

FABC 50 GENERAL CONFERENCE



JOURNEYING TOGETHER AS PEOPLES OF ASIA

“...and they went a different way.” (Mt 2:12)

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Volume 2

OCTOBER 12-30, 2022  
BANGKOK, THAILAND

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)







**Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)**

**FABC 50 General Conference**  
Journeying Together a Peoples of Asia  
Bangkok, Thailand

**Conference Proceedings**  
Volume 2

**Editor**  
Pablito A. Baybado, Jr

Published by  
Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

@ Copyright 2023 - Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

All Rights Reserved. This book is protected by the copyright laws of the Republic of the Philippines. This book may not be copied or printed/reprinted for commercial gain or profit.

Published by:  
Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

Layout and Design: Martius Richmond Lechuga, SThL-MA

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Volume 2

<b>EMERGING REALITIES (Continuation)</b>	
<b>Day 4: October 20, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	1
Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation - A Pathway for Asia by Mr. Lawrence Chong	5
Inter-intra Religious Dialogue - <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> by Fr. Bryan Lobo, SJ	10
Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation - A Pathway for Asia by Charles Cardinal Bo	22
Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation - A Pathway for Asia by Mr. Edmund Chia	29
<b>Day 5: October 21, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	38
Reflection on <i>Prædicare Evangelium</i> by Msgr. Joseph Sayer & Oswald Cardinal Gracias	40
FABC 50 Years On : Negotiating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities by Prof. Jonathan Tan	61
A Synodal Church for the Life of Asia by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich	76
Summary of Group Discussions on the Emerging Realities by Fr. Clarence Devadass	90
New Forms of Leadership & Governance in the Church by Prof. Christina Kheng	95
New Forms of Leadership & Governance in the Church by Bishop Pablo David	105
<b>Day 6: October 22, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	114
Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development by Ms. Naoko Maruyama	116
<b>Day 7: October 23, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	122
Address by Monsignor Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte OFM by President of CELAM (tr)	123

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Volume 2

<b>ENVISAGING NEW PATHWAYS</b>	
<b>Day 1: October 24, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	132
Case Clinic by Mr Leslie D'souza	134
Journaling and Empathy Walk by Mr. Leslie D'souza	
<b>Day 2: October 25, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	146
Theory U and Presecing Exercise by Mr. Leslie D'souza	147
<b>Day 3: October 26, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	160
Document on the Synod on Synodality by Professor Susan Pascoe	162
<b>Day 4: October 28, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	182
Address by Reverend Monsignor Michael James Nazir-Ali	184
Greeting by H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle	201
<b>Day 5: October 29, 2022 (Press Note)</b>	204
- Taiwan	206
- Bangladesh	208
- Pakistan	210
- India	212
- Korea	214
Impact of Social Media and A.I. on Evangelisation by Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle	216
- Myanmar	228
- Sri Lanka	230
- Indonesia	232
- Brunei	234
- Laos	236
- Malaysia	238
- Philippines	240
- Kazakhstan	242
- Mongolia	244
<b>Day 6: October 30, 2022</b>	247
Homily at the Closing Eucharist by H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle	248
Message from the FABC General Conference to the Peoples of Asia	252
Closing Speech of H.E. Charles Cardinal Bo	255





---

---

# EMERGING REALITIES

---

---

DAY 4  
OCTOBER 20, 2022

## PRESS NOTE

### 20TH OCTOBER 2022

20th October 2022, the fourth day of the segment 'Emerging Realities' at the FABC General Conference began with the Holy Eucharist, celebrated by Bishop John Baptist Lee Keh-mien of Hsinchu, Taiwan. H.E. Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij opened the morning session by leading the Adsumus. The morning prayer, played over video, was led by the Philippines-Malaysia-Papua New Guinea-Thailand province of the Daughters of St Paul.

H.E. Cardinal Kreingsak introduced the topics for the day - dialogue, peace and reconciliation; geopolitical and social shifts impacting Asia and reflections on ways of building bridges in the context of inter-intra religious dialogue, in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*.

H.E. Charles Cardinal Maung Bo SDB, President of the FABC, speaking of a mission of dialogue, peace, and reconciliation as a new way for the Asian Church, contextualized Asia as a country of great opportunity, optimism and survival. Adding how war has been a way of life, and describing the many threats to peace, H.E. Cardinal Bo stressed the need for the Church to be reactive, to be an agent of peace, initiating dialogue, advocating for equality, and standing up to power with 'empty

**“...every jubilee calls for metanoia - let us challenge ourselves to let peace-making be the new evangelisation”**

hands'. Mentioning that 'every jubilee calls for metanoia - let us challenge ourselves to let peace-making be the new evangelisation', H.E. Cardinal Bo concluded by calling his listeners to 'fight for peace'.

The next speaker, Dr Edmund Chia, professor of theology and Co-director of Interreligious Dialogue at the Australian Catholic University in

Melbourne, highlighting the key moments in the Asian Church's journey of dialogue, sought to emphasize the lessons that could be learned from them. Speaking of the history of dialogue, the appreciation of other religions, and the Asian Church as a learning Church, Dr Chia praised the FABC as an example of a Church of dialogue, citing it as something to be proud of.

Mr Lawrence Chong, Co-Moderator for the Singapore Archdiocesan Synodal Committee and Consultor to the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, speaking in the context of inter-intra religious dialogue, especially for young people, proposed ways to build bridges. Suggesting that Church leadership had to show credibility to the youth, develop capability for the youth, and create a future of involvement and dialogue with them, Mr Chong called on his listeners to be better at dialogue with the youth.

**“Emphasizing how the reality of agape was the fundamental principle of the document on which every initiative can be built, and that in dialogue with other cultures and religions, realities are more important than ideas.”**

The session was followed by a round of plenary group discussions and questions.

Prof. Edmund Terence Gomez, professor of political economy in the Faculty of Economics and Administration at the University of Malaya, spoke on the next topic, 'the political and economic trends driving Asia today'. Providing a comprehensive view of Asia's political history, Prof. Gomez elaborated on authoritative rule, the people's power movement, the effects of corruption on democracy and high industrialisation, along with adding context to current geo-political struggles. He reminded his audience that asking 'who is the state?' and 'where does power lie?' are the keys to understanding geo-political constructs in their countries.

In the afternoon, Fr Bryan Lobo SJ, Dean at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, elaborating on the topic 'The Church in Asia Proclaiming the Gospel: Ways of building bridges in the context of inter-intra religious dialogue in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*', reiterated the

Pope's message about being pilgrims journeying alongside one another. Emphasizing how the reality of agape was the fundamental principle of the document on which every initiative can be built, and that in dialogue with other cultures and religions, realities are more important than ideas, Fr Lobo underlined how dialogue must be characterized by openness to truth and love. The session was followed by group discussions.

Fr. Pedro Walpole SJ, a Network Catalyst of the River Above Asia Oceania Ecclesial Network, describing the organization's purpose and efforts in ecological preservation, stressed the importance of sustaining the food, environment and livelihoods of people, and invited the representatives to connect with those who could help effect change.

The day concluded with H.E. Cardinal Kriengsak leading the representatives in the Alma Redemptoris Mater.





## **Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation - A Pathway for Asia** **Mr. Lawrence Chong**

Mr Lawrence Chong, Co-Moderator for the Singapore Archdiocesan Synodal Committee and Consultor to the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, speaking in the context of inter-intra religious dialogue, especially for young people, proposed ways to build bridges. Suggesting that Church leadership had to show credibility to the youth, develop capability for the youth, and create a future of involvement and dialogue with them, Mr Chong called on his listeners to be better at dialogue with the youth.

The last speaker for this morning before the coffee break is Mr. Lawrence Chong, the co-moderator for the Singapore Ashtime Season Central Committee and a consultant for the Decastry for Inter-Religious Dialogue. Mr. Chong will speak for 15 minutes online. Good morning, Reverend fathers and sisters. I'm so happy to be able to join you at this moment at FABC. My name is Lawrence Chong, and I've been given the topic to share about dialogue, peacebuilding, and reconciliation as a way of the Church in Asia. The organizers have specifically asked me to provide input on building bridges in the context of inter-intra religious dialogue, especially among younger people in the Church in Asia.

Cardinal Ball started off on a very good note by mentioning that this is indeed a Pentecostal moment, a star to follow, and a challenge to move forward with Jesus. Pope Francis recently challenged the Bishops in Canada to address the challenge of secularization and restructure spiritual life in new forms and ways of existing. Inspired by Pope Francis and Cardinal Ball, I would like to give my intervention in three aspects: credibility to the youth, capability of the youth, and creativity with the youth.

To share a bit about my personal journey, I started getting involved in inter-religious dialogue as a youth in the Focolare Movement. As a youth leader in a parish, I was also involved in inter-religious dialogue. In 2005, I joined Religions for Peace and eventually served as the youth moderator for Asia from 2007 to 2013. Since 2020, I have been privileged to serve as a consultant to the Decestry for Inter-Religious Dialogue. Regarding intra-religious dialogue, I have been involved in the Pastoral Conversion of the Parish project, where we research and explore the transformation of parishes with around 13,000 parishioners since 2020. Additionally, I have been involved in the transformation of Catholic organizations such as a large Catholic University in Taiwan, Global Catholic Media, and the regional Catholic charity network since 2019. I also serve as an electoral coach in Catholic strategy and management for Catholic leaders in the seminary lay leadership and parishes since 2020. Moreover, I am the co-chair for another process in Singapore. This is just a quick summary of the different areas where I have contributed and hope to contribute further to the discourse.

**“It seems to me that we don’t really have an identity as Asian Catholic youth.”**

In 2018, I was invited by CCA to attend their Asian Christian Youth Assembly, where I shared my experience as a Catholic and my views on family values. This assembly brought together youth pastors, youth workers, and experts in mission and evangelization to exchange ideas for advancing the Kingdom of God in the region. It made me realize how wonderful it would be for Catholics to have a similar event where young people can collectively shape something for the region by sharing ideas and talents.

We are currently experiencing a beautiful age of historic initiatives, from the Document for Human Fraternity to the Francesco Economy, which is shaping social-economic dialogue, and the synodal process that is ongoing. This is truly a golden age for pastoral initiatives and dialogue. If we look at our situation as the Asian Church, we are a global Church with a global youth movement.

It seems to me that we don't really have an identity as Asian Catholic youth. I mean, we have the Asian Youth Days, but we don't really have other platforms where youth involved in dialogue and pastoral work can come together and exchange experiences and support one another concretely. We often receive church methodologies from Rome and other global sources, but what about our Asian methods? How can we localize them and learn from others in this region who are bringing about pastoral transformation? We need to adopt these approaches creatively, making them more relevant and useful for Asia.

From my experience serving in the church as a young person, it's not always easy to stay motivated. As you get closer to church leadership, you really have to steel yourself to continue serving. I call this the Three B's that kill the credibility of church leadership when it comes to young leaders.

**“We need hope despite the difficulties and a demonstration of charity in action, especially within church leadership.”**

When there's a lack of unity among church leadership for common action, when church leaders are not interested in intra-dialogue, or when they dismiss initiatives from Rome or bishops' conferences, it discourages young leaders and confuses their understanding of the Catholic Church. Additionally, if we hear discouraging sermons focusing on past failures, it demonstrates a lack of faith and hope in Jesus Christ. These toxic environments do not encourage young people to continue serving in the work of mission and evangelization.

What I've learned, both personally and from other young leaders, is that we don't need much. All young leaders need is to meet leaders who have faith and believe that God continues to act in our time and inspire

them to do the extraordinary. We need hope despite the difficulties and a demonstration of charity in action, especially within church leadership. For example, during a pastoral conversion program and strategy session for a parish of four thousand, we combined spiritual community building, intergenerational sharing, open dialogue, and a real understanding of difficulties and broken relationships that need reconciliation. Through the use of church methodologies and dialogue, the youth and young adults found hope in the process of positive change. It is possible to restore credibility if we engage in these processes of reconciliation in a methodical manner, aligning with the methodologies used by the church, such as the Synod process.

Another aspect is the capability of young leaders and young adults in the church.

What I've often observed is that we have a lack of real empowerment processes for young people to join church leadership early. There is also a lack of realism where church leaders try to protect youth from inter-religious formation, despite the reality of Asia's diverse cultural dialogue. We have the tools and instruments for inter-religious dialogue in the church, and it can actually strengthen the faith of young people rather than diminish it. Additionally, we need to localize pastoral work in Asia and make efforts to translate guidelines and content from Rome and other sources to be more relevant in our context. Furthermore, we need a network of Asian Catholic youth leaders that can support and collaborate virtually.

**“Through the use of church methodologies and dialogue, the youth and young adults found hope in the process of positive change.”**

Based on my personal experience as a young person volunteering in the church, I believe we urgently need an Asian class of youth and young adult leadership for the church. We need access to and understanding of Asian methods and structures for pastoral conversion and transformation. We should learn from examples in different Asian countries and understand the inter-religious and intercultural challenges specific to our region. Creating an ancient community of youth and young leaders for the evangelization of Asia is essential.





propose the establishment of a future Catholic Asia Pastoral Institute that would serve as a registry for young leaders working in the church in Asia. It would gather data for pastoral evangelization work, integrate inter-religious and intercultural dialogue into practical guides, and provide case studies, application, and learning points. Additionally, we should have an annual future Catholic Asia summit where senior Catholic leadership and young leaders come together to discuss pastoral challenges, strategies, and Asian church policy. This would help shape better exchanges and institutionalize an Asian Catholic strategy and policy integrating the views of youth. Lastly, we should foster gatherings of Asian Catholics strong in technology and innovation to explore how tools can advance our evangelization efforts and impact future generations.

In conclusion, I hope these ideas have been helpful, and I thank you for the opportunity to share them. Let us pray for the young people involved in the mission of evangelizing through dialogue. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



### **Inter-intra Religious Dialogue - Evangelii Gaudium Fr. Bryan Lobo, SJ**

Fr. Bryan Lobo SJ, Dean at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, elaborating on the topic 'The Church in Asia Proclaiming the Gospel: Ways of building bridges in the context of inter-intra religious dialogue in the light of Evangelii Gaudium', reiterated the Pope's message about being pilgrims journeying alongside one another. Emphasizing how the reality of agape was the fundamental principle of the document on which every initiative can be built, and that in dialogue with other cultures and religions, realities are more important than ideas, Fr Lobo underlined how dialogue must be characterized by openness to truth and love. The session was followed by group discussions.

The young sister from India will lead us in an action song to get us fully awake. Where are you, dear? Okay, come on. Yeah, yeah, okay, okay. Thank you, thank you. Good afternoon, Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, fathers, sisters, and all the invited guests. Actually, we all know that talks can be a little too heavy during lunch. It was a talk like talks are getting heavy. So, to make it a little light, I wanted to teach an action song. So, can I have permission to teach? Yes? Thank you so much.

So, it's a small one. I haven't prepared a big one today. I will be doing a big one tomorrow, in the coming days, a nice one. So, today it goes like this. It's a song about love. So, it goes like this. I say L, I say O. L, O, V, E. Love, love, everybody wants some love. L-O-V-E, everybody wants L-O-V-E. Everybody wants some love. L-O-V-E, everybody wants some love. Okay?

First, we'll be doing it with fingers, and after that, we'll be using our body. Okay? So, we'll all sing together. I say L, I say O. L, O, V, E. Love, love, everybody wants some love. Everybody wants some love. Everybody wants some love. Everybody wants some love.

Okay, we can stand now. We'll be doing it with our bodies also. Okay? So, first, we'll do it with fingers, and after that, we'll do it with hands, a full-body. So, I say L, I say O. L, O, V, E. Everybody wants some L-O-V-E. Everybody wants some L-O-V-E. Everybody wants some love.

Thank you so much. Thank you, dear.

It seems to me that we Bishop are behaving like good boys. Okay, one more talk only for today, and the focus is still on the current topic of today: ways of building bridges in the context of not only inter-religious dialogue, but we are beginning to hear a new expression, intra-religious dialogue, especially for the Church in Asia. In the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*, we have Father Brian Lobo, SJ, from India, who is the director of the Department of Theology of Religions at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Father Lobo will speak to us on the topic given to him: "The Church in Asia Proclaiming the Gospel: Reflections on *Evangelii Gaudium*."

**“Trusting others is an art, and peace is an art. It's true that we have to have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims if we want to walk with them towards our goal, towards peace, towards God.”**

To help understand better the way of building bridges in the context of inter and intra-religious dialogue, the modus project of his presentation will be that in the very beginning, he shall present some

snippets from the text *Evangelii Gaudium*, especially from numbers 244 to 254. After presenting those snippets, he shall narrow down on one theme or reality that he thinks is the underlying principle of the whole document and perhaps of quite a few documents of the Pope. After that, he will share some comments or reflections on that theme, and then he will conclude his presentation.

So, the first snippet will obviously have the theme of ecumenical dialogue. We're talking about intra-religious dialogue here, and we know that the Pope presents points that may be known by us personally, but the way he presents it has a certain freshness to it. And therefore, it has made a great impact on the hearts of the faithful, both Christians and even non-Christians. He says we must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another.

This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking—the radiant peace of God's face. Trusting others is an art, and peace is an art. It's true that we have to have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims if we want to walk with them towards our goal, towards peace, towards God.

We have to put aside all suspicion or mistrust. The Pope says that given the seriousness of the counter-witness of division among Christians, particularly in Asia and Africa, the search for unity becomes all the more urgent. If non-Christians see us divided, it would be a huge counter-witness to the mission itself. This is a topic that we reflect a lot upon, especially in India.

**“It's not a unity of diplomacy, but a commitment with conviction to create unity among ourselves because it is an indispensable path to evangelization.”**

The Pope says that the commitment to unity, which helps them to accept Jesus Christ, can no longer be a matter of mere diplomacy or forced compliance, but rather an indispensable path to evangelization. It's not a unity of diplomacy, but a commitment with conviction to create unity among ourselves because it is an indispensable path to evangelization.

Moving on to interreligious dialogue, the Pope states that an attitude of openness in truth and in love must characterize the dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions, despite various obstacles and difficulties, especially prejudice on both sides. Love could be the theme that unites all of us and helps us avoid conflicts that arise when each one thinks they have the sole truth. Love seems to be at the very base of all our realities and activities.

The Pope acknowledges the presence of fundamentalism on both sides, recognizing it not only among Muslims but also among Christians and Hindus. He emphasizes the importance of dialogue and being open to others, which comes naturally to us Indians in the context of multiculturalism and multi-religiosity. The Pope cautions against a diplomatic openness that says yes to everything to avoid problems, as it would be a way of deceiving others and denying them the good we have been given to share generously. Evangelization and interreligious dialogue are not mutually opposed; they support and nourish one another.

In conclusion, the use of diplomacy and double standards is not helpful in our activity of intelligence and dialogue.

“We are not trying to deceive. We are trying to be as open as possible, and our intentions of evangelization also have to be clear when the dialogue interreligiously in our context. In order to sustain dialogue, the Pope says with Islam, suitable training is essential, and this is true. It is not a new idea; it has existed in the church right from the time of the Dominicans, from Raymond and others who decided to study the scriptures of Islam and prepare the missionaries to face the onslaught of, let’s say, attack. And when I say attack, I don’t just mean physical attack, but also intellectual and spiritual attacks against Christianity. I mean very rational questions against the faith of Christianity that were actually creating a lot of problems, even to the Christians themselves. Therefore, even when Saint Thomas Aquinas writes the Summa contra, one of the intentions was to help Christians come to a certain conviction about their own faith amidst the onslaught of Islamic questioning, let’s put it that way.

To face this concerning episodes of violent fundamentalism, says the Pope, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalizations. Authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence. And this is true. There is this tendency of generalizing and perhaps looking at all Muslims, even though they may not be physically into terroristic activities. There is this tendency to look at all Muslims as supporters of terrorism or as supporters of violence. And if the Quran is read properly, this could be debatable, but still, what the Pope is trying to say is there is a certain hermeneutic that needs to go over the reading of the Quran, and that cannot end up in violence.

So, after reading these snippets, as I said, I shall narrow the themes down to just one theme or one reality, and that reality, I call it a reality precisely because later on, we shall see that the Pope himself makes a distinction between realities and ideas. So, the reality of agape becomes the fundamental principle of this document, and I think of even documents like *Laudato Si*. And this is what I feel should become also the underlying principle of our missionary endeavor in the Asian context. We have, in a way, worked for interviews, dialogue, and interacted with other religions. We have gone a long way in studying the scriptures of the non-Christians and also in our dialogue with non-Catholics. We have done a lot after Vatican II.”

So, what the Pope is actually telling us is, in a way, known to us. But the moment we consider Agape as the underlying principle, then I

“**The foundation of the new law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love.**”

think we hit upon a reality on which every other idea or initiative in this regard of intelligence, dialogue, and proclamation of the Gospel depends. Therefore, I would like to develop this fundamental principle with certain reflections and consolidate it, which may again

seem quite obvious to us, but when we concentrate on this principle, we see that it leads us to a foundational understanding that needs to be kept in mind in the future when proclaiming the Gospel in the Asian context, in the intelligence and pluralistic context of Asia.

Now, once again, I shall give some quotes of the Pope to show how love or unconditional love is at the center of his document because it arrives at the very beginning in the initial stages of this document, and that is why love itself becomes the very foundation of the joy of the Gaudium of this text.

The first passage I've chosen here is number 36 of Evangelii Gaudium. The Pope says, "All revealed truths derive from the same Divine source and are to be believed with the same faith. Yet, for giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel, in this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ." So, he's talking about revealed truths and our beliefs, but finally, when he has to suggest the basic core of all this, it is love that is chosen by him, and it is a love that God made manifest in Jesus Christ. Therefore, this point needs to be kept in mind while having any kind of discussion on the topic of dialogue or on the topic of missionary activity in the Asian context.

In the next point, while talking about the hierarchy in the virtues and the acts which proceed from them, the Pope quotes Galatians 5:6, saying, "What counts above all else is Faith working through love." The works of love directed to one's neighbor are the most perfect external manifestation of the interior grace of the Spirit. The foundation of the new law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love. So, normally, when one speaks about faith, one tends to relate it to the truth, to Revelation, and in a way, one also tends to create a certain defense of the Christian faith, with dogmas entering into the process. However, the Pope wants to focus more on love. He talks about faith working through love, not just the faith seeking understanding in new cultures and contexts and in pluralistic contexts. It is faith working through love, and works of love directed to one's neighbor, that are at the center.

**“It is faith working through love, and works of love directed to one’s neighbor, that are at the center.”**

Taking a cue from the Pope's love paradigm that generates joy for proclaiming the Gospel, the following thesis could be stated: Agape, to

be at the very heart of the Gospel proclamation in Asia, is unconditionally and self-sacrificially love. It is not just any kind of love; it is agape. That is what will finally lead us to the kingdom of God in Asia. That is our proposal, or let's say, the main proposal in this presentation.

In this Apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis mentions an important fact that realities are more important than ideas, as I said sometime in the beginning.

Um, we may have many ideas about how to proclaim the Gospel in Asia. So, the single reality which should be the driving force of all missionary ideas is agape. We are trying to present Agape as the hub to which all other initiatives for interreligious dialogue or ecumenical dialogue are connected. Because if we lose that dimension, that center, or if we lose that hub, we lose the sound. We lose Agape, and in a way, we lose everything. We are just doing mission which will finally not have the impact that it actually needs to have. Some reflections on agape and other issues connected to it would, therefore, be essential at this point.

So, the question surely comes, the very first question, conditional or unconditional love? The proposal is that it has to be unconditional love if it's adopted. It may seem a bit dangerous to some

missionaries the moment they feel that there have to be certain conditions in missionary initiatives or in all these activities. But in the proposal of agape, conditions could backfire or make our initiatives backfire. In the present scenario, if we do mission with self-interest, however noble it may be, of leading the other into baptism or joining the church, it will always be counterproductive because such love will not be respected as authentic love by the Asian psyche.

**“ Though the condition was the salvation of the other for which the missionary went through great sacrifices, the problem was that any condition was always looked at as a hidden agenda. ”**

Now, someone may object, saying that the earlier missionaries came to Asia and they preached and proclaimed the gospel with conditions. They wanted to baptize and get people to come to church and frequent the sacraments. So, if they did it with those conditions and were



successful, then even we can be successful. But that may not be fully true. Firstly, the situation was different then. There was political power backing most of those missionaries. And even with that objective in mind, it's not that they had 100% success, even today. Christianity is only about two or maximum 2.2% of the population, of which one and a half percent would be the Catholic population. So, having these conditions probably will not help, and there is a reason behind that.

Even let's talk about the condition of salvation. Though the condition was the salvation of the other for which the missionary went through great sacrifices, the problem was that any condition was always looked at as a hidden agenda. So, this makes even our goals of bridge-building and dialogue appear sinister. The moment there is a condition, whatever the condition may be, the other person first of all is not going to understand that.

Let's say that, for them, it's not that the other religions don't have goals for salvation (within inverted commas) because they have their own kinds of salvation, which we shall come to later on, and that also becomes a problem. But any kind of condition in mind while we proclaim love, the love that we want to show in Jesus Christ, the condition is seen as an element that makes our love impure, so to speak. There is a hidden agenda, so to speak, for conversion, and that's how the Christian missionaries were seen and will be seen always if love is conditional.

And when we think that we are proclaiming for the benefit of the other, that is for salvation, the condition of salvation may seem noble to us, but not to a Buddhist. In original Buddhism, as you know, they are more interested in Nirvana, and Nirvana is not the salvation that we think of. It is the going off of the flame in Nirvana. And then, if you come to the Advaitic Hindu, for him or her, Moksha is losing one's identity in God, Brahman. When both these ideas of liberation or Moksha and Nirvana are seen psychologically, there is the dying of the ego, the loss of the ego, and the living of the Divine "I" in the person.

Now, our idea of salvation, in fact, is something that, for a Buddhist or a Advaitic Hindu, is promoting egoism. That you're always thinking about yourself, and then it is yourself that is going to go before God, and

you want to save yourself. Although we can talk even about the community and salvation, but it precisely becomes a journey, so to speak. It could become that way, where the person, instead of trying to become aware of that egoism and trying to see ways and means of liberating himself or herself from the shackles of that enslavement or that egoism, enters into some other kind of spiritual egoism.

But still, there could be other ways of convincing a Buddhist or Hindu that egoism could also exist in their ways of thinking. But this is just to present before you that ideas of salvation also differ, and the moment we talk about that salvation, they may not want that salvation. So, this is what I say in the third point here in this slide, that they will not want our salvation, but they will surely want our spiritual joy and unconditional love.

Because that is what they are seeing and that is what, in fact, they are seeing. Also in the book, and that seems quite attractive, it seems genuine, authentic, and attractive, so they are attracted to charity. This has also been my experience with the Buddhists in Darjeeling. I had stayed with them for one month, and they said that they would never have thought of opening up a clinic for the Buddhists there and giving free medicines to all of them. They were attracted by the charity that the Christians were doing in the hospitals and clinics that they had opened, and even the schools. In many of the schools, they were giving free education to girls, although the government also provides free education to girls to a large extent. But the Buddhists were attracted by this charity, and it made them get into an activity that they would not have gotten into by themselves. So, such unconditional love is very much in keeping with the famous maxim of Jesus: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus wants us to take that neighbor to be not just a Christian or Catholic, but also a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Jain, a Muslim, and everyone that matters. Similarly, that would be the dictum of Pope Francis as well. In the activity of evangelization, the Pope states that it should not be seen primarily as doctrinal growth but as a growth in love (in paragraph 4 of the document). The Pope doesn't want to root his information in doctrine; he wants to root it in love. It becomes very clear when he states these ideas in this way. He quotes Jesus and other New Testament authors to stress

**“ Love precedes revelation; love is at the very heart of the missionary. ”**

that we need to love our neighbor as ourselves because the whole law is fulfilled in that one statement (Galatians 5:14). The core principle of most of Pope Francis's documents and his governance and missionary impulse is love or agape. This love is seen, at least symbolically, when he washed and kissed the feet of Muslims and Hindus along with other Christians and Catholics on Monday Thursday, March 24, 2016. If we reflect theologically on this proposal, the first question that could be asked is, "What about Revelation or dogmas that we were talking about before, also that we profess in our Creed? Are they there to be proclaimed even if they appear scandalous or foolish?" Well, we certainly need to proclaim the truths of Revelation, but before all that, agape needs to be manifested. For example, if a hungry person comes to my door, I don't start off by proclaiming the Creed to that person. It is my love that will make me understand or at least sense the situation of the other and fill him with food

**“However, true conversion happens through love.”**

rather than with dogmas and the Christian faith. After that, perhaps they'll be ready to accept or even listen to me. "For God so loved

the world that he gave his only Son." If we read this, we can say that even before the Dogma or the Incarnation, and before the great missionary Act of the second person of the Trinity, it was love that made God send Jesus Christ for our salvation. Love precedes revelation; love is at the very heart of the missionary. Even after the Incarnation, Jesus maintains that love proclamation is central to his mission, as seen in his life. When the law had to be used against sinners, Jesus was the one who supported sinners because he wanted to show the love of God in those situations. If all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments—love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself—then we could even say all Revelation hangs on these two commandments.

The fundamental principle of kenotic Christology is that the life of Jesus is the revelation of God's self-giving love. Even when we talk about the Incarnation, we are talking about it in a self-emptying way, which is the essence of love. We can provide an evolutionary backing to Agape to discover that at the very heart of things, at the bottom of the creative reality, lies agape. This is a new discovery of evolutionary scientists. With Darwin, the philosophy of survival of the fittest became the utmost idea

of evolution. It was believed that each of us had a selfish gene and we fought for our own survival. The idea of salvation or heaven was also seen as part of this survival instinct. Although this perspective still exists, scientists have found that altruism and agape are present in animals as well. They use the term “agape altruism” to describe this phenomenon. Altruism has been observed in ants, termites, dolphins, and other beings. So, while competition is a part of evolution, cooperation is also present. Therefore, the proposal of agape is not only realistic but also inherent to evolution itself. We must hold on to agape as the center of all dialogical and missionary activities. When it comes to conversion, we know that if love is not involved, it may happen due to various factors such as politics, economics, or social circumstances. However, true conversion happens through love. Therefore, in presenting our faith, if there is a conversion from a non-Christian, it should happen because of the principal agent of agape.

We shall just go to some examples which we all know. Mother Teresa, who was called by Jesus to serve the poor. Interestingly, Jesus appeared to her in a vision when she was in the train, but he did not tell her to go and baptize people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This makes one wonder why Jesus did not give her the same instructions he gave to his apostles.

**“She wanted people to be converted at the level of the heart, a kind of metanoia, to return to God.”**

Perhaps Jesus wanted another methodology to be put into practice. We have seen the consequences of her decision. Let’s consider what she said regarding conversions, as many accused her of doing charitable work with the intention to baptize and convert people to Christianity. Here’s what she said: “Oh, I hope I’m converting. I don’t mean what you think. I hope you are converting hearts. Not even almighty God can convert a person unless that person wants it. What we are all trying to do by our work, by serving the people, is to come closer to God. If, in coming face to face with God, we accept Him in our lives, then we are converting. You become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever you are. Better, we come closer and closer to Him.” Her intention was clear. She wanted people to be converted at the level of the

heart, a kind of metanoia, to return to God. Even if we take the example of Francis of Assisi, one might think that when he encountered Sultan in Egypt, he should have tried to convert him through miracles or other means. But that's not what happened. Francis of Assisi did not go with the Bible in hand, proclaiming the gospel.

The oldest source states that Francis made little progress in converting the sultan, but they understood each other. Francis's rule, written at the same time, shows his advocacy for a peaceful attitude towards

**“...the history of mission reveals that the Holy Spirit changes its methodology or paradigms for different ages.”**

Muslims. The way the apostles proclaimed the gospel was the method inspired by the Holy Spirit for their times. However, the history of mission reveals that the Holy Spirit changes

its methodology or paradigms for different ages. Different paradigms guided by the Holy Spirit can be identified throughout the history of the Church. These include the apostolic paradigm, the monastic paradigm, the penitential paradigm, the colonial paradigm, the modern paradigm, the postmodern paradigm, and the proposed Agape paradigm. Vatican II, guided by the Holy Spirit, offers a new Pentecost and a dialogical paradigm in mission and proclamation. In Pope Francis, the Holy Spirit presents us with the Agape paradigm. Through Agape, we find joy, which is emphasized in this text as “gaudium.” As people embracing the primary missionary paradigm of Agape for Asia, we aim to share our joy, point to the beauty of the horizon, and invite others. It is through attraction, not proselytization, that we strive to make an impact. With this, I conclude. Thank you, Father Lobo, the dean of the Faculty of Missiology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, for your enlightening presentation. Please join us in two minutes of silent prayer as we reflect on your words regarding the proposal and attraction of the Agape paradigm for inter and intra-religious dialogue. Let us now recite the prayer “Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.”



## **Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation - A Pathway for Asia**

### **Charles Cardinal Bo**

H.E. Charles Cardinal Maung Bo SDB, President of the FABC, speaking of a mission of dialogue, peace, and reconciliation as a new way for the Asian Church, contextualized Asia as a country of great opportunity, optimism and survival. Adding how war has been a way of life, and describing the many threats to peace, H.E. Cardinal Bo stressed the need for the Church to be reactive, to be an agent of peace, initiating dialogue, advocating for equality, and standing up to power with 'empty hands'. Mentioning that 'every jubilee calls for metanoia - let us challenge ourselves to let peace-making be the new evangelisation', H.E. Cardinal Bo concluded by calling his listeners to 'fight for peace'.

Let's give our very own Cardinal Charles Bow, Elder, our ears and our hearts.

Very good morning to all. As President, they have given me an extra grace of time allotted, 15 plus minutes. The moderator, Bishop Francis, would agree to that, although you did not announce that earlier. I'm starting with the Bible quotation. It's quite negative to my topic.

I am for Shalom, and thus I speak, but they are for war. I am for peace. I ask for peace, but even as I open my mouth, they are ready to fight. Psalms 120. When I say peace, peace, peace, they say fight, fight, fight.

Look at our Holy Land. The Israelites and Palestinians have been fighting since the time of Moses. So who is to be blamed? Definitely Moses. So God asked him, Moses, where do you want to take these people? Moses was very poor in speech and he was stumbling. I want to go to Ghana. Ghana? Okay, take them to Ghana. Actually, Moses did not mean Ghana. He meant California. We have heard presentations and talks from the theologians and professors and scholars. Now you will hear the voice of the son of a farmer.

Dear friends, dear brothers, sisters, we have gathered to discuss what could be our new goal to be at the service of Asia. In our efforts to enhance our multiple gifts and graces, very especially, we are here to deal with a new goal, the mission of dialogue, reconciliation, and peace-making. So is this the new way of being the church in Asia? The topic looks very simple, but it is a very difficult topic. A continent of great optimism and opportunities.

Asia is a divinely ordained continent. She is the mother and creator of all great religions. She continues the great spiritual tradition of mindfulness, yoga, meditation, etc. It is the oldest human continent next only to Africa, but it is vibrantly young population. 60 % of our world youth, around 700 million, live in Asia. Human assets are the greatest asset of Asia. It is a continent of riotous colours of diversity. Both in population and diversity, dividend Asia is far ahead to the West. It had a great past and it will have a glorious future. The whole church looks Asia and Africa to carry the missionary task. Asia is also a continent that learned to put its wounded past back and get on with the business of human development.

**“...we are here to deal with a new goal, the mission of dialogue, reconciliation, and peace-making.”**

Japan is a great example. Once this continent was deeply wounded, yet it learned to heal itself from the falling wounds. A continent of conflict, superpower rivalry, proxy wars, mutilated Asia. A continent

of the only nuclear holocaust, never forget Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A continent of various wars, genocide, Cambodia, Myanmar, at least for 70 years that never has been any year without fights and conflict. A continent that faced huge displacement like India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Myanmar again. A continent of distress migrants. A new goal to the Asia church, preventive peace mission against relapse into violence. Ukraine reminds us, we are on guard. Seek peace before hatred takes over. War affects all. War is between Ukraine and Russia, but it is a great warning. War anywhere will infect the globalized economy and inflict starvation in the poorest nations when the economy collapses.

Some are guilty, all are responsible. Church needs to be proactive with early warning measures and reactive to be with the accompaniment of victims of conflict in Asia. Violence, the second original sin of human beings.

Anthropologists like René Girard warns us, violence is in the congenital disorder in human beings. Unless checked by grace and common sense, genocides are dangerously possibilities. So even the first pages of the Bible shows, bloodletting occurs. The only first family, a family of three or four, killing happened. War is a way of life. Humans have been at war with one another 92 % of the time. Of the past 3,400 years, peace was for just 268 years of them and just 8 % of recorded history.

**Church needs to be proactive with early warning measures and reactive to be with the accompaniment of victims of conflict in Asia.**

In the 20th century, Mahanir killed 135 million of his fellow human beings. That is a warning sign to Asia of the 21st century. It is the epicenter of modern conflicts. For example, India and Pakistan have border issues. India and China, the South China Sea. Major challenges to peace in Asia. Big power rivalry in the South China Sea. Even threat of a third world war erupting in this region. Even during the COVID lockdown, the arms industry stock market did not close. Of the nine nuclear powers, four are in Asia. China, India, Pakistan, North Korea. Myanmar we don't have yet. Perhaps we may get supply from China and from Russia. Countries of democratic deficit headed by strongmen.



Climate change and real-time threat of island nations like Maldives, Fiji disappearing. Major challenges to peace in Asia. After disregard of indigenous rights, Asia holds the biggest indigenous population without any rights. Great poverty, enormous riches and grinding poverty. Asia holding the biggest number of poor in the world. Emergence of hate speech through internet, mobile phone, Facebook. Majoritarianism, majority bullies the minority all over Asia. Subcontinental conflicts inside many countries.

Militarization, nuclearization and arms race in Asia. Epicenter of nuclear arms race, South China Sea conflicts. And increased danger of nuclear proliferation in the current climate is not an immediate concern. But with Russia showing bad example, this could become an existential danger to the people of Asia. Church as a peacemaker in Asia. Church in Asia used the formal and non-formal means of constantly working for peace in Asia.

People to people talk, one to one talk. Non-discriminatory service delivery, especially during natural man-made disasters. Tsunami, earthquakes, earthquakes, floods. Providing the much needed human security, especially to the most vulnerable people through education and health service.

Great witness by people like Mother Teresa, Nobel laureate for rape peace. Direct action through religions for peace. We have at least over 100 countries religions for peace is heading. Accompanying the victims of violence.

Challenges. Minority complex in many countries. Lack of influence with government and civil society. Of course there might be some exception like his Eminence, Governor William Goh was telling in Singapore they have a good connection with the authorities. India also have some influence there. The Philippines church also has influence over the people and the authorities and the government.

Three fold dialogue again with poor cultures and religions. Need for greater attention. We have this in the Bantung Convention mentioned

again and again of this one. But we have papers and documents. Sometimes even the bishops. FABC papers and documents are the richest I would say compared to other continental conferences. But we never read them. That is the first model sin. We never take those into action. That is the second model sin. When you get the books and we embellish our libraries, that is the third model sin. Working towards economic and environmental justice. Collaborating more with the civil society organizations and the diplomats. Campaigning on global stage against militarization. Militarization. When we look at the UN Security Council out of five. Russia and China with veto power. Those two big bullies. So we are all mentioning UN structures have been over 70 years and very old and outdated. It needs new structures. If these two are still in the Security Council, I think there is little future for UN.

Promoting a culture of peace and reconciliation through working at the grassroots level. A special call to the Asian church. As we sail through this great jubilee, we are reminded that every jubilee calls or metanoia, a change of heart and direction.

“**As we sail through this great jubilee, we are reminded that every jubilee calls or metanoia, a change of heart and direction.**”

Our own themes talk about that they went a different way.

Let us challenge ourselves. Is it normal business as usual? Just peace is the proclamation of the kingdom for the Asian church. That does making the following at the action plans and incorporate into our senator planning. Peace making as the new evangelization.

Reconciliation as a new evangelization. Peace with justice with justice and human society. Peace making as the interreligious proactive presence. Multi layered preventive approaches with the individual. Among communities, national and regional collaboration with the UN and ASEAN.

Let us not forget the great encouragement of Jesus our Lord. Blessed are the peacemakers. They will be called children of God. Special prayer for the Asian church. Make us an instrument of peace. Fight evil. Empty hands will win over the might of armed evil.

Only justice and nonviolence can heal the world and bring lasting peace. Fight and fight with empty hands with their resolute heart. Evil has an expiry date. The longest night of silent tears will end in dawn.

Let us become the soldiers of Christ fighting for a world without want. Let us work towards a consigning war and conflict to the garbage of history. Let us also always remember history is full of men and women who took on the arrogance of power. Just with the power of empty hands and the power of a heart burning with zeal for a peaceful world.

And they won. Heroes of peace, those who fought for justice with empty hands and won against the power. Peace through witnessing.

Profiles in courage in simple acts of selfless love is etched in the memory of humanity. This is St. Anne from Medina. Pugnacious gestures move mountains. Good will always win.

Let us march ahead initiating dialogue. Proclaiming peace as the good news. Healing and reconciling a wounded world of the planet. Sorry, there's a phone call interrupting. Hello? I'm occupied with a talk. Francis, which Francis? Is it Penang or from Bangkok? Or from Sisi or where? Oh, from heaven. St. Francis of Sisi speaking from heaven. He wants to give a message to the general audience, general conference. Yes, yes. Oh, it's a surprise for us. Please give the message and I will pass on to my brothers and sisters. Please carry on. Thank you.

I keep on fighting. I keep on fighting. I keep on fighting. One day, said it won't be long. We will stand together, together as one. But until then, we got so much work to do. If we wanna see, see our dreams come true. Keep fighting for peace. Keep fighting for peace.

**“Let us march ahead initiating dialogue. Proclaiming peace as the good news. Healing and reconciling a wounded world of the planet.”**

Keep fighting for peace. Well, I'm fighting for the family. I'm fighting for myself. I'm fighting to make a difference. I'm even fighting for my health. I said I'm fighting for my life. I'm fighting for the better days

ahead. I'm fighting for my people. I'm fighting for the things left unsaid. What you fighting for?

I guess so. Keep fighting for peace.

There's no time to get up now. We gotta keep fighting. Keep fighting for peace. One day, one day, we're all gonna be free. But we gotta keep fighting. Keep fighting for peace. There's so much more work to do.

So we gotta keep fighting. Keep fighting for peace. Fight for peace. Thank you. So dear Cardinal Charles, who better to speak about peace and reconciliation than a son of a farmer from Myanmar, the suffering people and church of Myanmar.

**“Keep fighting for peace.  
Fight for peace.”**

God bless you and the people of Myanmar. Hold on and come and receive your gift from... So I think the song that we heard is almost a prayer that we will continue to fight for peace, no matter what is going on. So we are ready now for the second speaker. Okay, so Cardinal Kriyansak suggests that this talk deserves two minutes of silence.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.





## **Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation - A Pathway for Asia** **Mr. Edmund Chia**

Dr. Edmund Chia, professor of theology and Co-director of Interreligious Dialogue at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, highlighting the key moments in the Asian Church's journey of dialogue, sought to emphasize the lessons that could be learned from them. Speaking of the history of dialogue, the appreciation of other religions, and the Asian Church as a learning Church, Dr Chia praised the FABC as an example of a Church of dialogue, citing it as something to be proud of.

So we introduced the second speaker, Dr. Edmund Chia, who teaches theology and is co-director of inter-religious dialogue at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. Dr. Chia will be with us online and he will speak for 15 minutes. Over to you, Dr. Chia.

Good morning, your eminences, your excellencies, dear brothers and sisters of Asia. It is an honor for me to be appearing before you. As some of the most senior Bishops may remember, I served as FABC Secretary for Inter-religious Dialogue some 25 years ago. I then left Asia and spent the last two decades teaching first in Chicago and then in Melbourne. A

lot of my research and writing have been on Asian Christianity and FABC theology.

So it is a privilege for me to be exploring a theme of journeying together as peoples of Asia, especially with reference to the topic of dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. We have been asked to focus on the ministry of dialogue. Indeed, the practice of dialogue differs from what traditional Christianity advocates, enabling us to see how the Asian Church has gone a different way.

My presentation focuses on the key moments of FABC and the Asian Church's journey of dialogue. We can call these watershed moments or important milestones, but I believe they are grace-filled theological moments. I believe that the lessons from these key moments continue to be relevant for the Asian Church today. So instead of offering any new insights, I will simply remind us of the thinking and wisdom offered by our own Asian Bishops and theologians over the years.

When Pope John XXIII convened the council, the church's relationship with other religions was not initially on the agenda. An encounter with the Holocaust survivors changed that, resulting in the schema on the Jews being drafted. Upon hearing that Bishops from the Middle East and other Muslim-majority countries feared that this would be seen as the church siding with Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict of the 1960s, they asked that a statement of respect for the religion of Islam be included. Hearing this, the Bishops from countries where Buddhism and Hinduism are in the majority asked that a similarly positive statement be made about the religions of their compatriots and ancestors. It was these interventions by the council fathers, many of whom were Asians, that resulted in *Nostra Aetate* being a document about the church's relationship with religions in general, as can be seen in Article 2 on Buddhism and Hinduism and Article 3 on Islam, both of which precede the originally intended statement on Judaism, which is Article 4.

“**The Asian Bishops' meeting committed the Bishops to an open, sincere, and continuing dialogue with our brothers and sisters of the religions of Asia.**”

While *Nostra Aetate* paved the way for the Universal Church to engage in inter-religious dialogue, it is the Asian Church that has most helped in mapping out the trajectories for its implementation. FABC urges Catholics to reject nothing that is true and holy in other religions. The Asian Bishops' meeting committed the Bishops to an open, sincere, and continuing dialogue with our brothers and sisters of the religions of Asia. Bishop Felix Wilford asserts that the word dialogue best captures the orientation and theology of the Asian Bishops. To be sure, the Asian Bishops' meeting was signaling the birth of the Asian Church, where its vision of dialogue was clearly articulated in the works of Father Arévalo. And now the heirs have found their own voice; they can now speak for themselves. It is now the time of The Heirs.

The word dialogue was first used in church statements only with Pope Paul VI's 1964 *Ecclesiam Suam*, where he urged that the church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. When the Bishops met for the first FABC...

**“...that evangelization in Asia has to involve a dialogue with the great religious traditions of our peoples.”**

Assembly in April 1974, dialogue served as his guiding principle, strategically adopting the theme of the September 1974 Synod of Bishops, which was on evangelization. The theme of the Taipei assembly was evangelization in modern-day Asia. Eventually, Nonsiende mentions the word dialogue only once. The FABC I statement mentions dialogue at least a dozen times, specifically proclaiming that evangelization in Asia has to involve a dialogue with the great religious traditions of our peoples.

FABC I not only established dialogue as a new way of being Church, but it also spelled out that it has to be through the triple dialogue. This is how Cardinal Rosales put it: Asia's Bishops, reflecting on the situation, history, and needs of the Asian peoples, decidedly assigned to themselves the challenges of evangelization among the people, namely the triple dialogue.

The triple dialogue refers to the Asian view of evangelization. Firstly, in view of the many poor in Asia, the Church has to be engaged in a dialogue with the peoples of Asia, especially the poor. Secondly, in view of the many cultures of Asia, the Church has to be in dialogue with the Asian cultures. Thirdly, in view of Asia being the cradle of ancient major religions, the Church has to be in dialogue with the religious traditions of Asia. This is the triple dialogue approach to evangelization.

The Asian Church is a church of dialogue. With the formation of the Theological Advisory Commission, FABC embarked on deep study of the pastoral issues affecting the Church in Asia, producing theses on them. The first of these was on interreligious dialogue, taking the form of seven theses, all of which have provided guidance to the Asian Church in its relations with other religions. These include perceiving other religions as complementing and not in competition with Christianity, considering interreligious dialogue as integral to the Church's mission and the demand of the Trinitarian faith, and seeing both dialogue and proclamation as essential to the Church's mission of evangelization.

Like the Visas, the Beeras were the most noteworthy forum for Bishops to learn about interreligious dialogue. Archbishop Lokwang, who chaired the office which first organized them, informed that they were designed to assist the Bishops of Asia in discovering and implementing the interreligious aspects of the Church's mission in Asia. The first series of Beeras focused on a single religion and dialogue with the Catholic Church. It was a series of 12 programs dedicated to the theology of dialogue. Meanwhile, the Beta 5 series brought together groups of Bishops with their counterparts in other religions for interreligious dialogue on the theme of Harmony. Following the recommendation of Beta 5, the Firas were established to train grassroots and pastoral workers. The last 20 years have seen the continuation of the Bravo 6 series.

The 1998 Senate Ambitions for Asia was the first time the Asian Bishops were gathering as a collective outside of Asia, most specifically in Rome, to reflect on evangelization in Asia. This was truly a Grace moment as it provided the occasion for the Asian Bishops to speak on behalf of Asia, especially to Vatican officials, some of whom have little understanding of



the experience of Christians in Asia.

In commenting on this momentous occasion, Peter Pan says that with surprising boldness in Canada, humbly but forcefully, the Asian Bishops can affirm that the churches in Asia not only learn from but also have something to teach the church in Rome as well as The Universal Church, precisely from the experiences as churches not simply in but of Asia. Thus, if the 1970 Asian Bishops meeting marked the birth of the Asian Church, the Asian Senate can be regarded as the coming of age of the Asian church.

Let us now look at how the Bishops responded to the Sinners, instrumental laborious and lineamenta. With regard to how we appreciate other religions, the Bishops of Vietnam reminded the Synod that from time immemorial, three great religions—Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism—have flourished in their land together with many people’s popular beliefs deeply rooted in the soul of the Vietnamese people. The Indian Bishops added, in a country and a continent of many living religions, to be religious itself means to be inter-religious, that is, to live amicably in diversity.

The Thai Bishop suggested that the Asian Bishops are satisfied with their own religion and feel that they are able to lead their personal and social life in a proper and peaceful way. Evangelization must

**“Evangelization must recognize the traditions of other religions as friends or even relatives living together.”**

recognize the traditions of other religions as friends or even relatives living together. On the theme of learning, the Taiwanese Bishops advised that the Catholic Church can

also learn from other religions—their hospitality, openness, and mild and humble attitudes in dialogue.

Meanwhile, the Episcopal Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei entered, the church can, like the Asian religions, learn to be more open, receptive, sensitive, tolerant, and forgiving in the midst of the plurality of religion. The Korean Bishop said, “We have to study, re-evaluate the meaning and role of the great traditional religions in Asia.

They play a part in the salvific economy of God.”

From the floor of the Vatican aula, Archbishop Leo Iconaga compared the 16th-century arrival of Christianity to Japan with the introduction of Buddhism in the 6th century. Half a century was what it took for the Japanese to accept

Buddhism as the religion of their land, but with Christianity, it was another story. Buddhism infiltrated Italy, Christianity did not. Bishop Mansa added, “Could it be said that this is

the good news that the Buddhists can offer us? In our work, we try to be witnesses to Christ, but we also realize that our Buddhist friends are evangelizing us by their values.”

**“We have to study, re-evaluate the meaning and role of the great traditional religions in Asia. They play a part in the salvific economy of God.”**”

In another more recent forum, Katana Douglas pointed out that the major organized religions in Asia have articulated concepts and practices about salvation or the good and meaningful life that we are looking for. Now, even if the ancient Church insists that dialogue is the new way of being Church, it has not been an easy vision to follow.

Plenty of challenges abound from within. Auspicious Felix Machado once mentioned that inter-religious dialogue is not perhaps the easiest or sometimes even a happy part of our pastoral commitment. It demands patience and has to be seen in the light of the mystery of the cross.

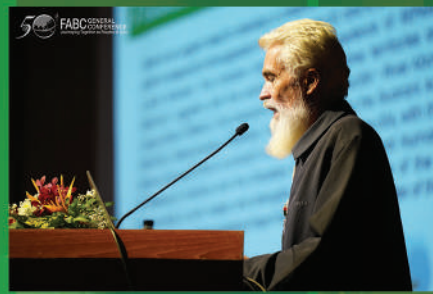
Archbishop Angelo Fernandez bluntly points out that among Christians themselves, there are some with fundamentalist attitudes who refuse to accept the church’s new and positive understanding of non-Christian religions and their place in the gospel plan of salvation. Someone has summed up the position into US arrogance and ignorance. Suffice to say, committing the church to dialogue is no mean feat.

As I mentioned at the beginning, a lot of what I talked about is what I have been writing about. Please indulge me as I share some of

these books with you, much of which focuses on ABC theologies. Let me close by referring to the opening address the Cardinal Oswald Gracias mentioned, that Bishops in South America often refer to Puebla, Medellin, and Aparecida, wishing that the same can be said about Asian Bishops. Well, from my own experience and research, I must say that quite a number of scholars and church leaders from North America, Europe, and Australia often refer to the FABC, wishing they could do the same about statements from their own Episcopal conference. To be sure, FABC's vision of a church of dialogue has not only inspired but is the envy of many from other continents. We can surely rejoice in this as we celebrate 50 years of FABC's existence. I thank you for your kind attention. God bless you all and the Asian Church.

Thank you, Dr. Edmund, someone who has journeyed with FABC for many years. Thank you, Doctor, for reminding us of so many names for the last 50 years who have been there before us and who have shown the way for us to move forward. So thank you very much, Doctor. Shall we just spend two minutes praying with Dr. Edmund Chia in thanksgiving for all the names that were mentioned by Dr. Edmund Chia? Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.







---

---

# EMERGING REALITIES

---

---

DAY 5  
OCTOBER 21, 2022

## PRESS NOTE

### 21ST OCTOBER 2022

21st October 2022, the fifth day of the segment 'Emerging Realities' at the FABC General Conference began with the Holy Eucharist, celebrated by H.E. Louis-Marie Cardinal Ling Mangkhanekhoun IVD, Vicar Apostolic of Vientiane, Laos. President of the day's sessions, H.E. Charles Cardinal Muang Bo, opened the morning session by leading the Adsumus. The morning prayer, played over video, was prepared by Sr. Catherine P.K. of Cambodia-Laos.

H.E. Cardinal Bo introduced the topics for the day - Synodality, reflections on Prædicate Evangelium, leadership, governance, and considerations on FABC 50 years on.

The first speaker, H.E. Jean-Claude Cardinal Hollerich SJ, Relator General of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, speaking on the Synod on synodality, explained the process of how the document was developed, and spoke of his experience working on it. Stressing the Holy Father's emphasis on everyone walking together with no exclusions, H.E. Cardinal Hollerich described the Synod as a Synod of the Church, where the consultation of peoples became the heart of the Synod, and where Christ and His mission remains the centre of the Church.

Fr Clarence Devadass, providing a summary of the small group discussions, recapped the theme of the week as 'reading the signs of the times'. Using the framework of consultation, conversation, conversion and communion, Fr Devadass summarised the discussions with three key points: celebrating successes, recognising the gaps, and identifying the opportunities ahead by looking for new pathways.

Professor Doctor Josef Sayer, Director of Misereor from 1997 to 2012 and member of the FABC 50 Organising Committee, reflecting on Prædicate Evangelium and the opportunities for new forms of leadership

and governance for the Church in Asia, provided a comprehensive explanation of the Prædicate Evangelium, using four central points: the preamble, principles, general norms and dicasteries. With emphasis on the Holy Father's reformations, the paradigm shifts, the importance of participation of all, and the application of the dicasteries, Monsignor Sayer outlined the points of the document that were especially relevant to the Asian Church, and concluded with questions on the application of the document for reflection. The session was followed by a plenary conversation with Monsignor Sayer and H.E. Cardinal Gracias.

Prof. Christina Kheng, professor of pastoral leadership and management at the East Asia Pastoral Institute (Philippines), and member of the Commission on Methodology of the General Secretariat for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, spoke on the topic 'new forms of leadership and governance in the Church in a synodal way'. Going back to the roots of synodality, Prof. Kheng asked her listeners, 'what current forms of leadership in your Diocese promote synodality and what forms are contrary to it?'. Along with key principles of synodal leadership and governance, Prof. Kheng also provided concrete suggestions to put the principles into practice.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio Siongco David, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, reflecting on how new forms of leadership could be promoted, added context through the history behind the first council of Jerusalem, and St Peter's role in it. Underlining the Church as one rooted in scripture that also responds to the signs of the times, Bishop David provided insights on the Holy Father's reformations, and highlighted methods toward taking a better path forward.

Prof. Jonathan Tan, professor of Catholic Studies at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, spoke on the next topic, "FABC 50 Years On: Negotiating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities". Introducing his background of work and analysing the demographics of migration and the changing population, and the rich documentation of the FABC, Prof. Tan described how Christianity has moved on from grounded geography to virtual and online communities of faith, and trends that would arise in the next fifty years.



### **Reflection on Prædicatè Evangelium Msgr. Joseph Sayer & Oswald Cardinal Gracias**

Professor Doctor Josef Sayer, Director of Misereor from 1997 to 2012 and member of the FABC 50 Organising Committee, reflecting on Prædicatè Evangelium and the opportunities for new forms of leadership and governance for the Church in Asia, provided a comprehensive explanation of the Prædicatè Evangelium, using four central points: the preamble, principles, general norms and dicasteries. With emphasis on the Holy Father's reformations, the paradigm shifts, the importance of participation of all, and the application of the dicasteries, Monsignor Sayer outlined the points of the document that were especially relevant to the Asian Church, and concluded with questions on the application of the document for reflection. The session was followed by a plenary conversation with Monsignor Sayer and H.E. Cardinal Gracias.

We will begin now the second session. In this second session, we are going to reflect on Prædicatè Evangelium, the apostolic Constitution, and the opportunities for new forms of leadership and governance for the church in Asia.

I call upon Monsieur Yosef Saya to come to the stage. Cardinal



Oswald gracious, Monsieur Joseph Saya has been a member of the organizing Committee of the General Conference of the FABC 50 General Conference. He has been a member of this committee right from the beginning and was also a participant in the Asian Synod held in Rome way back in 1998. He is the former president of Missouri and served from 1997 till 2012, succeeding Monsieur Spiegel.

Cardinal Oswald, who has been a member of the close consulters of our Holy Father and has naturally been involved in the elaboration of this Apostolic Constitution, *Evangelium*. I now request Monsieur Joseph to share his reflections, and then we'll have time for interaction. Monsieur Joseph has 30 minutes for his sharing. Welcome once again, Monsieur Joseph.

Your Eminence, Excellencies, dear sisters and brothers, just as Saint John Paul II saw the need to revise Saint Paul the Sixth's constitution for the Roman Curia after 20 years and enacted his Constitution *Pastor Bonus* to reform the Curia in 1988, Pope Francis saw the need to draft a new constitution 30 years after *Pastor Bonus*. What made him do this? You will certainly remember the resignation of Pope Benedict, which came as a surprise to everyone. This was associated with many discussions that were also conducted very intensively and openly by the Cardinals themselves in the pre-conclave of 2013 because they were concerned about the well-being of the church and its mission in today's world.

From the many suggestions and to prepare the church for the challenges of the 21st Century, Pope Francis decided to initiate a reform of the Constitution. To work this out, he formed a council of cardinals consisting of eight representatives from all the continents and the Curia itself. Among the eight, Cardinal Oswald was gracious. This Council should support him in the governance of the church. In its elaboration, not only the opinions of the congregations of the Curia and the pontifical councils were taken into account, but also all the bishop conferences around the world, including all conferences of Asia. Worldwide, all of

“**the new constitution envisions a shift in the depiction of the relationship between the Pope, the Courier, and the Bishops.**”

them were asked to comment on the draft, to contribute their criticisms and their suggestions for improvement. So, we see Pope Francis did not limit the participation in the reform of the Curia merely to the Council of the Cardinals. A broad participation of the universal church was important to him. All their experiences, criteria, and criticism were carefully studied and processed in a long working process.

What are the central points of the new Constitution that Pope Francis put into effect on Pentecost this year, and what are we particularly touched by in Asia? In my approach, I will follow the structure of the new Constitution, starting first with the preamble, second followed by the part of the principles, third the part of the general norms, fourth the explanation regarding the Curia, as well as the economic organisms of the Curia. For reasons of time, I will confine myself to some central aspects. So let's start with the preamble first. The programmatic orientation of the new Constitution is brought to a precise denominator in the first two words of the new Constitution: Predicate Evangelium.

Graphically, the new constitution envisions a shift in the depiction of the relationship between the Pope, the Courier, and the Bishops. They can no longer be expressed in a vertical line, with the Pope at the top, the Courier immediately below, and the Bishops beneath. According to the Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* 18, the new image corresponds to a triangle, with the Courier at its apex, under both the Pope and the College of Bishops, serving both.

**“Baptism is recognized as a central point, highlighting that not only the ordained, but all Christians are missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.”**

Such a decisive change, as outlined by the Vatican Council, requires a shift in mindset not only within the Courier itself but also among the Bishop conferences and the Shepherds of the dioceses. If the leadership continues to perceive the Courier as an apparatus of power superior to them, rather than a servant, everything would remain the same, and the intended target of reform would be missed.

Another central point of the reform, as laid down in number 10 of the Preamble and number five of the principles, emphasizes the participation of lay women and men in roles of government and responsibility. Baptism is recognized as a central point, highlighting that not only the ordained, but all Christians are missionary disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the reform of the Courier must include the involvement of lay people in leadership positions. The leadership function in the Courier is not

exclusive to the clergy but can also be exercised by certain lay individuals, as conferred by the Pope.

**“For us in Asia, this could mean allowing our distinct forms of spirituality, influenced by the council and Samaritan spirituality, to serve the wounded in our region, be it the wounds of people or the wounds of nature.”**

This stipulation in the Constitution holds significance for us in Asia, not only within diocesan organizations but also within the Episcopal conferences.

Moreover, the reform of the Courier implies an inner reform concerning its collaborators, guided by the spirituality of the Vatican Council, particularly the Samaritan spirituality. Saint Paul VI, in his closing address at the end of the Vatican Council, emphasized the importance of serving the wounded, vulnerable, and needy, even if they are unknown to us or consider us as enemies.

For us in Asia, this could mean allowing our distinct forms of spirituality, influenced by the council and Samaritan spirituality, to serve the wounded in our region, be it the wounds of people or the wounds of nature.

I come to the second part, principles for the service of the Courier. First, in the second part of the new constitution, the principles once again emphasize that the Courier has to serve the Pope and the Bishops. This is clearly stated in the third part of the new constitution, in the general norms, Article 1, and also in Article 3 of the general norms. The preamble, principles, and general norms all stipulate this paradigm shift, which is fundamental to the reform of the Courier and cannot be relativized

through any interpretation attempts.

For the sake of time, I will refer to three examples in the section on principles, as they have a special significance for the Church in Asia. In number two, it underlines that the reform is carried out in a spirit of sound decentralization, allowing bishops of particular churches to address local matters they are familiar with due to their proximity. This concept of sound decentralization aligns with the principle of subsidiarity, which Pius XII established, both within and outside the Church. It is important to note that subsidiarity is valid within the Church as well.

The service of the Courier in cooperation with the Bishops is described in number three of the principles. It involves recognizing and supporting the work of the Bishops, giving advice, supporting their work in solidarity with the poor, vulnerable, and promoting peace, and supporting

“**We have to study, re-evaluate the meaning and role of the great traditional religions in Asia. They play a part in the salvific economy of God.**”

the initiatives of the Bishops and Bishop conferences. The aim is to ensure that people may have life in the fullness of Christ. This description reflects the fundamental change in perspective brought about by the new Constitution, prioritizing cooperation and

recognition in a synodal Church rather than control and exercise of power. Such a change requires a shift in mentality on the part of the Courier and the Bishops and their conferences in their dealings with the Courier.

Moreover, this new spirit is also characterized by the principles, as stated in number four. The Church embraces many peoples and cultures around the world, and with this comes a great treasure of experiences in evangelization. The Courier has the task of collecting and processing these experiences and creative initiatives from particular churches and Bishop conferences for the benefit of the whole Church, promoting dialogue and mutual assistance. This should be done without immediately imposing reservations or controlling aspects of so-called orthodoxy.

I come to the third part, general norms. While the decisive role of

the Courier serving the Pope and the Bishops has been presented earlier in Article 1, I would like to mention Article 33, which deals with the General Secretary Aid of the Synod. It stipulates that all Courier institutions have to cooperate with the General Secretary of the Synod. It is noteworthy that the name is now General Secretary of the Synod, rather than Synod of Bishops. This indicates that the General Secretary now has a broader function for the Synod in general, including its relevance for us in Asia.

Additionally, I want to highlight Articles 40 and 42 of the general norms, which pertain to the *visita ad limina*, applicable to all Bishops and Bishop conferences in a possible five-year rhythm. Article 40, paragraph two, stipulates that a realistic description of the condition of the respective particular church should be included in the state report before the visit *ad limina*. Furthermore, the report should evaluate the support received from the Courier institution and express the expectations towards the Courier in terms of cooperation. Such a requirement would have been unthinkable in the past, but it demonstrates the shift in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration. Additionally, the summary of the report's most important statements is now made by the respective Bishop themselves, rather than a staff member of the dicastery, ensuring more subjective assessments.

As mentioned in the principles, the conversations during the *visita ad limina* are expected to be open, cordial, encouraging, and stimulating, contributing to the well-being of the entire Church. The Preamble, principles, and new statements regarding the *visita ad limina* reflect a different spirit characterized by cooperation, replacing any past notions of distrust, discomfort, or fear. Several Bishops from Latin America, Africa, and Asia have expressed their concerns and fears about going to Rome and participating in the *visita ad limina*. However, this also requires a change in mentality for both the Bishops and the presidencies of the Bishop conferences, in line with the new constitution.

Now, I move on to the fourth part, the dicasteries. In this section, I will focus on some aspects that are important for us in Asia. First and foremost, there is a constant reference to cooperation with the Bishop conferences and their continental federation, such as the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). This holds significant importance for us in Asia, and it marks the starting point.

Secondly, there was a lively discussion about the new order of the dicasteries, particularly why evangelization became the first priority instead of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Although all dicasteries are considered equivalent, the programmatic title of the Constitution, "Predicate Evangelium," which states the reason for the existence of the Church, and the wording in the Preamble logically follow that if the evangelizing mission fundamentally defines the Church, then the order of the dicasteries should also begin with evangelization.

It is important to note that the dicastery of evangelization has two sections. The first section addresses fundamental questions and challenges of evangelization worldwide, intentionally not limited to the task of the former Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, which focused on areas experiencing secularization. This makes cooperation with this section particularly crucial for us in Asia. The second section deals with what used to be the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, focused on new particular churches. The Pope himself presides over this dicastery, emphasizing its importance and superseding any debate about the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith versus evangelization.

**“The fundamental redemptive significance of God’s mercy is highlighted, calling for merciful actions towards people and humanity.”**

The third dicastery is dedicated to the service of charity and reflects a significant novelty. What was previously the Office of Papal Charities now holds the rank of a dicastery. Just as Pope John Paul II introduced the Feast of Divine Mercy Sunday, Pope Francis takes

it further by emphasizing mercy in the context of the Holy Year of Mercy (2015-2016). The fundamental redemptive significance of God’s mercy is highlighted, calling for merciful actions towards people and humanity.

In the dicastery for divine worship and the discipline of the sacraments, Article 89, paragraph 3, mentions an important innovation for Asia. It encourages reflection on various forms of inculturation of the liturgy in collaboration with Episcopal conferences. This presents a breath of fresh air, particularly for Asia, with its diverse cultures, compared to

the previous restrictions imposed by the former Congregation for Divine Worship. It opens creative space for better service through enculturated liturgy.

Regarding the dicastery for bishops, Article 105, paragraph 2, addresses the selection criteria for bishop candidates. The dicastery, in agreement with the Episcopal conferences and their regional and continental associations, establishes these criteria, taking into account different cultural requirements and periodically evaluating them. This signifies that a single set of criteria no longer applies worldwide, emphasizing the role of the Episcopal conferences in demanding and shaping the consequences of these criteria.

Moving on to the new dicastery for the laity, family, and life, it is important to note that there was no separate congregation for the laity until Pope Francis established this dicastery in 2016. The text of the dicastery focuses on the reality of life, with its positive and negative aspects, difficulties, failures, and breakdowns, rather than an ideal concept of what young people, families, and family life should be. It emphasizes the involvement of the bishop conferences and cooperation with them, which can be particularly helpful for approaching the diverse cultures and peoples in Asia.

Lastly, the fifth part of the Constitution addresses economic organisms. I would like to close with a brief reference to the articles 205 to 227 of the new constitution. With this part, Francis has succeeded in something that had not been accomplished before, namely the reorganization of the Vatican's economic area. Often enough, this was the reason for scandals. It had been seen by the pre-conclave as a special problem area demanding fundamental reform.

Pope Francis has paid special attention to this reform from the very beginning, and he has already implemented reforms step by step over the years. What is now found in the new constitution is ultimately the written version of the new order already implemented. It includes the following organisms: Council for Economy, Secretaryate for Economy, Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic Sea, Office of the Auditor General, and Commission of Confidential Matter, Committee for Investigation.

These little examples of reforms also show how Francis proceeded with his reform efforts. For him, it was not a matter of first creating a complete text of the new constitution and only then beginning the reform. Francis, so to speak, from the beginning of 2013, successively through dialogue with the Council of the Cardinals but also with other bodies and persons, already carried out steps of the reform.

Some conclusions beyond the already presented proposals at the different parts of the constitution. Now let's ask, what more can we gather for our Bishop conferences, dioceses, and the church in Asia, precisely from the specific approach of

Pope Francis? What I am going to present now is intended to open up ways of understanding and point out impulses for questions, not in the sense of an attempt to instruct or teach from outside. It is based on my own observation with regard to the work of the Cardinals, the Council of the Cardinals, and the close involvement and cooperation with some of the Cardinals in a working group from the very beginning in 2013.

**“To regain a damaged and lost credibility is not an easy task, but this was exactly the starting point of the Cardinals in the pre-conclave of 2013 and also of our Holy Father Francis.”**

First, what is at stake is to grasp and implement the program of the new constitution, which, with the words “Evangelium” and “Braedecard,” is precisely pinpointed by our Holy Father as the reason for the existence of our church. It is most closely connected with the credibility of the church, and everyone will agree on this. To regain a damaged and lost credibility is not an easy task, but this was exactly the starting point of the Cardinals in the pre-conclave of 2013 and also of our Holy Father Francis. What characterized the pre-conclave was the will to face the real situation, not to whitewash anything, to name things openly and plainly as a prerequisite for the reform, and to confront the threats to credibility at the root.

Following a suggestion from the pre-conclave, our Holy Father then immediately took up the idea of a systematic consultation by Cardinals from all continents so as not to be dependent only on the inner circle of the Curia. He established the Council of the Cardinals with the task of assisting him in the governance of the church and drafting a new



constitution.

As an analogy to the Council of Cardinals, do we have a group of persons from the various sectors of our diocese beyond the usual internal consultative persons to discuss with us as pastors on a regular basis openly and without blinders the situation of the diocese and to assist us in our covenants?

Let us go a further step back. Do we have in our Bishop conference, in our diocese, something analogous to a pre-conclave? That is, a forum that takes place from time to time, a moment of pause in which everything can be put on the table in an unbiased way and a kind of inventory and status determination can take place.

So, the church is made up of people and is not a perfect society. How do we deal with mistakes? Do we have an error culture in our diocese, in our Bishop conference, in our committees?

How can we avoid a backlog of problems in time and create opportunities to continuously reduce tension and relieve pressure, as

“**Not only learning from mistakes but dealing creatively with the creative initiatives of our young people, giving them an open space for women’s groups, indigenous people, religious groups, etc., and developing new dynamics.**”

Francis has exemplified with the continuous reforms, especially with the economic sector and the new dicasteries, for example, with laity and integral human development?

What attention do we pay to a well-established economy in our diocese, in our Bishop conference, so that no scandals can arise that can undermine the credibility of the church and especially the proclamation of the Gospel?

But we do not want to look only at the negative. According to part four of the principles of the new constitution, have we also developed a

creative culture in which creative initiatives, new ideas, and best practice examples in our parishes, dioceses, and Bishop conferences are collected, appreciated, and presented as inspiration and models for others, without immediately being placed under suspicion of a lack of orthodoxy? Not only learning from mistakes but dealing creatively with the creative initiatives of our young people, giving them an open space for women's groups, indigenous people, religious groups, etc., and developing new dynamics.

Finally, in the Preamble, the church is described as a "synodal" face. Would it not be recommendable, immediately, independently of the synodal process initiated by our Holy Father and structured together with him by Cardinals Mario Krek and Sharkey, to look for ways in which such a mutual process of listening and learning from each other can be established and consolidated in the future as well?

It is necessary to be sensitive altogether to the work of the Holy Spirit within the people of God, but also to His work in the world, and also to learn from it—a world in which the church is embedded and in which she has to put into practice the evangelization. Thank you for your kind attention.

We are grateful to Monsignor Desire for a fairly detailed and comprehensive presentation of the apostolic constitution "Evangelium," highlighting the paradigm shifts and opportunities it offers for new forms of governance and leadership for the church in Asia at various levels.

Before we have the responses of the members of the house, would Cardinal Oswald like to say anything at the moment? No? So we open up for your responses, comments, questions, clarifications. Kindly raise your hand. I can see Bishop Sebastian with one hand here. Please stand up, Bishop Sebastian. They can't see you. Please, here. Is there anybody who would like to intervene? If I could see the hand, please, here in front. I still have to study it very well. I have just gone through it. I just want to ask you, what is the position of the dicastery for the Congregation or for the Oriental churches? Where does it stand and what is its position? What about the evangelization work done by the Oriental churches? I would like to know. Shall we take two interventions at a time? One here, please.

Bishop here. Good morning, Monsignor. My question is about the reforms in the curia. The Holy Father would like everyone to really get involved, the people of God, not just one aspect, but everyone. Now, it brings us to the idea of responsibility among the people of God. Can you expand on that aspect of shared responsibility in the governance of the church?

**“It is necessary to be sensitive altogether to the work of the Holy Spirit within the people of God, but also to His work in the world, and also to learn from it...”**

Yeah, maybe I would agree that I would answer the first question about the Oriental churches. Now, the Eastern churches have the dicastery for Eastern churches, and it has not been devalued in any way. The first three articles, Bishop Sebastian, begin with you. Evangelization. This was a change because there was the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the beginning, and the idea was that the main purpose of the Curia is not just to supervise doctrine, although that's an important thing, but really the mission of the church. The Pope wanted to emphasize that the mission of evangelization is number one, and immediately after that comes the question of the doctrine of the faith. He puts that as number two, and then comes the service of charity. This was not a dicastery or congregation, but there was just a practically an office which existed before. Now, the Holy Father really, the extent of its work has increased a great deal. The head has been made a cardinal now, just again to signify the importance. It is put right on top again to show it's very small. I think there are just three articles, but the importance is shown. So, you proclaim the gospel, make sure that the morals and the doctrine is practiced, and then begins the department of evangelization. As you rightly said, before, it was right on top. It is still right on top of all the other dicasteries, because the idea is that the congregation of the Eastern churches concerns everything. All the other departments, education, saints, everything, changes them together with the liturgy. Everything that takes care of the Holy Father is not personally he's personally now Prefect of the Dicastery, so that there's no intention to devalue. And I want to tell you also that from the inside, this has been discussed with the congregation before the dicastery before this was done.

Now, the other question was about how the people of God are involved in the governance. The second question, if I understood it rightly, Bishop, is that the people of God should be involved in the governance. How are they involved? Co-responsibility at every level, sorry, you spelled it co-responsibility. The question, of course, as you see in the dicastery, nearly one of the big changes is that anybody, first of all, the baptized, the idea, the nature of the offices, vicarious part, delegated part, that's very clear. Now, this has been a big discussion, argued about, etc., but the Holy Father has said every baptized person could really be a part of the governance of the church. Naturally, this depends on the nature of the obligations imposed, the nature of the competences, etc. So, there has been some dispute. So, I think this is totally in keeping with Catholic theology, with a prudence understanding. There's no major shift, except that, in as far as legally it's possible, and there is, for example, in the dicastery for communications, already the head is a layperson. And therefore, there is much more of an opening. And now, the Holy Father is supposed to ordain three women as sisters, of course, at the head of the United and the body of the Congregation of Bishops. So, there is collaboration. He said open it's not a completely earthquake, but certainly a great opening for co-responsibility.

Thank you for the question. May I add a respect? You were talking about people of God, but according to the second chapter of Lumen Gentium, people of God consist of all, also the Pope, the Bishops, the Cardinals, the clergy. All belong to the people of God. And so, we have to distinguish very clearly. The discussion was more about why laypeople could take over a new dicastery. And our Holy Father did it already, for example, with the dicastery of communication. And he has also foreseen for the economy a woman for a leadership. But this woman did not take over at the end, even if she was foreseen. So, you see it very clearly. The point is very clearly in the principles, number five, the *Protestas Vicaria*, it means from the Pope is going out. The next two, Bishop Joseph Dorsius and Bishop Yvonne. Bishop Joseph Dorsius, please.

Thank you, Monsignor, for summarizing the entire document within 28 minutes. Congratulations. *Evangelium* is the update or renewal of Pastor Bonus after three decades, I think, and based on the basic or fundamental commandment of Jesus Christ, "Go and preach the Gospel

everywhere.” My question is, this has to affect the entire Church, not only the Roman Curia, but it has to affect the Bishop’s conferences, the dioceses, even the parishes. It’s not an easy thing, I think. We need special deliberation and the work of the Holy Spirit to navigate this change, this paradigm shift. Another doubt or if you can answer, if it is a confidential thing, what is the mindset of the present people who are working in the Curia regarding this paradigm shift? Are they satisfied or not? Right.

**“in the direction of the missionary evangelization, when the history of different countries and the work of evangelization is fleshed... I am delighted when I heard Asian priests, Asian bishops, who are now part of the dicasteries in the Roman Curia.”**

I would like to hear what is the mindset of the people who are presently working in the Roman Curia or the dicasteries about this paradigm shift. Yeah, I suppose... Sorry.

He wanted to know the mind of those who are at present in the Roman Curia. The Bishop Dae in the middle, and then Bishop Yvonne, and then there will be a response. Here, Philippines, when I was a seminarian priest, I was always fascinated when the CBCP would issue statements, and I did not know when I became a bishop that it underwent turbulent discussions, tensions within the body. But from the point of view of priests or a lay person at that time, I was so happy to have read those documents, and it says that there is really this magisterium, the teaching office of the Church. I am really grateful for that. And the second point, in the direction of the missionary evangelization, when the history of different countries and the work of evangelization is fleshed, these past two weeks, it’s always the European missionaries who came to the Philippines. And now, I am delighted when I heard Asian priests, Asian bishops, who are now part of the dicasteries in the Roman Curia. And it’s really a good sign that even the prefect of the number one dicastery on evangelization is headed by an Asian. So, it’s really a sign of the great contribution of our collegiality, our synodality as bishops of Asia. So, those questions of our new reflections on our collegiality, yes, it may seem turbulent. There might be a swing of the pendulum. But in the end, our lay people, even our priests, are so happy with the pronouncements,

with the teachings coming from the Church. Little did they know how difficult, how attention-filled it is. So, that's just my point as I heard this beautiful discussions this morning. Thank you. Thank you, Bishop. We'll take the third intervention, Bishop Yvonne. Where are you? Bishop, Bishop Yvonne is here. Thank you, Monsignor. We are happy to hear your talk on the kind of paradigm shift, as the others have already shared.

How long will it take for this paradigm shift you have spoken about to penetrate those who are working in the dicasteries? Because sometimes we see that things are sent to them, but we are waiting for a response. They say COVID has happened, okay, COVID passed, and then I don't know what happened. Things are delayed and delayed and delayed. Could you give an explanation for these delays?

Thank you, Bishop Yvonne. Yeah, now may I request the response to these three. The first time, I'm afraid, was not very clear. The first and the third are very connected, first question and the third question. And question the question, Bishop, the first thing, how what's the situation? Evidently, the Holy Father wanted to give a paradigm shift, as I said. He didn't want to make an earthquake. And here, he has already, before Predicate Evangelium came into effect, on Pentecost, he had already changed some, the integral human development came in, the Protost, already was formed. So, the dicastery for the laity and the family already was formed. There were some changes already made even before. The Holy Father wanted to be gradual in his approach. He didn't want to all of a sudden. He has said many times that this is a mindset change. **Laws don't change things, the mindset changes. The big thing is to preach the Gospel, the idea of service.** I gave an excellent talk, one of the best I've heard, really, on Predicate Evangelium, giving a good analysis. This paradigm shift is that the Curia is at the service of the Pope and the Bishops, not that the Bishops should feel when they are meeting the Curia that they are under scrutiny. It's really a fraternal assistance. That's the whole idea of the Holy Father, that the Curia is meant to assist in the pastoral and therefore at the service of the Pope and the Bishops. And there was theological discussion, now is it Pope the Bishops because the Pope at the service of the Bishops?

Now it's rather clear what it said over here, the Pope and the Bishops. And now the Holy Father also has added Episcopal conferences, also at the service of conferences. This theological discussion on what is the status, a theological discussion, and the Bishop is asking how much time this will take. It will be a gradual process. The Holy Father does not mean in the sense that any change management, there's got to be a process, the discussion, etc. I want to tell you that the Holy Father had a tremendous amount of consultation. You know, through the Council of Cardinals, they made the drafts, etc. But he had a lot of consultation. Every dicastery was consulted, and different members were assigned. I met several of the dicasteries, the Oriental Churches. I sat with them more than once, discussing. And then the Holy Father decided what should be done. So really, everyone is on board. The Curia is on board. The document is really completely the Holy Father's document. His mind, like how the Holy Spirit is led, he's kept it for over a year, studying it very, very carefully after it was handed in the final draft. And he was involved in the drafting also at every stage. So, a mindset is involved. Now, the other question. I apologize for any confusion caused by the formatting of the previous response. Here's the revised version:

I was not too clear whether I understood it, but it's a question of how the Philippines is coming of age, openness to Asia. I think it was more of a comment and reflection. One of the things, it was not a question, I think if I understood well. Yeah, yeah, but one of the things I want to say is that the idea is, like the Holy Father called all the Cardinals after the last dicasteries to discuss this document. The idea was not for an academic discussion to know the Curia, but I would think that this idea is how can these principles also apply? What you said at the very end, how can we apply this in our own diocese and in our own conferences? How this principle of subsidiarity, decentralization, allowing lay people also responsibility, using the baptismal... How exactly this will, again, take a process. To again come back to Bishop's question, those his question, the Curia, what is the level of acceptance? I think that's what behind your mind. Certainly, it's something new, but not something totally new because there was a consultation at the highest level. I mean, the prefect, secretaries, were generally consulted about every sort of the spirit is there. They knew it was coming in. There are some administrative things like the term of office, etc., which are administrative, okay, that can be discussed.

But as far as, yeah, I think that the Curia has tried to be internationalized. The Holy Father, Paul VI, began. Pope Francis has done it much, much more. But ultimately, much depends on the dicastery to dicastery, how the thing does him. Thank you. I'm sorry we're not fully understood your question. Monsignor Sire wants to add something. I think the question was how long... Yeah, with the paradigm shift. But I think the answer... How long is hard to say. You, the Bishops, the Bishop conferences should address and deal with the Curia in a different way, according to what is established in the new constitution. This is important. I think we have to say through this very clearly. And there was a question about mindset shift. In July, I was invited by the SELAM to participate in the meeting there. The President of SELAM is here. And there was very clearly Bishops from Brazil coming back from the Visits ad limina. And they were very happy. They said it's totally different than before. You see, you have to come from both sides. One side, the Curia, but also from you, from your side. And all, there are different aspects. For example, this election of the candidates. The list of criteria is something of you to claim this and to bring it in. I think this has, we have to see. And what Cardinal Oscar Oswald said very clearly also, to bring people from outside in. Therefore, in the new constitution, the norm is the time is five years. So that there could be a change, new people should come in. And it depends also on you whom you will send there. You will prepare for this special service. Yeah, we'll have the last round of three interventions. They will be brief because we'll have to keep within the parameters of time. The first one, Cardinal Po, then Bishop Pablo, and Bishop Charcoal. So I can see one more hand here. Okay, Bishop Ledesma. If you can, Archbishop Ledesma, if you can be brief. Cardinal Charles, yeah. Mine is simple and a general question directed to His Eminence Monsignor Sayah and perhaps also to... In the past, synods, we call it Synod of Bishops. Now, in the 15th, what is this one? We completely deleted the Bishops and we just call it Synod of Synodality for the 2023 and 24. In future synods, will there still only be called Synod of Bishops, or will there not be eliminated already in that case? The original idea, I believe, I understood so that the original idea of synod is to have unity, as fraternity, and cooperation among the

**“We have to study, re-evaluate the meaning and role of the great traditional religions in Asia. They play a part in the salvific economy of God.”**



Bishops, especially. But now, I see that the idea is too much scattered, and the original idea of ecumenism is somewhat abandoned. Is it still like that? Thank you. That's my question. Bishop Pablo, thank you. Then Bishop Charcoal, yeah. My question has to do with the political identity of the Vatican. Because inevitably, even if it is clear to all of us that the Holy See of Rome is a symbol of communion in the Universal Church, because it is also a political entity, there are others, especially countries that have emerged from colonialism, who are suspicious of the political agenda and they see things in a different way. And there are some people who say that the political statehood of the Vatican is also a disadvantage to the evangelizing mission of the Church. I wonder if this conversation ever surfaced in your discussions in the Council of Cardinals, if you are at liberty to share it. I would appreciate it. If not, it's okay. Thank you. Yeah, Bishop Charcoal, and the last one is here in the middle. And then we will... I will ask Cardinal Gracias and Monsignor Sire to respond briefly. Yes, I am the outgoing chair of the Office of Consecrated Life, and earlier I was also a member of the Office for Human Development of FABC. I would understand that the message of Predicate Evangelium is also addressed to the offices of FABC, that we do be listening to the needs of the different conferences in Asia. So I would like to ask, how can that be done? Maybe one is a stronger linkage between the offices of FABC with the dicasteries in Rome. Another one is the offices of FABC could really have representatives in every conference, also to give advice on what are the needs of the conferences in Asia. Because so far, the offices are just composed of four or five bishops from different regions, but there are about 20 member conferences in FABC, and that can be done now easily through Zoom meetings online. So maybe this can become the listening post also for the dicasteries in Rome.

Yeah, now I will ask Cardinal Ozil to respond. Joseph, also answer. Let me take the first question of Cardinal Bo about the Synod. That's a very valid question which Cardinal Bo has asked the Council of the Synod. But this really is a change modification in the always was called of Senator Bishops, but it's been putting his counsel of the Synod only indicates Cardinal from a technical point of view that it is could be a synod of Bishops seated of which is of a much bigger Synod. As you know, there is the diocese in it where many people are canonically. It specifies whose day is not only Episcopal, it's much more, much broader than that, so it

just enlarges the competence of that dicastery, that office, or the scented body. It does not necessarily mean Cardinal Hilariëch would know more because he's been directly involved in this city. My impression from the now this is that the present Synod will carry on, but this gives leaves open the possibility of really other synods also the Synod of Bishops, and they will have to be clear, I suppose directions for every Synod but leaves the certainly opens the door but does not mean that the Synod of Bishops is suppressed when Paul Saint Paul VI began it. It was really up the document he was after the Vatican Council where he specifically meant it as a continuation of a mini Council, etcetera. That's also developed, so that's only opens the door. The question about the FABC, Archbishop Ledesma, this of course we'll have to see. There's a little modification of the offices, etcetera, and that will have to be seen. But it's much more the FABC offices are much more flexible, much more freedom. It's got, sort of, there's no the Central Committee could make modification that's what the statutes say, the nature, the competence, etcetera. Now this really the nuncios are the ones who deal with the governments and then and then I suppose that they would be there's a whole department the Holy Father expanded to make it three departments now but the specifically that section the second section deals with relation with governments. Now that has also faded in now there has been slight modification here in their competences.

I don't know what is the background of what you had in mind when you asked the question of the political. What is the background of? Well, the background specifically is China, sorry. Pablo, yeah, the background specifically is China. You know how strongly the Chinese government is reacting to interventions from Rome because they look at Rome as the Vatican as a political state. You are infringing into, sorry, sovereignty as a nation, they say. Of course, you know, from our perspective, Rome is



basically an ecclesial symbol of communion, but that doesn't work for them. For them, you know, you're being a political state is under suspicion. Now, it is putting our work of evangelization in a disadvantage, and I do understand that there are some Orthodox Churches not in communion with the Catholic Church who are saying that, you know, if Rome gives up its political identity as a city-state and the Holy Father stops being a political head of state but just as a supreme pontiff, a bridge builder of the universal Catholic Church, they say maybe communion would be much easier. Thank you very much, Pablo. That's Bishop Pablo. That's a very, very valid question. But my own experience is that the Secretariat of State is extremely competent. I found them extremely competent, even more competent than many ambassadors have told me and councils that the training for these consuls is even better than what they get for the state.

Now, what I mean is that they are extremely sensitive, and that is a certain concern what you say about would be infringing the Holy Father. The Secretary of State, the Holy Father, with these advices, has got to take a decision on what to intervene in, where to intervene, how to intervene, when to intervene, without causing more damage than help. He's got a role as a spiritual father of the world, a moral authority. Now, he was criticized for not mentioning Putin by name at the beginning, you know, in the Ukrainian thing. Now, there are so many compulsions. It might have been more effective, but now he is exactly. All this is really taken into consideration, Bishop Pablo. It's, uh, but you say is absolutely true, and it's taken into consideration. I think that, right now, uh, I think it's got to be changed from the acceptability of the Holy Father. He's the country you're referring to, the situation you're referring to. All that will have to be taken, and I think it's taken. The speeches are so well-prepared. Those who have had papal visits know exactly how much preparation has gone into that. And then, Charcoal's question was whether we can have in our diocese in our council lay people. What it called for canonical changes and so on. It's quite a topic, but maybe brief response because we are running short of time. Canon law gives really the competencies of the Pastoral Council. There is a move Charcoal right now to say that they should not be merely consulted if that's what you have in mind, but to make it more deliberate, to have more voice. That already came from Vatican, to as well hinted the basis of some of these things is from also solidarity, is from *Lumen Gentium*, the whole concept of the church as the people of God and

everybody having the baptismal dignity, which the Holy Father is insisting. What he said, what he has been saying is that, I'm only bringing Vatican II into like fulfilling, well give you two. It's still in actualization about Vatican division of Vatican II, where it spoke of the people of God. Thank you, Cardinal Loyer. Any 30 seconds because we are running short of time. Once you are a sire, 30 seconds, and then we'll stop. Perhaps two words. What Pablo said, it's clear there is a double function, huh? It's a Vatican, the double identity, but on the other hand, if we are considering what is going on, where is the church in voice? The church is not an objective, a name in herself. The church has to serve, to serve the people, the humankind, so humanity, the nature, all the things we were talking about. And I think even if it's not so easy to balance both sides, but it's necessary. What the church is doing as an advocacy work in the U.N., for example, with a mission there at the U.N. or in Geneva or in the FAO, FRO, with the nutrition or with a health care, all these things, I think, is very important. What Cardinal Oswald said, how deals the Secretary of State with all these things very carefully, but I think it's necessary for the advocacy works that the church is present and the kingdom of God develops within the world and the Holy Spirit is working in the world and not only in the church. And so we have to struggle and to bring it together. It's not easy, but so also we, from here from Asia, you could also help, as it was said yesterday, to help the Vatican, the people there working there to deal with these experiences in your country. Cardinal Charles Paul was talking in his opening Mass about the wounds of Asia, the wounds of the nature. If we want to deal with the wounds and to end with the terrific work of our Lord Jesus Christ, then it's clearly we have also to be present there. And it's not only something me and my God, no, we are a Catholic Church and not some type of other thinking in Christian of Christianity. Thank you so much, Cardinal Oswald and Monsignor Joseph. Thank you so much for such a clear presentation. All of us realize the conversation must continue. We cannot exhaust. May I request Cardinal Oswald and Monsignor Joseph to come to the middle and receive tiny tokens of appreciation from our president, Cardinal Charles. Thank you. Thank you so much. And now, while we prepare ourselves for two minutes of silent prayer, I request Father Yan Stefanov and Bishop George Palia Parambil to be ready for your brief presentation. We now spend two minutes in silent prayer. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.



### **FABC 50 Years On : Negotiating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities Prof. Jonathan Tan**

Prof. Jonathan Tan, professor of Catholic Studies at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, spoke on the next topic, "FABC 50 Years On: Negotiating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities". Introducing his background of work and analysing the demographics of migration and the changing population, and the rich documentation of the FABC, Prof. Tan described how Christianity has moved on from grounded geography to virtual and online communities of faith, and trends that would arise in the next fifty years.

Session: The last session of today is "FABC 50 Years: Negotiating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities." I request Professor Jonathan Tan to please come up. Professor Jonathan Dunn hails from Malaysia and is a professor of Catholic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, in the United States of America. Professor Jonathan has written extensively on the FABC. Welcome, Professor Jonathan. Thank you very much.  
Is there a way to show PowerPoint slides?

Professor Jonathan will speak for 40 minutes. If Professor Jonathan succeeds in finishing earlier, well and good, we might have more time for interaction. Welcome, Professor.

So, a very good evening to all the bishop delegates, honored invited guests. Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you, to address this assembly.

My presentation today is meant to be an exploration of the FABC's 50 years from now. I have tried to discuss topics that were not covered earlier in the week and add to what other speakers have already brought up. These topics are not meant to be the only ones, but rather recommendations for points or issues that the FABC could consider over the next 50 years. Feel free to decide whether these should be included in the final statement next week.

When we talk about Resource One, it is not just at the national level but also the Universal Church. Even for us in the Asian Church, looking back at what our predecessors have done is crucial. For example, the document "The Spirit and Work in Asia Today" by the OTCS (Office of Theological Concerns in Southeast Asia) from 40 years ago is worth revisiting. It emphasized listening to the Spirit, accompaniment, and discerning the Spirit's work in Asia today. Let us use this as a starting point to explore the next 50 years and read the signs of the times.

I have written extensively about the FABC, starting with my very first FABC paper in the year 2000. It remains one of the major works ever written on the theological methodology of the FABC and is available in Gregorian or FABC Papers number 108. I have also written a book titled "Christian Mission Among the Peoples of Asia," where I used the FABC's approach to mission to articulate a mission theology and practices for Asia. This book has been recognized as one of the 15 books in Mission Studies by Orbis and the IBMR. These are sources you can refer to if you're interested in my work related to the FABC. Additionally, I wrote another book to celebrate the FABC's 50th anniversary, published by Fortress Press and ISPCK, marking the years 1970 to 2020.

If you visit the ISPC Case website, you can buy the book for a

reasonable price, especially if you purchase it from India. It contains an analysis of the FABC's documents, statements, and the Bishops Institute over the last 50 years. Today's presentation draws on some of that work, but it goes beyond the book since the task given to me was to look at the next 50 years and suggest what should be done.

In the first part, let's briefly look at Asia to ensure we are on the same page. My approach will be interdisciplinary, combining theology, mythology, and sociology. We will also consider sociological data, as too often, theology and mission are uninformed by such data. This data reveals aspects we may not have previously noticed.

So, you know, I use the data from the Pew Forum. When we look at the age of over 100 years, the Christian population of Asia has grown. We know that the Christian population of Asia is also very young compared to Europe and North America, as you can see here. If you look at countries

**... we have talked about diversity. This is part of our reality as the Church in Asia.**

with Asian populations, such as China, India, and Indonesia, they have a huge number of people. By the year 2050, based on current projections,

China will have the largest number of Evangelical Christians, surpassing the United States and North America. Bishop delegates, you have to take into account that this is a vibrant place, the center of mission where Christianity, especially Catholicism, is growing.

At the same time, we have talked about diversity. It's something hard to visualize, so I use charts from the Pew study. Asia has almost 60 percent of the world's population. You can see the number of Hindus, Buddhists, followers of folk religion, and other religions compared to Christianity. The FABC will always have to deal with this diversity in a manner that Latin American bishops or bishops from Europe or North America don't really have to deal with. This is part of our reality as the Church in Asia.

Another way of looking at it is comparing Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin America, where Christianity is the majority. They don't have to think about diversity in the same way. They can focus on issues like

the environment, ecology, and indigenous matters because they can take for granted that Christianity will always be the majority. In Asia, we cannot run away from diversity, with such a tiny population of Christians and so many adherents of other religions.

When we look at Catholics in Asia in 1910 and 2010, the Catholic population has also grown significantly compared to elsewhere, but it remains very small as a share of the total population of the continent, as you can see in this chart.

Now, I've identified the following eight points that we need to look at in the contemporary context of Asia, which summarize what other presenters have already talked about. It includes youthfulness, massive poverty, environmental degradation, migration, diversity, hybridities, intersectional identities, intercultural and interfaith families, grassroots practices, and religious violence. These are things that we always have to deal with as the Church in Asia.

Some key characteristics of Asian Catholicism include being a minority, except for the Philippines and Timor-Leste. Being a minority means we often don't get to dictate the conversation. Understanding power

**“Being a minority means we often don't get to dictate the conversation. Understanding power dynamics in dialogue is crucial for fruitful discussions.”**

young people who have to support their extended families and look for employment elsewhere. The intersection between faith, culture, and ethnicity is experienced at a much deeper level by Asian Catholics due to cultural and religious diversity. Ongoing violence also poses challenges in the quest for dialogue.

These are some of the ideas that I also presented regarding intersectionality and other topics when talking about Asian Catholicism.

It's not just a secular idea or intersectionality that sociologists in



the U.S. and elsewhere have been talking about. Our Latino colleagues in the United States, when talking about *teologia en conjunto*, respond to the local *tidiano*, the daily life experiences. It's not just Latin American theologies, but a kind of *theologizing en conjunto* as Latinos in the United States.

Now, let's start with the first point, migration. To visualize it, if we look at the World Bank data, five of the top 10 sending countries are in Asia: India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines. When people migrate, they bring their religion along with them. For example, in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf states, we often think of it as a region of Islam, but there are 2.5 million Catholics. This is how migration and religion intersect in the region.

“**The intersection between faith, culture, and ethnicity is experienced at a much deeper level by Asian Catholics due to cultural and religious diversity.**”

When we look at it visually, it's mind-blowing. The largest Catholic parish is not in Europe or the United States, but in Dubai, specifically Mary's Church in the UAE. They have over 300,000 parishioners officially, unofficially around half a million. They have up to 40 masses in 12 languages over three days because Friday to Sunday is a holiday, accommodating the Muslims' holidays as well.

To give you an idea of the size of the Filipino community, the *Simbang Gabi* is a significant event. It's like the *posadas* in Latin America, a series of novena Masses in the last week of Advent leading up to Christmas. In 2014, there were over 14,000 Filipinos attending, and the church couldn't accommodate everyone. They had to hold the *Simbang Gabi* in the car park. This shows the reality of migration and how it affects the Catholic community.

Migration is not just about the abstract issues of trafficking, abuse, and exploitation. We also need to empower migrants to witness their faith in the places they now call home, even in the heart of the Muslim world. When you see 14,000 people attending *Simbang Gabi* every night, it's a vibrant expression of faith.

My colleague, Professor Catherine Gomez, a Singaporean Eurasian Catholic, and I conducted fieldwork to study migrants. We identified a category called transient migrants or transient mobility. We often think of migrants as making a permanent move, such as refugees or those who are exploited and abused. However, there is also a silent majority of educated and professional migrants who are transient. They may study in one country, work in another for several years, and retire in yet another country. They are the prime drivers of world Christianity globally.

“**We also need to empower migrants to witness their faith in the places they now call home, even in the heart of the Muslim world.**”

These transient migrants include professionals like engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, IT professionals, and international students. They are educated and middle class or above, and they play a significant role in shaping world Christianity.

The results of our study have been published. The site we studied in Singapore is published in *Critical Cultura*, a journal published by Afternoon. The site in the Philippines is published in a book.

In our study, we interviewed about 88 respondents in Singapore. We did not initially ask them about religion, but we wanted to see what they would say without us prompting them. Many of them identified as Christians, and we wanted to understand how Christianity helped them. What we found is quite different from what we often hear from church parish priests. These transient migrants often don't fit in with the local population and turn to Christianity as a means of coping. This demographic is significant, including professional IT workers and others. In Singapore, for example, one-third of the residents are transient migrants. If you take out the IT professionals from India, China, and elsewhere, the Singapore economy would collapse. This shows the importance of understanding the experiences of these migrants.

One interesting finding was that when we interviewed them, we discovered that they tended to hang out with other transient migrants

rather than with the locals. They would go to church for Mass, but they formed their own groups among themselves. Additionally, online communities play a crucial role for transient migrants. Even before the pandemic and live streaming, migration and online communities have fascinated sociologists. In a study by Agnes Browser and Randy Rodriguez, they explored how online faith communities formed among Filipino Catholic transient migrants in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In our own study, we found that transient migrants formed communities on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and more.

These online communities are significant for missiology and ecclesiology. Our ecclesiology is often constructed based on grounded geography, with physical buildings in geographical regions like parishes and dioceses. However, online communities are real for migrants. They provide a sense of solidarity and belonging in the liminal space of being a migrant. It is crucial for the Church to accompany migrants where they are, including online spaces. This is especially important in places like Saudi Arabia, where building churches is not legally allowed. Online communities become a way for migrants to connect and practice their faith.

In Saudi Arabia, where there are no churches or priests, the 1.5 million Catholics find ways to navigate the restrictions. These online communities provide support and a sense of community for them.

Because you cannot enter as a priest in Saudi Arabia without getting caught, the option for transient migrants is to create an online church or virtual community that goes beyond the reach of Saudi law. The study by Agnes Brazal and a colleague on eight Filipino transient migrants in the

**“It is crucial for the Church to accompany migrants where they are, including online spaces.”**

Persian Gulf highlights the absence of physical churches in such regions. In this context, transient migrants experience their own liminality and rely on coping mechanisms.

When we talk about being transient, it is not necessarily a positive experience. It entails feelings of uprootedness, loneliness, and a yearning for home. Even if someone is earning a significant income as

an IT professional, they can still experience this loneliness. This is where Christianity, as argued in our study, plays a crucial role.

It's something that I believe both the FABC and local bishops, clergy, and dioceses need to address. The issue of assimilation also comes into play. In sociology, there is often a discussion about whether migrants should assimilate, such as speaking the local language instead of their native language. This also applies to the Church. Do we expect these transient migrants to assimilate into local parishes, or should they form their own communities? This tension exists not only in secular states but also within the Church.

I have written about online communities as early as 2009, discussing the intersection between faith, culture, and ethnicity. Lunar New Year Mass, as celebrated in various places like Jakarta, Malaysia, and the Philippines, showcases the connection between faith, culture, and ethnicity. Ancestor veneration rituals, such as those practiced by Bishop Ignatius in the United States, demonstrate how cultural practices are intertwined with Catholicism. This is also seen in India during the celebration of Diwali, as well as in Vietnamese Catholic communities in Chicago and at religious education congresses in Los Angeles.

Popular piety and devotion play a significant role in Asian Catholicism. It goes beyond just attending Mass or going to church. Popular devotions hold immense importance in places like the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and

Sri Lanka. The Marian pilgrimage to Our Lady of Velankanni in India is the largest pilgrimage of its kind, drawing millions of devotees. Our Lady of Madu in Sri Lanka served as a place of refuge and consolation during the long-running civil war. The Vietnamese diaspora in the United States gathers every August for the Marian celebration of Our Lady of La Vang, representing the intersection of popular devotion and Vietnamese Catholic identity.

**“Dialogue is an important aspect that needs continuous attention. It serves as a reminder for us to always discuss and address these matters.”**

In Australia, I took this photo. Martyrdom has historically been a topic of concern in Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, and other countries.

The FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Company) has always addressed this issue, not only in dialogue with outsiders but also as a question of justice for the victims of martyrdom and violence. This particular photo is from Orissa, India, and it represents Sri Lanka as well. In Sri Lanka, there was a conflict between the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and the Armed Forces, as well as the involvement of jihadis in the Easter bombing of 2019.

Dialogue is an important aspect that needs continuous attention. It serves as a reminder for us to always discuss and address these matters. The following are some of the Five Points that I discuss in my book, focusing on how the FEBC's intersectional theologizing addresses these issues. One significant point that I would like to highlight before concluding my presentation is the importance of harmony with the environment and ecology. This is often overlooked in discussions about the FEBC, but it has always been a topic of concern for them.

Let's begin with the Chinese character for harmony, which is also used in Kanji and Hancha. The left side represents the rise of the green stalk, while the right side depicts a mouse symbolizing the grain plant and the environment, with the mouth representing humans. This image beautifully illustrates the concept of harmony between nature and humans, the balance of the ecosystem. It is crucial to recognize that the care for the environment and the theology of harmony are intrinsically linked, and this has been emphasized by Asian bishops since the 1980s and 1990s.

In Asian Christian perspectives, harmony with nature and harmony in human relationships are interconnected. One cannot be achieved without the other. It is important to expand our understanding of harmony with nature, giving it an anthropocentric orientation. The sixth plenary assembly of the FEBC in 1995 also highlighted the connection between harmony and ecology. Although this topic seemed to have been forgotten for some time, it is crucial for us, as Asians, to contribute to the global Church and embrace this spirit of catholicity.

I have provided a QR code that you can scan to access the articles, citations, or full-text PDFs related to my presentation. Thank you for your attention, and I am now open to any questions you may have.

We thank Professor Tan for his enlightening reflections on Asia's population, our rich religious traditions, and the valuable documentation provided by the FEBC. The discussions on the relationship with nature and ecology that started many years ago are still relevant today. Now, let us take a moment of prayerful silence before proceeding to interventions.

Now, we have some time for questions, clarifications, or comments. Cardinal Joseph Quotes of Pakistan, please go ahead.

In that part of Asia, which we have not discussed, there are approximately 4.5 million people. I apologize for the confusion earlier; I meant to refer to the Gulf area, specifically the small countries like Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, and others. In the early 70s, Professor Bullman, a Swiss Capuchin, wrote a book titled "The Coming of the Third Church," in which he highlighted that the center of Christianity in the coming decades would shift from the West to Asia, South America, and Africa. He also provided a demographic picture, which aligns with the information Professor Tan shared today about the significant number of Catholics and Christians in Asia.

During this session, I was expecting to discuss the future and the way ahead for the FEBC. Looking back, I recall discussions about the participatory Church and the methodology adopted by the FEBC theologians from South Africa, known as the lumco method. We emphasized the need for a participatory Church and sent FEBC teams to different countries to educate and engage with us, helping us envision the kind of Church we desired. The Asian Synod in 1998 in Rome produced the document "Ecclesia in Asia," which concluded that the future of the Church in Asia would be a participatory Church and a communion of communities.

**“We must not lose sight of the importance of moving towards a participatory Church and embracing synodality.”**

While we now use the term synodality, similar to the previous buzzword of a participatory Church, we are essentially conveying the same message. Pope Francis has emphasized synodality, and it aligns with the direction we were already moving in. However, we must reflect on

whether we have truly progressed in this regard. The top-down system that we aimed to move away from still persists, despite our discussions and efforts. We need to consider how to advance further and build on the fruitful years of the FEBC, particularly regarding the Theology of Harmony, which I personally find significant.

When I became a bishop 34 years ago in 1988, I chose the word “harmony” as my motto. And during the following decade, the FEBC published several papers on the Theology of Harmony. Therefore, it

**“Moving forward, I believe that a significant aspect for the Church in Asia would be cultural enculturation, encompassing language, worship, and all aspects of Church life that are influenced by the respective cultures.”**

is crucial for us to focus on the way forward and discuss how to build upon the facts and information presented today. We must not lose sight of the importance of moving towards a participatory Church and embracing

synodality. Thank you, Cardinal Quotes, for your intervention. Professor Tan, we will now take one more intervention before you respond. Bishop George, please go ahead.

I’m Bishop George from India. Thank you, Professor, for your very clear and convincing presentation on the current situation. There are a few things I wanted to discuss. Firstly, I wanted to talk about Ecclesia in Asia, which you mentioned in your presentation. It is evident from the discussions over the past few days that in every country in Asia, we are a small minority. I would like to hear your personal opinion on the numerical growth of the Church in the years ahead.

We will now take one more intervention from Archbishop Simon Poe. Then, Professor Tan will respond. Due to time constraints, we will not take any further interventions. Archbishop Simon, please proceed.

I appreciate the concept of Harmony that has been discussed. I would like to emphasize the importance of Asia as a land that has birthed and created diverse cultures and religions. Moving forward, I believe that a significant aspect for the Church in Asia would be cultural enculturation,

encompassing language, worship, and all aspects of Church life that are influenced by the respective cultures. Additionally, I see the contribution of Asia to the Universal Church lying in the promotion of inter-religious harmony.

During discussions, I was impressed by Bishop David Ambo's presentation on the concept of yin and yang, a well-known Taoist concept that signifies harmony by bringing things together. Given the tensions that exist between different religions and cultures in Asia, it becomes crucial for us to contribute to the universal Church by living in harmony.

This concept aligns with the BEC (Basic Ecclesial Community) and the social dimension of the Church, as popularized by the SALAM documents. The Asian

**“Given the tensions that exist between different religions and cultures in Asia, it becomes crucial for us to contribute to the universal Church by living in harmony.”**

concept and contribution can thrive in fostering inter-religious harmony, which is unique to us as a minority living among various cultures and religions in Asia.

We need to consider how this can shape our way forward and the possibilities that arise from embracing this approach. Despite the tension we may experience, I appreciate Cardinal Hollerich's acknowledgment that we are living within this tension while striving to find a path of harmony. I believe that it is indeed possible to achieve. But how do we actually put these ideas into action and ensure that they don't remain inward and confined to documents? This is the question that Bishop Simon raises and wishes to present to Professor Tan for a response on the way forward for the future of the Church in Asia.

In response to Archbishop Paul and Bishop Simon, Professor Tan highlights the importance of recognizing that FEBC documents are not solely for the region of Asia but also intended for the universal Church. He encourages colleagues in North America to engage with FEBC documents in the same way they study Salem documents. He mentions an upcoming conference where he will provide the Asian response to the Amazonian synod and hopes to promote further engagement between FEBC and



other regions.

Professor Tan also reflects on the challenges of religious diversity and pluralism in Europe and North America, particularly the rise of right-wing fundamentalism and anti-immigration sentiments. He notes the dominance of white Christianity in these regions and the struggle to deal with cultural and religious diversity. In contrast, the Church of Asia, despite being religious minorities, has thrived and demonstrated resilience in the face of persecution and restrictions. He emphasizes the need to showcase this resilience and promote harmony as a contribution to the global Church.

Professor Tan acknowledges the alignment between the current statements of Pope Francis and the long-standing positions of the Asian Bishops, as well as various Bishops' Institutes. He affirms that these ideas are not new and have been part of the discourse on FEBC for over 20 years.

The question is how do we retrieve that and this is something I cannot answer. It's something that I think the Federation, the Vicious conferences, the individual business, how do we? We have all these hard work done by everyone, a participatory Church, the various Visa cycles, and all. I mean, they are all there.

It is time, I think, the next 50 years, sometimes resource more like I'll put John the journey doesn't mean that we start looking for something new from Europe or from Rome or fancy. Sometimes we already have done it. And not only that, we can also, in spirit, what Archbishop Simon Poe said, offer you to The Universal Church the way Salem offers up new ways of dealing with indigenous and environment.

**“The church is evolving. It's not static. Instead of lamenting the secularization and the loss of people migration, we should look for opportunities and spirit what the spirit is telling us.”**

You know, we should not be shy about our gifts, our talents. We do not hide the lamb under the bed. We've put it out so that the world can see.

And to Bishop George, what do I see as a future of, you know, the next 50 years personally? Personally, this is no me, no way me telling you what you should write in your document. I think that we have to, in US, in my own writings, I've written on the need to go beyond tradition maintenance to what I call traditioning. And it's not my traditionally. It's not a paradigm I invent. Traditioning is a paradigm that my Latino colleagues have invented because being Latino is not maintaining a Latin American identity but creating a new identity. So, in a spirit of traditioning, we have to explore new ways. The church is evolving. It's not static. Instead of lamenting the secularization and the loss of people migration, we should look for opportunities and spirit what the spirit is telling us.

If young people cannot survive in this country, even as professionals, IT professionals, they have to go to Silicon Valley or they have to go to the Middle East or they have to go elsewhere in the United States to earn a living. Then, you know, we have to think of what

**“Our people are not going to be in Asia. Our people are going to be all over the world because Asia cannot provide enough opportunities for them to remain here.”**

it means to be Asian. One of the things I think the FABC has always been limited to the geographical whereas, as an interdisciplinary scholar who looks at Theology and at the intersection of theology, missiology, and sociology, what does it mean to be a transnational Asian? You talk about transnational identities. Global. So, how do we minister to the humongous Asian diaspora? You know, if most of our Catholics are working in the United States. How do we include them? How do we connect them? Modi does a very good job of trying to connect overseas India. Why aren't we doing something similar? Xi Jinping does the same with China, trying to encourage overseas Chinese to look at mother China and not other kind of stuff. They are doing all kinds of things to convince them to reclaim a Chinese identity, not always successful, but they are trying. There are lessons to be learned.

So one of the things that I wanted to actually be to think, yes, we should address issues of trafficking, abuse, exploitation. Yes, we cannot neglect that. But we need to also think big picture missiologically. Our people are not going to be in Asia. Our people are going to be all over

the world because Asia cannot provide enough opportunities for them to remain here. How do we address Asians across the world, around the world? How do we reach out to them? How to ensure that they connect with us? How can we, using virtue and online technologies, create new platforms, new ways of constructing and intersectional Asian and Catholic identity as they support in the diaspora? How do we address issues of the challenges of religious diversity and pluralism, which is not often happy? That's why we have Harmony. How do we respond to create new relationships? How do we address the victims, whether they are Tamil Catholics or whether they are in Pakistan or elsewhere? The core justice also means that we also need to find ways of walking with the victims of violence. How do we deal with that? How do we break boundaries? How can the Church ultimately be prophetic?

I cannot tell you what to write, but what I can tell you is to lay out the issues, lay out some ideas, and hopefully, the spirit will move you. The assembly in a spirit of synodality, communal collegiality, the traditional Orthodox ideal synodality where this The Sinner teaches, so that you can come up with something that's truly inspiring, that my colleagues in the United States and Europe would love to study the FABC statement from this assembly, the way they are looking at, so excited, at the Amazonian Synod documents. Thank you, thank you very much Professor Tan for your thought-provoking reflections and enlightening insights on how to negotiate challenges and seize opportunities.

FABC 50 years on, thank you to you and to those who participated in the conversation. I request Professor Tan to kindly come to the middle and accept our token of appreciation and gratitude from the hands of our president.





## **A Synodal Church for the Life of Asia Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich**

H.E. Jean-Claude Cardinal Hollerich SJ, Relator General of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, speaking on the Synod on synodality, explained the process of how the document was developed, and spoke of his experience working on it. Stressing the Holy Father's emphasis on everyone walking together with no exclusions, H.E. Cardinal Hollerich described the Synod as a Synod of the Church, where the consultation of peoples became the heart of the Synod, and where Christ and His mission remains the centre of the Church.

A warm welcome to you for this fifth day of our second week of the general conference, and we begin with our first talk. Our first speaker for today is Cardinal Jian Cloth Holyrich, Archbishop of Luxembourg and the Relator General of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Cardinal Holyrich, though he is Archbishop of Luxembourg now, has lived in Asia for 23 and a half years. He is a member of the Society of Jesus and came as a young Jesuit Scholastic in Japan. He then exercised his ministry at Sofia University in Japan. He spent 23 and a half years in

Japan, and therefore, he had journeyed in a way with the Church in Asia. He has been appointed the Relator General by the Holy Father for the 16th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and has accompanied the synodal process closely. He will now share his reflections and insights on the Synod and synodality. He will address us for 20 minutes. Welcome, Cardinals.

So, thank you very much, dear brother Cardinals and Bishops, dear colleagues in priesthood, and dear sisters and brothers in baptism. A synod about synodality... surely it went through your head that it is a very difficult title and it's very difficult to speak about.

So, when I get asked, "What is all this Synod about?" I normally answer, "It is a Synod about the Church." We are 60 years after Vatican II, and Vatican II defined the collegiality of the Bishops. This was first pursued in the program of the First Vatican Council, which had to disband because of political reasons. But, of course, in the mid-20th century, that could be addressed in a different way.

**“We speak about the Church as the People of God, a priesthood based on baptism, the Holy Temple of the Spirit.”**

Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops based on this collegiality. But Vatican II and its teaching about the Church is more than the collegiality of Bishops. We speak about the Church as the People of God, a priesthood based on baptism, the Holy Temple of the Spirit. Pope Francis takes these elements up and integrates them into synodality.

Now, synodality is bigger than just the collegiality of the Bishops. We see a new development. It started with the Synod of the Families, but there was a large consultation before. It was already mentioned in this assembly, and before the Youth Synod, there was even a pre-synodal meeting of young people. A lot of what these young people have said and decided went into the Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod.

When we look at the Synod about the Amazon region, there was a whole network of people who prepared this Synod. And now it's even more because the Synod was opened by the Pope in October 2021. So,

we are already in the Synod, and we do not speak about the pre-synodal consultation, in fact, but the consultation of the People of God is part of the Synod.

Of course, this consultation was not perfect. Some people did not like the idea, some people did not understand it, and then we still had the COVID crisis. In some countries, it was very difficult to gather people. But nevertheless, it was a tremendous and unprecedented success. 112 Bishops' conferences sent their synthesis in, out of a total of 140.

And believe me, those who did not answer, I give you one example, and you understand, was the Latin Bishops' Roman Bishops of Ukraine. So, that is not a total of 114. They also have very good reasons. Even 18 dicasteries of the Roman curia answered and participated. 13 Oriental churches, consecrated life women and men answered. So, there was really a large participation all over the world, and we got a lot of sentences. It was a pleasure to read them.

But of course, one single person cannot read all these syntheses and understand everything. So, we had a meeting in Frascati where 25 experts gathered from all continents, and I'm very happy that we have a few people who participated in this process. If you could just stand up, that people might see you and acknowledge you. Thank you.

And they did a tremendous job. Everybody had homework to read some synthesis and pick up what was most important in these sentences. But it was divided in such a way that every sentence was read by several people, ensuring a good balance. Then, praying together, reflecting together, and putting things together. We had two writers because we believed it was not enough to publish such a document just in Italian. So, we decided that all the Synod documents would be published in Italian and English simultaneously. Hence, we had two writers, one Italian and one English.

We were also fortunate to have the Council of the Synod, including Cardinals and Bishops, as well as eminent people from Asia who were present. They unanimously approved the document. However, these documents still needed reworking due to certain modification proposals that we received and had to consider. We also wanted to give

examples of what the people of God had said, and many good examples were included. But as the document was being prepared, we realized that we had too many quotations from one continent and not enough from another. So, we had to reread and find quotations that were more evenly represented from all the continents.

Initially, I had hoped to present this document today, but as the correction work continues, it will most likely be published on the 27th of this month at 12:15 Roman time. Therefore, I cannot speak about the

**“I need to listen to what the people of God are saying, try to understand it based on my experience, and help put it into words.”**

document itself, but I can share my experience. First, my personal experience is that I have to be a good listener because, as a relator, my role is not to put all my thoughts into the document. That would be a misuse of the responsibility I

have been given. Instead, I need to listen to what the people of God are saying, try to understand it based on my experience, and help put it into words.

However, such a document cannot be written by a single person alone; a team is needed. It is beautiful to work in such a team in a synodal way. But as the Archbishop of Luxembourg, I also had to listen to my Church. Some of you might have had the same experience. Some people use the Synod as an opportunity to express things they have always wanted to say, not necessarily in a synodal manner, but sometimes in a regressive way, as the Pope would call “indiantrismo,” going back to past times. As bishops, we need to pray, discern, and also listen to criticism. None of us is perfect, and even if we try to fulfill our mission as bishops wholeheartedly, we sometimes fail. I observed this in my own diocese, and it was very helpful for me. It made me understand that when the Pope speaks about synodal conversion, I am also meant to be included.

Now, let’s come to the synthesis of the different Bishops’ conferences, and allow me to highlight some common points. The first point is “let us walk together.” The Pope often says “caminar,” meaning there should be no exclusion. When I presented the first draft to the Pope, he was very happy and emphasized that everyone must be included. In

this study, there are homosexuals, divorced and remarried people, African churches spoke about polygamy, people without education, the poor – those on the margins of the Church. We cannot walk without extending our hands to these sisters and brothers. Of course, this does not mean that we approve of polygamy, but it signifies walking together, accompanying people, and giving everyone a place in the Church. Perhaps this can lead us to a more evangelical attitude towards people. We can be inspired by Christ, and people have written that they see the deep attitudes of compassion and love of Jesus in our Church. If we take the image of a tent for the Church...

The tent has to be enlarged. We must make our tent larger to accommodate all the people and, of course, their tensions. There are people who ask for blessings of homosexual couples, while others ask for the Latin Mass. The tensions are wide-ranging, and as bishops, we often have a lot of tensions to carry in our churches. So, I would like to pray that we can carry these tensions with patience and humility, knowing that they can be part of a process that bears fruit. This is the thinking of Pope Francis, and it took me a long time to understand it. He bears the tensions and looks for the fruit that comes out of them.

In our communion with one another, we are based on the Eucharist, as Norman Johnson also mentioned. But we are also the people of God walking through time and led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in this new ecclesiology. Our Orthodox brothers and sisters have always emphasized that we should be more Spirit-centered rather than solely Christ-centered. I believe the Synod will allow us to find this new balance.

**“The important thing is that Christ remains our center, as it is only through Christ that we can see others. When Christ is our center, we can see others through Him, which helps us walk together.”**

As we walk through time, with Christ as our center, it is natural that some people may walk a little quicker, while others may be slower. Some may be to the right or left of Christ. The important thing is that Christ remains our center, as it is only through Christ that we can see others.



When Christ is our center, we can see others through Him, which helps us walk together.

Now, a very important word is participation, which leads to core responsibility. In many syntheses, people express frustration at the parish level because their opinions are not considered by their priests. They feel that their voices are not heard, or that the priest acts differently from what was discussed. This often leads to discussions on clericalism. So, how can we achieve greater core responsibilities where the priesthood of all the baptized and the ministerial priesthood can coexist and truly become a ministry of service? We must not speak of the power of the hierarchy but the authority rooted in service.

When we talk about core responsibility, we must address the role of women. Nearly all the syntheses mention women. It is something we cannot ignore. People speak differently about women in Western Europe and other countries, with some asking for the diaconate or priesthood for women, while others may not address it at all. However, all countries acknowledge that women have a responsibility in the Church, and we should demonstrate this through our appointments and shared responsibility. Just as Christ became human and not just male, the baptism of men is not more valid than the baptism of women. This should have consequences in how we work together and share this core responsibility. Of course, the Church is missioned by Christ. If we speak about structures without considering mission, we have a problem. The mission of the Church is to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection for us, but this proclamation can take many different forms. While bishops and priests are called to announce the Gospel through words, the Pope often emphasizes that it can also be proclaimed through our lives and lifestyles, which is even more significant. In his encyclical letters, the Pope points out what constitutes the proclamation of Christ in this mission of the Church.

Also in the world of today, integral ecology is crucial, where man is at the center, and we must change our lifestyle to address the seriousness of the environmental crisis. This ecological conversion is always a conversion to Christ first, and we cannot be missionary disciples of Christ without living that conversion. Fratellituti, universal brotherhood, is essential in a globalized world. The person next to us is not just our neighbor in our

country; it includes those on the margins, those abandoned by society worldwide. These are significant challenges.

I am confident that a more synodal Church will also be more missionary. Many people in my country think that mission is solely the job of the priests, but it is the mission of the Church. However, unless we make people co-responsible, they will not fully embrace the universal mission of the Church and will remain passive. We do not want mute sheep; every question is a sheep and a shepherd.

This Synod is a great opportunity for the Church. We do not hold the Synod on synodality just because it is an opportunity or because the postmodern world demands it, although these reasons are valid. We do it because the Church, in its essence, is a synodal Church. Even if we haven't lived it so clearly in the past centuries, it belongs to the depositum fidei of the Church.

**“This ecological conversion is always a conversion to Christ first, and we cannot be missionary disciples of Christ without living that conversion.”**

I apologize for speaking one minute too long. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Cardinal Jean Cloth, for your reflections and for sharing the fruit of your experience with this synodal journey. We would appreciate it if you could stay for some time so that we can engage in plenary conversation.

May I request the house if anyone among you would like to ask a question, offer a comment, or seek clarification, you are welcome to do so. Yes, I can see one hand, Bishop Sebastian.

Thank you for your presentation. Whenever we speak about synodality, we often question clericalism. Clericalism is a significant problem. But my question is, to address clericalism, should we make the laity more involved in clerical roles? Because there is a demand from some laypeople to accept all clerics, while others wish to become clerics themselves.

Shall we take one more question, Your Eminence? I can see a hand raised.

Thank you very much, Your Eminence. Synodality is truly a leap of faith and grace. As we are a conference of bishops, one manifestation of synodality is the collegiality of bishops as successors of the Apostles. Are you at liberty to speak about the emerging reflections on communion, participation, and mission among us bishops? I believe that if there will be a change in the Church, it would first begin with the brotherhood of bishops. While the initiative is not exclusively theirs, I would be interested to know what the emerging reflections are regarding collegiality among bishops and conferences. Thank you very much.

First, regarding the question about clericalism and laypeople, I believe we have to speak about clericalism in a prudent way, so as not to hurt priests. Many priests already face significant pressures, and they do not need additional pressure from their bishops. We need to offer them help and support and ensure they can have a healthy priestly life by embracing synodality.

Let me give you an example. When we were in Frascati, I did not dictate to people what to do. They are very capable of discerning themselves, but I was happy to be with them, accompany them if necessary. I believe this kind of conversion, where priests can be truly happy without having to make all decisions by themselves, is something we need to foster.

However, there is always the danger of a wrong clericalization of the laity, where a second clergy is created, leading to conflicts between the two groups.

I had to give an example which is a little bit similar I have in my diocese. We have many permanent Deacons who are married, and we pay very much attention to the information that they should not have the dream of being Priests of a second category, becoming more clerical than the priests. But that every Deacon must have a work as a deacon social work. Of course, he is also there at Mass, but we have a problem in Europe

that many priests think that their only work is celebrating Mass.

I was with some priests on holiday, and it was very nice to listen to their conversations. All their conversations were about how to organize masses in our territory because, you know, we have a great lack of priests. So, we have very huge parishes, and they do not think about how they should proclaim the gospel but how they should organize masses in which church and so on. And that, of course, is completely wrong. We have to announce the gospel, and the Deacon has an important function as a deacon in the announcement of the Gospel. I personally think that's why he reads the gospel during Mass because he has to work for it in daily life. And a very clerical lay people, it's not a way of synodality, but lay people do what they see. So if we behave like that, then they'll also behave like that, which means we have to change our behavior first.

So now I've spoken so much that I need a hint for the second question. Union among the Bishops, yeah, that is a very important role. We had as a sign of collegiality the Bishops conferences after Vatican II, and you see that is a success because you are here, FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences). But sometimes it can also be narrow, and I can give the example of Europe. There is not so much exchange between the Bishops conferences, and then you come to situations where some Bishop conferences fight another Bishop conference, and that is very unhealthy for the Church. Because the sign of disruption in communion is the worst sign we can have for proclaiming the gospel. And so we need this collegiality also to have it lived simply by seeing each other having a beer together when possible. No, of course, the distances are very big, but take time for one another.

We have all become, at least in Europe, the mirror of society. We are much too busy, and if we are too busy, we cannot discern what is right. You need silence for that, you need time for this learning, and that's also why you have the Synod now in two years, 23 and 24, for discerning. You need time. We are not in a hurry. We have not to change the Church or change ourselves in one day. It will not happen if we try it and so lose some time with our brother Bishops. I think that's something very important because we can also check. Now I can have certain insights I think they come directly from God, and then I speak with my colleague who has a

completely different vision, and that's healthy. I have to hear that.

So this Bishops' collegiality, I think it's more than just a collegiality of teaching in the Church, and it would, and you know that's why I like to go outside of Europe. When I was in Mexico for the ecclesial assembly of Latin America, the coverage, and also here, life is much simpler than in Europe. There is a pragmatism here that I do not see so much in Europe, and we need that. We need more simplicity, more pragmatism to go on.

**“Lifestyle is not something other than Evangelical gospel, and not only through the words that we should be preaching but also through our witness or testimony.”**

In this conference, some people spoke about eurocentrism. I hope it is finished because in Europe, we are very happy to have a pope from outside of Europe to give some new wind. Otherwise, the Church is falling apart in Europe now. We are not a model; we look up to you, how you do, and then we try to translate that into our cultural realities. So the Church of Europe needs input from other continents, and I feel blessed that I can come here. So thank you very much.

We have two more hands, others who would like to intervene, kindly let me know. Yeah, there are two hands here, Cardinal Patrick, Bishop Joshua, and then one hand behind. We'll take these three together. Cardinal Patrick of Bangladesh, please, your remarks. So joyful to hear your talk or your message to us. Because you are somebody who is within the whole process, and we are really edified. The second thing is we have mentioned that the mission of the Church, first of all, should be our lifestyle, and that touched me very much. Our lifestyle is nothing but a bit louder, please, louder. Lifestyle is not something other than Evangelical gospel, and not only through the words that we should be preaching but also through our witness or testimony. So this lifestyle, I would like to have a little elaboration, you know, what is meant for us.

The third thing, after the Second Vatican Council, collegiality came very much emphasized, but then after a few years, another emphasis came, and that is to say the particular churches are the most important.

Every Bishop is the head of the particular Church. We have continental national and continental gatherings, which is good, but somehow the collegiality among the Bishops within the Church, within the particular churches, has not really developed enough. And it's the first time I also feel this intercontinental level that collegiality has progressed a lot. So this is our hope in the Church, and the Church will be Church as Senate. Thank you, thank you.

We'll take two more interventions, Bishop Joshua and then there was one more hand there. But His Eminence will respond to these two interventions first. Your Eminence, I'm so happy. Though we have discussed the Synod of Synodality in the regional level, national level, when I came here and listened to you, I understood more clearly because evangelization is our priority. For that, we have to listen, we have to walk together. By our unity, let people know that we are Christians. And the FABC meeting, I experienced the unity of 29 countries coming together, and we are working together, we are listening together. That is giving more impetus for evangelization. So for that evangelization, the incarnation of Christ should be made possible in me, through me. For that, the attitude of Christ, we should emphasize. Thank you.

Your Eminence, would you like to respond to these two interventions? I mean, I shall respond, but even I think the two interventions have already a value in themselves. Now, you know that I'm a religious man, so I have my vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty. And I noticed with time that when I was young, chastity was the most difficult. When I was in the prime of life, it was obedience, because you want to do things by yourself. And now, when I'm old, it's poverty because I like to be tempered a little bit, you know. So that is where I have to fight personally. But it might be different for each of us. Now, to be a little bit more credible, and I also think that we have the idea that collegiality of Bishops are just the Bishops. But as you said, the particular churches are important. So when Bishops meet, it should not just be in our head, but in our heart, that we meet as Bishops, but that our churches meet. We are members of the people of God with a special Ministry we have inside these people of God. But I hope that when I am somewhere, aware also the Church of Luxembourg has a little bit there, and therefore to be listening to this Church also. And if we can transform our meetings of Bishops, that we know that we are not

alone, that we are part of the people of God, then yeah, it will be easier. And I know that I have to change quite a lot. I'm very thankful to the Pope because he speaks very often about conversion, but he's always smiling, and that's good. Otherwise, I would be afraid. Even I'm sometimes afraid even if he smiles. But I see that I have to change gradually, and I also can do that only with the help of my brothers. And then I'm in a very bad position because, as you know, Luxembourg has no Bishops' conference. Yeah, I haven't observed me whom I can share, but am I happy to have come here and the Bishops' commission to do that. But conversion is never just something. It's extremely personal, but it's not individual. The community is there.

And that is something I think we have to get more to an ecclesiology ecological, meaning of conversion. I am part of my church as its pastor, and I think what you said, dear brother Bishop, was perfect in itself. Yes, there was a hand there, there are two hands I can see. There was a Bishop there and then Bishop Malari. Good morning, I'm Bishop Emmanuel

**“The Church, in its very essence, is synodal, and inclusiveness is one of the essential characteristics of the synodal process.”**

Rosario from Bangladesh. Thank you very much, Your Eminence, for your wonderful presence, the presentation, and clarification of certain things. I have a question regarding this synodal process, and it is from the very fact of

our experience at the grassroots level. The Church, in its very essence, is synodal, and inclusiveness is one of the essential characteristics of the synodal process. While working with our people of God in the rural areas, we see also that there are certain social and cultural systems and practices, rules in the society. So while as pastors working with the mentality of inclusiveness, we try to find the lost sheep included in the society. The 99 who are with the pastor get lost. So this is a problem. So in that process of inclusiveness, we find some social and cultural barriers in those circumstances. How can we go with that inclusiveness smoothly? So in that process, can you suggest something on those challenges? What can we do as pastors? Thank you.

I mean, I cannot suggest anything for your situation because you know the situation much better than me. How could I, coming from

Luxembourg, give you a suggestion on how to do it in your country? But I can say that I sometimes feel the same. And in Europe, it's still, if you take the lost sheep, the parable, we have 99 lost sheep and just one remaining. So we have some work to do. But I think that the parable of the lost sheep, no shepherd would do that. So it shows the love and the mercy of God in Christ. And if we can show the love of God and mercy in Christ to our assembly, it will change with time. And things processes need time. So it's not something that we change from today to tomorrow. But you know better than me. Thank you.

Yeah, I mean, it's the last. Bishop Malari, please, Mike, please bring the mic.

Thank you, Cardinal, for your presence. I was really struck by your talk, particularly when you mentioned the church as one who welcomes everyone, the LGBTQ+ community, the divorced couples, etc. And that provides the theory, the tensions in welcoming these different groups, and that we have to bear the tensions with the hope that something will come out from it, having in mind always the reality of the passion, death, and resurrection. And this is easier said than done. We know that. And yet, it's something that we really have to embrace as a church. In one of my conversations and consultations with the LGBTQ+ group through Zoom, there was one petitioner who told me that the church is always talking to crowds, and they do not talk to individuals, meaning he was saying, "Can it be that the service of the church be customized, be really specific to certain groups and certain individuals?" I think this is also something that we have to embrace. It's not easy because we will have more preparations to do in our meetings to individuals. We're not just going to say one thing to everybody, but we have to be very specific to different groups. Maybe I hope you can also elaborate more on this from your heart. Thank you.

**“So while as pastors working with the mentality of inclusiveness, we try to find the lost sheep included in the society.”**

Thank you very much. No, thank you. And I think it is exactly as you said. It's easy to speak about it. It's much easier, more difficult to live these tensions. Now, because His Father has said it is also that there is attention



sometimes between the doctrine of the Church and the pastoral attitude we have. And I really think that tensions with time are fruitful if we take time again. Time and prayer are needed not to see that. When I was a professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, I was always with young people. And all of a sudden, becoming Bishop, no young people anymore. Because when you go to our churches in Europe, there are no young people. Now you have to do something special in order to meet them. So I started to offer trips for young people during summer. And three times, we came with 100 young people to Thailand and to the north.

We built a church with the villagers in a small village in the jungle. And twice, we were at the Jesuit small University College Savior Center, close to Shanghai, for mountain people. It was important for me to be two to three weeks together with the young people. At the beginning, they were very astonished when we had Mass every day. And one came to me and said, "We could also have Mass, perhaps every three days. That could be very nice." But we kept Mass every day. And at the end, the same young man told me, "Well, I will miss these Masses." And I had then a certain small number of girls and boys who were homosexual come up to me to speak about it. And then I felt like a father or grandfather. It's more realistic. Yeah, if your grandchild comes to you and tells you that, how do you react? You will not change your mind that a normal society or marriage in the Catholic Church is man and woman. But you will have all the love for that child also, and you will not spell that child. And when I listened to them, I heard stories, attempts of suicide, terrible stories. And part of it was also the Church, which did not accept them. So I felt that I have to change my behavior towards them. And again, it's attention. I also do not exactly know how to do it or what to do, but that's good because the answer is something the Church will give when the Church lived the attention for some time. And my experience is part of the experience that will give an answer with time.

But I heard things that I never could have imagined. So now I encourage them to have one partner. And that's, you know, that I'm a Jesuit. It's always about grace, a big fight between Jesuits and Dominicans in the past. Now, I do not want to come back to that, but I think that we can judge people to do the best they are able to do. You cannot ask people to do the best possible. Yes, what is possible for that person, but not the best



## **Summary of Group Discussions on the Emerging Realities Fr. Clarence Devadass**

Fr. Clarence Devadass, providing a summary of the small group discussions, recapped the theme of the week as 'reading the signs of the times'. Using the framework of consultation, conversation, conversion and communion, Fr. Devadass summarised the discussions with three key points: celebrating successes, recognising the gaps, and identifying the opportunities ahead by looking for new pathways.

Now, a request for Clarence Devdas to come forward and give us a brief summary of the coffee table reports of the conversations that we had in the last few days for the clearance. Thank you, Your Eminence. Good morning, everyone. I have 10 minutes to give a little summary of the conversations that we have had in this past week. I've put this as the emerging realities of Asia, the summary of group summaries of week two. Now, we will all agree that it has been a very intense week two, and it's going to be even more intensive exercise to summarize all those conversations that we have had into some key points. Now, it is even more daunting to present this, especially when you have had a cardinal presenting a synthesis on synodality, and now I have to present a little synthesis about what we have had.

As we come to the end of week two, it is so appropriate that this morning's gospel and the homily also was about reading the signs of the time. Jesus says, "interpret the times." And so, it is in that light that I would like to look at what has happened in this past week with regard to our small group conversations and your responses.

But before I do that, just to keep in mind that we realize that as we look at the reports, and some groups have also indicated the names of bishops from which countries they come, we realize that the breadth and depth of Asia makes it almost impossible to understand the diversity of issues that impact this continent. And also, the responses have been very, very diverse. So, in that light, I just want to keep this at the back of our minds.

Now, I call this The Big C, the alternative Big C lunchtime. Many of you have been going to the shopping mall called Big C. Now, this is the other Big C that I offer, which we have gone through in week one, prior to week one, and now week one, week two, and hopefully in week three. I call this the consultations, conversations, the conversion, and communion.

During the regional consultations in which many of you have been involved, we realized that we will need volumes to describe all the issues that concern Asia. And in that light, we identified 15 emerging trends that were neither exhaustive nor written in stone. But these 15 emerging trends gave us a little framework, a catalyst for deeper conversations that we have had in this past two weeks.

Just very quickly, I'm just going to go through this. I'm not going to read them, but these were the 15 that were published as the guide document, and you can also get them. You also have received them in FABC Papers Number 165.

And so, week one and week two were intended for that second level, which is the conversations that we have had. And while we actively listen to the country reports I presented to you last week, the 12 concerns that could be identified, this is just to refresh our memories.

And so, we enter into week two, and our conversations were focused on some key concerns in Asia as these also converge with

your own concerns that were raised. And the methodology that we had employed or engaged with to be supported with theological foundations and papal documents. Some of you had asked in the beginning why we are revisiting Fratellituti, Laudato Si, Amoris Laetitia, and it is for this reason that we looked at it as theological foundations with the support of papal documents. And this past week, these are the 14 topics that we have somehow covered, even though they were brief. But these were some of the things that were intended to spark deeper and more profound conversations. And as we did that, we also recognized that there were many other concerns that were not addressed, and we acknowledge that.

So, what do the small group conversations reveal? And I would like to offer you a three-step framework for us to look at the group reports. It is not possible to list down everything that had been said; they are exhaustive. But in the sense that we want to look at it from three key ways of how we can look at it.

One of the things that the reports show is that we celebrate our successes. In the reports, you will ask what activities, what things are being done, and we recognize that there are many, many things that are happening throughout Asia in the churches. In the reports, they show in the form of a call to action, formation, awareness, etc.

What the group conversations also show is that as you listen to one another, you have broadened your horizon, and you also discovered new creative, you can say, pathways or Asian responses to the breadth and depth of the concerns of Asia. So, I think the first step is to be able to recognize that a lot is already being done. And not that because this was a concern and nothing was done, it is just to be able to recognize and celebrate the good work that is already in Asia.

The second step of the framework is to also recognize the gaps and to look at the 20 reports throughout all the different topics to be able to recognize just seven gaps that I was able to draw. I'm sure you can add on to this list or even reduce, but this is what I was able to do.

The magnitude and the gravity of the issues before us can be very overwhelming. So, I think some are saying that it's too much, you know, we

do not know where to begin, we do not know what to do. And the reports also show that the emerging issues reveal themselves in different places in different ways. So, the gravity of certain issues may be pronounced in one particular area of Asia but not in another part of Asia. So, to be able to recognize that in some places, some things are more important than other things in other places.

It also shows that the issues that we have been discussing are deep. The roots of these things are deep and far-reaching. In other words, no part of Asia is exempt from the effects of these emerging trends and concerns. It also shows that some of the responses lacked networking. In other words, in some parts, it is more active, in some parts, it's not. It sometimes depended on a personality, whether it's the priest or whether it's the bishop who is active or very aware of a certain concern, and that is promoted, but it lacked networking with others. It also shows that we have a lot of documents already in all these different issues, but it seemed to lack praxis. It means we have it on paper, we have it in documents, but what is translated into action seemed to have a gap in that area.

Much has been spoken about the formation of seminarians and clergy, and many of these concerns should become pastoral priorities for different countries, for different regions.

I know I've reached 10 minutes, but just in a few minutes, I just want to offer some opportunities, some keywords that I have grouped together so that all your responses could come under these umbrellas. And there are 10 opportunities, and I'm just going to run through them very quickly.

Some of the words that we have seen: accompaniment, that have come up in our concerns for youth, for the different groups of people, they have asked for families' accompaniment. Listening has come out very strongly, also to be able to listen to the voice of the people. Letting Colonel Holridge has also mentioned that in the synodal process, listening.

Thirdly would be communal discernment, as working together, listening to one another, and to discern together where the spirit of God is leading.

Another opportunity here is inclusivity, that no one is excluded from the church, that to be able to include everyone, everyone finds a place in their church. So, we have heard words like the church being the field hospital and other words to describe how we have to be inclusive.

Creativity, in terms of how we reach out, evangelization with digital online, on-site, to be able to be creative.

Advocacy is another area that has come out quite clearly, how the church has to advocate different issues for the people.

Collaboration, to work together, whether within the conferences or also between neighboring conferences, to work together for issues that transcend or go beyond just a local diocese or parish, to work together as one and to share resources.

I think dialogue has come out very clearly, inter-religious dialogue, intra-religious dialogue in the reports also. We have spoken about peace or bridge-building with one another through dialogue. It is not just inter-religious dialogue that we're talking about, dialogue with others, with governments, with other agencies in order to bring about peace.

And the last point that kind of sums it all up is the synodal process, the synodality, the togetherness, working as one church. So, these are the ten opportunities that we see in the group conversations.

So, the task remains, how do we connect all these dots, how do we connect all these gaps and opportunities? And I think this is where we move into week three, looking for new pathways, having seen the country, listened to the country reports, seen the concerns. What do we do? And hopefully, as we move into week three, we will find new pathways for the church in Asia. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for the clearance for this enlightening summary that you have presented. I'm sure you and your collaborators have burned midnight oil to prepare it. Thank you very much.



## **New Forms of Leadership & Governance in the Church** **Prof. Christina Kheng**

Prof. Christina Kheng, professor of pastoral leadership and management at the East Asia Pastoral Institute (Philippines), and member of the Commission on Methodology of the General Secretariat for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, spoke on the topic 'new forms of leadership and governance in the Church in a synodal way'. Going back to the roots of synodality, Prof. Kheng asked her listeners, 'what current forms of leadership in your Diocese promote synodality and what forms are contrary to it?'. Along with key principles of synodal leadership and governance, Prof. Kheng also provided concrete suggestions to put the principles into practice.

Professor Christina King hails from Singapore. She is a member of The Faculty at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila. She teaches pastoral leadership and management at the East Asia Pastoral Institute in the Philippines. She's also a member of the Commission of Methodology of the General Secretariat for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Senate of Bishops. She participated in the recent meeting at Frascathy.

Professor King will speak to us for 20 minutes. Welcome, Professor Christina.

Hi, welcome. Good afternoon, everyone. We had a really good discussion this morning on the global Synod as well as Predicate Evangelium, the reform of the curia. From the questions and comments that are coming from the room, I can sense this emerging interest in seeing how we can manifest the same spirit of these activities and reforms back in the diocese.

This afternoon, we will be looking at the new pathways. The question I would like to start off with is, what are the new ways by which we will return? Based on this morning's discussion, I would like to explore how you can bring some of these back to your diocese. There is already a growing interest in synodality, but it's important to be aware that sometimes synodality is misunderstood or certain aspects are overemphasized to the point of neglecting others.

So, let's begin by going back to the roots of synodality. What exactly is it, and how can it be misunderstood? Synodality is not just a pet project of Pope Francis, nor is it something new from Vatican II. According to our own Christian anthropology and our view of humankind and our theology of creation, we see the world as the family of God.

In Guardian of the Meads, the document stresses the dignity and vocation of every human being. It's important to start with humankind in general. Everyone is called to participate as co-workers in the Divine mission of love. Humans have an intrinsic social nature and are meant to be in community. Each of us has diverse gifts and is called to collaboration. We have a developmental history and a sense of being on the journey, with the active presence of divine grace working with humanity.

**“According to our own Christian anthropology and our view of humankind and our theology of creation, we see the world as the family of God.”**

Synodality is not just a vision for the Church; it is the foundation of God's vision. It is a call for the whole of humanity, and the Church's role is to give witness through synodality. The phrase “the people of God” captures the equivalent principles between Gaudium et Spes and Lumen Gentium. The common baptismal dignity signifies that everyone is co-



responsible for God's mission, and community is our identity and call. We have diverse charisms that are meant to be brought into synergy, and we are all on a pilgrim journey. The Church is always in need of purification and always on the way, so there is no need to be anxious if things are not going well in your diocese. The Risen Christ is always with us, and we are the body of Christ. Christ continues to work closely with us.

The image of hikers in the forest represents synodality well. We are all companions finding the way forward together by following God's spirit. We nurture the vocation of everyone towards fullness of life, and

**“The common baptismal dignity signifies that everyone is co-responsible for God's mission, and community is our identity and call.”**

each of the five key aspects of synodality is essential. In this model, no one person has all the answers, and everyone must be included. We travel, seek, and discover the way together.

Considering this model, we should reflect on leadership and governance. What kind of leadership and governance is needed for a group that is traveling like this? This afternoon, I would like to focus on synodal leadership in the diocese. I invite you to look back at your diocese, your experiences as a lay person, as a priest, and as a bishop. Consider which current forms of leadership promote synodality and which ones are contrary to it.

Now, let's examine some caricatures of current forms of leadership that are not in line with synodality or inhibit it. The first form is what I call "solo leadership," where only the leader decides everything.

The leader controls everything usually; there's no consultation, and participation is only in terms of implementation. Usually, those who want to rule in the leader's direction will participate, and the direction changes when the leader changes. Parishioners often complain when a new parish priest comes and abolishes everything put in place by the previous one. This creates anxiety about whether the new priest will change everything again. While leaders may have good intentions and believe they know what's best for the parish or diocese, they may unknowingly slip into solo

leadership, determining everything themselves.

On the opposite end, some priests misunderstand Pope Francis's notion of the inverted pyramid as hands-off leadership. They interpret it as stepping aside and letting the laypeople do everything without guidance or engagement from the leader. This results in a lack of guidance, and individuals start building their own kingdoms, leading to a survival of the fittest mentality. When this issue is identified, it's often too late to engage, and feelings of powerlessness arise.

Another form of leadership is center point leadership, where the leader interacts directly and manages every person and group without any interaction among peers or intermediate bodies. While this approach may work in a small organization, it becomes exhausting and leads to burnout in larger settings such as big parishes or dioceses.

Bureaucratic leadership is a well-known form where the hierarchy is rigid, and conformity to rules is expected. It operates in a top-down manner with little flexibility. Maintenance leadership is a scenario where everyone participates equally, but the focus is on maintaining the status quo. The ship remains where it is, unwilling to venture into deep waters.

**“One key principle is mutual learning, where leaders and participants engage in a process of learning from one another.”**

Lastly, there is black box leadership, where consultation exists, but it's one-way, going up to the leader. Feedback and suggestions may enter a “black box,” leaving people uncertain about how decisions are made or why they differ from their suggestions. This lack of circularity and transparency leads to skepticism, suspicion, and distrust.

Quotations from various Asian countries' Senate reports reflect the reality of these leadership scenarios. People often feel that matters in the church are characterized by a top-down approach, and the laity's gifts are not recognized or encouraged, making them feel like second-class citizens. Consultations may be seen as mere platforms for show, lacking genuine engagement. These issues hinder the ability to witness as the people of God.

Considering the five key elements of synodality, it's essential to reflect on the implications for leadership and governance. One key principle is mutual learning, where leaders and participants engage in a process of learning from one another. Pope Francis's speech at the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops highlights this principle.

Here we've been hearing it many times, you know, a snow. Though churches where everyone has something to learn, it's not just the teacher telling the students but both listening to each other. SOS to listen to the spirit, to know what the spirit is saying and this is about sharing vulnerability and sharing wisdom. You know, everyone is vulnerable, everyone has wisdom and if we can sit around the table like this and mutually listen to and learn from one another, then you know we can start to learn how to be a synodal church. So the first principle of synodal leadership is really about Mutual learning, okay?

The second is about helping each one to find his or her buried talents. I call it buried talents because especially in Asia there are many scenarios where people's real gifts and talents are buried. Either because we have an education system that makes us conform. We are taught to conform to a certain way, to memorize the answer and then produce the answer in the exam. So the individual charism is suppressed also in the church. So we have to learn the art of listening to people's untold stories. We are too quick to judge and condemn but we need to learn to sit with people, to spend time, to waste time so to speak and to let the untold stories come out. And if we spend enough time that way perhaps we will find the solutions to get as a synodal church. This is about accompaniment and sacred presencing and fostering the development of everyone's potential. So your job when you go back home is to help your leaders to dig into the soil, to dig out all this hidden treasures and hidden talents of the people, the treasures that have been buried for so long.

The third principle is to promote the interdependence, you know, to break down silos. So think about your diocese, what are the different silos that are forming and how can you and your leaders break them down?

The fourth principle is what I call keeping one foot raised. You know, to be always on the move like this family here but also supporting one another not to be the ship that never sails out because you're so afraid to break, right? We have to do what Pope Francis calls embrace the equilibrium, meaning a time of disequilibrium because when you go and learn something new, when you sail out into the deep, there will always be a bit of disequilibrium experienced by the boat. And you must learn how to navigate that otherwise you will never be on mission, never be going out.

**“... we realize that it's a transformation that happens during the process and not when you get to the end.”**

And then finally, to give as much importance to the process as to the accomplishments. Very often that kind of solo leadership is because we are so passionate about the mission that we want to get there and achieve it as quickly as possible and we think it's faster we just tell people what to do.

But you know, directly it's about building the community, promoting everyone's potential and their development. So we need to take time, like Cardinal Hollerich said, to stay with the tensions because it's the tensions that will make us grow and strengthen and be richer in our fuller potential. And we realize that it's a transformation that happens during the process and not when you get to the end.

So I really like this picture here because it's about the upper and the lower, the tension of going forward, going back, going forward, going back. Don't worry if your pastoral plan or your ideas feel as if it's two steps forward, one step back. Sometimes it's one step forward, two steps back. You know, though it's not a failure, it's a journey. You have to take care of the process. And you know, that's why even in this current Global Synod, we are focusing so much on the process. Let's take time. If we get something wrong, let's go back and listen once again. Take time.

So how do we put all these principles into practice? I'd like to offer some concrete suggestions, some things you can do when you go back home. Five suggestions, okay?

The first one is to develop people's capacity for communal discernment in a gradual way. Right? As we have been saying, in our education system, we are not taught to discern. Most of us, especially in Asia, where we are taught to memorize answers and reproduce them in exams, and to conform and follow the rule book. So this quote from Pope Francis is very worth revisiting. He says, "Today the church needs to grow in discernment. This is very clear. And the more we are used to a yes-you-can, no-you-can't mentality. And generally, above all, we who are part of the religious setting don't often show that ability to discern."

We don't know how to do it, for we have been educated with another theology that is more formal. We go as far as you can or you can't. So to make this a paradigm shift, it takes time. Don't get disappointed if you don't achieve it overnight. It takes time."

The first is to be aware that we have this yes-no, can-cannot mentality, and that we tend to go back to church documents and look at them in a static way. This is even the same for Vatican II. We can't take the text of Vatican II and say, "This is not written in Vatican II, so why are we doing that now?" That's what's happening with modality, right? We all know that word itself is hardly mentioned in Vatican II. Or if we are looking at the whole people of God, does it mean that the priesthood or the role of Bishops or the collegiality of the Bishops is not as important? That's not the case because we really have to look at things from a developmental point of view. To see councils and church teachings as a journey of development, right from Nicea to Constantinople to Chalcedon. We can't stop that, and we can't freeze it. So if we look at earlier councils and the like, the smaller trees, and we see, "Oh, this tree is very good. Let's put in place a lot of canon law and the structures to implement it," but we forget that it's part of a developing journey. We can't be fixed and frozen in those structures and those rules forever. We have to be aware that the original idea has to keep developing. We have to keep exploring and let it grow. The same thing was happening with the Pharisees. They were putting all these thousands of rules and laws in place, and that ended up freezing the two days of the Jewish tradition. And Jesus was trying to break through that, to move them forward and not to be calcified and frozen in those structures. That's why more and more we are sensing the

growth of synodality, the including of the whole people of God. But that doesn't mean that the collegiality of Bishops is destroyed. No, if we all have to take it as part of a whole development of that whole idea. So the key question is, how is God's spirit moving us forward? We have to keep going back to that question. And it's about the art of the pilgrim hermeneutic. This phrase was used by Pope Francis in his homily last year to launch the Synod process in his own diocese. It is a very nice phrase. We have to relearn this pilgrim hermeneutic, and that requires faithfulness to an unfolding journey. It's not faithfulness to one document per se. And so we are so fixated on that document, but it's faithfulness to an unfolding journey that requires two key skills: ressourcement and a journal mentor. Going back to the roots of our sources and updating. And we have to remember the sources of discernment is not different people arguing for what they want, but it's really first looking at our faith tradition, scripture, and especially in scripture and church teachings, looking at the concrete data and hearing people's stories. The power of real stories. And that's what Paul and Barnabas did when they shared the stories of the Gentiles, both at the center and the periphery. It's listening to the sciences and the humanities but also interpreting intelligently and not just taking everything as the gospel truth. But even our faith tradition evolves, you know.

So everything has to be reflected upon and understood more deeply in a prayerful spirit. Okay, so that's something we have to recover, the art of the pilgrim hermeneutic.

So we develop people's capacity for communal discernment in a gradual way.

What you can do is perhaps start with a small project, but take concrete steps, an issue in your diocese that is doable, involves some people but not too many people, not too complex. For example, choose something doable that you can do, decide on the process and the participants for this communal discernment, and I've given you a website here where you can look at various methods and processes. Engage the help of experienced persons, and here we are really very happy to see how some Episcopal

“**There must be some dialogue where there is sharing and listening, a chance to ask questions and to speak with each other, and to examine the viewpoints together.**”

conferences are sharing skilled facilitators in the synodal process. Provide training and resources, carry it out with a timeline, and then review when you're finished. Get together, review the experience, what you learn. And so slowly, when you keep doing this, the culture and the capacity for communal discernment will gradually grow in your diocese.

So it's good to know that communal discernment does require a proper process. You can use various methods, but it should have at least these four elements. The first one is relevant information, the data and the knowledge from the scientists, has to be given out to people. They have to spend time to pray with it, to reflect and evaluate it. There must

**“Decision making is the process that involves everyone, and the decision taking has to be integrated, created with it.”**

be some dialogue where there is sharing and listening, a chance to ask questions and to speak with each other, and to examine the viewpoints together. To consider the church teachings and the guiding values and to really

understand them. And finally, to pay attention to how the Holy Spirit is moving and speaking to the group. So it's really a process that requires the heart and the head, and to develop the conclusion progressively, to test it out, to evaluate, and maybe even to fine-tune it.

There is this important part on decision making and decision taking in the document by the International Theology Commission on synodality, and it addresses that issue which people often complain about. If my Bishop is the one making the decision, why do we waste time discussing and discerning? So this part really stresses that there has to be a connection between the decision making and the decision taking. Decision making is the process that involves everyone, and the decision taking has to be integrated, created with it. It's part of the *sensus fidelium*. It's the same Holy Spirit speaking. So in the process, the final decision taker has to be integrated in that whole process. Otherwise, it's disconnected, and that's why people are very skeptical about communal discernment. It's because the one who takes the final decision does not respect the process of that whole discernment. So you have to be part of it. And people learn synodality when they do synodality. And that's why it's important to start with something that they can do, and that emerges very clearly from the synodal process.

These are again some direct quotes from it. All this is published on the FABC website in the country reports. And so people are really saying that the process has taught them to sit in the tension. Okay, so I do have a few other points, but these are quite familiar to you. Waste concrete ways in which you can promote synodal leadership in your diocese. The second one is to promote a relationship, collaboration, and leadership at the intermediate levels so that you bring people who are working on relevant issues together, and you build that subsidiarity, and they can journey with each other.

For instance, in this conference, the fact that we are all in small groups allows each one's voice to be heard. It is not possible for everyone to take turns to speak up in the plenary, so we are already doing that as part of our process in this conference. The third one is to identify diocesan pastoral priorities together through communal discernment, to have a good pastoral plan that responds to the signs of the time so that the whole diocese is on mission, everybody is responsible for mission together. The fourth is to renew formation at all levels, and for this, I would like to stress the promotion of active inquiry as a pastoral habit. And you can show the way by modeling that, instead of always jumping to teach or to tell or to judge, begin by asking open-ended questions so as to know more deeply. So it's good to adopt active inquiry as a pastoral habit. And finally, to lead as a team. You don't have to do everything alone. No doubt, you are responsible for the governance of your diocese, but you can form teams to assist you in governance so that you won't be like the center point leader who is stretched in every way and burned out, no time to pray, no time to reflect and read.

These are just five simple suggestions to promote synodality in the diocese. And I would like to just end with this reflection that a new way for us, perhaps, is to share our joys and challenges together, to work together with the God who works with us. Okay, thank you. Thank you very much, Professor Christina, for sharing with us such useful insights on the principles of synodal leadership and the various suggestions for putting them into practice. We will just observe a few moments of prayerful silence.





## **New Forms of Leadership & Governance in the Church Bishop Pablo David**

Bishop Pablo Virgilio Siongco David, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, reflecting on how new forms of leadership could be promoted, added context through the history behind the first council of Jerusalem, and St Peter's role in it. Underlining the Church as one rooted in scripture that also responds to the signs of the times, Bishop David provided insights on the Holy Father's reformations, and highlighted methods toward taking a better path forward.

Our next speaker to share with us reflections on the same topic of new forms of leadership and governance in the church is Bishop Pablo Virgilio David. He prefers to be called Bishop Embo, as he mentioned on the first day. Bishop Embo is the bishop of the Diocese of Kalookan and serves as the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. Let us now hear Bishop Embo's reflections. It would be appreciated if you could finish within 20 minutes.

Please note that I have recorded my talk because I tend to make too many parenthetical remarks in between. Dear brother Bishops and

fellow servant leaders in the Church of Asia, dear brothers and sisters in this FABC 50 conference, good afternoon.

I have been requested to address you on the topic of synodality, leadership, and governance: new pathways for the church in Asia. You may remember that last Tuesday, Cardinal Jose Adriola of Manila referred to the First Council ever to be convened by the church, the Council of Jerusalem, held in 50 A.D. At that time, the church in Jerusalem, led by the apostles, functioned as the central authority.

The occasion for that first Council was the feeling among some people in the Jerusalem leadership that their authority was being undermined by the church in Antioch due to the new pathways taken by their missionaries. Specifically, it was related to Paul, whose aggressive missionary activities among the Gentiles caused negative reactions among the Jewish Christians. Instead of ignoring the reactions, Paul reached out to the central leadership in Jerusalem to share with them about the new pathways, which he believed the Holy Spirit was leading the church towards. These pathways involved opening the doors to Gentile converts to the Christian faith, as mentioned by Saint Luke in Acts Chapter 14, verse 27.

If we closely follow the text, we will see that the opposing personalities on this issue were not really Paul and Peter, but rather Paul and James. I am referring to James, also known as the brother or relative of the Lord, not James the son of Zebedee. This is the James that Paul speaks about in Galatians Chapter 2, verse 12, who had apparently sent a team of Judaizers to spy on the church in Antioch.

I wonder why we have become accustomed to referring to Peter as the apostle to the Jews and Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. Understandably, this comes from Saint Paul himself in Galatians Chapter 2, verse 7, and that was before the issue was resolved by the Council. At that time, Paul tended to characterize the Jerusalem Church as limiting its mission to the Jews. However, all of them, including Paul himself, started as apostles to the Jews. Paul even tells us how their initial evangelizing missions were primarily directed towards their fellow Jews who gathered in the synagogues, whether in the homeland or in the diaspora. It was

Paul who dared to shift his attention to the Gentiles, who showed greater interest in the message when the mainstream rejected them. Peter himself, as narrated in Acts Chapter 10, also began to show interest in the Gentiles, prompted by a vision he received, including the story of Cornelius.

Among the apostles, it was the other James, the relative of the Lord, who seemed to insist on keeping their evangelizing mission focused on their fellow Jews. Perhaps he quoted Jesus, reminding them to go primarily to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. James was not keen on Paul's idea of welcoming Gentile converts to Christianity without first circumcising or Judaizing them.

In such a tense situation of conflict regarding the mission, Peter assumed his role of leadership in the apostolic community. Instead of siding with one or the other, he stood between James and Paul and facilitated dialogue at the Council of Jerusalem, as described in Acts Chapter 15. He also maintained communion between Jerusalem and Antioch.

If secular journalists had existed back then and reported on the Council of Jerusalem, they would have probably labeled James as representing the conservatives or traditionalists and Paul as representing the progressives or liberals in the early church.

Well, Luke tells us it was Peter who consistently played the role of the bridge builder, the promoter of communion. No wonder we refer to the office of Peter as Pontifex Maximus, which literally means the Supreme bridge builder or the Supreme pontiff, the greatest bridge builder. In the church, whether local or universal, it is never a choice between one or the other. Part of the wisdom of the church is precisely its gift of being able to keep together the traditionalists and the renewalists, to rise above the labels and to call them all her children.

There will never be a time when we will give up on the need to keep the church anchored on tradition and scripture, just as there will never be a time when we will give up on the principle of *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, a church constantly renewing herself in response to the signs of the times. Pope John XXIII called for the Council to be an

aggiornamento, an updating or renewal, but at the same time ensured that it was done simultaneously with ressourcement, a healthy return to the sources or an anchoring on the Apostolic tradition.

Pope Francis follows a similar path. Like Peter, who respected the missionary dynamics of the local church in Antioch while keeping them together in communion with the mother Church (which back then was not yet Rome but Jerusalem), Pope Francis consistently balances the functioning of the central or universal Church authority in Rome with that of the local conferences and synods of Bishops. He often expresses his desire to see greater decentralization of some curia functions and greater participation of the conferences of Bishops in leadership and governance roles. He frequently emphasizes that unity does not have to mean uniformity.

Allow me to provide a concrete example to further illustrate my point. The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, called for the full and active participation of the faithful in the liturgical celebrations of the church. One important expression of this principle has been the use of vernacular languages in liturgical celebrations. However, even after 16 years since Vatican II, many dioceses in our countries and various parts of Asia are still using unofficial and experimental vernacular translations of the Roman Missal and other liturgical rites. Only a few major language groups in the Philippines have succeeded in getting their liturgical texts approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome.

In September 2017, Pope Francis issued the document *Magnum Principium*, modifying Canon 838 of the canon law, to give immediate action to the issue of approving translations of liturgical texts. The document emphasizes the great principle established by the Second Vatican Council that liturgical prayer should be accommodated to the comprehension of the people, requiring the task of introducing the vernacular language into the liturgy and preparing and approving the versions of the liturgical books, a task entrusted to the Bishops.

While we may have thought that this principle had already been adequately addressed after the Council, without clear implementing rules

or regulations, they remain on paper and do not achieve the intended reform. When the task is mainly assumed by the Roman curia offices instead of the local conferences and synods of Bishops, the result is predictable. Pope Francis often reminds us of the importance of collegiality and subsidiarity in the leadership and governance of the church. Collegiality is the principle by which authority is practiced in the spirit of communion among the office holders in the church, on various levels, from the national and continental conferences of Bishops to the general synod of Bishops in Rome.

Lately, Pope Francis has emphasized that the spirit of synodality should extend beyond the bishops or ordained leaders of the church. If synodality aims to promote greater communion, participation, and mission in the church, then bishops should ensure that they engage in similar consultations and opportunities for communal discernment with the faithful at large—laity, religious, clergy, and other sectors of society that impact the life and mission of the church. Therefore, the upcoming Continental Synod should go beyond the FABC and involve a broader representation.

On the other hand, subsidiarity is the principle by which collegial authority is distributed among various levels, allowing decisions to be made at the appropriate levels. This concept applies to both the Universal Church and our particular churches. Leadership is best exercised in a team, a ministerial college, where each unit determines what it can do best and makes decisions accordingly. The higher units must respect and support this subsidiary authority, promoting shared authority and participatory leadership that enhances communion.

Collegiality and subsidiarity counter the tendencies of the institutional church to function like an absolute monarchy with an overcentralized system of governance. Unfortunately, the Roman Curia is more conscious of its political function of governance as a state than its pastoral function in observing the communion of the Universal Church. This lack of grounding in pastoral and ecclesial dynamics leads to a replication of the *modus operandi* on the local church levels. Dioceses can sometimes run like mini Vatican states, stifling creativity, hindering efficiency, and impeding the operations of subsidiary entities like

vicariates, parishes, mission stations, and basic ecclesial communities. This can occur when dioceses and curia offices overexert their authority over parishes in the name of the bishop.

Considering these issues, Pope Francis convened the Council of Cardinals in 2016 to consult on the most important issue in the reform of the Roman Curia—healthy decentralization of decision-making in the church. This reform seeks to promote the conciliary principles of collegiality and subsidiarity.

Dear brother Bishops, we are convening this FABC conference at an auspicious time in the church's history. Pope Francis is reigniting the fire of Vatican II. In the Philippines, we have a rice cake called bibingka, baked in an earthen pot fired up with burning charcoal above and below. Similarly, Pope Francis seems to be cooking up his reform with fire above and fire below. The fire above refers to the Vatican Curia reform, while the fire below refers to synodality, which began with consultations at the grassroots level in local churches worldwide.

This synodal process has progressed from the parish to the diocesan, national, continental, and global levels. In Asia, we will soon decide when to hold our own Continental Synod, which may happen between January and March of 2023. The global Synod will take place in two sessions, one in October 2023 and the other in October 2024. Consequently, we may have to wait until early 2025 before the fruits of the Synod are articulated in an Apostolic exhortation that takes the census *fidei fidelium* (the voice of the faithful) into account.

Synodality has consistently been Pope Francis's main platform. He has emphasized its three interrelated components: communion, participation, and mission. In essence, it is a revisitation or refresher of Vatican II, as synodality is simply another term for conciliarity, with concilium being the Latin version of the Greek term *synodos*.

We take it for granted that since Vatican II was an ecumenical council and its dogmatic constitutions and decrees were approved in the spirit of synodality, the succeeding pontiffs were duty-bound to pursue the implementation of its key resolutions that reflect its aspirations for

a constantly renewing Church. However, the dual dynamics within the central operations of Rome, as a political state run by a bureaucracy and as a central expression of the universal Church's communion, have sometimes hindered the full implementation of Vatican II's resolutions.

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Constitution *Predicate Evangelio*, has sought to address this tension and ensure that the Roman Curia functions in a manner that respects the conciliary principles of collegiality and subsidiarity. It would be beneficial for FABC to discuss more exhaustively the areas of concern that could be entrusted to the subsidiary leadership of national conferences of Bishops and their Continental federations. This may include meaningful participation in the nomination, election, coordination, and disciplining of Bishops. Exploring these possibilities through dialogue is important.

The interplay between the dynamics of *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement* that guided Vatican II is gradually bringing these concerns to light through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Council of Jerusalem, for instance, upheld the decision of the Church of Antioch to engage in mission work among the Gentiles and allowed Gentile converts to be baptized without circumcision or judaization. The central authority in Jerusalem did not impede because they recognized the promptings of the same Holy Spirit and provided guidelines for the harmonious relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

In Pope Francis's voice, I hear the sobriety of Peter, strengthening communion within the Catholic Church by empowering conferences of Bishops in their collegial exercise of authority at different levels. This reassures those who fear that promoting participatory decision-making among the Bishops might compromise the unity of the Church. Peter's voice assures us that moving towards greater synodality, both intra and extra, is the better path for the universal Church's growth in communion, participation, and mission.

Thank you, Bishop David, for your enlightening and thought-provoking reflection on how we can promote new forms of leadership and governance in the Church in a synodal spirit at different levels. Let us now pause for a few moments of prayerful silence. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.



**Emerging Realities in the Church of Asia**  
*Summary of Small Group Conversations (Week 2)*





---

---

**EMERGING  
REALITIES**

---

---

**DAY 6  
OCTOBER 22, 2022**

## PRESS NOTE

22ND OCTOBER 2022

22nd October 2022, the sixth day of the 'Emerging Realities' segment of the FABC General Conference began with the celebration of the Eucharist by H.E. Ignatius Cardinal Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo. H.E. Oswald Cardinal Gracias, the President of the day, led the gathered representatives in the Adsumus, and the morning prayer, hosted by the country of Indonesia, was led by the video prepared by Sr. Elisabeth Sukamdo OP, Chairwoman of the Women Religious.

The session began with Cardinal Gracias explaining the process and group discussions for the day, which were focused on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the pastoral priorities of the Church in Asia.

Dr Naoko Murayama, Regional Coordinator of East Asia and Oceania of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, speaking about the refugee crisis, suggested ways by which the representatives could respond, asking them to learn, listen, support and collaborate.

Plenary discussions presided over by H.E. Cardinal Gracias followed, based on the common data collected from the group discussions, which included courage as a minority, active listening, openness, harmony, dialogue and reconciliation, a united Church, the Asian-ness of the Church, ongoing formation, focus on the young people, ecology, migration, witnessing and spiritual formation, and the poor.

Prof. Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, founder and Director Emeritus of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), speaking on the topic, 'The Climate Emergency: Risks and Responses', provided comprehensive insights on the documentation of climate change, the global decisions taken, how climate change is measured, and its effects. Prof. Schellnhuber also highlighted a tentative timeline during which change was still possible, and concrete measures that could be taken in

response.

Mons. Indunil J Kodithuwakku K, secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, spoke on the importance of creating open dialogue, especially in a continent as diverse as Asia, followed by a continuation of the plenary discussions.

The evening concluded with a Holy Hour, led by Bishop Winston S. Fernando SSS of Badulla.





## Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development Ms. Naoko Maruyama

Ms Naoko Maruyama, Regional Coordinator of East Asia and Oceania of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, speaking about the refugee crisis, suggested ways by which the representatives could respond, asking them to learn, listen, support and collaborate.

**“...here in Asia, there is not a single country in Asia that is not affected by climate change or issues surrounding human mobility.”**

I'm Naoko Maruyama and for those that I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I'm the regional coordinator for Asia and Oceania of the Migrants and Refugees Section, which is part of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Vatican. So it's

a very lengthy title, I apologize for that. I just have a few points here just to talk about. So you know, here in Asia, there is not a single country in Asia that is not affected by climate change or issues surrounding human mobility.

So here in Asia, we have countries that are sending, receiving transit and origin countries and so there are migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and victims of human trafficking that are all present in Asia and whose vulnerabilities are even further exacerbated by climate change issues. So natural disasters and things like this.

Sorry, I'm catching my breath because I was just walking up the stairs. Asia is the most vulnerable region in the world and we have heard over the week from presentations of experts with the data and so now a lot of the questions that I've been hearing over the week is, okay, we have this information, we have this knowledge, so what can we do as bishops in Asia to make a change, to make an impact, to help these issues, to help these people?

So I just wanted to give a few points. It's going to take just a few minutes. So firstly, in order to know how to respond to a problem, I think that we must begin first by understanding what is the problem and what does it entail? So first, we need to educate ourselves. Start with a general education. Learn about what are the different types of migration? What are the root causes? You know, things are what is human trafficking? What is the difference between refugees and displaced persons, internally displaced and stateless persons? Look at what the existing materials and resources that are out there and available to us. And then from there, learn about what are the most prominent issues present in your local contexts? Is your country mostly affected by natural disasters? Which causes the displacement of persons? Are there many people leaving your countries for work or for studies?

**“...in order to know how to respond to a problem, I think that we must begin first by understanding what is the problem and what does it entail?”**

Are there many people coming into your countries for the same reasons? Also learn what are the existing church documents and pastoral guidelines from the migrants and refugees section? I can say that we have produced so far five pastoral orientations that serve as guidelines to the church on how to respond to these issues. Then also learn about what is

the work of the local church in your country? What are they already doing? So ask who are the existing and active actors in your local church?

Is there an Episcopal Commission or Migrant Commission? Is there a migrant desk? Who are active pastoral workers? Are there religious congregations that are working on these issues? Are there laypeople, lay experts that are already doing this? Are there Catholic organizations such as Caritas or ICMC that are already working and present in your local contexts? Second is listen. We are here practicing synodality and this idea of listening.

**“Find out how you as a bishop and a leader of your local church can support the already existing work that your local church is doing and collaborate them and also collaborate amongst each other as brother bishops in the region.”**

So listen to these active actors that are already present in your local churches and see how they need support from you as bishops. So third is to support and collaborate. Find out how you as a bishop and a leader of your local church can support the already existing work that your local church is doing and collaborate them and also collaborate amongst each other as brother bishops in the region.

So to summarize, it is first to learn, to listen, to support and to collaborate. I know it seems that it's another big task and as bishops you are already full of responsibilities and full of work. But the great thing is that you don't have to do this alone. I can confidently say that every country here present and even in Asia has at least one migrant commission, a desk, a ministry, a congregation or a Catholic NGO again such as CARITAS or ICMC that is present, active and currently working in your countries. So I urge you all please to learn and to listen and to really support the work of the church there. There are so many amazing initiatives, so much work that's already being done. And all you need to do is to just connect with them.

And as a migrants and refugees section, we are also here to help facilitate that link to help you collaborate. So please go out and see and listen to what is already existing so that we can all work together to help all of the most vulnerable. Thank you very much. Thank you, Naoko, for helping us to understand how to respond to the migrant issue.









---

---

**EMERGING  
REALITIES**

---

---

**DAY 7  
OCTOBER 23, 2022**

**PRESS NOTE**  
23RD OCTOBER 2022

**HOLY EUCHARIST AND PARISH VISITS**

Sunday, 23rd October, of the FABC General Conference began with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, presided over by H.E. Oswald Cardinal Gracias, and con-celebrated by Archbishop Cabrejos Vidarte, Archbishop Ledesma, Archbishop Kikuchi and Msgr Josef Sayer.

On the occasion of Mission Sunday, H.E. Cardinal Gracias reminded the congregation that Mission is the essence of the Church, that, taking the example of the tax collector and the pharisee, 'we must be God-centered, and not I-centered.' He stressed, 'our mission is not a numbers game, but to make Jesus real in the world', highlighting the many forms of evangelisation at work. Calling the youth, the women, the marginalized to be the 'first collaborators' of the Church, and asking the representatives to listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance, H.E. Cardinal Gracias concluded, 'Let us make Asia, by our work, our life, and our words, a better Asia.'

In the morning, the representatives participated in virtual 'Parish Visits', with Churches from across Asia, including parishes from Mumbai - India, Dhaka - Bangladesh, Seoul - Korea, Lahore - Pakistan, Yogyakarta - Indonesia, Patheingyi - Myanmar, Sabah - Malaysia, Darkhan - Mongolia, and parishes from Taiwan, Brunei, Laos, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan and the Philippines.

Representatives were divided into groups, with each group 'visiting' two parishes. The visit began with an introduction and video from the parish, followed by a conversation with the gathered delegates. Delegates spoke to the parish representatives about culture, parish life, daily lives of the Catholic population, celebrations of feasts and shared common joys and struggles. The visit ended with a final blessing for the parishes by the FABC representatives.



**Address by Monsignor Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte OFM  
President of CELAM**

**THE EPISCOPAL COUNCIL OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE  
CARIBBEAN (CELAM) IN COMMUNION WITH THE  
UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

I deeply appreciate the fraternal gesture for inviting CELAM to be present on this occasion to discuss the present and future of the pilgrim Church in Asia.

1. With great simplicity, I come to share the experiences of our performance in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a pilgrimage that gathers a long history, which goes back even to colonial times, with the celebration of synods and councils.

2. In the middle of the last century, the fragmentation of ecclesial work in Latin America and the Caribbean, the weakness of communications and the need to share pastoral work in the Region began to be observed. Given this, Bishops Fielder Camara (Brazil) and Manuel Larrain (Chile), enthusiastically fostered the idea of promoting episcopal and ecclesial coordination and support. This is how CELAM emerged in 1955.

3. CELAM was founded in the heat of the challenges and changes of the Church during that period, in light of the sands of time, and 10 years before the completion of the Second Vatican Council that marked the Church and is still in full force.

And while the Second Vatican Council was taking place, several bishops from Latin America, along with other bishops and theologians of the time, promoted the “church of the poor” concept, affirmed by Saint John XXIII.

4. The creation of CELAM was motivated by the need to respond to times that required a prophetic voice of the Church around the Continent facing the social, cultural, and paradigmatic changes of a time that required greater communication and reflection by pastors in such changing contexts.

At the CELAM creation base were always the principles of communion, collegiality and ecclesiality. The synodal perspective was there from the beginning since it was the only way to get together and interpret the new realities and look for new answers.

5. For this reason, the General Conferences of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean had immense importance for the pastors and for the entire Church of pilgrims in the Region. Their arguments and conclusions have been references for the evangelizing work.

“ **Human promotion was emphasized as a consubstantial element of any evangelization process and growth in faith.** ”

6. The first one, held in 1955, in Rio de Janeiro, and from when CELAM was founded, sought for pastors to reflect together on critical situations on the Continent and responses from faith, seeing the need to give life to a service organism to the Episcopal Conferences of the Continent regarding this task of communication, reflection and pastoral guidelines for action, this is how CELAM was created.

But from time to time, the need arose to hold General Conferences with the Bishops of the Region, so that together they could update analyzes and reflections in the light of faith, as well as continue to identify pastoral lines and strengthen formation. In this regard the Theological Institute for Latin America (ITEPAL) was created, which is now the Biblical Theological Pastoral Center (CEBITEPAL), by bringing together in a single organization the three Schools that confirmed it: the Biblical, the theological and the social ministry.

7. The Medellin Conference of (1968) was a magnificent event for hosting the Second Vatican Council and the prospects for its creative application in the region, evidencing the necessary preferential option for the poor. Human promotion was emphasized as a consubstantial element of any evangelization process and growth in faith.

8. In 1979, was held the General Conference of Puebla, which followed Medellin, and reaffirms the preferential option for the poor, and elaborates important proposals for an comprehensive evangelization.

9. In the Conference of Santo Domingo, in 1992, 500 years after evangelization began in the Continent, an important reflection is made on inculturation, and its great challenges for the new evangelization.

10. In 2007, the Aparecida Conference was held, and its conclusions are still being assimilated and we are making efforts to put into practice. It raises, in the face of the Change of Epoch that it detects the great challenge of the Continental Mission, but not as a "conventional mission", but as a Permanent State of Mission seeking that Peoples have Life and Live in abundance with the missionaries disciples work; the contents of Medellin and Puebla are taken up, particularly from the inaugural speech of Pope Benedict XVI, who pointed out that the option for the poor is contained in the Christological faith. We still have an outstanding debt with Aparecida that was discussed in the First Ecclesial Assembly of November 2021. in Mexico.

11. CELAM in light of the signs of the sands of time and the challenges for the Church, as "Ecclesia semper reformanda" has been restructuring at various times to better serve the People of God and pilgrims

in the Region through the Episcopalians Conferences. Thus, at the 37th General Assembly of CELAM, it was agreed to open a Renewal and Restructuring process, which organizationally meant forming 04 Pastoral Centers based on See Judge-Act.

12. In "See", the Knowledge Management Center (CGC), in "Judge" the Biblical Theological Pastoral Center (CEBITEPAL), and in Act. the Networks and Pastoral Action Center (CEPRAP); likewise, and as a Transversal Center the Communication Center (CpC). But the key word and concept is articulation, because is not about that each Center goes "by itself" but rather that it performs pastoral action in articulation and Synodality.

13. The perspective and prospective of the General Conference of Aparecida, its challenges and the Pope's request regarding the pending issues of the Conference of Aparecida, gave rise to the realization of the First Ecclesial Assembly that is unprecedented in Latin America and the Caribbean, also the first at the Universal Church level.

14. The Assembly Meeting, was held in Mexico between November 21 and 28, 2021, under the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, was preceded by a prior consultation, or listening to all the people of God (Bishops, priests, religious, lay men and women, and peripheries representatives).

15. Pope Francis emphasizes as a crucial point of his pontificate rescuing the role of lay men and women within the Church, walking together with the bishops and all the clergy and religious life, seeking social, economic, political, and religious conditions that allow the fulfillment of life in this world, which is also the Kingdom of God.

16. 70,000 people participated in the listening process and 1,030 attended the event, of which 900 were virtual and 130 in person. We were enriched by the illuminating participation of Cardinal Bo and Cardinal Gracias, among other illustrious prelates who. with their presence, reflections, and messages, gave us especially important contributions.

17. Currently we are in the final edition of the Conclusive

Document that we have called “Towards a Synodal Church that goes out to the peripheries: Reflections and Pastoral Proposals from the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean” and will also have a “popular version”. The document gathers the background, challenges, and pastoral proposals of the Ecclesial Assembly.

18. In the same perspective of the Ecclesial Assembly, CELAM has been promoting the continental process of Synod on Synodality, interacting with the 22 Episcopal Conferences that have already prepared their respective conclusive documents, since the perspective of communion, participation and mission is the same and that the Ecclesial Assembly has marked.

19. Thus, CELAM has formed two large working Commissions at the continental level, one on the Appropriation of the Document Content of the First Ecclesial Assembly, and the other to monitor the process of the

“**...we are truly clear that we all feel part of the Church, and work towards synodically, and in this regard we will be able to have a greater evangelizing capacity.**”

Continental Synod on the path to the Universal Synod. Both Continental Commissions are articulated from the Presidency of CELAM.

that are about to be approved by the Holy See, and that express the Restructuring and Renewal of CELAM in all its instances.

20. We can also say that CELAM seeks to reflect its new structure in the New Statutes

21. The CELAM Headquarters itself, as a “physical” meeting place, has special importance in the service to the Church and pilgrims of the Continent, and on July 12 of this year the New Headquarters in Bogota was inaugurated, whose realization has been the product of a great effort and will allow to host in its different environments the religious pastoral agents who wish to perform their Meetings, Conferences, Retreats, since it is a large place with adequate spaces and services.

22. In my opinion, I simply want to express what the Latin American and Caribbean Church has done in trying to be faithful to the conciliar teachings and, even more, to the experience of the first Christians and the

path towards synodically.

23. We have no doubt that the ecclesiology of the People of God is not opposed but needs episcopal collegiality. But, in the same way, we are truly clear that we all feel part of the Church, and work towards synodically, and in this regard we will be able to have a greater evangelizing capacity.

24. In essence, CELAM's contribution to the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean is manifested in the following:

25. Seeking to be faithful to its prophetic vocation in response to the voices of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples and that is expressed in the preferential option for the poor that has identified the evangelizing mission of the Church in this Continent.

26. Its original reception of the Second Vatican Council through the General Conferences of the Latin American Episcopate, and more recently, through the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean.

27. Its permanent support for the reflection and pastoral action of the Church in Latin America, in communion with the Bishop of Rome, with a fraternal and collegial sense at the service of the Episcopal Conferences.

28. Its offer of training spaces with a Latin American perspective to various ecclesial and social actors of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean.

29. Its work articulating networks for pastoral action at the continental and transcontinental level responding to the challenges of migration, human trafficking, care for our common home, defense of human rights, children, youth, and vulnerable women, indigenous peoples and Afro descendants, Catholic education, among others, promoting in this process the configuration of ecclesial networks such as the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM), the Mesoamerican

Ecclesial Network (REMAM), the Ecclesial Network of the Guarani Aquifer and Gran Chaco, the Latin American and Caribbean Ecclesial



Network for Migration. Displacement, Refuge and Human Trafficking (CLAMOR), the Centrality of Children Project, and the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA).

30. The preparation and dissemination of studies and research related to problems of the Latin American and Caribbean reality, which allow not only to have a well-founded diagnosis, but also vital action prospects for the Church, in light of the Social Doctrine.

31. The promotion of communication, meetings, and socialization of pastoral action experiences between the different episcopal conferences and ecclesial networks in Latin America and the Caribbean, in communion with the Holy See, providing spaces and communication means to favor participation, listening, work in Synodality, both religious and laity.

32. The testimony of a synodal Church that goes out to the peripheries is possible, disciples and missionary, mystical and prophetic, enthusiastic about caring for our common home.

33. The offer of subsidies, publications, and multimedia content to promote the Pope's Magisterium and the Latin American Magisterium, contributing to the formation and updating of bishops, priests, seminarians, religious men, and women, lay men and women.

34. The effort to be a sign and referent of the Church's collegiality in Latin America and its catholicity, in tune with the pastoral guidelines of the Pope's magisterium.

35. I would like to end this brief reflection by informing you that the Holy Father has entrusted CELAM the analysis, selection and monitoring of the projects that will be financed by the Fondo Populorum Progressio.

Dear brothers, I invite you to renew your passion for Jesus, for his Gospel and his People. May the Lord bless you, and the Blessed Virgin fill you with tenderness.





---

---

**ENVISAGING  
NEW PATHWAYS**

---

---



**DAY 1  
OCTOBER 24, 2022**

## PRESS NOTE

### OCTOBER 24, 2022

Monday, 24th October, the first day of the segment 'Envisaging New Pathways' of the FABC General Conference began with the Holy Eucharist, celebrated by Bishop Joseph Đo Mnh Hùng of Phan Thiet, Vietnam. The President of the day, H.E. Charles Cardinal Maung Bo, led the representatives in the Adsumus, and the morning prayer, hosted by Myanmar, was led by the video prepared by Myanmar's Fr Dominic, Fr Hubert, Fr Paulinus and Sr Catherine.

The day began with a video recap of the previous segment 'Emerging Realities'.

Archbishop Héctor Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte OFM, President of the Conferencia Episcopal Peruana and of the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano y Caribeño (CELAM), sharing an in-depth look into the experiences and history of CELAM, the effects of Vatican II and the Episcopal Conferences, added context to the development of the Church in Latin America and its part in ecclesial networks.

H.E. Oswald Cardinal Gracias gave an overview of how the week ahead and the sessions for the day would progress, and introduced resource-person Mr Leslie D'Souza, who led the representatives in several sessions based on self-assessment and leadership in preparation for the days ahead.

**“Moving from the ecosystem where I am to the ecosystem of where I can be.”**

For the first session, Mr D'Souza, reflecting on the theme 'and they went a different way', called the representatives to be 'new-age magis', who will forge a new path forward. Explaining the 'Theory-U' methodology - 'moving from the ecosystem where I am to the ecosystem of where I can be', Mr D'Souza led a session on 'presencing'; seeing, understanding, feeling, sensing, followed by an evocation activity.

The next session focused on the three divides in Asia; the ecological, social, spiritual divide between ‘self’ and ‘others’, the way of bridging them, and the levels and importance of listening. Mr D’Souza, underlining the root meaning of leadership, spoke about the need to develop an open mind, heart and will, and conducted a group-survey activity on listening.

The afternoon began with a journaling activity; with representatives answering questions about themselves, their habits and the systems they work in. Next was an empathetic walk, with representatives pairing up to listen to each other, while leaving assumptions and impressions behind. This was followed by a case clinic activity, where groups were handed case studies based on leadership and the levels of listening, to discuss and reflect on, a journaling activity based on the case study, and a sharing with the representatives as a whole. The day concluded with the angelus, led by H.E. Cardinal Bo.

**“The three divides in Asia; the ecological, social, spiritual divide between ‘self’ and ‘others’”**





### Case Clinic by Mr. Leslie D'souza

A case clinic activity, where groups were handed case studies based on leadership and the levels of listening, to discuss and reflect on, a journaling activity based on the case study, and a sharing with the representatives as a whole.

We will now be doing this afternoon, acting and putting into practice some of the tools that can be used while we journey along. Journaling is a very important tool along the journey. I am sure all of you, at some stage of formation, had to do this practice of journaling.

“**Journaling is a very important tool along the journey. I am sure all of you, at some stage of formation, had to do this practice of journaling.**”

I remember my novice master and I remember the word called “write.” So memorable days, dates, whatever. But this is very interesting because the way we will do this journaling right now is a little bit of

guided journaling that we are going to do. While we do it, keep one principle in mind: you have your sheets of paper for journaling, everyone on your table can use that or you can even use your notebook. You're going to record spontaneously. That's the key to this. The beautiful part

of this process is you don't think and then write. Normally, we've been used to journaling and we sort of think and reflect and then we write. In this process, we're just asking you to write, and there's a purpose behind saying first write, then don't think. But that's going to be very important because lots and lots have happened in the past two weeks as well, and during the day, and there are things that are in your mind.

So let it surface very spontaneously. Are we all ready to start this exercise? Good. I will read a question and pause for a little while, and while I pause, you start writing, alright? I will take a look around to get a feel for how you are in terms of completing the response. This is a response which you will write, and it's yours. This is a very important part of the EU Journey, especially when you're at the co-initiating stage and you are looking at creating that Crucible with those who are going to be part of that challenge or the problem or whatever you're talking about. It's always good to prepare a set of questions for which you're going to write down responses yourself. Quite often, after this, we'll do an exercise which is called a walk, but right now we will be very spontaneous with what we are doing. And the first question is: over the past days and weeks, what did you notice about your emerging self and what is wanting to be born?

Over the past few weeks and days, what did you notice about yourself? What is the emerging self that is wanting to be born? You will receive all these questions so no need of writing them down right now, just write your responses. No need to write the questions, you will get all of them. It's time for the next question. And the next question is: what do you notice about what is wanting to be born in the context of your community?



What do you notice that is wanting to be born in your contexts and in your community, in that context? For the next question, take a few seconds more. The next question is: what about your current work or your own personal life energizes you the most? What about your current work or your personal life energizes you the most? A few more seconds and we move on to the next. The next question is: fast forward your life to its last moments when it's time for you to pass on. What do you want to see at this moment? What would

you want to see at this moment? What footprint do you want to leave behind? We are moving on

**“Don't forget that you have sensed the emerging realities in your region.”**

to the next question in a moment or two. From the future point of view, what advice would you give your current self? What advice would you give your current self if I convert it differently? What would your future self be advising your current self if that is easier? From a future point of view, what advice would you give your current self? Okay, we'll be moving on to the next question. What is your vision and your intention for the next three to five years? What are some essential elements of the future you want to create in your leadership role? Describe as concretely as possible the images and the elements that occur to you. Don't forget that you have sensed the emerging realities in your region.

You have reflected on them. What is your vision and intention for the next three to five years, and what are the essential elements of the future you want to create in your leadership role? Describe as concretely





as possible the images and the elements that occur to you. In a few moments, we'll be moving on to the next question. And the next question is: What would you like to let go in order to bring your vision into reality? What habits do you think you need to let go? What mindsets and what behaviors? What must die so that your vision can come into the next future? Few moments more, the next question. What would you let come? And where do you find the seeds for tomorrow in the context of your environment? What should you let come? Where do you find seeds of tomorrow in the context of your environment?

Keep your vision in mind whilst you respond as well. Be as specific as you can name people, situations, main opportunities where you can find the seeds for tomorrow in the context of your environment. We move on to the next question. It's the penultimate one, the ninth one. Who can help you make your highest future possibility a reality? Who can help you make your highest future possibility a reality? Who can help you make your highest future possibility a reality? And the last and final response, if you were to take on a project of bringing your intention into reality, what practical first steps would you take over the next five to six days? Remember the quality of your attention to your intention. That will give you the energy to take it forward. Okay, very good. Take a quick look at what you have written so that you have a sequence, and you, I know, have not written the questions. That's not important. But if you have taken a photograph, that's okay. But you have a story in a storyline type now written down by you. Take a look at it, read it yourself.

**“Keep your vision in mind whilst you respond as well. Be as specific as you can name people, situations, main opportunities where you can find the seeds for tomorrow in the context of your environment.”**

Internalize it and sense what it means to you right now. I'm giving you just three minutes for that. Okay, what we're going to do now is we're going to engage ourselves in a very interesting theory process. This is a tool that is focused on building a close connection, a close bonding, a close understanding. And what we're going to do is have an empathy walk. When I say empathy walk, you need not really walk, but you can be seated anywhere, and I'll give you the instructions for that.

## EMPATHY WALK

So the instructions are like this: the purpose is to hold the space for someone totally different from you, quite different from you. What do you mean by hold the space? You see, all the space we are referring to, creating sort of a holy space, a holy vessel, where the two of you will actually spend time in and have a guided process in that. Hold the space with someone who's very different from you and who's possibly across significant boundaries, so may not be from your own diocese or from your own country, from some other country, from some other diocese. Okay, we encourage you to choose someone who's very different. See, right now you're sitting on tables where you are maybe possibly all Cardinals together and stuff of that type, correct? Don't keep that in your mind now. Just break loose from your tables. See who is someone who you would like to build this empathy walk with. That's the first point.

The key principles of this empathy walk, and this we are leaving free to choose, alright? We're not assigning who you will meet on this walk. Key principles: suspend judgment and engage in empathetic listening. This is not a time when you're going to be advising the person anything. That person is actually going to be going through his or her entire journal which he or she has written down now and will be sharing from the heart. You are requested to listen and in case you be tempted, a voice of judgment kicks in and tells you, "Yeah, you know, I had the same experience." Hold it back. This

is an opportunity for you to practice. Don't divert from the purpose. The purpose is to connect, to hold a space,

**“we're going to be experiencing what is empathetic listening... You're opening the heart.”**

not to give any advice. But to be able to see what it means to connect at a deeper level. And we're going to be experiencing what is empathetic listening. Now, we talked about empathetic listening. What happens in empathetic listening? You're opening the heart. And as Bishop from the Philippines mentioned, this is an opportunity for you to inquire, inquire in an appreciative manner so that the person feels nice and good and connected with you, and there is an appreciation of what is being said.

So we are looking at building that skill of empathy, of empathetic listening. Step into that perspective of the other person, just you know,



that's the essence of empathetic one. Try and put yourself in this whole circumstance that has been explained by the other person once again. Hold back from any voice of cynicism or the voice of judgment. Be very, very clear. And let go of any mental models or assumptions. Don't let your past, your own mental models of what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad, what you should do, what you should not do. No. So important. Suspend the voice of judgment. Suspend any cynicism that comes in your mind or voices. But encourage the opening of the heart through appreciative inquiry questions if you have to. Welcome to understand, expand your heart so that both of you can get connected at a very close level.

What we're going to ask you to do is practice moments of stillness when somebody is talking. Let there be some silence also. Don't be too anxious to push for something and get a quick response. Practice your ability to, once again, be still. Sometimes it's a great experience to learn how to be silent and still because it is in those moments that the Holy Spirit really talks to you and connects with you and brings you closer to that person. And all somebody wants at that time is just for you to hold the space. This is what holding the space really means. It's not about pushing for an answer or a response.

**“Don't be too anxious to push for something and get a quick response. Practice your ability to, once again, be still.”**

Does anybody have any questions on what we are doing? Because I am now going to launch you into the empathy walk. The instructions are clear to all of you. Very good. Enjoy this. It's a beautiful opportunity to have this experience. The time, first and foremost, I think...

I'll just give you five minutes to walk around and choose somebody who's very different from you, whatever it may be, and you can just be around in pairs, alright? Then I'll give you the time. So, I just want to make sure everybody has a little bit of confusion over here, alright? So we pair up with somebody who's very different from us, somebody whom we don't know at all. Some of you may be from a different country altogether, alright? Now, one thing, just be careful. You may be at different hierarchy levels, so just keep that in mind. Yeah, so there may be a tendency because of the hierarchy to play a role of, you know, a fatherly role or whatever it may be. But just right now, play the role of holding the space, of listening, of being empathetic, of sharing, okay?



Wish you all the best. Don't go away. I want to see your pairing. Yes, I thought I'll tell you that afterwards, but I'll give it to you right away. I want you to be back over here at 4:25. Okay, by 4:25, when you come back over here, 4:25, you will come back to this table, okay? And you will do a little journaling. What I mean is, you will write, very briefly, three to four sentences about what this experience meant for you, okay? And also, don't forget to thank the other person, be grateful. So take turns, manage your time, about 20 minutes each for each person, so 40 minutes all together. So don't worry about running and closing, but be back even if you're here by 3:30, it'll be okay with me. Is it okay? So, again, don't spend too much time analyzing who to choose, who's tall, who's short, no, no, no,

no, no. Just find someone, yes, yes, Bishop Garden, yeah, yeah, Mike, Mike, you're quick, yes, yes.

If someone who is next to me is very different to me, is it still necessary for me to walk around to find another one? Not



**“It’s important that we keep in mind that this, and whatever we are going to be doing now, is as we say, creating a space. I see it as actually a Sacred Space of sharing.”**

at all, not at all, don't worry. Not at all, not at all. I am not giving you food, a walk. Alright, please start. Come back at 4:30, alright? Hello, please come back. Don't go for tea. I'll send you in five minutes for your tea, okay? So please sit down. Come back to your seats, please. Don't forget to thank your partner.

I hope you have thanked your partners before coming inside. Come back to your seats, everybody. I'm going to send you for another five minutes. Everybody, come into your seats, please. Okay, everybody in your seats, please. Before you go to your seats, I hope you are thanking your partners for the sharing and the experience. Alright, just a few minutes and some very few important points now. It's important that we keep in mind that this, and whatever we are going to be doing now, is as we say, creating a space. And I see it as actually a Sacred Space of sharing. And so, what you listen, what you hear, stays with you and with each other. I would like you to take just five minutes to record on your journal what did this experience mean to you. Write it down in five minutes.



What did this experience of the empathy walk mean for you? Okay, as a leader, as someone who's had this experience now, in terms of sharing a series of questions, and these were totally related to our common intent.

The common intent for these two days is walking a new pathway, right? And they went different ways. That's the common intent of the first step of Theory U. We have started beginning now to co-sense as we move towards this common intent and going down the U and up. We're going to be experiencing something different. After this recording of your experience of the empathy walk, you can use the empathy walk at different stages of Theory U, at the co-initiating stage, at the co-sensing stage. You would have received a handout on your tables, okay? I'm sure you have that with you. It would be good for you to visit this because, don't forget, as part of this exercise, you have also committed and written down what you would do in the next five days from now in terms of converting your intention into action.

**“The common intent for these two days is walking a new pathway, right? And they went different ways. That's the common intent of the first step of Theory U.”**



And remember, the quality of the attention that you put into your intention will determine the energy and the success of what you want to do when you go out from here in terms of walking a new and different path. Okay, somebody having a mic around over here? I want a quick response from one or two participants who are willing to share very briefly what this empathy walk meant for him or her. Anybody would like to share? Just put your hands up.



Yes, please, give the Bishop there. Thank you very much. I am Bishop Be Joy from Bangladesh, and my partner was His Eminence Cardinal George Elementary. And here, we really walked an empathy walk like that. So, I found a great openness because I questioned something in one of the meetings here. Then he asked me, and I found in him a great openness. And as we walked together, listening to each other, it is a kind of more intimate. We came close to each

other, and it is that way I found the kind of strengthening our relationship, understanding. And it is, at the same time, empowering. As he was telling, I was listening. I was questioning. So, sharing is a kind of empowering. And last but not least, he chose me, His Eminence. So, I found a great generosity in him. Thank you very much. Thank you for your sharing. Thanks very much. Thank you very much. Just one more, anyone?

**“Sharing is a kind of empowering.”**

I also found this exercise very healthy and helpful. My partner was Bishop Paul Simek. I asked him about his community, about his church. So, he also asked me the similar situation, very specially. There are few G's of Pakistan in his place. So, I found that he was paying attention, and when he was speaking, I was listening with heart, and paid full attention. And I was not judgmental. But I think we should continue such dialogue.

Thank you very, very much, Bishop. This is the last one we'll have over here from Bishop. And just for your immediate reflection, did you find yourself having to suspend your judgment? Yes, very, very, very nice. That's very, very good and important thing, all right? And I can see some smiles.



Yes, yes. I wanted to share because I had a very concrete experience of suspending my judgment. Yeah, my Bishop partner is Bishop Nazarene, and the moment he started sharing his experience as a Bishop in his diocese, I said, "Oh my God, exactly like my experience." And then I had to say to myself, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. It's his experience." So, I suspended it, beautiful, and really pressured myself to listen, even to the point of not immediately sharing that when it was my turn.



And sort of, so that my sharing wouldn't just be in response to what he had shared. And it was a lovely experience. Thank you. Beautiful. Thank you so much for this sharing.

**“Oh my God, exactly like my experience.”**

So, we now have a tea break, and we'll come back at 4:55. Alvin, I don't know, but there is one person over here, and that is Bishop Allman. He is more concerned about you guys being very, very comfortable, and you must have your deeply, you know, thank you. So, we'll come back at 4:55.





---

---

**ENVISAGING  
NEW PATHWAYS**

---

---



**DAY 2  
OCTOBER 25, 2022**

## **PRESS NOTE**

### OCTOBER 25, 2022

25th October of the FABC General Conference began with the Holy Qurbana, celebrated in the Syro-Malabar rite by His Eminence Mar George Cardinal Alencherry, Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly. H.E. Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij, President of the day's sessions, led the representatives in the Adsumus. The morning prayer, hosted by the country of Japan, was led by the video prepared by Sr Clara Akhito and the Handmaids of the Holy Eucharist.

Mr Leslie D'souza, continuing with the next session on 'Theory-U', 'Presencing and Absencing' began with a short explanation of moving from 'downloading' past patterns to 'performing' new improved methods. The representatives continued with a group case study, followed by a sharing on what they had learned.

In the afternoon, representatives were divided into groups of fifteen and given specific topics to discuss, based on a framework. The topics and inputs were structured to be included in the drafting of the final FABC document. It was followed by collation and feedback.

The day concluded with the angelus, led by H.E. Cardinal Bo.





### Theory U and Presencing Exercise - Mr. Leslie D'souza

Mr Leslie D'Souza, reflecting on the theme 'and they went a different way', called the representatives to be 'new-age magis', who will forge a new path forward. Explaining the 'Theory-U' methodology - 'moving from the ecosystem where I am to the ecosystem of where I can be', Mr D'Souza led a session on 'presencing'; seeing, understanding, feeling, sensing, followed by an evocation activity.

Leslie is a he who describes himself as a man, a product of the church in India. He is a Salesian, not just a brother. Thought he had a sufficient formation of the solution and he's worked with Salesians a lot. He's a management expert and he's got his own firm for consultation. The purpose of this meeting with brother bishops and delegates is for them to remove any blocks they have. So, these two days could have a long-term effect on their own style of leadership, opening them to different avenues of thinking and removing blocks. It's a system developed by a professor at MIT, called the U-Theory, but Leslie will give more details about it the next day.

**“The purpose of this meeting with brother bishops and delegates is for them to remove any blocks they have.”**

Today and tomorrow will be almost entirely run by Leslie. He alerts those who are residing in other places, the city, and the sisters, that the lunch break will be a little shorter. Lunch will be at one o'clock, and the program will resume at three o'clock. They are negotiable in the evening, and it may go a little later. Leslie is given a hearty welcome and acknowledged for the congregations he has helped, including the Archdiocese of Bombay and Bishop Almond, who is a close friend and associate. Doug hands over to Leslie for his introductory words.



Doug thanks the Cardinal for the overall view of the week and for introducing Leslie. He mentions their journey together as people of Asia over the past two weeks, listening to the voices across their Asian countries. They have had an eye-opening experience and learned about the emerging realities in these nations. Now, it's time to move to the next level of their conference. The theme "They Went a Different Way" is mentioned, which is challenging. Doug refers to the biblical passage Matthew 2:12 and reflects on the Holy Family going a different way. They had to flee to Egypt and became migrants and refugees. He notes that many children were killed because they went a different way. They are now seeking a different way, which is also challenging.



This morning, Bishop was talking about peace, reconciliation, and all. So, we are taking a different way, a new path that goes against strong militarization, nuclearization, the arms race, and other major issues like recession. The new path we are taking is risky, dangerous, and challenging, but it holds potential for the future.

Drawing from the learnings of the past two weeks, Leslie D'Souza will facilitate two days of envisioning a new pathway using the Theory U approach. Theory U, developed by Dr. Otto Scharmer, is a process that has been refined over two decades at MIT. It provides a framework for identifying blind spots in leadership and systems change. It is a method for implementing awareness-based change and serves as a narrative



for evolutionary change, updating mental and religious institutional operating systems.

Leslie has previously applied this approach in the Mumbai Archdiocese, religious institutes, and organizations for growth and transformation. He is welcomed to take the floor and begin his session. Leslie expresses his gratitude to the Cardinals for the opportunity to spend the next two days with the participants. He acknowledges that the theme of the FABC 50th conference has emphasized journeying together as people of Asia. However, he highlights the importance of the aspect of going a different way.

Reflecting on the notion of going a different way, Leslie wonders if it would have been easier for the Holy Family to go back the same way they came. He acknowledges the temptation they might have faced to retreat, as it could have been very tempting. They were tired, and the palace they could have entered would have been luxurious. They would have received a phenomenal welcome, and the gifts they would have received could have been 100 times more valuable than what they gave to Jesus. However, they didn't choose that path. They had to let go of

**“They possibly had to let go of something inside of them that could have tempted them, and they took a different path.”**

all that and, by doing so, they allowed something to come forth—the story and history of our salvation.

To Leslie’s mind, the three kings, the Magi, made a magnificent sacrifice. They possibly had to let go of something inside of them that could have tempted them, and they took a different path. Leslie believes that all present at the

gathering, including the Cardinals and Bishops, are also seeking to take a different path in their lives.

Leslie emphasizes the important lesson that the Magi’s actions brought forth—the opportunity for them to witness the history of their salvation. He expresses admiration for the work, time, energy, thought, and intelligence invested by the participants during the past two weeks. Leslie clarifies that they will be harnessing the work done during the conference, focusing on individual change, transformation, improving blind spots, and cultivating the social soil of Asia as a whole.

He assures that the participants will receive his presentation later and encourages them not to worry about it for now. Leslie reflects on the faith journey of the Church in Asia, starting from the cross and being led by fishermen and tentmakers. Despite challenges faced by the Church, he emphasizes the importance of manifesting themselves in an attractive way, like a honeycomb approach. He draws a parallel to bees building honeycombs, highlighting their dedicated focus and attention to their intention.

Leslie emphasizes that while having the right direction, strategy, and approach is crucial for the Church in Asia, there is also a need for interior work. He



encourages everyone to go deeper within themselves and understand their present interior condition.

What is that interior condition that is present in me today that is actually responsible for the external condition that is really happening? I don't mind if you don't mind, I'll borrow from a senior Insurance CEO, Hanover, who was once asked about the secret of the success of his organization. It's so successful, and I don't mind borrowing that for our religious mission. What he really said is that the success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor. This interior condition

**“The only reason for that is that each one out there hasn't wrestled sufficiently enough to understand what they need to be able to do as leaders.”**

is not seen, but as it's felt, it gets manifested in the behavior of the leader. And so it is going to be for each one of us.

Because, you know, the World Economic Forum meets every year, with beautiful glorious promises and commitments made. But every year, I know what the latest survey is telling

them about the state of the globe. What's the reason for that? The only reason for that is that each one out there hasn't wrestled sufficiently enough to understand what they need to be able to do as leaders. They need to understand what interior condition they need to actually manifest in order to create the reality that they promised at the open global forum.



You can have any number of such stories. The 2001-2021-22 Human Report has been out just a month or two. We've had committees meeting to discuss that, and it's not a very sad state of affairs. There's almost like a sinking feeling that they experience. And more importantly, there's almost like an accelerated breakdown happening in the whole system, the whole global system at work. So, there's a tremendous amount of knowing and doing gap. If something radically has to happen, this knowing and doing gap must find a resolution.

In the words of Water Sharma, everything we know is collapsing because it's not sustainable. As a church, sustainability is so very critical. There was a question asked to a parish team and the parish priests about what will happen if the Parish priest is not there. The response was beautiful. They said, "Yes, we do understand, but it's up to us to be able to act and interact with what's really happening. It means that we need to cultivate the soil on which we are working."

I grew up on a farm, and my father invested his entire life not just in organic farming, but in a particular farming method that is biodynamic in nature. It really means studying the interactions and relationships of all the molecules within the soil. Unless we do that in our diocese and our church, of getting deeper into that, it's not going to be the change that we really want to see.

COVID-19 has taught us some magnificent lessons. And one of the biggest lessons I have taken from COVID-19 is that the world is interconnected. We had a firsthand experience of how interconnectedness and the whole web of interconnection really happens. Going back to the first statement I made, the three kings acted in a way that emerged the story of salvation that could continue. It wouldn't have otherwise.

**“Yes, we do understand, but it's up to us to be able to act and interact with what's really happening. It means that we need to cultivate the soil on which we are working.”**

So, as a result of this, we need to reflect very deeply because what I say and what I do as an individual is not in isolation. It's going to have an



impact somewhere, whether it's right, wrong, good, bad, or ugly. I like this beautiful phrase of the second U.N Secretary General who said, "You can count the number of seeds in an apple, but you can't count the number of apples in a seed." That's really what your interior condition is going to do. You need not know how many apples are growing on the trees, but they are all there, and they are growing.

So, this whole aspect, if we ignore it and if we are not able to accept that I, as an individual, am responsible for the system that's emerging out in which I am living, then there is no change that's going to happen. For leaders, this is the most critical and important thing. They cannot take themselves out of the situation in which they are. The lens of observation has to be turned not only outside but also inside, and that's going to help us discover a lot of things.

**“The lens of observation has to be turned not only outside but also inside, and that's going to help us discover a lot of things.”**

Another fundamental principle that I love and that may make sense to you as well is that energy follows attention. It's a fundamental principle of theory. Energy follows attention. Think for a moment about your own lives and what you're focusing on. What are you attending to more? Don't you feel that giving your attention to something rewards you in the way you would like? If the attention isn't there, there isn't energy for what you may want to happen.

While we, as leaders, can't be everywhere, it becomes a very humbling acceptance of the fact that leadership is not just about being on top or having power. If we want to cultivate the whole social system, then leadership has to be cascaded. Leadership has to move down the line because we are human at the end of the day.

For me, this is very critical and important. I'd like to spend a moment or two on the iceberg model, which we all know about. The decisions being made on a daily basis, whether in the government or the church or any organization, have consequences that even the decision

makers may not want, but we all experience them.

So, the first message for us at the level we are in the church is the message of “I am part of the system.” Only if I accept that, I can see the system. If I’m not part of the system, I can’t see it. I will be defending it or passing it off to someone else. Unless I can see the system as it is, I can’t think of making the change I want to make.

This is going to stop if we accept this. The old habits, behaviors, and transformations will give way to something new and different as we journey together. We want to go down beyond what we see on the surface, the behaviors, and delve into the structures and thoughts. We don’t actually see the paradigms that have become ingrained within us. But the bottom line is, we all know what leaders do and how they do things, but what we don’t know is the interior condition of that leader that drives them, the source of their inspiration.

Given the same conditions, two different leaders may have two different sources of information, and they act in different ways. And what emerges is different. We have seen this in our parishes with the appointment of parish teams. What emerges is a consequence of the way we behave. So, the reflection for us now is to discover the deeper systemic forces that exist within us and in our diocese, causing us to repeat behaviors and achieve results we don’t want.

Can we journey within, find out what’s not visible on the surface, and use tools and techniques to go deeper into that? I’m sure this is something we will invest some time in during these two days.

**“I am part of the system. Only if I accept that, I can see the system. If I’m not part of the system, I can’t see it.”**

I would like to invite you. I’m not asking you for any responses or questions at this time, but if you have something, please make a note and I would definitely like to address them at some appropriate time, okay? A very important part of this entire Theory U journey is presencing. It’s all about presencing. So, I’d like to invite you to a first exercise on presencing. While we do this, I invite you to loosen

yourself up and leave your hands free. Please sit down with both your feet on the ground. If you feel more comfortable standing, you may stand, but let both feet be on the ground. Keep all mobiles away from you and let nothing distract you during this exercise of presencing. It's a valuable tool, and I invite you to use whatever tools we are using during these two days in the work that you do.

I will also share with you the source of knowledge and experience. It is free of cost, and for me, this is really hope. Something wonderful is happening deep down in my heart. Despite all the challenges and reports we read, I'm convinced that there is something dying, and what is dying is this whole aspect of "me first." What is dying is the belief that bigger is better. What is dying is the feeling that we have to let go because something beautiful can come our way. COVID has taught us that.

Now, are we all ready with our feet on the ground? I invite you to close your eyes if you're comfortable with it. If not, you can keep your eyes open. Relax and take a few deep breaths. Feel the relaxation.

Now, slowly move your attention downwards, down your legs to your feet, to the lower parts of your feet. Imagine if you were a tree, you would have roots going downwards. While you don't have physical roots, you can still feel the connection downwards. Imagine this connection going all the way down to the middle of the Earth. Feel that connection.

Now, slowly move your attention upwards, up your legs, up the spine, up to the upper part of your head. Attend to this connection as it tends upwards. As you attend to this connection, be open to the inspiration and guidance that is coming down onto you from above, from the Holy Spirit. Imagine that you are in a state where the power of the Spirit is now resting on you.

Now, slowly move your attention to the middle part of your body, to your heart. Not just your physical heart, but the whole energy field of your heart. Remember that this energy field is opening up together with the power of the Holy Spirit in you. Notice how this part of your body is being connected horizontally across all the relationships you have. The entire energy field is touching every relationship, including your

relationships with people at work...

Allow yourself to be connected horizontally to all those beings around. Attend to your heart and the connections that flow into it and out of it. Now, I would like you to picture one person whom you truly love. Notice how focusing your attention on that person further opens up your heart and allows it to connect more deeply with deep appreciation and love.

Now, extend this quality of connection to our global community, with a special focus on our region in Asia. Connect with that whole larger source that shares this common journey we are on. Turn more deeply and clearly together with the knowledge of the source of who we really are.

Now, extend your heart even more broadly to all the human beings and species on this planet. Try to embrace this entire social field in that deep quality of your heart, including all your friends, the people you know, the people you don't know, and especially the people whom you find difficult. Bring them into your heart and create a space broad and deep enough for all.

Now, slowly let go of that and come back to the present moment. Relax for a brief moment, open your eyes, and let's continue our day from

**“move your attention to the middle part of your body... Remember that this energy field is opening up together with the power of the Holy Spirit in you.”**

this place of strength and connection. As you feel comfortable, come back with your eyes open into the presence of the room.

Thank you very much. We are now going to do one small exercise before we go for our tea break. I'm going to seek the assistance of our digital experts here. We are going to do an evocation exercise using your mobiles. Open a Google or Chrome browser on your phones and type in mentee.

com. Enter the website and you'll be directed to the Mentimeter login page. If anyone needs assistance, please let us know. Once you're on the Mentimeter login page, you'll be given a code. Enter the code 19481747.

We're going to do a trial run, and then we'll proceed with the exercise intended for this program. Digitalization has been one of the emerging realities. If anyone in the group can assist those who need help, please do so. We are now doing a test, and Father Nigel is here as well.

We'll do a test. Yeah, so we go to the next step. Once you enter the code, step three is to submit your input. Your question out there is, "How was your Sunday in one word?" Okay, how was your Sunday in one word? And once you can put one, two, three options, and then you can say submit, and automatically it will submit, and then you will see the results directly on screen.

So, we are talking about yesterday. How was your Sunday yesterday? Just one word to describe it. The quick evocation of what ideas, thoughts, what comes to your mind about your experience of yesterday. Have you all started logging in, responding to the question? One word, that's all. We don't want more than one word. This is only a test run.

Princeton, is the Mentimeter opened? So, let them see it as it comes up so they'll get an idea of what's happening. Okay, wow, this is what you have been king, and you didn't just now relax. Enriching, productive, beautiful, exploring. Wow, it's coming in. Enjoyable. Bishop Wanda, I love that joyful look at that. Good and wonderful. Fully respected. Cardinal bow and all the organizers, this is feedback for you because what's coming up on the screen is their experience of the day. Something must have gone right for all this to happen. Beautiful, holy. I love that as well. Enriching, joyful, great. Big hand to all of you. You've got it. You've got it.

Now, we'll go to the actual evocation, which I'm going to be. It's okay, got it. Okay, Bishop Almond. Tea break, no, what to do, Bishop? You know our bishops and cardinals have not been digitalized. (Laughter) And they get... We'll have a break. It's five minutes now. Okay, we'll have a tea break now. Before that, don't go. We'll do this quick exercise, and I'll be ready, everybody. All right.

**“extend your heart even more broadly to all the human beings and species on this planet... especially the people whom you find difficult.”**

Now, as I told you, what is evocation? The spontaneous word, phrase, feeling, emotion, anything that comes to your mind. And I'm going to put this up over here for all of you to see. And what comes to your mind, just type it out over there. You have just one or two words, all right? Take into account, reflect very quickly, and it's going to happen automatically because evocation is a spontaneous response to this, right? And what is the question? What does this word "envisioning new pathways" mean? What does it evoke? What feelings, what emotion does it evoke in you now that you have journeyed together, seen the emerging realities of the entire region? What does envisioning new pathways really evoke for you? One or two words and start it, and we'll get the words coming.

Okay, it's coming on. Just to help you, when you have a word growing in size, it means that more and more people are using that particular word. So, in real time, it's giving you whatever is coming up as you type. Automatically, it comes up onto the screen. Beautiful, hope and courage. That's so very, very important even in the context of Theory U, which we are talking about. These are two very good ones. I'm so excited about this. It's just coming from your heart. It's challenging, of course, very, very correct. It's about leadership. It's exciting. It's about expectations being met. On the right-hand corner, right below, are the number of responses coming in. So far, 87 have come in. Peace, prospects, new hope, expectation once again, internalizing, future challenges, future dangers, creativity. That's so very critical and important. It's going to be very, very much a good quality quantum of innovation and creativity is going to be required as we envision new pathways. The danger, it's so very important to also sense whatever it is. Okay, we have 101 responses so far.

This is good for us. I need to really congratulate you. We've got this in place. We have a couple of Mentimeter exercises. I'm sure we're going to get more responses from everybody. So, while you're on your tea break and you have a question or two on your Mentimeter, please feel free. But don't get distracted from the process that has started. All right, and where we left off in terms of the exercise on presencing. Right, and we are now all journeying together with an open heart, a welcoming heart, everybody around over here and back home. Okay, thank you very much.



---

---

**ENVISAGING  
NEW PATHWAYS**

---

---



**DAY 3  
OCTOBER 26, 2022**

## PRESS NOTE

OCTOBER 26, 2022

26th October, the third day of the segment 'Envisaging New Pathways' of the FABC Press Conference began with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by His Excellency Most Reverend Mathias RI long-hoon, Bishop of Suwon, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea. The President of the day's sessions, H.E. Oswald Cardinal Gracias, led the representatives in the Adsumus, and the morning prayer, hosted by Korea, was led by the video prepared by the Secretariat of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea.

H.E. Cardinal Gracias explained that the day would include discussion on the first drafts of the Final Message and of the schema of the Final Document, as well as discussion of the FABC Structure.



Prof. Susan Pascoe, AM, member of the Taskforce for the Continental Stage of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, speaking about the next stage of the Synod on synodality, explained three key points: a recap of what had happened so far, the continental stage of the Synod - how it was being carried out - and how it will go forward, through the FABC Assembly. Highlighting the processes and purpose of



the Continental stage, Prof. Pascoe emphasized how ‘the document will truly represent the voice of the people of God’.

Next, the first draft of the Final Message - which will be the message from the FABC General Conference to all the peoples of Asia - was introduced, and participants were invited to give detailed feedback and suggestions on the Message. Following that, the groups of the previous day presented short reports on their topics of discussion, in the context of ‘envisaging new pathways’.

**“The document will truly represent the voice of the people of God.”**

The General Schema of the Final Document of the FABC General Conference was introduced by Bishop Pablo Virgilio Siongco David, member of the Commission on the Final Document, and was followed by questions, suggestions and interventions by the participants.

Next, participants divided into groups based on country and region, to discuss the restructuring of the FABC, based on a few key points; dreams, changes, areas of collaboration, etc, with each group sharing a report on their discussion. The day concluded with a short prayer, led by Bishop Allwyn D’Silva.





## Document on the Synod on Synodality

### Professor Susan Pascoe

Prof. Susan Pascoe, AM, member of the Taskforce for the Continental Stage of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, speaking about the next stage of the Synod on synodality, explained three key points: a recap of what had happened so far, the continental stage of the Synod - how it was being carried out - and how it will go forward, through the FABC Assembly. Highlighting the processes and purpose of the Continental stage, Prof. Pascoe emphasized how ‘the document will truly represent the voice of the people of God’.

“**The title has now changed from “Senator Bishops” to “Synods,” opening the door to new possibilities.**”

One of the important things ahead is the Continental Synod, which the FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences) has to organize. Cardinal Bow and his team are responsible for organizing it. We had invited Cardinal Mario Craig, who is the General Secretary of the Council of the Castri for the

Synods. The title has now changed from “Senator Bishops” to “Synods,” opening the door to new possibilities. It is similar to the Latin American Ecclesial Assembly. Cardinal Craig declined the invitation but proposed sending his delegate, Dr. Professor Susan Pesko, who is a member of the

Senate Council and one of the commissions, possibly the Methodological Commission. She is also a member of the task force established by the Senate Secretariat for all the Continental synods. Professor Susan Pesko has been traveling to different continents to animate the synods. She has been helping the Australian Church and is now here to assist the Asian Church. We are pleased to have her with us until the end of the week. Professor Susan Artie, welcome, and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

Well, good morning, colleagues. I am delighted to be here amongst you, and as a late arrival, it was lovely to walk into the spirit of collegiality that is pervading your meeting together. As Cardinal Gracias mentioned, I'm here to speak to you today about the next stage of the Synod on synodality. I'll give you a little bit of a recap of where we've been and then take you into some of the details. I'm aware that last week Cardinal Hollerick spoke to you about the concept of synodality and where it sits in the life of the church, so you've got a very good grounding in the key elements. My role is much more practical. I'm here really to lay out how we might go about it in the Continental stage and to see if there's any accompaniment which I or the General Secretariat for the Senate is able to do.

So let's start, and we're just going to very briefly look at the journey so far. The first of the quotes here comes from a book I'm sure many of you have read. It's a book called "Dare to Dream," and it's Pope Francis's key messages to the people of God but written in language that is accessible and that anyone can understand.



And so we can see that this is somewhat consistent with the message we had in that last little short clip yesterday evening - to be creative, to dream, and to use our imaginations. And this is what Pope Francis is wanting us to do - to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, and allow hope to flourish. It wasn't that great yesterday morning that with that word cloud that kept changing - hunger, tiredness, other sentiments came in, but hope stayed in the middle. So that was a wonderful thing to see at this meeting. And so we are to allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel.

**“we are to allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another”**

If you haven't read that book, "Dare to Dream," I encourage you to get hold of it. It's a beautiful short book. Austin Ivereigh, the journalist, assisted Pope Francis in writing it.

Now, those of you who were involved in the first stage in the local churches and are on the discernment for the synod, you'll know that this is the main question that was asked. This was the overarching question, and then there were ten other questions. So it's a long question, and it asks how does this journeying together, which takes place today on different levels from the local level to the universal one, allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to her? And what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church? That's a very dense question with lots of sub-elements to it, but that's the overarching question. And we will come to the end, and you will see that rather than ten questions that we had in stage one, there are only three questions in stage two.

Okay, and this is really recapping the journey and foreshadowing the next stage. And by the way, I'm very happy to share the slides. Please,

you're very welcome as well to take photographs, but I'm very happy for them to be made available later if they would be useful to you.

So if you recall, the local stage, that was the stage that was to be within parishes, dioceses, Episcopal conferences. It was from the 17th of October last year until the 15th of August this year. Initially, it was going to be a shorter period, but people in the local churches made it clear to the Vatican that they needed more time.

And so the extra time was granted, which was very important because what emerged from that were very solid and thoughtful submissions based on a discernment process. I'm going to pause for a moment here just to describe to you what happened because I'm sure in this room there are people who were involved in developing those submissions.

112 of the 114 countries in which the Catholic Church operates sent a submission, and we're told that's unprecedented. So the people of God were invited to speak, and they wanted to speak. In addition to that, 1,080 submissions were put forward by various groups. These groups included the superiors general, lay movements like Saint Vincent De Paul, as well as individuals and other groups with specific issues they wanted to address. So, there were 1,080 separate submissions in that stream. Additionally, 112 submissions came through Episcopal conferences.

**“112 of the 114 countries in which the Catholic Church operates sent a submission, and we're told that's unprecedented.”**

The 1,080 submissions were summarized by a group of people at the synod, and they presented a summary of the key issues on the first day when we got together to summarize all the documents. But those of us who were asked to summarize the documents (30 of us from around the world were invited to Rome) didn't stay in Rome. We were taken very quickly outside of Rome to Frascati, where we stayed for 12 days. We worked 12-hour days. We were told that if we couldn't commit all of our time to this exercise, we should not say yes and should leave the space for someone else who could be available 24/7 to do this work.

Before we got there, each of us was sent a group of between 10 and 20 submissions. We were asked to set aside time in early September and to prayerfully discern upon those submissions. We needed to read them at least three times in a prayerful state. The first time, we read through and became familiar with the contents from each country. The second time, we read them with a template and analyzed the documents, identifying key issues, obstacles, hopes, frustrations, and more. We were also asked to select quotes that would give voice to the people from that particular Episcopal Commission. Finally, during the third reading, we were asked to summarize across the group of submissions we had.

When we arrived in Frascati, we were expected to know in detail the contents of the submissions that had been entrusted to us so that we could faithfully represent the views of the people of God who had spoken through that submission process. We began the process prayerfully, with meditation and getting to know one another. Then, we formed groups

**“We began the process prayerfully, with meditation and getting to know one another.”**

based on different criteria such as Continent, gender, ecclesial status, and emerging themes. We analyzed and discussed the submissions, slicing and dicing the information from different perspectives. Every group had different submissions, providing unique insights.

This process continued for about seven days, exhausting but dedicated to drawing forth the voices of the people of God without imposing our own views. We focused on identifying common issues, joys, hopes, frustrations, and fears.

After going through that process for long enough, writers took the templates we were using and started grouping them on the wall of the chapel, creating an annotated space. We were invited to add our thoughts and annotations with Post-it notes, expressing agreement, disagreement, or connections between different themes. In other words, from the emerging consensus, we were refining our understanding.

We were in the chapel, prayerfully reflecting, thinking, and coming back to it. After that process, the writers developed a first draft. Pope Francis, heavily invested in the Synod, wanted to see the first draft, even

though he had been warned it might not be very polished. The writers emailed the document to him at 2:20 AM. I'm told he gets up at 4:30 AM. When Cardinals Greg and Hollerick met with him at 8:30 AM, he had taken a look over the document, though not in detail, and they briefed him on it. This feedback and response from the Holy Father provided comfort for those of us in Frascati, knowing we were on the right path.

We went back to our meetings at that point. I should add that the members of the commissions involved in planning the Synod (theology, spirituality, methodology, and communications) were not in Frascati, as there were about a hundred members in total. They were invited to reflect on the draft and provide feedback during a lunchtime Zoom meeting. This was another way we received feedback from well-informed individuals who understood the process but were hearing it for the first time.

I want to emphasize the honest, authentic, rigorous, and prayerful process that took place. This is the voice of the people of God. The 30 people assembled there had no business imposing their own views or interpretations. This is genuinely the voice of the people of God. I want to highlight that because it is important.

Moving on, the key decision-makers, some of whom are in the room, including Cardinals Gracias and Bow, who were members of the Council of Ordinaries overseeing the General Secretariat for the Synod,

**“It has been a tremendous journey, and I don't want to underestimate the work that has happened in parishes, community groups, and dioceses because that's what was contained in those submissions.”**

arrived in Frascati. I felt sorry for them because they arrived in the evening of the tenth day, had dinner at 8 o'clock, and then went into briefings that lasted until 10:30 PM. The next morning, they began their 12-hour day. Initially, they met with those of us who had been in Frascati in small groups to understand the process. Then, they had the responsibility of reviewing the emerging second draft and approving it. Fortunately, we know that they did approve it since we have a document being

released tomorrow.

That's what has happened so far. It has been a tremendous journey, and I don't want to underestimate the work that has happened in parishes, community groups, and dioceses because that's what was contained in those submissions. People were disciplined to submit 10 pages, although not every country adhered to that discipline. But mostly, they did, and it was quite a discipline because it forced them to distill their thinking and focus on the essence.

Tomorrow, instead of calling it an "Instrumentum Laboris," because it's going back to the people of God and we want to use language that they understand, it's called the "Document for the Continental Stage." It's deliberately written in language that most people will be able to understand. It's being released in eight languages after going through a process of translation. The intent now is for you to take it back to your diocese through your Episcopal conference and discern based on it. I'll come back to that, but to finish the story, this period for the Continental phase is effectively from the start of November through the end of March. It's not a long time, only from November 1st to March 31st next year. We'll talk about that in a minute, but it gives you a sense of the stages.

**“The hope of this process is that all the baptized understand they have a role in the life of the Church, and taking something back to them is very significant.”**

The seven continents involved will send their submissions to the General Secretariat, and they will be summarized in a similar way. The summary from the continents will form the basis of the Instrumentum Laboris that goes to the assembly in October next year. The pope announced last Sunday that this is to be a two-stage process. The intent is that in between the assembly in October 2023 and October 2024, it goes back to the people of God for comments. Cardinal Gracias sometimes talks about this as circularity. The hope of this process is that all the baptized understand they have a role in the life of the Church, and taking



something back to them is very significant.

So, what are we looking for in this Continental stage? It is different from the stage in the local churches because now we have the first version of what people want for the Church in the third millennium. Your task is to make concrete or practical the insights and overall vision that has emerged. From the perspective of Asia, you need to assess if it resonates with your experience and identify any specific aspects of Asia that may be overlooked. This is an opportunity for you to provide input and suggest areas that need emphasis.

**“The emphasis is on involving the full range of the people of God, including priests, religious, bishops, and laity.”**

At this stage, the focus is on going deeper, not opening the entire debate. You are not yet suggesting answers or deciding on courses of action. Importantly, the document for the Continental stage is not a draft. You are meant to formulate it as you see fit, without just arguing about phrases. You have the flexibility to shape it according to your needs. You can submit up to 20 pages, considering the large regional issues at play.

Now, let's get more practical. I must apologize if this overlaps with your own thinking. Regarding the planning process, the FABC executive, responsible for the Catholic churches in Asia, needs to decide on their approach to developing a submission. The Church offers a structure, framework, guidance, and accompaniment, but not a rigid template to follow. The emphasis is on involving the full range of the people of God, including priests, religious, bishops, and laity. The voice of priests, in particular, was noted to be relatively weak during the previous stage, so it would be beneficial to ensure their input is stronger in the Continental stage.

A task force, possibly the FABC executive or a smaller group, needs to be formed to oversee the discernment process. Additionally, you need to decide if the Episcopal conferences want to share their approaches to organizing and conducting the discernment, or if there are culturally specific elements that make sharing less helpful. In Oceania, for example,

with only four Episcopal conferences and the Eastern churches, the task force includes representatives from the Eastern churches to ensure their voice is heard.

We encourage sharing of experiences, particularly from Australia, which has had a plenary council with a large number of submissions. If anyone is interested, we are willing to share further information. Starting tomorrow, you can find details on the Vatican website about the Continental stage, including questions and answers, as well as slides that can be used in dioceses or with various groups.

**“Given the emphasis on the marginalized and the poor, it may be easier to engage them at the level of the Episcopal conference.”**

In most regions, the Regional discernment process will take place, which may need to be conducted online, although in-person meetings are preferable. Given the emphasis on the marginalized and the poor, it may be easier to engage them at the level of the Episcopal conference. Time pressures should also be considered in managing the process.

For the Continental stage, there is a more targeted approach compared to the open invitation of the first stage. You are asked to discern on a document that summarizes the views of churches worldwide regarding their lives as Christians. It is up to you to decide how to conduct the discernment process within your diocese or Episcopal conference.

Regarding coordination, the FABC needs to reach an agreement on the duration of the discernment process. The continent is expected to receive all submissions, including those from religious groups or lay movements, if applicable. It is important to note that the intent for this stage is for all submissions to come through the continent.

For the first stage, individual submissions were allowed, but for the Continental stage, it is encouraged that all submissions come through the Episcopal conferences. There is no specific process for the universal aggregation to review individual submissions. The process

involves synthesizing the discernment within the Episcopal conferences and then across the FABC. Most regions, including Oceania, are forming discernment and writing groups composed of spiritual guides, theologians, and writers from each Episcopal conference. This process will result in a draft document that will be presented at the FCBCO assembly in Suva.

**“encouraged to include a mix of ordained, consecrated, and baptized members of the people of God.”**

In terms of the timeline, Oceania has chosen the first week of Lent as the time to bring people together for consideration. You can decide whether this is the point for the summary across the Episcopal conferences or the start of final deliberations. The nature and breadth

of the discernment process, including the number and duration of groups, will be determined by each Episcopal conference. It is important to note that this process is a deeper contemplation and not starting from scratch.

When organizing the discernment process, it is encouraged to include a mix of ordained, consecrated, and baptized members of the people of God. Efforts should be made to hear the voices of marginalized groups such as youth, women, divorced and remarried individuals, LGBTQI+ individuals, migrants, and refugees. Early consideration should also be given to the discernment and writing group, ensuring continuity and the necessary time for their work.

Once the discernment process is completed (likely between January and February), the discernment and writing group will gather in person to reflect on the discernment from the 19 Episcopal conferences and any other relevant groups. They will draft a consolidated document for consideration at the assembly during the first week of Lent. The discernment and writing group will need about five days to complete their

**“It is recommended to have at least one nominee from each Episcopal conference in the discernment and writing group for continuity.”**

work effectively.

It is recommended to have at least one nominee from each Episcopal conference in the discernment and writing group for continuity. The size of the delegation will vary depending on the region. Finally, the fruits of the two stages will be written into draft submissions, which will go through a discernment process. The deadline for submissions is March 31st of the following year.

In Rome, a process will be implemented to remove unwanted space, connect sentences, and divide the content into paragraphs without explicitly labeling them as such. The purpose of this process is to summarize the information coming from the continent and facilitate the preparation for the delegates attending the October 23 assembly. It was mentioned earlier that this practical approach aims to provide a clear understanding of the steps involved and how to effectively execute them. The intention is to make the process feel manageable and not burdensome, as organizing the content is a focused and targeted exercise.

**“aims to provide a clear understanding of the steps involved and how to effectively execute them.”**

“But look, uh, maybe we’ll pause for a minute and give you a chance, maybe even at your table, for perhaps if we give you three minutes at your table to have a discussion and then open it for question and answer. Thank you. If you have any questions to ask Professor Susan, let’s stay in the mic because there may be questions for you. Yeah, under my good stay at the podium, please.”

“Okay, we have a question already, so, very good. Thank you very much, Professor Susan. Your sharing has allowed us to understand further the synodal process at a more practical level. As I understand, the Synod is already happening. The it, we are not while we speak of it as Preparatory, it is actually the synodal process, and you are giving us an assignment to go back to our dioceses.”

“The first question is: What would make our coming together

a synodal? What would be elements as Bishops? I'm going back to my diocese. What would be elements, and what should I be keen about so that my coming back will be considered as synodal and something different from what we have been doing? That's the first question. The second is: Can you elaborate further on this circularity that is mentioned about? And the third: the distinction between decision making and decision taking. Thank you very much."



"Thank you, and you've got great confidence in the memory of an old lady up here. I'll see if I can remember all three questions. So, starting with the question of what would... I agree with

you entirely. We are in a synodal church now, and really, in some ways, we might say from Vatican II, but certainly from the pontificate of Francis, there has been an emphasis on all of the baptized. At the opening of the

**“if you ask what could you do, I think the first thing would be to be very open about whatever process you decide on, who could be involved”**

Synod in Rome on October 9th last year, Pope Francis said, 'Baptism is your identity card. We are all the people of God.' And so, what he's trying to do is to authorize people who somehow feel they need permission, and I'm talking mainly of the laity. They feel they need permission to speak; they feel they need permission to be involved."

"So, if you ask what could you do, I think the first thing would be to be very open about whatever process you decide on, who could be

involved, so that people don't feel that if they're divorced and remarried, they're excluded, or if there is something about them, they're excluded. One of the things that many of the submissions noted is that they were not able to reach the margins, and the main issue is that people exclude themselves. If you're very poor and you don't feel you've got the right clothes, if the language of the discernment process is not your first language, you might feel that you can't contribute. There's so many, or if you're LGBTQ or you're from a category like that, people, they often exclude themselves. So, that's one element, and so there may be, you may choose to have some sessions particularly for those groups so that they are safe, you know, with that group and have them particularly facilitated. That would be one thought."

"Then I think when you have the sessions, having a, if you like, a flat structure, so that, in other words, it's probably not having a platform, having everybody sitting in a circle. The method of the spiritual conversation is the recommended method, and I'm sure you're all aware of it, but the fact that it gives everybody a chance to speak before someone responds,

**“You are authorized through God, you’ve got a slightly higher level of authorization in canon law in your decision-taking.”**

it gives safety to people who may feel that their voice will be drowned out because they know that the process gives them a voice. So, they'd be just some ideas, but I'm happy to think of others."

"You spoke of the concept of circularity. It's a term that Cardinal Greg uses. I don't know whether he invented it or whether he's taken it from elsewhere, but at the opening of the Synod on October 9th last year, three people spoke: the pope spoke,

Cardinal Hollerick, and Cardinal Grick. At the end of his speech, Cardinal Greg said, 'I have a hope, like an aspiration, a dream, that when we convene as an assembly, that we will be able to come to decision-making by consensus, that we won't need formal voting, and that we may be able to go back to the people of God in a motion of circularity and get their response to what's been determined.'"

So, that's really what he's meaning by circularity. And I know even

in relation to the document for the Continental stage, he's very keen that every Bishop in the world gets that document today so that they know that their efforts to have a discernment process were recognized. He, as the general secretary responsible, is going back to them. So, there will be a media conference tomorrow, the world will know, but they get their own copy. So, I hope that the bureaucracy works for him because I know that that's his intention, that you all open your email at some stage today and you see a copy of that document ahead of the release.

**“This is a sincere effort for the whole church to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to the church in a way that involves the whole people of God, from the young person in the village right up to the Cardinals and the Pope.”**

And then, in relation to decision-making and decision-taking, there are people more expert than me here, so I might call for them in a minute, anyone who'd like to add to what I'm saying. Sometimes I find it helpful to make an analogy in the civil world, like in politics. For example, in democratic countries, you have a minister who's given a responsibility for a portfolio, and at the end of the day, that minister makes the decision. But in the process of getting to that decision-making, it requires an enormous amount of consultation, expert input, advice, and thought. And sometimes, just for your interest, I have worked for both government and the church, so I've seen both very closely. I've worked with Bishops and with ministers. In many ways, the role of a bishop

is like a minister. You are authorized through God, you've got a slightly higher level of authorization in canon law in your decision-taking. And again, if we think about the concept of the *sensus fidei*, it would be an unwise bishop who took a decision that was at odds with the thinking of the people of God in his diocese.

So, for me, there's the process of discernment and thinking and almost pre-final decision that is the



difference between the actual final moment when the decision is taken. But Cardinal Gracias, I might call, is there someone here, a theologian? I know that there are people who've studied this in much more detail than me. I would invite them to come and speak. I don't know, Christine, want to say something or Leslie? Leslie might say something. Christine, you want to say something about your decision-making? Or Leslie de Souza, okay?

Thanks for asking that question. I think it's a very, very important question, and they're basically different ways of asking the same question, as Susan has alluded to. The key theological idea here that brings everything together is really the *sensus fidelium*. This is a sincere effort for

**“we also hope that representatives from the local churches are able to come together and really dialogue with each other.”**

the whole church to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to the church in a way that involves the whole people of God, from the young person in the village right up to the Cardinals and the Pope.

It's really unprecedented, unprecedented in this global scale. It's important to remember that no epoch, no people in human history has ever done this before. So, we are really the ones doing it for the first time. A key idea is really the empowerment of the local churches and the people in this process.

So, this circular way of bringing the draft back to the people, to give them a chance to look at it, to comment, to raise questions, to validate, verify, and even go deeper, all the while maintaining an open mind, open heart, open will, as we have seen in the past two days, is really key in this whole process. So, as we are trying to listen to the whole *sensus fidelium*, we need to remain open, to continue to let the Holy Spirit speak through us in this process, to go deeper, to listen to those who may have been left out in the first local phase of this consultation.

So, that's why, you know, in this process, there seems to be more steps than usual in the past. The consultation only goes one way, and people have no chance to comment on what comes out finally. So, this



is the first time all of you and all of your people are given the chance to comment, to look, and not only that, to work together with each other so that the local churches are not walking alone. And that's why, in the Continental assembly, we also hope that representatives from the local churches are able to come together and really dialogue with each other, using this document as a basis. So, I hope that clarifies the essence of the process, which is really about listening together to the Holy Spirit speaking through us, through the people of God, through our Scripture and tradition, all the teachings, and the signs of the times. Thank you.

Thank you, Christine, for your clarification. I'm a little confused regarding the different steps and the timing. What I understand from here is that tomorrow, the documents will be released officially to all the Bishops, and we have to get the response from the national conferences to work for the Continental stages. But what I understood from what Hollerick said is that we do not have time anymore to get the responses from the local churches, but we work here at the Continental level and present the results to the universal level. I'm not too clear about the steps that we have to take. Are we, all the dioceses and the different conferences, have to see this document and give feedback to the FABC level?

"Continental level, please click some clarification. Thank you, and that's a very understandable confusion. Sitting behind it is the reality, as Cardinal Hollerick has said, that this is now a compressed time frame. But also, where this is a period for reflection. But in addition to that, Cardinal Greg doesn't want those Bishops who would like to have further discussion in their diocese to have that discussion. So, in a way, what you see, both elements are correct. And I think it'll be a matter for judgment at each Episcopal conference if they're going to have time for discernment in diocese, then what's their time frame? They'll really need to have quite a clear set of deadlines so that they can get it through to the Episcopal conference."

**“My own sense is that, particularly for those in the south, time is against us.”**

"That's one part of it. The other part of it is that it's likely that the Episcopal conference will organize the groups. For example, if I take

Oceania as an example, we've already decided that there will be groups for the religious, there will be groups for the juridic form, the association of ministerial pjs, there will be an LGBTQI+ group, there will be some women's groups, there'll be indigenous groups. Very important issue for Australia. So, that's all happening through the Episcopal conference. But if any Bishop wants to do a bit more, they can feed it into the process as well. I'm sorry that's not any clearer, but the reason that there's ambiguity is that I think, in particular, Cardinal Greg didn't want to shut down the possibility that some of the Diocesan Bishops would want to still have further discernment in their own diocese."

**“we also hope that representatives from the local churches are able to come together and really dialogue with each other.”**

“My own sense is that, particularly for those in the south, time is against us. Not only for all of us, we have Christmas and then Easter in this time frame, but also for those in the South, it's the holiday period. Like January for many countries in the south, no school, families go on holidays, so the timing is

quite difficult. So, it's not in some ways Cardinal Beau and either-or, but at both ends. But I suspect the reality is that most will end up working at the level of the Episcopal conference.”

“Yeah, Bishop Susan, thank you for these guidelines. We're done in joining with evidence Cardinal Beau that we have reached after the Continental level.” This is a new style of the Church, General Life, and we started these processes from our families, family units, a diocese at a national level, and we proposed our suggestion to the Continental level. So, you gave us the general guidelines, but what we expect, I think what we should do from here, at the Continental level, thank you.

And I think Christina's



intervention was very helpful, I think in terms of talking about the process. But for the Continental level, well, I suspect the meeting this evening will be helpful in clarifying how you want to go about it in Asia. And the message from the Secretariat is that, apart from providing the document, giving some resource materials, and setting the timeline, they want to give each of the continents the freedom to manage it as they will. But if we can assist in any way with accompaniment or advice, we're happy to do so.

Yeah, Bishop, we'll have one more question. Simon from Malaysia, when we had this FABC asking us to go through the questions, we went through that, and we tried to see how to respond to that. And at the same time, the Synod question came in. So, most of the dioceses will put everything together as one. So, what we are sharing here is actually part of our discernment process in a parallel gathering that we submitted to Rome. And at the same time, we also use it for the FABC. So, it's actually a sort of parallel process going. I would like to ask how would that assistance be, rather than reinventing everything? How do we put this FABC into the structure of the Synod journey so that it can work together in symphony, synchronized, rather than trying to move it here and we try to fit it together? So, maybe your assistance, together with the FABC steering committee, will be able to give us a way of putting it in sync rather than two separate movements. We will have to go back and try to implement. How do we share again the findings of FABC? So, how do we put the two together? Right. So, you're talking about the level of the Episcopal conference through to the FABC, how you put that together, FABC and the Synod, because our starting point was we do not want to have this set for Rome for the Synod process and this is for FABC. Yeah, and we had also already a series to be expected.

**“My own sense is that, particularly for those in the south, time is against us.”**

We have done our Synodal assembly, so it's part of the Synod process, but it's also part of the response for coming to FABC. So, it's actually one set of response that we are sending in. And that process, I think, is good to clarify for us with FABC how to put the two together. When we go back, we are asking for a timeline. FABC definitely will want us to do something, and we will have to go back and share the findings

of FABC for the next, I don't know, 50 years of planning for the future. So, how do we sync the two together? Thank you.

And look, Australia is well into a plenary council when the synodal process was underway. They used the same people to draw the two together, and not surprisingly, the same issues emerged. So, there wasn't a problem. In a way, it's more the process, the process that you use to get the two of them aligned. But I'm happy to speak separately if you like with some more detail.

Yeah, last question. The point that I would like to raise is actually not addressed to you, Professor Susan, but it's a way of making a suggestion to the Secretariat of our conference today, particularly to Cardinal Beau and Bishop Alwyn. In our gathering this afternoon, our gathering would be by country. The Episcopal conferences will be gathering together. Is there a possibility for us to include in our discussion the presentation that was presented in the synodal process? For example, on the timeline and more particularly on the process on how we would be able to bring these things to the Continental after the continent tells you know the possibility of merging what we had discussed for the last few weeks already with FABC, on how we can merge this one with our synodal consultation. And other than that, seemingly from my own understanding is, again, we will bring back the consolidated reports of all the Synod and bring them back again to the conferences and to the dioceses. So, can we discuss that on our own by country and the possibility of coming up with, if it is possible, with our own suggestion and consolidate all our suggestions so that it will become really a continental suggestion on how we shall approach our own synod as what happened, as I said, in Australia? Thank you very much. So, I think it's a very good question or suggestion. In the evening, we are going to meet country-wise, so I think we can discuss what you have suggested. Susan, thank you very much for the enlightenment, the suggestions, and you're right in the heart of the Synodal preparation, so we are privileged to have you here firsthand, and we want to take advantage of your presidency over the next few days to discuss. Cardinal Beau will sit with you to see how we can go ahead.

Thank you very much, and thank you for coming. Thank you for staying with us. Thank you.



ENVISAGING  
NEW PATHWAYS

DAY 4  
OCTOBER 28, 2022

## PRESS NOTE

OCTOBER 28, 2022

28th October, Friday, of the FABC General Conference began with the Holy Eucharist, celebrated by H.E. Giorgio Cardinal Marengo IMC, Apostolic Prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

The participants joined in the Song of Asia, and H.E. Oswald Cardinal Gracias led them in the Adsumus. The morning prayer, hosted by the country of Nepal, was led by the video prepared by Fr Stephen SDB and team.

Reverend Monsignor Michael James Nazir-Ali, priest of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham in England and Wales, speaking on Christ and religion, and the Church in the world today, stressed 'it is Christ who makes, renews and reforms the Church'. Talking about the process of Apostolic transmission, its traditions and how it engages with change, he emphasized how the Synod should work, and that 'the first requirement of the Synod must be praying together'.

H.E. Joseph Cardinal Coutts presented the revised draft of the Final Message, which was followed by an in-depth plenary discussion.



Bishop Pablo Virgilio Siongco David presented the revised draft of the Schema of the Final Document, paying attention to the revisions suggested by the representatives. The participants then divided into groups, with each group examining a different section of the document in depth.

**“very often, there are still surprises of God towards the end”**

H.E Charles Cardinal Bo welcomed Papal Envoy H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle to the FABC General Conference. Greeting all, H.E. Cardinal Tagle conveyed to the gathered representatives the Holy Father’s

reassurance of “my closeness to everyone”. Mentioning the Holy Father’s prayer to Mother Mary, that ‘the joys, sorrows and pain of the people of Asia may enter her heart’, H.E. Cardinal Tagle reminded his audience to



**“Mentioning the Holy Father’s prayer to Mother Mary, that ‘the joys, sorrows and pain of the people of Asia may enter her heart’.”**

persevere, and that, ‘very often, there are still surprises of God towards the end’.

The group reviews continued, with each group presenting their comments at the end. The day concluded with H.E. Cardinal Gracias leading the representatives in the angelus.



### Address by Reverend Monsignor Michael James Nazir-Ali

Reverend Monsignor Michael James Nazir-Ali, priest of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham in England and Wales, speaking on Christ and religion, and the Church in the world today, stressed ‘it is Christ who makes, renews and reforms the Church’. Talking about the process of Apostolic transmission, its traditions and how it engages with change, he emphasized how the Synod should work, and that ‘the first requirement of the Synod must be praying together’.

“**The church faces today, such as atheism, secularism, materialism, and different ideologies.**”

Now coming to today’s program, we are very happy to have with us an eminent guest, Monsignor Michael Nazir Ali. He is known to us, and just to give you a brief introduction, my first encounter with Professor Nazir Ali was at the Synod in Rome where he was a delegate from the Anglican communion. I remember meeting him there as we were both fraternal delegates.

Monsignor Ali was born in Pakistan but later moved to England, where he served as the Bishop of Rochester in Kent. He has since joined the Catholic Church, but I have come across his books on various subjects. Specifically, I appreciated his insights on the challenges the church faces today, such as atheism, secularism, materialism, and



different ideologies. His writings were poetic, provocative, and interesting. He often explored how the church can effectively confront these crises. I invited Professor Michael to share his expertise and guide us on this path during our time at the FABC. Currently, he is the head of the Department of Research at Oxford University and is scheduled to teach at Angelica College in the near future. We are eagerly looking forward to hearing from Monsignor Michael Nazir Ali.

**“it is Christ who forms and renews the church. He is the one who brings about its reform. This understanding must be our starting point.”**

Thank you, Monsignor Ali, for your gracious introduction. I must say that I feel unworthy of the kind words you have said about me. This morning, I had intended to speak about Christ and the religions, as Monsignor Ali mentioned. However, Cardinal Gracias is keen for us to discuss the church and the world today, as this is the challenge we all face. Additionally, we will explore how this relates to synodality and the synodal way that has been emphasized. Therefore, I want to begin by emphasizing that it is Christ who forms and renews the church. He is the one who brings about its reform. This understanding must be our starting point. In the letter to the Ephesians, it is stated in the first chapter that Christ fills his church with all his fullness. And in the letter to the Colossians, Paul writes

**“The concept of being grafted as branches into a vine signifies our unity with Christ, while Christ being within us represents his transformative power, as he continually shapes, reforms, and renews us.”**

about Christ in us as the hope of glory. These passages highlight the presence of Christ within us individually, but also in the collective sense as God's people, the church. It is important to acknowledge both aspects: being in Christ and Christ being in us. This understanding is crucial to comprehending Paul's teachings about the church. The concept of being grafted as branches into a vine signifies our unity with Christ, while Christ being within us represents his transformative power, as he continually shapes, reforms, and renews us. This process in

the church is intricately tied to the transmission of the apostolic tradition and teaching. Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Apostles, it is fitting to reflect on how this tradition is passed down from generation to generation, across cultures and individuals. Of course, the effectiveness of this transmission can vary.

We have witnessed both exemplary and flawed instances of this process. Earlier today, we saw a beautiful example of this transmission in action in Nepal. Nevertheless, different people receive this tradition, and they may discern unique aspects within it that others might not have noticed, even among those who have been faithfully transmitting it. For example, the Exodus trajectory in the Bible, depicting God's liberation of an enslaved people, resonates strongly with those who are oppressed, exploited, or facing various forms of slavery. It is no surprise, then, that this trajectory is found in the African-American musical tradition.

It shouldn't surprise us when that happens. William Temple, who wrote a very fine commentary on Saint John's gospel (which we've been thinking about this morning), used to say that the definitive commentary on Saint John's gospel will come from India. This is due to India's rich philosophical tradition, which allows its people to notice things in John that other, more pragmatically minded individuals might overlook. Pope John Paul II used to speak of the feminine genius in reading the Bible. The way women read the Bible can be different from how men read it, and men can learn from women's approach. Perhaps women can also learn from how men read the Bible, but that's a different story.

This process of transmitting the tradition and perceiving its nuances is ongoing within the church and all around us. It is happening in the present day. The question that arises in our ever-changing world is how this unchanging Apostolic tradition engages with change and addresses new issues. While ecclesial traditions like the Orthodox value the transmission of the Apostolic tradition, we also need a way to engage

“**Today, as we celebrate the Feast of the Apostles, it is fitting to reflect on how this tradition is passed down from generation to generation, across cultures and individuals.**”

with what is new. Not every claim to new knowledge is genuine, but some are authentic. This is where the Catholic Church, in my opinion, has been indebted to John Henry Newman. His doctrine of development is crucial, not only in the church but also in dealing with changing paradigms of knowledge.

Newman's doctrine of development emphasizes that in engaging with the new, the Gospel must be conserved at all costs. The fundamental nature of the Gospel, encompassing creation, redemption, and reconciliation, cannot be compromised. Additionally, Newman highlights the importance of a conservative action on the past. References to the councils of the church and papal writings in Catholic documents invoke the past for the sake of the present, providing resources to engage with the present. Continuity of principles is also essential, as exemplified by the early church's stance against infanticide. The sacredness of the human person, which informed their stand, continues to guide the church's approach to new knowledge about embryos, fetuses, and the development of new life.

Furthermore, Newman emphasizes the anticipation of the future. The church's teachings today, such as those concerning the beginning and end of life, should always consider potential future implications. There is a recognition of the slippery slope phenomenon, where extreme circumstances today may be used to justify further actions in the future. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the Abortion Act of 1967 was initially passed to allow for abortion in specific hard cases, such as incest or rape. But it has now become a free-for-all for any reason whatsoever and up to any limit whatsoever. Euthanasia or assisted suicide, or whatever you want to call it, more recently in many European countries, began dealing with very hard cases of terminal illness and unbearable pain. However, what has actually happened is that children who are depressed are now being euthanized. So the anticipation of the future, what we do today, and the effect it might have in the future is important.

Yet, once this engagement with new knowledge occurs, we must ask how we know if we are remaining faithful to the apostolic teaching. Different solutions have been proposed, such as the Vincentian canon that states what has been believed everywhere, by all people, at all times. However, we must remember that at one point, the majority of the church had become Arian in its Christology, and it was only Athanasius contra mundum (against the world) who stood out against a church going in the wrong direction. So, that cannot be a sufficient criterion on its own.

Some people say that the Bible must be the standard. Indeed, as Dei Verbum says, the Bible is something that has been given once for all, and it stands within the stream of Apostolic tradition, not outside it. But it is once for all. By it, the church orders all of her life. That is why the scriptures remain central to how we think about the church, our world, culture, and our relations with people of other religions. It is important to

**“It is important to note that scripture does not contradict Apostolic tradition, and Apostolic tradition cannot contradict scripture. They belong together as a whole.”**

note that scripture does not contradict Apostolic tradition, and Apostolic tradition cannot contradict scripture. They belong together as a whole.

In studying the Bible, we must bring forth every critical insight and appreciative insight available. We look behind the text to see the oral traditions and stories that now exist in the Bible in a finished form. We examine the motivations of the writers, why they wrote these things, and how the books were edited and compiled. This work is done by scholars, and it is necessary work that cannot be evaded. However, the scholars do not have the final say. They can examine what was behind the text and what is in the text, but ultimately, it is the church that must interpret what the Bible means.

The interpretive task of the church in this matter is significant. Revelation as a whole must be related to culture and context. Culture refers to the habits, customs, values, and worldview of a people, while context relates to their socioeconomic reality and the state in which

they are found. Revelation must engage with culture and context, and when Christians do this, they come as those who embody the Revelation themselves. They do not bring Revelation in a disembodied way to the engagement with culture and context.

Professor Lamin Sanneh, a Muslim convert to the Christian faith and a prominent Catholic mission theologian originally from Gambia in Africa, used to say that the Christian Revelation is completely translatable into every culture without remainder. He called it the translatability of the faith. He compared this with Islam, which also is a worldwide and missionary faith. However, he believed that there is a residual “Arabicness” about Islam that is found everywhere. The call to prayer is always in Arabic, and the Quran must be read in Arabic, or it is not considered genuinely read. According to Lamin Sanneh, this is not true of Christianity. There is no sacred language for Christians. While it is wonderful to hear Latin singing or read the New Testament in Greek or the Old Testament in Hebrew, Christianity transcends any specific language or cultural form.

But there is no sacred language. The Aramaic that Jesus spoke, although we had a very European Jesus this morning, was Jesus’ mother tongue. However, the New Testament was translated into Aramaic (Syriac) after being written in Greek. The old Syriac version dates back to around 150 A.D. So, the process of translatability continues all the time, rendering the good news of Jesus Christ into every culture and context wherever we may be.

“**There is no sacred language for Christians... Christianity transcends any specific language or cultural form.**”

Yet, are there any limits to enculturation? In his influential encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II stated that there were two limits to this process. Firstly, echoing John Henry Newman, he mentioned the nature of the Gospel itself. Whatever the process of enculturation may be, it cannot compromise the Incarnation, the atonement of Christ for our sins, the resurrection of new life in Christ, and the transformation of creation. None of these fundamental aspects can be compromised in the process of enculturation. The debate lies in how these limits are understood and

applied in specific situations.

Secondly, Pope John Paul II emphasized that enculturation should allow you and I to recognize the same faith in one another. Enculturation should not create such divergence that Christians in different cultures cannot recognize the same faith. It is the task of the whole church to ensure that Christians in different contexts can recognize and affirm the same faith.

These points about limits and criteria for enculturation are essential in approaching our task of engaging with culture and context in a principled way. Another approach promoted through joint meetings between the Vatican and the World Council of Churches focused on criteria for enculturation. They explored how the mind of Christ relates to culture and context, aiming to make the gospel intelligible, inspire people with the gospel, and inform them about living a new life in Christ.

The goal of this engagement with new knowledge and enculturation is unity in diversity. There must be a legitimate diversity that belongs to and enriches unity, rather than undermining it. The presence of the Eastern churches, with their unique liturgical practices and traditions, exemplifies this diversity that feeds unity.

**“The sacred deposit of faith and the sacred ministry are crucial considerations. While the Church serves the word and is not its master, it also serves the world.”**

The Catholic Church has been blessed under God’s Providence to preserve the deposit of faith—the whole deposit of faith—through Scripture and Apostolic tradition working together. This is a significant responsibility that should not be taken lightly. The sacred deposit of faith and the sacred ministry are crucial considerations. While the Church serves the word and is not its master, it also serves the world. The word should not be left without interpretation, teaching, and propagation.

These two aspects of the church’s treasure have always to be kept together. We were being reminded of the apostolic succession this morning

because of the Feast of the Apostles. The apostolic succession, of course, has to do with the transmission of apostolic authority by the laying on of hands. But it's not only that; it is not just something mechanical. It also has to do with conveying the whole faith and life of the church. And those

“**As we were hearing earlier from Professor Pascoe, synodality means walking together in the way, but the first requirement of synodality must be about worshipping together.**”

who receive it then have a duty to pass that on, to pass it on and not to keep it for themselves.

The sacred deposit and the sacred ministry then belong together, and this brings me to the question of synodality. How is the sacred ministry to engage with the deposit in the light of a changing world, new knowledge, and the requirement to involve the whole people of God? As we were hearing earlier from Professor Pascoe, synodality means walking together in the way, but

the first requirement of synodality must be about worshipping together. It has to do with praying together. If the church is not a praying church, it will not be an authentically synodal church. That also has to do with the celebration of the Eucharist, participating in the body and blood of the Lord together.

We cannot emphasize this too much, that synodality is not just about activism or about issues of one kind or another. It has to do with the Eucharistic life of the church, the fact that we are in communion with one another, worshipping together, and participating in Christ's body and blood together in a way that has been ordered from the very beginning and reflects the relationship of the sacred ministry to the sacred deposit.

And then, of course, synodality means consulting the whole church about the issues that the church faces from time to time in different places and at different times, but also universally throughout the world. But in this consultation, we have to be quite careful about what we are doing. I was glad that one of the bishops during the discussion had said that those who are being consulted also need to be catechized. If we are consulting an un-catechized laity, what are we going to get? We will

simply get a reflection of the culture around them. We won't get anything more than that. And I think the bishop also said some may even need to be evangelized.

Secondly, the consultation, the ecclesial consultation, is not just any consultation. The ecclesiality of the consultation has to be maintained. That means that the natural formations of being church have to be respected, whether that is in the family, the domestic church, the parish, the diocese as the local church, or even clusters of local churches expressed nationally or supranationally. Consulting with the natural formations of being church is quite different from coming under pressure from various pressure groups.

We live in a world of instant communication, which is a good thing. What we've had this morning could not have happened perhaps in another generation. But it also has dangers because small groups of people can become very active in one cause or another, and there is no end to these causes. Today it's one thing, tomorrow it will be something else, and the day after something else again. So we must make sure that the consultation is of a catechized laity, a theologically educated priesthood, and that it takes place in authenticity determined by the natural formation of the church in different manifestations.

Thirdly, the question of the census fidelium. The census fidelium is not just what the laity or the priesthood, together or separately, may think at any time. It has to be informed by what the apostolic tradition has always taught. It has to be

**“what the church has said throughout the ages.”**

principled in its engagement with new knowledge and articulated in the end by those with the authority to teach, that is to say the bishops of the church gathered in council, together with the bishop of Rome. The census fidelium has both a synchronic aspect, something which has to do with the time in which we now live, Of course, this is what the church as a whole is saying today, but it also has a diachronic aspect, that is to say, what the church has said throughout the ages. Both these aspects need to be kept together if we are going to have a rounded sense of the census fidelium.



Thirdly, synodality also has to do with discipline in the church. It has to do with saying, in the end, after listening to everybody and everything, what can be acceptable and what is not acceptable. From the very beginning, exclusion, whether from the Eucharistic life of the church or from ministry or whatever it may be, has been for the sake of restoration and inclusion. But whether we like it or not, those who are bishops here will know this: sometimes discipline has to be exercised in love for the sake of restoration and future inclusion. I think to pretend that this does not happen is to live in a Fool's Paradise.

**“But whether we like it or not, those who are bishops here will know this: sometimes discipline has to be exercised in love for the sake of restoration and future inclusion.”**

And then there is, of course, decision-making. Some decisions will have to be made; it can't just be prolonged consultation. Some things will have to be said about the nature of the priesthood, about marriage and family, about the sacredness of the human person, about the poor, and so on, by the church in due course.

So synodality has to be about a proper conciliarity. If we look at the very first Council of the church, the Council of Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts chapter 15, we find that the missionaries come back and report about the Gentiles coming to faith. The apostles call together the other apostles and presbyters. They listen to the missionaries and then decide what is to happen. They then go to the whole church and say, “Now we've made this decision about how the Gentiles are to live, what should we do about sending this news to the Gentile churches?” And then the whole church decides who to send. This is what we may call differentiated synodality. Different people in the process of synodality have different functions.

**“Religious and clergy of different kinds have played a role in both ancient and recent councils of the church.”**

In the early councils of the church, it wasn't just the bishops.

Athanasius was a deacon at Nicaea; he wasn't yet a bishop, but he played a very important part in the council. Religious and clergy of different kinds have played a role in both ancient and recent councils of the church. But in the end, it is the bishops gathered together in council who have a particular charism, a particular authority, a particular responsibility to articulate the faith in given circumstances on given issues, together with the bishop of Rome.

This is illustrated very well by what happened at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which was deadlocked between the Monophysites and the so-called historians. It was the Tome of Leo the Great, when it arrived from Rome, that made the difference, solved the problem, and articulated the Chalcedonian christological definition for the rest of the church, which we still acknowledge and profess.

So, a differentiated conciliarity, a particular function for the bishops together with the bishop of Rome, is the right expression of synodality. But again, when the bishops meet with the Pope, they will not just be talking about issues; they will, in the end, have to make some decisions; otherwise, the process so far will result in frustration.

Something clear will have to be said about the issues we are facing. And once again, the bishops, whether they say it explicitly or not, will have to say that certain things are excluded, not everything that people will want the church to give them. There will be difficulty about this, and it has to be handled very sensitively and properly so that false expectations are not raised. And if they have been raised, then people will have to be told at some time that they cannot be fulfilled. This is not an easy task, but it will have to be done.

I know you are embarking, Your Eminence, on the next phase of synodality, the Continental phase. And then there is, of course, the universal one coming. It is important to structure this well in a way that is helpful for the churches and for the Church at large.

**“It was a massive spontaneous movement of people seeking a deeper experience of God, Christ, and the work of the Spirit.”**

But, if I may say so, don't put all your faith in structures. The Church is generally not renewed by structure. The Church is renewed by Apostolic and pneumatological movements. One such movement is the monastic movement that pushed people out into the deserts of Egypt and Syria. It was a massive spontaneous movement of people seeking

**“Though the modern missionary movement had its share of mistakes and assumptions, we should not forget the sacrifice of these missionaries.”**

a deeper experience of God, Christ, and the work of the Spirit. By moving out into the desert, they miraculously renewed the whole Church.

An interesting example is Athanasius, who was a learned man in Greek culture despite being Egyptian. His alter ego, Anthony of Egypt, couldn't read Greek. Yet, they worked together for the renewal of the Church. In the Middle Ages in England, the parish clergy could not preach. However, when the Franciscans and the Dominicans arrived, they preached. If they were not allowed to preach in the Parish Church, they preached outside. Their preaching renewed the Church and made the Franciscans and the Dominicans popular in Europe, including the United Kingdom.

The missionary movement is another example. Bishop John Bosco shared yesterday how missionaries not only made new Christians but also renewed culture economically, socially, and educationally. Though the modern missionary movement had its share of mistakes and assumptions, we should not forget the sacrifice of these missionaries. Many of them took their coffins with them to West Africa, which is a remarkable display of dedication and sacrifice.

We know of many who were martyred on this continent and in Asia for the sake of propagating the faith. So what I'm saying is that, of course, we need good structures to efficiently do our work. However, the renewal of the Church comes by allowing the Holy Spirit of God to work, enabling movements born of laypeople, religious, and clergy. Bishops should not be excluded from this; they can also be involved in renewing the Church. That is how the Church will be renewed, not simply by dedicating all our

time to structures. Thank you very much, Your Eminence, for your time. I look forward to the discussion.

Thank you so much, Professor Nazir Ali. Now, we throw the matter up for discussions, the plenary discussion. The mics, please. Bishop Joshua, anybody else?

Thank you very much for sharing your faith conviction. What made you accept Catholicism? Could you kindly explain?

Yes, well, what I've done is, Pope Benedict, very graciously when he was Pope, made an arrangement for Anglicans to join the Catholic Church while retaining certain elements of Anglicanism that are good. There are other elements that are not so good, but the good ones. These ordinariates were created, as you know, so I've joined the ordinariate because there are things about the Anglican tradition that the whole Church needs.

However, there are certain things that the Anglican and Protestant churches do not have and which are needed, and which Christ has provided for His Church. The first thing is how to make decisions that affect everybody and are then implemented by everybody. "Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbatur" - you know, what touches everyone has to be decided together by everyone and then make sure that it is observed by everyone.

That's the first thing. The second is a body of teaching.

**“In the face of the persecution of Christians, the Catholic Church will be called upon more and more to express itself about these issues.”**

So, for instance, the Catholic Church has a body of social teaching that is very important today to refer to. When we engage with new knowledge, we also have to invoke the past and learn from it, rather than simply discarding it. Furthermore, there needs to be proper authority and intervention, although not exercised promiscuously at every turn. Proper authority at the right level has to guide and make decisions when necessary.

Whatever the issues may be today or tomorrow, these are the ways that Christ has provided for the Church. While other churches have their valuable elements of faith, we need this way of deciding together to be a coherent body in the world as it is today.

**“The Church’s contribution to education, not only for its own members but for the wider community, should also be emphasized, particularly in providing education for the poor and marginalized.”**

Now, moving to the question about the future of the Church in Asia and steps to revitalize ourselves to answer the needs and challenges of our times, I believe that while the Church may be a small minority in Asia, its influence in society is well beyond its numbers. It must use this influence for the sake of the society in which it finds itself. The Catholic Church, in particular, due to its universality, has an influence on national issues that other churches may not have. For example, in the Middle East, governments are attentive to what the Catholic Church says or does more than almost any other

agency because of its universal capacity.

In the face of the persecution of Christians, the Catholic Church will be called upon more and more to express itself about these issues. Dialogue with people of different faiths is also essential, not only for its various forms but also for promoting freedom of belief, expression, worship, and the ability to change one’s beliefs in different parts of the world.

The Church’s role in promoting human freedom is crucial, as seen in dialogue efforts with organizations like Al-Azhar in Egypt, which have resulted in personal freedom of belief being recognized in the Egyptian Constitution and the increased building and repair of churches in the country. The Church’s contribution to education, not only for its own members but for the wider community, should also be emphasized, particularly in providing education for the poor and marginalized.

In countries like Pakistan, there are many Christian initiatives educating the poor on a shoestring budget. The universal Church must

provide the resources to support such education. While we have seen positive examples of girls in Nepal being educated, there are still many challenges, with girls and boys being excluded from education due to social and economic circumstances.

So, um, what I think we need to pray for is a spiritual renewal of the church to allow the Holy Spirit to renew the church in such a way that we can engage in these ministries out of a new kind of spiritual life, and not just because we feel we ought to be doing these things. You know, then it just becomes duty, rather than inspiration.

So, I think the bishop who was talking about the charismatic movements in the church, I'm certainly with him in acknowledging that it is the Spirit that renews the church, and it is Christ who is renewing. That is what we have to pray for: the renewal of the church in Asia by Christ through the work of the Spirit.

Um, the enabling of congregations... you know, we were talking about evangelizing and catechizing the laity, but it's more than that. God has given gifts, and God wants to give gifts to His people of many different kinds. And it is for the priests, for the clergy, to recognize what these gifts are and to use them. So, not simply to rely on "Father Knows Best," but to make sure that all the gifts that the Spirit is giving to God's people in a particular place are discerned and enabled, and people are empowered to exercise them. And they are not turned away, as it were, in frustration. I think renewal will come out of that.

The one of the things that I've learned from Pope Benedict, well, there are so many things, is his reading of the Bible, how to read the Bible and how to help our people read the Bible every day in different contexts. I think that will deepen their faith and enable them to work in the church. Where your structures are concerned, sir, I would say, don't make them heavy, keep your structures light so that they do not absorb your energies and your resources more than they need to do.

Um, the sacramental life of the church is so rich. I mean, again, this is one of the things that I have experienced myself. The supernatural aspect of Catholicism has to be kept to the fore because this is what

people are looking for. They are not looking for just another social agency or even another educational agency. They are looking for a way of making contact with the very ground of their being. And I think the sacramental life of the church, the more visible it is, the better. I remember Pope John Paul II, as he then was, coming to Karachi in Pakistan, and all of us went to the National Stadium, to the cricket stadium where he said Mass and preached. And he preached on Saint John's gospel, on chapter six, about the Lord giving Himself to His people in His body and in His blood. And I was thinking, when he was preaching, it was being televised live throughout the country. And I was thinking, "How are Muslims going to understand this question of the body and blood of the Lord?" And feeling un-Christ-like. But actually, what happened was that throughout the rest of the week, our Muslim neighbors and friends were asking us, "What did the Pope mean when he said Jesus had given His body and blood for us to eat and drink?" So the Eucharistic moment became an evangelistic moment. We do not neglect the sacraments. I think those are the sorts of things I would say.

**“We always respect and have good dialogue. And where they deviated from the originality or they are not close to the Catholic Church anymore”**

Last question, Bishop Cruz. Hey, thank you very much for your nice and profound sharing. You spoke about what attracted you or what you found good in the Catholic Church: central teaching, apostolicity, and all these things. But we, as young priests and then bishops, always thought among the other churches, Anglican Church is the closest one to the Catholic Church. We always respect and have good dialogue. And where they deviated from the originality or they are not close to the Catholic Church anymore, what happened? These are difficult things. Well, yes, I think you're right that at the time of the Reformation, Anglicanism retained certain aspects of catholicity which I have valued and still value, which made them more recognizable to Catholics. But the fact of the matter is that in Anglicanism, there were two kinds of impetuses: there was the impetus towards greater catholicity, and there was the impetus towards greater fragmentation, which is characterized in the Protestant churches. What has happened, unfortunately, is that the impetus towards greater fragmentation has taken

over.

So, what could have happened? Well, I was, as is known for a very long time, a member of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission. And Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey had given us an explicit mandate to remove all the obstacles to sacramental communion. So, we worked very hard and produced an agreement on the Eucharist, on Ministry, some agreement on Authority, on the Blessed Virgin Mary, etc., on moral questions and so on.

But then, the Anglicans began to do things on their own. For instance, there was an agreement on priesthood, and then the Anglicans unilaterally began to ordain women priests and then women bishops. I have seen the correspondence between the Vatican and successive popes and the archbishops of successive archbishops of Canterbury, where the popes were pleading with the archbishops not to do this on their own. If the question is not whether to do it or not to do it, but don't do it on your own because you will jeopardize the recognition of Anglican ordained ministry by the Catholic Church.

And the replies that the archbishops of Canterbury gave were that even if they wanted to, they could not stop it, you see. And this has happened on many different issues. It has happened on the question of human sexuality, on issues of life, on many different matters, the uniqueness of Christ, and so on.

So, I think, of course, there are many Orthodox Anglicans who still believe in the kind of Anglicanism that you are talking about, and many of them are looking to the Catholic Church for encouragement. When Bishop Gene Robinson was ordained bishop, you remember the kind of turmoil that caused. Pope Benedict sent a message, I think he was still Cardinal Ratzinger at that time, to those who were gathered in distress, assuring them of the Catholic Church's prayers and solidarity with them.

I think this, whatever the issues may be, I think more and more Anglicans will look to the Catholic Church for a solution to their difficulties. And as I was saying, the question is not what one issue is or another issue, but how these things are solved. I mean, this is also now I can see an internal



issue for the Catholic Church as well. But what I'm saying is the Catholic Church has a way to settle these matters, and you must not give that up because the lesson from what has happened to the Anglican Communion and some liberal Protestant churches is that way lies confusion and chaos.

Thank you very much, Professor Michael. It's been a very illuminating and thought-provoking session. I want to thank you for your presence, participation, and forward a small token of our appreciation. Michael Michael, I invite you now for two minutes of silent prayer.

### **Greeting by H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle**

H.E. Charles Cardinal Bo welcomed Papal Envoy H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle to the FABC General Conference. Greeting all, H.E. Cardinal Tagle conveyed to the gathered representatives the Holy Father's reassurance of "my closeness to everyone". Mentioning the Holy Father's prayer to Mother Mary, that 'the joys, sorrows and pain of the people of Asia may enter her heart', H.E. Cardinal Tagle reminded his audience to persevere, and that, 'very often, there are still surprises of God towards the end'.

Thank you, thank you, your eminence. Greetings to all of you friends and brothers and sisters in the Lord. You see how lonely it could get if you're a special Envoy of the Holy Father. No, you are separated from the rest and uh yeah, it was a good decision to stay here. Aside from the distance, you know from the new church coming here, it's also good to be with brothers and sisters. No, uh this is not supposed to be a talk, a conference.

I think I will have an opportunity to share tomorrow, you know. So this is simply to greet. Yesterday morning before going to the airport, I had my regular meeting with the Holy Father. So I told him that I would be coming here. So aside from the video message that he had already sent to us, I asked him, "Is there anything else that you want to convey to the churches in Asia?" And he said, "My closeness to everyone." He said, "Please affirm to them how close to me, to my heart, the churches of Asia

are.”

So, uh, I have already conveyed that. And yesterday also, his letter to me appointing me as an Envoy was published. And it's significant that the opening part of the letter was an invocation of the Blessed Mother, Queen and Mother of Mercy. So the Holy Father is praying to our lady so that the tiredness, the pains, the sorrows, and the joys of the peoples of Asia may enter her merciful heart. You know, the heart of the mother of the Lord and also our mother.

So, uh, what a beautiful way to open a letter. Not the regular template for appointment. I, I, the will of God Sovereign. And some of us write that way to our priests. I, by the virtue of my appointment, Bishop of this village parish, with all of them. But here, the Holy Father, you know, uh, begins with a prayer and to a mother, to a mother now. And so, I want to assure you again of the Holy Father's closeness to all of us. I'm sure you are all very tired at this point.

You all look tired. And maybe you're all very eager to go back to the dioceses and the respective areas of mission. But I have a request. Very often, very often, there are still surprises of God towards the end. And if you are found sleeping already, the surprises might not be caught. So, uh, yes, we all need to rest. But at the same time, with a certain alertness, you know, the Magi, the wise men, whom we are invoking also, you know, they traveled another way because they had been warned in a dream, by a dream.

So when you are falling asleep here, make sure you dream. And in your dreams, you might get some surprise, no? Up to the last moment. Okay, please continue sleeping and uh, and dreaming while talking with one another. Okay, thank you very much. Thank you, thank you.



---

---

# VIRTUAL PARISH VISITS

---

---



DAY 5  
OCTOBER 29, 2022

## PRESS NOTE

### OCTOBER 29, 2022

29th October, the last working day of the FABC General Conference, began with the Holy Eucharist celebrated by H.E. Charles Cardinal Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar and President of the FABC, who celebrated his birthday today. H.E. Cardinal Bo led the representatives in the Adsumus, and the morning prayer, hosted by Kazakhstan, was led by the video prepared by Sister Irene Alberto of the Consolata Sisters.



H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, Papal Envoy to the Conference and Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, spoke on the emerging context of young people today, the changing landscape of social media and artificial intelligence, and its impact on evangelisation. Highlighting how social media has changed the self-identity of youth, their feelings of belonging and empathy for others, how the speed and limits of the medium impact their ability to infer, critically analyse and empathise, the importance of deep reading, and the danger of digital crimes and the monopoly of media by businesses, H.E. Cardinal Tagle described social media as not only a means for connectedness, but a powerful tool creating a new humanity. Illustrating social media and digital communication as a

world in itself that follows its own rules, H.E. Cardinal Tagle concluded with, 'social media is a world that needs evangelisation'.

Bishop Adrianus Sunarko OFM presented the final draft of the Message from the FABC General Conference to the peoples of Asia. This was followed by a vote, and the final draft was passed.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, member of the Commission on the Final Document, presented the final draft of the Schema of the Final Document, explaining the further edits that had been made. This was followed by a round of plenary discussion.

**“social media has changed the self-identity of youth, their feelings of belonging and empathy for others.”**

In the afternoon, H.E. Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle addressed the Bishops privately. Final comments on the Final Document followed, and a vote passing it. Fr Bill LaRousse explained the logistics of the process by which the continental Synod would be carried out.

H.E Charles Cardinal Bo, gave the final address. Thanking God for the grace of the past days, H.E. Cardinal Bo described the Asian Church as a church of the poor, of the young, and of dialogue, and spoke of the immense progress the Church has made in the last fifty years. He thanked the host of the conference - H.E. Cardinal Kriengsak, H.E. Cardinal Gracias for his guidance, the Church in Thailand, and everyone present for all the work put in.

The evening concluded with H.E. Cardinal Gracias leading the representatives in the Litany of the Saints of Asia and the Angelus.



# TAIWAN





**BANGLADESH**



**Holy Rosary Church-Tejgaon**  
*A symbol of Christian Tradition & Service*







PAKISTAN

# Visit to Our Lady Queen of Angels

Multan Road Bhai Pheru, Punjab. (Archdiocese of Lahore)





**Visit to  
St, Mary High school**



**Visit to  
Ibn-E-Mariam Hostel for Girls**



**Visit to  
Brick kiln**



**Visit to  
Gulshan Village for Brick Kiln Workers**



# INDIA





KOREA



FABC Virtual Parish Visit

# Gahoedong Parish in Seoul, Korea



*Procession of St. Mary Pilgrim Statue*



*Three Patron Blessed of the Gahoedong Parish*



Bl. Fr. James Zhou Wen mo  
The First Missionary to Korea



Bl. Columba Kang Wan suk  
Catechesis



Bl. Matthias Choe In-gil  
Secret Informer of Fr. Zhou

*Praying Rosary together at Home*



*Outdoor Mass with All Parishioners*





## **Impact of Social Media and A.I. on Evangelisation**

### **Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle**

Good morning to everyone, and happy birthday again, Your Eminence. Now we know the real reason why the general conference was convened on these days. It was to coincide with the birthday of His Eminence—an accident, and we thank the Episcopal Conference of Central Asia for the beautiful morning prayer. I was blessed to have participated in the inauguration of the new Episcopal conference through Zoom, and then with the Holy Father, we went to Kazakhstan. Congratulations to the newest Episcopal Conference of Central Asia.

Cardinal Gracias asked me to give a conference. The timing is not ideal because the final statement will already be voted upon, so please do not take this too seriously. I'm giving this talk not so much as the papal envoy but as a bishop from Asia, and I want to share some thoughts with you. With Cardinal Gracias, we agreed that maybe I could reflect on social media and artificial intelligence, as they are having an impact on the call to evangelize.

As we have already noted, social media has been a blessing to the world, especially in the democratization of information and knowledge. During the pandemic, thanks to social media, we were able to maintain



some form of connectedness. Many parents suddenly realized that they could be teachers and catechists as well.

We don't need to repeat all the blessings of social media, but we are also being asked to be attentive because the use of social media changes our view of the human person in a subtle way. Social media could change our understanding of what a human being is, affecting our relationships and our involvement in the transformation of society. It's a very subtle transformation. For example, many of us grew up believing that part of being human is to work, to find decent work for a living and for the sake of creativity. But nowadays, thanks to artificial intelligence, it is AI that does the work for human beings, and some work that humans used to do, we don't do anymore.

When I was a younger boy in school, spelling was stressed, and we had to memorize addition, multiplication, subtraction. Now, artificial intelligence does what humans used to do. What happens to the human being? Are we developing a new form of illiteracy? Are we pretending that we are developing as human beings, or are we beginning to see a form of underdevelopment where efficiency and profitability matter, but the growth of the human mind, creativity, critical thinking, all of those might disappear?

With that as a background, I want to share three points. First, I want to focus on the youth and their relationship with social media. During these past days, the concern about the youth has surfaced a lot. I want to share some results of a study conducted by the Foundation Gravissimum Educationis, established by Pope Francis in 2015 to support integral education and fraternal coexistence in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on youth. This Foundation conducted a survey of 16,773 young people ranging from 16 to 29 years of age studying in 68 universities worldwide. They focused on three elements: how young people look at themselves (identity), the we, and the they (the others).

Regarding identity, the survey revealed that young people often have an illusion of self-sufficiency, which they derive from the affirmation they receive through social media. They exhibit themselves, post photos, and seek likes to feel secure. Social media becomes a tool for this illusory

self-sufficiency, which comes from a small circle of those who like them.

The second point is related to the “we.” The digital inhabitants of the internet do not assemble; they lack the interiority of assembly. They form gatherings without true assembly, leading to individualism and atomization. Society is characterized by loneliness, not the interiority that makes us an assembled community.

The third point is about “the others.” We live in a globalized society with more interconnected networks, yet we care less and less about others. Being connected to the internet does not guarantee communication. Circles of real empathy are shrinking.

In conclusion, social media and artificial intelligence are reshaping our understanding of what it means to be human, especially for the youth. While these technologies offer blessings, they also raise concerns about the erosion of critical thinking, creativity, and genuine human connection. We must navigate this digital landscape with awareness and responsibility.

Circles of communion are diminishing, and we observe a quest for loyalty. If loyalty isn’t found, withdrawal occurs, and our group of loyal friends withdraws among themselves. I’m reporting the survey by this foundation in preparation for the Synod of Bishops. These trends are present among both Catholic and non-Catholic young people, and according to the survey, they manifest subtly. This transformation particularly affects those who have grown up in the digital world.

Their self-worth often lies in an illusion of self-sufficiency fostered by affirmation through social media. Seeking likes for validation, they rely on a small circle of those who appreciate their content.

Now, let’s shift to my second point, which relates to youth and social media. This might sound peculiar, but I’ve chosen this topic because many of us engage in educational ministry, serving as our primary means of connecting with youth, including non-Catholics and non-Christians. Catholic schools and educational ministries are appreciated in this context, even though Christian students may be a minority among thousands.

I'd like to share insights from a study conducted by the Pontifical Academy for the Sciences on changing media in a changing world. The study underscores the significance of deep reading and how it develops critical thinking, empathy, and contemplative skills. Unlike digital media, deep reading demands patience and imagination.

In contrast, the digital world encourages quick and swift processing of information, often limited to a few words or characters. Students are more accustomed to watching than reading, which affects their capacity for critical analysis and empathy. The study suggests that education up to age 11 should primarily focus on printed books, emphasizing deep reading. Only after that age should a hybrid approach incorporating social media be introduced.

The impact of digital media on critical analysis, empathy, and reading is essential to consider. We must ensure that we are producing future leaders with critical minds and the capacity for empathy. Reading, especially deep reading, takes time, but it is an essential foundation for nurturing these characteristics.

Finally, as we celebrate the blessings of social media, we must also acknowledge the darker aspects. Many crimes, including new forms of slavery and abuse of minors, are occurring through social media. Around 70% of child abuse cases worldwide are facilitated by families through the internet. Additionally, criminal financial transactions occur online, contributing to the challenges we face.

One alarming issue is the online promotion of assisted violence and suicide. A 15-year-old boy's suicide was linked to a website where mysterious individuals manipulated vulnerable young minds. These challenges highlight the need for responsible and vigilant use of social media and the digital world.

No skills like inference, critical analysis, and reflection are not given room for that; this develops only with deep reading, especially when a student, a young person, starts reading novels, short stories. There, the imagination works; the reader is able to enter the world of somebody else and tries to imagine how that person in the story lives and feels. Empathy

develops, critical thinking, inference, analogy, empathy also developed. But when the reading style is you browse, browse, browse, browse, no quickly, and our students, our young people, are so used to watching rather than reading, watching rather than reading. So, according to the study, this very simple thing of reading printed books and articles and spending time, spending time, you know, to make sense of ideas and then verifying from my own experience whether the ideas written are true or not, this takes time. This art is slowly disappearing and being replaced by quick and swift so-called reading.

The authors say if we do not pay attention to this lack of development in the skills of reading, we might wake up one day with citizens with no critical, with no ability to analyze critically the situation. And how do we expect them to be prophetic if their minds have not been trained in analogical inference and critical thinking? And also, we might develop a generation without empathy. Empathy, he says, is that individuals feel more empathy for a friend than for a stranger. But narratives and especially the intimate kind found in novels have the remarkable power to create a safe space in which readers can make strangers and strange others their friends when reading. When reading a novel, slowly, slowly, things and persons who are strange to me through reading, they become familiar, they might become friends, and I develop empathy through reading.

So, I thought of focusing on this because many of us have schools. What does reading still get the attention that it deserves? A study like this alerts us to the need for reading, and it is not just for intellectual prowess. But as the authors of the article showed, it would have an impact on the type of society that we will see. Will we be producing citizens who could discern and who have developed critical intelligence and, coupled with empathy, the capacity to empathize with those whom they do not know?

Yeah, the suggestion of these authors was for students up to the age of five to be brought up in storytelling by parents or grandparents and some children's book. And then they said up to the age of 10 or 11, education in school should be printed books, and only after the age of 11 could you have hybrid. You have some social media. And now that's the proposal of the authors. I'm sharing with you. I don't have the expertise to say that that is the right proposal, but just for us to be alert, no, to this.

We might be thinking, “How do we develop critical thinking, prophetic thinking among our young people and our citizens and our faithful?” We might be thinking of seminars, seminars, different types of seminars. But these scholars say we have to look back. Do they know how to read? Have they developed the skill of reading? And are we producing future leaders with critical minds but also with empathy?

And the best way to develop those kinds of characteristics now is to pay attention to reading. Deep reading, patient reading, that takes time, takes time. I think you will have such an experience when the draft of the final statement will be presented to you. Yeah, reading with patience. Every word, I say, should it be with or between? Should it be four or two? Critical, the critical thinking of bishops and the religious and laypeople but with empathy. But then look to the next generation. What if our seminarians, our novices, have grown up in the context where they don’t read or have not acquired the training in reading? Ah, we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of Vatican II. I wonder how many have read the documents of Vatican II. And then we expect critical thinking, reading the signs of the times, empathy, read. But it’s easier to watch the documents of Vatican II. How do you watch it? That’s why when I was teaching, just to force the students to read and to write, I never prepared PowerPoint presentations. I said, “No, look at me, listen to me, and write. Oh, man, I want you to experience my saliva reaching you. That’s part of the encounter. I am real; I’m not virtual.”

Yeah. Okay, as my final point, I’m sorry, your Eminence. It’s already 10:15. I should have ended at 10 o’clock, but you’re all patient. So the context of the youth in relation to social media, how social media has been changing their context regarding their self-identity, their sense of belongingness, and their view of the others’ concern for the others. And secondly, the impact of the present swift, quick reading style of social media, the impact on critical thinking, analysis, and empathy. So how the brain that reading develops, the what they call the reading circuit in the brain, is not underdeveloped when there is no patience devoted to deep reading.

And finally, as we celebrate the blessing of social media, I think we have heard this a number of times. Many crimes are happening nowadays

through social media. New forms of slavery, the abuse of minors, the abuse of the girl child. It's a real scandal. I attended the meeting in Abu Dhabi on the online abuse of minors, and around 70 percent of the abuse of minors through the internet now worldwide, more than 70 percent of the cases have been promoted by the families, the families of the children. And it is becoming more and more difficult to detect because it is happening in the homes. And to make the sad story sadder, the payment to the families happens online also. I mean, we all do bank transactions online, so even criminal financial transactions happen online.

I guess we're all familiar with the so-called dark web of assisted violence and assisted suicide. It was very painful to assist in the funeral of one boy, 15 years old, who committed suicide. And his friends told the parish priest and the principal of the school that a group of them, a group of them, young boys from the same school, would connect to a website every evening at around 10 o'clock in the evening. And there is this mysterious big brother or some who would start a conversation, "How has your day been like?" And this boy who committed suicide once told the story that, "Oh, my father got mad at me," and this mysterious someone said, "Your father is evil." So every evening, "Say your father is evil; he deserves to be punished." And said the best way to punish him is to commit suicide so that for the rest of his life, he would feel guilty. And the boy got brainwashed, and he did it three days ago.

The Holy Father told the priests studying in Rome in the different universities and the colleges there to be, I said, please avoid pornography available so easily through the internet. The trafficking of women and the children also happens through the internet. People who are being sold for cheap labor also happens through the internet. So yes, social media are definitely a means for human communication, for connectedness. But as we see in the recent events of our lives in society, they are not merely means, they're not only means of communication. They are also a powerful tool. They're creating a world. They're creating a new Humanity with its own consciousness.

The business world that controls even politicians, they control our use of the Internet. They know how many times we visit this particular advertisement, this type of news, and their algorithms tell them that we are

inclined towards this circle. And they will keep bombarding us with data so that we would become more and more entrenched in that mentality and that you also buy their products. So social media, yes, are tools but not just tools. They are a world in itself, a world that tries to recreate our world, a world that tries to recreate Humanity according to their agenda.

So if it is a world, then we just don't use social media for evangelization. Social media is one of the worlds, the spaces that needs to be evangelized. And right now, it is one of the omnipresent ecosystems affecting not only Asia but the whole world. You know, and how to evangelize that is a matter for our further study. I appreciate the contribution of the different scientists who are telling us or giving us indications. I think we should listen to them so that here in Asia, known also for some of our countries are known for their technological prowess, so evangelization might need to call us to enter that world and bring the values of the Gospel there.

Thank you for your patience and yeah, please read the documents of Vatican II and the documents of FABC. Thank you very much.

Yeah, I mean, that's... yeah, Eminence, thank you very much for this. We have to... yeah, really decide ourselves to go for more readings. I myself am very lazy for reading. Somebody... I mean, it's maybe a few questions that some of the bishops... Don't force yourselves or maybe it's not necessarily questions but sharing probably... yeah, yeah, Susan, thank you.

Thank you very much for a really illuminating address, Eminence. I've really enjoyed it. I just wanted to note that in the synthesis for the submissions that came through from the first stage of the Synod, many submissions talked about social media, and the predominant picture that was painted was people wanting the church to become much more actively involved in social media at the level of the parish, the diocese, the Episcopal conference, a sense that if we don't, we miss out on engaging with youth, but not only youth, that there are, as you've mentioned yourself, despite the inherent dangers, so many opportunities. So I thought that that was worth noting. And in a similar vein, we had a presentation as we gathered in Frascati from one of the directors of the dicastery of communications,

who had described to us what's, I think, somewhat loosely called the digital Synod, where youth were engaged with the use of influencers to assist the capacity to reach a broad audience. Some 20 million people logged on to look at that fairly brief exercise, and roughly a hundred thousand responded to 38 questions. So that's quite an engagement, but it's just an illustration of the potential that is there. And I think something, as you said in your conclusion, that we can use for evangelization. Thank you.

Thank you very much for the affirmation of that. I think that is one thing, one bright lining in the pandemic. Suddenly, dioceses realized that we needed the social communications office in the diocese because since Vatican II, we have been talking about it and say, "This is the new... what is the new..." When every year, the Social Communication Sunday, but very little effort, then the pandemic came, and we realized that it is. And now, as you said, many are looking for... I'm still part of the Catholic Biblical Federation, and during the pandemic, the requests from parents for biblical teaching guides that they could use for their children increased. Now, so yeah, there is potential, and if we do not occupy the space, somebody else will occupy it, so we might as well be there.

Here in our FABC conference, also, either in Coffee Talk, in the small groups, or else in the general conferences and so on, we were also emphasizing the use of modern media, digitalization, and so on. So when I listen to your talk, I am getting a little afraid because I am not sure how far this digitalization of our church, let it be for evangelization, catechesis, or any other mission of the church, what is a guarantee for us that it will be used all for always for good, or will we be in the church itself be creating a negative force? So how can we make sure that the digitalization within the church will be bringing better results rather than creating another world of difficulties for us? That is a question that comes to my mind. Yes, but what do you say, your Eminence?

Well, thank you, your Eminence, for that question. I think it is a question that is present in the minds of everyone as we see the opportunities, great opportunities in social media. We are not naive; we know that there are dangers. Now, how do we, how do we at least safeguard but, first, I have to tell you, go in my office there in the Vatican. I've been there for two years and now the two years and eight months I



have not used even once the computer assigned to the prefect because we have an office that monitors the IT, the information technology in the office. Even when I'm not using it, there are attempts to hack into it. And we report to the security. Probably some people are interested to know who is being named a bishop somewhere, and they want to get into the files. And then, so I said, "No." So I don't use it. I don't use it. So far, what I have seen is this: more and more people who are trained in information technology, those who know how to create systems and who know how to safeguard systems and those who know also the trends. You know, I think we need to get them involved more and more and even to make that part of our pastoral response, you know, training some people. And some are very, very good. No, I should say that we are blessed in the office; we have a good team. So even in the middle of the night, one of them would send me a text, "Your Eminence, danger signs." Last night, three attempts to hack into our computer. I would not have known it, but you have a team of experts, and they know more than that I do, and they love the church. They know what confidentiality means. They know what the Gospel of truth, sincerity, and justice entails. So that's the thing that I want to propose: let us invite these experts to get involved. And if we don't find anyone, maybe we could help train. You know, we can help train because we cannot avoid it anymore, the information technology will be there. You know, and look at how business people are, say, Twitter has been bought by... now what will happen.

Okay, last question, Bishop. Yeah, that's the last one.

Yeah, your eminence. Thank you so much for the beautiful presentation. I was a really ambitious Sebastian from India, Madhya Pradesh. I was touched, especially by the research study results presented to us by the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences on education. Because whenever she said, are in the field of Education, educational personally recently, there's always has sent out a directive prohibiting the use of books for children up to the second standard class, and then reducing the use of books even for the children up to 10th and so on, just the opposite of what the research said. I mean, I was because many of us are feeling a little slippery.

When the government tells us the grounds on which they present

research results, I felt that we need to react and respond with our own studies. It would be very beneficial if we could have the results of these studies published. Thank you, Bishop. The book is already published, and it is available. I don't know if it is for sale or if it will be provided for free by the Pontifical Academy, but it is an interesting study.

I know that some people are suggesting we stop using printed books for ecological reasons, to avoid depleting our forests and cutting down trees. However, if we transition to using laptops or computers, there is a challenge in guiding students to engage in deep, purposeful, and contemplative reading. It's crucial to instill in their minds that even with a laptop, they should focus on slow, purposeful reading rather than succumbing to the temptation of fast reading associated with digital devices.

Neuroscientists are researching the part of the brain activated by different reading styles and mediums, especially concerning the development of critical thinking and empathy. I've often wondered if the physical act of turning pages, as in traditional books, engages a different part of the brain compared to scrolling on a screen. These studies raise new questions, and the field is still relatively new. However, it deserves serious consideration, especially in preparing future leaders who can critically engage with the signs of the times and develop empathy for others.

Thank you very much for your insights and please accept this token of our deep appreciation.



**VIRTUAL PARISH VISITS**

# MYANMAR



## VIRTUAL PARISH VISIT IN ASIA: MYANMAR (St. Peter's Cathedral Parish of Patheingyi Diocese in the Region of Ayeyarwaddy)



St. Peter's Cathedral parish is one out of thirty-six parishes in the Patheingyi (Formerly Bhamo) diocese which consists of 63,373 Catholics, 106 priests inside and outside, 53 men and 130 women religious, and 109 catechists in the Region of Ayeyarwaddy where 6,571,826 civil population with multi-religions and multi-cultures exist.



The Diocese of Patheingyi belongs to four districts out of six in the Region of Ayeyarwaddy. The Cathedral parish is located in Patheingyi, the capital city of the Patheingyi District, in the Ayeyarwaddy Region.

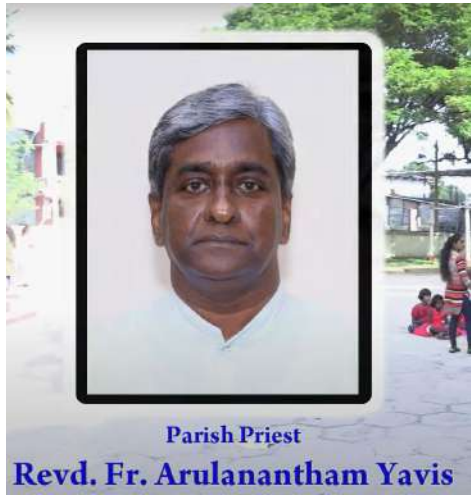




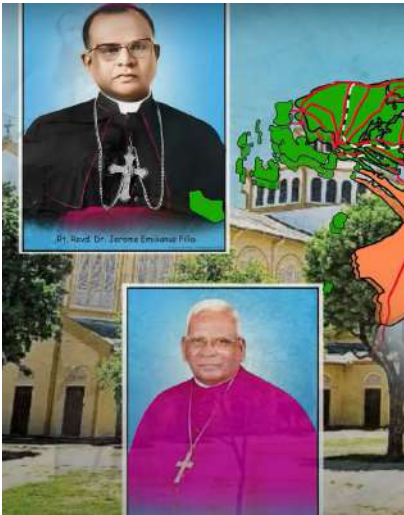
# SRI LANKA



**St. James' Church**  
Gurunagar Parish



Parish Priest  
**Rev. Fr. Arulanantham Yavis**





# INDONESIA







# BRUNEI



## APOSTOLIC VICARIATE IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Population: 430,000  
Catholic: 3%



## CLERGY IN THE APOSTOLIC VICARIATE IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM





Community Cleaning up the church



Communion to the Housebound



Anointing of the sick



Flores de Mayo



SSVP in action



Confirmation retreat

# LAOS



Lao PDR had divided into 4 Apostolic Vicariate, with the number of over 50,000 Catholic believers, there are about 172 parishes across the country.

One priest has to take responsible for at least 4-6 villages.





Most of the Catholic are living far away in the out-skirt and the remote areas, with the low road condition.

There are some places very hard to go or even cannot go during the rainy season. now, we are going to present you one of the parishes locating in the out-skirt areas, namely, St. Luke church of Thongsala village.



# MALAYSIA

## ST MICHAEL'S PARISH PENAMPANG, SABAH, MALAYSIA





Uprooted trees swept away by the flood water which almost hit a house.



# PHILIPPINES

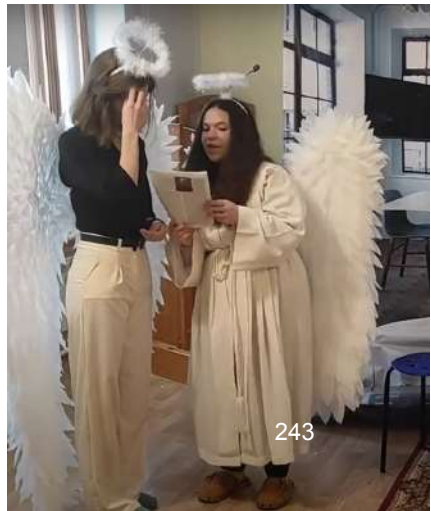






# KAZAKHSTAN





# MONGOLIA









ENVISAGING  
NEW PATHWAYS

DAY 6  
OCTOBER 30, 2022

## Homily at the Closing Eucharist

### **HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE LUIS ANTONIO GOKIM CARDINAL TAGLE**

Papal Envoy to the Conclusion of the FABC 50 General Conference

30 October 2022, Assumption Cathedral (Bangkok)

Wisdom 11,22-12,2; 2 Thess 1,11-2,2; Luke 19,1-10



As we bring the FABC 50 General Conference to a close in this Eucharistic Celebration, we make our own the words of the psalmist, "I will praise your name for ever, my King and my God." We praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit for journeying with us and for calling us, the Churches in Asia, to journey together with each other and with the peoples of Asia. We thank the local Churches who have participated in the consultation prior to the Conference, the various committees who made sure the proceedings provided a space, a sacred space, for discerning God's action in God's people, the experts, the guests, the Bishop-delegates, the wonderful people of Bangkok and Thailand, the Royal Thai Government and the hardworking staff that attended to our needs. You have shown what journeying together means. To all of you, I bring a message of communion and closeness from His Holiness Pope Francis, who has been journeying with us these past days even from Rome. Our Blessed Mother, the angels and saints, especially the Saints of Asia, have been our constant companions too.



Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia, “and they went a different way” (Mt 2). This has been the theme, the experience and the future of the general Conference convened to celebrate the foundation of the FABC 50 years ago. Then, now, and in the future there is no other path for FABC but to journey together. We might think or ask: yes, we need to journey together. That is life. That is mission. In many Asian cultures, life is often likened to a journey. But why together? And if we really have to do it together, how can we do it together? Our readings for this Sunday’s Mass, especially the Gospel, point us the way. I have three points to share with you.

The first point. Jesus was on a journey. “Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.” He “intended to pass.” There he encountered Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector and a wealthy man, probably amassing wealth through dishonest conduct. Jesus told Zacchaeus, “Come down quickly for today I must stay at your house.” I must stay at your house. Jesus intended to pass through the town. Look at the words used: Intended! Must! He also said, “The Son of Man has come to seek

**“Journeying together must be intended, chosen and willed. We cannot leave it to chance. We cannot be indifferent to it. I will journey with you. We will journey together.”**

and to save who was lost.” Jesus wills the journey. Jesus intends to go to the house of Zacchaeus. Jesus chooses him as a companion on his journey. Journeying together must be intended, chosen and willed. We cannot leave it to chance. We cannot be indifferent to it. I will journey with you. We will journey together. I intend this. I seek this. We intend this. We seek this.

The second point. Who did Jesus choose as a partner or companion on the journey? Not the purest, not the most upright, not the blameless, not the one who will make him more acceptable to people, not the one who belonged to his circle. He chose Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, considered a traitor to his people for he collaborated with occupying oppressive forces. Zacchaeus is someone nobody wants to journey with. You will ruin your name by walking with Zacchaeus. But there is a good spot in his heart. He wants to see Jesus. He climbs a sycamore

tree because he is small in stature in order to see Jesus, but probably also so that others will not see him. He can see but not will be seen. Surprise! Jesus sees him and commands him to come down quickly, to show his

**“God wants us to journey with those who might differ from us, with those who are hiding from other people,...”**

face to the crowd and to walk with him to his house. Jesus will enter his house, his heart, his wounds, his shame and bring all of it to their common journey.

God wants us to journey with those who might differ from us, with those who are hiding from other people, the isolated, the friendless, the despised, the shamed, the unseen, those in dark alleys and slums, those crossing mountains, rivers and hills in the dark of night so no one would see them, and also those hidden in high political, financial and military offices. God wants the Church in Asia to journey with the poor, depressed and marginalized, the refugees, migrants, displaced and indigenous people, the wounded and exploited earth, the youth, the women and the families. We will walk together as we together face rejection, extremism, threats to life, violence, conflicts, the ambivalence of the digital revolution and our neighbor religions and cultures.

The third point. What type of journeying together will it be? Where is its destination? With Jesus it will be a journey of mercy and compassion, not of condemnation; of patience, not of destruction. It is a journey that ends in the land of justice and charity. Zacchaeus finally felt treated as a human being. Jesus called him a son of Abraham. Accepted as human with a face and dignity, he began to see the poor and those he had hurt as human too. He would repay those

**“God wants the Church in Asia to journey with the poor, depressed and marginalized, the refugees, migrants, displaced and indigenous people, the wounded and exploited earth, the youth, the women and the families.”**

he might have defrauded beyond the demands of justice. Half of his belongings he would give to the poor. They have become his brothers, sisters and partners in his unfolding journey in life.



Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia and “they went a different way” (Mt 2). Jesus shows us the different way - different from ways that disturb communion and sow division, different from ways that keep other people unseen and non-existent, different from ways that show no mercy towards neighbors. Jesus is The Way and shows a different way. He promised that he will be with us until the end of time. We will never be alone in our journey. He is Emmanuel, God with us, forever. Let us walk with Him. And like Jesus let us walk with each other and the peoples of Asia.

**“Jesus is The Way and shows a different way. He promised that he will be with us until the end of time. We will never be alone in our journey.”**



I am certain that Pope Francis would love to address to you the words of Saint Paul, “Brothers and sisters, we always pray for you, that God may make you worthy of his calling and powerfully being to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ”. Amen.

**Message from the FABC**  
**General Conference to the Peoples of Asia**  
Baan Phu Waan, Bangkok, 12-30 October 2022

We, the Pastors of the Catholic Church in Asia, share this message of joy, hope, and solidarity with you, Peoples of Asia. We are grateful for the blessings that God has showered on Asia through our Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) comprising 17 Episcopal Conferences and two Synods of Oriental Churches. "Journeying together as Peoples of Asia" was the theme of our conference in which we sought to reaffirm our journey of the past 50 years, revitalize the Church, and envision new pathways of service.

We are deeply thankful to the Royal Thai Government for the warm welcome and for honouring our general conference with the presence of the Minister of Culture during the opening ceremony. We express our deep appreciation to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, especially the Archdiocese of Bangkok, for hosting the FABC 50 General Conference. We were happy to have with us representatives of the Holy See and other Continental Conferences. It was a fruitful time of praying, listening, discerning, and encouraging each other. It was also a moment of healing from the pain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through our discussions and deliberations at the conference, we touched the soul of Asia. At the same time, we were inspired by the hope, courage, and determination shown by the Churches in Asia to journey together and work with more dedication for a better Asia.

We were challenged by the different voices of our multifaceted continent that we hear crying out for help and justice:

- The sufferings of the poor, deprived, and marginalized longing for a dignified life,
- The anguish of refugees, migrants, displaced and indigenous peoples seeking genuine human dignity and safe places,
- The groaning of nature with wounds of exploitation, climate change, and global warming, pleading for being more adequately cared

for,

- The dream of youth seeking for more significant roles in the Church and society,
- The voices of women asking for a more inclusive Church that respects their dignity and recognizes their rightful place,
- The desire of families looking for better stability and more support from all.

We are also deeply concerned about:

- The pain and suffering of some churches that need to receive relief through our empathy and solidarity;
- The rising voices of extremism that need to be responded to wisely;
- The urgent need for a greater respect for life to be inculcated in society;
- The escalating violence and conflicts in our continent that call for dialogue and reconciliation;
- A society that is challenged by the digital revolution, which has impacted all both positively and negatively.

In prayer and in a spirit of collaboration, we desire to respond to these challenges by relying on the power of love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness. We believe that peace and reconciliation is the only way forward. We have envisaged new pathways for our ministry based on mutual listening and genuine discernment.

Inspired by the Gospel and by the recent teachings of Pope Francis:

- We commit ourselves to reach out to the peripheries. We are called to serve the most needy joyfully.
- We are called to a pastoral and ecological conversion to positively respond to "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."
- We wish to live out the spirit of complementarity and harmony by listening to others in genuine dialogue.
- We seek to promote a culture of peace and harmony in collaboration with our brothers and sisters of neighbouring religions and traditions.
- We commit ourselves to bridge-building not just among religions and traditions but also by principled engagement with governments,

NGOs, and civic organizations on issues of human rights, eradication of poverty, human trafficking, care of the earth, and other common concerns.

- We need to transform ourselves by fostering a culture of “reciprocal listening” where we listen to each other and all of us listen to the voice of God.

- We thus intend to improve the way we form ourselves in faith and accompany our families and communities, especially those in difficulty.

By journeying together along these pathways, we will serve the world with greater commitment. We assure our people of this continent that the Catholic Church in Asia will always work for a better Asia and the good of all our people. As we assure you of our prayers, we humbly ask you to remember us in your prayers. Together we journey at the service of the human family and all creation.

Given in Bangkok, Thailand, on 30 October 2022

CHARLES CARDINAL BO S.D.B.  
President of FABC

OSWALD CARDINAL GRACIAS  
Convener of FABC 50 General Conference

FRANCIS XAVIER CARDINAL KRIENGSACK KOVITHAVANIJ  
Archbishop of Bangkok (Thailand)

TARCISIO ISAO KIKUCHI S.V.D.  
Secretary General of FABC

## Closing Speech of H.E. Charles Cardinal Bo

Archbishop of Yangon (Myanmar) President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

30th October 2022

It is my happy duty to share a word of thanks to our merciful God for the grace of these days. As our Holy Father mentioned, Pope St. Paul VI encountered in Asia a continent of poor masses who were awakening from fatalism to a life worthy of man. Asia was also a continent of the young who were awakening to their rightful roles in society. Finally, Asia has always been home to ancient faiths and diverse cultures that were becoming more and more committed to building a fraternal community of nations. The Church, therefore, could not but realize that we were called to be a Church of the poor, a Church of the young and a Church in dialogue.

While we engaged in the triple dialogue with the poor, with cultures and with cultures, we were also painfully aware of and praying in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Church of silence, who - by bearing the Cross as Christ did - spoke more eloquently than any of us living in less oppressive societies. Fifty years later, we realize that we cannot divorce the cry of the poor from the cry of the earth. The Church of the poor must therefore become the Church in harmony with creation. Heeding the wisdom of our brothers and sisters in indigenous communities, the voice of the oppressed must become the voice of our sister, mother earth. "Blessed

“**The Church of the poor must therefore become the Church in harmony with creation. Heeding the wisdom of our brothers and sisters in indigenous communities, the voice of the oppressed must become the voice of our sister, mother earth.**”

are the meek, for they shall inherit the land". Fifty years later, we realize that the youth have already populated the world wide web, just as our forebears braved the seas and conquered mountains to explore and discover new habitats. Because of the young, Jesus is already in the web: transforming lives and building communities. The Church of the young has become the Church swimming and navigating the new frontier of the web. Aware of the many dangers we face in the digital continent, we cheerfully confirm: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God".

Fifty years later, we realize that dialogue has become not only relevant but also indispensable to a world that has grown more fragmented and prone to violent conflict. The Church in dialogue must become more and more a Church of bridge builders. With Jesus, we proclaim "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God".

**“The Church in dialogue must become more and more a Church of bridge builders.”**

Fifty years later, we realize that the space for the free exercise of religion cannot be taken for granted. Freedom must sometimes be bought by the sweat of our brow and redemption achieved by the blood of martyrs. With the Church

of silence, we pray the blessing: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". We stand also with those who suffer abuse and violence. As we work for a world that is safe for children, women, migrants and refugees, we pray, too, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied". The Church of silence is also the Church of redemption and hope.

**“The Church of silence is also the Church of redemption and hope.”**

Dear friends, thank you for making time for this Conference. To the wonderful people of Thailand, thank you for graciously hosting us. To the Church in Thailand, thank you for your cheerful witness and hospitality. To all who worked and prayed for the fruitfulness of this Conference, thank you. May God hear your every prayer. May God bless you with good health, prosperity and peace.

+ CHARLES MAUNG CARDINAL BO S.D.B.  
 President of FABC











FABC 50 GENERAL CONFERENCE  
JOURNEYING TOGETHER AS PEOPLES OF ASIA

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)