

Seventh Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide

OPENING PATHS TO LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

- I. Towards the Formation of Christian Values in Asia, by Lourdes J. Custodio
- II. Youth Ministry in Asia, by Luc Van Looy, SDB.

I. TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN VALUES TODAY

by
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A. INTRODUCTION

1. Focus

Pastoral reflections on the recently, concluded Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops to make the Church become ever more a Servant Church to continue her mission of love and service to the peoples of Asia, that "they may have life and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10) Special attention to be given to education in the formation of Christian values in the context of Asian realities.

2. Rationale

The Catholic Church considers education as one of its valuable services to society. This is one area in which the Catholic Church in Asia has been in the forefront of human promotion, for many year now. Education is seen to be an effective means to open paths to life in Asian context through the formation of Christian values.

3. Situationer

One striking feature of Asia and the Asian Church is its extraordinary diversity. However, one can speak of the Asian realities, and of the peoples of Asia, whose destiny is inextricably bound up with global developments. The world today is progressively becoming interdependent with interlock-

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ing interests and concerns. The evolutions in Asia, where more than half of humanity lives, will have their strong repercussions on the rest of the world.

There are formidable challenges facing the Church of Asia at the dawning of the third millennium. The Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Asia has for its theme: Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia:..." that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). In preparation for this Special Assembly, the socio-religious context in which the Church has to carry out its mission in Asia at this moment of its history was studied. It was seen to present a unique challenge, task and opportunity unlike those it has encountered in the past.

The Church considers education, as was pointed out in the rationale, one of its most valuable services to society. It offers an effective means to open paths to life in the Asian context today through the formation of Christian values. However, to determine what values need to be emphasized, the dominant trends affecting the religious, cultural, social and economic realms of the whole region must be taken into account. These trends have been traced and presented in the preparatory document of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops for Asia.¹

One of the findings of the study shows that there has been a rapid economic progress of some countries in the last five decades, but this has left many other countries in degrading poverty, inequality and social injustice. It was pointed out that this is the result of centuries-old social evils. These are the caste and feudal systems, internal and external colonization, vested national and international interests that resist social change, land ownership systems, state socialism, concentration of wealth and means of production, in the hands of a few, corruption, political instability, and the like. Many of these problems arise from the desire of the rich countries to dominate, while the poor countries, in their efforts to survive, have even reached the point of allowing themselves to be exploited.

Likewise, rapid changes are taking place in Asian societies and countries, in different aspects of life. They are due to the phenomenon of urbanization, the emergence of several "megapoloi," and internal and external migration, bringing in their train social and moral problems. The constructions of mega-industries and nuclear plants have brought about their attendant hazards. Globalization of the economy, without sufficient regard for

¹ Special Assembly of the Synod of bishops for Asia, *Instrumentum Laboris*, in "Relatio ante Disceputationem," Card. Paul Shan Kuo-hsi, S.J., in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, July-August, 1998, pp. 542-543.

global ethics and global solidarity, has widened further the gap between the rich and the poor. The heavy burden of foreign debt was seen to have caused the recent great economic crisis in South Asia. The disregard for the rights of the evicted and displaced persons, the expansion of slum areas, leading to organized crime, terrorism, prostitution, child abuse, pedophilia, exploitation of the weaker sections of society, and many others.

There are other problems to be dealt with, such as those of the economic migrants, political refugees, asylum seekers, forced demographic changes, religious fundamentalism, child labor, bonded-labor, oppression of ethnic and cultural minorities, indigenous or tribal peoples, all across Asia.

There is a rapidly changing social, political and demographic landscape of Asian societies. The growth and expansion of mass media, means of instant communication and informatics, have further accelerated cultural changes. While they serve the Asian people, they also undermine religious, moral and cultural values. There is an onslaught of pornography, the exploitative, amoral, and even anti-moral entertainment industry, glorifying violence, free sex, hedonism in every form, individualism, materialism, consumerism, and an exclusively secularist outlook in life, which strike at the roots of Asian religious and cultural values in family and society.

The other evils threatening life in Asia are the unscrupulous destruction of natural resources and life resources in land, ocean and atmosphere, leading to the destruction of eco-systems. Other growing threats to life in Asia are drug trafficking, drug addiction, the spread of AIDS, the neglect of basic health-care systems.

There is, therefore, a need for the promotion of human and legal rights, a struggle against the exploitation of women, children, migrants, AIDS, organized prostitution, child abuse, pedophilia, political corruption and wanton destruction of natural resources.

The aforementioned tremendous problems are at bottom line a degradation of human life and the dignity of the human person. It is important to call by name the different situations to find possible solutions. In other words, to find responses to the challenges they pose.

The Synodal Fathers made their interventions with respect to Asian realities as presented in the *Lineamenta*, the *Instrumentum laboris* and the *Relatio ante disceptationem*. In view of the said interventions I would try to group their responses to some challenges through different formation ministries of the Church in Asia, in particular, those directly related to her educational ministry.

B. RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY ASIAN REALITIES TO THE CHURCH OF ASIA

1. Needed Christian Values vis-à-vis Different Situations

1. The Church's Mission of Social Concerns and Education in Asian Context—keen sense of social awareness, spirit of service, justice, peace, solidarity, and option for the weaker sectors of society.

2. Interreligious Dialogue and Education in Asian Realities. Respect for the genius and genuine values enshrined in the religious-cultural traditions of other peoples, faith and hope in the Lord of history, a sense of wonder at the mighty works of God, a deeper striving for communion with God.

3. Inculturation and Education in Asian Setting. Respect for essential values in Asian religious and cultural traditions, such as complete trust in the Lord, spirit of prayer, the virtues promoted by an active non-violence like renunciation and simplicity, compassion and solidarity with the poor, meekness and humility.

4. Education of Women in Asian Societies. A Pro-Life stance, respect for human rights, respect for women, gender equality, building a culture of life.

5. Ecology and Education for Sustainable Development in Asian Setting. Respect for the integrity of creation, a call to stewardship, capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity, readiness to promote the common good.

6. Globalization and Possible Educational Responses in Asian Realities. Solidarity, justice, equality, search for meaning in life, search for truth, beauty.

7. Evangelization and the Educational Ministry. Familiarity with Asian cultures and traditions, formed in genuine Christian spirituality expressed in Asian forms, knowledgeable of authentic Christian prayer, as well as the Asian forms of prayer.

8. Family and Youth Ministries in Asian Societies: Catechesis

There seems to be a common thread running through the different problems that the Asian world is facing that point to some Christian values that are greatly needed, so that they could help steer away from the present crisis:

Solidarity, sense of justice, peace, respect for human rights, self-sacrifice, social awareness.

2. The Church's Mission of Social Concerns and Education in Asia

One of the aspirations of the Church in Asia is to discern ways by which education can serve to create a more just and humane order. Likewise, to search for ways to form persons who are not only intellectually and professionally competent, but above all, morally, spiritually and socially committed. Moreover, there is a felt need to evolve new educational strategies as a result of a deeper understanding of the mission of love and service of the Church in Asia.

The document of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education on *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* offers valuable doctrine on the vocation of Catholic educators. This would include the work of ongoing social development, preparing men and women to assume their social responsibility of working for the improvement of social structures, making them more conformed to the principles of the Gospel (LCS, 19).

As was previously mentioned, the tremendous problems of Asian societies today, in fact, of societies the world over, demand Catholic educators develop in themselves and cultivate in their students a keen sense of social awareness, with a profound civic and social responsibility. They are called upon to guide their students in the examination of basic problems of the world in the light of the Christian faith. Likewise, to prepare them to assert their human rights in decision-making within the social, economic and political community, all in the "centrality of service," as Pope Paul VI puts it. Thus, they will help form persons who will make society more peaceful, fraternal and communitarian (LCS, 19).

In the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II calls upon Catholic Universities to include in their research activities:

A study of serious contemporary problems in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing of the world's resources, a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level." He added that the "University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions. (ECE, 32)

An education with a social orientation will also be an education geared towards peace building. Noteworthy is the motto of Pope Pius XII, "Peace is the fruit of justice"; and of Pope Paul VI, "Development is the new name of peace." Pope John Paul II developed the idea that "Peace is the fruit of

solidarity," in his *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. He said, " In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbor is not only a human being with his or her own right and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. (SRS, 40)

A study of the Social Doctrine of the Church is imperative for a proper direction of an education with a social orientation. This type of education requires an all-out effort for the development of the whole person — body, mind and spirit. Educators must be filled with the urgency to build the defenses of peace in the minds of their students. They must be able to touch their hearts, so that with regard to "others" they may become persons marked by a passion for peace, justice and solidarity, especially for the weaker sectors of society, in fact, for all humankind.

3. Interreligious Dialogue and Education in the Asian Context

The disharmonies in our Asian world today can be challenged by a spirituality of harmony that is found to be propitious in preparing for an interreligious dialogue which is "a part of the Church's evangelizing mission." (RM. 55)

The fact that over 97% of those with whom Christians in Asia live are followers of other religions, interreligious dialogue is of paramount importance in the Church's mission of love and service. An interreligious dialogue presupposes a hope in the Lord of history, a sense of wonder at his mighty work, a hunger for the saving message, and invites all to share in the ultimate goal of human striving — the inner life of God. There is a need for interreligious dialogue as a way of seeing in our brothers and sisters of other faiths "a ray of truth which enlightens all men" (NA, 2). This task demands, firstly, attaining a deeper knowledge of our Christian faith and, secondly, an openness in understanding the religious convictions of others. Together with our fidelity to the Christian faith tradition, we are called to respect the genius and the genuine values enshrined in the religious-cultural traditions of other peoples. "Dialogue is based on hope and love and will bear fruit in the Spirit. (RM. 56)

The dialogue of life, a grass-roots approach to living the Gospel in pluralist societies, is of special importance in Asia. It is also held that authentic evangelization ought to move from dialogue to service, which in turn would lead to a deeper dialogue, and thus to an even greater service to the people of Asia. Likewise, the dialogue of religious experience deserves much attention. In the dialogue with the spiritual traditions of Asia, Chris-

tians bear witness to the vitality of Christian traditions of asceticism and mysticism, and integrate into their own faith in Christ the treasures of Asian spirituality.²

One of the aims of interreligious dialogue in Asia should be collaboration for common goals. This would include the building of harmonious societies on the principle of unity in diversity; support for those who suffer injustice and discrimination; common action for the defence of human rights, and a common stand on ethical questions, such as abortions — especially the selective abortion of females — and euthanasia.³

4. INCULTURATION AND EDUCATION IN AN ASIAN SETTING

Asia today finds itself in a rapid process of modernization. One can find at work, in varying degrees, elements of tradition hand-in-hand with the forces of modernization. Some of the components of the so-called modernity are science, technology, industrialization, telecommunications, information technology, urbanization, new educational, political and economic systems that profoundly influence traditional cultures with a transformation in attitudes, values and consciousness of individuals and groups. In other words, there is a relegation of the cultural dimension of life to the background. The economy became the dominant factor in human and social life, with adverse consequences. There is a pressing need to put culture back in its rightful place. "To bring faith to culture and to inculturate it are the major challenges of the Church in Asia on the threshold of the third millennium."⁴

The culture of a people expresses its spirit, its collective unconscious; and just as the trees of the forest help preserve the soil from erosion, so does the cultural roots of a people give a sense of identity and strength to withstand the oppression and exploitation of the powerful. From the culture of the people stem values, motivation and attitudes. It becomes necessary, then, to bring about a sustained cultural intervention through education, in particular, and the use of other means, in general, like mass media communications, networking, conscientization campaign, etc. In the cultural reconstruction of Asian societies, religions as an animating force of culture have an important role to play. And this role will be effectively carried out when the various religious traditions are in dialogue with each other, and the sa-

² "Relatio Post Disceptationem," Card. Shan Kuo-His, S.J., in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, September-October, 1998, p. 673.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Card. Paul Poupard, "Asia has strong cultural roots," in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, September-October, 1998, p.687.

lient values of the respective cultures are brought to the fore. Efforts must be exerted to overcome situations of contradictions and structural dualism in any country. There is a need for "healing at the root" of the growing social and economic disparity, giving in to a hedonistic culture of luxury, on the one hand, and a culture of want and destitution, on the other. A humane and equitable socio-economic development can be found in the emergence of a holistic cultural framework. In an education towards the formation of Christian values it would be advisable to begin by underscoring in each country, with the particular religious-cultural tradition of the majority of its people, the outstanding values in each of them, relating them as well to Christian values.

In this connection, it is of paramount importance to emphasize that, unless radical discipleship is lived by all concerned: lecturers, consultants, program designers, thinkers, implementors and others, all the educative interventions geared towards the promotion of Christian values will still be a myth.

Education in the Asian context must foster the appreciation, evaluation and promotion of the rich cultural heritage and spirituality of the Asian peoples. Its spirituality is characterized by a complete trust in the Lord, the spirituality of the powerless, the *anawim*. It consists in the virtues promoted by active non-violence, such as renunciation and simplicity, compassion and solidarity with the poor, meekness and humility. These Gospel values resonate deeply with the cultures of Asia. According to the Asian Bishops, this spirituality expresses the Asian peoples' communion with God, docility to his Spirit, and their following of Jesus. The disharmonies in our Asian world are challenged by such a spirituality, which can help move away from images of exterior organization, power or mere secular effectiveness, to images of simplicity, humble presence and service.

The spirituality of the powerless should not be misconstrued as something fatalistic, but rather that, as we endeavor to plan and implement strategies, we realize our personal limitations. Hence, we implore God's help in all our efforts. Our strength must come from him.

The pastoral care of culture rests upon the great cultural traditions of Asia so as to bring them the Good News of Christ according to the conciliar adage inspired by St. Paul: accept, purify, elevate. The plant develops from its roots, in good earth, through the labors of man, under God's sun. The Gospel finds support in Asian cultures and transforms them into moorings for the newness of Christ.⁵

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 688.

Catholic schools and universities in the Asian Region can do a great service in the preservation, enrichment and transmission of the particular culture where they find themselves inserted, as well as in the evangelization of this culture. This is a way of inculturating the faith.

5. Education of Women in Asian Societies

Discriminating against women is still prevalent in many Asian societies. Their exclusion is not only fixed in law and social relations, but also in the very structure of society. Women have no voice in the taking of decisions, whether in the home, the political or religious community, within the local, national or international spheres.

But in our increasingly interdependent society, women are called upon to develop their potentials. However, this is not possible if the social conditions do not foster a climate in which a woman can develop herself responsibly and freely. Women, therefore, must be freed from marginalizations and discriminations due to their traditional lack of preparation. This is a consequence of a society that has been unjust to women. Nevertheless, this condition is gradually disappearing, in the degree that people become more aware of the obligation to respect human rights, and the society truly opens itself up to the contributions that women are capable of making.

A new trend is appearing in many Asian societies nowadays. There is a movement from male dominance to the emergence of women in many aspects of social life. This was included among the Asian megatrends that are changing there, is a silent yet powerful revolutions that is taking place with regard the world today. There is a silent yet powerful revolution taking place with regard to the women in Asia. Asian women have made substantial, mostly unrecognized, inroads in the workplace. Although most women in Asia still live by the centuries-old tradition, millions of affluent, professional women will enter the 21st Century as a force to reckon with, even if by reason of sheer numbers alone. Just to take the case of China. In 1949 the number of women participating in the industrial force was 600,000. By 1996, there was a dramatic increase to 50 million.⁶

It cannot be denied, however, that there is still a long march towards equality between men and women in the Asian context in general, despite the oft-repeated Chinese saying that "women hold up half the sky." This is due to the Confucian-like ethos present in most Asian societies, where they consider men and women as having defined places and roles for the pur-

⁶ John Naisbitt, *Megatrends Asia*, London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1996, pp. 198-199.

pose of achieving harmony — *Yin* and *Yang*. On the other hand, as women grow more independent, more active in society, more influential in their communities, a new ethos will take the place of ancient traditions. The Philippines is an exception, though, compared with the situation in other countries, when it comes to women leadership roles in society. Asia is now moving from traditions to options. Undoubtedly, the first step to this change is education. If knowledge is power, education is the great equalizer.

Despite the dramatic gains in the awareness of the dignity and status of women in recent years, the continuing poverty and exploitation of women remains a serious problem in Asia. Illiteracy and lack of educational opportunities are much greater among women than among men. The abortions of females greatly exceed those of males. Women continue to be treated as commodities in prostitution, sex tourism and entertainment industries.⁷

The horizon would appear bright if the role of women will be increasingly recognized. The "feminine genius" is indispensable for the initial education in the family. The mother's influence begins even when the child is still in her womb. But the woman's role in the rest of the formational process is just as important. The universal values, which every sound education must present, are offered by feminine sensitivity in a tone complementary to that of men. The educational process will certainly be enriched when men and women work together in training projects, as well as in educational institutions.

There is an issue of paramount significance, and that is the protection of life from the womb to the tomb. The role of the woman in the service of life needs utmost attention. At this juncture, the call for a pro-life stance is indispensable. "Human Life International — Asia" can provide materials and expertise to guide the delicate task of building a culture of life in Asia.⁸ There is a pressing need to overcome such anti-life movements, as the propagation of contraceptives and abortifacient means to control population, to the point of legalization of abortion.

Women often form the majority of those who participate in the life of the Church and her mission. They are the first and most important educators of the faith. They nurture and bring to maturity religious and priestly vocations. They are active participants in every pastoral activity of the Church. Their important role in the evangelizing mission of the Church should be recognized and encouraged.⁹

⁷ *Relatio Post Disceptationem*, pp.666-667.

⁸ *Voices For Life*, A Pro-life Handbook for Asia, HLI-Asia Publication, 1996.

⁹ *Relatio Post Disceptationem*, p. 658.

6. Ecology and Education for Sustainable Development in Asia

There is a daily threat to survival posed to the marginalized peoples in Asian countries. This threat to survival derives from the abuse of natural resources. The overwhelming majority of Asians depends for their livelihood on the products of forest, land and sea. But these resources are being more diverted to answer the needs of a market-oriented economy and industry. Thus, the marginal groups in Asian societies, such as the tribals, fishermen, poor peasants, not only do not benefit from this model of development, but they are even the ones who pay the cost of such development, without deriving any benefit from them.

A pressing problem, then, in the Asian world is the fragility of its ecosystem. This has in fact been responsible for arousing the awareness of the interdependence of problems. These problems can only be resolved through resolute efforts and measures taken on the international level. Nonetheless, although the threats to life are global, they have also their local manifestations. This is why it is often advised to "think globally and act locally." In one place, the threat may be viewed as violations of justice; in another, a menace to peace; and still in another, an abuse of land, sea and air, posing a hazard not only to humanity but to the whole of creation.

In view of the devastation wrought by the so-called development efforts, which the different countries in Asia have undergone, there is now a pressing need for people to be convinced about the values of sustainable development. There must be an education of a new generation of citizens who will be truly creative and effective participants in the difficult task of reversing the current destructive results of conventional development.

There is now an emerging awareness as well, in the field of human rights, of the notion of intergenerational responsibility. For instance, in the case of natural resources, in which some are renewable while others are not, to use them as if they were inexhaustible is to endanger their availability, not only for the present generation but above all for future generations.

A Christian vision of man can enrich and guide environment-related projects and protect them from losing an authentic human direction. Pope John Paul II, in his Message for Peace, in 1990, very incisively pointed out that:

When the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of the search for peace in society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere is trying to tell us: namely, that there is order in the universe which must be respected and that the human person, endowed with the

capability of choosing freely has the responsibility to preserve the order for the well-being of future generations.

Harmony must exist between humankind and the natural world. This will spring from the understanding of the interdependence of human beings with the rest of creation. The call to stewardship is a privilege bestowed on humankind by God and is, therefore, a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. If men and women are caring, and cultivate harmony in all their dealings with each other and the earth itself, then they grow in the image and likeness of God.¹⁰

If political will is of the essence, not only in considering sustainable development as a call to action but also in solving underlying problems of illiteracy and ignorance, then a new informed civic culture must be created for the global community as a whole. In the formation of the said culture, the following words from *Centesimus Annus* appear to be most relevant and a wise guideline:

All human activity takes place within a culture and interacts with culture. For an adequate formation of culture, the whole man is required, whereby he exercises his creativity, intelligence and knowledge of the world and people. Furthermore, he displays his capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity and readiness to promote the common good. Thus the first and most important task is accomplished within man's heart. (CA, 51)

7. Globalization in Asian Realities and Possible Responses

Another Asian social reality which is greatly challenging the Church in Asia is globalization. This phenomenon of globalization has its lights and shadows. It is guided by the ideology of neo-liberal capitalism. The forces of free enterprise have opened up the world's markets, and have created a single integrated global market. This brings about vast increases in global income, higher rates of return on capital and increased trade. But this goes hand-in-hand with greater marginalization of the poor, greater inequalities between countries, and between the rich and the poor in the same country. Globalization has not improved the life of the poor. It has spawned cutthroat competition.

¹⁰Sean McDonagh, *To Care for the Earth: A Call to a New Theology*, Claretian Publications: Quezon City, Philippines, 1990, pp. 122-123.

The single global market has excluded worldwide masses from the system. The rules of the free market are biased against them. Its benefits do not trickle down to them. In this situation, the rich and the poor do not compete as equals. The reason why the new globalization and its ideology of free trade are so revolutionary is that they would reduce human beings to functioning solely as economic animals, under the constant threat of losing their livelihoods, unless they become more and more efficient in production. In the words of Pope John Paul II, in globalization the challenge is to ensure "globalization in solidarity and globalization without marginalization."¹¹

In an era of globalization, it is important to educate not only in the sciences and technology, even if they are of critical importance in our times. These disciplines correspond solely to the *homo faber*, the first level of human enterprise, enabling the people to adapt to their changing material environment in order to survive. However, this has the danger of seeing people only as "human resources," or their being transformed into "globally competitive workers." The more profoundly human activity of searching for the truth, the quest for meaning, the creation of beauty would require the arts, literature, the humanities and the social sciences.

The Church in Asia is clearly being called by the Spirit of the Lord to be a Church of the poor. Because of her love of preference for the poor, she must be a prophet, denouncing inequalities resulting from globalization, and announcing Gospel values of justice and love. It must continue in its "new way of being Church," concretized in basic ecclesial communities (BECs). The BECs, in solidarity with one another at the micro-grassroots level, are giving an effective community faith-response to the challenge of globalization.¹²

The Churches of the First World are called upon to be in solidarity with the poor of Asia, and to be their advocates together with the Church in Asia for justice and equality before their own governments, and with the world's economic institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, so as to bring about what Pope John Paul II called "globalization without marginalization. Globalization in solidarity."¹³

¹¹Pope John Paul II, Message on the World Day Of Peace, January 1, 1998.

¹²Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, "Globalization in solidarity without marginalization," in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, September-October, 1998, pp. 629-630.

¹³"Message of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops," in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, July-August, 1998, p. 580.

8. Education and Evangelization in Asian Realities

The work of education goes hand-in-hand with evangelization. Catholic schools and educational institutions have played an important role in Asia. There is, however, a need to rethink and reorient the apostolate of education. It must be directed more to the disadvantaged and the marginalized, so that these can be empowered for social transformation. However, it is to be noted that in the efforts of some Catholic schools to reach high standards in education, the poor are left out. This must be a great concern for the Church. In some parts of Asia, the Church's schools have provided educational opportunities for girls, tribal minorities, rural villages and children from low castes, for a long time now. There is, however, a danger that, due to economic pressures, they might limit their availability only to the well-off. It is recommended that attention be given to non-formal education and literacy programs to uplift those who cannot afford a formal education.

The educational environment in Church schools must provide a proper setting for the formation of Christian values. The educative community and the educative project should have an evangelizing mission. The new evangelization and the new way of being Church in Asia call for a new type of formation. In the first place, formation must take into account the Asian realities. All evangelizers in Asia must be familiar with Asian realities, and be able to analyze their root causes. They also need to discern, in and through them, what God is calling them to do in the situation. Secondly, they should be familiar with Asian cultures and religions, know their positive values in order to lead them to Christ. Thirdly, they must be formed to genuine Christian spirituality expressed in Asian forms. They must be knowledgeable of the authentic Christian prayer, as well as the Asian forms of prayer, contemplation and style of life. A truly inculturated Asian spirituality is considered to be the key to the new evangelization of Asia.¹⁴

Education alone cannot solve the problems besetting the Asian world. However, it can play its part in equipping the next generation with more insight, greater competence and deeper motivation than has so far been done. Over and above this, Christian education will help build up the Kingdom of God, and work for the renewal of the temporal order, which is seen to be central to the vocation and service of Christian educators in Asia. Catholic educational institutions are formidable partners in evangelization and community service.

¹⁴Op. cit. "*Relatio Post Disceptationem*," p. 664.

Because of the deep human crisis at the end of the 20th Century, an immense task lies before educators, i.e., re-orienting education to bring about human excellence through a better balance between academic excellence and human values and moral perceptions.

9. Family and Youth Ministries in Asian Societies: Catechesis

In the new evangelization, the importance and urgency of a renewed approach to the apostolate of the family and by the family within its neighborhood have been greatly emphasized in the Special Assembly. The family is the cradle of Asian cultures, as well as of their values and religious education.¹⁵

The family is the place where the gift of life is valued, and where filial piety to God and to parents is inculcated. But due to modernization, and under the impact of a consumerist culture, many Asian families are threatened and disintegrating. Divorce, birth control, abortion, etc., are on the increase, so that there is a need for the Church to be very close to all families, Christian and non-Christian. New forms of family ministry must be devised in collaboration with people of other religions. There is a need to update priests, Religious and seminarians in the empowerment of families to be witnesses to other families.¹⁶

In view of their number, youth represent the emerging culture of Asia. Youth are the most threatened by the erosion of family and religious values. In such a situation, youth ministries must receive special attention.

A study made on youth ministries in the most diverse situations in Asia brought out seven guidelines that could be the more preferred lines of action for doing youth ministry in Asian context. One ultimate concern in this regard must be uppermost in the minds and hearts of those involved in youth ministry: making the person of Jesus known as he has come to speak about the works of the Father. The following types of ministry were offered as indications:

1. Narrative Ministry
2. Ministry of Service
3. Inculturated Ministry
4. Celebrative Ministry

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.657.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

5. Inclusive Ministry
6. Personalized Ministry
7. Bible Ministry

Catechetical instructions can also be guided by the aforesaid approaches in youth ministry in Asian context.

C. MODELS FOR EDUCATION IN VALUES

Some Models for an Education in Values

a. I would like to mention what appears to be a very successful education in values known as the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values that was started in Asia but is now gaining world acceptance. Its methodology can serve as a model for an education in Christian values. A detailed description of this type of education can be found in the Internet: <http://www.sathyasai.org.uk>

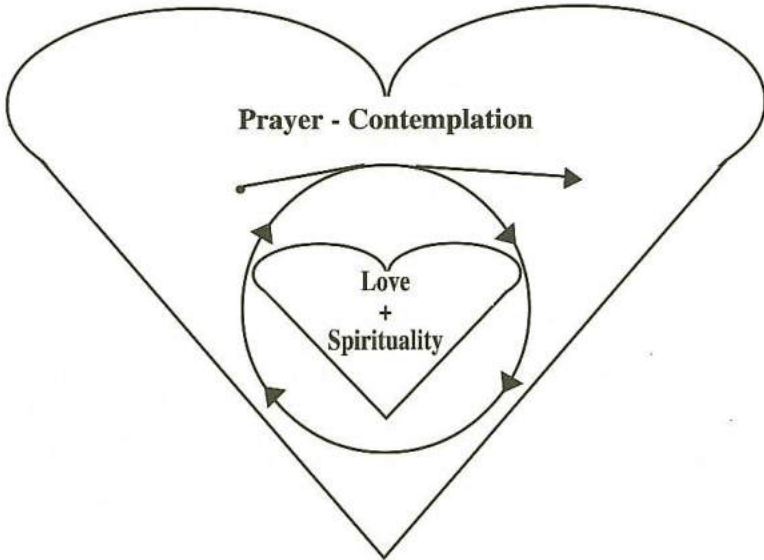
b. There is another model coming from educative centers with a direct Christian inspiration: An Education in Justice, Peace, Solidarity and Human Rights. This is being implemented in the educational centers of the Teresian Association in Spain and Latin America.

c. In the discussion of the eight responses to the different challenges posed to the Church in Asia, the "Pastoral Spiral" method may be used. The "Pastoral Spiral" is a method, at the heart of which is the love of God and spirituality. It consists in the scrutiny of reality at the start, and moves in the light of the Gospel to a reflection and discernment in faith. Such a reflection will lead to a responsive judgment that would in turn lead to efficient planning and action. These steps always conclude with a good evaluation. This would make the participants see a new reality emerging for the next "pastoral spiral."¹⁷

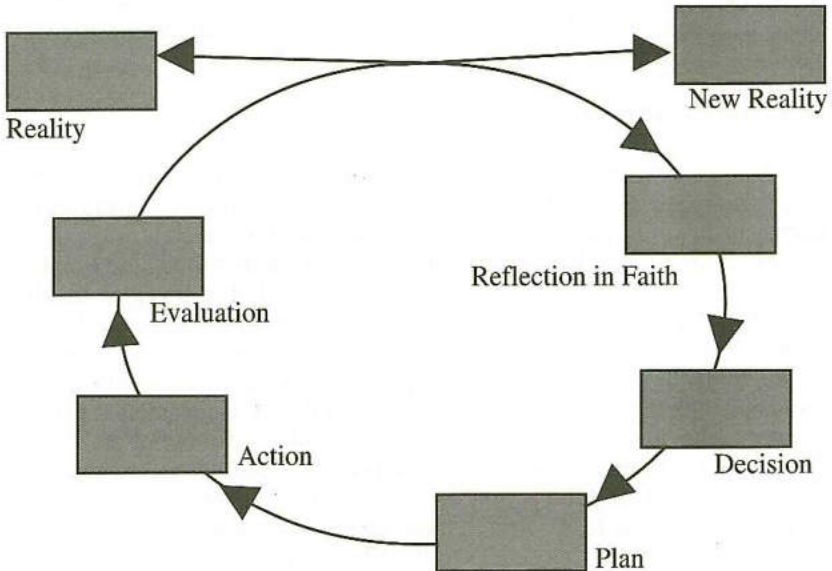
A diagrammatic explanation of the "Pastoral Spiral" method is as follows:

¹⁷"Toward a Formation-Oriented Education," *Proceedings of a Colloquium on Education in Asia*, Vicente Cajilig, O.P., ed., Manila, UST Printing Office, 1993, pp. 2, 19-20.

THE SPIRIT AND HEART OF THE SPIRAL



THE PASTORAL SPIRAL



To close: may Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother, who certainly holds a particular affection for her children in Asia, invoke the outpouring of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit on all the participants of this Seventh Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, so that the group discussions will bear lasting fruits for the pastoral and missionary activities in this vast Asian Continent.

II. YOUTH MINISTRY IN ASIA

by
LUC VAN LOOY, SDB

INTRODUCTION

It is an impossible task to speak for "Asia," as the differences between the countries are of such a dimension and variety that there is hardly any way to speak of Asia as a unity, in any field. In a certain way this makes it easier, as it allows me to choose the arguments I prefer, while it permits me to present some ideas to the people in charge of youth ministry in the various countries of Asia, from my own experience and insight. The reader may ask what the difference would be with youth ministry in other continents. The choice of arguments would be different, as each context would need to be approached in a different way, and each one needs to prioritize according to the situation. I feel these arguments, these seven guidelines, would be the ones to be given preference in an Asia context. There is one basic aspect which we will always have to bear in mind while doing youth ministry, that is, that the ultimate concern is to make known the person of Jesus, as he has come to speak about the works of the Father. This leads me to the first among the indications.

1. Narrative Ministry

For two reasons this is the central point on which to focus: first, because the communication of the faith goes through the recounting of the history of it. God came into the life of human kind in concrete ways in the history of his people. It is important to state this all the time, and to introduce young people into the world of religion through this. It is possible that a number of people are looking for some answers to psychological problems or inner quests through their adherence to religion. This is, however, not the thing they will get in Christian religion. It is like in the confrontation Jesus had with the seducer after 40 days in the desert. He wanted to give an answer to the hunger of Jesus, suggesting he make bread out of the stones. That is not God's way. Instead, when the people came to listen to his words, and evening fell, and the people were many, their disposition to hear his word was such that Jesus offered them bread and fish to eat. Maybe some people think that their closeness to the Church and their adherence to the

Catholic religion will give them a sense of belonging which brings them all the advantages of belonging to the group, and in such a way share in what the group has in every way. Also this may lead to a disillusion. Religion has a social aspect, and has also a role of being active in the field of solving social problems, but the fact of belonging to this religion does not provide such a right as to put yourself at ease and wait. The psychological and the sociological aspects of religion are not the purpose, nor do they define what Christian religion is. If anything, they may be due to the fact that one has been looking for the precious pearl and has concentrated everything on it. On top of this, then, everything else may come your way.

The second reason why narrative ministry is so important is that young Asians are good listeners. The way of communicating the faith goes not so much through the efficacious way of proofs and theological debate, but through the way of contact and life-communication. It is more important for the Asian youth to be able to visualize the person of Christ in his surroundings, and to experience how the relationships of the people around him grew. Asian young people enjoy role-playing biblical scenes; and this brings them into a life-contact with the content they want to draw from the gospel. As a matter of fact, this renders the reality of the gospel very much alive and realistic.

2. Ministry of Service

The social and economic situation of so many young people in Asia makes a service ministry necessary. As was made clear above, the young in Asia do not approach the faith in a theoretical way; nor would they profit much from that. Ministry needs to work on credibility, on the part of the message proclaimed, and on that of the messenger. It is true that the teacher-master will initially receive unconditional credibility. It is also true that the mentality of docility has changed a lot in recent years. Faith needs to make its way into life, and to share in the real situations of the young. A Church which is committed to the people in its environment, a Church which puts its strengths at the disposition of the poor and the needy will be recognized easily as the true Church. Real signs are necessary to speak to the young. It is significant that many groups of young people are organizing activities on behalf of the suffering part of society.

The young are attentive to the attitudes of service they encounter in the people who represent the Church. They themselves gladly take part in this service through volunteer movements of others, or the like. This gives an opportunity to form for service. This can happen on the level of groups and movements. It is important that the work of the Church be shared by many. Therefore, a systematic training to service is extremely useful. In order to

avoid the danger of voluntarism, that is, a service rendered without taking into account the whole context, or the consequences of it, our Christians need a good preparation and training in order to be able to serve well. Not everything that is good has to be done; not everything one can think of "for the good of the people" is indeed for their good. Therefore, not only do we have to develop a vision on the totality and of the complexity of service that can be rendered, to open a good vision of reality, but also, one needs to know the framework in which his or her service belongs, and what the motivations there are in rendering the service. Service can easily be taken as mere "occupational therapy" for the young. Instead, by giving them an adequate formation in the mentality of service, they will learn what it really means to serve the common good of people, and to be of service not only for this instant, but for life.

3. Inculturated Ministry

Asia is going through rapid changes—not at the same pace in every country—but it is amazing how far certain ideas or currents penetrate. Mass communications render everything public, and everybody has easy access to every thing. This leads to a very urgent response on the part of the religions. Each religion will react differently. We can also see groups alienating themselves from the stream of life and of communication. Christian ministry calls for an accurate assistance to the young, so that they may learn how to read and interpret reality. Inculturation today may well have to be looked upon, in the world of young people especially, as the fact of being present in the culture of the day following upon the pace of history. Often it is thought that religions linger behind. This could not be justified in Christian youth ministry. A well thought-out youth ministry will be capable of reading reality together, a group of ministers together with the young, and in this way remaining deeply present in the culture of the young of today. The knowledge of this youth context has to be shared commonly by the youth ministry team, for this allows all to have a general picture, and in this way view the religious reality on a solid ground.

An inculturated ministry will also speak the language of the young. Maybe this is one of the more urgent and necessary needs for attention in the lives of the young while they are approaching religion. It is commonly asserted that the religious message is presented in a terminology of the past. Young people need an introduction to the jargon of the faith. There is a need for a movement in two senses: first, in the sense of religious people coming close to the young by speaking their language and feeling at home in their symbols and specific expressions; and second, in bringing the concepts of religions to the young. The history of the last number of years shows that young people are not very much introduced into the world of

religion by their parents in the early years of their existence. This creates a need to explain the essential elements, often at a later stage. Of course, in a number of Asian countries a good number of youngsters are only brought to the faith during their young years, as their family has other religious roots. The communication of concepts and religious terminology is necessary in order to allow themselves to encounter a context which is common to all. Besides, it is necessary to use the right terminology in order to be able to express a reality, and to refer to a world which is not just measurable by efficiency or human yardsticks.

The inculturated minister is the guide who has his own point of reference in God, in the word spoken by the Father, and in the works done by his incarnated Son; and who stays present in the life of the young in order to assist and accompany them on their way. This attitude of sharing and staying with the young allows the adult to remain up-to-date with regard to the world of the young, and also gives him the possibility to read together with the young the interpretation of facts and events in the light of the faith. If any one wants to be a good interpreter, he needs to know both sides well, and to bring about a blend of the two realities. This is a job which reminds one of a technician who introduces a program into the computer in such a way that the keys on the keyboard correspond with the screen, and express what the writer intends to say, in a coherent way.

4. Celebrative Ministry

Faith needs not only to be presented and explained, or lived together and witnessed through service, it needs also to be celebrated. Studies reveal that the young do not show great interest in the liturgy of the Church. This is due, among others reasons, to the fact that the terminology is not sufficiently known, that the communication between minister and youngsters does not flow, and that the message does not really enter into the daily world of the young. Young people say that every Sunday service repeats the same thing, that there is nothing new or exciting about it. For the religious faith of young people it is of extreme importance that they feel at home where the faith is celebrated. It has to be "their" expression of faith and "their" relationship with God.

This calls for an attentive consideration to all we propose to them as liturgy and celebration. A careful introduction into what it means to enter into a relationship, as a community, with God, and how you address him is necessary. It is also indispensable to distinguish a religious celebrative moment from any other social or festive gathering. Nevertheless, it has to be "their" expression of faith. As a principle, we have to create together with them the conditions for a liturgy they enjoy. If they participate only on

the basis of the obligation imposed by the Church, then there is little chance that their life will be influenced by this. Young people need to move from the sense of duty to the sense of enjoyment when it comes to liturgical celebrations. This is possible if they are part of it, of the preparation, of the realization, of the conclusion; and that the whole event has a link with any of the more important aspects of their lives. Once they can "do something" in order to make the liturgy more alive and corresponding, they start to enjoy it.

Especially in Asia this has to be emphasized, as long as the young tend to remain passive, and the liturgical leaders tend to perpetuate this passive attitude. This may reflect the way our people enter into contact with God. The contact with the Mysterious One, according to culture and custom in many parts of the continent, happens in a rather passive way, and, therefore, is not very open and ordinary. Here we need to reflect upon the evangelization of our cultures. The very creation has been an act of God's presence in the world. His revelation to the prophets and to the people throughout the Old Testament show his vivid interest in what happens in the life of the people, even up to the point of offering food for their livelihood. The climax of this interest in the people is given in the Incarnation of his only Son. Jesus spent his life going around with his disciples, listening to many needs, confronting the people with their own interpretation of the law, and trying to explain to them that God has been present in their lives all the time through signs of love. This makes God closely related with what is human and with the things we do and love. These concrete things in life need to find expression in our liturgical approach to God as a community.

5. An Inclusive Ministry

Liturgy and prayer lead us to community. Youth and faith pass through the community. It is significant that Jesus, at the very outset of his ministry, creates a community of disciples. When he works his first miracle in Cana of Galilee, his mother and disciples are there. Then immediately he "goes to Capharnaum and remains with them for a few days." Here he sets up the first communitarian nucleus of Christianity.

Youth ministry needs groups and movements. It is in this way that they develop their capacity for creativity, and take upon themselves the organization and expression of their faith. In groups they reflect on the content of their faith. They organize the services to be rendered. They are engaged with the problems of expressing their faith in daily life. The presence of an educator in the group is a precious way of assisting them in their search, and will offer opportunities of clearing concepts, and of telling the story of his or her own faith.

The groups are composed of young people of all classes and races, creating an image of the Church as one fraternal community. At the moment of the appearance of the Apostles after the resurrection of Jesus it was clear that the Church did not want to set up any racial barriers among believers. It was also the great concern of St. Paul to create this union among people of different origins. Groups and movements foster this. They bring together young people of many different backgrounds. It is possible, naturally, that in the process of reaching this inclusive way of ministry, there be a need for certain groups to meet among themselves, but only as a preparatory way of integrating with others. The community of believers does not put languages or races or belongings as the most important issues. Rather it wants all together to be focused on the Christ present, who is in the community. Rich and poor, weak and strong, white and colored, all find themselves at home in the one community.

Movements do not necessarily have a strictly defined structure. Groups will need this much more. Today, a number of movements try to avoid purposely structuring themselves, in order to remain flexible, and not to exclude anybody. They would look to a common spirituality and to a system of networking. No presidents or elections are considered. This has the great advantage of avoiding elitism in such movements. The important aspect, then, is a process through which young people can come into contact with the other members of the movements, even though one may find himself or herself at a totally different level of faith expression, and in totally different cultures. These movements allow the young to meet on their own levels, between individuals and groups, in order to dialogue, confront themselves about different issues, exchange educational and formative experiences, and enjoy being together in their own way. Often these movements will open to a perspective of joyful celebrations, and they will spread their spirit and message through leaflets, newsletters and other types of communications, also getting other young people involved. Groups are in a special way the trampoline towards the formation of animators, since they need leaders; and they have the possibility to organize adequate training for their own members and for others.

6. Personalized Ministry

The heart of the faith experience consists in the encounter between God and the person. This will be greatly facilitated by the ambient created by the members, and by the personal links which become possible through this. Young people of today very much need to express their anxieties and their uncertainties. The most precious thing they receive in groups and in movements is the presence of some credible adults, who are there because of their faith and willingly accompany the young through the often dark

tunnels of fear and insecurity. It is here that the touch of grace is mediated by an adult who listens and encourages. The important task is to draw from within the young person his sense of religion and faith, make him or her aware of it, and activate it in such a way that it becomes significant in the realization of the task he or she foresees in life. In this way many young people discover the active presence of the Spirit in themselves; and, what makes it more appealing, is the fact that they recognize this same Spirit present in other persons. They soon find out that the practice of faith does not carry one away from life, that the growth of a spirituality allows one to live an intense inner peace, and does not allow secondary things to take the lead. Today we speak of a youth spirituality, which is an expression of this joy of living the faith, and living it in communication with others. as a way of making the Kingdom of God present in daily life.

While being very communicative, this way of living the faith is felt as very personal. Meeting with others, especially with someone who invites you to share at a deeper level, leads to a capacity of a personal meeting with Christ.

Prayer and contemplation are the immediate results of this personalized approach to religion. The activities of the group, the services rendered, the celebrations enjoyed, all remain valid and precious, but at this point everything concentrates itself on the love-relationship between the individual and Christ. This rich moment of sharing with Jesus will ultimately find its consolidation in certain moments of narrating the experiences to others, and in this way, communicating oneself to persons who also sharing the process of walking with the Spirit.

7. A Bible Ministry

Youth ministry builds strongly on the Bible. This is a very good way to avoid approaches to faith which may mislead and cause confusion. In an environment where many religions co-exist, it is of the utmost importance to turn to sure texts and references. Once again, it is good to remember that God has been the One to create heaven and earth, as stated in Genesis 1, 1; and that he has constantly followed up his work in the course of history. The "order" given to creation is his. Young people need models, and in the biblical stories and teachings there are many examples of the struggle people go through, and of the way people return to God. Persons, like Moses and David, or John the Baptist and Paul of Tarsus, send strong messages for young people.

There are a few principles to observe when reading the Bible with young people. First, there are different ways of reading the Bible. One can ap-

proach the texts from a historical, or dogmatic, or literary point of view; or one can make a pastoral reading. Second, when it comes to pastoral reading, there is the charismatic reading, or one of looking for charismatic foundations in the Bible. There is also an educative-pastoral reading, or a way of looking for life-models, rather than for theories; to search for the life's turning point in the stories, such as, e.g., in the dialogue Jesus has with the people he meets; looking for the decisive moment in which the person turns to Jesus; and in what way. Or also seeking to discover the pedagogy the Bible uses in approaching people.

This educative and pastoral reading of the Bible will start from experience, and go through a process of confrontation and evaluation of one's own life, in comparison with the figures and the processes one encounters in the Bible. All this becomes a very rich experience. Doing this, the Word of God remains no longer something outside of my own being; it becomes part of my self. Together with others, it becomes a place of personal confrontation, and it provides ways of telling the story of one's own life to others. It will not be difficult to recognize ourselves in some persons of the Bible, like Jonah who runs away from his calling; or the brothers of Joseph, when they try to eliminate their uncomfortable brother-dreamer; the story told by Jesus of the publican and the Pharisee praying in the temple; and so on with many others.

The Bible in youth ministry soon becomes an inviting mirror, through which we meet ourselves in the depth of our being, and put ourselves on the road to Jerusalem, together with Jesus and the disciples.

III. WORKSHOP DISCUSSION POINTS

The following questions may be of help in the discussions:

1. What are the educative interventions required in the given situations?
2. What lines of action can be proposed?
3. What are the respective roles of the stakeholders, such as the teachers and school personnel, the students and their parents?
4. What are the pastoral actions to be taken by the bishops?
5. What possible conflicts in behavior/way of life would there be between Christians and those of other religious traditions and cultures as a consequence of certain values peculiar to a group? (Between Christians and Muslims in Southern Mindanao, for instance; Christians with Hindus or Buddhists in other parts of Asia; consider the East Timor problem.)
6. How should values common to both Christians and other religious groups be made use of to resolve such conflicts?
7. Given all the educative interventions undertaken in Asia toward the development of Christian values, what particular limitation do you ob-

serve in such interventions?

8. How can a mindset shift be effected, so that educative interventions can become more relevant to the needs of a particular culture?

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