

Seventh Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide

CHURCH AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN ASIA

by

THE FABC OFFICE OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

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This discussion guide has been prepared for the workshops of the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, convening, January 3-12, 2000, at "BAAN PHU WAAN," the Pastoral Formation Center of the Archdiocese of Bangkok, Sampran, Thailand. The theme of the Plenary Assembly is: "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service."

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INTRODUCTION

In his message to the FABC Plenary Assembly, 1995, in Manila, 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 the years following this assembly the bishops and secretaries responsible for social communication in the different bishops' conferences started to have annual meetings as "FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet" (BM), and specialized gatherings like the "Bishops' Institute for Social Communication" (BISCOM), as well as "Roundtables" (RT) with professionals on certain issues.

The following considerations are based on insights, ideas and concerns expressed in those meetings. They are placed in a more systematic way to help the Sampran FABC Plenary Assembly 2000 to look into future needs and challenges. As far as possible, we let the existing documents speak for themselves. They are occasionally complemented with texts from former FABC plenary assemblies, Vatican II's decree *Inter Mirifica* on Social Communication, and other church documents, to make the issues clearer and more explicit. These texts should serve as basis for further considerations, developments, proposals and action.*

1. BASICS FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN ASIA

1.1 *Christian communication flows from the Most Holy Trinity.*

The trinitarian life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is in its essence communication. Communication is the unifying bond among the Persons of the Trinity. Because human beings are created in "his image and likeness," they are able to communicate. Any human communication rests in this theological fact.

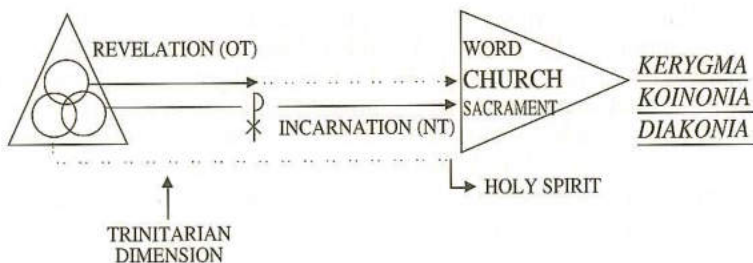
- *The communicating Trinitarian God communicates with his creatures in revealing himself.* For this revelation God uses all modes and means of human communication. He reveals himself on the levels of nature and grace.
- *The high point of God's revelation is the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ.* In him God communicates with us through becoming one of us in

*A full documentation of FABC-OSC documents 1996 till June, 1999 is given in *FABC Papers No. 85*. This paper should complement the considerations of this document. For the general Church documents on Social Communication, see: Franz-Josef Eilers, (ed.) *Church and Social Communication. Basic Documents*, Manila, 1997, Logos/Divine Word Publications.

the person of his Son: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us..." (Jn 1, 14).

- *The Church exists to continue God's revelation and incarnation into the here and now of every time and place:*

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 (BM '96).



1.2 *Christian communication serves evangelization and development.*

In continuing the revelation and incarnation the Church communicates in word and deed Gospel values in the service of humankind.

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 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 (FABC First Plenary Assembly, Taipei, 1974, on "Missionary Formation," nos. 30-34).

The "Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate" (BIMA), Suwon, South Korea, 1988, recommends: "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." (Resolutions, Means for Evangelization, 4).

1.3 Christian communication is social communication

Which comprises all means and modes of human communication in society. It includes interpersonal communication as well as group communication, multimedia communication and the mass media. Social communication refers to all "the communicative relations of members of a social system, their means, structures and processes" (cf. Eilers, 1994, 271-278). This has important consequences for the communications' attitude and apostolate of the Church in Asia, especially also in view of local cultures and inculturating Christian values into the old and the media-shaped new cultures of the Asian continent.

1.4 Christian communication is person-oriented.

"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*, 41) which communicates first. For Asia, being a religious continent, our own religiosity and love for humankind is the best means of communication" (BM '96).

1.5 Christian communication has a positive approach.

"We should be careful, however, not to brand everything that belongs to the new media cultures decadent or evil. We should not also 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 the new media culture but will firmly reject anything that does not correspond to true Christian faith and to traditional Asian values." (BM '96)

1.6 Christian communication in Asia is dialogic and creating relationships.

This is especially reflected also in interfaith dialogue. "Home of the great

religions, Asia and its evangelization call for dialogue as a way of life." (BM '96)

"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 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." (BM '96)

"Interreligious dialogue is also first of all a matter of human communication. Therefore, in the first place it is a dialogue with 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 it is, as much as giving encouragement and inspiration." (FABC Theological Consultation, Office of Evangelization, Hua Hin 1991, 22)

1.7 Christian communication helps through education to build awareness for seeing the way media represent reality,

and thus contributes to a more mature and positive approach to a modern communication environment: "Media education, understood not simply as skills training but as awareness and understanding, of the representations of reality generated by media in a media-shaped society, is for all... Hence, media education ought to be an essential and integral part of any pastoral plan. Training should be provided from a simple to a more comprehensive form and approach..." (BM '96)

1.8 The public image of the Church and Christians is very often the first "communication" to a non-Christian environment.

This challenges us to reflect deeper about the public communication/relation of the Church in Asia. "Public Relations should not be seen 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 Christ-like 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 other techniques, the witness of life stays central." "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" (BISCOM I, Orientations 1:4).

2. THE COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS OF A "NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH IN ASIA"

2.1 *Christian communication aims at community building* because the Church in Asia is a communion of communities. "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 by the Church." (BM '97)

"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 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." (FABC Third General Assembly, Thailand 1982 in a "Syllabus of Concerns", VIII)

2.2 *Christian communication reflects a truly participatory Church*, "where the gifts that the Spirit gives to all...are recognized and activated." (FABC Bandung 1990) "The must be communication that encourages co-responsibility at all levels both vertically and horizontally... 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?" (BM '97) "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." (BISCOM I, Orientations 4)

2.3 *Christian communication is witnessing and dialogic*. A communicating Church has to reach out to people through effectively eliminating communication gaps and in establishing relationships within the Church and with the outside, especially other religions (BM '97,3): "For her internal and external communication the Church needs to move beyond teaching and preaching to being a dialogic and communitarian Church."

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

"*Public Relations* should not be seen 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 Christ-like 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 1990, 4,1) Before all other techniques, the witness of life stays central." (BISCOM I, Orientations 5,3,1)

"Our communication has to reflect the preferential option for the poor and oppressed." (BM '97,3)

"Communicating with other religions and people 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." (BM '97, 3) "*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." (BM '96) "In most countries of Asia, Christianity is a minority where we need to let other religions feel that we respect them and they can trust us." (BM '97,3)

2.4 *Christian communication is prophetic.* The Church "should be a 'heaven 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 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. We should perceive this as a new call to integrate Gospel values into the "new culture created by media" (BM '96)...

"The fact that many 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." (BM '97, 4)

3. THE SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNICATION IN ASIA

3.1 *All spirituality of Christian communication "flows out of the communication of the Holy Trinity."* (BM '96)

3.2 *Jesus Christ as the "perfect communicator" (C+P 11) is the model for*

all Christian communication. (BM '97, 1)

3.3 "Any spirituality of communication is first and foremost expressed through the witness of life" (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41). (BM '97, 1)

3.4 The **Christian** communicator is a Spirit-filled person.

"Christian communicators:

- need to be men and women of Spirit-filled prayer, entering ever more deeply into the communion with God in order to grow in their ability to foster communion among their fellow human beings,
- must be schooled in hope by the Spirit, 'the principal agent of the new evangelization' (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 45)." (John Paul II, World Communication Day message 1998)

The Christian communicator in Asia must therefore:

- "be a person of contemplation and prayer, similar to the missionary whom Pope John Paul II calls a 'contemplative in action' " (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 91)".
- have "the ability to build communities through love, sharing, communion, relationship and equality";
- "the content of one's communication should reflect one's spirituality rooted in the Incarnation";
- must proclaim the "Kingdom values amidst a society of violence, corruption and evil forces." (BM '98, 1)

4. EVANGELIZING COMMUNICATION IN ASIA

The evangelizing communication of the Church in Asia should be based on the following (Consultation on "Evangelization and Communication" (Chennai; July 4-8, 1999).

"Orientations"

1. We see the Church as a communion of ecclesial communities participating in the mission and ministry of Jesus. (Cf. FABC: "A New Way of Being Church in Asia.")
2. In proclaiming Jesus to the peoples of Asia, we communicate "the full truth about the human person," whose dignity is based on "being an image and likeness of God," empowered by the Spirit of Jesus for the fullness of the Father's love. (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15)
3. The human person is the basis of our dialogue with all people of good will, all religions and cultures, and especially with the poor and young people of Asia. We are committed to bring Jesus' message to all nations

of Asia. Our contribution lies in the witnessing and dialogue of faith and life, Gospel and culture, Church and society.

4. The Church as a communion-in-mission has to begin by evangelizing herself, by the life and ministry of Jesus. She has to be transformed by "the full truth about the human person." (Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.) Evangelization calls for such renewal (*mission ad intra*), since the Church is a pilgrim among the Asian peoples.
5. Social communication is intimately linked with the mission of the Church within herself (*ad intra*) and to the outside world (*ad extra*).
6. The proclamation of the Good News in Asia is based on the "triple dialogue" (FABC), with the poor, cultures and religions. This involves also all areas of human behavior, thought patterns, social and cultural dynamics, environment and modern technology."

Evangelizing communication must be:

- (1) sensitive to Asian cultures and religions,
- (2) recognize the existing secular communication, its role and impact,
- (3) use the means and methods available,
- (4) reflected in an evangelizing communication within the Church. (cf. Consultation on "Evangelization and Communication," Recommendations.)

5. CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING AND WORK — FABC CONCERNS

5.1 *Christian communication is structured.*

All Church documents on social communication, especially since Vatican II, see a parallel or complementary structure for the communication work of the Church: the basis is the hierarchical structure, starting with the Pope and flowing to the bishops, which is complemented by the professional structure of the Catholic media organizations.

CHURCH STRUCTURES FOR COMMUNICATION

Hierarchical Structures:

1. Pontifical Council for Social Communication
2. Bishops' Conferences: National Offices
3. International Offices: Cooperation among Bishops' Conferences
4. Diocesan Offices
5. Spokespersons for those bodies

Professional Structures: Catholic Media Organizations

1. Press: Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse (UCIP)
2. Broadcasting (Radio / TV): Unda
3. Film: Organization Catholique du Cinema (OCIC)
4. Ecumenical: World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)

"It is for *bishops* to oversee activities and projects of this sort in their own diocese, to promote and, where they touch the public apostolate, to regulate them, including those under the control of exempt religious" (Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, 1963, 20)

"An effective national apostolate requires acceptance of a common objective and the unification of effort. This Council therefore decides and ordains that *national offices* for the press, the cinema, radio and television be established everywhere and be properly supported... In each country the direction of these offices is to be entrusted to *episcopal commissions* or *bishops* appointed to do the task..." (Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, 1963, 21) Other Church documents following *Inter Mirifica* confirm and repeat these demands.

"In our areas we recognize the following permanent structures as necessary for the apostolate of social communication:

- i. The diocesan office for social communications
- ii. The national office for social communications
- iii. The office for social communications of the FABC..." (Pan-Asia Meeting of Episcopal Conferences, Tokyo 1974, I.1.a)

"Unfortunately, the demand of the Church for offices of social communication on the national and diocesan level is not yet executed in all parts of Asia." (BM '96)

"Every country needs an episcopal commission/national office for social communication whose activities are carried down to each diocese, with their duties clearly spelt out..." (BM '96, 5)

5.2 Church communication in Asia needs networking.

On-going collaboration and networking within the Church between: a) bishops' conference and diocese; b) diocese and their grassroots; c) the Catholic media organization and with the outside; between a) Christians, b) other religions; c) people of good will, who are essential for a responsible communication.

- "The communication challenges of 'a new way of being Church in Asia' should lead us...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... A visible close cooperation among the bishops' conference and dioceses will be a good and tangible example for a communion of communities." (BM '97, 5a)

- "Bishops' conferences should... make attempts to link themselves and also individual bishops of Asia by e-mail." (BM '96, 4, 2) "The communication challenges of 'a new way of being Church in Asia' should lead us ... to share information about Church events and communication developments in the different countries also with modern technical means e.g., e-mail." (BM '97, 5g).
- "Attempts must be made for a greater cooperation between UNDA, OCIC and UCIP on all levels in the Asian continent" (BM '96, 7).
- "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." (BM '96, 3) "Networking and cooperation with other religions should be promoted. Concrete plans should be worked out in the context of common issues which affect all. ..." (BM '97, 3)

"In realizing the 'new way of being Church in Asia', emphasized also at the Asian Synod ('... That they may have life and have it abundantly,' Jn 10:10) greater collaboration and assistance has to be initiated among all Christians, and with peoples of other religions and cultures." (BM '98, 3)

- "In a continent where Christians are a small minority, any public relations of the Church should consider the need for ecumenical collaboration as essential." (BISCOM I, Recommendations, 8)
- "Because of the uneven development of communication 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." (BISCOM I, Recommendations, 7)

5.3 *Church communication in Asia needs (pastoral) planning.*

"Every bishops' conference must have a pastoral plan for communication, which includes also the communications 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;
- c. a strategy for making use of all these existing resources;

- d. performance objectives supported by action plans;
- e. mechanism for monitoring their achievement.' (BM '96, 1)

The Church "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." (BM '96)

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Approaches to Social Communication in Ministry: Planning and Activities

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

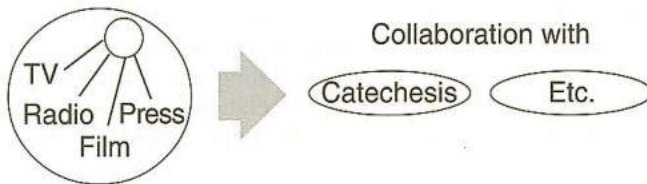
1. Isolation Approach



Communication office/activities work independently from each other and unrelated to other pastoral ministries. They are like "little turfdoms... press 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

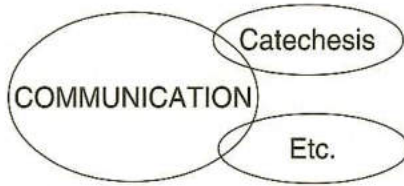
2. Unifying Approach



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

- 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

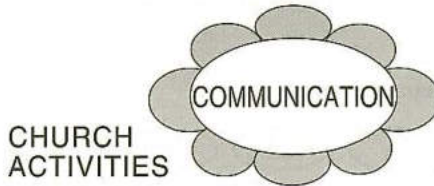
3. Basic Collaborative Approach



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. Integral Dimension Approach



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

- Communication as theological principle underlies all Church activities
- Less: Instrumentality of communication (media dominance)
- More: communication as "giving of self in love" (C+P 11)

"To make Public Relations a reality on the local Church level, some basic structures are needed, which should be determined by the local needs and situations. This requires medium and long-term planning and investment in personnel and resources. Public Relations activities should be developed as a team effort." (BISCOM I, Recommendations 2, 3)

5.4 Church communication in Asia promotes formation and training.

5.4.1. Formation of Priests, Religious and Laity

"Priests, religious and laity should be trained at once to meet the needs described above. They should acquire the competence needed to use this media for the apostolate..." (Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, 15; cf. C+P 111; AN 18)

"... That basic training in the principles and methods of mass communication be part of seminary studies, in preparation for their ministry in a world so profoundly influenced by communication in its myriad modern forms." (First Plenary Assembly, Taipei, 1974, Recommendation 10, c)

"National communication offices of bishops' conferences should encourage talent scouting among the young, especially lay people, for communication ministries. Such talents could be shared on the continental level with the support of the FABC Office of Social Communication." (BM '96, 5, 1)

"... the Asian Church sees its task first of infusing Gospel values, then of drawing more explicitly 'the seeds of the Kingdom' found in diverse cultures and religions ... 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 the Asian situation, where the people of God must reach out to millions struggling for social transformation..." (FABC 4th Plenary Assembly, Tokyo, 1986)

"The communication challenges of 'a new way of being Church in Asia' should lead us to ... inform about and possibly share training facilities and personnel between the different bishops' conferences." (BM '97, 5 j)

"For effective relationships, the Church needs to integrate Public Relations and communication training into the formation of Church personnel at all levels. This should start with the training of seminarians and lay people committed to the Church." (BISCOM I, Recommendations 1)

5.4.2. *Pastoral and spiritual care for communicators*

"Lay people must be given the necessary technical, doctrinal and moral formation ..." (Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica* 15) "The Church has a corresponding responsibility to develop and offer programs of pastoral care which are specifically responsive to the particular working conditions and moral challenges facing communication professionals..." (*Aetatis Novae* 19)

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 working in secular media; c) media professionals in general." (BM '98, 2)

Pastoral care for professionals

"In the pastoral care for Catholics in 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 pastoral priorities of the local Church;
- d) they be given a prominent role in the celebration of World Communication Day."

Pastors should accept and recognize professionals in communication and develop and promote dialogue and collaboration with them." (BM '98, 6,6)

"Building relations with secular media needs not only regular information, but especially friendly relations consistently developed over a period of time." (BISCOM I, Recommendations 6)

5.4.3 Communication/Media Education

"Media Education, understood not simply as skills training but as awareness and understanding of the representations of reality generated by a media-shaped society, is for all: bishops, priests, religious, seminarians, lay leaders, parents, teachers, youth, children, NGOs and grassroots. Hence, media education ought to be an essential and integral part of any pastoral plan. Training should be provided from a simple to a more comprehensive form and approach. For this, curricula, syllabi and programs need to be elaborated by special teams on the Asian level, and models of training be offered." (BM '96)

"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 Communications Awareness Education mandatory at all levels, especially in the seminaries;
- to organize a national association for Media Education;
- to arrange training of trainers "programs to provide sufficient people for Media Education on the national and continental levels." (BM '96, 5, 4)

"The communication challenges of 'a new way of being Church in Asia' should lead us ... to give primary importance to Media Education in 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' (BM '96, 5, 4) must be continued." (BM '97, 5d)

"We recommend the implementation of suitable programs on Media Education, 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." (BM '98, 3)

"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..." (FABC First Plenary Assembly, Taipei, 1974, Recommendations)

6. CHURCH COMMUNICATION IN ASIA MUST BE BASED ON SOLID RESEARCH

"There is an urgent need for communication research, systematic thinking, and criticism for the Church in Asia. Networking and bringing together all resources available should be promoted. The 'Communication Research Award' of the FABC Office of Social Communication is to be seen as one step in this direction and is highly recommended." (BM '96, 10)

"The communication challenges of 'a new way of being Church in Asia,' should lead us ... to promote deeper studies and research into the communication needs and consequences for a new way of being Church in Asia." (BM '97, 5, f)

"... The Church urgently needs to do communication research for the following reasons:

- to help the Church to 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 a sound basis for dealing with matters relating to Church and society
- 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..." (FABC Roundtable on Church and Social Communication Research in Asia, 1999)

7. THE CHURCH MUST BE CONCERNED ABOUT HER IMAGE IN DEVELOPING PROPER PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/RELATIONS.

"Bishops' conferences should see Public Relations as an important concern and act accordingly. Guidelines for better awareness and use should be formulated." (BM '96, 4.4, 1)

"We must see Public Relations as an important concern and act accordingly." (BM '97, 5h)

"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 *Communio et Progressio* (1971, Nos. 174-176), and *Aetatis Novae* (1992, 31). The officer's key role is to make the presence of the Church felt more in society..." (BM '98, 4)

"...Any Public Relations and proclamation 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.' (BM '96) Like any other communication, Public Relations also is basically a 'giving of self in love'... (C+P, 11)

Public Relations should not be seen only from a business point of view but rather as a "witness of Christians and Christian communities... Before all other techniques, the witness of life stays central. 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." (1;2)

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

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. (4)

For her internal and external communication the Church needs to move beyond teaching and preaching to being a dialogic and communitarian Church. (5)

There needs to be an ongoing flow of communication within the Church and to outside publics to reflect Christian activities and concerns. (7)

Public Relations' concerns and activities should not remain on the bishops' conference level but must be shared down to the most basic levels of Christian communities. (8) (BISCOM I, Orientations)

8. THE CHURCH MUST USE THE MEANS AT HER DISPOSAL TO THE BEST OF HER ABILITY.

"...It has been noted that the impact of Church-supported media on the masses of Asia is minimal. While consumer society exploits mass media to further its materialistic ends, the Church in Asia lags still behind in taking full advantage of these most powerful means of proclaiming the liberating Word of God to the Asian peoples... (3.6.3) Still, we happily note the advances of media directly under the care of the Church or influenced by Church through the laity. ... 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." (The Fourth FABC Plenary Assembly in Tokyo 1986, in a chapter on Laity and Mass Media 3.6.4)

"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. (7.3.1.4) 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." (The Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly 1990, in the "specific pastoral directions' for 'proclaiming the Faith" 7.3.1.5)

8.1 RADIO VERITAS ASIA

Pan-Asia Meeting of Episcopal Conferences for Social Communication, Tokyo 1974:

"Full pastoral responsibility for the overseas service of Radio Veritas has been assumed by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. We reaffirm our commitment to this common project. (V, 18)

An Asian Program committee should be set up. This committee should be composed of at least one person from each country who would be fully responsible for all Veritas programming in his respective country... (19)

Radio Veritas can be linked to the local Churches by its follow-up of contacts and by playing a role in an integrated apostolate. (21)

Radio Veritas could answer the need, so emphatically repeated in our regional Asian meetings, for news of the continent and for world news, properly explained and interpreted." (22)

FABC Plenary Assembly, Bandung 1990: FABC Covenant on Radio Veritas Asia.

"We the member conferences of FABC, gathered at the 5th Plenary Assembly in Bandung, Indonesia, express our deep conviction for 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 Jesus 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.
6. To attain the above objectives, we hereby acknowledge that RVA is a FABC project and collegially assume the responsibility to support Radio Veritas..."

(signed by the presidents of the bishops' conferences of Pakistan, Korea, China/Taiwan, India, Japan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Thailand, Philippines, and the FABC General Secretary, on July, 21, 1990)

(For a full documentation of the "Bandung Covenant" see Appendix 2)

"Bishops should be aware of the importance and possibilities of 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." (BM '96, 9.9, 1)

8.2 NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (BISCOM II)

Modern Communication Technologies

- A. provide additional tools for any communication in Church ministry
- speak a new language which is becoming the preferred language of the new generation
 - are creating a new culture and are radically influencing the way we live
 - urge the Churches in Asia to become more interactive among themselves and with the outside
- B. Have wide-ranging effects:
- any kind of information is available at the click of the mouse
 - differences between race, religion and culture can be reduced by the use of Internet
 - distances and times are shrinking
 - create a new vocabulary and new relationships via the Internet, e-mail, Websites, chat rooms, etc.
 - demand a special way of teamwork and mutual cooperation
 - diminish boundaries, therefore, a special sense of responsibility, commitment to proper ethics, and an appropriate spirituality are to be developed
- C. Modern Communication technologies can:
- greatly increase communication within the Church (*ad intra*) through Internet, e-mail etc.
 - help to improve the Church's contact with the outside (*ad extra*)
 - open new missionary frontiers for evangelization in developing cyber-missionaries

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CONCLUSION

Questions for Discussion and Planning

From the above documentation, the following questions might lead to a deeper analysis, evaluation and planning:

1. Is our communication evangelizing, e.g., in giving witness, using all means available to project Christ?
2. Do we use *all* means available, from traditional communication over Mass Media to Cyberspace? (*social* communications!)

3. Are we really person-oriented in our communication, beginning with interpersonal encounters, or are we fascinated and over-concerned with technical means and gadgets?
4. Does our communication have a positive approach in facing problems, needs and turning threats into opportunities?
5. Is our communication only "linear," in being concerned about "transmission" instead of developing personal dialogic relationships? Do we make an attempt to "dialogue" with members of other religions on different levels of life and society?
6. Are we especially helping young people to understand, and critically but positively manage and use the growing possibilities of modern mass media and communication technologies?
7. Is our communication on all levels of Church and society life really:
 - community building
 - dialogic
 - prophetic
 - and leading to participation?
8. Is our own communication as Church and persons grounded in a deep spirituality? Do we help communication professionals to become more and more grounded in the theology and spirituality of the communicating Trinitarian God? Are we and our communication "Spirit-filled"?
9. Is our communication sufficiently structured, and do these structures work? Are they filled with life?
10. Are we really networking with each other on the national, international level, within Church and Church organizations, with other Christians, and also other religions, with Catholic and non-Catholic communicators, professionals, with research institutions?
11. Is our communications really part of all pastoral planning on the different levels of Church activities? Is communication an integral part of all pastoral and missionary activities?
12. Is there a systematic, structural and on-going social communication formation and training within the Church for seminarians, priests, Religious and laity? Is there a regular and on-going media education in Catholic institutions, especially in schools, but also in Adult Formation programs?

13. Is there any serious social communication research being done by Church-related or Church-interested institutions in your country? What are the areas of special concern?
14. Is there a Public Communication/Relation office in your bishops' conference, diocese? How does it work? What is the public image of the Church with the general public in your country? Is there a permanent information and media office, with an official spokesperson?
15. How can Radio Veritas Asia programs be made more effective? And how can financing through Asian resources as a FABC project be developed and secured?

APPENDIX I

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

*Final Statement of BISCOP I.1
Training Seminar on "Church & Public Relations
Manila, Philippines March 10-20, 1999*

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" (BISCOP I September 1-5, 1997), we, bishops, priests, religious and lay persons involved with the works of Catholic bishops' conferences gathered for a training seminar on "Church and Public Relations," in Manila, from March 10-20, 1999.

The Office of Social Communication of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC-OSC) organized this seminar. We were 21 participants, representing 12 countries: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. The seminar was organized to train the participants in 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 engaged in various workshops, as well as exercises, on news reporting, feature writing, conducting interviews, managing a crisis, and the dynamics of a Public Communication/Relations Office. Having realized the value of our learning, we propose similar activities for those countries which were not represented in this 10-day training seminar.

As a result of these, we came up with practical applications of what we have learned, and suggest 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, is 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. NGOs
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 of 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 not only be 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 central 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.

Manila, 19th March 1999

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APPENDIX 2

FABC COMMITMENT TO RADIO VERITAS ASIA OVERVIEW AND DOCUMENTATION

Beginnings (1970)

Bishop Oswald Gomis, the first chairman of the FABC-RVA Committee recalls:

"A very significant event at this time was the founding of the 'Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' (FABC) and the visit of His Holiness Pope Paul VI in Manila, November, 1970. The Asian bishops gathered in full strength at the Plenary Assembly, in 1974, and the opportunity arose to discuss the project in its varied aspects. A three-member committee was appointed here, to study the current situation of Radio Veritas and to work out its rehabilitation... The Plenary Meeting of the FABC was held in Taipei, Taiwan, in 1974. This was a significant moment for the Radio Veritas project.

After the presentation of the Committee's report, the Asian bishops decided to support the Radio Veritas project, and assumed responsibility for the running of the Asia programs. Accordingly, the Philippine broadcasts were to remain the responsibility of the Philippine Bishops' Conference, and Radio Veritas Asia, or the RVA, was to become the *Voice of the Asian Bishops*. This function was to be fulfilled through the Committee for Social Communications of the FABC" (now: Office of Social Communication)... (RVA Silver Jubilee Memorabilia 1969-1994, pp. 106-107)

1974

The agreement between FABC and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) states:

"Administration and management of Radio Veritas shall be structured in such a way that:

FABC shall fully participate in the overseas service
while
CBCP shall fully participate in the home service..."

The "Definition of Terms" for the same document further clarify that "FABC shall assume:

- full pastoral responsibility
- full control and responsibility for the overseas service
- full responsibility for the financing of the overseas service."

On May 1, 1974, the FABC and the CBCP signed at the Apostolic Nunciature in Manila an agreement "binding in the ecclesiastical forum and remaining in force until renewed during the ordinary meeting of the Plenary Assembly of the FABC..."

1986

At the FABC Plenary Assembly in Tokyo, on September 24, 1986, this commitment was renewed, and it was further clarified that the FABC "shall fully participate" beside others in the:

- "decisions regarding overseas services and language programs,"
- "appointment of the Overseas Program Manager and/or the Overseas Program Consultant"
- "Proposal of candidates for the choice of the *General Manager* of Radio Veritas"

1990

After the separation of the Filipino and Overseas Services in January 1, 1990, the FABC Plenary Assembly in Bandung (1990) renewed their full commitment for the now independent overseas service "Radio Veritas Asia," with the following "Bandung Covenant":

FABC'S DECLARATION OF INTENT ON THE FABC COVENANT ON RADIO VERITAS ASIA

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 (RVA) 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 a FABC project and collegially assume the responsibility to support the 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 professionals 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 Faith), we suggest that the diocese 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 congregations 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 responsibility in strictly overseeing: (a) the programs and broadcasting priorities; and (b), the budget and accounts of the administration of RVA.

External Support

1. That FABC request a yearly subsidy of \$1.5 million from the Propagation of Faith.
2. We request the Bishops' Conference of Japan, and any other member conferences, which may in future renounce their annual subsidy from the Propagation of 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 programs, as well as 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 the future, RVA be invited to send trained reporters to cover the 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 for and on behalf of their bishop-members on this 21st day of July, in the year of Our Lord 1990.

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

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List of Abbreviations

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| AN | <i>Aetatis Novae</i> |
| BIMA | Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate |
| BISCOM | Bishops' Institute for Social Communication |
| BM | FABC-OSC Bishops' Meets |
| CP | <i>Communio et Progressio</i> |
| EN | <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> |
| FABC | Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences |
| FABC-OE | FABC Office of Evangelization |
| FABC-OSC | FABC Office of Social Communication |
| IM | <i>Inter Mirifica</i> |
| NGO | Non-Government Organization |
| NT | New Testament |
| OCIC | Organization Catholique International du Cinema |
| OT | Old Testament |
| PR | Public Relations |
| RM | <i>Redemptoris Missio</i> |
| RT | Roundtable/Consultation |
| RVA | Radio Veritas Asia |
| UNDA | International Catholic Organization for Radio and Television |
| UCIP | Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse |
| WACC | World Association for Christian Communication |
| WCD | World Communication Day |

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* The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do *
* not necessarily represent the official policies of the FABC or its *
* member Episcopal Conferences. Manuscripts are always welcome *
* and may be sent to: FABC, 16 Caine Road, Hong Kong. *
