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This FABC Paper presents the documents of the communication considerations of several meetings organized by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC).

Under the topic "FABC-OSC Bishops' Meets" the FABC-OSC has since 1996 organized annual meetings of bishops and secretaries responsible for communication in the FABC member conferences. These meetings were well attended, and their yearly "Final Considerations" offers insights into the concerns and thinking of those responsible for social communication. The first meeting (1996) in Tagaytay, Philippines, provided the more general overview of a theological and pastoral basis, and suggested concrete steps to be taken in the communication activities of the church in Asia. The second Meet in 1997 discussed the consequences for communication of "a New Way of Being Church in Asia." The 1998 Meet followed up on the considerations of the Roman Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops held the same year, and outlined the communication consequences of the Synod.

Following up the suggestion of the bishops in 1996, the first "Bishops' Institute for Social Communication" (BISCOM I) was organized in 1997, in Singapore, on "Church and Public Relations," with a follow-up training seminar in 1999, for information officers of bishops' conferences (BISCOM I.1). The choice of this theme indicates that the bishops are not only concerned about the mass media and their use but also about the image which the Church and Christian communities have with the general public. Christian communication starts with a "witness of life," which is reflected in its relation to others.

The need for communication research was addressed in a "Roundtable Discussion" of invited academicians from Asia specializing in social communication, in Bangkok, 1999. Without proper and sound research, the social communication of the Church cannot go deep and be lasting. This activity has to be grounded in solid research to be successful and meaningful.

An overview, with references to social communication to FABC documents from 1970 till 1998, is added to fill out the picture of FABC thinking about social communication.

The need for a holistic approach to communication formation is further explained in a special contribution at the end of this paper. Without proper training and formation, no responsible work in this field will be done by the Asian Church.

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The Final Considerations of the FABC-OSC Bishops' Meets from 1996 to 1998. The Meets are annual forums of bishop-chairmen and secretaries of the episcopal commissions for social communication of FABC member conferences.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN ASIA:

BISHOPS' MEET '96

Tagaytay City, Philippines

July 8-12, 1996

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the spirit of "a new way of being Church in Asia" (FABC Plenary Assembly, Bandung, 1990), and of "Christian Discipleship in the Service to Life" (FABC Plenary Assembly, Manila, 1995), the bishops and secretaries of 16 Asian countries assembled in the Divine Word Seminary of Tagaytay City (Philippines) from July 8 to 12, 1996, and discussed the "Communication Challenges for the Church in Asia".

The FABC Plenary Assembly in Manila, January, 1995, said in its final statement that the Asian bishops "did not miss the value of the discovery of mass media for the promotion of values and support of peoples' movements and rights. On the same occasion Pope John Paul II reminded the bishops that on them "rests the responsibility for fostering with wisdom and fidelity the most suitable means for communicating the Gospel to the various Asian cultures." In a letter of the Secretariat of State to the FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '96, the Pope states that "the fast approaching 2.000th anniversary of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ presents both a special opportunity and a special duty to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the communications media. In Asia this special opportunity is favored by the rapid and widespread introduction of new communications possibilities in all the media, as well as by the church's increasing presence in this important field..." (Letter of Cardinal Angelo Sodano, June 27, 1996, to Archbishop Oscar Cruz).

The participants of the FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '96 took up these challenges with the following considerations and proposals:

The Church is by her essence communication, which flows out of the communication of the Holy Trinity. She is founded to continue the communication of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Communication ought, therefore, to mark the life of the church in Asia. Communication, then, must be a constitutive dimension of all ministries of the church. Home of the great religions, Asia and its evangelization call for dialogue as a way of life.

Unfortunately, the demand of the church for offices of social communication at the national and diocesan levels is not yet executed in all parts of Asia. A pastoral plan for communications, to carry out the prophetic, proclaiming task of the church in a media-conscious society, must be established both at the national and diocesan levels.

We are not to lose sight, however, of the truth that it is the person and not the technology that is the best means of communication, especially in Asian cultures. It is the witness "of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 41) which communicates first. For Asia, being a religious continent, our own religiosity and love for humankind is the best means of communication.

"The "new culture" created by modern communications" (*Redemptoris Missio*, No.37), while bringing about economic progress in our Asian societies, is also often destructive of Asian and Christian values and traditions, especially among the youth. The church of Asia perceives this as a new call to integrate Gospel values into this "new culture."

The calling posed by the new media culture offers an opportunity for interfaith cooperation in communication activities, because it affects all religious communities in Asia. Hence, interfaith dialogue leading to understanding and cooperation should be an aspect of all our communication programs and activities. It is imperative to make it clear to our brothers and sisters of other faiths that we are not in any way aligned with destructive forces in the new media culture. Failure to do so will alienate them further from us. As in many Asian countries, Christianity is still seen as an alien, Western religion of the colonizers.

We should be careful, however, not to brand everything that belongs to the new media culture as decadent or evil. We should also not panic and throw up our hands in despair, thinking there is nothing we can do. As believers, we should have the confidence that we can face this problem — that we can educate our people, so that they will allow themselves to be nurtured by what is positive in this new media culture, but will firmly reject anything that does not correspond with true Christian faith and with traditional Asian values.

Media education, understood not simply as skills' training but as an awareness and understanding of the representations of reality generated by media in a media-shaped society, is for all — bishops, priests, religious, seminarians, lay leaders, parents, teachers, youth, children, NGOs and the grassroots. Hence, media education ought to be an essential and integral

part of any pastoral plan. Training should be provided from the simple to the more comprehensive form and approach. For this, curricula, syllabi and programs need to be elaborated by special teams at the Asian level, and models of training offered.

On the basis of these considerations, the participants agreed upon the following concrete measures to be taken:

1. Every bishops' conference must have a pastoral plan for communication, which includes also the communication dimension for every ministry of the conference. Such a pastoral plan is to incarnate the prophetic, proclaiming mission of the Church in a media-shaped and media-conscious society.

Elements constituting such a plan are:

- a. an analysis of the state of the conference;
- b. resources available for communication, including traditional and local means, such as street theater;
- c. a strategy for making use of all these existing resources;
- d. performance objectives supported by action plans;
- e. mechanisms for monitoring their achievement.

2. Communication at all levels should focus especially on FABC concerns, as expressed in the considerations of FABC plenary assemblies and the activities of the several FABC offices. These include concerns such as those on behalf of women and the girl child, the family, displaced persons, Asian youth, and ecology.

3. As much as possible, networking with Christians of all churches and denominations, and with people of other faiths in the areas of production, training and sharing of resources should be encouraged.

4. Bishops' conferences should:

- 4.1 see public relations as an important concern and act accordingly. Guidelines for better awareness and use should be formulated.
- 4.2 make attempts to link themselves and individual bishops of Asia, as well, by e-mail.
- 4.3 National communication festivals (e.g., video festivals), or communication training institutions, such as the one planned in India, should be open also to participants from other Asian countries.

5. Every country needs an episcopal commission/national office

for social communication, whose activities are to be carried down to each diocese, with their duties clearly spelled out.

- 5.1 National communication offices of bishops' conferences should encourage talent-scouting among the young, especially lay people, for communication ministries. Such talents could be shared at the continental level with the support of the FABC-Office of Social Communication.
- 5.2 Any important document sent to bishops should have an executive summary, which is prepared in a simple, palatable way by the national office of each country.
- 5.3 The bishop-chairman of the national office of each country should send a one-page information sheet highlighting the major thrusts of this FABC-OSC meeting to his fellow bishops and to other interested persons in communication.
- 5.4 For media education a formal attempt should be made by the bishop-chairmen of the national offices for their respective countries:
 - to make media education and communication awareness education mandatory at all levels, especially in seminaries;
 - to organize a national association for media education;
 - to arrange the training of trainers' programs to provide sufficient people for media education at the national and continental levels.

6. The FABC-Office of Social Communication should organize:

- 6.1 an annual FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet, like this one, at least for the coming three years, "to keep the fire burning," and to give an opportunity to follow up developments in a responsible and effective way;
- 6.2 bishops' institutes of social communication (BISCOM). The results of these 'institutes' should be carried down to the local levels by the national offices for social communication of the bishops' conferences.

7. Attempts must be made for a greater cooperation between UNDA/OCIC and UCIP on all levels of the Asian continent.

- 7.1 The bishop-chairmen of the national episcopal communication commissions and FABC-OSC representatives should attend UNDA/OCIC, UCIP general assemblies and yearly continental study days.
- 7.2 Information about trainings, productions, publications of the Catholic media organizations in Asia should be shared, possibly through a common information bulletin.

8. World Communication Day should be reevaluated about the way and about the date it is celebrated in different countries.
 - 8.1 A series of programs should aim at a greater communications awareness;
 - 8.2 People working in the different means of communications, including the secular, should be encouraged, especially by the bishops;
 - 8.3 We should aim as much as possible at a common date for the celebration to bring this day also into the greater awareness of people at the Asian continental level.
9. Bishops should be aware of the importance and possibilities of :
 - 9.1 Radio Veritas Asia (RVA) for reporting and sharing the church's teaching and church events. People should be encouraged to listen to RVA and give feedback on the programs.
 - 9.2 The initiative for a Catholic Satellite Television Program for Asia via Thai Sky Cable, which should be supported by all.
10. There is an urgent need for communication research, systematic thinking and criticism for the church in Asia. Networking, and bringing together all available resources should be promoted. The "Communication Research Award" of the FABC Office of Social Communication is seen as one step in this direction and is highly recommended.

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"Communication Challenges in Asia II"
Bishops' Meet '97
Bangkok, Thailand
November 24-28, 1997

A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH IN ASIA – COMMUNICATION CONSEQUENCES

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the Final Considerations and experiences of the first FABC-OCS Bishops' Meet '96, July 8-12, 1996 in Tagaytay City (Philippines), the second assembly of bishops and secretaries responsible in bishops' confer-

ences for social communication discussed in particularly the communication challenges of A New Way of Being Church in Asia (5th FABC Plenary Assembly, Bandung 1990). The 35 participants from 14 countries, assembled in Sampran, Thailand, November 24-28, 1997, and took up the FABC considerations of this "New Way of Being Church."

Such a church is:

- A communion of communities
- A participatory church
- A witnessing and dialoguing church
- A prophetic church

As communicators responsible to the bishops' conferences, we ask ourselves: "Where are we going and what are we doing in the spirit of a new way of being Church?"

1. The FABC plenary assembly of Bandung described the church as "at its deepest level a communion (koinonia) rooted in the life of the Trinity, and thus in its essential reality a sacrament of the loving self-communication of God." If we are a communion of communities, our communication must aim at community building. We need to create a new style of leadership which is enabling and facilitating, being real leaders and not mere followers. The voice of the laity must be heard louder and clearer. The marginalized and the poor too have a voice to be recognized in the Church.

2. If we are a truly participatory church, "where the gifts that the Spirit gives to all.. are recognized and activated" (FABC, Bandung), there must be communication that encourages coresponsibility at all levels both vertically and horizontally. We have to find and create a "mechanism" to effectively bring about this communication. Are we really seen as people of God, praying people, Spirit-filled, dynamic, evangelizing and mission-oriented? Do we share God's love and concern with the people we work with?

3. If we are a witnessing and dialoguing church, our communication must be concerned with the world, where people live in their joys and hopes. their fears and anxieties, reaching "out to people of others faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all" (FABC, Bandung). Therefore, our communication:

- Has to reflect the preferential option for the poor and oppressed;
- Should build on historical moments and events, e.g., the death of Mother Teresa, celebrations and anniversaries of communities and people;
- Must make an impact at the right moment: are we involved in, e.g., national issues;
- Has to be dialogical:

- Within the church concrete efforts must be made to eliminate communication gaps and to "effectively establish relationships ...through communication which is transparent, dialogic, and marked with candor" (BISCOM I. Orientation #4). Equality and coresponsibility, as well as interpersonal communication, are to be developed.
- Communicating with other religions and peoples of good will in mutual trust, openness and transparency, the church needs to look beyond institutional boundaries, moving into the unknown, led by the Spirit within.

Networking and cooperation with other religions should be promoted. Concrete plans should be worked out in the context of common issues which affect all. This "requires reciprocal trust and understanding among Catholics, other Christians, and members of other religions, based on mutual respect, and with a view of doing things together in communication" (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, "Criteria for Ecumenical and Interreligious Cooperation," 1989, No.19). "Interfaith dialogue leading to understanding and cooperation should be an aspect of all our communication programs and activities. It is imperative to make it clear to our brothers and sisters of other faiths that we are not in any way aligned with destructive forces in the "new media culture. Failure to do so will alienate them further from us" (Bishops' Meet '96, Tagaytay). In most countries of Asia, where Christianity is a minority, we need to let other religions feel that we respect them and they can trust us. We celebrate, e.g., national and religious festivals, with all. God loves everybody.

4. If we are a prophetic church we should be a "leaven of transformation in this world and serve as a prophetic sign to point beyond this world" (FABC, Bandung). Therefore, our church communication must challenge, announce and denounce... In what way are we crying out like the prophets with conviction and in a convincing manner? Where is our witness of life 'which communicates first?' " (BM '96). Are we seen as standing with people crying out for justice, harmony, equality, ecology? We should not only cry over unsolvable problems of our countries but also highlight the fact that our continent is rich in cultures, traditions, values and religions. Filled with such riches, the church should think of herself as a giving and not only a receiving community. She should perceive this as a new call to integrate Gospel values into the "new culture created by media" (BM '96). It is also time to think about helping each other within the continent of Asia, instead of always looking outside for financial help.

The fact that many of our young people are seeking peace and are looking for the beyond in other religions should challenge us to see more the signs of the times and to try to fill the void in their hearts, in collaboration

with all people of good will.

5. The communication challenges of "A New Way of Being Church in Asia" should lead us to concrete steps for action, which means beside others:

a. To share the communication consequences of being a new church in Asia with our bishops and church leaders, with seminarians under training and their professors, with lay people, especially those involved in the apostolate. This should be part of every pastoral planning (BM '96, No.1). A visible close cooperation among the bishops' conferences and dioceses will be a good and tangible example of a communion of communities.

b. To be aware of the fact that secular media in our countries are not always people-oriented, liberating and contributing to a healthy development. This calls on the church to make a serious move towards an alternative, culture-based, indigenous and people-oriented communication. Interpersonal and group media/communication needs to be given priority, especially in formation and education. Instead of complaining about cultural invasion and mental colonization, the church must first take initiatives to encourage cultural communication within her own institutions.

c. To take initiatives in highlighting success stories of small people doing extraordinary things within and outside the church.

d. To give primary importance to media education, redefining it as a new form of evangelization for the emerging media situation in our continent. In many places, it still has to be "made mandatory at all levels, especially in seminaries and the training of trainers must be continued" (BM '96, No. 5).

e. To see the common celebration of World Communication Day as an important way to contribute to a new way of being church in Asia (BM '96, No. 8).

f. To promote deeper studies and research into the communication needs and consequences for a new way of being church in Asia.

g. To share information about church events and communication developments in the different countries also through modern technical means, e.g., e-mail.

h. We must "see public relations as an important concern and act accordingly" (BM '96, No. 4; BISCOP 1).

i. To make useful productions promoting "a new way of being church in Asia" available, including those of the secular media and of other Christian bodies (BM '96, No. 3).

j. To inform about and possibly share training facilities and personnel with the other bishops' conferences.

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*"Communication Challenges in Asia III"
FABC-OSC Bishops' meet '98
Taoyuan, Taiwan
November 23-28, 1998*

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS – THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR ASIA: SOCIAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

The "Synod of Bishop--Special Assembly for Asia," from April 19 to May 14, 1998, in Rome, was a special hour of grace for the church in Asia. It made us aware again of special concerns and obligations, like interreligious dialogue, the church as a communion of communities, inculturation, spirituality, a new way of being church, human promotion...

The Synod Fathers said in their final message that "the media is rightly called the modern *Areopagus*, and it is here, as in other fields, that the church can play a prophetic role and, wherever necessary, become the voice of the voiceless."

This reflects the concerns of Pope John Paul II in his *Redemptoris Missio*, where he writes:

Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here. Since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications (RM, No. 37c).

It is in this spirit, and based on the Final Considerations of the FABC-

OSC Bishops' Meet '96 and '97 that we, the participants, make the following recommendations:

1. Spirituality of Communication

With the many challenges being faced today, we felt that the spirituality of those involved in social communication must be reemphasized. Such a spirituality "flows out of the communication of the Holy Trinity" (Bishops' Meet '96).

Jesus Christ, as the "perfect communicator" (*Communio et Progressio*, No. 11), is the model for all Christian communication.

Christian communicators need to be men and women of Spirit-filled prayer, entering ever more deeply into communion with God in order to grow in their ability to foster communion among their fellow human beings. They must be schooled in hope by the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of the new evangelization (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, No. 45) (John Paul II, World Communication Day '98).

Any spirituality of communication is first and foremost expressed through the witness of life (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 41), which means for the communicator in Asia:

- a) to be a person of contemplation and prayer, similar to the missionary whom Pope John Paul II describes as a "contemplative in action" (RM, 91);
- b) the ability to build communities through love, sharing, communion, relationship and equality;
- c) the content of one's communication should reflect one's spirituality rooted in the Incarnation — communicators need to be people-oriented;
- d) the proclamation of Kingdom values amidst a society of violence, corruption and evil forces.

2. Spiritual Formation

In their enthusiasm to be professional in their work, it has been observed that the sense of spirituality has declined among Church communicators. Hence, well-defined areas of formation are recommended for:

- a. Catholic communicators working in Church media;
- b. Catholic communicators in secular media;
- c. Media professionals in general.

3. Dialogue with Cultures and Religions

In realizing the "New Way of Being Church in Asia" (cf. Bishops' Meet '97), it was emphasized also at the Asian Synod ("... that they may have life and have it abundantly," Jn 10:10), that greater collaboration and assistance have to be initiated among all Christians, and with peoples of other religions and cultures.

We recommend the implementation of suitable programs in media education of traditional and indigenous media, in order to help people to be more responsible, that is, to be appreciative, critical and discriminating users of the means of social communication within their own culture.

4. Public Relations Office/Officer

In the context of the current "mediated" society, we recommend that every bishops' conference and diocese appoint as part of a "pastoral plan" a public relations officer, in fulfillment of the provisions of the pastoral instructions of *Communio et Progressio* (1971, Nos. 174-176) and *Aetatis Novae* (1992, No. 31). (Cf. also BISCOM I, "Orientations and Recommendations.")

The officer's key role is to make the presence of the church felt more in society. "All these officials, and indeed all those who are identified with the Church in the mind of the public, should...consider the sort of audience they are, at various times, addressing, and are establishing a relationship that is based on mutual trust and understanding. This can only be maintained as long as people have a genuine regard and consideration for one another and a scrupulous respect for the truth..."(CP, No. 174).

5. Pastoral Care of Catholics in Secular Media

In the pastoral care of Catholics in the secular media, we recommend that:

- a) frequent contacts with them should be initiated by the respective social communications office of the diocese;
- b) bishops should meet Catholic, and also Christian and non-Christian, professionals as frequently as possible;
- c) formation programs for them should include media ethics and the pastoral priorities of the local Church;
- d) they be given a prominent role in the celebration of World Communication Day.

6. Concern for Professionals in Communication

Pastors should accept and recognize professionals in communication and develop and promote dialogue and collaboration with them (cf. CP, No. 175; BISCOM I, "Orientations and Recommendations").

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The following is the final statement of the first Bishops' Institute for Social Communication (BISCOM I) on "Church and Public Relations," and of its first follow-up, BISCOM I.1. "Bishops' Institutes," in FABC parlance, are training seminars for bishops on topics relevant to Church ministries.

**BISHOPS' INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION
(BISCOM I) ON 'CHURCH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
SINGAPORE
SEPTEMBER 1-5, 1997**

We, 40 participants from eleven Asian countries, composed of bishops and communication delegates from our respective bishops' conferences, in the first Bishops' Institute for Social Communication (BISCOM) on "Church and Public Relations," came to the following consensus.

ORIENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The "New Way of being Church in Asia," promulgated by the fifth FABC Plenary Assembly in Bandung (1990), and the proposal of the FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '96 in Tagaytay City, to "see public relations as an important concern, and to act accordingly" (4.1), made us reflect more deeply on this obligation.

All public relations and proclamations of the church must keep in mind that she "by her essence is communication, which flows out of the communication of the Trinity. She is founded to continue the communication of Jesus Christ in word and deed" (FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '96). Like any other communication, public relations is also basically a "giving of self in love" (*Communio et Progressio*, No. 11).

The pastoral instructions *Communio et Progressio* and *Aetatis Novae*, already urged that the church, "should take into account the principles of public relations" (*cp*, No. 174, cf. also AN, No. 31).

Orientations

1. Public relations should be seen not only from a business point of view but rather as a "witness of Christians and Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, a proclamation through Christlike deeds...above all, to live like him in the midst of our neighbors of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace" (FABC, Bandung, 4.1). Before all techniques, the witness of life stays central.

2. There is an expanded awareness of public relations and its implications for the church as a relationship of trust and confidence between different publics within and outside the church.

3. For building relationships with various "publics," both internal and external, the church needs first to clarify her vision, mission and values, based on the Kingdom, and to ask in every situation and context: Why does the church exist? What does the church stand for? Where are we going?

4. For building a coherent identity it is necessary to effectively establish relationships within the church through communication which is transparent, dialogic, and marked by candor.

5. For her internal and external communication the church needs to move beyond teaching and preaching to being a dialogic and communitarian church. The FABC's concerns for dialogue with the poor, cultures and people of other religions should be a guiding principle.

6. Building relations with secular media needs not only regular information, but especially friendly relations consistently developed over a period of time.

7. Because of the uneven development in communications technology in the various parts of Asia, which hinders the proper development of public relations within and outside the church, there should be greater sharing of resources between different bishops' conferences and local churches in special circumstances or living in isolation.

8. In a continent where Christians are a small minority, any public relations of the church should consider the need for ecumenical collaboration as essential.

9. To be prepared for any possible crisis, bishops' conferences should have a permanent crisis management team, composed of professionals from church and relevant secular fields.

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*BISCOM I.1 on "Church and Public Relations"
Training Seminar for Bishops' Conferences Personnel
Manila, Philippines, March 10-20, 1999*

RECOMMENDATIONS ON PLANNING AND ORGANIZING A PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS/RELATIONS OFFICE FOR BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

Based on the teachings and considerations of the pastoral instructions *Communio et Progressio* (Nos. 174-176), *Aetatis Novae* (No. 31), and the *Orientations and Recommendations* of the Bishops' Institute for Social Communication on "Church and Public Relations" (BISCOM I, September 1-5, 1997), we bishops, priests, religious and lay persons involved with the

operations of Catholic bishops' conferences gathered, March 10-20, 1999, for a training seminar on "Church and Public Relations," in Manila.

The Office of Social Communication of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC-OSC) organized the seminar. We were 21 participants, representing 12 countries: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. The seminar was organized to train the participants about public relations. Experts and resource persons from different countries conducted sessions on: public relations, relations between church and media, crisis management, and concrete planning for a public communication/relations office.

We took part in various workshops as well as exercises in news reporting, feature writing, conducting interviews, managing a crisis, and the dynamics of a public communication/relations office. Having realized the value of what we have learned, we propose similar activities for those countries, which were not represented in this 10-day training seminar.

As a result of these days we have come up with practical applications of what we have learned, and recommend the following design for a public communication/relations office:

Objectives

1. To build good relations with external audiences, based on good communication and unity within the church herself;
2. To provide information that is authentic, relevant and timely;
3. To respond to the issues of the times, faithfully presenting the mind of the church in order to improve mutual understanding (cf. *Communio et Progressio*, Nos. 174-175).

Main Task

To communicate the vision and mission of the church in understandable language, and to build good relations, especially with the general public. The office will work as a service unit of the bishops' conference, helping other service units/commissions in dealing with external audiences. It will make sure that all communication with different audiences will be congruent with the chosen identity of the Church in that particular country or region.*

* This presupposes that the church defines what she stands for (core values), which, beside others, are reflected in her apostolates and ways of proceeding in a particular situation. The communications/PR personnel should help to discern a congruent identity, and thus bring about a unity of mind and heart within the church. Authentic relations with outside audiences must be based on such internal unity.

Audiences

1. Media
2. Government
3. NGO's
4. Internet users

Organizational Structure

A public communication/relations officer, duly appointed by the bishops' conference, shall direct the activities of the office.

Adequate human resources must secure the functions of a public communication/relations office including:

1. Information assessment and dissemination
2. Research and documentation

The activities shall be supported by a crisis management team, writers' pool and legal advice.

Crisis management teams shall be convoked in the event of a crisis, comprising a team leader, relevant experts and a spokesperson. Dealing with crisis situations should be set up in a crisis management plan, which should be regularly evaluated.

The individuals chosen to assume these posts should be committed persons. They should be authentic, knowledgeable, truthful and sincere. They should work in harmony with other responsible persons of the bishops' conference, as well as with people outside the church.

Activities

1. Dissemination of information through bulletins, timely press conferences and press releases
2. Responses to the press which should be not only critical but also positive
3. Collection and publication of stories about the activities and life of the church
4. Monitoring media's coverage of the church
5. Networking with diocesan public communication/relations offices
6. Design and undertaking research programs
7. Training of public communication/relations personnel
8. Giving feedback to internal church audiences for possible revisions and corrections.

Hardware

Appropriate technical equipment should be provided for the different activities.

Finances

Sufficient financial support should be provided for the establishment and/or operations of the office.

Location

The most appropriate location is the general secretariat of the bishops' conference or in the capital city.

Challenge

Possible obstacles, e.g., financial constraints and non-availability of suitable persons, should be overcome by those responsible within the church through their mutual concern for a good public image of the church and her members.

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The following is the final statement of a Roundtable discussion of invited academicians specializing in communication research. The aim of this Roundtable is to promote research on "Church/Religion and Social Communication."

ROUNDTABLE: CHURCH/RELIGION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH IN ASIA

BANGKOK, THAILAND

APRIL 19-23, 1999

*A Proposal of an Agenda for
Church/Religion and
Social Communication Research
In Asia*

Adopted at the Roundtable on Church/Religion and Social Communication Research in Asia, held at Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand, April, 19-23, 1999. The Roundtable was sponsored by St. John's University and Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand, in cooperation with the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC), Communicatio Socialis Scientific Association, Germany, and the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), England.

RATIONALE

As an institution or as a community of people in worship of God, the church needs effective communication. To paraphrase St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, the church needs to communicate encouragement and hope (Eph 4:29-32).

As the world becomes a global village and enters the Information Age, the church needs to keep in step with the changing times, and keep itself abreast with new ways and novel technologies of communicating, especially with and of youth. It needs research to be able to do this.

As early as 1961, 25 years after the publication of *Vigilanti Cura*, Pope John XXIII in a letter to the president at that time of the Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio and Television at the Vatican, spoke of the need for research "into subjects that have to do with the study of the human mind, the art of teaching, criticisms and the proper understanding of beauty, insofar as these things apply to the questions raised by the film art." At that time, film was the new mass medium. Today, we have global television, computers, satellite, internet, and newer information technologies.

There is a "new culture" created by modern communications (to quote Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*) which "originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and new psychology" (RM, No. 37c).

The church therefore urgently needs to do communication research for the following reasons:

- To help the church do a better job at communication, within the institution, with its community of believers, with people of other faiths, and with the world at large.
- To provide the church with a sound basis for dealing with matters relating to church and society.
- To help the church reassess its role and mission in the changing communication environment.
- To help the church discover new expressions of faith.
- To help the church promote understanding and peace among various cultural groups and religions in society.
- To help the church improve the human condition, by promoting social justice, equality and human rights.

PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS

A. Communication within the Church

Levels of Research

1. Local
2. National
3. Continental

Research Areas

1. Communication patterns within the church at various levels
2. Structure and flow of communication in the church: strengths and weaknesses
3. Communication styles and leadership patterns in the church
4. Nature and effectiveness of communication practised by the church
5. Church efforts in creating awareness of and implementing church documents and recommendations
6. Church formation, including ongoing communication training for church personnel and laity

B. Church, Communications and Society

Levels of research

1. Local
2. National
3. Continental

Research Areas

1. Communication roles of the church in society
2. New approaches to media education
3. Church's response to and responsibility towards local, national and regional issues
4. People's perceptions and expectations of the church, especially those of the youth
5. Role, function, levels of participation and problems of laity in church and society
6. Communication strategies and influence of charismatic groups and other religious movements
7. Social communication potential of communities of love in promoting peace and harmony in society
8. Different modes/effective ways of communicating Christian ethics and values
9. Impact and influence of music video channels and other new communication/information technologies on value systems and life styles of the youth and family

C. Religion, Culture and Communication

Levels of Research

1. Local
2. National
3. Continental

Research Areas

1. Role of social communication in promoting interreligious dialogue
2. Role and use of media in promoting religious understanding
3. Relationship/influence between religion and communication (interpersonal, folk and traditional, mediated)
4. Role of religion and religious expressions in culture and communication

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Qualitative and quantitative methods, or combination of both
2. Participatory action research
3. Exploratory research
4. Experimental research

STRATEGIES FOR RESEARCH

1. Submission of research agenda to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).
2. Documentation of basic research done on church/religion and social communication in Asia (databases, directories, organizations, groups, and individuals)
3. Dissemination of information about the need for research and sharing of research results
 - a. Circulate results of Roundtable discussion through church media outlets, secular press, FABC conferences, Christian universities and institutions, ecumenical institutions involved in research, NGOs and professional research organizations, communication organizations, seminaries, etc.
 - b. Convene/utilize special meetings of church personnel to share research findings
 - c. Include communication and research elements in church programs
 - d. Show how research will be beneficial to church and society
4. Networking with schools of communication, Christian universities, religious institutions, research institutions, and other groups involved in social communication
5. Involvement and training of church personnel and laity in the planning and implementation of research

6. Identifying professional groups that will help: (a) to develop concrete research proposals; and (b) to secure funds/grants for conducting research

IMPLEMENTATION

Establishment of an Asian Research Center (ARC) for Religion and Social Communication, based at St. John's University, Bangkok, Thailand, in cooperation with FABC-OSC.

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The following is a compilation of texts on social communication as discussed/mentioned in documents published by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences from 1974 to 1997.

Social Communication in FABC Documents

AN OVERVIEW

At the foundation of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), 1970, in Manila, Radio Veritas Asia was already proposed as a common project for the Federation. A small committee studied the possibilities, and at the first Plenary Assembly in Taipei, in 1974, FABC took responsibility for this continental short-wave radio station for Asia which had started operations in 1969. This led to the creation of a permanent commission for social communication, which eventually developed into the FABC Office of Social Communication.

On many occasions FABC underlined the importance of social communication for the church in Asia. The following are texts on social communication or mass media which are found in the final documents or recommendation of FABC documents at two other levels besides the meetings organized by OSC:

- The FABC plenary assemblies which are the highest body of the Federation.
- Bishops' institutes and other gatherings, organized by one or more of the specialized FABC offices regarding the special concerns of these offices.

1. PLENARY ASSEMBLY STATEMENTS

The First Plenary Assembly in Taipei, 1974, discussed the general

theme of "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia." Under "Missionary Formation" it is stated that:

For to preach the Gospel is first and foremost to communicate the experience of the Risen Christ. "What we have heard, what we have seen, what our hands have touched..." (1 Jn 1:1). It is the encounter with the Lord in our hearts, in the midst of his community, an encounter in faith and in the Spirit, which will in turn awaken faith in those to whom we announce his Word. And this encounter, we know, is his gift (No. 30).

This leads from mission formation to the use of mass media as other means for proclaiming the Gospel:

No one today needs to be told of the influence and importance of the media of social communication for effectively proclaiming God's Word to our peoples. We therefore wish to make it our urgent collegial concern as Asian bishops to place them more fully at the service of the evangelization, education and development of our peoples. (no. 34).

These considerations lead to the following recommendations of the Taipei Assembly:

- (10) a. That mass communications be given a higher priority than before by the various episcopates, in the allocation of material and human resources, considering its vital importance as an instrument for evangelization.
- b. That Catholic institutions offering courses in mass communications be urged to give their Catholic students and trainees adequate theological formation to go with the techniques of mass media, and, conversely —
- c. That basic training in the principles and methods of mass communications be part of seminary studies, in preparation for their ministry in a world so profoundly influenced by communication in its myriad modern forms.

The Second Plenary Assembly in Calcutta, India 1978, on "Prayer - - the Life of the Church in Asia," refers to Taipei in their recommendations:

7. In order to comply with Recommendation No. 10 (a) of the First Plenary Assembly on mass communications, the Office of Social Communications should relate its activities to the promotion of prayer and the life of the Spirit for a more effective evangelization in Asia

The Third Plenary Assembly in Sampran, Thailand, 1982, on "The

Church—A Community of Faith in Asia," lists in the "Syllabus of Concerns" of the final statement the following considerations:

VII. Social Communications in Asia

- That the FABC support fully and facilitate, where necessary, the various media efforts which evolve from and are supportive of local communities;
- That all media work harmoniously project a more realistic view of the Church as a community of faith deeply rooted in Asia and appreciating all that is good in the life and cultures of the peoples;
- That Catholic mass media, by becoming progressively professional, increase their credibility, so that they can the better project the true image of the Christian community, thus becoming an efficient instrument in dialogue as well as in the building up of the same Christian community.

The Fourth FABC Plenary Assembly in Tokyo 1986 on "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia" gave in their final statement a special consideration on:

3.6 The Laity and Mass Media

3.6.1 This is the hour when the laity of Asia are called to evangelize their milieu through those most powerful instruments of mass media which modern technology has created. Pope Paul VI has drawn attention to "the growing role being assumed by the media and their influence in the transformation of mentalities and of society itself" (*Octogesimo Adveniens*, no.20).

3.6.2 Finance and the mass media determine to a very large extent the destinies of nations; in fact, finance uses the media to this end. Those in power are well aware of the potentialities of the mass media, which they manipulate to mold public opinion and to consolidate and perpetuate their positions. One test of the freedom prevalent in any society today is the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the mass media.

3.6.3 Today, the mass media in Asia are predominantly controlled by authoritarian governments or by a handful of economically and politically powerful persons, while the vast majority of the Asian people are passive recipients. It has been noted that the impact of church-supported media on the masses of Asia is minimal. While the consumer society exploits mass media to further its materialistic ends, the church in Asia still lags behind in taking full

advantage of these most powerful means of proclaiming the liberating word of God to the Asian peoples. Many of us are still not sufficiently acquainted with the idiom and impact of the media.

- 3.6.4 Still, we happily note the advances of media directly under the care of the church or influenced by the church through the laity. The establishment of mass media centers in various parts of Asia, the efforts to educate church leadership regarding the complexities and power of media, the training of personnel for this specific apostolate, have made great strides. Many of the laity in the secular media are faithful to Gospel values and are witnesses to these values — not only as individual Christians, but also in their professional lives where they exercise a positive influence on their peers and the recipients of their work. An admirable example of collaboration of the people of God — with the laity carrying most of the burden — is the crucial role that Radio Veritas has played in the struggle for truth, justice and freedom.
- 3.6.5 The power of the media within the plurality of cultures is to be recognized and appreciated. Within such a situation the Asian church sees its task, first of infusing Gospel values, then of drawing out more explicitly "the seeds of the kingdom" found in diverse cultures and religions. Through the mass media, it thus may bring these values to bear upon all efforts at collaboration, unity and fellowship among various peoples in view of the common good.
- 3.6.6 This vision will require of the people of God, and especially of its leadership, a supportive stance toward the systematic formation and training of the laity to assume even greater responsibilities in the media. This is a pastoral priority in the light of our Asian situation, where the people of God must reach out to millions struggling for social transformation, a struggle that requires an inter-faith collaboration.

The Fifth Plenary Assembly in Bandung 1990, reflected on "Journeying together toward the Third Millennium." The final statement of the assembly gives under "Living in the Spirit: Pastoral Responses" (No.7), with the "Specific Pastoral Directions" for "proclaiming the faith," the following points referring to communication media:

- 7.3.1.4 That effective measures be taken by episcopal conferences to develop and communicate a process of regular faith-discernment that everyone could easily use and share in.

7.3.1.5 That the content and programming of Catholic media implement a "ministry of compassion" for the sick and poor of Asia, thus making itself a more effective instrument of evangelization.

It was in the Bandung FABC Assembly that the presidents of the FABC bishops conferences signed an FABC covenant for Radio Veritas Asia, which reads:

We, the member conferences of FABC, gathered at the 5th Plenary Assembly in Bandung, Indonesia, express our deep conviction of the absolute necessity of Radio Veritas Asia in the task of evangelization.

We believe that for RVA to be truly a common FABC endeavor, all member conferences must cooperate in providing RVA with a common direction, assist in planning its programs and policies, and provide the necessary support for RVA to achieve its objectives.

We reiterate our support for the objectives that were set for Radio Veritas:

1. To make present to all Asians the Gospel of Christ in such a way that it can have a real impact on their lives and all their activities.
2. To support the living faith of Christians and help them to live according to the teachings of Christ; especially in countries where the Good News cannot be proclaimed by other means.
3. To help answer the needs of the people and work towards their material, cultural and spiritual development.
4. To strengthen the bonds between people through education, information and entertainment services.
5. To maintain close relationship with the production centers.

To attain the above objectives, we hereby acknowledge that RVA is an FABC project and collegially assume responsibility to support Radio Veritas. We agree to the following recommendations to our respective conferences.

FABC Support

1. That Bishops' Conferences' councils which have production centers in the target areas finance themselves progressively, taking 25 percent of the financial burden from 1991, so that by 1994 they will have shouldered all expenses incurred in their country in relation to the programs aired by RVA.
2. That bishops' conferences, which are able, support the profession-

- als who are working for their own language programs at RVA.
3. Besides the contribution of \$1,000 which is now deducted from the annual subsidy (of the Propagation of the Faith), we suggest that the dioceses in the non-target areas contribute a further amount to be determined by each individual diocese. This proposal is made because the conferences in the target areas are already financing their own production.
 4. That the major superiors of the religious congregation working in Asia be approached by the central committee for an annual generous subsidy and be invited to support RVA with personnel.
 5. That FABC-OSC propose to the central committee that they set up a permanent finance committee, with lay collaboration, to implement these recommendations and take steps to establish a permanent reserve fund.
 6. That FABC-OSC, in communication with the representatives of the funding agencies, exercise the responsibility to strictly oversee: (a) programs and broadcasting priorities; (b) budget and accounts of administration of RVA.

External Support

1. That FABC request a yearly subsidy of \$1.5 million from the Propagation of the Faith.
2. We request the Bishops' Conference of Japan and any other members conferences, which may in future renounce their annual subsidy from the Propagation of the Faith, to do so in favor of RVA.
3. That FABC request the German Bishops' Conference to continue their support for RVA at the current level for some more years to enable FABC to work towards self-sufficiency.

We believe that for member conferences to identify more closely with RVA, bishops of the areas covered must speak regularly through RVA to their people. They should also monitor the quality of the programs as well as the doctrinal content.

The various Federation offices have to use RVA to communicate their responses to emerging challenges in Asia. RVA must itself become the voice of FABC, communicating its vision and thrust for the evangelization of Asia.

That in future, RVA be invited to send trained reporters to cover important meetings of the FABC and the various activities of the offices.

This covenant is signed by the presidents of the member conferences of FABC on behalf of their bishop-members on this 21st day of July, in the year of our Lord 1990.

Joseph Cardinal Cordero (Pakistan)	Angelo N.S. Kim (Korea)
Paul Shan, SJ (China)	Henry D'Souza (FABC Sec. General)
George Phimphisan, CSsR (Thailand)	Alphonse Matthias (India)
Leonardo Legaspi, OP, (Philippines)	Peter Shirayanagi (Japan)
Michael Rozario (Bangladesh)	M. Marcus Fernando (Sri Lanka)
Gregory Yong (Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei)	

The Sixth Plenary Assembly in Manila 1995, under the theme of "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life," has no special section on social communication in its final statement but refers in a sentence to the positive role of the mass media:

We did not miss the value of the discovery of mass media for the promotion of values and support of peoples' movements and rights (No.8).

A regional South Asia Bishops' Meeting, Kathmandu, Nepal, 1996, discussed the "Christian response to the phenomenon of violence in South Asia." In their final statement they say:

8. Media. Many people, irrespective of their religious, political and social affiliations, have rightly shown concern at the incalculable harm that is being done by some media presentations. Violence, sex, and a consumerist mentality are being foisted among the young and the old by television, films and the print media. Positive steps should be taken to stem this evil tide.

At the same time, it has to be admitted that a media-conscious society is here to stay. The enormous potential of the media for good has also to be recognized and rigorously pursued. We note with gratitude the presence of a large number of persons of good will in the secular media industry, and we acknowledge their good efforts to produce wholesome programs with human values, which could counteract the culture of violence.

Media education at the national, diocesan and parish levels should be fostered. The vast potential of the pastoral media should be well utilized. Clergy, religious and lay leaders should be given suitable training in the media. The right use of the media should be a regular feature in implementing the pastoral programs of the diocese.

Various organizations and even governments are unquestionably influenced by the world opinion. The international community can be an effective deterrent against dictators and oppressors. For this, the media should be used to highlight injustices, and of world opinion should be harnessed to restrain unjust regimes. Church-related media structures are encouraged to work with the secular media to defend human rights and oppose violence and injustice.

2. OTHER FABC RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATEMENTS

In other conferences, organized by the several FABC offices, many references can be found on the means of social communication. The following are some:

The Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church, 1977, in Hong Kong, lists under the ministries of lay people:

(No.69) xii. Ministry of Communication — Mass Media — Group Media

The importance and impact of the communication media — TV, cinema, radio, press — urge us to have specially qualified people to educate groups and communities to make better use of these media, to influence these media with human and Christian principles and to fight against the possible evils inherent in them.

Several Bishops' Institutes for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA) refer to the means of social communication:

BIRA I, Samphan, Thailand, 1979, the recommendations of the Assembly contain also the following:

— Use the mass media for promoting dialogue and giving information about efforts being made in other countries.

BIRA IV/6, Singapore, 1987, on the theology of dialogue, states under the pastoral recommendations:

10. The mass media should be used to promote interreligious understanding and harmony.

BIRA V/3, New Delhi, 1995, under the theme "Working for Harmony in the Contemporary World, Hindu-Christian Dialogue," under the "Steps toward working for a culture of harmony":

8.7 Make effective and critical use of the media (TV, radio, newspapers, journals, books, cinema, etc.) to promote interreligious understanding and defend values of family integrity and civic responsibility, justice and harmony.

BIRA V/5, Bali, Indonesia, 1996, evaluated the foregoing BIRA V encounters with different religions and comes to the following proposal:

13. Multiplying the effects of seminars should involve a better use of communications media, such as press releases and press conferences, local newspapers, jointly produced interreligious radio and television programs and videos. A better follow-up could be achieved through the establishment of interreligious committees, both Asia-wide and in each nation, through circular letters or a newsletter, and through the production of materials on interreligious dialogue for schoolchildren. It was noted that follow-up relies on well functioning structures of dialogue in order to succeed. Where these structure are in place, follow-up occurs; where they do not exist, follow-up is rare...

The Bishops' Institutes for Social Action (BISA) give the following considerations for social communication in Social Action:

BISA I, Novaliches, Philippines 1974, lists among the areas of concern:

20. Communication Media.

We wish to develop that mass media over which we have some responsibility or influence in the direction of providing local communities, especially in the rural areas, with information and ideas that will help farmers and workers to become aware of their rights and responsibilities, and enable them to take effective measures for improving their human condition.

BISA IV, Antipolo, Philippines, 1978, includes among its final reflections, resolutions on episcopal commissions, education-formation-training and:

III. Communication and Documentation

1. That we utilize all existing media of information which are open to the church, especially the press and radio, to disseminate the experiences, insights and recommendations of this institute.
2. That bishops' conferences maintain a regular exchange of information and/or pastoral statements concerning justice, peace and human development.
3. That delegates to this institute report to their respective conferences on the merits of the assembly, and encourage the participation of other bishops in similar encounters.
4. That communications on matters of social concern be maintained with the Holy See, especially through the Justice and Peace commissions and with international non-governmental organizations

BISA VI, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1983, refers in the final reflections to mass media in the following way:

15. The church has tried to use mass media to emphasize essential values, such as love, peace and justice. Its untiring efforts to form the mentality of people in these values is a crucial antidote against moral imperialism.

The Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate (BIMA), Suwon, South Korea, 1988, about "Evangelization in Asia Today" along with its resolutions about the means for evangelization, also states:

4. Strive for a deeper understanding of modern means of communication as constituent elements of modern culture, to seize all opportunities to use mass and group media for evangelization and learn how to do so effectively, and in particular to minister to and foster Christian values among men and women working in the media industry.

The Fourth Bishops' Institute for the Lay Apostolate (BILA IV), Hua Hin, Thailand, 1988, lists under "V. Common Priorities":

8. We affirmed the need for better utilization of mass media for conscientization and animation of peoples.

The First Asian Laity Meeting, Suwon, South Korea, 1994, on the "Commitment of the Laity in the Church's Mission, with special reference to implementing the social teachings," organized by the FABC Office of Laity, appeals that:

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

The First South Asian Regional Laity Meeting, Sampran, Thailand, 1996, recommends as a follow-up to the 1994 meeting:

There is a need to harness and maximize the use of media as a tool for evangelization and popularization of the Church's social teachings

A Consultation on Women, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, 1993, describes the realities of women:

In mass media: mass media and communication project the stereotyped images of men and women. In the advertisement world, bodies and sexuality are used to sell products and to promote tourism.

The consultation recommends for the FABC Office of Social Communication (OSC):

B.2. That the Office of Social Communications:

- develop communication/dialogue/talking and listening at all levels about women's issues;
- evaluate/analyze the abuse of women in the mass media and contribute to awareness raising.

The Pan-Asian Conference on Catechesis, Singapore, 1995, on "A Renewed Catechesis for Asia towards the Year 2000 and Beyond," describes under the contextual Asian realities for catechesis as "phenomena on the Asian horizon which are disturbing":

(2) media invasion of our countries and homes propagates this false ideology (import of non-Asian values);

For national catechetical directories in the pedagogy of catechesis: Effective use should be made of traditional, as well as modern, means of social communication.

An Asian Consultation on Tourism, Pattaya, Thailand 1995, discussed "the promotion of humane tourism," and recommends as a response of the church, beside others:

7.1 Information and Education

- to develop and distribute informative materials, such as videotapes and pamphlets, in major languages containing pertinent information about good tourism and make it available in communities
- to keep up with modern trends and utilize popular media, e.g., television and Internet, to get the message about tourism across to a wider audience.

A First Program of Faith Encounters in Social Action (FEISA), Pattaya, Thailand, 1994, discussed contemplation and compassion as an integral spirituality for faith encounters in Asia, and recommended for a "Plan of Action," beside others:

- 8.3 Individually, we shall communicate our experiences with those we live and work with, as we return to our homes and countries.
- 8.8 We urge a more effective use and revitalization of the structures we already have (e.g., FABC, national episcopal conferences, national conferences of major religious superiors, commissions, committees, offices). We seek to share and disseminate information and to communicate to the people of God in our schools, parishes and communities the results of the processes undertaken and decisions made. This is especially necessary when decisions affect their lives and growth as believers in Jesus and as members of the church.
- 8.9 For this, we see the need to make more effective use of the technology available in our times, including Radio Veritas, pub-

lication centers and other mass media to collaborate with the international Catholic organizations of mass media.

A meeting on "Harmony among Believers of Living Faiths: Christians and Muslims in South Asia," of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Vatican was organized in cooperation with the FABC, 1994, in Thailand. In identifying the problems the meeting says:

- 8.b. The mass media, which has tremendous potential for building understanding and respect among religious believers, has sometimes promoted models of an alien lifestyle and perpetuated suspicions and prejudices.

A Theological Consultation, Hua Hin, Thailand, 1991, was organized by the FABC Office of Evangelization on "Church Issues in Asia in the Context of Evangelization, Dialogue and Proclamation." Under the "dialogue with cultures and religions" also, the following is cited:

22. Interreligious dialogue is also first of all a matter of human communication. Therefore, in the first place it is a dialogue with the people with whom we live. Such a dialogue presupposes that we prepare ourselves. Preparation involves religious education with appropriate material at hand. However, the most important factor is not the imparting of accurate information, important as that is, as much as giving encouragement and inspiration.

The FABC International Theological Colloquium, Pattaya, Thailand, 1994, on "Being Church in Asia: Journeying with the Spirit into Fuller Life," describes in part of its final statement the "new phenomena in Asia as challenge and possibility." One of them is:

12. Modernization, Secularization and Media

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

of intimacy are being explored and fostered. The deep religious and community sense that characterized most Asian peoples is, indeed, dissipating.

Pastoral orientations are given as a response of the Church in Asia which also refer to communications:

57. Because the Church is communication (of the Gospel), it must cultivate good relations with the media, understand its process and gain real competence in the discerning use of them.

A document of the FABC Theological Advisory Commission (now: Office of Theological Concerns) on "Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony," 1995, treats various attempts at promoting harmony at chapter two, under "Educational Cultural Effects" (2.3), besides institutions of learning (2.3.1), one reads:

2.3.2 Mass Media and Computer Networks

Traditional religious communities have shaped personal and social ethics for their members. Yet television in the late twentieth century also offers a far reaching and powerful medium through which persons, directly or indirectly, derive information about right and fitting actions. Video-evangelists are quite explicit in advocating and attempting to organize and support a resistance to certain policies. But the medium can be used by so-called liberal or conservative, reactionary or progressive, individuals or groups, to champion their causes.

From one perspective, television appears to be neutral and so can be used for a variety of causes. To some extent this is correct. However, the production and management of television involve such large financial investments that there are many segments of Asian peoples, and indeed of the world population, who do not have the means to enter telecommunications as producers.

For this reason, radio has begun to re-emerge as an important source for communication and social orientation in poorer, less developed countries. The rural and urban poor are making greater use of this and other less expensive and more easily managed media. Simple audiovisual materials, newspapers, and radio systems have been developed through the church, labor and grassroots groups.

For those who can afford them, computers have made information accessible with an ease previously not dreamed, of, e.g., through linkages like the Internet. Computer network-use actually travels on a communication highway at more than the speed of light. This, too,

is a neutral ground. It can be used for many excellent pursuits, but it can also open floodgates for such things as pornography at the click of a button.

The FABC Theological Advisory Commission prepared over a two-year period a document on "The Spirit at Work in Asia Today," which was approved in a meeting in Sampran, Thailand, May, 1997, in which the new "FABC Office for Theological Concerns" also emerged. The "6. Pastoral Recommendations" says:

1. One of the signs of the Spirit at work in the Asian Church is the FABC itself, and its various activities. Much has been accomplished and many excellent documents have been produced by various offices of the FABC, but unfortunately, they are little known, even among Asians.

A) We recommend that the FABC set up a publication office to function as an information pool, and to disseminate the fruits of so much labor. Among other things this office might do are the following:

- 1) Give notification of publications, results of seminars, etc., to news agencies.
- 2) Distribute reviews or short notices of FABC publications among theological and religious journals.
- 3) Arrange for popular presentations of the contents of the FABC documents in diocesan bulletins, weeklies, etc.
- 4) Ensure that the FABC publications are made available to seminaries, Catholic universities and colleges.
- 5) Reset: <http://www.fabc.org.ph>

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Some insights from the many FABC documents may be the following:

- Mass media are part of Asian reality. Their possible negative influence should be seen but also their potentials for evangelization.
- All means of social communication, especially the mass media, must be used in every way possible for evangelization and development.
- It is necessary to educate and introduce people into the proper and critical use of modern means of social communication. Clergy, religious and lay people should be given suitable training in the right use and handling of the media. Training in communication must include a proper theological formation. Specially qualified

people must be available at all levels of the church. Talents should be discovered and promoted.

- Mass media should project the church as a "community of faith deeply rooted in Asia" (Sampran, 1982). Media should serve as a "ministry of compassion" for the sick, poor, promote Gospel values, and support peoples' movements and rights.
- Mutual information at all levels of the church should be facilitated through the different means of social communication available to us.
- Because mass media have a tremendous potential for building understanding and respect among religious believers, they should be used and developed for interreligious dialogue, sharing of experiences and mutual support.
- Because church is communication, we should cultivate good relations with the media. People working in those media should be appreciated and encouraged in their work and their responsibilities.
- Human dignity, especially the dignity of women, must be respected. The media must develop a special sense of this dignity.
- Radio Veritas Asia should be used more effectively as the voice of the church in Asia.
- The Office of Social Communication of the FABC, beside its other obligations, is especially asked to:
 - relate its activities to the promotion of prayer and life of the Spirit;
 - be concerned for and evaluate women issues in media.

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V. COMMUNICATION FORMATION IN ASIA*

BY

FRANZ-JOSEF EILERS, SVD

There is a difference between formation and training. Formation aims at a deeper, more holistic level of communication and experience in ourselves, society, culture and church. Training refers to skills development, the "how-to-do" ability which is not totally excluded from formation but not its first aim. Communication-training builds more the specialists, whereas

* Presented at the annual meeting of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Vatican City, March 1-5, 1999.

communication formation is for all, and also the basis for any further specialized training. It is in this distinction and spirit that the last general congregation of the Jesuits (1995), in a first-ever document of such a body on communications' makes a distinction between communication as a "sector" and a "dimension": "Communication in the Society has usually been considered as a sector of apostolic activity, a field for some specialists who often felt isolated or on the margin of the apostolic body. The Society needs to acknowledge that communication is not a domain restricted to a few Jesuit professionals, but a major apostolic dimension for all our apostolates..." The constitutions of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) speak, in this spirit, of communication as "a basic attitude necessary for us Divine Word Missionaries" (Const. 115). Underlying these considerations is the *Communio et Progressio* definition of communication as "giving of self in love" (11).

1. Basic Principles and Convictions in Asia

There is a growing awareness of the need of a deeper understanding of social communication as "dimension" among the bishops and secretaries for social communication in the many Asian bishops' conferences.

In their first meeting, the "FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '96," in Tagaytay City, Philippines, the participants accepted that the church in her essence is communication, "which flows from the communication of the Holy Trinity. She is founded to continue the communication of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Communication ought, therefore, to mark the life of the church in Asia." Because of this, "communication must then be a constitutive dimension of all ministries of the church," which calls for and is the basis of all communication formation. From here, the bishops go on to say in the same statement:

We are not to lose sight, however, of the truth that it is the person and not the technology that is the best means of communication, especially in Asian cultures. It is the witness of "an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy, and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal" (EN, No. 41), which communicates first. For Asia, being a religious continent, our own religiosity and love for humankind is the best means of communication.

In more specific terms the kind of communication formation needed for Asia is expressed in the FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '97, "on the communication dimensions of a new way of being church in Asia." This "new way" sees the church as a communion of communities, a participatory church, a witnessing and dialoguing church, a prophetic church. Communication for such a "new way of being church" in Asia calls for communication formation being:

- community building
- encouraging coresponsibility at all levels
- witnessing and dialoguing
- a prophetic sign

Added to these concerns, are the considerations on the communication consequences of the Synod of Bishops for Asia, where the spirituality of the communicator is underlined and concretized:

Any spirituality of communication is first and foremost expressed through the witness of life (cf. EN, No. 41), which means for the communicator in Asia:

- a) to be a person of contemplation and prayer, similar to the missionary whom Pope John Paul II describes as a "contemplative in action" (RM, No. 91);
- b) the ability to build communities through love, sharing, communion, relationship and equality;
- c) the content of one's communication should reflect one's spirituality rooted in the Incarnation — communicators need to be people oriented;
- d) the proclamation of Kingdom values amidst a society of violence, corruption and evil forces.

These are some of the underlying elements for any communication formation in Asia as seen by the Asian communication bishops. It shows that formation goes beyond skills and technical knowledge. All communication and media activities need such a basic grounding.

Communication formation is directed to different groups and levels of the church and beyond.

2. Formation of Priests and Religious

The call of *Inter Mirifica* (No. 15), *Communio et Progressio* (No. 111), and *Aetatis Novae* (No. 18) for a thorough formation and training of members of the church is only partly fulfilled in Asia. There are some major seminaries with communication courses, but most of them are special courses of one or two week length during the school year or during vacation time. The communications department of the Indian Bishops' Conference holds annual courses jointly for seminarians of different seminaries of certain regions. In Malaysia and Bangladesh such courses are given as special training in individual seminaries, as it is done also in the Philippines. Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay City has since 1985, an "Introduction to Social Communication" as a regular and required subject for every student in first semester of theology. Out of this experience grew a textbook (*Communicating in Community, An Introduction to Social Communication*), which is

published also in Indian and Italian editions and is widely used in different Asian countries. What is lacking are more detailed concrete training courses, possibly even at the graduate level, for those seminarians or priests with special talents and who will work more professionally in the different fields of social communication.

In a continent where Christians are only 2% of the population, it is essential that members of the church have a basic communicative attitude, to be open and available to dialogue with Christians, as well as with members of other religions.

3. Media Education

Another target group for a proper communications formation in media education are students, both in and out of school. To come to a kind of attitude towards communication described by the bishops young people and adults have to be introduced into a critical as well as creative use of the different means of social communication, especially of the mass media. More than half of the population of Asia is below 35 years of age. Many of these young people are progressively influenced and determined in their ways more by the mass media than by family and society. This is especially true in the ever-growing big cities. The church is running schools and universities. Only in some cases do these institutions have special media education programs. But there are growing efforts in countries like Thailand, India, Malaysia. The Catholic "Philippine Association for Media Education" (PAME) celebrated its tenth anniversary in November, 1998. PAME members have been invited to other Asian countries to share their experiences and to help in training. The Catholic Sogang University in Seoul just presented a thorough proposal for a national plan in media education. The Catholic media organizations UNDA/OCIC Asia organized study days in media education.

4. Pastoral Care

Another target group for communication formation are Catholics working in the different secular media of the continent. The church should be more aware of their needs and expectations, and help them to be grounded in a proper Christian spirit and commitment. In the 1998 "FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet" the bishops recommended some concrete steps for Catholics in secular media:

- a) Frequent contacts with them should be initiated by the respective social communication office of the diocese;
- b) Bishops should meet Catholic but also Christian and non-Christian professionals as frequently as possible;
- c) Formation programs for them should include media ethics and pastoral priorities of the local church;

d) They be given a prominent role in the celebration of World Communication Day.

Formation and training are interrelated. There is quite an awareness in Asia of the need of concrete media training through special courses, university studies and in-service training. But there is also a growing conviction that all this must be based on the Church's "giving of self in love" in a continent with a strong Christian minority.

VI. THE COMMUNICATION FORMATION OF CHURCH LEADERS AS A HOLISTIC CONCERN*

BY

FRANZ-JOSEF EILERS, SVD

When the Jesuits, for the first time in the history of their general congregations, drafted and approved in 1995 a document on social communication, they observed that "communication in the Society has usually been considered as a sector of apostolic activity, a field for some specialists who often felt isolated or on the margin of the apostolic body. The society needs to acknowledge that communication is not a domain restricted to a few Jesuit professionals, but a major apostolic dimension for all our apostolates..."

In many church circles and religious groups in general the same observation can be made. Formation in communication is considered a specialized training of a more or less technical nature. The need to base this on a broader vision and experience, where communication is a dimension of and an attitude in religious life, is often missing. It is time to base the communication formation of religious leaders, especially the clergy, on a broader basis, which would mean going beyond mere technical training.

Theological Basis

In the Christian understanding, there is further a deeper theological reason for such an understanding and approach.

Over many years church people have asked to develop a "theology of communication," but it really never developed. Instead of developing another "genitive theology," however, one should see communication rather as a theological principle. It means that the whole of Christian theology is seen and considered under the perspective of communication. Here, communication becomes a theological principle and is not just seen as one activity which is "baptized" by theology. Avery Dulles, together with Karl

* Presented at the 3rd International Conference on "Media, Religion and Culture," Edinburgh, July 20-23, 1999.

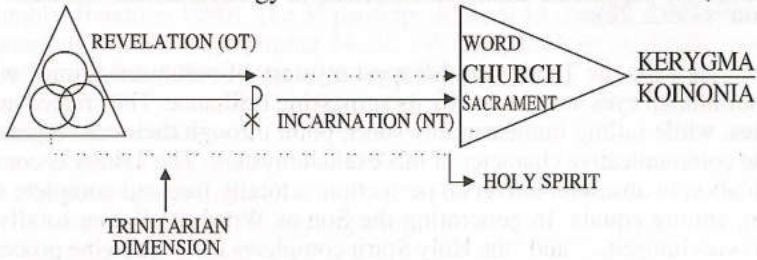
Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, Carlo Martini, Peter Henrici and others, says that "theology is at every point concerned with the realities of communication" (1992, 22).

He calls the Trinity the "deepest mystery of communication," where "our human eyes are blinded by its surpassing brilliance. The created analogies, while falling immeasurably short, point through their convergence to the communicative character of this exalted mystery. The Trinity is communication in absolute, universal perfection, a totally free and complete sharing among equals. In generating the Son as Word the Father totally expresses himself..." and "the Holy Spirit completes the intradivine process of communication." Concluding, Dulles quotes Bernard Haring in saying that "communication is constitutive in the mystery of God. Each of the three divine Persons possesses all that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, but in the modality of communion and communication" (1992, 37f.). Human beings are able to communicate because they reflect this inner trinitarian communication, because they are created "in this image and likeness." Haring formulates it in this way: "Creation, redemption and communication arise from this mystery and have as their final purpose to draw us, by this very communication, into communion with God." And Dulles concludes: "Because Christianity is first and foremost the religion of the triune God, it is preeminently a religion of communication, for God in his inmost essence is a mystery of self-communication" (1992, 38f.).

God's trinitarian self-communication manifests itself in revelation, and especially in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The church is the continuation of this self-communication into the here and now of every time and place. Or as Avery Dulles says: "The entire work of creation, redemption, and sanctification is a prolongation of the inner processions within the Trinity. Creation is ascribed to the Father, who thereby fashions finite images and vestiges of his Son. Redemption is attributed to his Son, who communicates himself to the church, the communion of saints. The mystery of divine communication, therefore, permeates any area of theology." "Because Christianity is the religion of the triune God, it is preeminently a religion of communication."

This reality can be expressed in the following scheme: ¹

Communication theology is concerned about the Trinitarian God, com-



munication within himself, communicating in revelation through creation and grace, and communicating through the incarnation of the Son. The Church is founded to continue this communication into the here and now of our time, especially as community (*koinonia*), proclaiming (*kerygma*) and in service (*diakonia*).

Without developing further details at this point, it should be obvious that such a theological perspective has concrete consequences for the communication formation of church members, especially her leaders. The concern is not just the training in skills for the media but the formation of attitudes which grow from such deeper theological understanding.

Duty and Role of Communication

If the church is the continuation of God's communication through revelation and incarnation, the ways and means of God's communication must also be reflected in her, especially in her leaders. They are required to develop a communicative attitude which goes beyond technical skills.

Such a formation is practiced and reflected at different levels of communication.

1. Personal communication of a church leader must be first and foremost determined by her/his communication with God in prayer and meditation, which is also reflected finally in her/his communication with others.

2. Interpersonal communication starts with the "witness of life" of the individual and the community. What personal and public image does the church have? How is her public communication also relation? A communicative church leader needs a certain sensitivity to this, and a willingness to

* Franz-Josef Eilers, svd., *Communicating in Community, an Introduction to Social Communication* (Manila, Divine Word/Logos, 1994), p.35.

be available.

The early church talked about the *koinonia* as basic to Christian life. Today, in many countries it is the "basic Christian community" which brings life.

All principles of group communication apply here. Homiletics, as the study and teaching of preaching, and also religious instruction (catechesis) are areas to be considered.

Simple newsletters and information services can be an expression of committed interpersonal communication and a service to professional communicators.

3. Of the modern mass media, electronic media are to quite an extent entertainment media, but they bring also news and documentaries. Religion and religious practices can be part of stories told, but also part of new documentaries, or the general background of any presentation.

Press and publishing offer books, periodicals and other materials where church leaders can share their concerns and communicate with those related to them.

4. In "multimedia," different means of communication, including computers, satellites, the Internet and others, combine into a unified personal experience. They are a new level of communicating, with growing challenges to the availability and the flexibility of the church leader.

All these different levels and areas of communication require of church leaders not only a certain professional knowledge but also attitudes and abilities which must be already formed and secured during the formation years. We need not only an introduction into the professional basics of mass media but a holistic approach to communication formation, where also attitudes and abilities, human as well as Christian, are developed in such a way that they respond to the needs and demands of our times.

Attitudes and Abilities

Such basic attitudes and abilities are related to the personal as well as to the professional level.

1. Personal Level

a) The first basic attitude at the personal level is an openness to God and to others. The church leader must in the final analysis reflect God himself, who became flesh through his Son Jesus Christ. This is only possible if she/he is grounded in prayer and has developed a personal relationship to the God she/he represents. Such an openness to God automatically leads also to a greater openness to others, their concerns, needs and expectations.

b) Willingness to learn and to listen is another consequence from such

openness. Only a person who is willing to listen and learn can really communicate with others and share in their needs and expectations.

c) Only a willingness to listen and to learn finally equips the church leader also for dialogue and to share.

2. Professional Level

Attitudes and abilities needed at the professional level flow from the basic personal attitudes of openness and willingness to listen and learn.

Besides the basics of technical knowledge appropriate to the means to be used, it is essential that a church leader be aware of: a) the situation and needs of the people she/he has to address; b) the communicative possibilities of the medium she/he wants to use; and c) the message she/he wants to convey.

a) Any target audience is determined through expectations and a capability for reception formed by culture, society and general environment. Recipients are shaped by given cultures, societal relations and perception abilities. This requires from the church leader a sufficient knowledge, and possibly an experience, of these cultures. Only a church leader who knows the emotional, cultural and professional background of his people can adequately communicate. For the electronic media, this, also includes, e.g., a knowledge of the program preferences of a given audience for radio, TV and film.

b) A church leader must further know which means of communications are appropriate for a given community or situation, and how to use them accordingly. This refers not only to mass media, but also to their ways and means of behavior, which are always influenced by culture and relationships.

Directions for Communication Formation

Communication is an essential need for every church member and especially every church leader. It is not only one sector of the church's activities; it is "a major apostolic dimension of all our apostolates," as the communication document of the Jesuit general congregation of 1995 says. This requires in the formation of church leaders the development of:

1. Basics for a healthy communication attitude and communication ability involving the whole person. It means that the basics of human communication have to be instilled theoretically and practically in all future ministers of the church.

2. In a world where communication is growing in "unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a 'global village'" (*Redemptoris Missio*, No. 37c), it is important that church leaders receive sufficient media education to be able to assess, critically evaluate, and also to use the modern means of communication, especially the mass media.

3. Besides basic human communication skills, those leaders with special talents and or interests should be encouraged and involved in further professional studies and skills training.

Such a holistic communication formation should also help towards the integration of social communication into the overall structures and activities of the church. Often different communication activities, especially those of the mass media, are separated and isolated from other church activities. The following approaches can be seen in many church activities and structures.

Approaches to Social Communication Ministry: Planning and Activities*

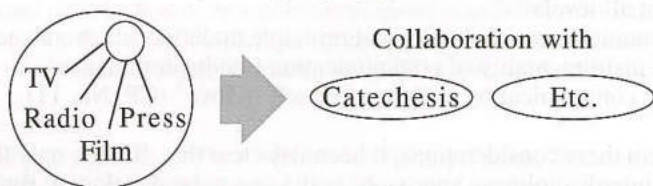
1. Isolation Approach



The communication office/activities work independently of each other and unrelated to other pastoral ministries. They are like "little turfdoms," e.g., the press is on its own, broadcasting, film, etc., each on its own:

- Possibly due to a lack of a common vision and concern
- Lack of collaboration, sometimes with overlapping and duplication

2. Unifying Approach

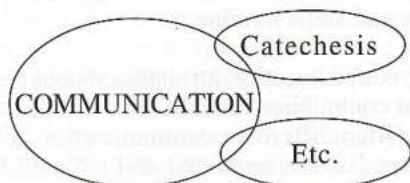


Communication office/activities are under one umbrella, e.g., one director for all the different media. Different media sections are interrelated to each other:

* Based on Angela Zukowski, "Shifting the Paradigm: Perspectives on Diocesan Pastoral Communications in the United States," Victor Sunderaj (ed): *Pastoral Planning for Social Communications* (Montreal, Paulines, 1998), pp. 94-98.

- Common vision: all communication activities are supportive of each other and related to the overall mission
- Collaboration with other apostolates like catechesis, bible, etc.
- Effective use of limited resources

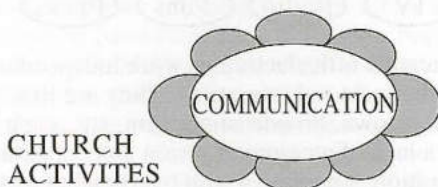
3. Basic Collaborative Approach



Communication office/activities are integrated and interdisciplinary:

- Communication dimension brought into all other ministries
- Quality infrastructure: convergence of communication technologies and convergence of ministries

4. Integrated Interdisciplinary Approach



Communication is seen and realized as an essential dimension of the church at all levels:

- Communication as a theological principle underlies all church activities
- Less: instrumentality of communication (media dominance)
- More: communication as "giving of self in love" (CP, No. 11)

From these considerations, it becomes clear that, finally, only the integrated "interdisciplinary approach" is the one to be developed. But such a development depends very much on an overall holistic formation of church leaders who are mutually open to each other and are able to dialogue for the good of the community.

Communication Formation Experiences

An attempt at a more holistic communication formation has been made for several years at the Divine Word School of Theology in Tagaytay City,

Philippines. Every student entering his theological studies has in the first semester a regular and obligatory course: "Introduction to Social Communication." This course stresses the dimensions and basic rules of human communication, considers the theological dimensions, and leads from there to the basics of mass media, group communication and multimedia. Students with special interests are offered additional classes with more practical applications. In the course of further studies, beside regular classes in "Homiletics," other courses are offered, like pastoral communication, intercultural communication, communication theology, and religious broadcasting. Beside such courses, "personal relations" are being developed which in a deeper way happen in the student's regular spiritual direction, individual conferences of the students with the formator, as well as in group sharings and processing. The more a holistic communication formation is personalized, the more effective it will be, and the more the student himself will experience the values of openness, and a willingness to learn, listen and share.

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