Major Pastoral Challenges

1. Commitment to the promotion of fuller life among the poor and the marginalized:

— Some concerns:

— A continuing need to create greater awareness of social realities among religious

— The need to emphasize the ecclesial dimension when religious commit themselves to be socially involved, so that their commitment does not become divisive or a counter-witnessing

— A "decline" in the social commitment of religious in countries that survived some very oppressive political regimes; this decline can be interpreted either as a weakening in the absence of a "common enemy" to be opposed, or as a time for a better synthesis of faith and social involvement

— The fostering of a deep spirituality among religious who live among the poor sometimes in very remote places and under conditions that deprive them of the Eucharist for long periods of time.

— Some blocks:

— Institutional mentality, competition among, and self-sufficiency of religious

— Concern for security and positions (oftentimes reinforced by the attitudes of the laity towards the religious) that prevents religious from going to the poor

— Some practical considerations, e.g., maintenance of religious who do pastoral work among the poor, since these works are rarely income generating

— The fear of involvement with some new forms of poverty, e.g., AIDS affliction, that is threatening a number of Asian countries.

2. Preservation and deepening of authentic cultural and religious life values in the face of a consumeristic and materialistic environment:

— Some effects of our secularistic environment on religious life, perpetuated particularly through mass media:

— Weakening of the faith

— Growing individualism, spirit of competition

— Weakening of religious life values, e.g., total giving of

self, obedience, generosity, etc.

— Sometimes it is difficult for religious to be prophetic in the face of secularism because they themselves have become part of the problem.

3. Inculturation of Religious Life

— Some concerns:

— The need to relativize culture so that it does not become the norm/basis for some choices made in religious life

— The need to discern those elements in the culture that should be integrated within the hierarchy of values in religious life

— Formation in discernment as a priority in formation programs

— The recovery of some authentic cultural values from which religious may have been alienated due to a “foreign” formation

— The conflict between some religious values and some deeply rooted socio-cultural elements, e.g., simplicity and the Asian propensity for face-saving, adult obedience and dependence on/respect for authority, poverty/detachment

4. Fuller participation of women in the life and mission of the Church

— Some concerns:

— Lack of representation of women/women religious in bodies charged with decision-making and pastoral planning on different levels

— The need to promote mature collaboration and partnership between women and men (bishop/clergy/religious men) in the local Church

— More conscious efforts in the Church to integrate the feminine dimension in its life, e.g., the qualities of compassion, sensitivity to persons, in-touchness with the affective life, etc., to complement the objectivity, the rational/dualistic approach that often predominates, for example, in the application of laws, norms or principles in the Church.

— Some difficulties:

— A mentality in the Church that regards certain areas in

the life of the Church as areas reserved for men, e.g., theological reflection, spiritual direction, etc.

- A priestly formation that does not adequately provide for facing up to the challenges of sexuality and the mature use of power/authority in relation to others, especially women.

5. Fostering of religious vocations

- Some concerns:
 - The recruitment of very young candidates (even from the grade school in some countries) to the religious life, and the consequent lengthy formation years this requires; motivated by the need to survive as a congregation, particularly in milieux where Catholics are a minority
 - Admission of recent converts
 - Shallow faith foundation of candidates, resulting in unclear religious identity once admitted to religious life
 - Proliferation of new congregations of foreign origin in some countries, motivated largely by the need for congregational survival; the lack of clear recruitment policies, and uncultivated formation programs, distort the meaning of religious life
 - Founding of many local congregations with limited human and material resources, resulting eventually in major problems, e.g., spirituality, formation, etc.
 - The difficulty of fostering good vocations (and also doing missionary/pastoral work) in some Islamic countries, due to restrictive government policies.

6. Formation of Religious

- There is a need to stress the formation of religious who can be agents of dialogue within their religious communities, in the Church and in society.
- In the Asian context of diversity, this formation for dialogue will equip the religious with the capacity to bring about harmony in the face of differences and diversity.

7. Growing Missionary Sense among Asian Religious

One sign of growth in the Asian Churches is the growing number of Asian religious who are responding to the call of the mission *ad gentes*, both in Asia and in other continents.

B. Pastoral Recommendations

So that religious in Asia may be more fully at the service of life, the following recommendations are made:

1. That the FABC establish an "Office for Consecrated Life."

In future, this office can occasionally organize sessions for bishops and religious on regional levels, where mutuality can be both experienced and talked about.

2. That FABC tap more and more the gifts and services of women religious through its various offices.

3. That FABC encourage strongly the national conferences to regularly hold joint sessions with religious women and men, e.g., during their annual meetings, as is already done in some conferences.

4. That FABC encourage the promotion of mutuality among bishops, clergy, religious and laity by strongly urging the bishops:

- To revitalize the structures that promote the spirit of mutuality on the national, diocesan and parochial levels
- To take the initiative in widening the base for the participation of religious in decision-making and pastoral planning on various levels, considering that Asian social structures put great weight on authority
- To take the lead in harmonizing the charisms of the clergy, the religious and the laity on the diocesan level, e.g., through the formulation of a common vision of mission, and fostering cordial, fraternal relations with them.

5. Added notes from the assembly floor.

- *Sentire cum Ecclesia* is an important dimension of religious life.

In the name of a "prophetic" stance, some religious seem to pioneer "dissent" and "division." A correct understanding of the religious role in the Church is required; a firm exercise of authority by religious superiors is often lacking. This concern has increased rather sharply after the decision of the Holy Father on woman's ordination to priesthood.

- A higher role of "radicality" in the exercise of the vows should

also be manifested, especially evidenced in prayer and devotional life as "persons of God."

10. Workshop: Social Communications and the Arts at the Service of Life (Consult FABC Paper No. 72j)

A. A Theological Background of Social Communications

1. The communication of the Church is not only a question of means and technologies and their use. Communication is the essence of the Church. It is founded to continue the communication of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Proclamation, evangelization, dialogue and *diakonia* are parts of the communicative Church to incarnate Christ. Such a communication is open to its own community (*communicatio interna*), as well as to the world (*communicatio externa*). Witness of life, preaching, liturgy, catechetics, personal contact, sacraments and popular piety as well as mass media (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 40-48) are part of the communicative dimension of the Church.

2. There is no discipleship without sharing and communication from and with the one master, Jesus Christ. Any sharing and communication of the Master must flow from the same source, the Father ("Abba"), and must follow the same pattern of the one Master, the communication of the Father in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

B. The State of Social Communications in our Asian Dioceses

1. The main difficulties:
 - the vastness of dioceses
 - the lack of personnel and finances and, hence, hardly anyone trained in this field
 - an insufficient awareness that communication underlies all pastoral action; and because of that, the insufficient approach to multi-communication (multi-media)
 - religious congregations in the diocese having trained personnel sometimes work independently; and thus, there is duplication and little coordination because resources are not pooled together
 - the threat to traditional values and lifestyles through modern mass media, like satellite television, etc., which reach in this way even the most remote village
 - hardly any dioceses have someone who can speak to the media persons at their level
 - many difficulties arise from the lack of a pastoral plan coordinating communication; and/or generally the lack of awareness of the

communication dimension of other pastoral activities.

2. Some positive aspects

- training programs for bishops, priests, religious superiors, seminarians and professionals have been started in some countries
- where the state allows the use of television and radio, the bishops are making use of these opportunities
- messages by the bishop and articles by Catholics of general interest to the public in secular newspapers
- transmission of Catholic programs through secular radio and television stations, including participation in cable television networks
- use of small local communication possibilities, e.g., the use of hospital intercom systems to reach patients with morning and evening prayers
- use of folk media, traditional means of communications for the deepening and the proclamation of the faith
- The pioneering work of Radio Veritas Asia, as well as the activities of the Catholic media organizations (UNDA, OCIC, UCIP, UCA News, SAR News).

C. Pastoral Recommendations

1. The Church is by essence missionary, which means that communication is an integral dimension of all Church activities. Bishops, priests, religious and laity must have this awareness, which needs to be articulated into a pastoral plan at all levels.

2. The role of the national offices, as envisaged by Vatican II (*Inter Mirifica*, no. 21, *Communio et Progressio*, nos. 169-171, cf. *Aetatis Novae*, nos. 18-33) should be strengthened, together with the respective coordination and cooperation of the professional Catholic media organizations. The FABC/OSC (Office of Social Communications) can support such a process in the conferences by assisting pastoral planning, providing information on resource personnel available, stimulating serious research and training. The FABC/OSC should organize a meeting of national directors of social communications accordingly.

3. The training for a critical media awareness and media evaluation, especially through education institutions and formation houses of the Church, should be developed because of the partly life-threatening monopolization of news and imposition of destructive values

4. The need for coordination in and pooling of resources at all levels

5. That parishes, educational institutions and dioceses develop lend-

ing libraries of books, and audio and video cassettes, and promote in a special way the use of traditional means of communication according to local cultures and needs

6. That bishops encourage, appreciate and bless Catholic initiatives in communications, such as UNDA, OCIC, UCIP, UCA News, SAR News, and professionals working in non-Church-owned media who bring the Good News to others.

11. Workshop: Formation and Education for Christian Discipleship in Asia (Consult FABC Paper No. 72k)

The discussion treated formation and education for Christian discipleship in Asia. The unanimous consensus was that the vision of the Church, namely, "A New Way of Being Church," which is at the heart of the Final Statement of the FABC Fifth Plenary Assembly at Bandung, has not at all been followed up in most of our dioceses. In order to form and educate our lay faithful, our children, youth, seminarians and new priests, it is felt that there should be a new learning process.

A. Reflections on the Learning Process for Adults

1. The statement of the Fifth Plenary Assembly called for a process of a regular faith-discernment that everyone could easily use and share in an appropriate formation for mission and proclamation, with an emphasis on the laity's participation. In order to achieve this goal we need to look for an approach that will:

- Make disciples who experience the Lord in a community of disciples, in community worship and in personal prayer.

- Promote and transform the life of those who listen to the word and act on it, and who are liberated by the light the Gospel gives to their life.

- Help them to build communities with adequate Christian formation.

2. This approach is a participatory way of being the Church. The whole community of the faithful is enabled to share actively in the integral, global vision and mission of Christ in the multi-dimensional context of Asia, an approach we have named the "Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (ASIPA)". With this view in mind, we must aim at:

- A participatory Church, where each one is enabled to use his/her charism.

- A non-dominating style of leadership, putting into practice

the command of Jesus that those who mean to be first should be the last.

— A Christ-centered community of brothers and sisters who respect each other, and which is built up by the word of God.

— Where dialogue is to be encouraged not only among various denominations of Christians, but also with neighborhood communities, where we come into contact with people of other religions too.

3. By this process a strong experience of community should be developed in the course of sharing faith. The search for God's will is done with the community.

B. In Our Houses of Formation

1. The priest who graduates from the major seminary needs to be inspired by the same vision of the Church which we have seen articulated in FABC V and inspired by Vatican. II. The seminarian will also need experience of an approach that enables him to become an animator who encourages participation among lay people as sharers in divine life and in the mission of Christ. A non-dominating style of leadership should be part of his experience as a student and member of the community.

2. Seminary staff or fellow students, who are older, to accompany him in his faith-journey in a way that helps him discover his life's direction, his motivations and his mission, would also be a timely help for him.

3. In 1990 the Catholics Bishops' Conference of India noted with great concern that the deficient and inadequate formation of priests to respond to the needs for the times is a drawback in implementing the vision of FABC. The CBCI also stressed the need for lay participation in the formation of seminarians, in matters concerning seminary policies, the evaluation of seminarians for admission into the seminary and advancement to Orders. All these will strengthen the notion that the formation of priests is the concern of the whole Church.

C. The Catholic School as a Place of Encounter with Christ

The vision of a Church which is Christ-centered, "a communion of communities," needs to be experienced to some degree in our Catholic educational institutions. One of the criteria listed for a school to be Catholic is fidelity to the Gospel and its values proclaimed by the Church. The activity of a Catholic school is, above all else, an activity that shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is a part of the particular local Church of the country in which it is situated, and shares in the life and work of the local Christian community.

D. Formation of Small Christian Communities

The rapidly-growing phenomenon in young Churches, one often fostered by the bishops and our bishops' conferences as a pastoral priority, is that of Ecclesial Basic Communities, which are growing to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach.

E. Pastoral Recommendations

1. The FABC V vision of the "New Way of Being Church" has become a focus of study among bishops, priests and seminarians in Asian countries. This should become the content of priestly renewal programs over the next one or two years. It could also be studied in bishops' conferences.

2. The FABC Bandung vision can be broken down into actual programs to enable all lay people and religious to share in this vision.

— The Asian Integral Pastoral Approach could be used to allow a discovery and participatory approach.(ASIPA), Elements of the vision should be found already in the process of sharing the vision.

— Sharing of the vision in parish communities, organizations and movements, religious houses and national commissions could begin with immediate effect.

3. As part of the vision of the Church, people should be given convincing reasons, theological and scriptural, for SCC/BECs, ministries, and should be given the opportunity to form SCCs with the assistance of parish or diocesan teams. For this, the FABC Office of Laity should continue to provide pastoral training in the conferences and dioceses for parish and diocesan teams.

4. The FABC Office dealing with the seminary formation should should look seriously into the necessary changes in seminary formation:

- Greater emphasis on the community aspect of Christian living
- Spiritual formation for community
- Pastoral approaches in forming community.

12. Workshop: Christian Discipleship in Work and Profession: a Service to Life in Asia Today (Consult FABC Paper No. 721)

A. The Christian Vision of Work

1. For most lay people, service to life is exercised daily in the workplace: protecting, enhancing and improving the quality of life from its beginning to its end. Any ordinary person will readily answer that he/she desires a fuller life and desires it, too, for others. In the workplace, Christian faith and discipleship are lived: "The factory is my church and my sewing machine, my altar of offering," says a garment factory worker.

2. The Book of Genesis opens with God's own work in the creation of the world. After creating all the living creatures in the land, water and sky, God created man and woman in his own likeness. He gave the command to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth" (Gen 1:28), calling each person to work and be a co-creator with God.

3. 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 seeing 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."

4. 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 recreating and transforming our world" (FABC IV, no. 3. 7. 1).

B. Work as Mission

1. The same FABC final statement goes 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).

2. Vatican II documents and the other Church documents mention:

- Work, every human activity, should be done in the light of God's will (GS)
- Work should be oriented towards the true good of the human race... (SRS)

- Work in the temporal order is the special obligation of lay people... (AA)
- In work, man and women discover their own growth and fulfillment (*Laborem Exercens*)
- It is in work that lay people are able to exercise distinctively their discipleship, through the witness of their lives in the world... (AA)

C. The Experience of Work As Mission

Some examples given by lay people who responded to our survey and those who attended our consultation express how they are of service to life in their work and profession:

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

"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.

"Though my research and training services, I can contribute to the education of rural workers about human development; and it is a concrete 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.

"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 violate the rights of others again" — a lawyer.

"I accepted a low pay to be able to teach poor children and their parents how to read and write" — a teacher.

"I am able to influence in law-making in our country" — a parliamentarian.

"Everybody in my factory is surprised that I opted to receive lesser pay by not doing overtime work so I can have time to join my community" — a factory worker.

"I also teach the children of my employers how to respect their parents" — a migrant domestic helper.

D. The Challenges to a Christian Vision

1. So much work must take place for a tree to become a chair so that life can be more comfortable, to cite one example. But how aware are most of the workers and professionals that their daily, often times routine, work is actually continuing the creation of God? For Christians in the workplace, how much consciousness is there that these everyday acts are carrying out God's plan and Christ's mission to build the Kingdom of God in the world? For those who are aware and desiring to do so, how much possibility do they have?

2. As we listen to the voices of workers and professionals, much of their daily work is a struggle, a burden because of existing structures, of the dichotomy of faith and life, of the greed for more money and of the pervading atmosphere of crisis of meaning in work. Examples of these situations are:

- competitiveness within the company, creating no room to develop relationships; and workers are becoming more individualistic
- the migration of workers from rural to urban areas, with their accompanying problems affecting families and their livelihood in the crowded cities
- migration of many workers to other countries, with all the sacrifices made by the families left behind (children growing up without their mothers and/or fathers around), and all the exploitation and hardships encountered by the workers
- unfair treatment of migrant workers and the disregard of their dignity and rights
- unjust pay given to workers and lack of benefits and protection in the workplace
- unemployment as a very serious problem in many Asian countries, and many young graduates leaving the country
- child labor in big numbers in many Asian countries, depriving them of their rights to study
- unsafe and unhealthy working conditions for workers
- the effects of mass media on young workers who are enticed to use illicit means in acquiring more money to imitate their idols
- the treatment and conditions of women workers: unequal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination in promotion, long working hours, poor working conditions; enforced lodging within the factories, and deprived of privacy and adult guidance for young girls coming from remote areas
- the trafficking in young women workers, especially those in the entertainment business.

2. There are other reasons that are related to the kind of understanding people have of their life of faith:

- Most lay people do not associate spirituality with their work. Religiosity is reduced to attending Mass for those who can; and more sadly, many church-goers are ignorant of the meaning of the Mass; and even more are unaware of Church's social teachings.

- Before many of the ethical issues of science and technology the Church is silent or the Church is giving a response that is no longer suitable to the new discoveries in science.

- For most workers the "Church" is absent from the workplace, and many workers and professionals feel that they are not recognized by the Church. As an example, existing organizations in our parishes are the "pious" type of organizations, and not secular, which would make them able to respond to the needs of workers, doctors, lawyers, etc.

3. For others, social practices and other structures affect the way they live and witness to faith in the workplace:

- existing structures in society that create an atmosphere of dishonesty and corruption

- some cultural patterns that perpetuate unlawful practices in government offices and companies

- the structures created by media promoting consumerism and shallowness.

4. Surrounded by many of the above-mentioned factors that do not make work a humane act for most of our people in Asia, coupled with the greed and strong desire to make more money, the meaning of work and the service-attitude are often times missing even in the service-industries, like hospitals, social work, transportation, etc.

E. Pastoral Recommendations

1. To FABC

Issue an urgent call to all the bishops on Asia, together with the laity, to study "the new vision of Church as a communion of communities," where all gifts and forms of discipleship are recognized and put to use (FABC V), the implications of being the "Church in the world" (GS), and the importance of lay involvement in spreading and implementing the Church's social teachings. The FABC Office of Laity should follow up

within the next two years the resolutions of the Asian Laity Meeting by organizing regional meetings to introduce methods on how the challenge of Christian discipleship in the workplace can be assimilated and practised.

2. To The National Episcopal Conferences

— At the National Level

— We encourage all bishops' conferences to continue their efforts along the line of social justice and the defense of human rights; and we recommend that more emphasis be given to the formation and encouragement of lay people to be involved in these tasks, and to assume their mission of being "Church in the world" and in the workplace. For the Church in Asia to be truly exercising Christian discipleship at the service of life, more attention needs to be given to the formation of lay people and to the recognition of their apostolate exercised in the workplace.

— Church leaders should actively involve themselves in facilitating lay initiatives to form movements for workers and professionals in different fields for their mutual support.

— The Church's social teachings, (e.g., *Centesimus Annus*, *Laborem Exercens*, *Populorum Progressio*, etc.) should be translated into the local language and presented in a more readable form (e.g., what has been done in Malaysia), and be made part of the basic and on-going formation for all.

— In seminaries, the Church's social teachings should be made part of the curriculum, with well-planned exposure and immersion programs. Trained lay people should be invited to teach in seminaries, especially in the areas of human sciences and ethics.

— To set an example, the Church needs to professionalize pay and treatment of their Church workers

— That May 1st be declared as a day dedicated to workers; and that guidelines for the organizing of seminars and symposia to become more aware of workers' rights and conditions be prepared and made available to all the parishes. Particular attention should be given to educate and empower workers, and to the protection of child, women and migrant workers.

— At the Diocesan Level

— That the bishops and their priests be open to welcome initiatives by lay people and offer their support to start social projects.

— That bishops and their priests welcome the initiatives of lay people to organize themselves sectorally, and that existing organizations for workers (e.g., YCW and MCW), Catholic Doctors' Guild, Catholic Nurses' Guild, etc.) be supported and revived, if they are not still active at diocesan and parish levels.

— That bishops and their priests express openly their support of and solidarity with workers and uphold the protection of their rights.

— At the Parish Level

— That parish priests in their homilies encourage people to share their faith through word and example. Lay people could be invited to give witnessing on how they exercise Christian discipleship in their workplace.

— The spiritual formation of lay people should help workers and professionals maintain balance between the demands of work and attention to their personal and family needs

— Catholics in our parishes should be encouraged to express their solidarity with the workers and their struggles, especially in situations of child and women-workers.

— In parishes where there are many migrant workers, special attention should be given to welcome them into the parish.

— That the laity initiate programs in consultation and co-operation with their parish priest, for the formation of Christian workers and professionals to enable them fulfill their active role as Christians in their workplaces.

— The parish priest can make a call to all Christian owners of companies in their parish to give just salaries to their workers, to establish ways of sharing with them their profits, to improve working conditions and create new jobs for the unemployed.

— To challenge Christian businessmen and encourage them to discuss with other businessmen in finding alternative forms of doing business that will eliminate the exploitation of workers,

circulate their profits in the local place and create greater job opportunities.

— The lay people could be encouraged to set up cooperatives for mutual support to meet their needs.

13. Workshop: Integral Human Development at the Service of Life (Consult FABC Paper No. 72m)

The reflection on integral human development (IHD) at the service of life begins with identifying those forces which are contrary to the service of life and thus against IHD.

A. Challenges

1. Economic growth and industrialization in Asia are taking place within the context of the globalization of our economy. The flow of capital and technology from the West and the more-developed East Asia countries brings with them negative effects which, far from being at the service of life, are dehumanizing and therefore death-bringing.

The global economy has entered every aspect of life in Asia. It brings with it a whole set of negative values: acquisition of more wealth; consumerism; profiteering, and making of everything a commodity that can be brought or sold — even the human person. It has such dehumanizing and life-destroying effects as:

- violence and terrorism fuelled by the production and sale of arms for profit
- large movements of migrant workers, with its resultant problems
- exploitation of workers, especially women and children
- promotion of tourism as an industry, with its resultant sex trade
- destruction of the environment such as forests and other natural resources through ruthless exploitation

2. Fundamentalism, or rather fanaticism, is on the rise not only in Islam and Hinduism but also to some extent in Buddhism. Such forces are contrary to human solidarity and the interrelatedness of human living.

3. Politically, there is much suppression of the voice of the oppressed, who are marginalized. The media has a way of “blackening out” or ignoring news of the struggle of such people for justice and their rights.

B. Signs of Hope

In this overall black picture of the Asian scene, however, there are found signs of hope.

1. There is a mission and a vision before us of a new way of being Church in Asia. There is a desire for solidarity and the need for inter-dependence.

2. From the poor and the marginalized there is an awareness and a cry for humane governance and participatory politics.

3. Numerous groups, movements, NGOs, and human rights activists have emerged to make the voice of the voiceless heard, and to point to alternative policies.

C. Pastoral Recommendations

Building on these signs of hope, our workshop offers these recommendations:

1. That empowerment of the laity, in a liberative sense, be promoted, i.e., to empower the laity to overcome their own divisions. In most parish councils and activity only the well-off elite are involved.

On the other hand, when it comes to taking a stand on issues, the comfortable middle-class do not want to commit themselves. It was noted that the BEC method was welcomed by the urban and rural poor but not by the urban middle class.

2. That the Church show solidarity with all those who are marginalized in society, struggling to come into their own.

3. That study days be organized on the impact of globalization of the economy and related issues for national bishops' conferences and Justice and Peace groups.

4. That research be conducted into an alternate economics which is less dehumanizing, e.g., the Bishops-Businessmen Forum. The Church should play a prophetic role in working for the humanization of development.

5. That the bishops participating in this assembly bring the reflections and recommendations of FABC to their national bishops' conferences and individual dioceses for implementation at the local level.

6. That FABC support and work with other groups involved with common human issues.

7. That the Office of Social Communications assure that a process be implemented to make available FABC statements to national/diocesan press and offices.

8. That a communitarian spirituality be promoted, moving from the sacramental to include an incarnational spirituality in all formation programs and out-reach activities.

9. That the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Office of Human Development collaborate to work with people of other faiths — and with Muslims, in particular — in a dialogue of life at the grass-roots level, for the promotion of social harmony, especially through exposure-immersion programs.

10. That FABC continue to intensify its efforts towards promoting the pastoral care of migrant workers.

11. That FABC make it a priority to enter into dialogue with our Churches of the First World to address questions related to IHD, Justice and Peace — for solidarity, networking and advocacy.

IX. GROWING COLLEGIALITY: THE ASIAN CHURCH SHARING IN PRAYER, MUTUAL CONCERN AND SUPPORT

A Sense of Community

"The bishops of Asia know each other." This was the perception of a European bishop at a recent World Synod in Rome. Coming to an FABC plenary assembly is the meeting of friends again. Through the years of FABC assemblies, seminars, colloquia, and training programs, many of the bishops of Asia have met, discussed, planned and prayed together in all our FABC member countries. This interchange of the years explains in part the "instant" conviviality that filled the plenary assembly hall at Manila's San Carlos Seminary. And the pleasure of friends meeting again contributed to the sense of community, and a quick getting down to the business of the assembly.

Archbishop Henry D'Souza, secretary general from 1984 through 1993, gave an overview of his years of leadership and set the tone of work accomplished and how much work waits to be done. The present secretary general, Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz, described the plenary assembly as a "working meeting," with much to be discussed and decided upon —

perhaps too much — and invited the delegates and special participants to examine the many happenings in the Church of Asia, and to provide a clear and commonly-agreed pastoral vision for the Church's pastoral of "service to life."

A Prayer-Filled Assembly

Early on its history, the late Cardinal Lawrence Picachy of Calcutta, called upon FABC to make its plenary assembly "a prayerful experience," and this has remained an FABC goal. The participants joined with the San Carlos seminarians for the daily Eucharist. As the days moved on, more and more ways were found to bring the personal contributions of all the participants to the Eucharist and the daily prayer sessions: bishop, priests, religious men and women, and lay men and women. Two brothers of the Taizé community led the daily prayers according to their particular liturgical usage. Interestingly, the chapel was always full.

The World Youth Day and the Silver Jubilee of Radio Veritas Asia

The World Youth Day was originally scheduled for April in Manila, with the sixth FABC plenary assembly and the Radio Veritas Asia anniversary to be held in January (a few months later than usual to take advantage of the "25 Years"). The Holy Father requested that the events be held at the same time in January, so that he could be present for all three celebrations. The rearrangement made for much movement to the different sites of the celebrations. Many of the plenary assembly delegates were at the same time "catechists" for the young people from their countries. And other bishops wished to thank Radio Veritas Asia for its irreplaceable service to their countries. However, the small problems of re-scheduling lead also to the spiritual experience of the plenary assembly, for if "immersion" has now become part of every major meeting, the participants shared in the spiritual treasure of all three meetings, with the unforgettable outpouring of prayer and the commitment of faith of the Catholic community expressed in the Holy Father's many Eucharistic celebrations, and the universal good cheer of the social events of song, dance and drama. These days provided the plenary assembly with an immersion never to be repeated.

Also a Business Meeting

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

The secretary general, the bishop-chairmen of the six Offices and the executive secretary of the Theological Advisory Commission made their reports to the bishops. Individual Offices also called together their com-

mittee members to continue their planning for the implementation of the assembly's deliberations.

Changes in the Federation's statutes were approved. One change was a clarification of terminology regarding individual members of FABC. The second change limits the secretary general to two terms of three years each.

The Open Forum

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

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

A fundamental question of the Open Forum is: "Who speaks for the member conferences?" FABC is a voluntary association of episcopal conferences, and no decision of the plenary assembly binds the individual conference. Any statement of the plenary assembly expresses the mind of the plenary assembly and establishes FABC policy. Any decision can later be received or not by each member conference, as it should decide.

Insights gained from the workshops' reports and the special presentations were discussed in the hall and also contributed to the assembly's conclusions, which are contained in the final statement and in the pastoral recommendations of the workshops for follow-up action.

The topics chosen for the Open Forum pertained mainly to pastoral problems relevant in Asia. A presentation was usually made by experts; the subjects were discussed; and in some instances the bishops came to agreement to emphasize some pastoral concerns during the coming four years to the next plenary assembly, for concerted and unified effort.

Follow-up on the assembly's recommendations through specific programs was to be formulated when the bishops holding FABC positions met later in April in Thailand with the FABC staffs for joint planning sessions.

The FABC Impact Study

The preparatory committee for the sixth plenary assembly decided early on to obtain data gathered by a professional institute for group analysis. The Federation commissioned Manila's renowned Asian Social Institute (ASI) to conduct a survey of the bishops of Asia in order to provide them with a more effective pastoral service. It was agreed that the study should not be too "scientific," i.e., not too technical, "expansive," and not too "expensive." A questionnaire was mailed to 448 Asian bishops, with three follow-ups from June 1 to August 31, 1994. Responses came from 51.8% of the bishops, which professional people say is remarkable.

Dr. Mina Ramirez, director of ASI, gave an over-all presentation of the general results of the survey, which she hoped "will be seen as a take-off point for the local Churches of Asia to renew themselves. . ."

The ASI report is extensive but some attitudes come through with more strength.

- FABC should be directed primarily to bishops, and to the bishops' conferences.
- Bishops as a whole group favor programs that are directed to themselves as bishops, rather than those concerns that deal with a particular diocese.
- There is a consensus that there should be major emphasis on intercommunication with bishops and conferences.
- "Intensification of FABC's system of exchange of information and experience through fora, seminars and dialogues and exposures."
- Focusing on specific concerns, ". . . e.g., BECs, ecology, Church of the poor, social teachings of the Church, Asian liturgy, among others."

The ASI study concludes with the challenge that the forces of animation be strengthened among bishops, who consequently will animate the pastoral directions and actions of episcopal conferences and dioceses.

Non-Violent Action for Social Change and Peace

How can Christians in Asia — a "little flock" — contribute what moral

strength we may have to the causes of justice and peace? What guidelines does our Christian tradition provides us with? Have we reached a stage in Asian social development when we are called to move from a passive, if unaccepting, tolerance of overwhelming evil to an active kind of non-violence that will strenuously resist evil and injustice but not to the killing of the perpetrator of wrong? Bishop Francisco Claver, S.J., of Manila's East Asian Pastoral Institute, presented the traditional theological stance of Catholic morality on violence, and the contemporary demands or social morality, not just of individuals, but of communities as a whole. He posed for the plenary assembly the question: "How to develop and foster our collective imagination along lines of non-violent but nevertheless effective change?"

Refugees and Migrants in Asia

There are estimated to be 4.5 million refugees and migrants in Asia — politically or economically displaced from their homelands, cultures and families. Father Graziano Battistella of the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila and the Philippines Bishops' Conference Commission on Migrants, opened his presentation with a summary of the Holy See's directives on the pastoral care of refugees and migrants.

Displaced persons constitute a relatively new group of the poor of Asia. They are the internal and external refugees seeking and struggling towards life. They are the migrant workers from the poor countries of Asia searching for livelihood and security in other countries. Separated from their own families, they are often subject to abuse and exploitation. The major pastoral concern is how to address the causes of their situation. (Please consult FABC Paper, No. 73.)

Ecology and the Christian Response to the Care/Destruction of Creation

Ecology can no longer be ignored as a pastoral concern in Asia. It is of the utmost importance. We are witnessing continuing and unabated destruction of our environment. People, especially the poor, and the ecosystem that supports life, are being destroyed — sacrificed on the altar of economic gain. We must choose life for our world and its peoples by acting against policies and practices that cause the further degradation of our environment, and by caring for the earth and all that live in it. Father Edna McDonagh, a Columban missionary with many years of ministry in the Philippines, gave a detailed presentation of the theme "Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation." Of particular value was the discussion of the Christian meaning of ecological concern and the means to promote a pastoral formation through liturgy and education of an attitude of the sacredness of creation. (Please consult FABC Paper, No. 72f.)

Contemporary Trends in Bio-Ethics and the Church's Response

There are only a few Catholic centers in Asia for research in bio-ethics and its related moral problems. (Bombay, Seoul and Manila were named.) And yet the Asian contest, with its burgeoning economies and resultant secularization, is witnessing an attack on life, with a progressive withdrawing from traditional family values and related personal morality. The presentation of current trends in bio-ethics in the plenary assembly could only be introductory. Dr. Teofilo San Luis, and his team, of the Institute for Biomedical and Family Ethics of Manila's University of Santo Tomas, provided an overview of current movements and contemporary ethical and moral questions, and the broadening responsibility to be placed upon the Church as biomedical research advances to new frontiers. The question from the presentation is simple: "Will the church in Asia be ready to respond?"

The Asian Synod

The Holy Father repeated in his address to the participants his intention to convoke an Asian synod, after the manner of recently-held regional synods.

Cardinal Jan Schotte, secretary of the Synod of Bishops, was sent by the Holy Father to discuss with the bishop-delegates the history and significance of the Synod of Bishops. His lengthy presentation provided a well-appreciated opportunity for the bishops in the assembly hall to touch almost every aspect of the proposed synod, and to try to determine what more immediate preparation was to be expected of the Asian bishops' conferences.

X. CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN ASIA TODAY: SERVICE TO LIFE

The Final Statement of the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly

Introduction

1. To our God of love and life, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we give praise and thanks!

In the same city of Manila, where 25 years ago in the inspiring presence of the revered Pope Paul VI, the dream of actualizing the communion of Asian Churches began, we, the bishop-delegates of twenty-one countries and territories, gather in Manila for the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. We are deeply blessed by the active participation in our assembly of a number of dedicated lay persons, priests, religious sisters and brothers.*

On this occasion a singular grace for us is likewise the moving presence of Pope John Paul II. With him we not only celebrate the 25th anniversary of the resolution to form a structure that would later become the FABC, but also the 25th year of Radio Veritas Asia, the 400th year of the Archdiocese of Manila and its 3 historic suffragans, Cebu, Caceres, and Nueva Segovia, and especially the 10th World Youth Day. Indeed these festivities are peak moments of God's grace to the Church in Asia, in communion with one another and with the Holy Father — at the service of life.

2. Remembering with gratitude the beginnings of FABC, we are impressed by the vigor of the creative energies that gave it birth and life. We also recognize that the history of FABC is but a short chapter in the continuing saga of the Asian Churches' solicitude for life, whose individual and collective stories are about promises already realized, if yet waiting to be fulfilled.

This remembrance of blessings past is both comfort and strength. For we realize that the spring from which FABC draws its vigor is the God who has blessed us in Jesus Christ with every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3). We thank our God in our remembrance (Phil 1:3).

* We note with pain the absence of delegates from some countries. We hope for the day when conditions would allow them to celebrate with us our ecclesial communion in a fuller way.

A. 25 Years of FABC Commitment to Life

3. Through its past five plenary assemblies, FABC tried to discern the current "life-context" of the Asian pastoral situations that inevitably consist of death-dealing as well as life-serving realities. The initial bishops' meeting in Manila in 1970 already indicated the expectations of Asians for "a better and fuller life for themselves and their children" (ABM, 10). For this reason, the Church in Asia must foster a threefold dialogue: with the many different faiths of Asia, with the cultures of Asia, and with the poor multitudes of Asia. We believe that fullness of life can be realized "only in and through Christ and his Gospel, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (FABC I, 1974).

For the Church and its mission in Asia, whose peoples are characterized by traditions of deep religiosity, prayer has to be "the river of life." Prayer is absolutely indispensable if the Christ-life is to indwell Christian participation in life-giving liberation and development (FABC II, 1978). This inner life of prayer builds the Church into a credible community of faith, rooted in the life of the Trinity and turned resolutely toward the construction of a fully human future for Asian peoples (FABC III, 1982).

This is why the laity must act as an evangelizing and liberating force in the struggle for fullness of life (FABC IV, 1986). Our unique contribution is our vision of Jesus Christ and our Christian spirituality manifested through dialogue, discernment and deeds. As Church, we need to walk in compassion and humility, in accompaniment with all the peoples of Asia "as they pray, work, struggle and suffer for a better human life, (in their) search for the meaning of human life and progress" (FABC V, 1990).

Through the years FABC has addressed various concerns that promote social, economic, religious and ecclesial life. Such concerns are the promotion of justice and integral development particularly in relation to women, migrant workers and indigenous peoples; the building of basic ecclesial communities and basic human communities; the promotion of interreligious dialogue, especially the dialogue of life; leadership formation and specialized formation of priest-formators, youth chaplains, bishops and lay leaders; the conscientization and organization of basic sectors of society; and a more effective use of media for evangelization.

The overall thrust of activities in recent years has been to motivate the Churches of Asia towards "a new way of being Church," a Church that is committed to becoming "a community of communities" and a credible sign of salvation and liberation.

4. Yet on this the 25th anniversary of FABC, we have to confess

humbly that the goal of conscientizing the local Churches and building a communion of our Asian Churches is still far from being reached, despite the truly remarkable advances already made in this regard.

We are glad to recall, even if only briefly, the extraordinarily rich story of FABC. It is the story of a listener attentive to the perils of life, to the visions of life, to celebratory songs of life and who wants to share the singular wealth one has, which is the memory of the person named Jesus who is for us the Way, the Truth and the Life.

5. The theme for this Sixth Plenary Assembly of FABC is most fitting. We take as our theme "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life," in order that we may recommit ourselves to the promotion of life in Asia.

B. A Vision of Life amid Asian Realities

6. "Life. Vibrant life pulsating from the fecundity of Asia" (FABC International Theological Colloquium, 1994). How do the disciples of Jesus in Asia view this life that is welling up from the depths of Asian peoples, their histories, their habitats and their cultures? What service can the disciples of Jesus in Asia offer to affirm, enhance, defend and promote this life?

Our response begins with a rapid scan of Asian realities not so much to repeat the already substantive analyses that previous FABC assemblies and a great number of FABC seminars and workshops have done, as simply to situate more clearly the struggle of Asia for life.

7. We turned our attention to whatever threatens, weakens, diminishes and destroys the life of individuals, groups or peoples; whatever devalues human beings, conceived, born, infant, old; whatever socio-cultural, religious, political, economic, or environmental factor that threatens or destroys life in our countries. We identified some of these forces of death at work in Asia. And we concluded that as promoters of life, we could only denounce them.

We were alarmed at how the global economy is ruled by market forces to the detriment of peoples' real needs. We considered the insecurity and vulnerability of migrants, refugees, the displaced ethnic and indigenous peoples, and the pain and agonies of exploited workers, especially the child laborers in our countries.

We became more aware of the forces of death depriving women and the girl child of their dignity, freedom, personhood and fuller humanity.

We realized how the same forces undermine the family, the basic cell of society and the Church, through liberalist, anti-life, anti-child, anti-woman, anti-family policies and values, and pose many threats to wholeness of life in the area of health care, especially of the poor.

We recognized the growing violence, terrorism, conflicts and nuclear proliferation fueled by the arms trade and greed for profit, all of which violate people's rights. They threaten participative democracy, humane governance and a just and peaceful society. We also noted with pain that our sisters and brothers in some countries are still denied their right to religious freedom.

In the area of religious pluralism, we reflected on the growing fundamentalist extremism and fanaticism discriminating and excluding people who belong to other religious traditions, thus destroying the harmony of peoples' lives and their solidarity already witnessed to in a dialogue of life.

As we reflected on these negative areas, we could not ignore the immense damage to the ecosystem of our planet which offends justice and the rights of people.

We say "no" to these death-dealing forces.

8. In this scenario of shadows, we were also encouraged by areas of light. We became aware of the many signs of hope in the histories and cultures of our peoples, as seen in peoples' movements and the initiatives of groups, peoples, and the Churches in Asia for the service of life. We identified with great joy these expressions of life powerfully at work in Asia. We resolved to affirm them, encourage them, celebrate them, and unite our efforts to them.

Noteworthy among them are the growing consciousness regarding human dignity and empowerment of the poor, the growing voices of groups and peoples for humanized development, and the cries of the marginalized groups for participatory and democratic governance.

We dwelt also on the movements for the protection of the environment and ecosystem linked to justice, and the solidarity of committed groups and peoples in the struggle for the rights of women, children, especially the girl child, and those of indigenous peoples. Truly remarkable is the increasing number of young people moving towards solidarity and community, and seeking a deeper spirituality. We were consoled by efforts of many groups to foster dialogue with people of other faiths.

We did not miss the value of the discovery of mass media for the

promotion of values and support of peoples' movements and rights.

To these life-giving forces, we give a resounding "yes."

9. From the dynamic forces at work within Asian realities a basic vision of life emerges. In the living heritage of cultures and religious traditions of Asia we discern values and their expressions in symbols, stories and art forms, that embody a vision of life; while we are critically aware of the distortions that have entered into these traditions. In these cultural and religious traditions we also discover the responses to life given by past generations of Asian peoples, which in turn become resources for our contemporary response.

We Asians are searching not simply for the meaning of life but for life itself. We are striving and struggling for life because it is a task and a challenge. But life is a gift too, a mystery, because our efforts to achieve it are far too short of the ultimate value of life. We speak of life as a *becoming* — a growing into, a journeying to life and to the source of life.

10. So what might this vision be?

In the rich diversity of ancient Asian cultures and faiths is a vision of *unity in diversity, a communion of life* among diverse peoples. In this context we seek to become persons of dialogue.

Ours is a vision of *holistic life*, life that is achieved and entrusted to every person and every community of persons, regardless of gender, creed or culture, class or color. It is the fruit of integral development, the authentic development of the whole person and of every person.

We envision a life *with integrity and dignity, a life of compassion* for the multitudes, especially for the poor and the needy. It is a life of *solidarity* with every form of life and of *sensitive care* for all the earth. It is thus a life that unites us Asians among ourselves and with the whole of creation into one community of life.

For us to live is to live with integrity and dignity, in peace and justice, in freedom and participation, in mutuality and complementarity. It is to live in simplicity and friendship.

At the heart of our vision of life is the Asian *reverential sense of mystery and of the sacred*, a spirituality that regards life as sacred and discovers the Transcendent and its gifts even in mundane affairs, in tragedy or victory, in brokenness or wholeness. This deep interiority draws people to experience *harmony and inner peace* and infuses ethics into all of creation.

11. Such is a broad sketch of an Asian vision of life. With the eyes of the heart, with our faith, we need to understand it as the work of the creative Spirit of the God of Life, who in all things and among every people is healing, renewing, and recreating in ever new, ever mysterious ways.

What can we, and how can we, as disciples of Jesus, contribute to the shaping and achieving of such a vision of life in Asia, with our Asian peoples and for Asian peoples? How can the Churches of Asia participate, as Churches and as Asian, in the common global search for life? What does Christian discipleship in Asia mean, if it is to truly serve life?

Our response leads us to Jesus, the Life whom we are following and whom we share with others.

C. To Life in the Footsteps of Jesus

12. All life is related to the active presence of the Creator Spirit. No wonder Jesus, confessed as Messiah and Lord, is Spirit-filled. He who is the Life is dependent on the Spirit. Conceived in the virgin's womb by the Spirit's power (Lk 1:35, Mt 1:20), anointed by the Spirit at his baptism in the Jordan (Mk 1:10), driven to the wilderness by the Spirit to be prepared for his mission (Mt 4:1), sent to preach the good news of salvation by the Spirit's action (Lk 4:18-19), Jesus ushers in the new creation, the fullness of life in God. As the Risen One, he breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples (Jn 20:22f), making them partakers of his life and mission.

What vision of life emerges from the Spirit-filled Jesus?

13. **Jesus and the Kingdom of the God of Life.** "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). With these simple words, Jesus describes his mission. But it is also depicted as the mission of announcing and inaugurating the Kingdom of God (Mk 1:15), the hope of subjugated Israel for the fullness of life in God. Jesus teaches what life in the Kingdom consists in.

13.1. *Communion with Abba.* Jesus identifies the ultimate source of life, the God whom he intimately calls Abba. In Abba Jesus finds his whole life. "I am in the Father and the Father in me" (Jn 14:11). In Abba he finds the resting place of his life's journey. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). Who Jesus is, what he does, where he ends up, are all found in a passion for communion with Abba.

13.2. *Liberating and Recreating Communion among Neighbors.* In compassionate love, Jesus makes his own the struggles and aspirations of

Israel for life. Assuming their humanity, he incarnates Abba's life-giving actions of old: creation of all the living out of sheer love, liberation of the chosen people from the bondage of Egypt, mutual belonging within the covenant. Like Abba, Jesus brings life through a new creation, a radical liberation and a renewed communion.

At his word, demons flee, sinners are liberated. At his touch, the sick are healed. He frees the victims of society from the evil and sin that shackle them. He restores them to communion. He breaks down barriers set up by greed, pride, discrimination, lopsided social norms and even religious distortions. Outcasts become sisters and brothers. Sinners are worthy of compassion. The hungry, the thirsty, the prisoners, the naked bear the divine presence. And God is our Father. In the freedom and communion that Jesus offers, a new creation dawns. The human community is reborn. Indeed the time of fulfillment has come. Life in abundance is in our midst. The Kingdom is here (Lk 17:21).

13.3. *Death for the Life of the Many.* In his passion for life, Jesus courageously confronts death. But like all defenders of life, he catches the wrath of the "friends of death" and suffers humiliating death. In the meal he shares with his friends before being crucified, he portrays his death as an act of self-giving for the life of others: "my body is given for you" (Lk 22:19), "my blood is to be poured out for the many" (MK 14:24). And he commands his disciples to remember this supreme act of love. On the cross, Jesus unites himself with every person seeking life. On the cross, life is poured out from the love and strength that dare to be weak for Abba and neighbors. On the cross, Jesus wins life by offering his own life in death.

13.4. *The Risen One Conquers Death.* Jesus' rising from the dead tells the whole of humanity and creation that God is the Master of life. In the resurrection of Jesus, death has been stripped of its definitive role in shaping history. History belongs to life! The whole of creation is propelled by life! God offers hope to the whole world and its teeming millions searching and struggling for life through the Risen One, Word of Life, the Bread of Life, the Author of Life.

13.5. *The Gift of the Spirit of Life.* Jesus promises and gives the Spirit, "the Lord, the Giver of Life." The Spirit, that enabled Jesus to be the life-giving Messiah, will enable the community of disciples to remember him, to follow him, to participate in his life. The followers of Christ, individually and corporately, are to be comforted and rejuvenated in their following of Jesus by the Spirit of Life.

This image of Jesus — man of the creative Spirit, friend of God, per-

son of interiority, bringer of harmony, lover of the poor, healer and liberator, bold prophet, suffering companion, victor over death, sharer of his Spirit — resonates with the Asian peoples' vision of life.

14. Discipleship in the Spirit of Life. It is the Spirit of Jesus that creates the disciple-community. And it is in the power of the Spirit that we believe in him (1 Jn 4:2f), remember him (Jn 14:26), communicate him (Acts 8:39) and live by him (2 Cor 12:13). Discipleship is living by the Spirit of the Risen Lord and by the demands of the Kingdom of Life. The peoples of Asia will be drawn to Jesus if his disciples abide in his life (Jn 15:4).

14.1. "Solidarity" with God. As Jesus immersed himself into the depths of Abba's life and love, so the disciple-community has to immerse itself totally in the life of the Triune God and live by communion with God. Through this communion, the disciple-community can more credibly share the love and life of God with others and more effectively bring the forces of God's Kingdom of Life to bear on the death-dealing realities of Asia.

To be in solidarity with God, prayer is indispensable. Prayer expresses our inner spirit and impels us towards ever deeper communion and intimacy with God. This communion is at the core of life-giving spirituality. In Jesus' own example, mission and service draw their energy and power, their very life, from solidarity with Abba and lead back to this solidarity. If the disciples of Christ are steeped in prayerful encounter with and service of Abba, they will strike a chord in the heart of Asia where traditions of spirituality and prayer abound.

14.2. Liberating and Recreating Communion Among Neighbors. Like Jesus, we have to "pitch our tents" in the midst of all humanity, building a better world, but especially among the suffering and the poor, the marginalized and the downtrodden of Asia. In profound "solidarity with suffering humanity" and led by the Spirit of life, we need to immerse ourselves in Asia's cultures of poverty and deprivation, from whose depths the aspirations for love and life are most poignant and compelling. Serving life demands communion with every woman and man seeking and struggling for life, in the way of Jesus' solidarity with humanity.

Our solidarity requires a resolve to work with our Asian sisters and brothers in liberating our societies from whatever oppresses and degrades human life and creation, most especially from sin. We offer the radical freedom of life in Christ. In a special way, we will follow Jesus in his "preferential journey" with the poor and will assist in the liberation of the materially poor, of indigenous peoples, displaced persons, victims of misguided economic and political development, victims of wars and divisions,

victims of sex tourism. We will more actively assist in the integral development of women, children and the youth, who cry out for liberation from many dehumanizing and oppressive situations and for their rightful place in society and in the Church's mission to serve life.

With our Asian sisters and brothers, we will strive to foster communion among Asian peoples, who are threatened by glaring economic, social and political imbalances. With them we will explore ways of utilizing the gifts of our diverse religions, cultures and languages to achieve a richer and deeper Asian unity. We will build bridges of solidarity and reconciliation with peoples of other faiths and will join hands with everyone in Asia in forming a true community of creation.

14.3. *Dying for the Many.* Immersion in Asia's cultures of poverty is a dying to ourselves so that we may live for God and for others. It is a dimension of the spirituality that stems from Jesus himself for whom the giving of life to others happens in the giving of the very self. That is why the love of the Father, Son and Spirit, the self-giving of God to all humanity, especially on behalf of the poor, is at the heart of all genuine service to life.

It is this love that impels us as the disciple-community of Jesus to confront and act against death-dealing realities, oppression and injustice, discrimination and exploitation, the destruction of ecosystems, the tampering with life. As disciples we cannot serve both life and death! Just as Jesus worked as a prophet of new life and died to usher it in, so we in Asia today must prophesy on behalf of the God of life. Refusal to prophesy and speak against the forces of death is to fail in serving life!

We may hesitate because we are a minority group. Indeed, we are a little flock in Asia. But it is from this position of weakness that God's gift of divine life in Jesus Crucified, the power and wisdom of God, is most significant. Triumphalism and displays of pomp and human power do not witness to the abnegation of Jesus on the Cross. It is often from our weakness that God's love as life-giving grace is more clearly made manifest.

We memorialize Jesus' total self-gift around the Eucharistic table. We partake of the very life of Jesus, the Bread of Life broken and shared. We drink of the Cup of the new covenant with God. We join Jesus in serving life by washing the feet of our neighbors. We celebrate the new creation when simple fruits of the earth and work of human hands become the presence of Jesus in our midst. We look to that promised banquet where all will sit as brothers and sisters around the God of Life.

14.4. *Living in the Risen One.* Faith in the Risen One demands that

his disciples in Asia be symbols of hope. Because Jesus is risen, we realize that the promise of life is not empty. Our common search will not end in senselessness but in life. The resurrected life, proclaimed in word, deeds, presence, community and service by the disciples of Christ, can help assure Asians that in the various arenas of death, life still pulsates and flows, life is a promise that is being realized and will be fulfilled in Jesus and his Spirit.

14.5. *Walking by the Spirit of Life.* The gift of the life-giving Spirit makes men and women disciples of Jesus. "Living by the Spirit, walking by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25) is concretely seen in a life marked by the fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22f). These values, which are opposed to the "fruits of the flesh," need to be infused into the Church's lifestyle, policies, programs and communal life.

The Spirit is the powerful breath animating the mission of the disciples of Christ. Whether in explicit proclamation of the Gospel or in the silence of prayer, whether in the warmth of personal contact or the burden of liberative action, the Spirit of life guides, sanctifies and unifies the disciple-community for the world and humanity. The deepest communication of the Church to Asia is its Spirit-filled and multiform mission of sharing Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

14.6. Our reflection on discipleship cannot be complete without invoking Mary, the woman who gave Jesus to the world. She who is the Mother of Life is also the foremost disciple of Life. Her example teaches us that discipleship involves attentive listening to the word of God and the freedom to respond to it (Lk 1:26-38). She regards herself a servant in solidarity with her people Israel, celebrating God's mercy for the lowly and the hungry (Lk 1:46-55). She courageously suffers with her Son at the foot of the cross and from that wood of life becomes the mother of us all (Jn 19:25-27). With the early disciple-community, she prays, awaiting the promised Spirit of Life (Acts 1:12-14). Now with her son in glory, she enlivens the hopes of all for eternal life. In Mary we find not only a mother but also a model and companion in our pilgrimage to life.

14.7. In the final analysis to the question that we have asked about our Christian contribution to the struggle for full life in Asia, our answer is brief, but profoundly committed. Our answer is Jesus and his Gospel of Life. Our answer is the sharing of Abba's liberating and reconciling life and love with others. Our answer is authentic discipleship in the creative Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Life.

15. **Major Pastoral Areas of Discipleship.** The above reflection on a

theological-pastoral basis of discipleship leads us to its concrete implications to our pastoral mission. Many, indeed, are our pastoral concerns: dialogue with peoples of other faiths, dialogue with the poor, dialogue with the cultures of Asia; justice and integral development mediated by the social teachings of the Church, formation and education, the apostolate of the media and the arts. We have deliberated on all these very important and interconnected concerns. The results will be published.

But in the light of our faith-reflection, we believe that five concerns require special pastoral focus:

15.1. *The Asian family* is a microcosm of Asian society. It is bombarded on all sides by anti-family forces of dehumanization and disintegration, ranging from material and moral poverty to secularistic values and external pressures leading to anti-life types of bioethics and practices of abortion and contraception. Children, as in many other areas of life, become the unwilling and innocent victims. Young girls and boys are also exploited through illegal labor practices and sex tourism. Discipleship in Asia then has to denounce such anti-life and anti-family pressures, policies, and practices and foster bioethics that is in accord with God's law and the Church's teachings in order to promote the family as a "sanctuary of life" and a school of life.

15.2. The complex issue of *women and the girl child* in Asia has to be one of the major concerns. Already our Fourth Plenary Assembly, in Tokyo, 1986, raised the issue to the level of the whole Asian Church. We cannot effectively promote our Christian vision of full life unless the Church as a communion of communities will credibly expend its moral and spiritual energies to the conversion of mentalities, the transformation of structures, and the eradication of practices that deny women and the girl child in Asia their God-given dignity. An urgent pastoral imperative is for women to exercise their right to corresponsibility and mutuality with men — in society and in the Church.

15.3. On the occasion of the 10th World Youth Day, the Church likewise confronts the reality of Asia as the continent of *the youth*. As in other FABC forums, we stand in solidarity with their struggles for authentic life. We share their concern and alarm in the face of misguided policies and structures that are already laying the foundations of their future. We wonder with them if the earth will still be preserved for them and their children at the rate it is being misused now. We commit ourselves to accompany their life-giving movement in their aspiration to transform themselves and our societies towards fuller life.

15.4. *Ecology* is once again brought to our pastoral attention. And

urgently so, since we see in the countries of Asia the continuing and unabated destruction of our environment — waters, forests, plant and animal life, air — and the support systems of all created life. Life, especially in a Third World setting, is sacrificed at the altar of short-term economic gains. The Lord, the Giver of Life, calls our discipleship in Asia into question on the time bomb issue of ecology. Choosing life requires our discipleship to discern and act with other faiths and groups against the forces of ecological destruction.

15.5. Special attention is given to *the displaced* in our societies: political and ecological refugees and migrant workers. They are marginalized and exploited by the system, denied of their place in society and must go elsewhere to seek a dignified life. In welcoming them we expose the causes of their displacement, work toward conditions for a more human living in community, experience the universal dimension of the Kingdom (Gal 3:28) and appreciate new opportunities for evangelization and intercultural dialogue.

Though our pastoral directives for action touch on many issues of concern, we appeal for a particular pastoral focus on these five major challenges.

Conclusion

16. As we end our deliberations, we do so as we began — with a prayer of thanks, hope, and commitment.

A Prayer of Service to Life in Asia

Loving and life-giving God, at the beginning you called us in Asia into life, enriched us with an astonishing variety of cultures, ways of living, believing, and worshiping. As sisters and brothers in your one Asian family, we thank you and praise you.

Among us are the poorest of the poor, the poor with their many faces of misery and pain, millions who seek not only a better life but the full Life that only you can give. We hear your call to serve them, the way your Son Jesus served others in total love, in utter selflessness, eucharistically.

Send us your Spirit of Life, that together with other communities, we may respond to the anguish of our sisters and brothers with courageous and generous love, and with them come to the Life that never ends.

May our Mother, Mary, the voice and Mother of the Poor, who announced the liberation of the lowly, be our companion. May she as the mother and model of all disciples lead us to the Way, the Truth, and the Life in your Kingdom forever and ever. Amen.

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FABC Papers:

- No. 69. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: Orientations, Challenges and Impact. A Background Paper of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, 1995.
70. Asia: The Struggle for Life in the Midst of Death and Destruction, by S. Arokiasamy. A Position Paper for the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, 1995.
71. Jesus Christ: His Service to Life, by Luis Antonio G. Tagle. A Position Paper for the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, 1995.
72. Sixth Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guides
- Prayer, Contemplation and Holiness: the Church, Community of Christian Discipleship in its Service to Life, by Catalino Arevalo.
 - Dialogue at the Service of Life, by Michael Amaladoss.
 - Christian Discipleship in Asia: Protecting Human Life, by Francisco F. Claver.
 - A Life-Giving Asian Spirituality for the Service of Life, by Thomas H. Green.
 - The Christian Vocation to Promote Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, by Sean McDonagh.
 - The Family and the Child: The Asian Family's Struggle for Life, by Catherine Bernard Haliburn.
 - The Struggle for Life: Asian Youth, by Leo Perera.
 - Women and the Church's Service to Life in Asia, by Amelia Vasquez.
 - Religious Life: A Service to Life in Asia Today, by Virginia Fabela and Quirico Pedregosa, et al.
 - Christian Discipleship in Work and Profession — A Service to Life in Asia Today, by Cora Mateo.
 - Formation and Education for Christian Discipleship in Asia, by Wendy Louis.
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