

**COMMUNION AND SOLIDARITY:  
A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH IN ASIA  
A COLLOQUIUM ON THE CHURCH IN ASIA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
PATTAYA, THAILAND  
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**I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLLOQUIUM**

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences gathered about 130 bishops, clergy, religious and lay people in a colloquium on "Church in Asia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Towards Communion and Solidarity in the Context of Globalization."

This was in response to Pope John Paul II's appeal – contained in the Apostolic Letter "The Coming of the Third Millennium" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*) – to all local Churches to prepare for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

The colloquium, which was held in Pattaya, Thailand, August 25-31, 1997, set for itself the following objectives:

1. To have a more informed awareness of the phenomenon of globalization and the impact of its various dimensions: economic, cultural, political and religious;
2. To understand some major trends in Asia and their influence on Asian life in the light of globalization;
3. To become more aware of the ways by which faith and theology in Asia have responded, and are responding, to emerging Asian realities in the light of the vision of Church in Asia;
4. To learn some approaches to renewing our way of being Church, our pastoral care, and the task of human promotion, in view of the pastoral

priorities of the Church in Asia;

5. To become more aware of the role of partner agencies that collaborate, in their First World context, in the vision — mission of the Church in Asia;

6. To come up with recommendations that address the major concerns emerging from the colloquium, which may become a program of pastoral action to be carried out by the Church in Asia in the next few years.

The colloquium's process included the following: inputs, open forums, reflection and sharing through workshops, reporting at plenary assemblies, panel presentations, and consensus-taking in the form of recommendations. This process aimed not merely at an intellectual understanding but at concrete pastoral action.

In this report of the colloquium only a few of the main papers read during the week are presented, as stepping-stones in the directions taken by the participants.

The daily prayer and meditation during the colloquium became integral to the process of discernment in the colloquium. The Church has always taught that in the work of renewal and development everything flows from and returns to the Living Word of God.

This is why the daily celebration of the Eucharist was considered to be at the heart of the colloquium's activities. The Eucharist was at once the ultimate celebration of total commitment to integral liberation in Jesus, as well as the very life of a "new way of being Church."

## GLOBALIZATION

The first phase of the colloquium dealt with the phenomenon of globalization and its impact on the peoples of the Asian continent. Experts helped clarify the notion of globalization, and exposed its transforming effects on all aspects of life: economies, culture, family relationships, religion, etc.

The supporters of globalization stress its unifying character as it incorporates all nations into a common economic system and facilities development. Without it, poor countries would remain isolated in their poverty. In addition, the globalization in communications brings about the encounter of different peoples and cultures, promoting mutual knowledge and understanding among them.

The critics of globalization point out that the phenomenon is flawed at its roots. A completely free market, ruled by the law of maximum profit, created more inequality, and favors those countries and corporations that already control the technology. Available data show that, although globalization has accelerated the creation of wealth, it benefits the wealthy. Rich countries are becoming richer, while poor countries are becoming poorer.

In a recent address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Pope John Paul II warned of the disastrous effects for humanity of a market-

controlled society:

Experience shows that a market economy, left to unconditional freedom, is far from bringing the greatest possible advantages to individuals and societies. One cannot forget the human price of globalization and the scandal of serious inequalities between nations and between persons and groups within a country. An unbridled market, under the pretext of competitiveness, prospers by exploiting man and the environment to excess. This type of market is doomed to failure, even in purely economic terms...

From a Christian point of view, then, globalization must develop a "human face" through the promotion of a solidarity which seeks to solve the basic problems that affect a great portion of humanity.

### GLOBALIZATION AND EVANGELIZATION

Globalization challenges the life of the Church and the way it evangelizes. Against the forces of the free market that create isolation and marginalization of poor countries and people, the Church, now more than ever before, must present itself as a sign of communion and solidarity.

The Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly reads:

The Asian Church is called to be a companion, a true partner of all Asians as they pray, work, struggle and suffer for a better human life and progress, to be servants of the Lord and of humanity in a spirit of compassion, the compassion of Jesus himself who came to bind the wounds of humanity.

From the process of faith-reflection on Asian realities, then, there has gradually emerged a clear vision of what the Church in Asia has to be in order that it be relevant, credible, effective.

Some of the fundamental components of the vision of Church in Asia may be articulated, rather broadly, in the following way:

1. In light of the massive poverty of Asian peoples, of the plurality of their faiths, and the rich variety of their cultures, the Church in Asia has to be a Church of the poor, a Church of dialogue, and a Church that is truly inculturated, a Church then that is thoroughly Asian.

2. It has to be Church that is communion, a people in communion with the Triune God, with the universal Church, and with the peoples and cultures of Asia. It is a communion of participatory faith-communities. It is a Church of solidarity, in active solidarity with the struggles of the poor of Asia, in solidarity with God's creation, defending and promoting its integrity.

3. As people of God, this Church humbly accompanies, walks hum-

bly with the peoples of Asia in the common journey to the Kingdom of God, a Reign of justice and peace, truth and love. It is a sign of this divine reigning, and bears, as a herald and servant-community, the Gospel of Jesus, Lord and Savior, who is the Good News of salvation and integral liberation.

4. For this reason, the Church in Asia must speak, act and live out of profound communion with the Spirit of the Lord, in an integral spirituality that is truly apostolic and therefore truly contemplative.

Such is the "new way of being Church in Asia," and is genuinely reflected in the life of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) now sprouting like seeds, that are harbingers of a full life in the Reign of God.

## II. JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE AS CHURCH

by

BROTHER ANTHONY ROGERS

Beginning with our experience of Jesus in our lives, we move to reflect on our lives as Christians. It is our vocation, rooted in our Baptism and nurtured by prayer and the sacraments, that enables us to enter into a process of dialogue with Jesus in our lives. It is the light of Jesus within us that enables us to look at the world of relationships, around us, and thus made able to love tenderly with the compassion of Jesus. It is this love that moves us to settle differences and conflicts, and walk humbly with the Lord, asking forgiveness of the Lord and of each other.

The steps closer to the Word of the Lord are also closer to each other and to the world that in need of transformation. The journey within is the first step to the journey outside. When we begin to see the life of Jesus as a result of our contemplation on his Word, we experience anew the power of his spirit. We who are thus transformed in our perspective also imbibe the new values of the Gospel.

From self-promotion and falsehood we move on to be concerned about human promotion and justice; from self-centeredness and profit for self we move to selflessness and prophecy.

When we see the Spirit of Jesus alive in the Kingdom of God that is already present in the world that we live in, we see the relevance of interreligious dialogue and inculturation.

Thus, this journeying with the Lord and with each other is what makes us credible witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus in the context of our times. Thus, the Kingdom of God in us, with us and among us is what becomes the salt, leaven and light that bring salvation in and through Jesus to the whole of humanity. The mystery of the Kingdom is the mystery of God working in and through our lives.

Strangely it is the "the least powerful" and those who have put their complete trust in the ways of the Lord, who are ready to listen to the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus. Amidst material poverty and lack of physical

comfort they relish the Word of God as being the source of consolation and comfort.

We are truly evangelized when others can say, "It is no longer he/she who lives but Christ who lives in them." They are not recognized by their status and stature but by the love and truth present in their lives, by the compassion and sincerity that govern every moment of the day.

It is in the light of this Vision of Church that we are being challenged to move into the 21st Century.

### III. THE CHALLENGES TO THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by  
CARDINAL ROGER ETCHEGARAY

#### INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

It is always dangerous to attempt to predict the future. Who, for example, could have foretold the rapid fall of communism in Eastern Europe and its persistence on the Asian Continent? Yet, think, in a little more than three short years, we will be in the year 2001; the Millennium will already be a thing of the past. The twenty-first century is in fact already present; the factors at play today will continue to affect entire societies and peoples, indeed the world as a whole, for years to come. Other forces, not yet clearly discernible, may, however, radically codify the best previsions. I can, therefore, only look at the future with the eyes of today.

I have been asked to speak of the challenge the *Universal Church* must face in the proximate future. The adjective "universal" is of vital importance to the Church which boldly proclaims, with a single voice, that the Word of God became one of us, which announces that God calls all people to be one and wills that *all* to be saved. How much of its savor the word "universal" loses if reduced to the notion of a Church spread across the world! Wherever the Church is, it is universal: be it in Africa, in the Americas, in Europe, in the Pacific... and yes, in Asia. The Church is, in fact, most truly universal when it takes on flesh and mind and spirit in a particular place. Or, as you so well phrased it, when it recognizes and announces the Power of the Spirit of Jesus at work in a specific part of this world. The true challenge for the Church is to be fully God's Church everywhere it is, whatever its situation may be. In this regard, it is interesting to remember that one of the more significant aspects of the preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is precisely the holding of regional synods. The Church which is in Asia must enrich the Church in other parts of the world, as, for example, the Church in Africa did a few years ago. This is part of our call to be a Universal Church, or "to walk in communion," as you aptly put it.

## THE CHALLENGES THAT THE CHURCH FACES

Other speakers will address the major trends evident in the world today, among which are the globalization of the economy and of the financial market, as well as the communications and electronic revolution. Before such megatrends, we tend to forget that these phenomena originated with people, and are ultimately controlled by people. They are not blind forces. Yet, at the same time, the vast majority of the people of the world run the risk of being caught up in forces that are actually and totally beyond their control. Even entire regions face the possibility of being marginalized, judged unproductive. The very production of goods can now shift with extraordinary speed and ease to different parts of the world, to wherever costs are minimized and output maximized. The effect on the worker, on the human person, on the local community, does not enter into the calculations.

While the challenges that these trends offer the Church are immense, are they not at the very heart of its mission in today's world, as traced out by our great conciliar charter? The Church in the modern world is to share not only the joy and the hope — *Gaudium et Spes* (No.1) — but also the grief and the anguish of the men and women of our time, precisely because we are a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, pressing on towards the kingdom of the Father.

Our challenge is basically to assure, with the full force of our belief in the Power of the Spirit of Jesus, that each individual, every family, community, nation, and region have a place and a voice in a globalizing society. The Church is concerned with economic and other social phenomena only because they deeply touch the lives of people. It cannot remain at the heart of development, or work that people do not lose their cultural identity because of the communications revolution. It must also continue to proclaim tirelessly the inalienable right of all people to practice freely the religion of their choice and to have the means to be able to do so.

At the same time, the Church must become ever close to the microsociety groups: the family, the local community. I have just come from Paris where more than a million young people proclaimed together their faith and declared their readiness to build a new world in Christ, where all can live together in peace and justice. The true wealth of Asia is its young people; it is a continent of the future. A major challenge for the Church in Asia is to find its place in the midst of Jesus, to build the Church of the twenty-first century with and for them.

If a Universal Church is a stranger nowhere, it is most at home among the poor. In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* Pope John Paul II reminds us that a necessary condition for the preparation and the celebration of the Jubilee is "to lay greater emphasis on the Church's *preferential option for the poor and the outcast*" (No. 51). Asia, with its social contrasts and its rapid economic transformation, also must face the challenge of vast numbers of economically-poor or socially-excluded groups. The Church in Asia, and

indeed the entire Church, as it moves into the twenty-first century, must make visible its preferential love for the poor. Love presupposes resembling the one loved.

### COMMUNION AS A WAY OF LIFE IN A DIVIDED WORLD

At the 1990 FABC Plenary Assembly in Bandung, you determined to find "A New Way of Being Church in Asia." You then went on to develop a vision of communion and solidarity. These are not abstract concepts but rather have direct relevance to the challenges the Church faces in the immediate future.

Your bold statement that communion is your way of life is leading you ever more consciously into that great dialogue with the venerable religions and cultures of the Asian continent. What might we as Church have specifically to offer to this dialogue? Perhaps nothing more than our deep conviction that every person — each man, each woman, each child — is created in the image and likeness of a loving God, and is endowed with inalienable dignity. All, therefore, merit respect. A vision of communion thus reflects our firm belief in the unity of the human family.

The consequences of these deceptively simple affirmations are highly exacting, in the first place for the Church itself. Is the Church in Asia going to be able to offer to the world a living model of a society in which there is neither "Greek nor Jew" — or today we could perhaps say neither Malaysian nor Laotian, neither Chinese nor Indian — but rather one people in God? A Church living in communion will be able to give this clear witness to the possibility of all peoples living together in harmony. How sadly we need that witness today in a world marked by ethnic and religious conflict! A Church living in communion will also be able to speak credibly to those powers that favor certain countries because of their economic potential, while ignoring the weaker ones.

### COMMUNION IN SOLIDARITY

Communion *within* the Church could bear the risk of turning in on itself, especially in situations where Christians are a small minority, as is the case for almost all the FABC countries. You have wisely recognized this danger by coupling communion with solidarity. You have committed yourselves to proclaim and work for the common good of the *whole* human family. This bold challenge of solidarity will only be achieved when every element within the Church is truly activated to live and act for the good of others, *because all are called to oneness in God: all have been redeemed in and through Jesus.*

A Church that lives in both communion and solidarity can also proclaim without hesitation that the riches of creation are destined for all. These riches are not just raw materials. They are also the fruits of human

ingenuity: technological know-how, information, literature and other forms of artistic expression, scientific and medical progress. Hence, the importance of the Church's attempting to insure that development is not only economic, but that it embraces the integral development of each human person. Paradoxically, this is actually in the interest of the globalization process under way. If the true good of the human person and of the human community is overlooked, if the rich are favored and the poor left behind, globalization will eventually fall of its own weight. And what a fall this will be!

You have already begun to set for yourselves pastoral plans to meet the challenges of tomorrow already present today. The particular Asian sensitivity to spirituality and dialogue will help you in this regard. These two gifts are also much needed contributions to the entire Church in an increasingly materialistic world where only the strongest voice dominates.

### A CHURCH MOVING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

In closing, I should like to say that what the FABC is attempting to do is fully in the spirit of the preparations for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. It is almost as if you had begun to interiorize *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* even as it was being written. You have not hesitated before the need to review the past and to take a fresh and critical look at the place of the Church in Asia. As its spiritual sons, you are able to speak with its mind and heart. You have, indeed, determined to proclaim and to live out the eternal paradox by which, the stronger our faith, the more we are sensitive to the needs of those who do not yet know the Power of the Word, or who cannot experience it because of their blinding poverty.

Communion and solidarity are two of the many faces of evangelization. And I would urge you to continue along the path that you are attempting to trace out for the Church in Asia. Your coming Synod will offer you an excellent occasion to deepen and expand this vision for the good of the entire Church, and ultimately for the benefit of the one human family created by God in his own image and likeness. Think how very rich that image is!

### IV. THE INTERPERSONAL AND TRANSPERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF ASIAN SPIRITUALITY

An Integrated Spirituality

by

FATHER SEBASTIAN PAINADATH

Pope Paul VI, addressing the Asian bishops in Manila in 1970, said: "Asia is a continent, the past history of whose people manifest the sense of spiritual values dominating the thoughts of their sages and the lives of their vast multitudes."<sup>1</sup> Asia is the womb of the religions of the world. A relent-



less quest for the Beyond, for the Ultimate, for the Divine characterizes the very fabric of the Asian psyche. This quest has given rise to a rich heritage of sages and an immense diversity of spiritual paths. The Asian psyche resonates with diversity in spiritual pursuits. "Diversity is not something to be regretted and abolished, but to be rejoiced over and promoted, since it represents richness and strength. The test of true harmony lies in the acceptance of diversity as richness."<sup>2</sup>

Diversity in spiritual search in Asia has given rise to a rich plurality. Deep within this plurality, however, we can discover two spiritual streams, two approaches to the experience of the ultimate mystery of reality. There is basically a two-fold path of experiencing the Divine: the interpersonal and the transpersonal. This can be found at the core of every religion, however, with a predominance of one or the other approach. A reflection on the main factors of these two paths would clarify the inherent dialectic between them and the need of an integration of the two approaches in spirituality.

### THE INTERPERSONAL APPROACH

In the interpersonal approach the Divine is experienced as personal God. As a result, an interpersonal relationship between the human person and God evolves. This is a relationship in the pattern of I—Thou. God, who is I encounters the human Thou in love; the human person, who thus becomes aware of his/her subjectivity responds to the divine Thou in surrender. Encounter with the divine Thou is expressed through personalistic symbols, like father, mother, lord, king, friend and bridegroom. The primary medium of communication between I and Thou is word; when one speaks the other listens. There is a constant dialectic between revelation and response, between the demanding word and obedient surrender. Disobedience to God's Word and Will is sin.

The I-Thou relationship between the human person and God finds articulation in doings. God enters the lives of human persons through events, which are considered to be salvific events. Human persons respond to God's demands through acts of "doing the Will of God." Thus, the relationship between the human person and God gives rise to a spirituality with ethical overtones and a dominant sin-consciousness. Justice becomes the central concern of religious existence. Interpersonal relationship with God creates human communities with a keen spiritual sensitivity to interpersonal human relationships. Religion, thus, inevitably promotes social responsibility, and creates salvific communities. Believers feel themselves bound together in a spiritual community, in and through which they experience the demanding and saving presence of God. In the community a history-consciousness, too, evolves because of the salvific doings of God in the world. History thus becomes salvation-history. This communitarian and historical understanding of salvation process is the consequence of an interpersonal relationship between human persons and God. God's revelation is understood to be

taking place in history and through the community.

Since God is experienced as personal Thou, devotional practices, vocal prayers and structured rituals play significant roles in the practical religious life of the believers. Hence, houses of worship, like temples and churches, exert a great influence in shaping the religious life of the believing community. Consequently, a certain domination of the cult-officers, like priests, sets in. Elaborate rituals and colorful forms of worship tend to characterize popular religious expressions.

Another consequence is the formation of religious community structures, like hierarchical offices and caste-bound strata. Certain persons or offices will be considered as mediations of the Divine to the human, and, hence, sacred institutions. They feel responsible to keep the believing community together in pristine faith, and to interpret the symbols of God's personal revelation authoritatively. To the believers they offer a sense of security and togetherness, a sense of continuity and clarity in religious heritage. Laws and regulations, norms and customs, well-defined dogmas and precise rubrics play a decisive role in shaping the religious life of the believers.

Interpersonal relationship always contains a certain exclusiveness. Love relationship binds I and thou in such an intimate way that the lover and beloved develop a language of possessiveness and exclusiveness. This is true of the pattern of interpersonal relationship between a jealous God and a passionate devotee. Faith-language is ultimately love-language. A devotee feels gripped and transformed by the love of God (*bhakti*). Out of this experience he/she will tend to raise absolute claims and spiritual experience: the only way, the final revelation, the absolute norm, the ultimate expression, etc. These do have their validity in the context of an intense experience of God's love manifested in an interpersonal way. These may be challenged when such statements are made into absolute norms (*norma normans non normata*), for believers of other religions. When faith/love language is clothed in dogmas normative also for seekers outside the particular faith-community, a tendency towards religious fundamentalism arises. When one particular religion considers its experience as the criterion for all others, it tends to be intolerant, authoritarian, and even oppressive. With its proselytizing drive, supported by political and economic power groups, exclusivistic religions tend to lose the pristine intensity of faith/love. Dogmatism and ritualism, structuralism and legalism, eat up the very spiritual matrix of religious life. In all religions such tendencies can be found.

In such moments of crisis a prophet appears on the scene. The prophet gives expression to the divine anger and calls into critique the oppressive structures of religion. The prophet exhorts believers to deepen their faith response to God's love by living a life of commitment to justice. In a community's encounter with God the prophet articulates God's saving word to the community, and brings human words of response to God.

## THE TRANSPERSONAL APPROACH

In the transpersonal approach the Divine is experienced as absolute mystery. No personalistic symbol can truly express the ineffable mystery of the Divine. Hence, the seeker goes beyond all names and forms in search of the God-beyond-God. Transpersonal symbols, like ground of being, depth of existence, ineffable silence within, and the ultimate Self of all, may surface in the course of this inner pursuit (*sadhana*). The medium in which this awareness of Mystery wakes up is contemplative silence. In silence one enters into the deeper levels of consciousness unto the experience of oneness with the Ground of being. Transparency to the divine reality is the basic dynamic of this apophatic spirituality. Opaqueness to the Divine Light is sin. It is ignorance, not realizing what one truly is.

Transparency to the divine Ground is ultimately a matter of being: the transformation of consciousness that leads to a holistic perception of reality. Spirituality gets here a cosmic dimension. When the divine Light within shines forth, "one sees the Divine in all things and all things in the Divine." This gnosis (*jnana*) recreates the life of the human individual. Such an outlook of reality has mystical underpinnings. The holistic vision of reality is the fruit of enlightenment. Integration and harmony with all beings become the central concern of religious existence. Alienation of the individual from the totality of reality is considered to be the cause of all suffering; it is the possessive attitude of the mind that causes this alienation. Spirituality means, therefore, progressive liberation from egoism and insertion into the totality of reality. This process takes place at the depth of the individual's consciousness. Revelation of the Divine happens through this transformation of consciousness in individuals, who in their turn help others on their way to self-integration.

Since the Divine is experienced as transpersonal Ground of being, practices of asceticism, pursuits of meditation and longing for mystical experiences have great significance in the lives of the seekers. Hermitages, spirituality centers, monasteries and ashrams attract those who seek spiritual integration. The experiences of the spiritual masters are communicated to others through disciplined forms of spiritual practices and intense study of Scriptures and spiritual classics.

Insofar as the emphasis is placed on the individual seeker's relentless quest for oneness with the Divine, and consequently with all beings, external structures and practices of religion are not considered normative here. However, the seekers may follow certain schools of spiritual pursuits, or adhere to particular spiritual masters (*guru*). These are looked upon as mediations of the Ineffable in the individual's consciousness. The relationship between spiritual disciple and master may evolve into a very deep friendship, in which the disciple feels a deep sense of security and clarity of being on the right path. However, a true spiritual master would not bind the disciple to his/her own path of experience; rather the disciple would be

encouraged to explore the Inexplorable on his/her terms.

The mystical character of this spiritual pursuit is constantly kept alive by a sense of the Mystery. A truly spiritual individual is aware of the fragmentary character of any Truth perception. There is a constant search for the Beyond. In this process one recognizes the tremendous plurality of paths to the Divine. There is no absolute religion or universally-binding religious experience. The language of a seeker is an inclusivistic language. The process of transference to the Divine includes an infinite variety of means, expressed in an rich plurality of religions, because the Divine is beyond all religions. This generous tolerant attitude is the basic dynamic of a contemplative pursuit of the Absolute. However, this may also evolve into a sort of naive tolerance, in the sense that there is no critical interaction among the seekers of Truth. One may tend to let grow all forms of religious practices, without asking whether there are dehumanizing elements in some of them. As a result, exploitative customs and practices may flourish in the religious landscape, together with ennobling forms of worship and mysticism. In all religions such tendencies can be found.

At this juncture, the mystical sage appears on the scene. The sage is a passionate seeker of Truth. In this search there is a constant critique of all concrete symbols of the Divine, cultic and theological, social and ethical. The mystic invites seekers always to be alert to the mystery dimension of the Divine. The mystic is a spiritual master who accompanies the seeker's search for the Divine, and liberates every individual towards ever deeper experiences.

### THE INTEGRATION OF THE TWO APPROACHES

These two approaches to the experience of the Divine are not mutually exclusive paths of spirituality. Rather, they are the two poles which are dialectically related in the evolution of an integrated spirituality. The dialectics between the transpersonal and the interpersonal, silence and word, wisdom and love, being and doing, transference and surrender, contemplation and devotion, harmony and justice are the constitutive dynamics of a liberative spirituality. In the concrete cultural evolution of spiritual experience in a particular religion, one or the other dimension may take dominance over the other. In general, the religions of Semitic origin tend to uphold an interpersonal relationship between the human person/community and God, while the religions of Indian origin move towards a transpersonal experience of the Divine. Though mystical streams have always been present in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the dominant power of theology and authority hold them in check for fear of disruption in the community of believers.

Devotional forms of surrender to the divine Lord, and prophetic movements of protest, are found in Hinduism and Buddhism, but they have been subordinated to an overarching worldview that is evidently cosmic and

mystical. A creative dialogue between these spiritual hemispheres would promote the integration of these dynamic elements of spirituality.

Through such an integration, a new spirituality would evolve that is nourished by a mystical perception of the universal harmony and by a prophetic commitment to integral liberation, by contemplation and compassion, solitude and solidarity. The emergence of this integral spirituality in Asia is a process that demands from every community of believers a self-critical introspection into the dynamics of its spirituality, as well as a creative openness to the movements of the Spirit in the other religious communities. Pope John Paul II gives a theological meaning to interreligious dialogue: "As we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God," for "with believers of other religions we are copilgrims in pursuit of the goal that God has set for us."<sup>3</sup>

The life and thought of Christian communities in Asia have been shaped to a great extent by the Semitic elements of spirituality and the European patterns of thought. There is an overemphasis on the logistic and structural aspects of religions, at the expense of the intuitive and mystical dimensions. The Church can have an effective presence on Asian soil only if the mystical dimension is revitalized in the life and thought of the Christian communities. FABC has perceived this and articulated it in unambiguous terms: "A contemplative awakening to the all-pervading and all-transcending mystery of the Divine is a hallmark of Asian spirituality."<sup>4</sup> "We would have a message for Asia only when our Asian sisters and brothers see in us the marks of God-realized persons. Credibility is the fruit of authenticity."<sup>5</sup>

#### AWAKEN THE MYSTIC IN THE CHURCH

The Church finds itself in a radically new situation today. The encounter with the mystical religions of Asia has brought to its awareness that a religion without mystical depth is not religion at all, for it fails to bind believers with the Divine. Coherent theological theories, detailed ethical teachings, and elaborate ritual performances are unable to transform the lives of people, unless they are constantly nourished by the hidden streams of mystical experience. Words — in teaching, preaching and praying — which are not painfully born out of contemplative silence will not carry the Word of God to the hearts of the people. Ecclesiastical structures, however well-functioning they may be, cannot reach out to the existential life of the people unless they are characterized by compassion. Ethics without mystical perception can deteriorate into formalism. "The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or no Christian at all!" (Karl Rahner).

In the religious practices of Christian communities there is a tendency to overemphasize the interpersonal relationship with God as Thou. Consequently, vocal prayers, elaborate rituals, administrative structures and conceptualized theological pursuits get the upper hand in Christian life. What is thereby ignored is the intrapersonal experience of the Divine as the true

subject of our being — the experience into which we are initiated by God through Christ in the Spirit. This calls for meditative pursuits, a contemplative vision of life, silence before the mystery of the Divine, and a great respect for the "sacred space" in which the Spirit deals directly with persons. The awakening of the mystic in the lives of individuals and communities in the Church is an epochal need. This is the only way to bring to life the rich diversity of charisms in the Church. The search for authentic mystical experience has become acute all over the world; the search for the master has become quite loud. This is a sign of the times, with its demands on the Church.

Asian Christians, with their innate mystical sensitivity, have a significant role to play in revitalizing the mystical dimension in the universal Church. The Asian bishops have perceived this mission: "We live in Asia, the home of great contemplative traditions. The Catholic Church is often perceived as not sharing in these contemplative traditions, as being primarily concerned with the external, with rituals and festivals."<sup>6</sup> There is a deeper problem here. When God is onesidedly conceived as the ultimate object of adoration, there is danger of ritualism, dogmatism, legalism and structuralism. The Divine has to be perceived also as the ultimate subject of experience, as the Self of our self, as the Spirit that cries from within us (Gal 4:6). This is a mystical perception and "the believer of the future will have to be inevitably a mystic" (Karl Rahner). Contemplation is the way (*marga*) towards this "new way of being Christian today" (Pope Paul VI). Contemplation is alertness to the Spirit that "blows where it wills" (Jn 3:8). The contemplative constantly listens to "what the Spirit is telling the communities" (Rev 3:13). Spirituality, insofar as it is response to the Spirit, has to evolve through contemplation. What the Samaritan woman asked is a question that every religious person would ask: In which temple shall I worship God (as Thou)? Jesus replied: "God is Spirit, and those who worship God must worship in Spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24). This is an explicit invitation to grow as a spiritual person through contemplative pursuits.

And Jesus made contemplative experience a prerequisite for his disciples in their mission of proclaiming him: "Father, may they all be one just as you are in me and I am in you; may they be completely one, so that the world will believe that it was you who sent me (Jn 17. 21-23). This experience of deep oneness within the inner-trinitarian life is a mystical perception. Contemplation is the heart-beat of evangelization. Asian bishops realized this and repeatedly made concrete proposals: "We became more aware of the role that contemplation has played and still plays in the religious quest of Asia, and of the role it should play in our evangelizing effort."<sup>7</sup> To be true messengers of harmony and reconciliation one needs to convert himself or herself to God, and must be spiritually mature to embrace others in one's heart in unfeigned love, mercy and forgiveness. All this would call for a contemplative experience in which one is intimately united with God, humanity, and the whole nature, and thus be in peace within oneself.

Hence we recommend:

— that efforts be made to recapture the contemplative and ascetic dimension in Christian life.

— that towards achieving this goal, centers be created, where Christians could spend some time in deep silence and meditation.

— that these centers be open also to followers of other faiths,

— that Christians learn from other Asian traditions of faith the ways of meditation and interiorization, like zen, yoga, vipasana, etc.

— that those who are mature and experienced in their faith be encouraged to avail themselves of the facilities provided in ashrams and centers of contemplation of brothers and sisters of other faiths."<sup>8</sup>

—"The need to seek indigenous expressions of our faith, worship and religious life leads us to stress the special role of the Christian ashrams and forms of contemplative life, which in recent times have been developing in our countries. This movement answers an important need, as it meets the age-old search for contemplation, characteristic of our religious traditions, and reminds our nations in their efforts toward economic development of the primacy of spiritual values."<sup>9</sup>

"Create and support centers of prayer and contemplation where the Asian forms and experience of prayer can flourish."<sup>10</sup>

"We suggest that a network of centers of spirituality be created, where besides study and research, seekers of God and truth of all religious affiliations could meet and share their spiritual experiences."<sup>11</sup>

"Steps should be taken to undertake in-depth studies of the sacred writings of other religions, of the various Asian forms of prayer and meditation, and of the different authentic forms of popular piety!"<sup>12</sup>

Contemplation is not just a matter of exercise. Rather it is a holistic vision of life, integral motivation for liberative action. Contemplation generates compassion which bears fruit in commitment to integral human liberation and protection of the environment. Contemplation has social and ecological consequences and it binds the hearts of believers of all religions in common spiritual pursuits and liberative action.<sup>13</sup> Unless action emerges out of contemplation, it cannot be liberative; unless proclamation evolves out of mystical intuition, it cannot transform the lives of people. Words of power have to be born in silence. Works of love have to flow out of compassion. Solidarity grows out of solitude. The question of developing a culture of contemplation is vital to the very existence of Christian communities on the Asian soil — *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae!*

## FOOTNOTES:

N.B. Citations from the documents of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences (FABC) are taken from Gaudencio B. Rosales, D.D. and C.G. Arevalo, S.J. (eds), *For All the Peoples of Asia*, FABC Documents from 1970 to 1991, Quezon City, Philippines, Claretian Publications, 1992. The page of the citation is indicated in brackets after the reference.

1. Quoted in FABC, II, Plenary Assembly Statement, 1978, n. 7 (30).
2. FABC-BIRA IV/11, 1988, n. 15 (32).
3. Pope John Paul II addressing believers of various religions at Madras, India, 1986, AAS 78 (1986); the Pope at Assisi, Oct, 27, 1986.
4. FABC - FEISA I 1994, n. 7.2.3.
5. FABC. V. Plenary Assembly Statement, 1990, n. 9.2. (288)
6. FABC. V. Plenary Assembly Statement, 1990, n. 2.3.4. (278)
7. FABC - BIRA I, 1978, n. 16 (95).
8. FABC - BIRA IV/II, 1988 n. 22 (322).
9. FABC - BIMA II, 1980, n. 9 (99).
10. FABC - BIMA I, 1988, n. 7 (294).
11. FABC - BIRA IV/II, 7, 1988, n. 17 (311).
12. FABC - II Plenary Assembly Statement, 1978, 4 (39).
13. Cfr. Sebastian Painadath, SJ, "Contemplation and Liberative Action," *Vidyajyoti*, (Delhi) 52, (1988) 210-223.

## V. EXPERIENCES IN COMMUNION AND COLLABORATIVE MINISTRIES

A REFLECTION BASED ON THE EXPERIENCES OF BISHOPS

by

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### THE CONTEXT OF OUR DISCOURSE ON COMMUNION

The mystery of the Church is communion. It defines both the nature of the Church as well as its mission. The discourse on communion, however, requires to be contextualized and situated. In so doing we add a new quality to the perception of the mystery of the Church. At the same time we also gain the sense of concreteness, which is indispensable for effective pastoral ministry. Otherwise, I am afraid that the category of communion could easily turn out to be an abstraction, and pastorally not effective.

That is why I would propose at the very outset that, from an ecclesiological point of view, it is important in Asia that the Church is defined not simply in terms of communion but equally through the concept of the people of God. After all, in the document on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, what we have is a chapter on the mystery of the Church in which the thought of communion is explored. But we cannot forget that it is followed by a very central and long chapter on Church as people of God. I say this because I notice, unfortunately, an eclipse of the conception of the Church as people of God taking place. Communion can become a concrete and pastorally meaningful conception of the Church only in relation to the



understanding of the Church as a people, as a community with different charisms and ministries. Therefore, I find it appropriate that FABC has not spoken of communion in the abstract, but has spoken of the nature of our Asian Churches as a "communion of communities" (FABC V Plenary Assembly). If communion is an abstraction, "communities" brings in the dimension of people, and gives flesh and bone to communion.

With this specification of the theological perspective, I would like to make some reflections on the ministry of communion. These reflections have as their basis the experience of the local Churches I am familiar with in South Asia. And these reflections have the objective of helping to review critically for ourselves the pastoral approaches we have taken in the past years, and also to indicate some pointers for the future direction of collaborative ministries as we move towards the new century.

### MINISTRY OF PLURALISM AND COLLABORATION

It is a fact that unity has been the focal point for the ministries in the past. It has been the key to interpret the person of the minister as well as his mission. The bishop's role, for example, has been defined as one around whom the local Church acquires its unity. Obviously, we cannot deny the important of this conception of unity.

At the same time, I think, the experience in our different Asian countries seems to indicate that we need to give as much more importance to pluralism in understanding the nature of ministry. Consequently, a bishop or a priest will be not only a minister of unity, but also a minister of pluralism. Let me explain what I mean by this.

Plurality is the hallmark of Asia, and it is evident in the rich variety of peoples, cultures, histories, religious traditions, ways of life, etc. Further, developments in contemporary times indicate that our societies are getting more and more diversified. New opportunities and avenues have been opened up for unfolding the inherent possibilities in individuals and collectivities. Now, the Church cannot be impervious to these developments, nor can it overlook them. Responding to the growing pluralism and diversification in our societies calls for the redimensioning of our ministries in order to be able to respond to their exigencies. What is particularly important is the change all this calls for in the existing focus and direction of the ministries.

Reviewing the present scenario from the experiences in the part of South Asia from where I come, it appears to me that much of the time of the bishops and priests is being spent on arbitrating and mediating the conflicts within the diocese or parish, among the various castes and classes, and in settling disputes of every kind. On the basis of my experiences, I would suggest that the Churches in Asia need to give greater attention to a more creative kind of ministry. More time, energy and talent should be spent on encouraging individuals and groups in bringing to fruition their God-given charisms. Attitudes and values should be fostered, and appropriate structure

should be created, so that the charisms of individuals and groups can flourish and bear fruit both in the life of the Church and in its evangelizing work in society.

It is not rare that young priests many times get disappointed, and even frustrated, when they are constantly dragged into disputes in their parishes. One may view it as a ministry of unity, reconciliation, communion, and so on. But, then, communion is a very positive reality and a creative experience. That is why we need to give greater scope to communion interpreted through pluralism. When this becomes the guiding perspective, ministry can also become creative and spiritually very rewarding.

For example, we may not expect today that every diocesan priest is bound to the traditional parish ministry. A pluralist situation has come into existence. Once upon a time a parish was almost a self-enclosed entity, with the priest ministering to its spiritual need. But today the situation has become complex. Spiritual issues are intertwined with social, economic and cultural issues. Secondly, the demands of today's life cannot be fulfilled by a parish priest. He, then, would be expected to be an expert in all sorts of matters — an impossible proposition. The traditional parish ministry needs to be enlivened by linking it up with other types of services rendered by those who have competence in those areas. It naturally requires new forms of collaboration.

I am not undermining the role the parishes play in our Christian communities. I think they have still their validity. But what I mean is that the local parish community requires the pluriform charisms and services of others to be truly a local Church, as well as to be able to fulfil its responsibilities to the society around it. In this connection, no praise is too high for the spirit of communion and solidarity we find in Basic Christian Communities, or basic ecclesial communities. Basic Christian Communities have been, for example, in my diocese a very important source for living the vocation and evangelizing mission of the Church. I do not claim that Basic Christian Communities are the panacea for all problems. One cannot, however, deny the role they play in translating communion into the every-day praxis of Christian life.

The spirit of communion and solidarity, and the ideal of a participative Church underlying the Basic Christian Communities, needs to be matched by a similar spirit at the level of ministry. Today, communion in terms of ministry is a communion in pluralism — with many ministers understanding each other and cooperating with each other and the people. The people in their turn are linked through these ministers to other communities with other experiences and backgrounds.

The demands of the situation have led in some parts of Asia to the development of team ministries. Some diocesan priests, for example, live and minister together in a group of parishes, instead of each parish priest looking after his own parish. It is an attempt, in a complex and pluralistic situation, to come to grips with the new exigencies. It pools together the

talents and charisms of the ministers. Communion is created among the ministers not in a vacuum, but concretely in the joint exercise of their ministry.

I think such team ministry should not be conceived only in terms of clerics. We need to develop ways and means by which team ministry will be a collaborative venture of all the sections of the people of God. In this sense the ideal would be that team ministry is exercised by priests, laity and religious jointly. Further, it cannot be a team ministry exclusively of men. Laywomen need also to form part of the team ministry. Such collaborative ministry will have a great educational value for the Christian community. It will help to overcome the idea of associating ministries only with the clerical state, and to realize a ministry which is the responsibility of the whole community. There are already efforts in this direction in some parts of Asia. What is required is that we give momentum to such collaborative ministering as we get ready to move into the new century.

It is, then, not enough to speak of pluralism and collaboration among the ordained ministers. I think our efforts in the future should go in the line of bringing into collaboration the ministries being done by the laypeople both within the Church, and outside in the larger society where they are involved. The rich experiences which the laity have in ministering in a wide variety of situations in life — given their rootedness in the world — need to be shared among themselves. This will lead to mutual support and encouragement, as well as to offer possibilities to learn from one another. Enough opportunities and means need to be provided so that such a thing can become real.

#### **FROM CHURCH-COMMUNION TOWARDS KINGDOM-COMMUNION: IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY**

The relationship between the reality of the Church and the mystery of the Kingdom of God has necessarily its reflection in understanding two distinct and at the same time interrelated levels of communion. I mean the Church-communion and the Kingdom-communion. The former tends towards the latter as its ultimate fulfillment. What the Kingdom-communion means can best be understood in the light of the parable of Jesus in which he compared the Kingdom to a large tree where all kinds of birds, come and inhabit (cf Mt 13:31-32). In our pastoral ministry we should not lose sight of the fact that the Kingdom of God relates to the communion and fellowship of the entire human family. Working towards that goal implies that we get sensitized to and foster communion and dialogue with the larger society around us. FABC in its very first plenary assembly spoke of a threefold dialogue through which the local Church gets constituted: dialogue with the cultures, with religions and with the poor. In this way, the plenary assembly pointed to those areas of life which go beyond the visible borders of the Church, and lead us towards the larger horizon of the Kingdom of God. In

fact, cultures, religions and the poor cut across all boundaries. The tree of the Kingdom of God is a communion of cultures, religions and the poor.

What implications does all this have for collaborative ministry? The way the structures, means and personnel are organized today in the Church does not appear to be adequate to meet the exigencies of the larger Kingdom-communion. As it is, much of our energy and time is spent in fostering communion within the Church. Our ministry needs to move out as well, and that requires close cooperation among the ministers. Collaborative ministry is not only action. It involves equally study and reflection. The complexities of the larger issues facing us today requires that the ministers get together to reflect and to act.

Let me make concrete what I have said, through some examples. It is a fact that in several parts of Asia the technological modernity and the dominant model of economic growth have created serious ruptures in every area of life. Whether it is in families, or in the relationship of various groups, we notice ever less of the spirit of solidarity and togetherness. People are turned into competitors vying with each other. To take another example: The religions which are expected to foster unity and communion are themselves caught up in conflicts, with serious social consequences. The South Asian situation exemplifies what disruption of communion happens when religions are locked in conflict.

In such cases, where does our ministry of communion figure? First of all, we are in the face of new areas of the ministry of communion which may not be easily fitted into the traditional scheme of ministry. Ministerial involvement, in such areas as economy, religions, cultures, requires that the competencies of many people are pooled together. In other words, it calls for very close collaboration with competent laity and other ministers in the Church. One thing, then, that is becoming clearer is that the new areas of the ministry of communion are the ones which also demand that there be collaborative ministry. I think in this colloquium we need to reflect further on how and in what ways we need to open up to areas of life which affect the life of the people very seriously. We will be guided in our endeavor if we adopt the perspective of Kingdom-communion.

The movement from Church-communion to Kingdom-communion can take many concrete forms. For example, a group of Christians in a particular locality need not limit their communitarian existence only among themselves. Having in view the ultimate gathering of all daughters and sons of God into the one family of God's Kingdom, it is possible and desirable that the Christians forge new relationships with their neighbors of other faiths in such a way that they live together in harmony and love, and work together for peace and justice. In our diocese, the existing Basic Christian Communities tend towards the creation of such wider communities, cutting across religions and caste barriers. It has been found an exciting opportunity to live the unbounded love, communion and universionality to which the Gospel challenges us.

Another expression of this communion is the close collaboration with those initiatives for unity and fellowship sometimes initiated by secular groups or civil authorities. Let me give an example from the area where our diocese is located. Given the volatile situation of religious and caste conflicts and violence, the collector — chief district civil authority — initiated a move to create solidarity among the various groups of the locality. To this initiative, known as *Nala Oli Iyakkam*, the Christian communities of our diocese have actively responded, and it has resulted in creating an atmosphere of greater communion and fellowship among the various groups. On our part we have also taken the initiative to enlist the cooperation of secular groups and civil authorities towards creating greater fellowship among people of different castes and religious traditions living in the district.

Some of the parishes in our diocese, particularly those along the coast, have been for centuries a hotbed of conflicts and scenes of violence. The people of these villages are all Christian from the time of St. Francis Xavier, who worked among them. In recent times the rifts in these villages have been aggravated by the conflict of economic interests between those engaged in fishing with non-motorized traditional catamarans and those owning modern motorized boats. We have taken an initiative to mediate in this kind of vexed situation by creating a mediatory body (known as Coastal Peace and Development Council) to help in conflict-resolutions and to maintain peace and communion among the two groups.

#### COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY AND COMMUNION AMONG THE BISHOPS AND WITH OTHER MINISTERS

It is well-known that one of the most important teachings of Vatican II was to state that the bishops are not pastors with each one pasturing his own flock in splendid isolation. The Council has emphatically taught us that the bishops form together a body, a college, a stable group. There is no need to belabor this point here. In my view, this teaching corresponded at the structural level to the conception of the Church as communion. Or, to put it in other words, the reality of communion gets translated into pastoral praxis when the chief ministerial function in the Church — episcopacy — is defined not in terms of its distance from, but rather of its relationship to, the people and other ministers with whom a bishop is duty-bound to enter into collaborative ministry in view of the Kingdom of God.

It should be frankly admitted that we bishops have not always given good example in the matter of collaborative ministry. The fact that today many problems flow over the diocesan confines makes it a pastoral necessity for greater collaboration among the bishops at regional level. But when the image of bishop as the sole responsible pastor for his diocese dominates the mind of a bishop, it often happens that he is not ready to enter into closer cooperation with his brother-bishops. There is also, unfortunately, a sense of fear that what is deliberated about and decided on jointly in a collegial

spirit may upset "his freedom" in his diocese. It also happens that a bishop consistently absents himself from regional or national episcopal conferences when these bodies gather together to reflect jointly on common pastoral problems. This, I would consider as a lack of faith in one of the central teachings of Vatican II — collegiality. Collegiality expresses itself in many ways and forms and at different levels. We would wish that in the coming century, there will be ever closer collaboration among the bishops of our Asian local Churches.

Every pastorally sensitive bishop would know from his experience how crucially important it is that he act in close collaboration with his priests, religious and laity. It is generally true that a bishop who is wanting in collaboration with his brother-bishops would generally be wanting also in working jointly with other ministers — clergy, religious and laity, because ultimately what is involved in both forms of collaboration is faith in the working of the Spirit through others and in ministerial coresponsibility. But we have also many examples of such close collaboration of bishops, priests, religious and laity. When such ministerial collaboration is there, we have very flourishing local Churches.

Such a collaborative ministry requires a new spirit and attitude. It requires as well cultivation of certain skills. By way of example, let me point out just one of such skills. My experience shows that in the life of a bishop, many problems crop up when there is a failure to communicate. A bishop is a leader, and a leader must be a man of communication. In the life of a bishop, when communication goes to sleep, monsters appear. All sorts of problems from the priests, from the religious, and from the people begin to haunt him. A bishop gets isolated from the ground-realities and grassroots experiences, and he ends up reacting in a world that he has created for himself. This danger is all the greater in the case of bishops who have had little exposure to the pastoral realities of the people as a priest before assuming episcopal office.

Every time this isolation is broken and bridges of communion established, the problems which appeared at one moment so very intractable cease to be so. Such is the case in dealing with priests, religious and lay people.

#### STRUCTURAL MEANS FOR THE PROMOTION OF COMMUNION

Just as there is no real communion without communication, I would say, that there can be no communion without participation. The days are gone when the laity were viewed as the extended arm of the clergy. For the coresponsible exercise of ministry today, certain structures are provided for: the pastoral council, presbyteral council or senate, parish council, etc. Such officially recognized means are today very important both for fostering communion, as well as for realizing in the concrete a Church that is truly a people of God with diversity of charisms and ministries.

We have numerous local Churches where such means of ministry and communion have brought about significant changes. But, sadly, in some other local Churches, even this minimum of structures has not found a place. There are various reasons for this state of affairs. I do not want to go into them here. However, I would like to highlight one. Clericalism is something that inhibits the realization of participative structural means in the Church. This clericalism has been inherited from the time of missionary expansion and has been reinforced by us Asians in our local Churches. I think that as we move towards the twenty-first century, we have also the obligation in our Asian Churches to overcome this strong clericalism.

It may lead to misunderstanding if we speak of the Church as a democracy. But then, certain important concerns and values of democracy cannot be alien to the Church. It appears to me that the spirit of communion would be the functional equivalent of the spirit of democracy in secular society. A Church maintained in true love and communion will not neglect the legitimate aspirations of the people for participation, dialogue and the evolving of consensus. These are also very Asian values. Responding to these aspirations, by availing ourselves of the new participative structures, we attain ultimately the effective realization of the Church as communion. Clericalism, as the concentration of power and ministry in the hands of the ordained ministers, can lead to the loss of all those important values which we require to be able to live and experience the Church truly as communion. If someone, by saying that Church is not a democracy, wants to deny human dignity and rights, communion, consensus, participation, coresponsibility, such a statement could make us suspicious regarding an ulterior purpose. This is all the more so if it is spoken by a Church leader who functions as an authoritarian, with scant attention to the spirit of communion.

In this regard it is important that the value of structures meant for participation (pastoral council, presbyteral council or senate, parish council, etc.) should not be played down by simply harping on the fact that they are "only consultative." This would be a failure to go to the heart of the matter, and limit oneself to a juridical framework. We just cannot start off with such a juridical position to block and undermine every free discussion and deliberation. Such a praxis leaves the laity wondering whether participative structures are intended earnestly. Overstretching juridical provisions foreseen for limited cases, and curtailing serious deliberations on the part of the members of such participative structures, cannot but smack of an authoritarianism totally opposed to the spirit of service enjoined by the Gospel. Further, there are various processes and stages in dialogue, deliberation, consensus-evolving which need always to be gone through in participative structures.

As for the laity, these structures offer the occasion to exercise their right to bring to fruition the gifts of the Spirit. "From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise for each believer the right and duty (*ius et officium*) to use them in the Church

and in the world..." The role of the laity is not optional, but inalienably bound up with the rightful exercise of their charisms. And this should be reflected also in participative structures, such as the parish council and the pastoral council.

In this regard, Karl Rahner, who knew the theology of episcopate as few did, and who decisively influenced the conciliar teaching of Vatican II on episcopacy and collegiality, has a very instructive passage in one of his post-conciliar works. Even though lengthy, it is worth quoting here:

A more obvious participation of the laity is required, not only in the appointment of office holders, but also in other decision-making processes in the life of the Church. In such decisions it must be admitted that the bishop has a personal and inalienable right which is qualitatively different from any existing or conceivable right of other members of the Church to share in discussions, but this does not mean at all that priests and lay people can never have more than an advisory function in regard to these decisions. Such an assertion cannot really be deduced from the orthodox theology of the episcopal office, and it also contradicts the practice of the Church throughout all the centuries up to the present time. The pastor should remain pastor, but this certainly does not mean that he is to treat his flock as if they were really sheep. But if this is not to happen, then there must today also be a right on the part of priests and lay people to cooperate in varying degrees and in forms appropriate to the matter in hand, in a deliberative and not merely consultative way in the Church's decisions" (*The Shape of the Church to Come*, SPCK, London, 1974, p.121).

#### CONCLUSION

Now to conclude. The Holy Father in his document *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* speaks of the many things for which the Church needs to repent (cf. nos. 33-36). This needs to be done in every context, so that we can review our past critically as a Church and move towards a future that will turn the Church more and more into a sacrament of the Kingdom of God. In this respect, I would think that one thing which we need to repent for in Asia is that our Churches have been so very uniform, unbelievably so in a continent of such diversity. Asian Churches will flourish to the extent that plurality becomes our focus in the new century. Recognition of plurality is ultimately confessing our faith in God's creation and in the Spirit, who is author of plurality as much as of unity. Plurality is not opposed to communion, but rather communion becomes real when each one, each group in the Church, is recognized and affirmed in its distinctiveness and in its potentiality to serve the Church. All this will lead us to a collaborative and coresponsible praxis of ecclesial ministry. It is in this spirit that we want to look at the



shape of the Asian Churches in the twenty-first century.

## **VI. COMMUNION AND SOLIDARITY – TOWARDS A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH: A CASE STUDY**

by  
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### **INTRODUCTION**

This is a case study on how one archdiocese is journeying towards a "new way of being Church," a journey of total renewal.

The special focus of the case study is the aspect of communion and solidarity among clergy, religious, lay people, and the archbishop. The major issues related to pastoral renewal, and the steps taken to address the issues will be highlighted. As a final point, the problems and obstacles confronted, and the positive factors that contribute to the journey of renewal will be presented.

### **A. FROM 1986 TO 1992**

#### **THE POINT OF DEPARTURE: THE PASTORAL SITUATION**

After four centuries of being divided and subdivided into dioceses and apostolic vicariates, the archdiocese now covers only one civil province. It has around 600,000 people, scattered in a territory of about 2,800 square kilometers. About 90% of whom are Catholics, in 36 parishes and missions. During the Spanish Period (up to around 1900), Spanish Augustinians made up the bulk of the clergy, with a small number of Filipino diocesan priests who were ordinarily not given any pastorates. During the American Period (from ca. 1900 to 1945), Jesuits, CICMs, SVDs, came to help the Filipino clergy, since the Spanish friars had to leave the archdiocese as a result of the Philippine revolution against Spain (1898). Today, only one CICM, and two SVDs remain. The rest of the 70 priests are Filipino diocesan priests, who on the average are between 35 to 45 years of age. The present archbishop is the fourth Filipino bishop in a line of 34 bishops since 1595.

Around 110 women religious minister in the archdiocese. They belong to eight religious congregations, including the biggest group – a indigenous congregation of OSB contemplative nuns with some 55 members. Most of the other Sisters belong to the SPC congregation and run their own schools. Only a handful of the women religious are involved in parish ministries, such as catechetics and family life.

In 1986, a bishop on the island of Mindanao was appointed to the archdiocese by Pope John Paul II. Not knowing the situation, the new archbishop spent much of his first 12 months, 1986-1987, traveling around the

archdiocese, visiting, often hiking to villages, most of which had not seen any bishop, talking with village people, sometimes sleeping in their homes, and learning about their faith, their life-problems, aspirations, their expectations of the Church.

He saw two different churches in the archdiocese: the mainstream "church" at the poblacion and a peripheral "church" in the villages. He saw a church understood mainly as an institution of bishop and clergy. In the peripheral "church" he met poor farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples in the mountains, hungry for pastoral care and a sense of belongingness to the Church.

In 1987, a little more than a year after he arrived and on the occasion of the National Eucharistic Year, the archbishop called for an archdiocesan eucharistic congress with the intention of developing a pastoral plan. The clergy readily agreed, and said that the participants should come from the officers and members of various parish lay organizations. But the archbishop suggested that another type of participation should be tried—sectoral. The clergy thought that this would be difficult, but they were willing to try it.

With the clergy actively planning and the archbishop advising, as needed, on the sidelines, a multi-sectoral live-in three-day eucharistic congress was held on September 23-26, 1987 with about 200 lay people and religious. Various sectors were represented: youth, farmers, housewives, fisherfolk, business people, professionals, leaders of traditional lay organizations, and politicians. Workshops were held on the basis of sectors so that the voice of each sector would be heard.

The gathering was the first of its kind in the 400-year history of the archdiocese. And together—for the first time—lay people, religious, and clergy analyzed the pastoral situation of the archdiocese and evaluated the responses that the archdiocese was giving to the situation. Finally, the congress envisioned what the church in the archdiocese should become.

The pastoral situation was described by the congress in terms of five major negative features:

(a) individualism—by which people generally acted by themselves without any unity and coordination, intent only on their own individual goals. Their faith was likewise individualistic, without much sense of community;

(b) privatism—if individualistic, religious faith was also concerned almost exclusively with one's own personal relationship with God and not so much with social issues;

(c) ritualism—although the faith of the people had been nourished through the centuries, it has remained geared towards the fulfillment of rituals and pious devotions, where the profound meaning of the sacraments celebrated (baptism, confirmation, penance, eucharist, matrimony) was little known and was widely neglected in daily life, as in the fields of business and politics.

(d) concentration of pastoral ministry on the poblacion — whereby almost all the pastoral care of the priest was focused on the care of the parish church, lay organizations, the celebration of the sacraments and, with the assistance of some catechists (the sole lay pastoral workers in the parish), on the catechesis of public school children. Hardly any significant quality time was spent in the villages among the poor.

(e) an "elitist" church — where pastoral care seems to favor the better-off sectors of society, and lay leadership was entrusted to the professionals and the well-to-do; a close union between the Church and the rich and powerful, resulting in an inability for the Church to be a social critic.

The congress thus came face to face with what the archbishop had already learned from his visits around the archdiocese. In the main, the congress saw that there was a tremendous "dichotomy between faith and life"; a lack of community; a neglect of the poor; a lack of holistic faith that should have a social dimension; a lack of holistic pastoral care that should have a special concern for the poor in the villages.

It was the first time that a whole assembly took the clergy to task for their failures; the first time, too, that the presbyterium honestly and courageously acknowledged its responsibility for the negative pastoral situation.

It was the beginning of the journey towards a new way of being Church. From the pastoral situation, it was relatively easy for the congress participants to move on to a new vision of what they wanted the Church to be. For them the eucharistic congress was also the beginning of a sense of community and an urgent sense of renewal. They would return home, full of enthusiasm and expectation about what would take place in the archdiocese in the next few years.

What did the vision of the eucharistic congress consist of? It had the following essential components:

(a) to become a community of solidarity, sharing, and love;

(b) to be a sign of integral liberation, a leaven of change in society;

(c) to build "basic eucharistic (ecclesial) communities," centered on Christ, active in defending and promoting human dignity, especially of the poor;

(d) to be a sign of the Kingdom community that is to come and be a living memorial of Jesus loving and serving others.

### THE KEY ACTORS OR WORKERS OF RENEWAL

To initiate the task of realizing the vision, the archdiocese would have to rely on key workers of renewal, namely:

1. The clergy: fairly young, very open to change, among whom is a group who had agitated, rather in vain, for a more consultative and participatory role in decision-making in the 1970s, socially aware but inactive in a geographical region well-known for its almost blind adherence to its most well-known political scion, President Ferdinand Marcos; (one of the clergy

had joined the underground Marxist military arm and was killed by government forces sometime in the early 1980s); accustomed through formation and practice to the traditional ministry; devoted almost entirely to sacramental work in the poblacion; very eager for some significant change in the context of Vatican II.

2. The laity: very solid and deep personal faith, steeped in popular religiosity, with great reverential respect for the clergy; yet deeply immersed in a pre-Vatican understanding of the Church and of faith; privately critical but socially uninvolved and uncommitted; a great economic and social gap between people in the villages and the people in the poblacion; very much dependent on appointed or elected leaders, whether in the Church or in politics.

3. The religious: dedicated and faithful to their religious charisms and commitment but almost exclusively involved in their own congregational apostolates, with relatively little reference to the parish or the archdiocese; though caught up in the traditional structures and ministries of their own congregations, they were eager to cooperate to the extent they could with any effort at pastoral renewal.

4. The archbishop: born in the region, he grew up and studied in Mindanao, became a missionary priest; spent the first 12 years of his priestly life in academe; served one year as a parish priest-missionary among the Muslims (his only year of pastoral experience); a little more than a year as a seminary formator; then six years (1980-86) as bishop of a Mindanao diocese during its most difficult period, when the diocese suffered "persecution" under a Martial Law government, because of the militant, anti-authoritarian, pro-human rights stance of its Basic Ecclesial Communities. In his mind and in the cultural context of the archdiocese, the key to renewal was in the hands of the clergy.

## THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH.

### RENEWAL OF THE CLERGY

Willing and eager to journey on the path of renewal, the clergy responded to the archbishop's suggestion of reviving the monthly spiritual recollection and assembly which had been mothballed for many years, since the clergy considered it more as the archbishop's assembly rather than their own.

They elected their own officers, planned their monthly activities, formed committees to take care of spiritualization, on-going formation, and fraternization. They reserved an hour at the monthly assembly for the archbishop to give updates on the archdiocese and on the Church in the Philippines. They asked him to give a spiritual conference as part of their monthly recollection, following the themes that they themselves lined up. They requested him to facilitate their annual yearly retreat.

In all these the focus was on becoming a new kind of priest, with a new pastoral mentality, a servant leader, with preferential option for the poor, with sights set on service to the villages. The activities enabled the clergy to know their archbishop better, how he thought, what plans he had, what roles they were to play. In the next three years the presbyterium would grow in knowledge and collaboration.

In addition, the archbishop decided in 1988 to send some young priests and the theology seminarians in their last two years of studies to his former Mindanao diocese. They were to spend five weeks during the summer living in the Small Christian Communities there, learning about these communities; how they were organized and maintained; how the priest lived and worked; how lay people were selected and trained to assume various responsibilities. They came back greatly changed; with more service-oriented mentalities and simpler, even rugged, lifestyles; enthused about the lay-oriented Church in the diocese they had visited; the dedication, commitment and expertise of poor farmers in the Small Christian Communities. Such an immersion — exposure program would be repeated in 1990. Thus, a pool of some 20 priests and seminarians was established for the building of Basic Ecclesial Communities.

To deepen collaboration, the archbishop suggested that a personnel board be set up that would assist him in assigning priests and in resolving priestly problems in the external forum. The clergy decided that such a board would have members representing various age levels: the young, the middle-life, and the old. All recommendations would be confidential, so as to prevent conflict between the board and the members of the clergy.

Through the years, this board has become indispensable to the clergy. Perhaps 95% of its recommendations are usually accepted by the archbishop. Other recommendations would be sent back for review or denied because of other considerations not accessible to the clergy. Many of the problematic issues regarding particular members of the clergy would be settled by personal dialogue between the archbishop and the priest concerned. Often, the board or one of its members would inform the archbishop to reach out personally to this or that priest who may be having some personal problems. When necessary, the archbishop has had to say, "I'm sorry," to one or two priests who may have been personally affected by one of his general remarks at the clergy assembly.

#### **DEVELOPING A NEW BREED OF LAY PASTORAL WORKERS: BASIC EUCHARISTIC (ECCLESIAL) COMMUNITIES (BEC) EXPERIMENTS**

Simultaneous with the first exposure program in 1988 was the setting up of a BEC commission, tasked with the training of parish core teams of lay people that would experiment with setting up BECs in a selected village in each of the parishes where the core teams came from. For seven week-ends, the core teams were formed and trained in social analysis, community

organizing, Bible and faith sharing through training modules we ourselves had made and called BEC EDAF, or BEC Education for Adult Faith.

From 1988 to 1990, the trained core teams did their experimenting in building BECs with varying success. The painstaking efforts they made to immerse themselves in the lives of the people and to raise their consciousness of Church and society, and to help village people organize themselves in Basic Ecclesial Communities took some toll. Many core teams broke up because of the difficulties encountered, including lack of moral support by some of the parish priests. Others persevered, so that by the end of 1990, dozens of functioning BECs, at least at the liturgical and praying levels of organization, could be counted in various parishes. Where parish core teams and their parish priests worked hand in hand, success was assured.

### REORIENTATION OF PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS, PASTORAL PROGRAMS, LAY ORGANIZATIONS

From the time of the 1987 Eucharistic Congress, the clergy set about reorienting their pastoral priorities. They gathered into vicariates and, at length, discussed collaborative ventures among themselves, not only in building BECs but also in reorienting parish pastoral programs. Thus, each vicariate came up with its own vision — mission statement to help them realize the vision — mission of the archdiocese.

At the same time, the archdiocesan pastoral commissions did a similar exercise. Thus, the commissions on Christian Formation, Family Life, Youth, Bible Apostolate, Schools, etc., underwent orientation seminars and formulated their own vision-mission statements. It was hoped that all the commissions would have a unity of vision and mission and make coordination among themselves better. A desk for pastoral coordination was set up precisely to oversee the work of the commissions.

In 1989, the archbishop presented two questions to the superiors of women religious in the archdiocese: (1) How can the various congregations in the archdiocese help one another in on-going formation? (2) How can the women religious collaborate with the clergy in realizing the vision of the archdiocese? The superiors then met in order to respond to the questions. They discovered that indeed some form of collaboration among themselves for their on-going formation would be necessary. They were doing various apostolates in the archdiocese, sometimes with no knowledge about what other sisters in the same apostolate were doing in another place. They thought that by sharing experiences and resources, they could help one another. They also discovered that joint on-going formation would be beneficial in view of the great expenses in getting resource persons from Manila. They thought that more knowledge about and deeper immersion into the pastoral thrust of the archdiocese would be necessary.

Thus was born the Association of Women Religious of the archdiocese. Since then the association has conducted yearly on-going formation

for religious sisters, re-oriented their apostolates so as to take into consideration the pastoral directions of the archdiocese with regard to renewal, lay empowerment, option for the poor, the social dimension of the Gospel, the building of Basic Eucharistic Communities.

This flurry of renewal activities was extended to the parish organizations of lay people. For them, however, the focus was to re-echo the thinking as well as the vision — mission that emerged from the 1987 eucharistic congress. There was as yet no effort to reorganize or retrain lay leaders for parish councils. Nonetheless, in 1988 the archbishop decided that the structure of the archdiocesan council of the laity was not appropriate, since leadership was exclusively in the hands of the "elite" and was limited to lay people active in the lay organizations. The council did not recognize the reality of emerging BECs, with their own type of leaders. Therefore, he let the council die a natural death by not convoking meetings. He exhorted the clergy that a new type of parish council should start from the bottom, including new leaders from the villages.

#### AN EXPERIMENT ON A NEW FINANCIAL SYSTEM: MODIFIED TITHING

In 1989 at one of their monthly meetings, the priests brought up some of their dissatisfaction with the traditional support system called *arancel*, by which fees were paid for baptisms, marriages and funerals. The more elaborate the celebration, the higher the fee. This is the system of so-called first class, second class, or ordinary celebrations.

The priests argued that this system seemed to be mercenary. It discriminated against the poor. Rich and poor should be treated equally in the sacraments.

The corollary issue: Without the *arancel* how will the parishes support themselves? Mass stipends, offerings, and collection would seem to be inadequate. The suggestion then was to have some form of tithing. This should be experimented on. One vicariate agreed to do the experiment for one year.

The priests of the vicariate subsequently met and decided to install a modified form of tithing by which every family would pledged monthly, not 10% of their income, but what the family decided to be within their means. A minimum was set at P5.00 per month per family.

The lay leaders, catechists, and members of parish councils in the vicariate then conducted an intensive educational campaign about the new system in every barangay in the vicariate. Barangay pastoral councils took up the same task, and did a registration of every Catholic family with their respective monthly pledges.

After three months of education, the system was installed. After six months, the vicariate reported to the clergy assembly that the new system was a resounding success, not just because the parish incomes had doubled, but because the people had learned about their individual and collective

responsibilities of "stewardship" of their earthly goods and "sharing for evangelization." The other four vicariates were also convinced that this system was, indeed, promising. After six more months with the same results, the presbyterium and the archbishop decided in 1990 that the *arancel* would be abolished and modified tithing would be the new system of church support. The abolition of the *arancel* was an added incentive for the people to enter even more enthusiastically into the new system.

The collection of monthly pledges was the responsibility of every barangay pastoral council, and every month the people, through their councils, offered the pledges at a special Mass in the poblacion.

At this time, two issues began to be discussed: standardizing the monthly financial support ("salaries") of the clergy, and equalizing the celebration of the sacraments for rich and poor. The first issues would be taken up by the clergy assembly. The commission on worship and liturgy was given the task of studying the second matter and providing guidelines.

#### FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE ARCHDIOCESAN LEVEL

With the resumption of the clergy assembly in 1987, the archbishop suggested that the clergy create a financial board to oversee the finances of the archdiocese. This idea was to do away with the secrecy and mystery surrounding the properties and finances of the archdiocese, and to ensure accountability by the archbishop. Up to that time this was a rather radical move, since in Philippine law the head of a diocese is considered a "corporation sole," with almost total power to acquire, dispose, sell, mortgage, etc., the temporalities of the diocese (limited only by canon law).

The archdiocesan financial board was thus created with some of the clergy, selected by them, and two trusted lay people as members. Their first task was to look into the holdings of the archdiocese. Much to their surprise, they saw how insufficient the funds of the archdiocese were to support general operations. The archbishop also asked the board to determine a monthly stipend for him, taking into consideration that all board and lodging is free, that the archbishop is a religious and has no need to provide security for the future, but that he does have some social and charitable commitments to meet. They pegged his monthly stipend at P10,000 per month, a level that remains to this day. With these decisions, a standard of transparency was set.

#### MORATORIUM ON RENEWAL ACTIVITIES

In 1990, the ongoing renewal activities and the BEC experiments went into a moratorium, in view of the forthcoming Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. Not knowing what directions of renewal the Plenary Council would take, the clergy and the archbishop waited.



It was also a welcome respite. The clergy had to assess what had transpired in the three years since the eucharistic congress. There was a lot of impatience regarding inaction on the part of some priests, and a lot of frustration among members of parish core teams because of lack of priestly support. Some of the archdiocesan pastoral commissions seemed to ignore their vision — mission statements and went their own way. The presbyterium was itself going through some growing pains, internal friction, lack of solidarity. There was some anxiety about whether or not the people could sustain their enthusiasm for the new things that had been introduced.

And yet by the end of 1990, the pastoral assessment undertaken by the clergy was generally positive, the advantages of the renewal program overwhelmingly dominating the negative. It was happily noted that the archdiocese had turned almost 95 degrees towards the future. For the first time in its 400-year history, the archdiocese had a vision — mission providing fundamental unity for pastoral work, the beginnings of BECs in various parishes, a new servant-leadership mentality among the clergy and their empowerment in decision-making through the clergy assembly, an emerging lay leadership at the grassroots, and a more participatory, equitable and accountable and evangelical financial support system. Renewal was entering the field of liturgy and worship.

## **B. FROM 1991 TO 1997**

### **THE SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES AND A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH**

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (January 17, 1991 to February 17, 1997) was truly a pentecostal event for the Church in the Philippines. It formulated a vision — mission statement for the Church in the Philippines and laid out a set of decrees designed to renew the Church in its mission of evangelization and liberation.

Using the FABC-OHD method of pastoral discernment, the Pastoral Spiral (Reality/Situation → Faith-Reflection → Decision → Planning → Action → Evaluation → New Reality/Situation), the council envisioned a Church that is truly a community of authentic disciples, a participatory and inculturated Church, a Church of the Poor. This vision of a new way of being Church in the Philippines would require renewed catechesis, renewed worship, and renewed social paostolate. The vision, PCP-II stated, is truly reflected in the Basic Ecclesial Community.

A national pastoral plan was designed to implement the decrees, each diocese being left to itself to see how best it would implement PCP-II. The archdiocese decided to design a simpler pastoral plan for itself.

For the archdiocese, PCP-II was a welcome affirmation of the directions of renewal that the archdiocese had taken since 1987. Thus, the moratorium on renewal activities ended in 1991 and renewal resumed with greater

vigor, this time backed up by the vision of PCP-II.

### RESUMPTION OF RENEWAL, 1991

After PCP-II, a special pastoral assembly made up of the clergy, religious and lay people, including some from the grassroots, met for two days in September, 1991, to assess the state of the archdiocese, and to come up with an updated vision of the Church in light of realities and of PCP-II. In the new vision, the Church of the Poor was explicitly included as a component, though it had been implied in the original vision. The more familiar term Basic Ecclesial Community replaced the original term Basic Eucharistic Community, and the idea of Inculturation was also included.

### EQUALIZING RICH AND POOR IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

The Commission on Worship and Liturgy then submitted its study of equalizing the celebration of the sacraments for rich and poor, and the recommended guidelines for implementation. After refining the recommendations, the clergy and the archbishop agreed to implement these in 1992.

An education campaign began in all parishes, led by lay leaders, catechists and other pastoral workers, with regard to the new pastoral initiative, its purpose, its desirability and necessity. The Church's option for the poor was emphasized, the inherent discrimination against the poor in the system of classes for sacraments was pointed out, and the need for communion and solidarity between rich and poor in a true community of disciples was highlighted in the education campaign.

The great majority of the people accepted the new pastoral initiative. A few of the rich and powerful expressed their objections, and some of them actually did go to other dioceses for baptisms and marriages in order to have first-class baptisms and marriages.

### RENEWAL IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS

In 1992 the elections of a new president, new senators and congressmen took place — the first national elections since President Cory Aquino took over from the ousted dictator, Ferdinand Marcos.

Political life and behavior had always been a major problem for the country. Elections had usually been marked with fraud, dishonesty and violence.

The archdiocesan vision of Church impelled the clergy to take up the cause of renewing the way political elections were held. A pastoral program was set up, lay leaders, and especially the Integral Youth Ministry of the archdiocese, became lead agents in conscientizing the people, organizing parish volunteer teams to monitor the conduct of the May elections. From February to April, the archdiocesan pastoral program for political renewal

conducted a conscientizing project in every barangay to try to form a responsible electorate. Hundreds of volunteers, especially college students and out-of-school youth, participated in the whole pastoral program until the end of the elections.

The more successful component of the program was the monitoring and safeguarding of the polls. Parish volunteers recorded and submitted any fraud and violence to the appropriate agencies. They made sure that the counting of votes was honest.

People were happy that at last the "Church" was involved in cleaning up politics. However, several months after the elections a clergy assembly evaluated the exercise as very inadequate in its conscientizing component. While the people understood what kind of candidates should be voted into office, at the end they voted for the usual ones, those whose names they recognized, and those who gave them a lot of promises, or extended immediate help to them (the "buying and selling of votes"). A positive factor was the great number of lay volunteers in all the parishes that were awakened to their responsibilities and to the Church's mission of evangelizing the political order.

#### **THE FIRST ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL ASSEMBLY, 1993.**

In January 1992, five years after the groundbreaking archdiocesan Eucharistic Congress, the archbishop suggested to the clergy that perhaps it was time for the archdiocese to hold another similar congress. The clergy agreed. They suggested that a synod could be organized. They then set up a task force made up of some priests, religious and lay people to plan for this synod. Another group studied what synods were like. The study made by this group was submitted to the archbishop. After considering the study, the archbishop decided that the planned assembly would be more flexible in nature, more participatory, less legalistic, if it would be called simply a pastoral assembly. The recommendations that would result from such an assembly could be made into binding decrees by the archbishop's fiat.

The work of the planning task force was approved by the clergy. The process of pastoral discernment would be that of the FABC Pastoral Spiral. The pastoral assembly would last for five days. Participation would be sectoral: all the active clergy (some 50 of them), six lay people from each parish representing the youth, farmers/fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, if any, professionals, lay leaders, and lay pastoral workers. Each parish would have a mini-pastoral assembly to analyze its own situation, reflect on it in faith, envision what kind of a parish it should be, and provide recommendations to meet the needs, and to realize its vision. This mini-assembly would also prepare the parish and its delegates for the archdiocesan pastoral assembly.

The planning task force took four months to do its task, and actual preparations at the parish level took the remaining eight months.

In Easter Week, 1993, some 200 delegates gathered for the first archdiocesan pastoral assembly (NSPA-I). The archbishop gave only one instruction to the clergy: "A much as possible, do not speak. Listen to the people. Give maximum participation to the lay." At the first workshops, this was very difficult for the clergy to do; they were accustomed to providing the answers; and the lay people kept asking them for answers and directions. It was, therefore, necessary for the priests to explain their role to the people.

### COMMUNION, SOLIDARITY AND LAY EMPOWERMENT

While parish councils and lay leaders have become active in the new pastoral initiatives for renewal that have been previously mentioned, including planning, such as the work of the planning task force, decision-making had generally been in the hands of the clergy and the archbishop since 1987.

The real beginning of lay participation in decision-making was at the first archdiocesan pastoral assembly. Some 85% of interventions at the plenary assemblies were by the lay people. Workshop discussions were "dominated" by the lay people. Consensus was the desired goal for decision-making at the workshop level.

At the final plenary voting on the recommendations, the archbishop was asked to intervene twice — on two issues regarding politics that did not receive clear majorities: (1) on not soliciting any funds from politicians; (2) on not having any elected political official or any of the official's immediate relatives as an officer of any lay religious organization. These two recommendations came from some of the workshop groups. The archbishop presented the disadvantages and advantages of the recommendations in the light of the political culture and realities in the archdiocese. A second voting obtained a much stronger majority in favor of the recommendations but a significant minority remained.

On the whole the voting pattern of clergy, religious and lay people was one of clear consensus. This seemed to be proof enough that when the laity gather and decide from their collective wisdom in an atmosphere of dialogue and prayer, the clergy need not be anxious about the good of "the Church," especially when the lay people have a sense of identification with and belongingness to the "Church." They are not likely to make decisions against themselves as people of God.

Communion among members of the Church was gradually built during the pastoral assembly. Trust was necessary for such communion. The daily celebration of the Eucharist, where aspirations for a genuine community were expressed and supported, was a very significant factor in building community. An evening of cultural recreation for all the participants gave the laity a demonstration of the humanity of the clergy. The priests depicted in a humorous skit the contrast between what they were before and what they wish to be as servant leaders in solidarity with the poor. The humble

confession, as well as the humor through which it was expressed, literally "brought down the house" and built bridges between clergy, religious and laity.

The recommendations of NSPA-I were made into obligatory decrees by the archbishop on the feast of Pentecost, 1993. The stage was set to continue the renewal initiatives already started, and to initiate an even more comprehensive renewal in the major areas of the archdiocese's mission.

During 1993-1994 week-end parish-level seminars, called NOW (Archdiocesan Orientation Workshop), were conducted by an archdiocesan task force of priests, religious and lay people in order to orient the parish to the new vision — mission statement of the archdiocese, the decrees of NSPA-I and their pastoral implications. These seminars made use of some of the Lumko materials adapted to local situations.

### **BECs AND LAY EMPOWERMENT AT THE GRASSROOTS**

Up to 1993 the active pastoral programs of the archdiocese were catechetics (the Commission on Christian Formation — COCF), Bible study, sharing and training (Bible Apostolate), Liturgy and Worship (COWL), Social Action, Justice and Peace (CARITAS Nueva Segovia), media (archdiocesan radio and weekly newspaper), education (the school apostolate), Youth (Integral Youth Ministry), the BEC Commission, and the Pastoral Coordination desk.

In 1994, a new pastoral program was established in order to form and train a new breed of lay leaders at the grassroots and to move away from traditional lay leadership that favors name, title, profession, rather than commitment, service and competence. This was also for the purpose of dispersing lay leadership to the barangay.

This type of lay leadership was considered by the clergy as necessary for the Basic Ecclesial Communities and for the various levels of lay councils.

With the use of the AsIPA Method (the Asian Integrated Pastoral Approach) the new lay leadership training program began its work and had become well known, even outside the archdiocese. The results of the training program at the grassroots level have been dramatic. Where new lay leaders at the grassroots level, i.e., farmers in the barangay, and especially at the BEC level, have gone through the training process, they have found new confidence in their ability to lead their communities in prayer and in decision-making through dialogue and participation. Skills in discernment through the use of the pastoral spiral, and communication skills are of great help to them in organizing their communities for action. Characteristic of this new type of lay leader is coresponsibility and participation. This leadership demands a corresponding type of leadership on the part of the clergy. Otherwise, the whole paradigm of a new way of being Church collapses.

With such lay leaders, some of the BECs have gone on to discerning

and confronting social issues in their communities, such as high prices of rice and farm inputs, and gambling. Others have gone into small-scale income generating projects, although the majority of the BECs remain at the liturgical stage.

In each BEC is a pool of lay leaders who call the community to prayer, facilitate the people's reflection on the word of God in Scriptures, leads them in discerning God's will for them in facing religious, political, cultural, economic or family issues that might be affecting the community. BEC action might result from such prayerful discernment.

In many parishes, there is a monthly meeting at the parish level of all leaders of BECs for a sharing of experiences and for discerning what possible collaboration they can have regarding some common pastoral or social issue.

More than 1,200 BECs are now in various stages of BEC development. These involve an estimated number of 14,400 families in the archdiocese, about 14% of total families in the archdiocese. The number of BECs grows every month.

Failures in BEC-building have been due to lack of parish priest's interest and support, poor selection of lay leaders, the natural waning of members' interest without being renewed through a leader's motivational skill or the moral support of the other members, the lack of a social apostolate, which leaves the BEC simply at the level of praying together.

#### LAY EMPOWERMENT IN CHURCH TEMPORALITIES: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The modified tithing system that had been introduced throughout the entire archdiocese to replace the *arancel* system had implications on financial accountability. Two were of major importance: (1) parish finances in the hands of lay people; and (2) the standardization of priests' monthly stipends.

To implement and supervise the whole tithing system, lay finance committees were organized at the parish and barangay levels. The clergy agreed that all finances of the parish must be placed in the hands of the lay people. Hence, all incomes would go into a parish central fund, from which support would be taken for every parish expense.

The clergy assembly, with the agreement of the archbishop, allocated parish funds in the following way:

- 50% for parish pastoral programs, including salaries of pastoral workers, and the monthly stipend of the parish priest;
- 40% for the general upkeep of the church and the parish rectory, including food;
- 10% for the archdiocesan curia to support archdiocesan pastoral programs.

The allocation presupposes a definite monthly stipend for priests. This

problem was resolved by the priests themselves when, acting on the suggestion of the archbishop, the clergy assembly discussed for three years (1990-1993) the matter of standardizing priests' salaries. Previous to 1994, the handling of parish finances was totally in the hands of the parish priest. What he reserved for himself was absolutely in his control, since he did not have to make any report to the parish. Such practice is traditional and universal for the Philippines. This fostered a natural desire among the priests to aspire to the better-off parishes for their security. The clergy came to a consensus that such worldly ambition was not in keeping with servant-leadership and solidarity with the poor.

Thus, for two years a task force among the clergy undertook a study and hammered out a recommendation that was finally submitted to the archbishop for his approval. Assuming that they were at the level of executives, they believed that P5,000 monthly would be just. The archbishop sent the recommendation back to the assembly, asking the priests to reconsider the recommendation in the light of the following: board and lodging and all other needs, except personal, are covered by the parish; the level of teachers' salaries is much lower, even though teachers had their own families to feed, send to school, etc.; and they had to live the spirit of evangelical poverty. After almost a year of further discussion, the clergy submitted a recommendation bringing down the salary level to P3,000 monthly, with provisions being given to the nature of work and years of service.

The standard salary meant that priests would have the same salary whether in a poor small parish or in a big rich parish. They considered this decision as a way of living out their option for the poor. It placed poor parishes at the same level as rich parishes. At the same time it brought down their standard of living to the relative level of school teachers. But it took all of three years to make this radical decision. The policy was put into effect at the beginning of 1994. Now the lay finance committee of the parish knows exactly what to allocate for their parish priest's monthly stipend.

In this very important and delicate area of finance, the laity have been empowered, and the priests have gained greater inner freedom to devote their time to the pastoral care of their parishioners. Transparency and accountability regarding finances are now the norms in all the parishes of the archdiocese.

### LITURGICAL RENEWAL

The liturgical renewal that began in the archdiocese before PCP-II resumed, with the implementation of the NSPA-I decrees in 1993. The decrees call for a renewal towards making liturgical celebrations more meaningful, more simple, devoid of ostentation and extravagance.

Thus, the religious as well as the social dimension of Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Matrimony were emphasized in catechetics. Pre-sacramental catechesis was required for those preparing for

Confirmation and Marriage. Parents and sponsors for Baptisms were also required to go through seminars.

The number of marriage sponsors was cut down to two, so as to take away the ostentation and extravagance of a marriage with six or more "primary sponsors" and an even bigger number of "secondary sponsors."

Patronal fiestas were taken out of the hands of municipal government officials. The main responsibility for planning such town fiestas was with the priest and the parish council, so that the religious meaning of the feast of the town patron saint would be retrieved and deepened, and at the same time exclude other events such as gambling and "Miss Gay" beauty contests, not in keeping with the religious nature of the fiesta. Such are some of the renewals done in the liturgical sphere.

### RENEWAL OF THE POLITICAL ORDER

The NSPA-I decrees call for Church disengagement from dependence on politicians. The rationale for this was so that the Church, long identified with the ruling elite, could serve as a moral and religious critic of government. Thus, the two decrees already mentioned above. As a result of the antagonism that arose on the part of politicians due to these moves, the archbishop called for a dialogue with the provincial officials and the mayors. He explained the reasons for the decrees, emphasizing the transitory nature of public political office, and the fact that to be true to her identity the Church must likewise evangelize the political order, no matter who holds political power. At a subsequent election, the candidates vying for political office requested the archbishop to give them a Lenten spiritual recollection.

The archdiocesan pastoral program for responsible citizenship resumed the task of conscientizing the people with regard to political issues and the coming 1998 national elections, and to setting up a network of trained parish volunteers to monitor the elections, and later to monitor political performance. The social teachings of the Church and of PCP-II are used as basic sources by the pastoral program.

### OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE PASTORAL CARE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Along the southeastern boundaries of the archdiocese are seven relatively remote mountain parishes populated by indigenous peoples. During the rainy season, when the rivers are swollen and mountain roads become muddy, slippery, eroded and impassable, many villages would be totally isolated. Hiking is the usual mode of travel. The people are neglected by the government. The pastoral care of the Church had not been consistently and regularly given. They are among the poorest of the poor in the archdiocese.

It is to these parishes that the young priests of the archdiocese are challenged to go. All the young priests now assigned there were participants, as seminarians, in the immersion-exposure program in the BECs in



the diocese of Kidapawan. It is to them that much of the attention of the archdiocese is given in terms of logistics and moral support.

A pastoral program was established, geared to demonstrate Christ's option for the poor, and the special love that the Church has for poor indigenous peoples. While the parishes and the young parish priests provide more direct pastoral care, the indigenous peoples' apostolate of the archdiocese has been involved in helping indigenous peoples organize themselves into conscientized communities, with trained lay leaders, and in facilitating the establishment of developmental as well as liberational projects by their own efforts. Presently, the special project is the defense of their ancestral domains and their ecological integrity because of the exploratory intrusion of mining companies into their area.

By this process of conscientization, advocacy and self-reliance, the indigenous peoples are beginning to gain a greater respect for themselves, and a stronger confidence in their own ability to rise out of poverty.

### CRISIS

At the beginning of 1995, a great crisis emerged among the clergy. The pastoral thrust of the archdiocese was seen as an obstacle to priestly self-development, because of peer pressure to achieve stated goals within a period of time. Attendance at the monthly clergy recollection became irregular. A lack of enthusiasm to maintain pastoral initiatives was observed among many of the older priests. The young priests began to have their own meetings, aside from their regular young priests' gatherings. The six episcopal vicars suggested that instead of the annual retreat, a week-long pastoral evaluation session should be made. The archbishop agreed. A planning committee was organized. The session took place in July 1996, with the assistance of an outside resource person.

Evaluation of the pastoral programs of the archdiocese and the pastoral thrust of building BECs did not reveal any factor that would significantly affect the generally positive attitude of the priests towards these pastoral matters.

The major claim that the priests had different understandings of BEC also proved negative. The real key to the malaise that afflicted many of the priests was not the work itself but the relationships among the priests. A soul-searching session revealed that some priests were deeply resentful of indirect criticisms, insensitively expressed by others at the clergy assembly, that they were not doing their jobs. Others objected to the way some of the clergy dominated the assembly sessions. Still others felt that the clergy assembly did not give enough time for spiritualization and fraternization, and that it was too much work-oriented.

The archbishop himself was blamed for being too work-oriented, for favoring the young priests in the mountain parishes, for listening only to "the intelligent and articulate" among the clergy, and visiting only the priests

who were in difficulty.

As the real reasons for the crisis came out, the realization of human personal inadequacy and the need for reconciliation became foremost. The archbishop led the clergy on the last day of the week-long session in a process of reconciliation and recommitment, climaxing in a joyful celebration of the Eucharist.

This event was part and parcel of the struggle of the archdiocese towards the new way of being Church. Many, indeed, are the frustrations and disappointments that clergy, religious and lay people went through. To maintain enthusiasm and zeal at a high pitch for a long period of times is never easy. There are long periods of inaction because of the dampening of the human spirit, either naturally through time or because of conflicts in relationships between priests and lay pastoral collaborators, among priests themselves as regards peer pressure, and conflicts in pastoral discernment and strategies. But when these happened, honest dialogue would overcome the obstacles.

### EVALUATION OF THE RENEWAL PROCESS

For our colloquium workshops, the following questions are posed in order to understand the case study in terms of the principles of communion and solidarity:

1. What strikes you most in this case study?
2. What do you consider as the key factors and key steps in this case study that contribute to the achieving of the goal to be a new way of being Church?
3. What are the obstacles hindering this goal?
4. In what ways and at what levels are communion and solidarity being realized?

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS – SUGGESTIONS – PROPOSALS

compiled by  
BROTHER ANTHONY ROGERS

### I. AWARENESS – EDUCATION – FORMATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1. Form a social conscience and deep respect for human persons affected by processes of dehumanization. We need to give priority to value education.

2. Take the responsibility to promote alternative ways of thinking and acting. It should encourage awareness and formation programs for all the People of God. This has to lead to a greater appreciation of our own cultures.

3. Implement new and creative methodologies in formation that will enable them to grow in communion by empowering and mobilizing their

energies to be at the service of solidarity, and for a radical witness. We need radical changes in our pastoral approaches.

4. Promote a truly Asian theology that begins with the realities of our Asian people. The methodology has to be based on our religio-cultural sensitivities, and one that attempts to deepen our spiritualities. It has to be a methodology that bridges the gap between faith and life. It is this theology that will move us towards "A New Way of Being Church."

5. In the context of the new way of being Church, to forge new relationships which do not mutilate the other, especially women and the young, in the name of development, progress, religion, and even love.

6. The Church in Asia to invest more energy, resources, personnel for the integral formation of the laity, pastoral teams, etc., with a monitoring system to make sure that the creative collaboration of all takes place at all levels.

7. To take urgent initiatives to translate various FABC seminar statements into the vernaculars, and to use them systematically in the formation of bishops, priests, laity, religious, and the local parish communities.

8. There should be more communion and solidarity at the spiritual level.

9. To conduct activities, seminars, formation sessions, to make people understand and realize the sense of communion and solidarity.

10. To make sure all sections of parishioners take part in the parish/Church activities, which should be conducted according to their needs.

11. Formation in leadership towards communion and solidarity has to start in the seminary, through such means as having seminarians participate in decision-making for their own formation. Joint decision-making leading towards consensus, instead of a "top down" approach, should be taught.

12. The formation of lay leaders is to be a priority in the new way of being Church. They are to be given the opportunities to exercise their abilities and talents.

13. To promote communion and solidarity, participation and co-responsibility, a well organized, continual programs of formation for the laity at all levels have to be designed and introduced. The clergy and religious should undergo regular updating. For such formation, Church teachings, including FABC Papers, should be simplified and made more easily intelligible.

## **II. LEADERSHIP — DECISION-MAKING — CORESPONSIBILITY**

1. There is the need to make a critical review of the existing structures in the Church at all levels as part of our journeying towards conversion and renewal.

2. Reconsider the decision-making processes in the Church, calling for greater consultation and discernment in the light of our vision of "Church as communion."

3. Importance is to be given to the building of the local Church as a local Church, that is, to be an inculturated, evangelizing and dialogical Church. It is in the process of becoming a local Church through a comprehensive, systematic and integral formation of the People of God. It is in this context that evangelization is possible, and that the laity can play their rightful role as citizens in their respective nations.

4. Present leaders have to undergo a constant process of conversion and renewal, using the "pastoral spiral" methodology of social involvement.

5. Existing structures of decision-making at the FABC, diocesan, and parish levels should be reviewed, updated, and reformed, if necessary.

6. Avoid appointing to leadership positions those persons, whether foreign or not, who are alien to the life and cultures of peoples.

### III. LOCAL CHURCH — COMMUNION — BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

1. Regular communication between bishops, priests and lay people has to be set up, and a more democratic way of policy-making established. At the same time, there has to be a forum to clarify issues, and the possibility of review and appeal.

2. Parish councils and financial councils must effectively ensure people's participation. Priests' councils are to be formed and should function effectively.

3. The bishop, priests, religious and lay people should have joint live-in pastoral discernment and planning sessions regarding mission and ministry in the diocese.

4. At the level of the bishops' conference, an environment of trust and confidence should prevail.

5. Joint formation sessions for bishops, the clergy, religious and laity are to be encouraged, where the thrust is formation for communion. Such sessions should include an ecclesiology of communion, its vision, the attitudes and skills needed to build it up; and reflection on Asian religions and cultures, particularly the elements in them that promote patriarchy, sexism and clericalism.

6. Review of the curricula of seminaries, lay formation centers and religious houses of formation to conscientize those in formation.

7. They need to be instructed in perspectives and elements of theology that are born out of a patriarchal culture, so that they can critique them, relate them with existing practices in their own situations, and propose creative alternatives.

8. The effort in some seminaries to restructure their community life in such a way that it approximates that of the BECs is gaining more support. Likewise, the presence of lay women and men, and women religious in seminaries as members of the teaching or non-teaching staff, can provide and opportunity for both the priest-staff and seminarians to learn "the ways of communion."

9. Promotion of a style of leadership among priests, religious and laity that encourages participation and co-responsibility.

10. Such a leadership style will be consultative, dialogical, inclusive and collaborative. Team ministry, where men and women, priests, religious and lay work together, should be proposed as an ideal for all who work in the ministry of the Church. Formation for this type of leadership, particularly in the values and skills this calls for, needs to be part of the initial and on-going programs for clergy and religious alike.

11. On-going personal conversion of bishops, priests religious and laity, particularly with regard to attitudes and values that weaken or destroy communion.

12. Conversion is imperative not only for the clergy but also for the lay men and women, and for religious, for they, too, have attitudes and biases that do not encourage communion, e.g., a total deference and subservience to the male leaders of the community, and an unquestioning belief in priests, reinforced by the belief that "Father always knows best," the religious' own attitude of superiority and lording it over the laity, of a paternalism and materialism that encourage dependence, etc.

13. The vision of communion and solidarity of the Church in Asia for the twenty-first century is best realized at the most fundamental or basic level of the Church. It is at this level that the contribution of the BEC to the building up of the Church in Asia is best seen. It is in this sense that BEC truly offers an alternative or new way of being Church.

14. Personal conversion of bishops, priests, religious and laity, particularly with regard to attitudes and values that weaken or destroy communion, e.g., prejudices stereotypes.

15. Promote a leadership style that is collaborative, inclusive, dialogical, consultative and empowering.

## TO DIOCESES

1. Organize programs of joint formation for bishops, clergy, religious and laity that will include an ecclesiology of communion and reflection on elements of Asian cultures/religions that promote patriarchy, sexism and clericalism.

2. Address the questions of the participation and the role of women in the Church in a more conscious way, e.g., through organization of a Women's Desk or Office in the BEC, parish, diocese.

3. Review the curricula/structures of the seminaries, lay formation centers and houses of formation to align them with the vision of communion, e.g., teaching, orientation with regard to laity and women, the restructuring of community life in seminaries along the lines of BEC.

4. A holistic formation of clergy, religious and laity that will include, e.g., the vision/methodology of the BEC; the development of skills of a theological reflection that begins with the realities of Asian peoples; a de-

velopment of capacity to confront issues of human sexuality, and of power, which pose problems for partnership.

5. Review structures for decision-making to make them more participatory.

6. Conscientize business people and policy-makers.

7. Form Basic Human Communities, where spirituality, not religion, could be the basis to unite people.

8. Lead the way in forming new Basic Human Communities among peoples of all faiths.

9. An earnest review of the structures on the BEC, and parish and diocesan levels, to evaluate the extent to which they promote values of communion. For instance, even as Vatican II had been explicitly encouraging the establishment of structures for participative decision-making, e.g., Parish Pastoral Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, etc., not all parishes and dioceses have actually organized them. And where they are existing, many of them are not always functional. The participation of religious, particularly of women religious, in these bodies is negligible.

#### IV. PRIORITY AREAS OF PASTORAL CARE

##### 1. WOMEN, YOUTH AND CHILDREN

1. To advocate regulatory measures with international standards to protect those made victims of globalization and the unfettered market economy, particularly women

2. To promote the empowerment of women in society, as well as to bring more Church women into leadership positions in the context of a women-friendly theology; and to sensitize men and women into building such new structures and processes both in Church and society

3. To identify the key issues discriminating women in Asia and in the Church, and to formulate plans and strategies levels

4. Address the concern for the place and charism of women in the Church in a more conscious and organized way, in the BECs and in parish/diocesan pastoral programs. The weight of history and tradition in our Asian context is such that, leaving this question to chance, or with the hope that it can be responded to in the course of implementing other pastoral programs, e.g., family life, justice and peace, will bear little fruit. A study of the BECs in the Philippines shows that "they have not enhanced the status of women because this aim has never been incorporated explicitly into their goal structure and policy formulation." This finding is corroborated by experience of those who have worked with the BECs.

5. The organization of a women's office, or a women's program in the BECs, or in the parish/diocese, is certainly a step in the right direction to fill this lack.

6. Involve women in the process of theological reflection, e.g., through

the Office of Theological Concerns.

7. The long and arduous task of looking into the life of the various youth movements and activities, groups and organizations, episcopal and diocesan commissions, and critically asking how far has this reality been a source of growth or division in the lives of young people? We need to be aware that where the market economy has as its target the youth, the sector that they appeal to most, and seem to have a powerful influence over, is also the mode of operation within the many undertakings of the Church. It seems good and popular to have "youth" on the agenda. As a Church, then, we shall need to look beyond the definition of current youth ministry, and seek ways of reaching out to the different sectors of youth activity. We will have to ask ourselves. How do we foster a communion among the different sectors of the youth? How do we bring about unity, despite their diverse experiences? At what point would they come together as one?

8. As we try then to discern the path to "A New Way Of Being Church," of establishing a "communion of communities," we will have to learn to walk with the young. It would mean not approaching youth with the answers, but entering into their world, discovering its peculiarities, and journeying with them through it, in the true spirit of the Incarnation.

9. The Holy Father, in the World Youth Day celebrations, echoed the call of Jesus to "Come and See." Before any communion, there will have to be a listening, a sharing and understanding. It is only in entering into the world of the young, being rocked in their boat, amidst their uncertainties, fears, competitiveness, challenges, peer and other pressures, social influences, pluralistic ideologies, and seeing the world through their eyes that we will be able to establish communion. A ministering that would be different from what we may have been doing for the most part so far, i.e., approaching them with answers, catering to a need from the point of presumption, for fear of undertaking a long and difficult journey. For it could well mean giving up some of our own certainties. The fruit of such listening would truly involve the youth in a participatory Church, being witness of the Gospel of Jesus, daring to be prophetic signs of the Kingdom.

10. Recognize the rightful role of women and youth in the Church. This will lead to a greater support and affirmation of the numerous positive contributions they can make to society. Part of this task would be for an "intermediary group" to help youth to understand the language of the Church.

11. Church should understand the language of the youth in the emerging global culture.

12. Modern media culture is powerful. To make sure of it for the integral Christian formation, especially of the youth.

13. To promote a value-based education for our youth.

14. To make friends with the youth, parish councils, along with youth commissions to conduct programs for youth/students/youth workers.

15. To set up mechanisms and structures for youth and women to be a constitutive part of the decision-making process and programs of the Church

in a spirit of communion, solidarity and equality). Set up an FABC Office for Youth.

16. The issues of women, especially women migrant workers, need to be addressed urgently. Local Churches need to work towards changing attitudes towards these women, as well as to provide pastoral care to this group within our communities.

17. To deal with the ruthless growth and the inequalities engendered by globalization, including the root causes of poverty, which in Asia has a female face

18. To inculcate Christian values in children.

19. School children as agents of change — the Jomtsien Meeting (March 1990) proclaimed:

- a. That basic education for all was an attainable goal by the year 2000.
- b. OIEC, the Catholic Education Office — to which 240,000 Catholic schools in the 5 continents are affiliated — during a 4-year period developed this call: "The Catholic school in the service of all," which was endorsed by 400 participants from 62 countries.
- c. The evaluation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India proposed reorientation of the Church's two power bases, viz., the school system and our health care ministry.
- d. School children in schools should be made to feel responsible for the "families" in the slum near the school, with a basic education package program, which includes developmental components. This is being done and should be encouraged.

## **2. MIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **FOR FAMILIES IN GENERAL**

1. FABC take up family concerns as a priority area by setting up a desk for it.

2. Use mass media more to instruct about family and the programs for their care.

3. Improve dissemination of FABC communications with its constituents, bishops, priests and lay leaders.

4. Family ministry should be seen as a comprehensive and integrated endeavor, focusing on needs of workers, women and youth.

5. Seminarians need to be trained and to learn about intimacy with the people they will serve, getting into emotions, human and psycho-spiritual formation.

### **FOR MIGRANT FAMILIES IN PARTICULAR**

1. Initiate bilateral meetings of the migration commissions of episcopal conferences.



2. Elaborate formation programs for pastoral workers of migrants, first at the national level, and then perhaps also by organizing regional initiatives for this.

3. Insert the pastoral care of families of migrants within the diocesan pastoral programs, particularly where migrants are numerous, beginning with dialogue between sending and receiving Churches.

4. Link the issue of migration with the issue of labor in general, for a more comprehensive understanding and unified action on it.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That dioceses with migrant workers take up the cause of migrant workers through the legal process of the host country, by providing financial support and lawyers to fight for their rights and contractual rights, especially where such legal proceedings would drag on beyond the validity of their visas to the host country.

2. Pastoral care to focus on the integrity of the family, the backbone of Asian culture.

3. For international marriages, intercultural awareness and re-contracting.

4. For blended families, finishing unfinished business through psychological interventions, and reinstating bonding and parenting.

5. For composite families, better tolerance of each other, and maximization of each other's charisms and potentials through growth and group processing.

6. For long-term commuter couples, seeking new channels of communication; and for short-term ones, growing in trust through the giving of quality time for each other.

7. For renewed extended families, clarifying boundaries, and identifying and sharing what are intrusions.

8. For singles, building support systems, and exploring areas for reaching out to others in love and care.

9. For couples marrying later, tearing down walls of individualism, and exploring new areas of intimacy and affection.

10. For small-sized families, developing fun activities with each other and involvement in larger community affairs.

### 3. WORKERS

1. There is a urgent need for the Church to reflect and express the meaning of "work," and how we view the identity of a "worker" in today's changing situation.

2. For those countries where "workers" movements have past negative connotations due to involvement in civil unrest, or where they raised fears of communism, we must reflect on the effect of this mentality for our work

today. These fears from the past greatly restrict the urgent task of evangelization of the workers, and the work of all worker movements, including those within the Church.

3. We must give priority to faith education and development of workers and those working with workers. The Church herself must address our own injustices and exploitative work practices in the employment of workers.

4. Young people, just leaving school to join the work force, are at a particularly crucial stage of faith development. Millions are migrating to the cities and are cut off from the close-knit family and faith communities. In their new environment of unemployment, or in factory work, they are quickly corrupted by prevalent value systems. It must be a priority of the Asian Church to protect and educate these young workers.

5. With the establishment of episcopal and diocesan commissions, we as an ICO see ourselves being either excluded, or incorporated under an umbrella body that ignores our specific ministry among students and young workers, and does not pay sufficient attention to the wider dimension of youth ministry. e.g., rural, unemployed and unorganized youth, dropouts, indigenous people, etc.

6. We deeply regret the divisions created among the young workers, and we see the need for the Church in Asia to use its good offices to promote the process of dialogue for reconciliation between the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW) and International Co-ordination of Young Christian Workers (ICYCW) at the international, regional and at local levels, before the Jubilee Year 2000.

7. In an environment of increasing competition, worker solidarity has been eroded. We need to promote new structures of workers solidarity.

#### **4. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

1. That special attention is given to indigenous peoples and tribal communities, and that due attention be considered in the mission concern in Asia in the 21st Century.

2. The impact on globalization is felt most negatively upon these communities. All means should be made available to protect their lands and their religio-cultural values.

#### **V. GLOBALIZATION – JUSTICE AND PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE JUBILEE YEAR 2000**

1. Promote various forms of non-formal education that will bring a new awareness and consciousness to resist the forces of growing mass media influences.

2. Encourage an education of the masses that calls for a moving away from the big institutions to the places where people are in need of education.

This also calls for a critique and review of the curriculum in our present educational systems.

3. Support all programs for a greater participatory democracy at all levels, to enable people to stand up for justice and to speak up for the disadvantaged and marginalized. The increasing importance of advocacy through denouncing injustice and supporting various forms of peoples and organizations will be the credible sign of the Good News of the Gospel. Our prophetic role and vision has to be revitalized.

4. Attempts need to be made to create a network of regional organizations, and thus form a new alliance among those who realize the importance of playing a positive role in the society of today.

5. At the level of Church authorities (particularly national and regional):

a) Reassert advocacy work as a natural extension of grassroots activities, as part of the mission of Catholic organizations;

b) Build on the credibility that Catholic organizations may enjoy in their respective fields of action. (E.g., Caritas is not credible in bioethics or arms sales questions)

6. At the Catholic Organizations' level:

a) Define one (maybe two at most) area of concern for advocacy building (at best on regional level). (E.g., Caritas combating the causes of poverty and of migration, forced/displaced.)

b) Stick to it! Don't change according to the latest political fashion.

c) The aim is the elaboration of a politically workable proposal (not a statement of principles). Achieving this implies active co-operation with reliable experts (grassroots knowledge is not enough). (E.g., Caritas Europa — a proposal for a common European immigration policy.)

d) The targets are the international policy makers, to be reached through the national member organizations. (Media and opinion leaders are best reached nationally as well, e.g., Caritas — CIDSE positions.)

e) Seek support from other "civil society" players. (It becomes much easier when the proposal is already there.)

7. The Church of the West to wield more influence among the western powers, and TNCs to engage in non-exploitative trade and investments.

8. That international/Asian groups, through their mechanisms, fight for workers' rights, cancellation of debts, etc. However, we must bear in mind that such groups are not one Church. It is the task of the local Churches. They are the people who have to take on the responsibility of fighting for justice in solidarity with the rest of the People of God and with all other people of good will.

9. National conferences of bishops should welcome clearly understood procedures in the Roman Curia, when disciplinary action is undertaken against particular individuals or theologians.

10. It is imperative for the Church, especially her leaders, in the context of civil society, to provide alternative expressions of community and

participation against the pervasiveness of individualism and consumerism.

11. Globalization is seen as positive and negative. It is also shown to be something that will stay here. So, what are we saying as to how to stay with it, and further to change the negative aspects into positive ones?

12. Even the concept of globalization is difficult to understand. How can this be made simple so that BECs, etc., can discuss, and make collective decisions to combat the negative?

13. That aspects the FABC Office of Human Development, and its partner, Caritas, in the different countries in Asia, coordinate their activities with regard to the campaign for the cancellation of foreign debts. This would involve:

a. A careful study of the debt situation in each country and in the region;

b. Linkages with Catholic agencies and other partners in the North;

c. Articulating our own positions, nationally and regionally, with regard to the debt situation;

d. Including positive conditionalities to transform debts into development funds for the upliftment of targeted poor sectors;

e. Integrating a note of hope and joy in the spirit of the Jubilee in all these efforts to restructure global relationships;

f. The need for the Church in Asia to form some kind of coalition to work for the cancellation of the unpayable debts.

14. CAFOD in England and Wales is, for example, energetically promoting the Millennium as a chance for a new beginning — a privileged moment which must be celebrated as a Jubilee. Practically speaking, CAFOD is campaigning through to the year 2,000:

a) for the forgiveness of the unpayable debt of the Third World;

b) for international conventions, codes of conduct and regulations to prevent slave-like working conditions, and

c) for generous international development aid focused on basic human needs.

d) The Preferential Option for the Poor must continue to be stressed as Church's priority. This must truly be the option of the national episcopal conferences and the dioceses. Though the FABC is very clear about this option, not all local churches seem to be clear about this.

15. Many do not see how we can be Church in communion and solidarity, if there is no conversion, structure and mechanism to live this option. This reference to the "Option for the Poor" is sometimes mentioned/included/referred to as a "decoration" to the presentations ("icing on the cake," metaphorically speaking). Do the bishops and priests really know the meaning of this? Is this option only an appendix to our ministry?

## INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

1. Foster interfaith harmony, alliances among all peoples, who are

willing to work together in a dialogue of life and deeds.

2. To intensify interreligious dialogue (as globalization will lead to fragmentation and further conflicts), and to work through alliances within civil society.

3. FABC should develop symbolic modes of "lifestyle and action" which can be understood by our non-Christian partners, and clearly interpreted by such large countries as China and India, that the Church in Asia is not dominated by Western interests or thought.

4. Continue sharing experiences of interreligious dialogues at the Asian level.

5. Promote the formation of interreligious "neighborhood communities," in which individuals and families of a locality experience genuine support concern and acceptance.

#### **THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY OF ASIA FOR THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

1. In the past 27 years the theological perspectives of FABC have grown through the painstaking searchings of the people of God in Asia. In the Asian Synod, the Synod need not give new statements, but only approve the process and perspectives of the FABC, which are indeed in tune with Vatican II.

2. It is important that the participants in the Special Assembly be assisted by a few Asian theologians, so that the theological perspectives of FABC are presented at the Synod.

3. Catholic Church leaders and representatives who will attend the Asian Synod next year should be warmly supported and helped in whatever way by experts from the different of concern areas dealt with in this colloquium.

#### **FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES AND THE OFFICE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

1. Spirituality and social justice are the two keys to the Kingdom in the context of Asian realities. The flow of information with regard to the megatrends in the world today needs to be strengthened.

2. For FABC and OHD to take a clear perspective on globalization and communicate this to all in the Church.

3. Initiate and set up through the Office for Human Development or other groups "a Watch Dog Committee" that will monitor events and trends at national, regional and Asian levels.

4. We recommend a formation at all levels of strategies to create the awareness and understanding of the Asia Vision to all kinds of groupings in Asia.

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