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Opening of the Asian Synod of Bishops (Waiting for a Fruitful Ending)

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

The Asian Synod is considered as the "time of grace when the Church in Asia is called to a fresh missionary outreach." The Synod takes place from April 19 to May 14, 1998. Intense prayers are offered by the laity, religious, contemplatives, clergy and even other Christian communities for the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that the Church in Asia would become a communion of communities.

There are all in all 255 delegates: 67. *ex officio*, 98 elected, 23 by pontifical nomination, 18 experts, 40 auditors, and 6 fraternal delegates.

The sessions cover many dimensions of ecclesiastical life. There are also small group meetings to discuss specific themes, and then, to the general assembly for further discussion. The Holy Father is always present in the general assembly.

Pope John Paul II in his opening homily invited the bishops present to pay attention to "asian realities" and make proper discernment.

The Church in Asia is still waiting for the fruits of this august assembly, the first in her history of Christianity in the course of two thousand years.

Regardless of religious affiliation, all believers are exhorted to "bear witness to Christ crucified and risen," the unique Savior of humanity.

A New Way of Being Church in Asia: Communication Consequences

FABC-OSC

Based on the Final Considerations and experiences of the first *FABC-OSC Bishops'Meet '96* July 8 to 12, 1996 in Tagaytay City (Philippines), the second assembly of Bishops and Secretaries responsible in Bishops' Conferences for Social Communication discussed in a special way the communication challenges of *A New Way of Being Church in Asia* (5th FABC Plenary, Bandung 1990). The 35 participants from 14 different countries, assembled in Samphran (Thailand) from November 24 to 28, 1997, took up the FABC consideration of the New Way of Being Church. Such a Church is

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

As Communicators being responsible for the Bishops Conferences we ask ourselves: Where are we going and what are we doing in the spirit of a new way of being Church?

1. The FABC Plenary assembly in Bandung described the Church as "at its deepest level a communion (koinonia)

rooted in the life of the Trinity and thus in its essential reality *a sacrament of the loving self-communication of God*". If we are a *Communion of Communities* our communication must aim at community building. We need to create a new style of leadership which is enabling and facilitating, being real leaders and not mere followers. The voice of the laity must be heard louder and clearer. The marginalized and the poor too have a voice to be recognized in the Church.

2. If we are a truly *participatory Church*, "where the gifts that the Spirit gives to all... are recognized and activated" (FABC, Bandung) there must be communication that encourages co-responsibility at all levels both vertically and horizontally. We have to find and create a 'mechanism' to effectively bring about this communication. Are we really seen as people of God, praying people, Spirit-filled, dynamic, evangelizing and mission-oriented? Do we share God's love and concern with the people we work with?
3. If we are a *witnessing and dialoguing Church*, our communication must be concerned with the World, where people live in their joys and hopes, their fears and anxieties reaching "out to people of others faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all" (FABC, Bandung). Therefore, our communication

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

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

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

4. **If** we are a *prophetic Church* we should be a "leaven of transformation in this world and serve as a prophetic sign to point beyond this world" (FABC, Bandung). Therefore, our church communication must challenge, announce and denounce... In what way are we crying out like the prophets

with conviction and in a convincing manner? Where is our witness of life "which communicates first"? (BM '96) Are we seen as standing with people crying out for justice, harmony, equality, ecology? We should not only cry over unsolvable problems of our countries but also highlight the fact that our continent is rich in cultures, traditions, values and religions. Filled with such riches, the Church should think of herself as a giving and not only receiving community. She should perceive this as a new call to integrate Gospel values into the "new culture created by media" (BM '96). It is also time to think about helping each other within the continent of Asia instead of always looking outside for financial help.

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

5. The communication challenges of "A New Way of being Church in Asia" should lead us to *concrete steps for action* which means beside others:
 - a. To share the *communication consequences* of being a new church in Asia with our bishops and church leaders, with seminarians under training and their professors, with lay people, especially those involved in the apostolate. This should be part of every pastoral planning (BM '96, No. 1). A visible close cooperation among the Bishops' Conference and dioceses will be a good and tangible example for a communion of communities.
 - b. To be aware of the fact that secular media in our countries are not always people-oriented, liberating and contributing to a healthy development. This calls on the Church to make a serious move towards an *alternative*, culture-

based, indigenous and people-oriented *communication*. Interpersonal and Group Media/Communication needs to be given priority, especially in formation and education. Instead of complaining about cultural invasion and mental colonization, the Church must first take initiatives to encourage cultural communication within her own institutions.

- c. To take initiatives in *highlighting success stories* of small people doing extraordinary things within and outside the Church.
- d. To give primary importance to *Media Education* in redefining it as a new form of evangelization for the emerging media situation in our continent. In many places, it still has to be "made mandatory at all levels, especially in seminaries" and the 'training of trainers' must be continued (BM '96, No. 5).
- e. To see the common celebration of *World Communication Day* as an important way to contribute to a new way of being Church in Asia (BM '96, No. 8).
- f. To promote deeper *studies and research* into the communication needs and consequences for a new way of being Church in Asia.
- g. To *share information* about church events and communication developments in the different countries also with modern technical means e.g. E-Mail.
- h. We must "see *Public Relations* as an important concern and act accordingly" (BM '96, No. 4; BISCOM 1).
- i. To make useful *productions* promoting "a new way of being Church in Asia" available, including those of secular media and from other Christian bodies (BM '96, No. 3).
- j. To inform about and possibly share *training facilities and personnel* between the different Bishops' Conferences.

Neo-Pentecostalism: A Pastoral Response

CCBI-LR*

PREAMBLE

We, the 85 archbishops, bishops and diocesan administrators gathered for the Ninth Plenary Assembly of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI-LR), held in St. Joseph's Seminary, Mangalore, from January 9-12, 1997, discussed, as our main theme, the rise and growth of Neo-Pentecostalism, which poses a challenge to the Catholic Church.

All over the world episcopal conferences are confronted with this phenomenon. Various departments of the Vatican studied the matter and issued a document, "Sects or New Religious Movements — A Pastoral Challenge" (1986).

In our country a national survey on Neo-Pentecostalism was conducted by the Department of Social Sciences, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune. The findings of the survey were presented to the General Body of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) at Thiruvanthapuram in February 1996. Later an All-

* The Conference of Catholic Bishops of India.

India Consultation on the "Challenge of New-Pentecostalism" sponsored jointly by the CBCI Doctrinal Commission and the National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, was held in December 1996 at NBCLC, Bangalore.

Against this background, we discussed the challenge of Neo-Pentecostalism and other challenges faced by the Church. After sharing, dialogue, praying and discerning, we have formulated these pastoral guidelines which we believe the Holy Spirit has led us to. It is our hope that these guidelines will be helpful to make our communities vibrant with faith, hope and love and thus realize the vision of Vatican II, which was a new Pentecost in the Church.

PASTORAL GUIDELINES*

God Experience

Our epoch is characterized by a deep quest for the experience of God. God is experienced in many ways: in creation and the events and circumstances of life, in the Word of God, in the community and in the sacraments. For us genuine God-experience is not necessarily related to feelings and emotions; it is deeply rooted in faith and is fundamentally Christ-centred (Phil 3:8). It is deeply rooted in faith and is fundamentally Christ-centered (Phil 3:8). It is the Christ-experience handed over to the Church by apostolic witness (I Jn 1:1-3) which formed the core of authentic Christian God-experience. It is a gift from God through his Holy Spirit and therefore it has to be sought through prayer in an attitude of openness and surrender. Our Church celebrates her God-experience in the liturgy, with the Eucharist as its source and summit. In the Eucharist Christ is experienced as Savior,

* The Pastoral Guidelines were issued by the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI-LR) at its plenary assembly, held at St. Joseph's Seminary, Mangalore, India, January 9-12, 1997, and reprinted with permission.

Redeemer and Healer, Friend and Brother. This Christ-experience is witnessed to through a life of service to others, especially those in need. In the Catholic Church the lives of countless faithful have been transformed by such a profound and personal encounter with Christ.

In order to promote God-experience through prayer and liturgy it is important that:

- our people be enabled to find God through a faith perspective in the events of life, especially in difficult circumstances and in times of suffering, through a faith perspective;
- the prayer life of our people be deepened through different forms of prayer, such as prayer of praise, worship, thanksgiving, forgiveness, adoration and night vigils. Indian forms of prayers, such as *namajapa*, *bhqjans*, and the practice of interiorization be fostered;
- mutual forgiveness be facilitated between individuals and families within the community, culminating in the sacrament of reconciliation;
- The Eucharist be celebrated on different occasions (First Communion, Confirmation, weddings, jubilees, anniversaries, times of sickness and funerals), in a manner that is more relevant to the life of the people;
- neighborhood masses, children's masses, youth masses, etc., be encouraged;
- the faithful be made aware that the Eucharistic celebration is the greatest healing service, since the Healer himself becomes one with us;

- our traditional and other devotions, such as novenas, popular devotions and para-liturgical services be revitalized through participation, spontaneity, and be made relevant to the needs of the people;
- The celebration of the sacraments be made a true family and community event, leading to a conscious commitment to the Lord;
- the prayers be said and the hymns be sung in the liturgy in such a manner that they become powerful means of personal communion with God;
- The retreats, recollections, live-ins, week-ends leading our faithful to Christ-experience and conversion experience be promoted.

The Word of God

The Word of God is of fundamental importance for the building up of the Christian community. The first Christian community received the Word from the preaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:41). It was constantly nourished by the Word, by sharing of the bread, by prayer and by the warmth of their fellowship (Acts 2:42). Any effort at forming the Christian community demands a living and effective presence of God's Word. It is therefore urgent that Christians should nourish their spiritual life through immediate contact with the Word of God. This demands not merely a better knowledge of the Bible, but an experience of the intimate presence of Christ through a deeper listening to the Word. Jesus offers us a pressing invitation when he says: "those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (Jn 14:23). The promise of Jesus is reassuring. He will make his presence felt in our hearts through our listening to and living his Word.

Vatican II emphasizes the primacy of the Word in Christian living. "In the Sacred Books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them... Therefore, they should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through liturgy, rich in divine word, or through devotional reading... and other aids, ... Prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture so that God and man may talk together ..." (Constitution on Divine Revelation, 21, 25). "Ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (St. Jerome).

To emphasize the primacy of the Word in Christian living:

- In the liturgy the Word of God should be proclaimed with faith and unction so that it touches the hearts of people;
- A short homily ought to be preached at every liturgical celebration and made relevant by relating it to the life-experiences of the people;
- Daily reading of the Bible should be encouraged in the family. This is the right place to begin the process of being nourished by the Word of God;
- Bible study groups and prayer groups ought to be promoted;
- Bible conventions should be held with special emphasis on God-experience, with testimonies of people who have experienced the power of the Word of God in their lives;
- Church doctrines ought to be taught in the light of the Word of God;
- In the interpretation of the Bible, respect for the tradition of the Church and communion with the Magisterium should be emphasized. (The claim of the fundamentalists that the Bible by itself is the only source of revelation

has no foundation in the Bible); that our people ought to be familiarized with the latest document of the Holy See on "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church."

Fostering Fellowship in the Church

The early Church which was essentially a communion, a fellowship of Jesus' disciples gathered together and led by the Spirit of the Risen Lord is the model for our communities. Early Christian communities provided the people with warm fellowship, participation in prayer, encounter with the living Word of God and an experience of the Lord in the breaking of the Bread (Acts 2:43-47). These were truly sharing, caring and praying communities; in them the faithful found fulfillment of their spiritual, interpersonal and affective needs.

This communitarian spirit needs to be recaptured and relived in our Church today in order to respond effectively to the sense of isolation and alienation felt by many Catholics.

To achieve this it is proposed that:

- the traditional parish structure be revitalized, for example, through the establishment of smaller Christian communities within the parish;
- genuine Catholic renewal stressing the role of the Holy Spirit, as is done in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) and in other renewal movements, be fostered in our parishes under the guidance of Church authorities;
- parish councils be established wherever they do not exist, and be made instruments for building up the parish as a true fellowship, as they share in the pastoral mission of the Church;

- both the pastor and parish council members, along with pastoral teams, undertake visiting of the families in the parish, especially in times of distress, sickness, death or any other form of suffering in families;
- the liturgical celebrations, the prayers of the faithful, etc., should reflect the needs of the members of the parish;
- the significant events in the life of individuals and families be made known to the whole parish community through appropriate announcements and prayers;
- wherever possible, Community Day or Parish Day celebrations be held to create a sense of belonging and fellowship.

Pastoral Care

Jesus is the Good Shepherd whose pastoral concern was to lead every human person to "life in all its fullness" (Jn 10:10). He showed care and concern for every person whom he met or reached out to. The Church is called to follow in the footsteps of the Master and to demonstrate the same concern in reaching out to the people in all aspects of their human life — material, social, psychological and, above all, spiritual.

This pastoral concern is not adequately expressed today in the Church, due to clericalism, over-institutionalization and unwieldy parish structures. A new way of being Church is required in which the burden of pastoring does not fall on the priest alone. It would be shared by many others in the parish community, gifted, called and empowered as they are by the Holy Spirit. The priest then would be the animator and co-ordinator of pastoral teams made up of parish pastoral council members, Basic Christian community leaders, religious, and parish elders, i.e., representatives from every area of parish life. Women would have a far greater role to play than is currently the case. Each

parish community would strive to actualize the Pauline vision of the Church as a body in which each part contributes to the well-being of the whole.

To prepare pastors to meet this challenge of "pastoral care with a personal touch," it is proposed:

- to give more attention in our seminaries to pastoral skills, with special reference to the four themes above and the Indian context. Even the study of philosophy and theology should be geared to the realization of this objective. The staff of the seminary should equip themselves to meet these challenges;
- to offer in each of our dioceses an on-going formation and skill training for such pastoral care to all involved in pastoral ministries in the parishes;
- to identify and train lay men and women whose gifts and charisms can be put at the service of the community, even on a full-time basis;
- to revive lay ministries that were so much part of the Early Church;
- to equip both clergy and laity to deal appropriately with those questions and arguments that are used to challenge the Catholic position on biblical and theological issues.

Till now, our attention in pastoral care has been mainly on the parish community, parish-related associations and smaller groups, but much less on the family, which is the basic unit of community and society. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, stresses that every family should be involved in the preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

Hence, in view of this Jubilee it would be appropriate if we strengthen our efforts to make the family a true domestic church where the experience of God, the Word of God, fellowship and pastoral care are promoted. In other words, our future pastoral approach should revitalize our families, which in turn will strengthen smaller communities, parish communities and the whole diocese.

Conclusion

In the face of these challenges our task is to co-operate with the Spirit in renewing our ecclesial life. For this we, the bishops, commit ourselves to be effective instruments in promoting God-experience, the ministry of the Word, fellowship, and effective and personalized pastoral care in our dioceses.

We appeal to the clergy and the religious of India to become actively involved in the implementation of the above objectives and guidelines, both at parish and diocesan levels.

We earnestly urge the formators in the seminaries that in the formation of future pastors a special focus be given to the primacy of God-experience, the centrality of the Word of God, the vitality of fellowship in the community and the urgency of personalized pastoral care.

While appreciating all the efforts being undertaken by the laity in different parts of our country to live true Christian lives, we encourage new and creative initiatives and co-operation in the implementation of the above-mentioned guidelines.

"Behold, I make all things new" is God's eternal creative Word. The call of Vatican II is for ongoing renewal, an invitation to live the mystery of the Church in such a way that she becomes a sign of communion between God and his people.

Jesus promised to give us his Spirit of life in order that we might be renewed and that the face of the earth might be refashioned. The Spirit of the Promise is alive and active in our Church, creating us anew. To collaborate with the Spirit in leading our people to a deep Abba experience, let us commit ourselves to the task ahead.

As the Great Jubilee Year 2000 approaches, our Church, cannot offer the Lord a greater birthday gift than to fill the Earth with vibrant communities of faith and worship, living and witnessing to the power of the Word and the spirit of love.

We cannot but feel pain and anguish at the separation of our brothers and sisters who have chosen to leave the Church. We pray and hope that they realize the Lord's will for them to belong to the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church.

As we seek to bring about an all-round renewal in the Church we turn to Mary, the perfect disciple of Jesus, who filled with the Holy Spirit, was obedient always to the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus gave her to us to be our Mother. Many Christians who do not acknowledge, or even reject, Mary as their Mother, are in fact her children, for the very Bible they quote describes who the children of Mary are: "those who obey God's commandments and give witness to the world of Jesus" (Rev 12:17). May she intercede for us her children to grow in authentic discipleship and to be responsive to the needs and problems of our people in the modern world! May she gather together under her mantle the scattered sheep of the Good Shepherd!

Are there Sects in the Catholic Church?

CHRISTOPH SCHONBORN, OP*

I. Clarification of a concept

For some time now the media have been reporting about "sects in the Church" or "sects within the Catholic Church". This is what a number of movements and communities are called which were founded over recent decades. Early on, some of these new groups were labeled as "conservative" or "fundamentalist"; now one tries to eliminate¹ them as "sects within the Church". People are warned of them as of the classical sects or the religious youth movements which make people psychologically ill and in which they are inhumanly treated. Many faithful are aware that there have been sectarian schisms in the history of Christianity, including today. But the claim that groups approved by and acknowledged in the Church are "sects" within her, seems disturbing to many Christians.

* Archbishop of Vienna, Austria

¹ Cf. H. Gasper, "Ein problematisches Etikett: Mit dem sektenbegriffe sollte man behutsam umgehen", *Herder Korrespondenz* 50 (1996), 577-580; H. Maier, "Sekten in der Kirche? Es muB Platz geben fur unterschiedliche Wege", *Klerusblatt* 76 (1996), 208.

1. Towards a theological clarification of the concept 'sect'

The notion 'sect' is originally a religious term used by the Church. Recently it has been broadened into a socio-political dimension at the cost of precision and clarity. In everyday use it has become a slogan defining groups considered "dangerous", since they offend against the fundamental values of the liberal democratic society.

At present the following criteria are generally applied to a sect: formation of an elite group, sealed off from social reality and frequently in opposition to it; the development of alternative ways of life, often so extreme that they lead to a loss of the sense of reality and to unhealthy exaggerations. Besides following an aim in life that goes against generally accepted conventions, or a spiritual idol with occasionally Utopian features, the following inner characteristics are listed: renouncing today's basic values of personal freedom and tolerance; occasionally fighting for fundamentally opposed attitudes; a totalitarian way of life; oppression of the members' consciences; ostracizing outsiders, as well as the tendency to dominate society or aspects of it. If several of these characteristics are recognized in a group, it is called a sect.

According to the religious (more apt and precise) usage of the term, those groups are called sects which have broken away from the general or national Churches. Often sects hold on to particular values, religious ideas or ways of life of the original ecclesiastical community. But these particular basic principles are understood in an absolute way and are lived out in a community life that is strictly isolated from the former body and that aims at self-preservation and self-defence. The following characteristics arise from these basic conditions: some one-sided religious ideas (e.g. holding that the end of the world is near), refusing to exchange ideas with people of different opinions; an over-enthusiastic promotion and pursuit of their own ideas; fierce

proselytizing, over-confidence in their sense of mission towards an often despised world; a conception of salvation that is exclusive to a certain number of people belonging to the specific group.

According to Catholic theology, a sect is characterized by estrangement from the common biblical-apostolic truth and the central contents of faith. Therefore the Church considers sects always to be tantamount to heresy (cf. Gal 1:6-12) or schism.

Nobody needs to have studied theology to recognize the basic contradiction in the slogan "sects within the Church". Their presumed existence in the Church is an indirect reproach of the Pope and Bishops who are responsible for investigating whether ecclesiastical groups are in agreement with the faith of the Church in teaching and practice. From a theological and ecclesiastical point of view, a group is considered a sect when it is not recognized by the relevant Church authority. Sects are outside the Church (and outside ecumenical movements). They are isolated and as such do not want to be examined by Church authority. Associations approved by the Church, however, are in constant contact with and answerable to Church authority. Their statutes and ways of life are scrutinized. It is therefore wrong if communities which are approved by the Church are called sects (by institutions, individuals, or in media reports), or if a life according to the three evangelical counsels is seen as a sect-like practice.

According to canon law, the faithful have the right to found associations. It is the duty of the Bishops or the Holy See to examine new groups or movements — which St. Paul calls new charisms — and to acknowledge them as genuine. The authority of the Church is obliged to promote and support the work of the Spirit of God in the Church today. The Church has to intervene and correct, if there is an unhealthy growth or a deviation in teaching and practice. This is different from a sect which does not see itself to be under such an authority and does

not acknowledge any; Church groups submit consciously and freely to authority, and are ready to accept corrections if needed. Many examples show this.

Libero Gerosa summarizes the essential criteria of genuine charisms as follows: "Charisms are 'special graces' granted by the Spirit to every and any faithful. These gifts make them 'fit and ready to undertake the various tasks' for building up the Church. Some of these gifts are extraordinary, others simpler and more ordinary. Judging their genuineness and proper use is a matter for those with authority in the Church who have no right to suppress genuine charisms".²

No one needs to be uneasy if communities approved by the Church are labeled as "sects within the Church" by the public. Should there be doubts or questions, it is possible to ask the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities for information.

Some remarks on 'fundamentalism'

"Fundamentalism" was originally the name given to a religious-ideological movement that sprang up in the United States before the First World War aiming at a strictly literal understanding of the Bible (especially of Genesis), which developed into a collective Conservative Protestant movement. Typical of fundamentalism in the country of its origin today is the rejection of any historical-critical view of the biblical texts, an almost mythical orientation towards an idealized past, the refusal of any positive evaluation of modern development, a sometimes impetuous moralism, above all directed against prevalent consumerism, now and then some right-wing tendencies and declarations critical of democracy. In modern philosophy and sociology this American fundamentalism — though duly criticized — is seen

² Libero Gerosa, *Charisma und Recht*, Trier 1989, p. 66; quotations in text from *Lumen gentium*, n. 12.

as a phenomenon that should be taken seriously as an expression of the "American Civil Religion" in view of the problems of extreme liberalism.

Quite different from this term is the concept of a "religious fundamentalism" which spread in Europe in the '80s, a rather vague and woolly expression that is used for such distinct phenomena as an extreme Islamic fanaticism inflicting the death penalty on dissenters and for the adhering of Catholic Christians to the traditional faith of the Church. Without any discrimination, groups within the Church that are based on her teachings and especially on those of Second Vatican Council, and followers of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre who parted with the Church, are suspected of fundamentalism.

Actually, the term "fundamentalism" is more often a slogan meant to attack someone, than to describe a definite, precise spiritual phenomenon. It is often found in connection with labels such as "dogmatism", "integralism", "traditionalism", "mistrust of people who think or live differently", or "being afraid to make one's own decision".

Criticism of fundamentalism is directed against a rigid faith marked by fear and insecurity, not acknowledging any development of dogma and of the understanding of truth, attempting to hold on to rigid forms and formulas, not daring to be exposed to the practices of changing times. This form of criticism is justified. But some critics tend to label all those communities and movements as fundamentalist who — acknowledging the changes of the times — hold on to lasting truths and binding values and do not want to swerve from "the fullness, the organized form and the beauty of the Catholic world of faith".³ These critics should ask themselves whether they do not run the risk of falling

³ L. Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt: Wahrheit unci Gestalt*, Aschaffenburg 1977, p. 351.

into a relativism of value and truth, while advocating, in their own way, an absolutism that makes them the only ones to decide about the valid principles of present realities of life and faith.

Asked about the significance and danger of modern fundamentalism, Cardinal Ratzinger carefully differentiates in his new book *Salz der Erde*: "The common element in the very differing mental attitudes and movements which are classified by us as fundamentalism is the search for security and simplicity of faith. This is not bad as such; after all, faith is meant very much for the simple and little ones — as we are told repeatedly in the New Testament. The search for security and simplicity becomes dangerous only when it leads to fanaticism and narrow-mindedness. If reason as such becomes suspect, then faith is falsified and becomes a kind of party ideology which no longer has anything to do with trust in the living God, source and creator of life and reason. Then pathological religious forms arise, such as a desire for visions, for messages from beyond, and the like. However, instead of attacking fundamentalism, the concept of which is becoming progressively more inclusive and vaguer, theologians should reflect how far they themselves are responsible, if more and more people are taking refuge in narrow and unhealthy forms of religion. If one merely questions and does not show a positive way of faith, then people will inevitably resort to distorted forms of religion"⁴.

II. Specific accusations

After this short clarification of the concepts "sect" and "fundamentalism", we now turn our attention to specific accusations against newer communities in the Church. Communities and movements approved by the Church should not be called sects, since their ecclesiastical approbation confirms their belong-

⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde. Christentum und katholische Kirche an der Jahrtausendwende: Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald*, Stuttgart 1996, pp. 146f.

ing to and grounding in the Church. In spite of this approbation, the charges made against the newer charisms in the Church are sometimes considerable. It must be said generally that the teaching and practices of communities approved by the Church should be distinguished from the weaknesses of individuals. We are all familiar with our imperfect human actions. Therefore it should be stressed that ecclesiastical authority must intervene in cases of unhealthy developments.

Some accusations leveled at these communities are: brainwashing as a method, isolation and alienation from the world, estrangement from the family, dependence on charismatic leaders, building up of their own structures within the Church, violation of human rights, as well as the problem of ex-members. What can be said of these accusations?

Brainwashing

This term cannot even be applied to the often observed change of personality in sects, as brainwashing means the inhuman methods which are used in totalitarian regimes to influence people and change their personalities. It should not be used to describe the formation of members of communities in the Church. The latter is a freely accepted transformation of the personality into Christ, respecting human dignity. It refers to the call of Jesus to repentance and faith (cf. Mk 1:14f). Whoever follows the call of Christ will — in grace and freedom— have an outlook of faith on all dimensions of life. St. Paul, too, speaks about this transformation in one of his letters: "Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do" (cf. Rom 12:2). In Christian tradition it is called "metanoia", conversion of life. The transformation of life is brought about by a call from God to follow Christ. It is a life-long process

for a Christian which has to be freely renewed. Spiritual communities in the Church must make sure that the decision to follow Christ is freely undertaken. This is safeguarded by a series of canonical regulations.

Isolation and alienation from the world

In the Gospels we read that Christians "do not belong to the world" (Jn 17:16), but that they are "sent into the world" (Jn 17:18). Turning away from the world means not turning away from people, their joys, sorrows and anxieties, but from sin. In this sense, Jesus prays for his disciples: "I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15). If Christians do not participate in everything and are not fully one with the trends of their times, this does not mean that they despise the world. They only turn away from what is opposed to their faith and also from goods that they no longer consider important, once they have found the "treasure hidden in a field" (Mt 13:44). Communion with Christ ought to urge them not to retreat into a world of their own, but to sanctify the world from inside, transforming it in truth, justice and love. In a society dominated by the media, where the Church should be transparent, there is the challenge, as St. Peter says in his First Letter, always to "have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope you all have" (1 Pt 3:15).

This applies also to contemplative communities who live behind the walls of monasteries, and in prayer and sacrifice surrender their lives to God for the good of all. On the one hand, the Church is an alternative society,⁵ and, on the other, a missionary community in the midst of the world.

³ G. Lohfink, *Wie hat Jesus Gemeinde gewollt?*, Freiburg (Neuausgabe) 1993, pp. 142ff., 181ff.

This was expressed by the Second Vatican Council in many texts. One of them referred to the *Epistle to Diognetus* from the very early Christian Church. Written in the second or third century, it stresses that Christians — as all other people — live in the world, but are opposed to the spirit of the world; striving towards a goal beyond this world. Thus they fulfill their mission as a blessing for the world.

"To put it briefly, the relation of Christians to the world is that of a soul to the body. As the soul is diffused through every part of the body, so are the Christians through all the cities of the world. The soul, too, inhabits the body, while at the same time forming no part of it: and Christians inhabit the world, but they are not part of the world. The soul, invisible herself, is immured within a visible body; so Christians can be recognized in the world, but their Christianity itself remains hidden from the eye. The flesh hates the soul, and wars against her without any provocation, because she is an obstacle to its own self-indulgence ... Christians, as they sojourn for a while in the midst of corruptibility here, look for incorruptibility in the heavens. Finally, just as to be stinted of food and drink makes for the soul's improvement, so when Christians are every day subjected to ill-treatment, they increase the more in numbers. Such is the high post of duty in which God has placed them, and it is their moral duty not to shrink from it".⁶

Estrangement from family members

Respect and loving care for parents belong essentially to the Christian message. If, however, someone is called to a closer imitation of Christ, then Jesus asks him also to leave his family. The Apostles left their families, occupations and country. This kind of imitation of Christ has its continuance in our time. Some

⁶ *Epistle to Diognetus*, 5-6; trans. by Maxwell Staniforth in: *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, Penguin Books 1968, reprinted 1987, pp. 144ff.

parents rejoice at such a decision by their children. But conflicts may arise with the members of some families. Jesus himself talks about it (cf. Mt 10:37).

It is not always easy to let a child go, not even in the case of marriage. If one leaves home for Christ's sake, freely accepting his or her call, then, it is not an escape from family obligations and may not be attributed to the unjustifiable influence of a community. Criticism is only justified if a deliberate break with the family were intended, offending the other members of the family who often strive to live a faithful Christian life as well. Every member of the family is free to choose his or her own way of life. One must be tolerant and respect the decision of each conscience.

There have been difficult situations in the past, of course, and conflicts still arise today, for example when communities influence minors against the will of their parents, or when parents have difficulty in understanding and accepting the decision of a child to enter an order or a religious community. But if imitation of Christ is lived with love, determination and Christian tact, respecting everyone's free decision, then a relationship of trust can develop between the "natural" and the "spiritual" family that brings abundant graces, as many have experienced.

Dependence on charismatic leaders and personalities

Here one has to distinguish between those who use their abilities in a selfish and dishonest way in order to dominate others and make them submissive, and truly charismatic personalities as they can still be found in the Church today. In a "spirit of holiness" (2 Cor 6:6), they do their utmost for the Church and the good of mankind. Throughout the history of salvation there have been truly inspired leaders. The prototype is Jesus Christ himself, and countless men and women have found their way of life and happiness as his disciples. Great founders and

charismatically-gifted men and women, such as St. Benedict or St. Ignatius, St. Clare or St. Angela Merici, have given their lives to win others for Christ. They were God's gift to his people. They did not bind others to themselves, but led them to Christ and his Church. In the freedom of God's children, they passed on the supernatural riches of their lives to others, always in obedience to the authority of the Church. Should we not thank God that he is still giving us such people who are filled with his Spirit? While necessarily holding on to historical structures, ought we not be open to the Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church?

Building up their own structures within the Church

It is often held against modern groups in the Church that they build "a Church within the Church". To counter this danger, one has to make sure that the relationship between the existing structures of the Church, above all the parish, and new groups is always well balanced. As Cardinal Ratzinger writes: "In spite of all the changes that will come about, I am convinced that the parish will remain the essential cell of the Christian community ... As at most times in history there will also be groups which are linked through a special charism, by the personality of a founder, in a specific spiritual way. For the sake of both, an exchange between them is needed: the movement needs the link with the parish, so as not to become isolated and sectarian; the parish needs groups and movements so as not to lose its vitality. Now new forms of spiritual life have already come into being in the world. If one looks around, one can discover and astonishing variety of Christian ways of life, in which the Church of tomorrow is already visible among us".⁷

⁷ J. Ratzinger, op. cit., p. 283.

Violation of human rights

To follow Christ in celibacy, obedience and poverty has always been part of the consecrated life. Whoever chooses this way of life and after several years of discernment and prayer binds himself to it, renounces certain rights as a free decision of his conscience: the right to marry, the right to self-determination and the right independently to manage and acquire. *The Second Vatican Council* says: "The evangelical counsels of chastity dedicated to God, poverty, and obedience are based upon the words and example of the Lord. They were further commended by the Apostles and the Fathers, and other teachers and shepherds of the Church. The counsels are a divine gift, which the Church has received from her Lord and which she ever preserves with the help of his grace" (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 43). If this way of life is freely chosen, it does not go against human rights, but is the answer to a special call from Christ. Those responsible for the different communities are, however, obliged — in a pure conscience — to support the vocation of the member for the fruitful upbuilding of the Church and the good of humanity in the spirit of a genuine "communio".

Ex-members

All religious communities know that their new members need a time of mutual getting-to-know-each-other, of growing into the group and of self-examination, as they prepare for a definite commitment. The superiors have the right to dismiss someone for certain serious reasons. But, unfortunately, departure or dismissal may also occur after someone has already made a final commitment. Of course, communities approved by the Church will — in case of conflict — offer their members and ex-members the opportunity to approach the appropriate Church authorities.

Some ex-members cannot come to terms with their negative experiences and make them known from the platform of the

media. People living together will experience their limitations and weaknesses. It is, however, unjustified, to present personal difficulties within a community as if they were a general experience. On the whole, negative experiences of individuals are painful for the whole Church community.

Such experiences continue to be discussed in public. There is no interest in questions of the teaching of the faith, but in ways of behaviour and their effects. In discussion it becomes obvious that the Church in her various communities is an "alternative society " with respect to a liberal secular society — "Whoever is ready to accept religion only in the form of a civil religion which is compatible with society, must be suspicious of anything more radical".⁸ Should criticism be based on real problematic developments in a group, this will be sufficient reason for the appropriate Church authority to undertake a thorough investigation. Criticism may give rise to a purification and better growth of groups. In the Vatican Interim Report of 1986: *"Sects and New Religious Movements — A Challenge for the Pastoral Ministry*, we read that attitudes adopted by sects (such as intolerance and aggressive proselytism) are not enough to characterize a sect, since these attitudes may be found in Church communities as well. To quote: "However, these groups may undergo a positive change by becoming more deeply absorbed in Christian formation and also through contact with other Christians around them. Thus they may continuously grow in thinking and acting with the Church".⁹ To think with the Church is a challenge for both sides: the group has to learn to bring its charism in as one among many (thus resisting the temptation to lay claim to an ecclesiastical absolutism); those who have no direct access to this form of life in the Church have to learn to

⁸ H. Gasper, *ibid.*

⁹ I. Kapitel, ed., *Referatfur Weltanschauungsfragen der Erdiozese Wien*, 1986, p. 5.

see in such a community a gift of the life-giving Spirit, whereby many can find a new approach to faith.

In our time, a new desire is arising in different countries of the world, in spite of all human frailty, to live up to the message of Christ and to serve the Church in unity with the Holy Father and the Bishops. Many see new charisms as a sign of hope. Other experience these new awakenings as something strange; for others they are a challenge, by others again they may be experienced as an accusation, against which they vindicate themselves — sometimes reacting with reproach in turn. Some promote a kind of humanism that has less and less to do with its Christian roots. But we should not forget: "If the Second Vatican Council speaks of the 'ecclesia semper reformanda', it speak not only of the necessity to think anew about the structures of the Church, but moreover about the constant renewing of the life of the Church and about the querying of some long-established and treasured ideas which may be too much in keeping with the spirit of the age".¹⁰

Breath of Life, Gift of the Spirit*

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

The conventional picture of hospital childbirth is that of a doctor — nose and mouth covered with a surgical mask—holding down a baby by its feet and tapping the baby's behind until the baby cries. Wits and humorists would say this is a rather rude way of welcoming a child into our world—spanking it in its first moment. But there are those who would explain that this is not really a spanking. It is just the slightest of taps meant to produce a little shock that would make the baby gasp for air—which gasp then becomes the baby's first breath. While in the womb, the baby had to rely on the mother's breathing. Now umbilically cut from her, it must breathe on its own or perish.

In some aboriginal tribes in Indonesia, however, it is reported that the practice at childbirth is not the tapping of a child's behind. Rather it is that the newborn child is brought to the father who breathes into the baby's face—symbolizing thus how the gift of life is passed on.

* Homily of His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila during the National Catholic Education Congress from January 29-30, 1998, held at the Philippine International Convention Center, Manila.

I find a serene beauty in both pictures, and a welcome biblical resonance.

In Sacred Scripture, as we know, among the Hebrews, wind and breath have always been symbols of life, of spirit, of creation. The second description of creation in the Book of Genesis says, "The Lord God formed a human being from the dust of the ground and BREATHED into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living creature". (Gen 2:7.)

"In the book of the Prophet Ezekiel in the episode of the Valley of Dry Bones, although the bones came together and sinews, flesh, and skin covered them, there was no life until winds from every quarter came and BREATHED life into the bones and "they came to life and rose in their feet a mighty company" (Ex 37:7-10).

Our First Reading today, taken from the liturgy of the Pentecost tells us as much. Though we are not talking here of inanimate creatures first coming to life, or dead creatures getting the breath of life again, here is a picture of a New Creation. The disciples of Jesus are in one place, praying, yes, but not yet having the strength and dynamism to stand up and identified with Jesus — Until the wind comes upon them and -tongues of fire appear and they are roused into life. For in the wind and the fire is the Spirit. And the disciples become transformed into brave preachers and witnesses of Jesus Christ. A New Creation is upon us.

The Gospel scene is more subdued. No rousing wind, here, no blazing fire. But it is no less a picture of life, a New Creation. If the Pentecost event can be related to the hospital doctor tapping the newborn baby to make it cry, this Gospel scene is like the father giving the first breath to his child.

Here, Jesus BREATHES on His apostles and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit". A most intimate picture is this: Jesus who has been betrayed, denied, and deserted by His chosen ones, who died feeling abandoned by all He had loved, is now risen. Yet among His first words is not reprimand but Peace; His first actions, a BREATHING, a Sharing of Resurrection Life, a Gift of the Spirit; and a Forgiving. But, with that new life, too, He gives them Mission to share: "As you receive, give. As I was sent, so I send you."

All these provide a fitting context to our gathering here today and tomorrow.

We are here in a National Catholic Education Congress: we, member schools and friends and supporters of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) with representatives from the different sectors of the academic community: students and teachers, administrators and non-teaching staff, parents and alumni. We are here because we are concerned with our survival as schools. We want to meet one another and get to know how we may help one another — the big universities in the city and the small mission schools in the province; the more endowed colleges in the towns and the struggling schools in the barrios. We want to forge alliances, but, more deeply, we want to establish Communion.

We come from different situations, and surely with different problems. Some of us are new and inexperienced, many of us are old and seasoned in the way of running schools. Some of life, others are gasping for breath. Some of us are able to easily provide good salaries, others struggle to gather enough money for wages once a month, let alone thirteen times a year and yet we all share the same mission. So we come together in the hope and with the will that we learn to appreciate or value again Catholic education; and by working together not to allow it. To languish and die but to make it grow and live.

Catholic education is a gift to the Filipino nation, which came with the gift of faith. Not everything may have been formal and organized then as we know them to be now, but education started with the first preaching about Jesus in our shores. Since then, Catholic schools have spread throughout our islands. The first ones were established even before the public educational system was put up. When the government started public schools, our schools worked side by side with these. Oftentimes, our mission schools were in places where government schools could not be found.

Four centuries have passed, and a new millenium is upon us. Our pioneers in Catholic education are long gone, and even as we remember them fondly in our work and in our Mass today, we know the task and responsibility of education is now thrust upon us. We must now carry the torch. And it is not easy.

Where there were no schools but ours, there now are public schools that draw our students away. It is a situation not necessarily bad because it is a government service finally delivered. Still, it is a situation that makes us ask the government: What now do you want us to do? Do you want us to continue to operate? Shall we continue to be partners? It is a situation that challenges us: Are we to continue even if now we struggle, or shall we close and explore other ways of ministry?

Where two Philippine pesos could buy one American dollar, the rate is now so high we hear a drop in student enrollment because our national economy has been severely shaken. Where we could make do with blackboard and chalk and eraser in teaching, somehow we feel incomplete without the modern computer, the Internet, the Web — necessary things now that we struggle to acquire with scarce resources. Where life was simple, different issues now confront us —morally, economically, socially — issues that as Catholic schools we must face. Indeed, times

have changed. Sometimes we regret it, but we cannot ignore it. And we know, for life to be life, it must change.

So we strive to hold the torch of education high, but strong winds threaten to blow it out. Fuel for the torch is running low and there is no guarantee of fresh supply. And yet our Mission must go on. The light of Truth and Knowledge must continue to burn and turn away the darkness of evil and ignorance. How are we to do this?

That this Congress is being held in the Year of the Holy Spirit — and indeed, after the Congress of the Holy Spirit — provides thoughts for our reflection.

Genesis says that in the beginning, when the earth was a vast waste and darkness covered the surface of the deep, the spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water. And in that setting, when God said, "Let there be light" so, there was light. Creation had begun.

In the darkness of our sins and uncertainties, in the wastelands where we find ourselves with all our problems, let us be aware that the Spirit of God hovers over us. We can turn to Him and ask for Light and pray we be a New Creation.

If we find ourselves tired or afraid or running out of breath, we ask the Spirit to rouse us from our fears — as He did at the first Pentecost—to stir us into life. If we find ourselves so enfeebled that we fear even the Pentecostal winds may just blow us down and out, we ask Jesus who will not snap off a broken reed nor snuff out a smoldering wick (Mt 12:20) to be gentle with us, breathing life into us serenely as He did to His apostles,

But whether through the first or the second way, we ask life and life shall be given us and we become a New Creation.

With that New Creation, we understand, new responsibilities are given us—to continue sharing what we have received. This, too, is the context of our wanting to forge alliances among ourselves. The big and the small university; the rich and the poor school. We must learn to or reaffirm our commitment to cooperate rather than just compete; to share rather than to exist separately and in solitude.

I know that we are not starting from scratch. There are those of you who are already members of consortia. Some schools twin with others in need. Others offer free or low-fee services to fellow CEAP schools. I can only commend you for this, and encourage the continuance and the spread of such cooperative ventures. But each school, no matter how big, no matter how small, must be ready to both give and receive. As an oft-repeated line from PCP II has it, "No one is so poor that he cannot give; no one is so rich that he cannot receive."

Each of us is valuable and has to share. Not only when we have excess resources but even in our direst of needs.

At a prayer meeting once, a preacher invited people to give testimony to their faith. A man in the front row stood up and told this story. (*Many years ago, I fell on very hard times. I lost my job. My wife divorced me. I was out on the street with nowhere to live. In desperation I walked into a church and sat down and prayed. Then I took my last peso and put it in the offering. Penniless, I walked outside, only to run into an old friend of mine, who took pity on me and offered me a job with his company. I accepted it, became successful and now I am millionaire. All of this happened because of that night long ago when I put all the money I had in the offering at the church.*)

When the man finished his story, the congregation was deeply moved and sat in silence for a while. Then a woman

in the back row stood up and said to the man; "I dare you to do it again right NOW."

A similar challenge is given to each of us now. While we are all in need in some way each of us also is in a position to share. What sacrifice then can we offer for Catholic education? What sharing are we ready to do? This and related issues our Congress must address.

I am confident that your coming here today in such huge numbers is an indication that Catholic education will continue to be a cooperative enterprise for us; that we will continue to be our sister's keeper, that no matter what the load we carry for another in need, it will not be too heavy — for he is our brother.

Following now the gesture of Jesus in His Resurrection appearance, breathe on each of you and say, "Peace be with you." "Receive the Holy Spirit." As I have been sent, so, too I send you — to share the Spirit to spread the faith, to keep alive the torch of Catholic education in our country.

And with the vision of a New Creation, a Resurrected Life, a Pentecost event for Catholic Education in the Philippines, as Honorary Chairman of this gathering, this National Catholic Education Congress I NOW DECLARE OPEN.

LONG LIVE CATHOLIC EDUCATION.

Forging Strategic Alliances in Catholic Education

CORAZON C. AQUINO

It is a pleasure for me to address you on this very important occasion, the CEAP's National Education Congress. Thank you, Fr. Roderick Salazar, and the CEAP Board for inviting me.

As we all know, Catholic schools have contributed significantly to the task of nation-building. Our Catholic universities, colleges and schools have educated generations of young people who have become leaders of government, business, industry and other sectors of civil society. You have succeeded in your mission, in part, because of the tireless work of the CEAP in coordinating the efforts of Catholic schools for the past six decades. You have participated actively with government and other educational associations in the formulation of national educational policies and in the improvement of academic standards.

The reconstruction of our country after World War II and the rebuilding of our democratic institutions after we regained our freedom from the dictator in 1986 would not have proceeded so quickly without the enormous help of Catholic education.

I stand before you, a product of Catholic school education. From my early education at St. Scholastica's College under the

Benedictine sisters, I was told about the twin values of *Ora et Labora*. Through the succeeding years, I began to learn that a quality life is one of prayer and service to humanity. Of course, in the 90's, the *labora* part could also be taken to mean that a woman's work is never done.

The habit of prayer was more deeply ingrained in me as I grew older in all schools I attended, both here and abroad — St. Scholastica's, Assumption Convent, Ravenhill Academy, Notre Dame Convent School, and the College of Mt. St. Vincent. Prayer is the source of whatever strength I have, the force that keeps me whole in the face of exaggerated head-spinning praise and debilitating adversity. And God knows, in my life, I have seen a lot of both.

In 1984, barely a year after Ninoy was killed, the College of Mt. St. Vincent gave me my first honorary doctorate, citing me for my "faith and courage". I said then, when I accepted the award that "the honor is more accurately for courage founded on Faith". And for that Faith, I am profoundly grateful for the strong foundations built in me by the education I received as a young and impressionable girl in Catholic schools.

Indeed, I am a product of the world I was born into. I once lived a sheltered and privileged life where all of my needs were met and adversity was kept at arm's length by a very protective family. But having married a politician, even one who was a typically protective Filipino male who tried to shield his wife from the harsh realities of his chosen life's path, I lost my innocence early. Still, nothing could have prepared me and my family for the very painful public exposure that we had to undergo during Ninoy's incarceration and martyrdom.

After my husband was killed, and I was elected President of the Republic, my life became even more demanding. If our struggle to oust Marcos was gruelling, the six years I spent in

Malacanang were, for the most part, punishing. Even now, six years after my retirement from the presidency there are still many demands on me. I am still always expected to be available, courageous and wise.

For the gifts of steadfastness and faith, courage and wisdom that have seen me through the most difficult of crunches, I have my intensely Catholic girlhood to thank. Today, I would like to officially thank you, the pillars of Catholic Education in the Philippines, for my early immersion in the tenets, practices and values of our Faith.

Catholic Education Today

Catholic Education has been with us for centuries now. Missionaries from all over the world saw to it that most of this Catholic country had the benefit of Catholic education by establishing their schools in strategic places. Today, one thousand three hundred Catholic schools — large and small — are found in our cities, municipalities and barangays. Of these, three Catholic universities — De La Salle, Ateneo, and Santo Tomas — made among the top-rated universities in Asia-Pacific, according to a recent Asiaweek survey. Congratulations!

But whether or not they come from the high-profile and prestigious schools — large, medium-sized, or small — all graduates of CEAP schools have one thing in common. They are recipients of that premium product called Catholic education. On all of them rests the reputation of the Catholic school sector in the country.

Just what does Catholic education consist of and what makes it different from a non-sectarian and public school education? Speaking as a product of Catholic schools and as a parent who sent her children to Catholic schools, my understanding and expectation of a Catholic education is that it produces graduates

who possess a culture of academic excellence and self-discipline, are socially aware and service-oriented. I expect Catholic schools to provide education that is relevant to the times. This means that they should give students the inner spiritual resources, mental discipline and the many skills and competencies they need to cope with a fast-changing world, as well as a strong commitment to their fellow men and women and to sustainable national development.

I would like to see in my children and grandchildren and the other products of catholic schools the habit of prayer and service to others, a devotion to duty, to country, people and family, and a willingness to sacrifice for the common good.

But as it is, is there really a difference between a Catholic school graduate and a graduate of a sectarian school? Are they more socially aware men and women for others? Do they steal less or not at all? Are they better leaders? When elected to public office are they honest, fair and just? Can they see beyond the tips of their own noses or the fences of their homes into the plight of most Filipinos who are poor and powerless?

Is the Philippines really better off because of graduates of Catholic schools? Are we a more equitable society because of Catholic schools or do the schools add just another layer to an already elitist social structure?

During this two-day conference, you will be discussing the strategic alliances that you need to forge to provide Catholic education with a much-needed boost. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has joined hands with the CEAP to form the first of several necessary strategic alliances. You have also invited the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, parent-teachers' associations, and students to join this expanded two-day dialogue.

This is commendable because education is not only about sending our children to the best schools. It is about knowing and supporting the values and principles taught in those schools. Education must be a full partnership between the school and the home, between parents and teachers, and between the school and society. So all of the members of what should be a vast and tight network that makes up the totality of education must get together and forge a common understanding of their individual and joint mandates.

I note from your program that you have also invited the presidential aspirants to a panel discussion on their views on education. I encourage you to grill them not only on the educational policies they intend to institute and carry out if and when they become president, but also on their commitment to those values that make for a humane and civilized society — and their personal values and lifestyles. After all, education is not just an agenda or a set of policies written on paper. It is a way of life. Those of us in leadership positions are an integral part of the continuing education of our people. We must therefore be ready to be called to account for all of our actions and decisions that impact on the public.

Look at every candidate critically. Does he have an understanding of public service? Is he socially aware? Is he a man for others? Does he have a kinship with civil society? If a presidential aspirant can give satisfactory answers to these questions, you can be sure that at the very least, he will not stand in the way of the salvific mission of Catholic schools. At best, he will be your strategic partner in your task as educators.

There are also other partnerships that you need to forge among yourselves if catholic schools will remain true to their commitment of excellence, relevance, service to society and quality education. Long before the current economic crisis hit us, many of the smaller schools were already reeling from the

high cost of quality education. One result of this is the large gap between the salaries of teachers and workers in public schools and those of many private schools. It should be a matter of great concern to this assembly that while public school teachers now get a basic salary of P9,000, most Catholic schools in the provincial and rural areas are able to pay their teachers only P3,000 to P4,000 a month. I am told that even some of the more expensive schools in the big cities are unable to raise the salaries of their teachers to decent rates.

Although there are remedies that you may be able to work out with government under the constitutional provision recognizing the "complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system" (Art. XIV, Sec. 4), I urge you to begin by helping yourselves. As in the larger society, some schools are more blessed than others; they have bigger endowments, better locations, better access to quality administrators, teachers and professional staff. I urge those schools that are better situated to extend their resources to help other Catholic schools that are in distress and spread the culture of excellence more evenly among the members of the CEAP.

You are one network. The problems of one will sooner or later become the problems of the others, and eventually, of society itself. Catholic schools, acting independently but moving in concert — *Kapit-Bisig*, as we did in our days of protest — can be more effective in persuading their strategic partners in government and society to see things their way.

I leave you with these thoughts of a Catholic school graduate who has become president, and a parent who invested in a Catholic education for all of her children. A sizable portion of our society and I have placed the formation of our children in your hands. We have done so in the hope that a Catholic education does make a difference, and with faith in your sincere commitment to our children, our country and our people. I shall continue to pray

for and with you for the success not only of your conference but also of the strategic alliances that you hope to firm up in these two days. I will also pray that you continue to produce the kind of graduates that this country badly needs — young people who believe that a quality life is one of prayer and service to others, young men and women who will pray as hard as they work and play when they go out into the fields of the Lord. Thank you and good day!

The keynote speech of President Aquino was followed by a presentation of bouquet as a token of CEAP's appreciation and gratitude. Msgr. Gerry Santos, Chair, NCEC Executive Committee and concurrent Executive Director of MAPS A schools, read a brief citation:

Your Excellency, Your Eminence, beloved family of CEAP, what images does the name Corazon C. Aquino evoke?

The image of the gentle presence of the widow of a Filipino martyr whose words echo in our hearts, "The Filipino is worth dying for."

The image of the undying determination of a Filipina fired with freedom and democracy never to be intimidated by the flames of a dictatorship;

The image of precious memories of that shining event that captured world attention: the EDSA People Power when Filipinos joined hands and hearts with prayer and festivities;

The image of a private citizen whose voice and will can always captivate the Filipino spirit.

Your Excellency, Tita Cory, as you are fondly called, kindly receive the gratitude of this august assembly of delegates from all the Catholic schools of the Philippines.

The Bishops and Catholic Schools: Alliance for Action

OSCAR CRUZ, DD

"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember! I am with you always till the end of time." (Mathew 28:18-20)

From this Gospel passage on the signal pronouncement of Christ after his resurrection and before his ascension, consequently forming part of his Last Will and Testament, three basic truths immediately and clearly face us: One, Christ has the plenary authority to command: "I have been given all authority..." Two, He gave the Church the expressed mandate to teach the truth of the Gospel: "Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you..." And three, as Mother and Teacher, the Church is certain of His abiding presence: "Remember, I am with you always..."

These are the three major Gospel factors we cannot but have well in mind as underlying premises when we address the matter Christian Education, the plight of Catholic Schools, the pastoral ministry and administrative office of Bishops, and the con-

sequent needed alliance for action between the Bishops and Catholic Schools.

Otherwise, we might sadly lose sight of the fundamental reason why the Church is in the field of education, the essential Gospel dimension of Catholic education, the trust we must nurture that God is with us in our teaching Ministry.

But before I actually proceed further, allow me to say — by way of some kind of a warning perhaps — that instead of providing answers, I would rather ask questions, and in place of me herein telling you what to do, I would prefer that you decide what you want done.

That said, permit me now to open my mind on the subject matter assigned to me — without the least pretending that this too is how the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines sees it. And I wish to address the item by no less than by in fact asking three rather simple questions: Why is alliance needed? What shall the alliance be on? How shall the alliance be done?

WHY IS ALLIANCE NEEDED?

Alliances have the distinct connotation of structural and deliberate collaboration for a common purpose, a collective goal, a corporate option. Allies have come to the conclusion that individually and separately they could no longer make it. Allied entities intend to secure their existence, ascertain their operative integrity, promote their progressive growth. These are the more known and accepted finality elements of alliances.

Now, why should there be alliance for action between the Bishops and Catholic Schools?

It is to integrate their evangelizing task of formation of individuals and the transformation of society? It is to consolidate their apostolic authority and harness their moral strength? Is

it to plan and implement a pro-active program of action with a good and honest look toward the third millennium? It is to face a perceived common threat undermining their respective mission and negating their complementary vision?

The basic reason or even constitutive rationale of the contemplated alliance should be clearly identified and consequently well defined in order to determine the needed particulars of the allied status. Otherwise, the alliance becomes ultimately nominal, and none of the allies draw any real and lasting benefit therefrom. The truth of the matter is that a veritable alliance comes to fore only after a process of self-knowledge, common reflection, deliberation and determination among the allies — particularly so if the alliance is meant to address and resolve serious problems and standing issues.

WHAT SHALL BE THE ALLIANCE ON?

It is evident that the envisioned alliance for action between the bishops and Catholic schools can call for a good number of generic as well as specific agenda, considering that Bishops have multiple pastoral and administrative functions and that Catholic Schools have multifaceted apostolic and temporal dimensions.

For the moment however, it might serve us well to focus our attention on but three apparently more salient alliance agenda that could be legitimately considered and accordingly resolved upon: One, alliance for action in the work for evangelization and catechesis. Two, alliance for action in the promotion of Catholic education. Three, alliance for action for the sustained operation and development of Catholic schools.

Would it be alliance for action in the work of evangelization and catechesis?

The mandate of proclaiming the truths of the gospel for the implementation of the faith and the imperative of maturing in the faith, constitute an essential constitutive element in the nature and mission of the Church. And this has been, is actually and will ever be the priority agenda for the Church as a whole, for the lay faithful and ecclesial entities therein — the Bishops and Catholic Schools in particular.

Alliance on this evangelizing and catechizing task could mean that the Bishops and Catholic Schools have been probably moving in separate and autonomous directions to the detriment of pastoral and apostolic action programs and plans.

Alliance on this specific agenda item could also mean that there is the perception that after so many long years and so hard toil by the Bishops and Catholic Schools in the field of evangelization and catechesis, there is still much to be desired in their work paradigm as might be deduced from the allegedly poor faith quality and low moral commitment of a good number of their previous charges — such as some who are now in fact leaders in government, business and industry and who in fact underwent Christian formation or Catholic education.

Finally, alliance for action in the work for evangelization and catechesis might mean that there is the felt need that the signs of the times call for the closing of their ranks, the consolidation of their labors and coordination of their options, considering the rather critical socio-moral indications of our days as seen in the life, behavioral pattern and attitudinal posture of a good number of men, the women and the young people of today.

Would it be alliance for action in the promotion of Catholic education?

Is there really a substantial difference between education that is categorically qualified as "catholic" and education that is something else? If in reality they are in substance the same but accidentally only distinct, many might claim that there would be no sense really in promoting Catholic education per se as this would result in but a wasteful duplication of labor, a plain competition for enrollment, a futile use of time and an exertion of effort that could be directed to more proper and beneficial finalities.

And in the event that the Catholic educational system does have that substantive distinction, that essential "id" neither ingrained much less verified in other learning structures and institutions, what is this really and truly — in addition to the offering of a commonly admitted "good" education usually perceived in terms of the impressive command of English, the admirable knowledge of the sciences, the excellent preparation for the secular professions?

Lastly, with the substantial difference attributed to Catholic Education having been rendered definite and defined, would the Bishops and the Administrators of Catholic Schools through their alliance for action want to do much more in enhancing and realizing that distinctive Catholic constitutive educational ID — so that those who have the opportunity of having Catholic education ultimately emerge truly better persons, better citizens, and even better Catholics?

Would it be alliance for action for the sustained operation and development of Catholic Schools?

Basically due to financial constraints, I have been told more than once, may, actually forewarned the recent past, first, that Catholic Schools were definitely on their farewell days in our national educational scene; second, that this was true in a more radical way for small Parochial Schools; and third, that the

Christian faithful concerned from the parents down to the Bishops better start praying much, resolving well, acting soon.

Small Catholic Schools in particular seem to be losing their good teachers to higher paying placements. This would ultimately mean poor quality elementary and secondary Christian education. More and more students appear to be leaving these Schools as their parents find themselves progressively incapable of financing their needed educational expenses. This would eventually depopulate the Schools and argue against their very reason for being. And on the part of Bishops and the School Administrators, they might find it gradually frustrating to continue funding and continuing School operation, much more so to plan and work for School development.

Would the Bishops and the Catholic Schools then pursue an alliance leading basically to seeking and assuring funds for School maintenance and growth?

Wherefore, would they want to bring the School and the community closer to one another so that the School feels it is an integral part of the community, and the community on the other hand consider the school as its own — for their mutual support and benefaction?

Would they make the option to devise even but a simple, practical but effective mechanism for bigger Catholic Schools to assist financially in one way or another unable or disabled small School according to certain standards and conditionalities?

Would they wish to make a clear and urgent formal corporate and consolidated resolution or advisory to the Government Agency concerned stating the financial predicament of Catholic Schools, establishing their signal and needed service to the nation as a whole, validating their right and claim for public funding assistance?

HOW SHALL THE ALLIANCE BE DONE?

To address this question, it might be good to review the following more pertinent normative pronouncements, first, in the level of the Universal Church, second, within the sphere of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, and third, in the competence of the diocesan Bishops.

The Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome has the following formal task: "The Congregation expresses and exercises the solicitude of the Apostolic See... for the promotion and organization of Catholic education... watches over all Catholic schools..." (Const. Apost. De Curia Romana. AAS 1988).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has the Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education with the following official assignment: "Shall coordinate with various Catholic educational associations in the Philippines, on matters affecting the promotion and development of the ministry of education." (CBCP Constitution and By-Laws, Art. VII, Section 2, Letter e.).

Finally, the Directory for the Episcopal Ministry among other complementary agenda, assigns to Bishops as provided by law, the pastoral care for and administrative vigilance on Catholic schools, inclusive of the development of general policies regarding their organizational management (NCCB 1983: Can. 804,806 CIC).

Depending wherefore on the considered study, the due consideration and deliberate option of those concerned, it appears that there are in fact three ready premises that could be tapped to forge the needed alliance for action among Bishops and Catholic schools — from the local to the national and all the way to the universal levels.

For being here and for listening thank you and God bless!

Instrumentum Laboris

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

JESUS CHRIST THE SAVIOUR AND HIS MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE IN ASIA: "...THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY" (JN 10:10)

PREFACE

The initiative of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II to convoke a Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia, set forth in the Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente, appears in a series of continental synodal assemblies called in light of the celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. The first such assembly was held for the African continent in 1994. The Special Assembly for America recently concluded in December 1997. The remaining special assemblies for Oceania and Europe are to be celebrated in the closing years of the Second Millennium.

The Synodal Assembly for Asia is to take place in 1998, after a period of preparation characterized by some significant moments: the consultation for arriving at a synod topic, followed by the Holy Father's approval of its formulation; the publication

of the Lineamenta with its series of questions, sent to the interested parties (3 September 1996); and the publication of the present working document or Instrumentum Laboris, which, taking into account the responses to the preparatory document, is the proposed agenda for synod discussion.

The announcement of the celebration of the Special Assembly for Asia generated great interest in the Universal Church as well as among the particular Churches on the Asian continent. This is seen in the many responses and observations to the Lineamenta which arrived at the General Secretariat. Many particular Churches took full advantage of the preparatory period and the Lineamenta document to devote time and prayer to a common reflection on various aspects of the synod topic, thereby providing for the richness of the content of the Instrumentum Laboris.

In possession of all the material submitted to the General Secretariat resulting from the preparatory stage, the Pre-Synodal Council proceeded, with the help of experts, to draft the working document during the Fourth Meeting of the Pre-Synodal Council, held in Rome, 30 September-2 October 1997. At this meeting, the members studied the draft text which was composed on the basis of the responses and was structured according to the main topics suggested in the questions of the Lineamenta. The observations of the members of the Pre-Synodal Council at this meeting were incorporated into the various parts of the final text which follows.

In the work of arriving at a text which reflected the contents of the responses and observations, three aspects were given consideration, all of which are found in some form in the definitive text: 1) shared points of view 2) contrasting aspects and 3) possible oversights in the responses. Moreover, it is worthwhile to state that the document contains not only the above points but also those subjects which, according to the responses, should receive further examination and development. In these cases, even

though they may not be given an extensive treatment in the present text, they are mentioned so as to become part of the agenda for treatment in synodal discussion.

The Instrumentum Laboris, presented in the two official languages of the Special Assembly (English and French), is structured according to a logical progression of ideas based on elements in the synod topic: "Jesus Christ, the Saviour and His mission of Love and Service in Asia, 'that they may have life and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10)'"'. Following this plan, the working document is composed of an Introduction, Seven Chapters and a brief Conclusion.

The Introduction, first alluding to the synod as a moment of grace for the Church as well as for the Asian continent, immediately focuses attention on the person of Jesus Christ and His life-giving mission, a mission in which the Church and each of her members takes part.

Chapter I, entitled Asian Realities, treats the vastness of the Asian continent and its rich variety of peoples, religions, cultures and living situations. This brief description is followed by a similar treatment, from the Church's perspective, in Chapter II, Ecclesial Realities in Asia.

Chapter III, A Brief Evaluation of Catholic Mission History in Asia, attempts to provide highlights in the Church's missionary activity on the Asian continent as a vantage-point for the succeeding chapters, treating various elements in the formulation of the synod topic.

Jesus Christ: The Good News of Salvation, the title of Chapter IV, describes the central aspect of the Church's message of evangelization and her mission, i.e., the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour and Son of Man.

Chapter V, God's Salvific Design: The Holy Spirit at Work is a panoramic view of the role of Holy Spirit from Creation throughout history as a preparation of peoples, religions and cultures for the encounter with Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Within the context of the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology of communion, Chapter VI, The Church as Communion, describes the life and mission of communion at the various Church levels: the relations existent in the particular Church, the sharing among particular Churches, the particular Church and the universal Church, and the Church's mission of communion in the world.

The Seventh and final Chapter, The Church's Mission of Love and Service in Asia, is an outward look to the sources and means of the Church's mission of love and service on the Asian continent, ending with an invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as Mother of Evangelization and Model of Mission.

The brief Conclusion takes up anew the synod topic in the context of the new evangelization on the threshold of the Third Millennium.

Card. Jan P. Cardinal Schotte, C.I.C.M.
General Secretary

INTRODUCTION

A Moment of Grace for the Church

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia comes at a very important time in the history of the universal Church and the Church in Asia. The worldwide Church is looking ahead to the celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, when she will cross the threshold of the Third Millennium. While joining the universal Church in this forward vision, the Church in Asia is also looking backwards over two millennia of her

history in Asia, in thanksgiving for the gift of salvation and in joyful hope as she journeys forward into the future towards her Lord, Jesus Christ.

This synodal gathering is taking place three decades after the Second Vatican Council. During this period the Church in Asia, in union with the worldwide Church, has been striving to assimilate and live Vatican II's ecclesiology of communion in Jesus Christ. In order to strengthen the bonds of communion among the bishops and to foster the pastoral concerns of the Church, episcopal conferences and oriental synods have proven to be beneficial and fruitful structures for the Church in Asia. In a similar way, the establishment of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (F.A.B.C.) is proving of assistance to the member bishops of central and south-east Asia in their treating mutual pastoral concerns.

Furthermore, following the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, the Church in Asia has also sought to increase the communion of her members as well as to be an instrument of communion with other Christian Churches and with followers of other religious traditions and cultures. To achieve this end, she has embarked upon many new activities in Asia.

In the Western part of the Asian continent, the Church and the testimony of her members has existed for almost 2000 years. Many traditions hold that from Christianity's beginning in this part of Asia, various apostles set forth to evangelize other parts of the Asian continent. In the succeeding centuries, other disciples went forth in true missionary spirit to spread the Gospel in distant lands. Indications exist in China, for example, which bear witness to the presence of Christian communities as far back as the 7th century. In still other parts of Asia, this Special Assembly for Asia is taking place after only five centuries of evangelization work.

A Moment of Grace for Asia

The Special Assembly for Asia is also an important moment for the people of Asia. During the last fifty years many countries in Asia have their independence. A modern and more self-confident Asia is emerging with its ancient cultures, philosophies and religious traditions. The twenty-first century and the Third Millennium will offer new challenges and opportunities to Asian peoples in shaping their own destiny and taking their places on the world scene.

The Special Assembly for Asia, therefore, comes at a crucial moment in the history of the Asian continent, coming about in accord with the intention of Pope John Paul II as expressed in his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente** and in his extensive treatment of the subject at the Plenary Assembly of the F.A.B.C. at Manila in January, 1995, in conjunction with his Apostolic Visitation to Asia for World Youth Day².

The Topic of the Synod

The topic chosen by the Holy Father for the synod, namely, Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia: "... that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10), is most appropriate for Asia, especially in the context of its plurality of religions and cultures, as well as the variety of socio-economic and political situations. This plurality and variety provide fertile ground for the saving message of Jesus Christ the Saviour and opportunity for Church initiatives to demonstrate the Lord's love for Asia's peoples through various acts of loving service aimed at putting into action the Lord's gospel of life.

¹ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 38; AAS 87 (1995) 30-31.

² Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the FABC Plenary Assembly*, Manila, 1995, 11: *L'Osservatore Romano*: Weekly Edition in English, 25 January 1995, p. 6.

The Church came into being as a result of the salvific act of Jesus Christ in the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection. Her faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world is the centre of her faith, determining her mission of bringing the gift of eternal life to all. In Christ — the Church believes — all peoples, including those of Asia, can live as brothers and sister in one large family of God in authentic freedom and newness of life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that everyone who believes in him may not perish but my have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

The mission of Jesus is to give fullness of life to all, especially to those in circumstances where life is threatened by sin, evil, selfishness, injustice and exploitation. In every human instance, Jesus wants to bring his life to bear. His mission concerns the life of the Spirit, the gift of eternal life: "Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes ... Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:21, 25).

A Mission of Love and Service to Life in Asia

The Gospels attest that Jesus offered life through deeds of love and service on behalf of all. Love and service take specific forms in Asia. They mean having a genuine regard for all Asia's peoples, appreciating their deep religious nature as well as their many cultures. This love is translated into action through various forms of service to the many peoples of Asia, especially the poor and those in need, so that all might share in the fullness of life which Jesus came to offer. Jesus' mission is that of bringing to all those in any form of captivity the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Such is also the mission of the Church as she seeks to renew herself through the celebration of the Jubilee of Redemption in Jesus Christ and as she prepares to enter the third millennium. Her mission today in Asia is to be at the service of life, particularly as lived by those suffering from the effects of sin and injustice.

The Synodal Pilgrimage

The Church in Asia is presently involved in a synodal journey, a journey which, it is hoped, will lead to internal renewal and revitalization of the commitment to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ through a new evangelization. In keeping with the etymological meaning of the word, *syn-dos*, "a walking together," the synodal journey is done in the company of Jesus Christ, in communion with all the particular Churches of Asia and with the worldwide Church, and in a spirit of unity not only with the Christian Churches and communities in Asia but also with the followers of the Great Religions and religious traditions in Asia.

Along the way, the Church wants to recognize the presence of the Spirit who reveals Jesus Christ in Asian realities. She wants to recognize the presence of Jesus Christ through humbly sharing in the life-experiences of the Asian peoples and through service to all. The Church in Asia seeks to do this, not as a stranger in a foreign cultural, organizational and liturgical garb but through means of Asian cultures, making her own "the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people"³ of Asia.

³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1.

CHAPTER I — ASIAN REALITIES

Asia in General

Geographical Area and Population

The vast continent of Asia extends from West Asia and the Gulf countries to the East Asian countries. The southern portion includes South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia. In the north, there are the Central Asian Republics and in the north east, Siberia and Mongolia. In this large land mass, the great distances are gapped by a multiplicity of races, religions and cultures.

The responses to the *Lineamenta* confirmed that Asia is a continent with numerous populations. Three-fourths of the world's population is in Asia, a significant number of which is youth. In this way, Asia is rich in human life and human potential.

Contrasts within Asia are equally striking at the level of social organization, political life and patterns of economy and standards of life, both within the countries of Asia and between the countries themselves. Various responses point to the fact that where there is human life, the Church is present in varying ways and seeking to increase that presence in response to her mission of spreading the Gospel of Life.

Religions, Cultures and Ancient Civilizations

Asia is home to the great religions of the world such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is also the birthplace of other religious traditions such as Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, etc. Most are soteriological in character⁴ and offer interpretations of the Absolute, the universe, the human person and his existential

⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 38: AAS 87 (1995) 30.

situation as well as evil and the means of liberation. It is in this religious context that the Church in Asia lives and bears witness to Jesus Christ.

Analysis of Asian realities would be incomplete without reference to what is today called Primal Religion or Traditional Religion. Across Asia there are millions of people who belong to Traditional Religion and other Primal Religions. Some of them have accepted the Christian faith. Many responses point to this fact and mention that the Church needs to enter into dialogue with the followers of Traditional Religion and seek to apply to the cultures which have developed in association with these religions the principles of inculturation in areas of theology, liturgy and spirituality, as a tool in announcing and living the message of life in Jesus Christ.

The religions of Asia have moulded the lives and cultures of Asian people for several millennia and continue to give meaning and direction for their lives even today³. In this sense, many responses indicate that the religions of Asia are indeed living religions, permeating every aspect of the life of the individual, family and society. A deep religious nature is one of the main characteristics of the Asian people, expressed in various ways in the family and social life at critical moments through rites of passage such as birth, marriage and death. Such moments are accompanied by prayer, rituals, sacrifices, reading of the Scriptures, fasting, pilgrimages and almsgiving. According to various responses, these positive elements of religion in Asia readily dispose the people to the saving message of Jesus Christ.

Asia is also the cradle of many ancient civilizations. They have had a significant influence not only Asian cultures, but also

³ Cf. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — F.A.B.C., *Final Statement*, Taipei, 1974, *Evangelization in Modern Asia*, IV, 14 in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, ed. Rosales/Arevalo, New York, Manila, Orbis/Claretians, p. 14.

on many cultures outside of Asia. Furthermore, some of them still show an extraordinary vitality today. These also require attention in the Church's mission on the continent.

Distinctive Characteristics and Situations

Socio-economic

As expected, the responses to the *Lineamenta* portray a continent with many unique characteristics and a vast variety of situations⁶. From country to country, and even within countries themselves, many contrasting differences exist among peoples, cultures, and the circumstances and details of life.

Though a few countries of Asia have made considerable economic progress, a degrading and inhuman poverty, along with its consequent inequalities in many parts of Asia, is perhaps one of the most glaring and saddening phenomena of the continent. Though today's poverty can sometimes be traced back centuries, even millennia, certain injustices and other circumstances seem to be perpetuating this state of affairs. Certain responses have suggested the following: an unjust distribution of resources, unequal opportunities, unwillingness to carry out land reform, poor literacy campaigns, concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, state socialism which inevitably leads to corruption, economic waste and poor governance.

In some areas of Asia, despite rapid economic growth and development, poverty still remains the fate of whole sections of the population. In an ironic twist, in some countries of Asia where the living standard is increasing, cultural values are gradually being eroded, leading to egoism and the breakdown of family and social relationships. In such circumstances, many insist that the Church, besides providing a voice for the poor and oppressed,

⁶ Cf. Ibid; also Bandung, 1990 and Manila, 1995.

needs to provide pastoral services which will assist people, not only materially but spiritually in their course of development.

Industrialization and urbanization also figure into this situation. Rapid industrialization, absence of land reform, diminishing prospects for livelihood in rural areas, the attraction of great cities and other such causes are changing the economic and demographic landscape of many Asian cities. Forced eviction of rural people to make room for mega industries and projects, financial and economic policies that favour the urban elite ignore the rights of the poor. Unplanned urbanization is turning some cities of Asia into large slums where human dignity is oftentimes being lost.

Introduced into the economic situation is the question of bonded labour and child labour. All across Asia there are instances of several million bonded labourers, that is, workers under bond to work even for a lifetime for debts incurred in the past. Bonded labour is prevalent mostly in the brickmaking industry, in stone quarries, the tobacco-cigarette industry, the carpet industry, etc. Despite national and international legislation, and commercial and political pressure, the problems related to the socio-economic situation in many countries of Asia remain unchanged, and in some cases, are even worsening. In her mission of love and service of life, the Church's message of the inviolable dignity of each human person and works commensurate with this teaching can serve the cause which can help improve such situations and lead to a process of development which respects human life.

Culture

Some responses indicate that the economic state of affairs is having collateral effects. New forms of culture are resulting from an over exposure to the mass media, books, magazines, music, films and other forms of entertainment. Although the

media has the potential of being great force for good, many responses mention that what seems to be reaching the Asian market is having an opposite effect. Its images of violence, hedonism, unbridled individualism and materialism are striking at the heart of Asian cultures, at the religious character of the people, families and whole societies. Many responses lament the fact that the sacredness of marriage, the stability of family, and other traditional values are being threatened by the media and entertainment industries on the Asian continent. Such a situation is posing a serious challenges to the Church's message.

Influences from outside Asia are resulting from the movement of peoples for various reasons. Tourism, for example, is a legitimate industry and has its own cultural and educational values. However, in some countries the situation is described where it is having a devastating influence upon the moral and physical landscape of many Asian countries, manifested in prostitution and the degradation of young women, child abuse and prostitution.

In a similar way, responses indicate that migration within Asian countries, between the countries of Asia and from Asian countries to other continents, is posing increasing human and pastoral problems. Poverty, civil war, ethnic conflicts and economic factors are some of the causes of migration. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are often exposed to harsh treatment as well as economic and moral exploitation. Migrant foreign workers are often paid unjust wages and are sometimes required to work in inhuman conditions. They are also exposed to many health hazards and often left without the protection of law. Many call upon the Church in Asia to be sensitive to the pain and human drama caused by migration in and from Asia.

In many parts of Asia, persons belonging to ethnic groups such as tribals, indigenous peoples and minorities based on race, religion, culture, etc., are victims of the injustice of discrimination.

In some countries, caste practices have isolated for centuries whole sections of populations, leaving a consequent psychological, cultural and economic trauma on the social conscience. Certain responses give attention to the particular problem created by discrimination against women and girl children. Despite recent efforts from many quarters to lessen this problem, such attitudes still prevail, affecting educational opportunities, work and wages for women. In such situations, the Church, as small as it might be in a given area, is seen as an instrument — through word and deed — of the saving message of Christ which can lead people to a greater awareness of the dignity of each human person and thus to a greater justice and harmony between people.

A number of responses to the *Lineamenta* touch on several other life-threatening and destructive tendencies in Asia. There is a growing lack of respect for human rights and human life itself, abortion, drug trafficking, addiction to various kinds of drugs, spread of AIDS, criminalization of politics, use of violence to settle disputes, depletion of natural resources, disregard for ecological balance, absence of basic health services, fundamentalism in various forms, etc. These are all new areas in which the Church in Asia has an opportunity to carry out her mission of service of life.

Signs of Hope in Asia

Everywhere in Asia there is visible a new awareness carrying the Asian people to liberate themselves from the legacy of negative traditions, social evils and situations associated with the past. The ancient cultures and religions and their collective wisdom form the solid foundation on which to build the Asia of the future. Levels of literacy, education, research and technology are rising daily. Skilled workers, specialists in various sciences, technicians, researchers, inventors are on the increase. Democratic institutions are taking firm root in many countries.

Many Asian countries are regaining a sense of self-confidence. There is a growing awareness of human dignity, despite failures in some areas. People are growing in their respect for human rights and they want to demand their rights from governments and institutions of power whether national or international. Regional co-operation is on the increase, especially with continental bodies such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Disputes between countries are more and more frequently settled through negotiations rather than armed conflicts. Mutual cooperation and trans-national investments within Asian countries is growing. These and similar factors provide much hope for the Asia of the future, and consequently, for the Church as well.

CHAPTER II — ECCLESIAL REALITIES OF ASIA

Many Churches

The ecclesial situation of Asia is as diverse and distinctive as its secular realities, as seen in the rich variety of Churches. Among the Churches of West Asia special mention must be made of the Churches of Antioch of the Syrians, Antioch of the Greek Melkites and Antioch of the Maronites as well as the Latin Church of Jerusalem. There are also the Chaldean Church of Babylonia and the Armenian Church. Today, most of these Churches live among predominantly Jewish or Islamic populations and cultures, serving their faithful who continue the Christian presence in these countries since the first centuries, and are witnesses to Jesus Christ among other religions.

Many responses mention that their work of evangelization is devoted mostly to works of charity and Christian witness through schools, hospitals and other apostolic works. They seek

to project the image of a servant Church. While these Churches are inculturated in Islamic cultures and in the Arabic language, and hence well placed for dialogue with Islam, they are also in a region of conflicts and are threatened by religious fundamentalism.

Apostolic Churches, coming from the Syrian tradition, exist also in India, i.e., the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church. Responses indicate that these Churches are well rooted in the Indian soil and are generally flourishing with a large number of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. They have a significant presence in the field of education, social and health services and mass media. Large numbers of faithful from these Churches have migrated to many parts of India, the Gulf countries, Europe, Canada and the United States. According to some responses to the *Lineamenta*, however, certain situations related to liturgical tradition, rites, and synodal forms of Church organization and administration are still posing difficulties for these Churches.

The Latin Church extends throughout the continent in varying stages of development. For the most part, her presence has depended on the Church's missionary efforts which have taken place in the last 500 years. The work of missionaries has seen varied success in the course of the centuries. Recently, the Holy Father has established three missions *sui iuris* in the Central Asian Republics: Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In Siberia the Church is happily discovering communities which have kept the faith alive despite the adverse circumstances created by the past communist regime.

A Variety of Living Situations

In addition to the great number of Oriental Churches in Asia, there is a great variety of situations in which these Churches are required to live.

In some parts of Asia, the Church lives in a predominantly Hindu milieu, posing great philosophical, theological and methodological challenges to the Church's mission in Asia. At the same time, modern Hindu reformers are great admirers of the person of Jesus Christ. In some cases, theologians in India have been attempting to interpret Jesus Christ in terms of the dominant India philosophy. Some responses mention that, in this and similar situations, the Church needs to engage in a healthful dialogue and to seek to apply the principles of inculturation in her attempts at evangelization.

With the exception of Indonesia, the presence of the Church in Muslim countries is small; in some cases communities have to deal with discrimination and prejudice. Responses mention that certain communities have often to live in difficult situations where the only type of evangelization which can be done is daily witnessing to the faith and charitable works. In some countries, the Church's members are being put to a real test.

In predominantly Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist countries, the Church is for the most part in the minority. Some responses mention that for the past few decades communities have been living under many restrictions to freedom of worship, missionary work, and movement, and even persecutions. Despite these obvious difficulties, responses mention that in some of these countries there are signs of growth in the work of evangelization and human development. In many cases, the championing of the cause of workers and the marginalized classes as well as the example of the laity in the everyday life of the Church have contributed to a good image of the Church within society.

The Church in the Philippines, the only predominantly Catholic country in Asia, has a unique history of evangelization and growth through different periods of its five hundred year-old history; this has taken place with varying cultural influences. Certain responses mention that various events within the decade

have served to assist the Church in a great movement towards renewal. As a result, the Church has a better understanding of evangelization *ad intra* and *ad extra*, with all its social and spiritual dimensions. The Catholic character of the Philippines is an important factor in the Church's work of evangelization on the Asian continent.

It is only recently that Central Asian Republics, Siberia and Mongolia began to receive attention at the international level, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This is true also of the Church. Missionary work has started in these countries. Some responses mention that the occasion of the Special Assembly for Asia is an opportunity to give greater attention to this region and to the work for the evangelization in these countries where there is a very limited Christian presence.

In some countries the Church lives amidst civil wars, caused by ethnic, communal or ideologically inspired conflicts. The Church as a community of communion, harmony and reconciliation has a mission to people in conflict situations, providing a special opportunity for her to preach in action her message in service to life.

A special situation is created for the Church as a result of sects and other religious movements which are becoming increasingly present and active in Asia. As in other parts of the world, certain social patterns and changes are causing people, especially young people, to embark on a search for meaning in their lives, oftentimes looking to the sects and religious movements because they give an immediate sense of well-being, community feeling, and fellowship. Many responses see the great need of the Church to respond to this situation, especially in revitalizing her pastoral commitment to the spiritual needs of people, strengthen Christian fellowship and education to prayer and use of the Scriptures.

The Image of the Church in Asia

Many responses relate that, in the work of evangelization, the Church in Asia needs to be aware of the image she has among believers of other faiths and non-believers. While the Church is admired for her organizational, administrative, educational, health services, and developmental works, these people often do not see the Church as totally Asian, not simply because much financial support comes from Western countries, but also because of her Western character in theology, architecture, art, etc., and her association with the past history in some sections of Asia. Therefore, some people are reluctant to accept Christianity fearing a loss of national identity and culture. Aware of this fact, the bishops in Asia are attempting to address the matter.

With few exceptions, the Church in Asia is seen as a clerical institution, e.g., in administration, liturgy, formation, etc. Many responses mention that the laity, especially women and young people, are eager to become more actively involved in various levels of local Churches. They also wish to take part in programs of catechesis and ongoing formation so as to fulfill their role in the mission of the Church in Asia. In some cases, the responses sought a greater cooperation among the various states in the Church so that the evangelizing mission of the Church might be more effective.

Christian Mission and Asian Religions

The Western Christian missionary approach to other Asian religions, popular devotions and spirituality, with the notable exception of people like Ricci and Valignano in China and Japan, and De Nobili and Beschi in India, oftentimes lacked a full appreciation of these elements. At times, there was also an inadequate regard for Asian cultures. Even though the missionaries' efforts met with many successes, it is felt that a proper understanding of these elements in the work of evangelization would have led to a greater acceptance of the faith by the people

of Asia. Therefore, some responses mention that the Church's rediscovered appreciation of other religions and cultures should find greater expression in her missionary approach.

Positive Elements and Signs of Hope

Lay Witness

The responses to the *Lineamenta* indicate many positive elements in the particular Churches in Asia. Most of the Church faithful can be termed "practising Catholics," who for the most part give priority to a sacramental and devotional life. The fact that Asians are religious by nature seems to be of assistance in this regard. In many parts of Asia, family prayer, reading of the Scriptures and family devotions nourish the religious life of the faithful. In a particular way, Catholics put their faith in action in moments of natural calamities and communal strife.

The emergence and growth of Basic Christian Communities, charismatic movements and Basic Human Communities are also very positive elements in a number of particular Churches. Some events sponsored by charismatic movements, such as days of spiritual retreat, prayer meetings and gatherings of spiritual renewal, have attracted national interest in which several thousands of the followers of other religions have participated. Ecclesial movements also offer an opportunity to many to enter into dialogue with the followers of other religions.

Certain responses refer to the migration of Christians in and outside Asia whose regular religious practice assists in spreading the faith. In this regard, missionary sisters, brothers and priests from Asia are sent to serve these people and the local Churches in several parts of the world, such as Africa, Latin America, Oceania, etc. This is a most welcome missionary phenomenon in Asia. It is estimated that several thousand priests, religious

sisters and brothers, and lay persons are working as missionaries in countries other than their own in Asia and elsewhere.

In a number of particular Churches in Asia, the laity increasingly exercise their role in the life and mission of the Church, as exemplified by lay institutes in Japan and the Philippines. In some countries, the laity play an important role at the national level in politics, education, health care, etc. There are permanent structures in many countries of Asia for the formation of the laity in theology, spirituality, and other related subjects. There are also centres where the laity, the clergy and bishops come together for pastoral planning and work. These are very promising initiatives for the future of the Church in Asia.

Consecrated Witness

Certain parts of the Church in Asia have shown a steady increase in the number of vocations during the past decades. While many vocations go to traditional religious congregations and institutes which are Western in origin, in recent years a number of new local religious congregations have sprung up in Asia. In general, the percentage of vocations to the priesthood, the religious life, other forms of consecrated life and missionary institutes, is higher than in most other parts of the universal Church.

The Christian witness of love and service to the poor shown by Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity as well as by many other religious women and men have contributed greatly to reveal to the peoples of Asia the authentic countenance of Jesus Christ and the true nature of the Church. Many responses mention how greatly welcomed and appreciated is the Church's presence in homes for the handicapped, orphanages, leprosaria, rural dispensaries and in movements which seek to meet the needs of the marginalized.

In many cases, this service provided by missionaries has led to martyrdom. Their testimony in the history of evangelization has enriched the life of the Church in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and many other countries of Asia. The witness of the martyrs of the past and the present is a great means of evangelization. Therefore, certain responses voice a hope and desire that the Church will consider more Asian martyrs in the canonical process leading to sainthood.

Witness in Asia has also come from a great many of the Church's religious orders and congregations who have made a major contribution to the growth of the local Churches in Asia during the last five hundred years of evangelization. Tens of thousands of religious sisters and brothers, by their love and unselfish service to those who suffer from poverty in its many forms, have contributed to nourishing the faith of many in the Church in Asia. Some of these have given an invaluable service to local Churches by establishing houses of formation, especially seminaries. They have been able to reveal the compassionate, loving and caring face of Jesus to the peoples of Asia. Religious brothers have given an outstanding service to the cause of general education, vocational training, technical education and developmental works. Contemplative religious have also made a unique contribution to the Christian mission in Asia by their prayers and their witness of complete dedication to a life of union with God.

Some responses refer to missionary institutes of diocesan clergy which have had a great share in the work of evangelization in Asia. Some of them have sent thousands of missionaries to Asia during the last four hundred years. Today, they are followed by several Asian-born missionary institutes. A good number of diocesan priests is volunteering for missionary work in other countries. Some of the earliest seminaries for local clergy in Asia were established by them.

Ecclesial Institutions

The Church in Asia has a large network of various kinds of institutions, despite the fact that in some places Christians form a tiny minority of the population. In some countries, where the Christian population is as low as 2%, the percentage of Church related institutions is as high as 30% of non-governmental organizations and voluntary organizations operating in the field of social services.

The Church has a formidable instrument in its hands to bear witness to Christ's compassion, love and concern for the poor of Asia. Perhaps the greatest among these are her educational institutions, i.e., primary schools, high schools, colleges and universities. The Church also has health care institutions, such as hospitals, medical colleges, dispensaries and other health centres. There are homes for the elderly, the handicapped, the blind and those with speech and hearing disabilities. Moreover, the Church has a good number of publishing centres for books, reviews, newspapers, weeklies, popular magazines.

In recent years a number of renewal centres, ashrams, spirituality centres, audio-visual centres and broadcasting stations have also been started by Christians in Asia". Nearly every country in Asia has now pastoral and catechetical centres. Furthermore, the Church has established institutions for human promotion, human rights, inculturation, etc.

The Church in Asia has not only institutions, but a relatively large number of very qualified, dedicated and efficient personnel to run all its institutions. However, certain responses pose the question: Are all Church institutions also centres of Christian values and witness in a largely non-Christian environment?" and "How can these institutions serve as a tool of Christian witness and service to life in Asia?"

Conclusion

The Asian continent is characterized by a diversity of religions, cultures and peoples as well as of ecclesial realities. Their coming together in Synod is itself a grace and an example for the peoples of Asia which can work for the welfare and progress of the continent and all its peoples. It is in this continent that God has called together Christians in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is in the context of the socio-economic realities, its political history and present situation, and in the context of its multi-religious traditions that the little flock of Jesus Christ must live and carry out its saving mission.

CHAPTER III — A BRIEF EVALUATION OF CATHOLIC MISSION HISTORY IN ASIA

The Faith and Its Impact

The Gift of Faith

From Apostolic times to the present, faith in Jesus Christ is the gift brought by the missionaries and offered to all in Asia. The term 'missionary' includes not simply missionaries from outside Asia, but all native missionaries, clerical and lay, diocesan clergy and those in consecrated life, and Christian communities which witness to Jesus Christ and carry the Good News to their neighbours within the Asian continent or to far off lands. Their example of Christian charity, spirit of dedication, service and sacrifice plants the seeds of faith in the hearts of countless Asians. The fact that tens of thousands of Christians gave their lives in times of persecutions in many Asian countries, especially in Vietnam, Japan, China and Korea, is proof that the faith has taken deep root in the hearts of the Asian people. For this, the Church in Asia rejoices and expresses her gratitude to missionaries who are bringing the faith to various parts of Asia. She also rejoices

in the great number of Asian missionaries at work outside their own areas and countries.

Today, in almost every Asian country a Christian presence exists; in some it is a significant number of people, in others, a small minority. By and large, the particular Churches of Asia are well established and have their local clergy and religious to carry out their pastoral and missionary duties. Thanks to missionaries, local communities were established; they were nurtured with continuing catechesis and developed ecclesial structures, a sacramental life and devotions to support their Christian life. At present, these communities have become self-supporting Churches in many ways, though not fully.

Leaven in Society

Because of the presence of the local Church in a given country, the Gospel is being announced, becoming a leaven in Asian society, even if not always acknowledge as such. The Gospel has the power to transform Asian societies. It has challenged many social systems and evils in Asian society and acted as an agent critical judgment. As a result, a number of reform movements within several Asian countries have come about.

Though the Church was not fully involved in independence movements, indirectly she has inspired such movements. In many cases, independence movements were initiated by persons educated in Christian institutions in Asia and abroad. Several outstanding personalities at the highest levels of national life, past and present, were taught in missionary institutions.

Christian mission in general has been an agent of the advancement of culture. In fact, many missionaries were men and women outstanding as linguists, scholars, historians, poets and scientists. Many Asian languages were put into writing and

foundational books, such as grammars, dictionaries, etc., were done by missionaries. Besides making significant contributions to existing Asian languages both classical and modern, missionaries also translated many Christian classics into several Asian languages, thus enriching many languages. In this way, they also gained the respect and gratitude of many non-Christians. They also became engaged in the publication of popular magazines, scientific reviews, weeklies, daily newspapers, and scholarly books. In some cases, missionaries were also the instruments and channels of introducing modern science into several countries in Asia. Some distinguished themselves as anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of tribal peoples, indigenous peoples, minorities, and marginalized sections of society. In several parts of Asia, missionaries are responsible for the establishment of libraries at the popular and scholarly levels.

In a related manner, high rates of literacy and education have also accompanied the spread of the Gospel, particularly in Asia where in many areas education was limited to the higher classes of society. The Church has undertaken programs to help eliminate illiteracy in Asia and increase the level of education of its people, providing educational opportunities at the elementary level as well as at higher levels of learning. In many places in Asia, girls and women, who were formally excluded from this field, are now receiving an education. Along the same lines, the Church has been instrumental in introducing and encouraging technical, professional, vocational and industrial education in several cases. It has also brought new attitudes and values to manual work and its inherent human dignity.

Human Services

Wherever the Church's mission has gone, the care of human life and service to life have followed. Missionaries, particularly religious sisters and Christian nurses, have distinguished themselves in their evangelical witness to the healing ministry of Jesus.

As a result, the Asian continent can boast of hundreds of hospitals and thousands of dispensaries run by the Church, primarily in the midst of the poorer classes. Such action has led to alleviating malnutrition, the curing of various illnesses and the providing of better child care, preventive medicine, diagnostic services, etc.

Missionaries and Christians in general have been present in rescue operations and resettlement works in times of natural calamities like earth quakes, floods and drought. In times of famine they have been very generous with personnel and means. In a number of cases, Christian missionaries have been, and still are, in the forefront for the development of small scale cottage industries, employment schemes, co-operatives, rural banks, etc. By establishing co-operative and rural banks they offer assistance to persons in personal economic matters, with many families benefiting from such self-help projects.

Social Reform

The Gospel contains the seeds of human dignity, freedom and human rights. Thus, the Church has been able to show herself on the Asian continent to be a defender of human dignity and rights. In this way, the presence of Christian mission has led to reforms in several areas of social life. In a number of cases, the missionaries and their Christian followers have provided the impulse towards the formulation and application of legislation relating to prison reform, total hours of work, the health and safety of workers in mines and health-hazard industries, protection of women and children in certain industries, etc. The support given to marginalized peoples, tribals, fisherfolk, refugees and the working classes is generally acknowledged throughout the Asian continent.

Through introducing the education of girls, the Church in Asia has given a great impetus towards the emancipation of women in general and in many specific areas. It is mainly

education that enables women to have an equal status in society. With the entry of religious sisters into the Asian missionary scene, the process of social emancipation of women gained a fresh momentum. In challenging a number of religious and social customs, the announcement of the Christian Gospel has led to legislation against caste practices, permitting temple entry to the so-called untouchables (*Harijans*), and discouraging the practice of self-immolation by widows (*satti*).

Christian mission in Asia has also brought about an increase in vocations among women. They in turn have been instruments of social change through their work as teachers and other educational works, health services as teachers, nurses, dedicated to the service of the poor, the sick and the handicapped.

Critical Aspects

Where several Churches in Asia can trace their roots to Apostolic times, the spread of the Gospel in Asia has met with difficulty. The missionary efforts of the early Church towards Central Asia and China made by the Syrian Church did meet with some success. In fact, in the first eight centuries of the Church, the Gospel had reached the farthest end of Asia, to China as far as Beijing. The Western missionary efforts of the Franciscans in the 13th century led by Giovanni da Montecorvino in China also had some limited success. Nevertheless, most of the particular Churches founded as a result of the Syrian missionary effort and by the Franciscans were practically destroyed because of various causes, such as the Islamic invasions, difficulties in encountering ancient religious traditions, an inadequate appreciation of Asian philosophic, religious and cultural systems, etc.

Most of the present day particular Churches in Asia are the fruit of modern missionary efforts originating the West from the 16th century. Taking advantage of the European colonial movement, the Church sent missionaries to spread the message

of the Gospel. In the course of their work, these missionaries encountered ancient and highly developed philosophical systems, social organizations and religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, which, over the centuries have developed profound religious and philosophical explanations concerning the absolute, the universe and the person, seeking to illuminate humanity's present condition, its final destiny and the ways to reach that destiny. These teachings were supported by deeply moving scriptures, liturgical rites prayers, methods of contemplation, the practice of virtues for every stage of humanity's pilgrimage to salvation and self-realization. Sacred art, architecture, and worship also belonged to a highly developed system.

The lives of the Asian people of today, at the individual, family and social levels, are deeply permeated by religious sentiments and practices. Popular religious practices, places of pilgrimage, centres of prayer and dialogue, myths and stories bring the philosophical religion to the level of the masses. Thus every aspect of social life is imprinted with a deep sense of religion. On the other hand, there is no compelling hierarchical structures to determine and guide religious beliefs. A wide spectrum of faith and morals is permissible. Religious authority is based not on official position, but on the religious -leaders' experience of God and his ability to communicate it to others.

Asian religions propose to give an answer to man's search for the meaning of life, values, and an explanation and interpretation of the universe, his actual state of religious and moral ambivalence, his situation of brokenness, self-alienation, and evil. They also offer concrete means of liberation from the present existential predicament of evil, suffering, death, and provide spiritualities for self-realization. Moreover, they hold to the nobility of their religious traditions, interpretations and means of liberation-salvation.

This is the context in which the present Christian mission is to take place. Therefore, the new evangelization is called upon to consider not simply the content of the Gospel message, but those to whom it is directed. This was the conviction of great missionaries like Francis Xavier and Valignano in Japan, Ricci in China, De Nobili and Beschi in India. Among the causes in the past why the efforts of the Church's missionaries in Asia met with limited success, might there be a lack of proper understanding of Asian religions, their inherent values and strengths, their centuries-old teachings, their inner power of self-renewal as well as a reluctance to adopt methods which were suited to the Asian mentality?

In evaluating the Church's program of a new evangelization in Asia, the question of properly understanding an Asian mentality might also be raised in conjunction with past historical experiences which colour the present situation. Among these are such historically sensitive issues as colonialism, the *padroado*, inculturation of the Gospel, reaction to a perceived Westernization, etc.

CHAPTER IV — JESUS CHRIST: THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION

Some Perceptions of Christ in the Church

Jesus: Son of God

The Church in every age looks to Jesus Christ so as to come to an understanding of her vocation and mission in the Church and in the world. The first encyclical of Pope John Paul II, setting the theme of his pontificate, states: "The Church's fundamental function in every age and particularly in our own is to direct man's gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God, to help all men to be

familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus"⁷.

In this spirit, the Church in Asia, engaged in the synod process, wishes to look to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all, in order to come to a proper understanding of the life she shares in Him, to strengthen her union with Him and to renew her dedication to her mission to all peoples of Asia to share that fullness of life in Him, now and in the world to come.

For Christians, Jesus Christ is the centre of salvation history going back to the very first moment of creation. It is in him that everything is created and in Him everything reaches fulfillment (cf. Jn 1:3ff). The Church believes that Christ is the firstborn of all creation, in whom all things were created and in whom all things are also saved, for he is the firstborn from the dead and the head of the body, the Church or the community of the redeemed. It is in him that all things are reconciled to God (cf. Col 1:20). Using cultic terminology, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews states that Jesus Christ is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being. It is He who achieves "purification" for the sins of all (cf. Heb 1:1-3). Thus, in him all creation is saved. The faith of the Church in Jesus Christ has been passed down beginning with the Apostles' experience of the Risen Lord who breathes the Holy Spirit into his disciples on the day of resurrection. That same Holy Spirit came to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, compelling them to go forth into the world to bring others to the new life which they came to know in the Lord Jesus Christ. Participation in the mystery of the One God as a Community or Trinity of Persons is the beginning, sustaining force and goal of the Church's mission.

⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, 10; AAS 71 (1979) 275.

Many responses to the *Lineamenta* recall that the Christian message is not simply a set of teachings but a dynamic relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, died and risen, who introduces, sustains and brings to fulfillment the life intended for humanity from the moment of creation. In this regard, much of the success of the new evangelization in Asia depends on how people come to recognize Jesus so as to respond to the perennial invitation to experience fullness of life in Him through participation in the communion of the Church, His Body.

Most are in agreement that the program of a new evangelization begins with a proper catechesis of the Church's members. In this regard, various responses have noted that Christ is seen in a variety of ways by Catholics in Asia. For most people in the Church community, there seems to be little difficulty in viewing Christ as divine, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of God. Flowing from this acknowledgment of Jesus as Son of God, the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt 16:17) comes various associated roles, i.e., teacher, shepherd, healer, miracle worker, etc.

In some areas, the viewing of Christ solely from the divine perspective by some faithful in the Church has the potential of setting Christ apart from the world with its problems and difficulties. In placing over-emphasis on the divine, the unique role of the individual and personal responsibility are weakened, if not totally relinquished. In some cases, especially among converts, where there seems to be no difficulty in intellectually making an act of faith in the Lord, sometimes there is difficulty in allowing the faith to have an impact on daily life.

To counteract such difficulties, many responses insist that catechesis include a complete and total presentation of the Person of Christ, based on the Scriptures and the Church's Tradition throughout the centuries. Since all agree that the most compelling announcement of Jesus Christ is through the witness of His

followers, they further insist that, given the Asian mentality, the catechesis received by the faithful be so devised as to allow them to experience and celebrate their relationship with the Lord within the Church in order to be better able to witness to the faith in everyday life.

Jesus as Saviour

By his own admission, Jesus came that all might have life and have it abundantly (cf. Jn 10:10). He declared Himself to be the Way to be followed, the Truth to be believed and the Life to be experienced in its fullness (cf. Jn 14:6). In announcing the birth of the Christ, the angel indicates his mission from God in bestowing his name, "...and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). As a basis for accepting Him as Saviour, the Scriptures indicate that Jesus preached repentance for sins and conversion of heart: "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15).

The definitive act of salvation is accomplished by Christ through his Paschal Mystery, i.e., His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Throughout the ages, in obedience to her Lord, the Church has offered this gift to all in Christ's name, to all who believe and are baptized. Through His exaltation on the cross, He draws all peoples to himself (cf. Jn 12:32). His body was broken in death and his blood shed for all for the remission of sins. (cf. Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24).

The Risen Christ sent forth his disciples on a universal mission to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His Name to the ends of the earth (cf. Lk 24:47-49), and to make disciples of all nations (cf. Mt 28:19). On Pentecost, His disciples are empowered through the power of the Spirit to go forth and witness to this new life in Christ (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:1-11). Since that day, people of every nationality have accepted the proclamation of

Jesus Christ and experience that new life in the community of the Church.

Responses to the *Lineamenta* indicate that the overriding title for Christ among his disciples, associated with his mission to all humanity, is that of Saviour and Redeemer, who in freeing a "people" from sin and all its effects — particularly death — has established a Church, or worshipping community, called to give praise to God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging Jesus as Saviour involves not simply confession of sin but a change of heart, that is, accepting Jesus Christ as Lord of one's life in an ongoing process of conversion. As many replies indicate, this is a solid basis for undertaking an apostolate which seeks to apply and extend the values of Gospel to the living situations prevalent in Asia, particularly those which deal with the effects of sin as experienced in society.

For this purpose, many call for a living witness by the Church community: through the celebration of the Sacraments, particularly the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist; through attitudes of forgiveness and reconciliation towards others; and through efforts as a community to combat the effects of sin in society so as to bring about peace, harmony and fellowship. Most agreed that achieving this end will require not simply a proper catechetical program to instruct individual members of the Church, but formation projects for whole communities, where others may come to see the visible effects of acknowledging Christ as Saviour and experience them first-hand in their lives, the most convincing form of witness to Christ.

On this topic, many responses mention that Christ is not simply one of many "Saviour" figures among the many Asian religions and philosophies, but the "one and only" Saviour. Certain responses see a need to present and explain more clearly and frankly that Jesus Christ is not only Saviour, but Saviour in a manner which is entirely different from those to which the

Asian mind is accustomed. However, in this regard, some responses caution that the term "Liberator" in reference to Christ should be avoided, since it is too restricted to a worldly philosophy and outlook.

Some maintain, that in the past the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in relation to other religions was not adequately presented. Today there is an urgent need to present this topic in the context of the universal salvific will of God for all peoples, especially in missionary proclamation or *kerygma*. Some suggested one of the many ways of doing this, in particularly Asiatic manner, would be through the use of stories and parables coming from the Bible. The Church is motivated by the desire to bear witness to Jesus Christ in contemporary Asian society, and therefore, as many insist, any presentation should be done without any sense of superiority or a condescending attitude towards other religions.

Jesus as God-made-Man

In Jesus Christ the story of humanity and the story of each human being become a divine story. His life, death and resurrection has a salvific meaning and value for all human beings. The Second Vatican Council states: "By his incarnation the Son of God united himself in some sense with every man."⁸

Jesus presented himself to his contemporaries as the Good Samaritan, the sower of the Word, and the Good Shepherd. Though he identified himself with the Father as His Son, he also identified himself with every human being, in each person's longing for fullness of life, and with every form of suffering, mental and physical. Thus the author of the Letter to the Hebrews states: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who in every

⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). The community He founded was to follow his example and be characterized by such human qualities as mercy, forgiveness, simplicity and authenticity of life, brotherly love and charity in mutual service and sharing of goods, spiritual and material. Thus St. James writes: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27). Any other form or expression of religion would be like a body without its life-giving soul. Solidarity with those who suffer and compassion for all human beings and all creation were to mark the new community of believers.

Jesus, as the Prophet inspired by God, preached human dignity and equality of all human beings as God's children and as brothers and sisters of one heavenly Father. His actions incarnate God's mercy, love and goodness towards humanity. His teachings are the foundation for the right ordering of family and society.

In His earthly life, He stands as the great teacher of union with God the Father through prayer and contemplation, the source, sustaining power and motivation for his life of identification with sinful humanity and of his life of service to others, to the point of giving his life so that humanity might be redeemed from sin and all its effects.

Some responses to the *Lineamenta* mention that if there be a difficulty among Church members in viewing Christ, it is in seeing Him as "Son of Man," i.e., in his humanity, as God-made-man, who took on the human condition in all things but sin, thereby consecrating the world and all things human, save sin. To counteract this tendency, many felt that greater emphasis needed to be given to the Passion and the Cross of Jesus Christ as the way to Wisdom and true salvation, not simply in catechesis, but in preaching and in the Church's daily life.

There was general agreement among the responses that the disciples' personal understanding and living experience of Christ was directly related to witnessing to Christ in daily life. For this reason, the Church's members need not only a proper academic catechesis about the Person of Christ in the mystery of His Incarnation and Redemption, but also opportunities to experience Him in the reading and study of Sacred Scripture, in the fellowship of the Church community, in the person of the Church's ministers, and above all in the celebration of the Sacraments, particularly the Sacred Eucharist.

As a consequence, several responses to the *Lineamenta* point to the need to present Jesus Christ with love and compassion for the poor. They insist that the image of Jesus as a brother, who shares his life with the suffering, that will appeal to Asian peoples more than any other. Moreover, these same responses maintain that the Church, as a community of believers, needs to make a greater effort to identify herself with the society's poor by being a voice on behalf of human life for those who have no one to speak for them, by taking up the cause of those suffering from injustice of any type, by providing trained personnel to assist those in need to care for those suffering any manner of physical, mental or spiritual ills, etc. Many argue that the action of service by the Church, after the example of her Master who became poor for the sake of all so as to bring people to God, is the most compelling and credible form of witness that the Church can render in the continent of Asia.

Some Perceptions of Christ in Asia

As for the image of Christ among other Asians, many responses point out that by natural disposition most Asians have a positive outlook towards Christ, seeing him as a deeply spiritual, compassionate and loving person. Some consider Him a great Teacher. A particularly favourite image for Christ among Buddhists is that of the Sacred Heart.

If some Christians have difficulty in properly understanding the human nature of Christ, most Asians would view him exclusively from this perspective. To respond sufficiently to this fact, the Church needs to place greater emphasis on presenting Christ in the wider context of salvation history and the master plan of God the Creator for the universe, a plan, fulfilled in the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ, and still being worked out in Christ, through His Church, in the present moment in time. To achieve this, some insist that a greater attention should be given to presenting Christ "in Asian garb," that is, using the support of various philosophical and cultural concepts. Such an approach seems all the more important in the context of the Church's dialogue with other religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. The question then is: "How can the Church in Asia explain that Christ is the one and only Saviour and unique mediator of salvation distinct from the founders of Asia's other greater religions?"⁹.

In some cases, followers of various Asian religions are increasingly prepared to accept Jesus Christ even as God. However, this does not seem to be a reason for them to accept him as the only Saviour. The trend among the followers of these religions, especially the Hindus, is to consider all religions as equally good. For them, the Hindu gods and Christ are only different manifestations of the same God. Even those who believe in Christ as God do not see the necessity to embrace the Christian religion, much less the Church, despite the fact that the Church and her institutions do much for society in general.

Asian people, both of the classic religions and traditional and cosmic religions seek to live in harmony between heaven and earth, between the realm of the divine and the human, between the transcendent and the immanent. These apparently contrasting

⁹ Ibid., n. 38.

and contradictory realities paradoxically merge into one in many Asian religions. The distance between them is overcome philosophically and liturgically. Christian liturgy expresses it wonderfully when it says: "Would that you rend the heaven and come down" (Is 63:19). Such an encounter between the divine and the human, the absolute transcendent and the finite has definitively taken place in Jesus Christ.

Based on the above situation, many responses state that there is a need to present Jesus in the context of this search by Asian religions and cultures for harmony between apparent paradoxes which confront human existence: between transcendence and immanence, emptiness and fullness, death and life, suffering and joy, the finite and the infinite, poverty and riches, weakness and power, the temporal and the eternal, the historical and the cosmic. In Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, crucified and risen, the above paradoxes find a point of convergence. Some responses to the *Lineamenta* speak of a need for developing a Christology of *kenosis*, namely, a Christology based on the self-emptying of Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation and his glorification in the Paschal Mystery.

However, many responses mention that beyond intellectual arguments, true witness to Christ among the Asian people will result when the gap between religion and service is surmounted, in other words, when believers truly become the *living signs of the Lord Jesus Christ* through the exercise of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In this way, for the Asian, who sets high priorities on such concepts as community, harmony, peace and deliverance from evil, the faithful's living of the Christian faith will be a compelling form of witness to Christ. At the same time, the rites of the sacraments, devotions, prayers, etc. also reveal, in their own way, the person of Christ, making his saving message known and providing a powerful invitation to the unbeliever towards participation. In this regard, certain responses

suggest that greater attention be given to the inculturation of the faith, so as to search for ways among Asian mentalities and cultures — while remaining faithful to the essential content of the faith — to express more clearly and effectively what it means to live in Christ.

CHAPTER V — GOD'S SALVIFIC DESIGN THE SPIRIT AT WORK

The Spirit of God in Creation and History

God's plan of salvation for all human beings, revealed in Jesus Christ, is not an isolated event. It is part of one single salvific plan which began with creation. From the very moment of creation, God's Spirit was at work in the world and in the hearts of all human beings. In a mysterious way the Spirit of God prepared for the coming of the Son, Jesus Christ. God's plan of salvation is reflected in creation. "The eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of his wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe, and chose to raise up men to share in His own divine life"¹⁰. According to St. Bonaventure, the purpose of creation is communication of divine life and goodness to all human beings: "God created all things not to increase His glory and goodness, but to manifest them and to communicate them"¹¹.

Creation is also an act establishing harmony from chaos as the story of Genesis recounts (cf. Gen 1:1ff). Therefore, the cosmos reveals God and is the sacrament of his love for all things: "Because the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world and that which

¹⁰ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 2.

¹¹ St. Bonaventure, *In Librum Sententiarum*, 1, 2.2:1: *Opera Omnia, Ad Claras Aquas (prope Florentiam), Tipografia Collegii S. Bonaventurae*, 1885, II, p. 44.

holds all things together ..." (Wis 1:7). All of creation is a reflection of God's truth, goodness and harmony as the *New Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness"¹².

Sin brings disharmony, division, hatred and death itself. Human history touched, from the very beginning, by the transcendent power of the Spirit of God is also affected by the power of evil (cf. Rm 1:2-3). Original sin became the root of all disharmony in man in the world: "At the same time man went out of harmony within himself, with others and with all created things"¹³. Despite division and the power of sin and death, God continued to reveal himself in manifold ways to humanity (cf. Hb 1:1-3). All human beings are touched by the Spirit of God: "The Spirit, therefore, is at the very source of man's existential and religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of his being"¹⁴.

The Spirit of God touches, purifies and saves not only individuals, but through them, also cultures and religions. Hence they have a salvific role to play as Pope John Paul II states: "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history: 'The Spirit of God with marvelous foresight directs the course of the ages and renews the face of the earth'"¹⁵. The Spirit of God at work in creation and in human history does not cease his salvific activity

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 339.

¹³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, n. 13.

¹⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, n. 28: AAS 83 (1991) 274.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 28.

at any time. He continues to sow the seeds of truth and grace among all peoples, their philosophies and religions as Vatican II clearly affirms: "He generously pours out, and never ceases to pour out, his divine goodness, so that he who is creator of all things might at last become all in all"¹⁶. The Spirit of God is at work in the world as the Vatican II document *Ad gentes* states: "Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified"¹⁷.

Recognizing this fact, the Church seeks to respect all religions, on the basis of the following words of Pope John Paul II: "The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by twofold respect: respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man"¹⁸. The Church has always believed that the hidden salvific presence of the Spirit of God gives to all men life and breath and every other gift.¹⁹ At the same time, the Spirit leads the way to Jesus Christ by revealing him in concrete historical experiences. Salvific revelation in Christ is not parallel or superfluous to that of the Spirit, but remains its fulfillment and public authentication. Furthermore, whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ. Every form of the Spirit's presence is the responsibility of the Church, to which Christ gave his Spirit in order to guide her into all the truth²⁰.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, n. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 4.

¹⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Visitation of India (1-10 February 1986), *Address to Representatives of Non-Christian Religions*, (5 February, Madras), 2: AAS 78 (1986) 693.

¹⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, n. 2.

²⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 29: AAS 83 (1991) 274-275.

The Spirit of God at Work in Asia

It was in Asia that God chose to speak to the people of Israel through his chosen servants, the patriarchs and the prophets. And finally he spoke through his Son, Jesus Christ. Today, He continues to speak to the peoples of Asia in a variety of ways.

Many responses point out that all which has been said about the salvific presence of the Spirit among peoples is particularly true of the Asian continent, home to most of the great religions of the world. These religions have been, in a concrete manner, the way to God for a majority of the peoples of Asia and God's way to them. The Spirit of God was at work in the minds and hearts of the ancient sages of the Asian continent. They have left to its peoples the record of their spiritual enlightenment in their sacred books. Their teachings still govern the religious, moral and social life of many peoples of Asia.

For this reason, other religions in Asia constitute for the Church a positive challenge. They stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and the working of the Holy Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all.

This gives rise to the spirit which must enliven dialogue in the context of mission. Those engaged in this dialogue must be consistent with their own religious traditions and convictions, and be open to understanding those of the other party without pretense or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility and frankness, knowing that dialogue can enrich each side²¹. With other religions there is a giving and a receiving, a listening and a sharing. On the level of human experience and faith, much can be learned from the deep religiosity of people and from their religions.

²¹ Cf. *ibid*, 56.

In this regard, responses to the *Lineamenta* recount a variety of situations on the Asian continent. In rare cases, some particular Churches mention little or no dialogue activity with other religions. In some of these instances dialogue began with a certain enthusiasm, but subsequently a mistrust and suspicion set in, resulting in difficulties and even hostility. For the most part, however, dialogue with other religions is taking place on the Asian continent with much benefit to all the parties concerned.

At the same time, some responses are eager to point out that dialogue involves more than discussion over belief systems. The task of dialogue also involves placing persons in touch with other persons. Fears, mistrusts and suspicion cannot be overcome simply by discussions. The heart cannot be earned simply by words, but it can be conquered by gestures of love. Thus the interreligious dialogue in Asia requires a capacity of love which is great, patient and persevering — a work of the Spirit — before which every Christian may experience many positive aspects as well as shortcomings. In this context, the interreligious dialogue is a human and spiritual pilgrimage in which the witness of Christian conversion is decisive because it gives to the Christian the strength and light to continue the adventure of dialogue and to invite the non-Christian interlocutor to the same process of conversion.

Among the more concrete and programmed initiatives in this field taking place in Asia are the following: courses on Asian religions in seminaries, houses of religious formation, lay formation centres and academic institutions; active involvement in social issues with the followers of other religions, where there is a sharing of values; joint charitable programs on behalf of those in need, open and public gestures of mutual respect at special religious periods, etc.

In this movement of the Spirit towards interreligious dialogue, some responses explained a number of difficulties to be

considered, e.g., the highly social character of religion, permeating and regulating every aspect of life; a general suspicion of all things Western, in some cases, including the Church, etc. These same responses mentioned the above elements can be used as challenges for the Church in presenting her message, using elements from society in the process of inculturation, emphasizing the universality of the Church over Western associations, etc.

At the same time, some responses hasten to mention that dialogue itself can provide the Church with elements which can be beneficial in her programme of a new evangelization, in presenting Catholic truth to the Asian mind, e.g., cultural elements, language, thought patterns and rites. Harmony, for example, is a great value among the Asian people. This intended idea of harmony can find a counterpart in the concept of the Kingdom of God the Bible, where God's justice reigns. To the Asian mentality, harmony is not a matter of simply living in peace, but a creative and dynamic force in relationships. In other words, harmony is not a matter of adding indefinitely to what one already has, but placing one's goods and talent at the service of others so as to make up for what is lacking in another, all in order to reach a perfect proportion. This proportionality is operative primarily in the person in the family, then in society and its institutions, and then in relation to the world. Such an idea of harmony would find resonance in Christ's proclamation of the Kingdom of God where he invites reconciliation of the sinner with God, the person with humanity and the whole of creation. Most responses agree that Catholic truth can be served by a similar borrowing of concepts and ideas which are particularly Asian, all the while remaining faithful to the Catholic faith as presented in Sacred Scripture and the Church's Tradition.

Many responses point out that contemporary Asia, while clinging to many traditional ways of life and values, is undergoing

a very swift and radical transformation²². Many value systems and meanings which supported the lives of people in Asia are now threatened and shaken. The Church in Asia is part of this transformation and is bound to its peoples through a common history and destiny: "We know that in the hearts of our brothers there are these quests today: to find new meanings in their lives and endeavours, to overcome destructive forces and to shape a new integration in our societies, to free themselves from structures which have created new forms of bondage, to foster human dignity and freedom and a more fully human life, to create a more genuine communion among men and nations"²³.

In the Asian peoples' search for meaning to sustain their quest for fullness of life, the Church wants to recognize the presence of the Spirit who leads them to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life (Cf. Jn 14:6) The First Plenary Assembly of the F.A.B.C highlighted this fact in the following words: "It is our belief that only in and through Christ and his Gospel, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that these quests can come to realization. For Christ alone, we believe, is for every man 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' (Jn 14:6) 'who enlightens every man who comes into the world' (Jn 1:9). We believe that it is in Him and in His good news that our peoples will finally find full meaning we all seek, the liberation we strive after, the brotherhood and peace which is the desire of all our hearts"²⁴.

At the same time — as a variety of responses mention — Christians in Asia can profit from considering elements shared with the followers of other religions and cultures of Asia, e.g.,

²² Cf. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — F.A.B.C, *Final Statement*, Taipei, 1974, *Evangelization in Modern Asia*, IV, 4, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, ed. Rosales/Arevalo, New York, Manila, Orbis/Claretians, p. 33.

²³ Ibid., II, 6, p. 13.

²⁴ Ibid., II, 7.

the centrality of the will of God with Islam, with Hindus, the practice of meditation, contemplation, renunciation of one's will and the spirit of non-violence; with Buddhists, detachment and compassion; with Confucianism, filial piety and humanitarianism; with Taoists, simplicity and humility; and with Traditional Religions, reverence and respect for nature. The Church in Asia has much to offer believers of other faiths, the values of reconciliation and peace, obedience to God's will, the sacred dignity of each person, the love and service of neighbour, the Church's social doctrine, human promotion in its many forms, the value of suffering and service which are central to the mystery of Jesus Christ.

The recognition of the presence of the Spirit among all peoples should in no way make any one blind to the presence of evil and sin in manifold ways. Sin leads to all forms of idolatry of the self, wealth and power. Such idolatry refuses to acknowledge the image of God in self, in one's neighbour and in the universe. For this reason, humanity stands in need of salvation. The Church believes that this salvation is a free gift offered to all by God in his Son Jesus Christ.

The salvific presence of the Spirit among all people is, in the saving plan of God, to lead all peoples to a new creation, of which Jesus Christ is "the first born and the first fruits of those who have died" (I Cor 15:20). The "seeds of the Word" sown by the Spirit become ripe for eternal life through the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. The universal plan of God for salvation and wholeness of life takes a concrete shape and human form in the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ. Vatican II had this in mind when it declared: "The universal plan of God for the salvation of mankind is not carried out solely in a secret manner, as it were, in the minds of men, nor by the efforts, even religious, through which they in many ways seek God in an attempt to touch him and find him... their efforts need

to be enlightened and corrected ... God decided to enter into the history of mankind in a new and definitive manner, by sending his own Son in human flesh..."²⁵.

CHAPTER VI — THE CHURCH AS COMMUNION

The Church and the Salvific Design of God

The one salvific design of God for the salvation of humanity does not end with the death and resurrection of Christ. In virtue of the gift of Christ's Holy Spirit the effects of his salvific work in his passion, death and resurrection are extended to all peoples of all times, through the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the work of Christ and the Spirit finds its realization within the communion of the Church: "The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit"²⁶.

The Church is included in the salvific plan and will of God. It is the same with her mission in the world: "Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but it is a sacrament..."²⁷. The Church's mission is constantly to strive to make visible the Kingdom of God on earth, to bear witness to it and to be its servant in all her activities. This is the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "... in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity"²⁸.

²⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, n. 3.

²⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 737

²⁷ Ibid., n. 738.

²⁸ Ibid.

Even today, the presence of the Spirit at work in the world, its cultures and religions is intended to lead all to the mystery of Jesus Christ and to Trinitarian communion within the Church. The Church's mission is to continue Christ's mission of salvation and communion in the Holy Trinity. Her task is to strive to sow the seeds of the Kingdom of God, to strive towards its perfection in her members, and to be a sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God, to strive, towards its perfection in her members, and to be a sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God to all. The more she strives to extend the Kingdom of God through the witness of all her members, the better she will be a sign and instrument of salvation to all, and thus more credible and effective in proclaiming that Kingdom to all, in imitation of Jesus Christ, her founder.

Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council

The Second Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1985) speaks of the ecclesiology of communion as the central insight of all the conciliar documents and the motivating force of all post-conciliar renewal. The final statement of the Synod summarizes the main points of this ecclesiology: the Church as communion is founded on Trinitarian communion. She is the sign and binding force of communion between God and humanity. She is a communion of all the disciples of Jesus, and she is the locus and symbol of communion among all peoples²⁹.

In a similar way, Vatican II also called the Church the Pilgrim People of God³⁰. The Church is seen as related to peoples and believers of other religions: "Finally, those who have not yet received the gospel are related in various ways to the People of

²⁹ Cf. Second Extraordinary Special Assembly — 1985, *Relatio Finalis*, II, C, 2.

³⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, nn. 9, 68.

God"³¹. In its declaration on the Church's relation to non-Christian religions Vatican II states: "In our times ... the Church is giving deeper study to her relationship with non-Christian religions"³².

The responses to the *Lineamenta* make reference to attempts by local Churches in their mission of evangelization to apply the concept of the Church as communion to the particular circumstances in Asia. This reflection on the Church in Asia from the viewpoint of the ecclesiology of communion can be divided into the following categories: 1) the communion shared in particular Churches; 2) joint endeavours at the local level towards expressing and fostering communion; 3) the ways the local Churches relate to the Universal Church; and 4) the Church's attempt to promote a communion of life among peoples of various cultures and religions in a common pilgrimage towards fullness of life in God. Communion implies inter-dependence within each particular Church and among all the particular Churches in Asia. The responses offer the following reflections on the four above aspects of ecclesial life.

The Particular Church

At the level of the local Church, various responses note that a Church of communion is called to be a Church in which all the baptized are engaged actively and fruitfully, according to vocation, in every area of the Church's life and mission, and where the gifts and charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit on each one are mutually recognized and put to the service of building up the Church and carrying out Christ's mission.

³¹ Ibid., n. 16.

³² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, n. 1.

Several responses note that this spirit of communion must first be evident and operative among the hierarchy, particularly the bishops within a region or nation, the bishop with his clergy, both diocesan and religious. In some cases, a better coordination with the local bishop is needed in the work accomplished by religious congregations in Asia. In a similar vein, where many particular Churches are mentioning the increasing active participation of many of the lay faithful in various areas of Church life (prayer and study groups, family gatherings, basic Christian communities, etc.), there seems to be a growing need to turn these believing and worshipping communities into sharing communities, where the lay faithful are made more aware of their role in the Church's mission towards others. In some cases, the lay faithful on the parish level are unaware of, or are not sufficiently involved in, the Church's relief organizations and development activities at the diocesan level.

In this regard, several responses insist that participation in the Church's mission is directly a result of a person's ecclesiology or idea of the Church. For example, Church members need to be taught that communion — both personal (the individual with God) and communal (the community of the Church) — is everyone's responsibility. The visible effects of communion are service to others or solidarity. Some insist that if each member — bishops, clergy, religious, consecrated and lay faithful — would indeed live the implications of Church communion, the Church would increasingly be seen as a "serving Church," where all her members would seek ways of identifying with humanity, as "Christ, the Suffering Servant", through works of love and service in Asia. It is felt that such an image of Church would manifest communion in Asia better than any other. The responses suggest that such a form of communion can be best achieved in relatively small groups whose members know each other personally and whose leaders can share intimately in the sufferings and joys of the daily struggles of the members.

The Communion of the Local Churches

Each particular Church has a vocation of being in communion with each other and the Universal Church. Relations between local Churches are expressed as an inter-ecclesial communion in which the local Church incorporates elements from the local socio-cultural environment, while remaining faithful to the uniqueness and unity of one, holy, catholic and apostolic faith.

In all parts of Asia, post-conciliar structures are seen as playing an important role in developing the sense of Church as a communion of faith communities. In West Asia, the responses noted that, among these ecclesial structures, the Council of Oriental Catholic Patriarchs (C.O.C.P.) has facilitated theological reflection and made possible pastoral planning in both inter-ritual and international contexts. The responses from South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asia were in agreement that the creation of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences was an important factor in developing a sense of communion among the local Churches. The wide range of its theological and pastoral institutes has enabled Christians from various local Churches in Asia to know one another personally, to share experiences, to confront problems together, and to propose common pastoral strategies and "action plans" for the entire region.

Many responses insist that the Church's program of a new evangelization in Asia could receive assistance by engaging in a "three-fold dialogue", that is, a dialogue with the poor, a dialogue with other religions of Asia and a dialogue with Asian cultures. This three-fold dialogue would provide the concrete manner for announcing the person and message of Jesus through acts of love and service. Such a dialogue would also inspire and provide a method for the Church's mission.

Most agree that the programme of a new evangelization in Asia requires ongoing conversion and renewal of the Church's

members, and a renewed commitment to incarnate the Church of Christ in Asian cultures. This vision was set forth during the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (F.A.B.C): "... Built in the hearts of the people, it is a Church that faithfully and lovingly witnesses to the Risen Lord Jesus and reaches out to people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all"³³.

The Local Church and the Universal Church

The question of the relationship of the local Church to the Universal Church was raised in several responses. Relationships between the local Church and the universal Church are guided by the principle of unity of faith, charity, collegiality and subsidiarity. Unity and collegiality are important gifts of the Spirit in the Catholic Church and are appreciated by other Christian Churches.

Some responses mentioned that more autonomy should be given to the local Churches in areas of dialogue, inculturation and adaptation. While maintaining the unity of faith, more room could be made for diversity in the ways in which the local Church, through prudent discernment of local needs, determines pastoral priorities and its related structures. All this would be done in the spirit of communion and dialogue between the local Church and the universal Church. In this way, the many Catholic Churches in Asia as well as the local Churches will be better assisted in making contributions to theological, spiritual, pastoral and missionary programs for the well-being of the people of Asia.

³³ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — F.A.B.C, *Final Statement*, V, Bandung, *Journeying Together Towards the Third Millennium*, n. 8, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, ed. Rosales/Arevalo, Manila/New York, Orbis/Claretians, 1992, p. 287.

The Mission of Communion

As the third millennium approaches, the Church in Asia seeks to address the phenomenon of disunity in its many forms and to walk towards greater unity, as an expression of her mission of communion. This calls for a sincere examination of conscience, reconciliation, a renewed commitment to dialogue, and expressions of unity.

Responses to the *Lineamenta* sadly point out that Asian societies all too often display the reality of disunity, including tensions between ethnic and religious groups, economic imbalances, conflicts in the political order between the powerful and the powerless, between majority groups and minorities, social distinctions and discrimination, and cultural differences between generations and between people of modern urbanized societies and those of rural societies. In many cases, certain groups of people, especially women and children, suffer more than most not only from attitudes of discrimination and oppression but from various forms of physical and psychological violence. Often these situations within societies simmer unresolved under the surface and occasionally explode into open violence.

The Church too, made up of human persons, is not immune to this reality of disunity. Certain responses note a lack of communion at times between clergy, religious and lay people. Most admit that the greater the unity in the local Church, the greater will be the unity in other areas and levels of Church life. At the same time, some point to the effect of divisions within the Church on those of other religions. The scandal of a divided Christianity is seen by many in Asia as a counter-witness to Jesus Christ. New tensions have also arisen in many parts of Asia by the proliferation and tactics of some evangelical groups. In other places, religious movements and sects are creating difficulties.

On the other hand, there are signs of improved relations among certain Churches. Catholic and Orthodox Christians in West Asia often feel a cultural unity among themselves, a sense of sharing important elements of a common ecclesial tradition. The constructive working relationship fostered by many ecclesial structures, including the National Episcopal Conferences and Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (F.A.B.C.), offers hope for new ecumenical initiatives in Asia, an outlook which is reflected in the effective collaboration on peace and justice issues in various Asian countries. The Church's participation in other ecumenical initiatives is leading to cooperative pastoral ventures with other Churches in certain parts of Asia. However, the reality remains that much work needs to be done in this area.

The responses to the *Lineamenta* also recount the divided manner in which Christians are sometimes viewed by their neighbours of other religions. For example, Christians are respected and admired for the quality of schools, health-care facilities, and social programs for the poor; yet some people suspect the motives of the Church in these activities.

In these various situations of disunity, the ecclesiology of the Church as communion has relevance not only for the internal relationships within the Church; it also underlines the nature of the Church's mission to build communion among all peoples. In the rich diversity of Asian ethnic groups, nations, social classes, cultures and religions, many responses maintain that the Church is to be a sign and sacrament of the unity desired by God among the peoples of Asia. The struggle to build unity and bring about reconciliation, to promote dialogue with religions and cultures and to break down prejudices and engender trust is to be considered an essential part of the Church's evangelizing mission in Asia.

This vision of the Church as agent of communion in Asia was expressed during the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (F.A.B.C.). Noting that

Christ's mission is essentially one of "nourishing life to its fullness," the bishops affirmed: "With our Asian sisters and brothers, we will strive to foster communion among Asian peoples who are threatened by glaring economic, social and political imbalances. With them we will explore ways of utilizing the gifts of our diverse religions, cultures and languages to achieve a richer and deeper Asian unity. We will build bridges of solidarity and reconciliation with peoples of other faiths and will join hands with everyone in Asia in forming a true community of creation"³⁴.

Some Initiatives towards Communion

The Church in Asia is a "little flock," living among millions of followers of other religions. As such, the Church in Asia, according to many responses, has the special potential, in virtue of her catholicity, of being a "sacrament of unity" not only for the Church herself but for the peoples of Asia.

Throughout Asia, religious believers of all faiths are confronted with strikingly similar crises posed by globalization and economic situations, by counter-values such as individualism and materialism, by the erosion of traditional values of family and community, by a consumerism in which a person's worth is assessed by what one owns, by development projects which endanger the environment and marginalize indigenous populations, and by the media pressure of an alien "pop" mono-culture. Despite being a "little flock," the Church in Asia is called to address and respond to such sweeping issues. Many times this will involve programs of dialogue and cooperation with other religions.

³⁴ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — F.A.B.C, *Final Statement*, VI, Manila, 1995, *Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life*, n. 14, in F.A.B.C. Papers, 74.

In this regard, many responses insist that the Church must search for partners, particularly with other Churches and Christian communities, who share common values. She must, on the one hand, seek to bring together like-minded believers to work together, not on a sectarian or partisan basis, but with each offering perspectives which arise from their respective faiths. On the other hand, Christians must be open to taking part in the initiatives of others to confront problems that cut across confessional lines. In this way, Christians in Asia can make a more effective contribution to society in matters of ethics and values. By becoming fully immersed in the problems of the societies in which they live, Asian Christians can pursue an important element of the Church's evangelizing mission.

The unity which the Church seeks in the midst of disunity and in the face of serious challenges is one which is oriented towards life. It involves a rejection and struggle against the death-dealing forces that enslave people and cause suffering to millions, and it means an affirmation and struggle in favor of human life. Christians, who find the fullness of life in the power of Jesus' Paschal mystery of suffering, death, and resurrection, want to share their vision of a communion of life through dialogue and cooperation with their neighbours of every faith and cultural background. In this way, the Church in Asia can truly become a sacrament of unity, united with all in the task of proclaiming and working for one goal: "That they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

CHAPTER VII — THE CHURCH'S MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE IN ASIA

Missionary Proclamation

Most responses to the *Lineamenta* emphasize the need and urgent character of the Church's program of a new evangelization in Asia. As seen in the recent Magisterium of the Church in

Vatican II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio* and recent trends in mission theology and practice, the concepts of mission and evangelization have acquired a wider meaning and contain new dimensions and emphasis. This is clearly noticeable in the various initiatives mentioned in the responses which deal with promoting the values of the Kingdom of God, human dignity and human rights, justice and peace issues, dialogue and sharing of religious experiences, and collaboration in the struggle for a more just and humane society. All of these are seen as essential elements in today's new evangelization, which is part of the service of life rendered by the Church in Asia.

The Liturgy: The Wellspring of Mission

Some of the responses coming from the local Churches in Asia, especially those of the Oriental liturgical traditions, stress the importance of the role of the liturgy in the Church's evangelizing work in Asia. Mission has its origins in God and his desire, in goodness and love, to share his life with all of humanity and creation; Jesus Christ's mission springs from the liturgy of his life, his act of worship of the Father in prayer and contemplation. In his final act of self-giving on the cross the Church was born, and with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost the Church set out to fulfill her mission: "... that they might have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

In the Church's mission, the liturgy is absolutely necessary to assist all the faithful in their communion with God in Jesus Christ, so that they might draw on that communion as a source, means and goal of their mission. Thus, many responses insist on the need for liturgical renewal in Asia, so that the liturgy might really become the source and summit of the evangelizing activity of the Church. In this regard, some mention that ways need to be sought to see if the liturgy can be more adapted to the missionary needs of Asia, i.e., to its languages, cultures, etc. Therefore, it seems that formation in the liturgical life needs

greater attention in all the Churches, both as the means for the faithful to experience the mystery of Jesus Christ and for the Church's members to become truly missionaries in Asia.

The Word of God and Mission

Some responses ask for a greater attention to the Sacred Scriptures, the Word of God, in all areas of Church life, especially by bishops, priests, deacons, those in consecrated life, catechists and lay missionaries. Preachers, especially missionaries, should draw from the Bible and lead their hearers to take up the Word of God for personal study and inspiration.

Likewise, the Sacred Scriptures should be utilized more in the evangelizing efforts of the Church in Asia, since God's Word has an inherent power to touch the hearts of all peoples, both Christians and believers of other faiths. In all Asian religions, the word is highly venerated. Religious leaders, profoundly shaped by the sacred words of their religions, use them widely in their own missionary work. At the same time, the Sacred Scriptures are shown great veneration by believers of other religions.

Missionary Spirituality

Several responses also called for a greater emphasis on missionary spirituality and asceticism as a basis for mission. Docility to the Holy Spirit transforms the missionary into a true disciple and witness of Jesus Christ, as happened to the Apostles at Pentecost. Imbued with the Spirit, the missionary can live the mystery of Jesus Christ in life, have the mind of Christ, and become a true servant of all. In this way, the missionary becomes one with all peoples in charity³⁵: "As such, he overcomes barriers

³⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 89: AAS 83 (1991) 335-336.

and divisions of race, caste, or ideology. He is a sign of God's love in the world — a love without exclusion or partiality"³⁶.

For this purpose, several responses ask that all people engaged in missionary activity receive a formation in missionary spirituality, especially among seminarians and religious. By the same token, an understanding of the spirituality of the other religions in Asia would also be helpful in missionary work. The Church's mission of love and service in Asia will depend on the kind and the depth of formation which is given at all levels of the Church in Asia.

The Laity

In a similar way, many responses call for greater attention to the formation of the laity. The Second Vatican Council and the years after the Council have brought about a renewed understanding of the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church. By virtue of their baptism the laity share in the threefold office of Jesus Christ and fulfill that role in the family and secular society, the specific area of their mission³⁷. To assist the lay faithful in fulfilling their role, various particular Churches as well as national and international episcopal conferences have established programmes of formation for the laity, especially for women, so that they can exercise their proper role in the life of the Church and in her various apostolates.

Several responses to the *Lineamenta* stress the need for systematic lay catechesis at various levels of Church life, in the initiation into various sacraments, pastoral catechesis of whole Christian communities, etc. Changing times and cultures in which Church members live call for a continual renewal of catechetical

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Cf. Ibid., n. 31; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 901-913; The Code of Canon Law, 443, 463.

methods. The missionary catechumenate, catechesis and pastoral catechesis require good catechists. Special attention is required, therefore, for the basic and ongoing formation of lay catechists, especially in missionary contexts.

The Family

According to some responses, the Christian family is not only the object of pastoral care, it is an agent of evangelization. Since the family is the heart of Asian cultures, family values are held in very high esteem not only by the Church in Asia but also by the followers of other religions in the continent. Family is also the first place of catechesis in traditional religions. Some mention, however, that tendencies in Asian society are threatening the family with disintegration, e.g., mass migration, forced resettlement of peoples, search for work, absence of parental presence when both parents are working, and other such factors. Many insist that the strengths and weaknesses of the Asian continent can be traced back to the Asian family. Such situations as poverty, exploitation and degradation of women, children forced to hard labour, a growing number of unwed mothers, prostitution, child abuse, abortion, etc.³⁸, are threatening the very foundations of family life in Asia.

The family is the domestic Church. Thus, the first witness to Jesus Christ is given by the Christian family. It is also the first missionary Church among the non-Christians of the neighbourhood. In this context the apostolate of the family and the apostolate by the Christian family assumes a great significance for the future of the Church's mission of love and service in Asia. Such a mission should also be mindful of the many positive values in the Asian society, values cherished by long-standing traditions,

³⁸ Cf. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — F.A.B.C., *Final Statement*, Tokyo, 1986, *The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia*, n. 3.

e.g., filial piety, love and care for the aged and the sick, etc. Some note that the generous service of families is the source of the abundance of vocations in Asia. Hence, many feel that an apostolate on behalf of the family is needed in the Church's evangelizing mission on the continent.

Youth as Evangelizers

Considering the great number of young people in Asia, youth have an important role in the life of the Church and society in the continent. Many responses point out that youth in particular are caught up in the tension between the traditional Asia and the emerging Asia. As a result, they are threatened by such situations as a lack of opportunities for education, employment, confusion of ideologies and uncertainties for the future, etc. At the same time, they display an idealism and a generosity to give themselves to those ideals, an aspiration for a better life and a desire for renewal in society³⁹. In such a situation, the Church needs to be close to youth so as to share their aspirations and difficulties as well as to provide opportunity for them to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ who can be their light and life at this moment in their lives.

These same responses also pointed out that youth are not only the object of the Church's pastoral care, but also agents in the Church's mission in her various apostolic works of love and service as well as in missionary work. In several countries of Asia they have played an important role in bringing the Gospel to their peers, their families and villages.

The particular Churches in Asia have a wide network of schools, universities and centres of learning. These need to become centres for the evangelization of youth, so that they too can better be evangelizers in the changing societies of Asia.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

The Breadth of the Church's Evangelizing Mission

Evangelization today has acquired a wider meaning than in the past. Evangelization is a complex reality and has many essential elements such as witnessing to the Gospel, working for the values of the Kingdom, the struggle for human promotion, dialogue, a mutual sharing of God-experiences, inculturation and dialogue with other religions, to mention a few.

Church documents since the Second Vatican Council have presented a richly textured conception of evangelization. Documents of the Universal Church such as the papal encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, and the documents *Mission and Dialogue* and *Dialogue and Proclamation* produced by dicasteries of the Holy See have elaborated a multi-faceted understanding of evangelization. In Asia, the statements of the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and the documents of the F.A.B.C. have been efforts to convey to the particular Churches in Asia the many elements of ecclesial life which come together in the Church's evangelizing mission.

The responses to the *Lineamenta* stress that evangelization is not to be reduced to any one element. Evangelization cannot be equated with proclamation of the Gospel *ad extra*. Conversely, a broad understanding of proclamation is needed, one which locates the preaching of the Word within a holistic approach to evangelization. Asia is a highly religious continent, maintaining ancient and rich traditions of spirituality which have taught generations of people to pray.

Because the emphasis in Asia has always been on religious experience rather than on dogma, many maintain that Christ is better communicated, not on the purely theoretical or verbal level in an orderly presentation of doctrines, but through a shared experience. In Asia, the medium of approaching the Absolute or Divine is not word, but silence. The most effective and credible

proclamation of the Risen Lord is the unspoken witness of a person who has undergone a deep God-experience and whose life is transformed accordingly.

In the sharing of life with their neighbours, Church members enter upon numerous opportunities to interact with others. It may be the occasion of important events in the passage of life: birth, marriage, sickness, death. It may be the struggle for justice and more humane societies. It may be located in communal daily activities, such as working and studying together, in preparing and sharing food together, in common efforts to prepare local or national celebrations. In all these situations, Church members who have been deeply transformed by faith in Christ come into contact with people of other religions. They share their views on many aspects of life and, where the level of trust and mutual esteem permits it, they share what is deepest in their lives, their experience of faith.

Such interaction and proclamation are not seen as opposed to each other, but complementary. An emphasis on proclamation without a corresponding willingness to share the faith is one-sided. In dialogue, the spontaneous question to the other is not, "What do you believe" but "What has been your spiritual experience?" Some responses relate that such interaction is perhaps the only kind of proclamation possible in some part of Asia.

The Church's love for the poor and solidarity with those who are seeking justice and a recognition of their human dignity is another way of proclaiming Christ. Such proclamation is in deeds rather than words. In several responses, the witness of the late Mother Teresa, admired equally by Christians and by people of other faiths throughout Asia, was given as an example of this type of evangelization. In short, the need to elaborate an Asian understanding of evangelization in which interaction, dialogue, witness, service, and proclamation are all seen as integral elements

of the Church's evangelizing mission was proposed for consideration during the Special Assembly.

The Renewal of Prayer Life

The source of power and effectiveness in the saving mission of Jesus was his communion with the Father through daily contemplation and prayer. Many responses point out that this Christian truth is particularly appreciated in Asia, a continent where experience is prized more than religious doctrine or a set of teaching. In 1970, Pope Paul VI referred to Asia as a continent which manifests "the sense of spiritual values dominating the thoughts of their sages and the lives of their vast multitudes"⁴⁰. He further noted the discipline of asceticism, the deep and innate religious sense, filial piety and attachment to the family, the primacy of things of the spirit, an unrelenting search for God, and hunger for the supernatural as characteristics of Asian religious traditions.

Today, however, these elements of Asian spirituality are in crisis. Modern culture, with its emphasis on material gain, instant gratification, and continual diversion, threatens the life of the spirit. Particularly in the great metropolitan areas of modern Asia, life is hurried, over-full, and marked by constant distractions. Reflection and contemplation are being neglected at the expense of the life of the spirit. This situation also affects the Church's members who are sometimes unable to find time for prayer and worship, still less for periods of deepening their relationship to the Risen Lord.

Many responses insist that any significant renewal within the Church in Asia and her mission of love and service to Asia's people must include a revived attention to the life of the spirit

⁴⁰ PAUL VI, *Radio Message to the People of Asia* (Manila, 29 November 1970), 3: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 1970, p. 554.

and to practices of prayer and contemplation. A clear precondition for Church members, both as individuals and as faith communities, to bear witness to Christ in their societies, to live as Christ in this world, to communicate Christ to their neighbours, is to be continually nourished by the experience of knowing Christ deeply through prayer and meditation. In Asia, words are not enough. It is the religious experience that transforms one's life which gives credibility to what one says and does. Promoting a deep, immediate knowledge of and union with Christ among the faithful would seem to be a prerequisite for effectively carrying out the Church's evangelizing mission in Asia.

The missionary, according to John Paul II, is the contemplative in action. Contemplation is the wellspring of all missionary activity. The Holy Father shared his impressions on Asia in the following words: "My contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation"⁴¹. As a true contemplative who has experienced God in Jesus Christ through prayer, the missionary will have the courage and credibility to proclaim Jesus Christ: "He is witness to the experience of God, and must be able to say with the Apostles: 'that which we have looked upon ... concerning the word of life ... we proclaim to you'"⁴².

The Service of Dialogue

The mission of the Church takes place in interaction with others of which dialogue is an important aspect. Dialogue is a means of mutual knowledge, enrichment and communication of the saving message and life of Jesus Christ. True dialogue

338. ⁴¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, n. 91: AAS 83 (1991)

⁴² Ibid.

involves both giving and receiving, speaking and listening. Many responses to the *Lineamenta* have urged that attention be given, in the Church's mission of love and service in Asia, to the service created by dialogue, both with religions and cultures. These responses centre upon the need for dialogue in the present context of Asian societies and the need for a grassroots approach to dialogue, in other words, a dialogue of life.

Modern Asian societies are multi-cultural societies, composed of many different religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups living together. This is true today more than at any time in the past. Increased mobility has resulted in regions where formerly people of only one ethnic or religious group had lived now manifesting plurality in social life. Most urban neighbourhoods and rural villages today are made up of people of various religions and social backgrounds. This has led to a situation in which ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups find themselves trying to maintain and promote their identity, at times creating a danger that national societies become fragmented.

Though various difficulties need to be overcome in the area of dialogue, the Church, committed to being a sign and sacrament of unity among all peoples, pursues the path of dialogue, particularly inter-religious dialogue, on many levels so as to bring good to the many groups which suffer from injustice, discrimination or marginalization and, at the same time, to contribute through the application of her social doctrine to building societies based on principles of justice, peace and harmony.

In seeking to apply the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent magisterium on dialogue in the situations of the local Churches in Asia, some bishops in Asia have placed an emphasis on what they term a "dialogue of life and heart"⁴³.

⁴³ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Plenary Assembly, Taipei, 1974.

This type of dialogue refers to Christians and followers of other religions living the highest ideals of their respective faiths in the midst of others. Their lives become the dialogue in which each offers and each receives from the other and in which all are enriched. In the dialogue of life, each strives to express the values derived from their faith, while at the same time remaining open to listening and learning from their neighbours.

The concept of dialogue of life was endorsed by Pope John Paul II in his 1990 encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*. There he described the dialogue of life as one in which "believers of various religions bear witness to one another in daily life concerning human and spiritual values and help one another to live them in order to build a more just and fraternal society ... all the faithful and every Christian community is called to practice dialogue, although not in the same way nor to the same degree"⁴⁴.

Several responses to the *Lineamenta* noted that although the term is new, the reality of the dialogue of life has been practised by people of various faiths at the grassroots for centuries in Asia. Other responses noted that the dialogue of life has many applications in Asia. Christian schools can become "laboratories" for students and teachers to learn the dialogue of life. Christian hospitals and other health care projects can be places where people of all faiths seek to comfort one another and offer hope from the richness of their respective faiths. Cloistered sisters, who lead lives of prayer and love, in open friendship with their neighbours of other faiths, have shown themselves to be among the most effective practitioners of the dialogue of life.

Dialogue at the grassroots level points up another need for the Church in Asia to come to a greater awareness and appreciation of the religious character of the Asian people. Responses

⁴⁴ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, n. 57; AAS 83 (1991) 305.

to the *Lineamenta* insist that there are important spiritual values preserved in popular religiosity which deserve respect and offer values sometimes neglected in the lives of modern Asians, e.g., reverence for nature, the divine presence on earth, and the value of familial and communitarian solidarity. A major task of the Church in Asia is to promote respect for cultures and beliefs of Asia's indigenous peoples and demonstrate a greater solidarity towards them through actions of love and service.

The Mission of Bringing the Faith to Culture

Inculturation results from the interaction which takes place between faith and culture. In such an interaction, the faith takes visible form and becomes intelligible to believers and others, while positive cultural values are purified and assimilated into the faith. Many responses mention that the new evangelization in Asia urgently needs to consider the process of inculturation so that the Gospel might take on a real Asian character. True inculturation means "the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity in the various human cultures"⁴⁵.

Many responses to the *Lineamenta* deal with the question of inculturation of the Christian faith in the cultures of Asia. The responses from West Asia indicated that inculturation is not so much a problem to be faced today as the natural process by which the Churches in the region developed since the time of the Apostles. There is a centuries-long history of inculturation in language, art, architecture, liturgy, and social organization. Inculturation is expressed today in the continued study by seminarians, clergy, and laity of the Syrian and Arabic traditions of theology, philosophy, spirituality, and liturgy. Inculturation has

⁴⁵ Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1985), *Final Report*, II, D, 4.

also meant that Arab culture has been profoundly influenced, over the centuries, by local Christians.

The Eastern Churches in India are engaged in trying to preserve their indigenous traditions and are seeking to assimilate Western artistic and liturgical traditions. It is felt that inculturation in theology, liturgy, spirituality, art, etc., will emerge only when Christians as a community live the life-style of the masses, understand their ways of thinking and speak their language.

Elsewhere in Asia, inculturation is seen as a major challenge for the Church. The approach to inculturation is complicated by the fact that in modern Asia no "pure culture" exists. Asian cultures are continually evolving and incorporating elements from elsewhere. There is an emerging "culture of the city" that often bears little relation to life in the provinces. Some responses are concerned that the power of the Western media and advertising industry are producing a universal "mono-culture" which threatens to drive traditional Asian cultures to extinction. Various experiments in inculturation are producing mixed reactions and effects in the particular Churches. Despite some reservations, the majority of responses regard inculturation as "a major missionary challenge" for the Church.

In its encounter with Asian cultures, dialogue is a two-way process. Religious traditions and symbolic systems of Asian religions can enrich the faith of Christians, but cultural elements cannot be adopted uncritically. Some customs and symbolism will be found to be incompatible with the message that Jesus came to teach and embody, and Christians in Asia, as elsewhere in the world, have a duty throughout the world to challenge their cultures and seek to purify them.

The need for inculturation in the field of theology and theological research is often mentioned in the responses. Many maintain that theological expression should draw from the field

of culture. A proper application of the process of inculturation would see theological training in seminaries and the work of theological faculties using elements from various Asian philosophical systems, in addition to those already taught in the West, to make more intelligible for the Asian mind the rich theological content of the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. In this way Asian theologians can take more seriously the cultural context, thought patterns, and world views of their regions. This process of inculturation is also important in the area of Christian spirituality through exploring how the richness of Asian spiritual traditions can be lived and transformed through contact with Christ's Paschal mystery.

The efforts in inculturation throughout Asia to move towards giving the Church a truly Asian character offer a sense of richness to the universal Church. Inculturation brings about unity in diversity, in which all local Churches enrich one another by their various attempts to delve deeply to the heart of the Christian mystery and to express that faith in culturally understandable ways.

The Service of Human Promotion

The Church, following the example of the Master, is committed to human dignity and promotion in all her evangelizing activities. This ought to be so in a very special manner in Asia where hundreds of millions of people still live in inhuman poverty. Massive poverty is one of those Asian realities that should help all to widen the concept and scope of evangelization in Asia.

The Church in Asia can come to the aid of the poor in various ways. One way is to bring attention to the burden of foreign debts accumulated by some countries of Asia, because of past and present injustices.

The Church's evangelizing mission in Asia is carried out in the context of the triple dialogue with the poor, with people of other religions, and with Asian cultures. As disciples of Jesus, the members of the Church in Asia must turn their attention to all that threatens, weakens, diminishes, and destroys the life of individuals, groups, or peoples. Just as Jesus Christ confronted the forces of sin and enslavement in his day, so today the task of the Church is to struggle constantly against all that enslaves people.

The responses of the Church on human promotion vary according to the concrete situation, the needs and problems of each region, and the structures existing in a given society. The Church's contribution to human promotion includes vocally denouncing injustices, supporting victims in their just causes, caring for the marginalized and suffering, joining together with all persons of good will who seek to build a more just and humane society, engaging in the analysis of the given situation in order to arrive at the root causes of poverty and injustice, and faith reflection on pastoral action.

The Church's traditional social works of caring for those in need are expanded today to include new groups of suffering people. Throughout Asia, in addition to orphanages, homes for the elderly, schools, hospitals, and clinics for the destitute, centres for the handicapped and leprosaria, the Church today conducts, for example, drug treatment programs, rehabilitation centres for prostitutes, hospitality centres for seafarers, centres and residences for HIV/AIDS patients, and an apostolate to an increasing number of prisoners who are undocumented workers.

While the Church in Asia strives to oppose forces which threaten the dignity and well-being of the individual, she also works to encourage people to form a better society. In Asian countries, the Church has been active in pro-democracy movements aimed at establishing participatory democracies and humane

government, in monitoring elections, in working for legislation against graft and corruption, in efforts at reconciliation after communal clashes, and in establishing peace in regions torn by civil war.

In many countries in Asia, the Church has sponsored workshops and training programs aimed at teaching social analysis to get at the root causes of injustice and poverty. In studies on arms proliferation and trade, in communal and interreligious conflicts, in development projects for tourism, logging, mining, and damming, social analysis is used to raise consciousness regarding who is benefiting and who is suffering from such projects. In many instances, Christian activists have discovered that it is primarily local politicians and foreign multinationals who profit, while the local poor are displaced.

The responses to the *Lineamenta* emphasize that in all these expressions of a preferential love for the poor, which are seen as integral aspects of the Church's evangelizing mission, Christians do not act alone. Many of their most devoted and self-sacrificing partners in striving to oppose abuses and build better societies are Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, followers of Traditional Religions, as well as secular non-religious individuals. Some of the most fruitful forms of dialogue of action are those in which Christians and other believers join hands to address the problems of society and serve the poor in loving cooperation.

The Service to Creation

Ecological concerns are gaining in popularity throughout the world. In this area, the Church's teaching on the stewardship of creation, i.e., the responsible use, care and protection of the world created by God, has much to offer in both discussion and practise. In Asia there are particular concerns in this area, requiring the pastoral attention of the Church. Consumerism and greed strikes at the root of the sources of life, namely, the seas,

rivers, forests, plant and animal life. Unabated technological research and experiments can unsettle eco-systems and balances and endanger future generations and their life on earth. People of today have the responsibility to pass intact to future generations the resources of earth, sea and sky, since they form one support system for life given by the Creator God and Sustainer of all things.

Many responses mention that the Church, though a minority, needs to make the faithful aware of the ecological problems facing humanity and find ways to bring these matters to the attention of policy makers of the Asian countries and world organizations. By means of catechesis, pastoral guidance and prophetic declarations the Church can give a very timely service to decision makers in politics, industry, economics, trade and other such areas.

The Means of Social Communication

The Church today seeks to preach the perennial saving message of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, so that the riches of his life might always be communicated to those who will open their hearts in conversion to the promptings of the Spirit.

The responses to the *Lineamenta* note that, since the mass media have a growing influence even in remote areas of the Asian continent, the proclamation of the Gospel message can greatly benefit by better employing this modern technology. Some ask for a more inclusive view of the term "means of social communication," going beyond the customary idea of the technical structures and processes of communication in human society. In speaking of the means of evangelization, Pope Paul VI listed along with the mass media: witness of life, preaching, personal contact, and popular piety. In the Asian context, all the traditional forms of human communication from Asian cultures can be added, such as dance, theatre, drama, speech, shadow plays, etc. In this way, a particularly rich communication spectrum provides possibilities

in the work of evangelization, far beyond what is possible solely through the restrictive term "mass media."

Responses further maintain that the communications explosion in Asia through satellites, internet, video-conferencing, etc., raise a new challenge for evangelization. Pope John Paul II states in the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, the means of social communication "have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media"⁴⁶. The Holy Father then asks, "Since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communication.... The new culture originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating with a new language, new techniques and new psychology"⁴⁷. How far is the Church in Asia responding to these "new ways"?

Modern means of social communication challenge the Church in Asia towards three concrete areas of action: 1) the Church in Asia needs to increase her presence in the world of the mass media in order to communicate the Gospel message as well as the social and moral teachings of the Magisterium; 2) the Church needs to enter into the "modern areopagus" through the means of social communications in order to evangelize society and transform, through the values of the Gospel, the new culture being

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris missio*, n. 37; AAS 83 (1991) 285.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

shaped by the means of social communication; and 3) all Church personnel, both clerical and lay, need to receive adequate exposure and training in the use of the mass media and means of social communications. At the same time, the Gospel must be brought into the lives of those who control and those who are engaged in the mass media in different ways.

Mary, Mother of Evangelization and Model of Mission

Mary was the first to receive the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ brought from God by the angel Gabriel. Her total acceptance of the plan of God in her life from the first moment of the Lord's Incarnation in her womb to his Redemption on the Cross makes her the Mother of Faith. The Gospel of Luke records the fact that following the announcement that she was to be the Mother of God, Mary's thoughts were not towards herself, but towards her cousin who was with child. As a result, she immediately ventured forth, at no little inconvenience to herself, to be of service to Elizabeth in her time of expectation. Upon her arrival, the child in the womb of Elizabeth recognizes the divine presence in the womb of Mary. Mary stays with her a few months. In this way, Mary is seen as the woman of service, bringing Christ to others (cf. Lk 1:39ff). After her example, the Church's members are to totally accept Jesus Christ into their lives and through love and service bring him to others.

The responses to the *Lineamenta* attest that throughout Asia the Catholic faithful love and revere Mary with deep affection. Looking to her as the Mother of Jesus, given by Christ himself to his Church from the cross, they confidently approach Mary in time of joy and sorrow and continually raise their prayers to her in supplication as a ready helper in time of need. The reverence with which mothers are held in all Asian cultures greatly influences the Church's devotion to Mary.

In western Asia, the Eastern Churches, similar to Orthodox Churches, look upon the person of Mary as strongly linked to that of Christ. Oriental spirituality always unites Mother and Son. This is exemplified in the iconic tradition in which Mary, as Seat of Wisdom, is portrayed holding the Child Jesus on her lap. In West Asia, devotion to Mary at times is a point of unity between Christians and Muslims, who visit her shrines and hold her in veneration.

In other parts of Asia, the responses to the *Lineamenta* note that there exist many forms of popular piety to Mary and many Marian shrines, which, drawing many persons — at times even those from other religions — is a source of consolation and support for many in the practise of their faith. However, some mention that in some cases Marian devotion would be helped by making more clear the essential bond between Jesus and his Mother. Where this is lacking, other Christians and followers of other religions are at times left confused. In some Asian countries, certain persons in the Church are exploring the Gospel image of Mary as a model for Asian women and as a key figure in presenting a spirituality for women. At the same time, emphasis on the role of Mary as the perfect disciple of Jesus and model of evangelization could supplement in the faithful's mind the already existent teachings associated with Marian devotion. In this way, the qualities and virtues of Mary, drawn from the Biblical testimony and the rich tradition of the Church throughout the ages, can be recalled and recommended to the faithful in the Church's mission of love and service in Asia. By taking Mary as a model of love and service towards others, they will lead them to an encounter with the fruit of her womb, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

As the Church in Asia approaches the third millennium of her presence on the continent and as she seeks to re-dedicate herself to continuing the mission of proclaiming salvation in Jesus

Christ, she desires to renew herself in light of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium which has developed since that time. To achieve this requires that Church members re-discover the vocation to communion within the Church and rededicate themselves to her mission of love and service in Asia. The Church in Asia, standing on the threshold of the third millennium, also stands on the threshold of a new evangelization: new in its approaches, new in its theological expression, new in its methods and new in its understanding of other religions.

Many responses mention that a renewed awareness of the Church in Asia is emerging from a fresh reading and understanding of the Gospels, a perceptive reading and discernment of the history of the Church's mission over the last two thousand years, and a prayerful reflection on the various experiences which the Church is undergoing on the Asian continent. Primarily, however, this renewed awareness of the Church and her mission will result from looking to Jesus Christ the Saviour (cf. Heb 12:2) and making him present among Asia's peoples and their cultural settings in a contemporary way and thereby bringing about a renewal within the Church in Asia for the third millennium.

To assist in achieving this purpose, the Holy Father has convoked the Special Assembly for Asia so that the bishops might reflect in common upon their pastoral experiences on the continent and, in a spirit of collegiality, offer their assistance to him in approaching ways for the Church to share in humility, in dialogue and in service the inexhaustible riches of Christ with all the peoples of Asia, "... so that they might have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

The basis to this renewal is a total conversion of mind and heart of each member of the Church to Jesus Christ and to the Gospel: "For the Church and her mission in Asia, whose peoples are characterized by traditions of deep religiosity, prayer has to be the 'river of life.' Prayer is absolutely indispensable if the

Christ-life is to indwell in Christian participation in the life-giving liberation and development. This inner life of prayer builds the Church into a credible community of faith, rooted in the life of the Trinity and turned resolutely towards the construction of a fully human future for Asian peoples"⁴⁸. Only a new spirituality that enables the Church in Asia to have a deep experience of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Because the Church believes that only in Jesus Christ a person can find answers to the ultimate longing for fullness of life, her understanding of evangelization is not limited to human promotion, dialogue and inculturation. It includes also the initial proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour which leads to conversion, baptism and incorporation into the community.⁴⁹

In approaching their task, the bishops of Asia can avail themselves of the encouraging message of Pope John Paul II addressed to the Asian Bishops gathered in the Plenary Assembly of the F.A.B.C. at Bandung: "On the eve of the Third Christian Millennium, an ever greater commitment to evangelization is imperative for all the local Churches of Asia, which, though small, have shown themselves to be dynamic and strong in their witness to the Gospel. Their special challenge is to proclaim the Good News where different religions and cultures meet, at the very crossroads of social, political and economic forces in today's world"⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences — F.A.B.C., *Final Statement*, Manila, 1995, *Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life*, n. 3.

⁴⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, nn. 44-58; AAS 83 (1991) 280-307.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Letter to the Delegates of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences*, 23 June 1990, 4: AAS 83 (1991) 101.

Towards A Christian Anthropological Humanism

EMMANUEL MIJARES

Introduction: Do we need a new anthropological method?

Pope John Paul II, in a message for the 11th International Meeting on "People and Religions," said, "if we consider the past centuries and especially the past 100 years, we can easily discern many shadows... How can we forget the appalling tragedies which have stricken humanity throughout the century now drawing to a close? We still vividly remember the two world wars and the atrocious slaughter they caused. And unfortunately violent and cruel massacres of defenceless men, women and children, still persist today... All this is unacceptable!"¹ This is a true description of our world situation. Its inner causes could be of course varied, cultural, political, religious, economic or even personal. Basically, however, this is due to a certain individualistic, ego-centered and undialogical anthropology which has dominated in the last millennium.

¹ John Paul II, "Message to Cardinal Roger Etchegaray for the 11th International Meeting on "People and Religions," *L'Osservatore Romano*, n. 45 - 5 November 1997, p. 6.

The world today looks for a new anthropological outlook which could satisfy his inner desire for peace. The Pope continued, "The time has come for a resolute decision to set out together on a true pilgrimage of peace... It's more necessary than ever to put aside the 'culture of war' in order to develop a solid and lasting 'culture of peace'."² To build a solid 'culture of peace' needs a solid and robust anthropological philosophy.

Modern Philosophy has, through the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes, started to make "thinking" as the starting point of existence and hence of any philosophical endeavor. The basis of existence therefore became subjective reason and it created a kind of paradigm which builds a philosophical anthropology from a perspective of *thought* — man's thinking became the center and basis of his own existence making the *thinking subject* as the center of philosophy. He made an anthropological shift from *existence* itself and placed man's conscious subjectivity as the standard of the world around him even in front of his creator and therefore of the objective truths like the truths of faith. His own consciousness, rather than his *ens and esse* became the center. He became the subject and at the same time the object of his own study without any point of reference to objective existence. The result therefore is a view of man from the perspective of the *thinking man* himself. This goes without saying that any endeavor that makes a judge of his own self without any objective standard will make himself as the standard.

In this process, it is inevitable that man disengages himself, as *de facto*, with God his Creator and make himself as the center of everything leaving behind God and objective values and truth. Brought to its extreme, this leads to an atheistic mentality which takes away the God who is the origin of man. Without this creator, in as much as he sets himself as the standard, man easily

²*ibid.*,

becomes *homini lupus*, a wolf to his fellow men instead of being a *fratelli homini*, a brother to his fellow men. With this anthropological outlook, in as much as he is the center, man was led to deny the other which has its tragic consequences like wars, cruel massacres, etc., in order to affirm one's own existence.

Mission of a Catholic Institution: towards a 'culture of peace'

Any catholic institution has a specific mission in terms of making dialogue between our Catholic faith, reason, and other convictions. This is not only for any academic endeavor but is part of its nature. John Paul II states that a catholic learning institution is called "to explore courageously the riches of Revelation and of nature so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, renewed even more marvelously, after sin, in Christ, and called to shine forth in the light of the Spirit."³

Any seminary or catholic school therefore should "institute an incomparable fertile dialogue with people of every culture"⁴ even atheistic ones. This is true because, "man's life is given dignity by culture, and, while he finds his fullness in Christ, there can be no doubt that the Gospel which reaches and renews him in every dimension is also fruitful for the culture which he lives."⁵ Any cultural outlook therefore on man has to be founded in its fullness in Christ.

According to Pope John Paul II, "this task [of dialogue] is incumbent on every Christian institution which has an intellectual calling, since Christian thought is open to the truth wherever it

³ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution of Catholic Universities, n. 5.

⁴ *ibid.*,

⁵ *ibid.*.

is found; this thought is ready to encounter the different opinions existing in the world of other religious and cultural traditions."⁶ Without this attitude the building of a solid culture of peace could be unattainable.

Towards a New Christian Humanism

Among another things, the Pope invites, "to make an original contribution to creating a renewed Christian humanism, presenting the humanity of Christ as the model for the generations of the new millennium. A splendid programme: to create beauty, to draw from the good, to understand and express the truth!"⁷

Reflecting on these words of the Holy Father, and conscious of the fact that the first characteristic of a catholic institution is a "Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the ... community as such."⁸ I invited my class to consider this renewed Christian humanism based on a sound Christian anthropology presenting Christ as the model of our philosophical endeavor. Living and studying in a framework of a seminary which is a life that is basically communitarian and in unity with other priests friends, we believe that this task is possible.

On the outset, we would like only to focus on a new understanding of man in the light of Christ, a Christian anthropology and humanism. We believe that a Christian view on man is universal and can be applied to any culture and could assume good elements of any culture the study of which could be taken up in a separate study. From this understanding we could attempt to come up with an ontological formulation of who man is.

⁶ John Paul II, Message to First Joint Public Session of all the Pontifical Academies, n. 2, Nov. 28, 1996. OR No. 49, p. 3.

⁷ *ibid.*,

⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution of Catholic Universities, n. 13.

Man is Created under the Image and Likeness of God

Man is created by God according to his own image and likeness.⁹ This is a biblical truth which constitutes the foundation of any Christian anthropology and therefore, anthropological ontology.

The biblical mystery of our origin is explored by John Paul II as "the unchanging basis of the whole of Christian anthropology."¹⁰ In many of his apostolic letters especially in His "Mulieris Dignitatem," he focuses first of all on the rich anthropological meaning contained in the affirmation of the creation of man and woman "in the image and likeness of God."

The rich meaning of this biblical teaching has been summed up in theological tradition by the concept of person, a concept which gathers together its multiple aspects. The Pope gave the two fundamental aspects which define the human person.¹²

The first is already known: We are God's image and likeness because we operate with intelligence and freedom. These are attributes of God and as His image we share in this aspect. So the rationality of man. In other words, the free and intelligent character of the person which allows him or her to exercise dominion over the other creatures of the visible world (Gen 1:28), and in the first instance to know and love God.¹³

Man's nature however is not only rationality but also relationality. By the fact that the human being is not created to be alone (Gen 2:18), but can only exist as the "unity of two"

⁹ Gen 1:27.

¹⁰ Mulieris Dignitatem, n. 6-7.

¹¹ Gen 1:27

¹² cf. Piero Coda, Three Keys for the Reading of "Mulieris Dignitatem," Gen's Review, Vol. 6, n. 3, 1996, p. 11.

¹³ cf. Mulieris Dignitatem, n. 7.

this second aspect is as important as the first. He has to be seen therefore in relation to another human being. We would like to dwell and emphasize this second aspect.

Christ as the Way to know God's Image

We could know who really man is by entering into the reality of God which can only be known through Christ.

Christ is the light because, in his divine identity, he reveals the Father's face. But he is so too because, being a man like us and in solidarity with us in everything except sin, he reveals man to himself. ... By the Incarnation, the Word of God came to bring full light to man. In this regard the Second Vatican Council says that it is: "only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear." (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22)¹⁴

The mystery of the Incarnation has given a tremendous impetus to man's thought and artistic genius. Precisely by reflecting on the union of the two natures, human and divine, in the person of the Incarnate Word, Christian thinkers have come to explain the concept of person as the unique and unrepeatable center of freedom and responsibility, whose inalienable dignity must be recognized. This concept of the person has proved to be the cornerstone of any genuinely human civilization.¹⁵

We can know the face of the Father our God only through His Son who reveals fully to us Himself. In as much as Jesus is both human and divine, we can cross the infinite bridge from humanity to the divine in and through Him.

¹⁴ John Paul II, Angelus Message, Dec. 15 1996 in OR No. 51/2 p. 2.

¹⁵ John Paul II, Message to First Joint Public Session of all the Pontifical Academies, n. 3, Nov. 28, 1996. OR No. 49, p. 3.

On the other hand, "man has lively awareness of the fact that the truth is "above" and beyond him. Man does not create truth; rather truth discloses itself to man when he perseveringly seeks it. The knowledge of truth begins a spiritual joy at having known the truth we can see also a confirmation of man's transcendent vocation, indeed, of his openness to the infinite."¹⁶

God's image is revealed as Trinitarian communion

If man is the image of God, the human being is a "language" through which God expresses Himself: if "the human being is 'like' God," "then God is also in some way 'like' the human being, and on this basis of likeness God may be known by human beings" (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 8).¹⁷

God exists as one Being but in as much as the divine Revelation affirms that He is Love, His essence is charity.¹⁸ And in as much as He is charity, He cannot but be more than one. Divine revelation says that the nature of God is one but in as much as He is charity, He is Truine. There is one God but three Persons in the Divine Trinity.

We have said that to understand what it is to be a human person ought to be enlightened not only by the biblical mystery of the "beginning" but also by the mystery of the Person of Christ and, in the final analysis, by the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.¹⁹ The fullness of this mystery is inaccessible to our limited

¹⁶ Pope John Paul II, Address to Polish University Rectors of the Jagiellonian University and the Pontifical Academy of Theology, OR n. 26 (1497) 25 June 1997 p. 5.

¹⁷ Piero Coda, Three Keys for the Reading of "Mulieris Dignitatem," Gen's Review, Vol. 6, n. 3, 1996, p. 14.

¹⁸ 1 Jn 4:8.

¹⁹ Piero Coda, Three Keys for the Reading of "Mulieris Dignitatem," Gen's Review, Vol. 6, n. 3, 1996, p. 12.

minds, the Pope admits, yet it is revealed to us by Jesus, the Son of God made man. "No man has ever seen God", says the Evangelist John. "The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known"²⁰ Jesus revealed to us who the Father is for He and the Father are one.²¹ Their love is so intimate and infinite that Love itself is a person, the Holy Spirit.

Now, the interiority of God, which He alone can reveal through Jesus, the second Person of the Divine Trinity, is the communion of three: where the absolute does not say anymore who He is in the solitude of the One (— and in such the personal face disappears —) but We are, in the communion of three — such that the face of Each of the Three is revealed by the other two. Each of the three EXISTS, but as communion of Love. (And the creature is englobed in this life.)²² To be created in this likeness therefore cannot but be a being in and for communion. Man's realization, his perfection and self-fulfillment is no other than "communion for and in love."

The Trinity professed by Christianity in no way prejudices the unity of God. The one God is not resented to our gaze as a "solitary" God, but as a God-communion. The First Letter of John marvelously expresses the mystery when it says: "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8).²³

Yes, God not only loves, but loving is his very essence. By virtue of this love, he is Triune for in the interiority of God is the loving communion of the three Divine Persons.²⁴

²⁰ Jn 1:18.

²¹ cf. Jn 17:11.

²² Giuseppe M. Zanghì. *La Vita Interiore. Riflessioni sull' oggi*, Nuova Umanità, XVI, Maggio-Giugno 1994, 20-21.

²³ John Paul II, Angelus Message, May 25 1997 in OR N. 22 (1493) - 28 May 1997, p.1.

²⁴ *ibid.*,

Only God could open this horizon of comprehension, opening in the Incarnate love, His intimacy, through Christ which is otherwise unreachable by the creature.²⁵

Man, in as much as he is the image and likeness of God has to have a relational nature, therefore. His very essence is to relate and to be in communion with others. "It is not good for man to be alone" therefore is a divine revelation which could be understood in the light of this image of God who is Triune.

We are all called to have a living experience of this ineffable mystery of love. "If a man loves me", Jesus has assured us, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (Jn 12:23).²⁶ Man can attain through charity his divine and transcendental vocation to be in communion with his creator through living communion in charity with his neighbors.

The Absolute, the Supreme person to which man has always tended, in the Christ-event has opened his interiority, calling man to model, enter and to live to the full his own essence upon which he was created and at the same time, live, in a certain way, the life of the Trinity.

Moreover, because God is love, He could not but be disclosing Himself in Creation and in man. "It is the existing-in-Himself in God through his ontological disclosing of his profound being, that the creature becomes what it is: because it is the Epiphany of God-Love, who is Himself in going outside of Himself in that otherness of personal kenosis which is the Trinity, and in the otherness of His ontological kenosis — the

²⁵ Giuseppe M. Zanghì. *La Vita Interiore. Riflessioni sull' oggi*, Nuova Umanità, XVI, Maggio-Giugno 1994, 8-9.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Angelus Message*, May 25 1997 in OR N. 22 (1493) - 28 May 1997, p. 1.

unthinkable transcendence of God towards Himself —, in which He is Creator."²⁷

This dimension of communion is the root of man's being "created" in that immanent-transcendence which is Love, and reveals itself in the antinomy of interior life, where the creature is made completely itself.²⁸ The "locus" where man can find *himself* is in this "trinitarian communion."

So, man, in as much as he comes from God, cannot but be his image and likeness. God in as much as He is love cannot but self-disclose himself in man. In the interiority of this Triune God, we find that the three Divine persons really love one another. This is the reason why they are one. On the other hand in as much as God is charity, they are three at the same time. In as much as the core of God is charity man cannot but have this image of charity, and therefore relationality. His essence has to be in communion, in charity with another.

"To be a person, [therefore, created] in the image and likeness of God means being in relationship with another T (MD, 7), to the point where "humanity signifies a call to interpersonal communion" (MD, 7). This fundamental truth which is inscribed in the very mystery of our beginnings' "is the prelude to the definitive self-revelation of God as one and three" (MD 7). The full revelation of the mystery of God in Christ as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are "one God through the unity of divinity," but who exists as distinct Persons "through the inscrutable divine relations" (*ibid.*), throws therefore a new and decisive light on the mystery of the reciprocal relationship of man (and woman) who [is] called to "mirror in the world the mystery of the communion of love which is in God and through which the three

²⁷ Giuseppe M. Zanghi. *La Vita Interiore. Riflessioni sull' oggi*, Nuova Umanita, XVI, Maggio-Giugno 1994, 9.

²⁸ cf. *ibid.*,

Persons love one another in the intimate mystery of the one divine life" (MD 7).²⁹

Here the truth about man is revealed. Not the abstract truth an equation, or a logical operation, but the truth of a living Person, (the *aletheia*).³⁰

The inferiority of the life of man is therefore, "to walk in overcoming the unique individuality defined by the pure immanence in itself, reaching and transcending the love-heart of man, to attain the heart of the Absolute who is Love. ..." ³¹

Man is called to reached where he is not any more what *he thinks he is*, but what he *truly is* - his essence as being created under the image and likeness of the Trinitarian God which is at the same time his "ought to be".

Christ's Abandonment, the Door towards Communion

How did Christ revealed this Trinitarian God to us? In as much as Christ is the way the truth and the life, to know Him is to know also the Father for He and the Father are one. The self-disclosure of Christ which is at the same time the moment when He Himself reveals who He is, by revealing to us the Father, is on His *kenosis* on the Cross, his abandonment. There, he became really the nothingness of love, annihilating Himself so that he could reveal the fullness of His love to the Father and at the same time, He opened to us who the Father is, for He and the Father are one. It is in through His *non being* that He truly *is*. Annihilating himself, he is what He *is* — love, and here he allowed us, through Him and in Him, to enter into the reality of this communion — *enosís*.

²⁹ Piero Coda, Three Keys for the Reading of "Mulieris Dignitatem," Gen's Review, Vol. 6, n. 3, 1996, p. 12.

³⁰ Giuseppe M. Zanghí. La Vita Interiore. Riflessioni sull' oggi, Nuova Umanità, XVI, Maggio-Giugno 1994, p. 6-7.

³¹ *ibid.*.

In as much as he is the way in which we can have our being, to be non-being out of love is also the *via per excellence* in reaching our true Being in God. We become what we are by being non-being. In as much as Christ became who He is by non-being, we too through non-being, can be, *is*.

The Pope called this a "sincere gift of oneself." When man, by his non-being, i.e., by seemingly loosing himself in loving the other, really becomes who he is: "being by non-being." His self-realization is centered in being participant in the divine life of the Trinity because it is only through non-being that we are in communion with others. It is also here that man lives to the fullness his freedom. "Christ on the cross reveals the authentic meaning of authentic freedom, he lives it in its fullness in making a total gift of oneself and invites His disciples to participate in this same freedom."³²

The ontological identity therefore of man is "being by non being." He is what he is by being-not. We can base a philosophical anthropology and humanism in this "identity" of man. Man is man as long as he is a "sincere gift of himself for the others. He is who He is in loosing himself out of love for the others. That is why martyrdom is the highest expression of freedom. The martyrs are the most realized and most free persons.

Therefore, *communion*, through *kenosis* is both an ontological truth (who man *is*) and the ethical truth (how we are to live, our "ought to be"). In this, the foundation is first and foremost the union of man with God his creator through Jesus Christ who opened to man the divine life of Trinitarian communion. This unity is to be the model of every other unity among men, peoples, nations and religions, and, in them of all creation. But this unity

is not the cancellation or the absorption of all differences, for God himself is one in the distinction of the Three Divine Persons. In this Trinitarian unity, although they are one, each person is distinct from each other, diverse, but equal in dignity. It is both a gift (from God's revelation of Himself) and at the same time an ethical task towards the freedom of the human being, a task to be fulfilled by means of love.³³

As mentioned earlier, we are called to this experience. The divine precepts lead to this fullness so that the life of *communion* could be realized. In fact the Church is no other than the "sign and sacrament of communion with God and of unity among all men."³⁴ Communion is also the "source and at the same time the fruit of mission" of the Church.³⁵ It is the same time the starting point, the beginning and the end.

Conclusion

We have tried to present therefore a way towards a Christian anthropology with some ontological formulations. Based on the fact that man is created under the image and likeness of God, and in as much as this image is revealed by the Christ-event as a trinitarian communion, through his *kenosis* on the cross, He revealed to us the face of the Father as love, who gives His only Son, thereby loosing Himself in the Son. At the same time through this annihilation, Christ truly reveals who he *is* — love. And with Him, in Him and through Him, we could understand who man is. Man's true identity is this relational communion of love with God and his fellow man by his *non-being*, his loosing himself for the sake of love for others. It is only through this *non-being* for love that he becomes what he truly *is*.

³³ cf. Piero Coda, Three Keys for the Reading of "Mulieris Dignitatem," Gen's Review, Vol. 6, n. 3, 1996, p. 13.

³⁴ Lumen Gentium, 1.

³⁵ Christifideles Laici, 32.

In the world today, after Descartes, man still insists that the way to attain self-realization and self-fulfillment is to emphasize his being, his consciousness, his ego, himself. Other systems of economics that lead to a certain lifestyle, would emphasize man's *having*. To be more means to have more. This is usually done by accumulating a lot of "something" in order to affirm more who one "is." Ontologically and philosophically and even psychologically, this form of viewing at man has created a lot of problems which extend not only in the personal and spiritual level, but also in the social, economic and political level to the point of annihilating one another to affirm one's own identity. But this deviates from his true *being*. There must be another way of living in this dawn of the second millennium: the way of communion based on a sound Christian anthropology and humanism — a path in taking the first steps "to set out together in a true pilgrimage of peace" by being a *communion of love* through a "sincere gift of oneself by "non-being" for love for others. From *cogito, ergo sum* we need to start from a new basic proposition: *amo, ergo sum*: a fresh paradigm shift towards an anthropological humanism to build the "civilization of love".

The Priest, an Instrument of Christ

PEDRO TEJERO, OP

When a priest is ordained, he is constituted as an instrument of Christ's salvific mission. This office clearly manifests the lofty dignity of the priesthood while at the same time, it also suggests important and valuable considerations in the field of apostolate and sacerdotal spirituality.

Whenever we think of an instrument, whether this be animate or inanimate, we presuppose the existence of a principal cause or agent, capable of making the instrument act and work its proper effect. A pencil, for instance, can never draw a single line were it not for the one who moves it. The whole water of the ocean will never be sufficient to wash away the moral stain in the soul of a person. A principal cause, therefore, is absolutely needed for the action of the instrument.

The humanity of Christ, united to the divinity of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is the instrument by which the whole economy of salvation is achieved and distributed. Christ is the supreme and eternal priest who intercedes between God and man. Christ is the source and fountain of all graces. He is the one who saves and sanctifies us through his passion, death and resurrection.

Furthermore, Christ's humanity enjoys the primacy and causality in regard to all other external instruments which play a role in man's salvation, such as the priestly ministry. Once these principles have been properly understood, the following applications follow:

1. God could have devised his economy of salvation in many different ways and manners. But he preferred the present one in which he wanted to call man's active collaboration and participation in the distribution of graces. He has chosen, therefore, certain men and made them instruments for the design of salvation. He needs men to baptize, to preach the Gospel, to celebrate the Eucharist, to forgive sins... The priests are the administrators of the fruits His redemption.

2. At the time the priest is exercising his ministry, he should have in mind that the power of all his instrumentality does not come from him but from Christ who is the main instrument of redemption and salvation. He should never give the impression that the sacraments are his own property or that they are at his disposal. He is not the source but an instrument in the hands of Christ the Lord.

3. It is of great importance that while the priest is administering, the sacraments, he is fully aware that, at that moment, he is raised and dignified to such an extent that he performs actions which are divine in nature and of infinite value. All these go beyond man's reach or power. By no means, the priest loses his freedom or personal identity when he performs at this level. The closer he is to Christ, the more his liberty is affirmed and proclaimed.

4. When the priest in his ministry finds himself totally united and identified with Christ, he is, then, at the center of his spirituality. He could really say he is acting *in persona Christi*.

The ministry, then, performed belongs to Christ as the source, and to the priest as a faithful instrument of Christ.

5. St. Thomas Aquinas makes the following reflection: *An animate instrument such as a minister is not only moved but in a sense moves itself, in so far as by his will, he moves his bodily members to act. Consequently, his intention is required, whereby he subjects himself to the principal agent; that is, it is necessary that he intends to do that which Christ and the Church do (III, q. 64, a. 8, Reply Obj. I).* How important, therefore, are the internal dispositions and preparations for the administration of the sacraments! Not to pay attention to this aspect may bring monotony, lack of interest, mechanisms and sterility in the apostolate.

The Rise of Catholic Movements: Know them by their Fruits

JEAN VANIER*

Many people are embarrassed by the new Christian lay communities. Their poverty, enthusiasm, celebrations and radical way of living provoke a certain anxiety. They are out of the ordinary. Let us take the same attitude as Gamaliel in Acts 5:

Keep away from these men. Let them alone; for if this plan or understanding is of human beings, it will fail. But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God.

A few years ago I was invited to visit the Jesus People in a brokendown area of Chicago. When I arrived in the large building, formerly a hotel in which all the members lived, I was somewhat surprised by the rather strange drawings on the walls, the long beards and long dresses, and by the "mother" who seemed to have authority over the group. After supper I was asked to speak to the whole community of about 200 men and

* Mr. Jean Vanier is the founder of *L'Arche* Community. His article appeared in *The Tablet*, (1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W60QZ), March 15, 1997, and is reprinted here with permission.

women, simply and poorly clothed, including quite a few "punks" with their colored hair.

As I spent time with them, I discovered that they gave free meals each day to some 300 people who were down and out. I also realized that many of the members had suffered in their younger days, some through drugs or in prison. I asked one of the leaders what their links were with the mainstream Churches of the city. He told me they were not too good because nobody seemed to want to accept them.

I found this strange group of people, which some might call a sect, quite beautiful. I am not sure there are many Christian communities capable of welcoming men and women whose lives have been so disordered and of helping them to live in a more human and more deeply Christian way.

In Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic, there is a small community of L'Arche where a number of young people, whom we call "assistants," have come to live with people like Luisito, a young beggar with a severe mental handicap whom we welcomed. Some of these young assistants are generous and idealistic but have no interior discipline; their attention span is limited; they are unable to take on a real responsibility; they need continual stimulation and exciting experiences; they are frightened of authority. They join the community for a short time and then leave.

Other young people who come are more structured. Quite often they are former members of a lay movement in the Church which some people might call sectarian and closed, because of its strong formation and the way it is separated off from others. And yet they know why they have come; they can assume responsibility.

My experiences in Chicago and Santo Domingo, then, have taught me to be careful before speaking about "sects" or "sectarian" communities.

Let us examine the differences between a sect and a community.

In recent years, we have heard of the mass deaths (including suicides) of sect members in Texas, Guyana and Switzerland. Other sects, especially in Latin America, bring people into a dream world, cut off from reality. Still others, based on the cult of Satan, appear particularly evil.

Certain characteristics describe or define a sect:

- A sect is frequently dominated by an all-powerful guru seen as the uniquely inspired prophet and savior whose teachings and writings alone are true. No other authority is tolerated. Contacts with other forms of thought or behavior are forbidden.

- The sect has all the truth. It presents itself as having a new message of salvation for all the world. This gives a total meaning to its members' lives and an intense motivation to proselytize and to recruit.

- For those in the sect, society is divided into the good and the bad, the saved and the damned. Strong walls of fear are created, making it difficult for members to question anything. They are cut off from family, friends and all other social institutions.

- Members are obliged to sacrifice their personal conscience, freedom and critical capacity to the power, security and goals of the group. Their intelligences are manipulated. They live off slogans rather than growing in their understanding of reality through their search for truth.

- Anguished, fragile, lonely people are attracted and seduced into the group. The togetherness, security and powerful goals of the group transmit a good feeling and relieve the anguish and pain of loneliness, worthlessness, meaninglessness and lack of direction. This makes it almost impossible to leave without going through even greater anguish, and the apparent risk of emptiness, loneliness and inner death.

Now, some of these elements can be found in all Christian communities, particularly in the early years of their foundation. But as the community grows and deepens and is recognized by a Church, two very distinctive differences become evident.

- A Christian community is there for each person, to foster growth into freedom and a deepening of personal consciousness. Though the mission of the community may be greater than any one member, the integrity and vocation of each is more important than numerical increase or institutional survival. There is a long probationary period before anyone can be committed long-term, and whoever discovers that their place is no longer in the group is helped to leave peacefully.

- A community is not closed upon itself. Community members are encouraged to be in contact with other Christian movements, spiritual leaders and theologians in the Church as they grow to maturity. They are part of the wider Church which recognizes and accepts the goals of the community and the way it is governed, and which can arbitrate in times of conflict.

There are certain signs that reveal a community or movement is evolving in the ways of the Spirit. A tree is judged by its fruits. Good fruits, good trees.

First, as the community or movement grows and deepens its own charism and mission, it discovers the beauty and gifts of others in the local Church, and the whole Church.

This insertion into the local Church can take time because some new movements, with their enthusiasm and poverty, seem to "rock the boat." People set in their ways and their ideas may not like this. New movements founded in one particular diocese may then need support from the Pope and the universal Church, in the initial stages of their foundation, so as to grow universally.

Subsequently, however, the new movements must become integrated and "inculturated" into the local scene, recognizing the authority of the local bishop and co-operating with other movements.

Secondly, it is a sign of the Spirit at work when a movement, conscious of its own limits and weaknesses, and of being closed, realizes it has committed errors.

Every new foundation has its own call, but also its shadow side. Every founder bears some darkness as well as light; none is entirely pure. What is true of the founder may be even more true of the first disciples. They tend frequently to be less open than the founder and to interpret in a rigid way the founder's spirituality, vision and way of life.

Movements and communities will normally need help from outside in order to face their shadow side, to perceive and evaluate how authority has been exercised, how power is used and abused. They will also need to listen and accept criticism, to have the courage to question themselves, the honesty to admit shortcomings and the energy to change. They will have to rid themselves of certain aspects that were necessary at the beginning of the foundation but which have become outmoded, even a sign of death.

Thirdly, a movement is growing in the Holy Spirit if it seeks continually to be faithful to an evolving Church, while remaining clear in its identity. This is not always easy, especially for

movements founded to maintain rectitude of faith. But as a movement grows, it is called not only to deepen its charism and identity, but also to progress in openness. It must learn to follow both the Gospel message and the mind of the Church.

Pope John Paul II sets an example of firm identity combined with openness, as shown by the Assisi meeting in 1986 with leaders of other religions, his visits to the synagogue in Rome, and to Morocco and Tunisia, and his insistence that all Catholics work for unity among all Christians.

If a new movement is announcing good news to the poor and allowing them to evangelize it in return, then here again is a sign of the Spirit. To eat at the same table as the poor, to be committed to them in bonds of friendship, is always demanding and disturbing. The presence of the poor and the weak keeps a movement humble and prevents it from closing in upon itself.

The poor oblige it to evolve and to deepen. When Jesus sends his disciples out to announce good news to the poor, he tells them to go in the style — without money or change of clothes. Is it possible to announce good news to the poor and the broken if we speak from a place of power, comfort and security? God is Emmanuel, God-with-us, looking after us and caring for us in our weakness.

Another important sign is the quality of love for the weaker members of the group: for those who are going through a particular time of psychological or physical difficulty or of doubt, or who feel called to move on. The latter frequently need help in order to leave the group peacefully, without feeling guilty.

All groups tend to hold on to their members. They do not let go easily. Beyond certain limits, this becomes destructive and indeed sectarian. It is as if for a person to leave the group is synonymous with leaving the Church or leaving God. But it does

not seem right or of the Spirit when a brother or sister who leaves the group suddenly becomes a stranger.

Another sign of the Spirit is when joy and celebration flow from trust in Jesus. Sectarian groups tend to be very serious. They consider themselves responsible for reforming the Church and that is serious business. But communities growing in the ways of the Spirit know that Jesus is responsible for his Body, the Church, and that they are but instruments of his life, love and light.

As time goes by, some members of new movements, like members of the Church in general, try to hold on drastically to ways of doing things which are not essential to their charism; this prevents them from evolving in the Spirit of God. Others, in an attempt to be totally open, reject elements of faith, of spirituality and of their tradition.

We all need to be pruned and purified in order to be faithful to the Holy Spirit. Only then can we remain grounded in our identity, charism and spirituality, while at the same time being open to evolving in accordance with the needs of the times.

The Offerors and the Offerings

JAIME CARD, SIN

"Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to Him. Know what you are doing; imitate the mystery you celebrate. Model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross."

Our bishop said those words to us on the day of our ordination.

We receive the offerings of the people while we are offering to God ourselves. This is a sacred calling.

I wish to focus particular attention on the practice of receiving Mass offerings and intentions.

It has been a widespread practice in our Archdiocese that Mass intentions are announced publicly in various forms. There has been a prevailing sentiment that the priest is obligated to announce Mass intentions and the failure to fulfill this eventually causes unpleasant experiences between parishioners and parish priest. Through this present instrument we would like to clarify:

1. present day reasons for Mass offerings
2. the legitimacy or present practice of multi-intentions applied to one Mass
3. the non-obligation to announce Mass intentions

The present practice of announcing Mass intentions is not conducive to the promotion of a healthy liturgical atmosphere.

Mass Offering in the Revised Code

The new code does not use the word "stipend" (stipendium). Instead the word "offering" is used. The word "stipend" (stipendium) in Roman times was used for wage paid to soldiers. Even St. Thomas Aquinas used this term to refer to the donation for the celebration of Masses according to a definite intention because it is indicated that the donation was compensation for the priest's time and labor rather than the selling of graces. This exactly meant payment for services rendered.

The revised code espouses the term "offering" — a term which better conveys the freewill, gratuitous nature of a gift.

Canon 946: "The faithful who make an offering so that Mass can be celebrated for their intention, contribute to the good of the Church, and that by their offering they share in the Church's concern for the support of its ministers and its activities."

It is clear from the prescription of the Code that Mass offerings should be seen as a gift to the Church for the support of its ministers or other purposes and not as a contract involving services in return for the payment of money. In accepting a Mass offering, the only obligation the priest undertakes is the canonical obligation to celebrate the Mass. It is enough that a priest has at least the habitual and implicit intention of offering the Masses at which he presides or concelebrates for the donor's intentions, this obligation is satisfied. No other obligations—such as publicizing the intention—are incurred by accepting the offering.

To the question of multi-intentions applied to one Mass we respond according to the Church's mind:

Canon 945: "In accordance with the approved custom of the Church, any priest who celebrates or concelebrates a Mass may accept an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention."

The law prescribes that a priest can accept one offering for one Mass but does not exclude other intentions to be prayed for which are not conjoined with an offering. This we do in the Eucharistic prayer itself when it speaks of offering the Eucharistic sacrifice for the Church, the pope, bishops, clergy, the faithful and other intentions aside from the donor of the Mass offering. Also, in the liturgy of the Mass itself, e.g. in the prayers of the faithful, different intentions are prayed for other than the intention of the donor.

We should therefore avoid creating a mentality of "commercialism" as regards the sacraments and in particular, to the Eucharist. Our present practices have led our people to think that they pay for the sacrament with the amount they give to their priests. We can no longer allow such practices to persist since they run contrary to the reforms of Vatican II.

In view of these considerations we recommend the following:

- * Our people need to be catechized on the real meaning of Mass offerings. They are not payment for the sacraments but are voluntary gifts to the Church for her needs and works.

- * To cease the practice of announcing the intentions of the Mass before the celebration of the Mass. The various expressions "This Mass is being offered for —", or "especially offered", or "celebrated for", or "the intention of this Mass is —", or "the special intention is —" are not exact and misleading since the effect of the Mass is not limited by the donor's intentions.

On Youth Ministry Program*

JAIME CARD. SIN

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The last World Youth Day in France last August 1997 sent a ripple around Europe and the rest of the world. On television, I have seen the concluding Mass of his Holiness Pope John Paul II, attended by close to one million people. There was even a glimpse of the Philippine Flag borne so proudly by our country's young people who I have heard have benefitted so much from that endearing experience.

Sensing the surge of youthful enthusiasm, the Holy Father said in his preaching: "Dear young people, your journey does not end here. Time does not come to a halt. Go forth now along the roads of the world, along the pathways of humanity, while remaining ever united in Christ's Church."

He further encouraged the young saying: "Continue to contemplate God's glory and God's love, and you will receive

*** Homily delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of Holy Eucharist for the Launching of the Youth Ministry Program at the San Carlos Seminary, Makati on November 8, 1998, at 8 am.**

the enlightenment needed to build the civilization of love, to help our brothers and sisters to see the world transfigured by God's eternal wisdom and love."

Indeed, as in the Philippine experience, the explosion of hope in the young engendered by the World Youth Day can only be an invitation to a deeper participation in the complex life of the young people today. They need special attention. They demand our constant care and affection because they are proven to be very receptive to the Holy Spirit. They want to be evangelized more and more.

Our young Christians are a people embarking on a vital quest. They are a questioning and searching people. From the heart of the young and from their creative imaginations, questions arise. It is part of the inner law of their hearts to seek an answer and pursue its search.

They see the world and its grandeur and through it, they grapple with the reality of a power beyond their own. Yet also a power that reaches out to them, reaches down to comfort them and show them much love.

Many of the young are very sensitive to life. They know that though life is exciting and adventurous, nevertheless, our life is superficial and precarious. Only God gives stability to the whole order of creation.

With the strength of our prayers we have witnessed the phenomenal growth of devoted hearts among the youth. Once they take hold of God's assuring love, they blossom like flowers in the field, giving color and zest to an environment awaiting their fragrance. The young are zealous Christians now in the parishes, in the campuses of both private and public schools. They spread their faith in the dormitories and work places. They truly enliven our faith life.

To cope with this tremendous awakening, the Archdiocese of Manila, supports vigorously the many programs that will ensure the continuity of ministry to young people. We are assisted in this task by the able leadership and humble work of our priests, sisters and lay personnel, many of them volunteers, armed only with great concern for the welfare of their young friends.

As we launch today this youth ministry program for deeper reflections on youth ministry, we make a steady step forward in our own desire and our own quest to transmit the gospel of the Lord Jesus to our most open and receptive members, also the most tender and impressionistic. For to reach the mind of the youth is to speak their language, to study their sub-culture, to enter their inventive and restless world.

It is one thing to say to them that Jesus is the wisdom and word of the Father, the Incarnate Son of God who gave Himself for our salvation. And it is another thing to use their own images of life to send the same message. Like for example, telling them: "Jesus is like Coca-Cola - He is the real thing; Jesus is like Pepsi-Cola - He is the choice of the new generation; Jesus is like Rexona - He won't let you down; He is like Visine (Vay-Sin) - He takes your problem in 60 seconds; He is like Vicks Vaporub - He has the *"haplos ng pagmamahal."*

We pray to the Lord for the fruitfulness of this attempt to from youth leaders and ministers. May this be the start of more creative ways of stabilizing our love for the youth of the Archdiocese. May this be our offering of thanks to God for giving us a Church alive and sensitive to the prompting of the human quest for meaning. May the Holy Spirit bless all who will participate in this program God Bless and congratulations.

Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

ORDINARY WITNESSES IN A VALID MARRIAGE

It is a well known Church's law that two witnesses are necessary for the validity of a canonical marriage. In our diocese, a marriage was solemnized with only one witness. Each contracting party had chosen one witness, but unfortunately one of them could not arrive in time for the marriage celebration, due to heavy traffic.

The wedding had to take place at exactly 8:00 in the morning, followed by other two weddings. Since it was Sunday, the church was already full of faithful for the Mass. The Parish Priest, seeing that one of the witnesses had not yet arrived, decided to go ahead with the wedding, hoping that perhaps the witness would be able to arrive in time. The contracting parties and their parents were notified and considered the Parish Priest's decision correct. They decided too to go ahead with the wedding with only one witness present.

Unfortunately the second witness did not arrive. I ask whether that marriage with only one witness was valid or null and void?

A Priest

1. Persons participating in a marriage celebration

Canon 1108 states who are the persons that must be present in the valid celebration of a canonical marriage: "Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local Ordinary or parish priest, or the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who, in the presence of two witnesses, assists ..." Hence, the five persons are: The two contracting parties, the Church's qualified witness and two other ordinary witnesses.

a) *Contracting parties.* The new Code points out in its preliminary canons on marriage who should be the two contracting parties. Canon 1057 describes marriage as "a covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life..." Canon 1057 states that "a marriage is brought into being by the *lawfully manifested consent of persons who are legally capable*". And canon 1058 says that "all can contract marriage *who are not prohibited by law*, in other words, who are legally capable to marry. Therefore, the two persons of different sex, qualified by law to get married, who exchange their consent according to the law, are the contracting parties. Since their own consent, duly manifested, brings out their marital union, they are true ministers of their own marriage.

b) *Qualified Church's witness.* Canon 1108 mentions specifically the person before whom the contracting parties have to declare their marital consent, namely "the local Ordinary or parish priest, or the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who in the presence of two witnesses, assists..." The second

paragraph of the same canon 1109 declares what is meant by the term *assist* used in the first paragraph, saying: "Only that person who, being present, asks the contracting parties to manifest their consent and in the name of the Church receives it, is understood to *assist* at a marriage". He is qualified Church's witness, who asks and receives the marital consent of the two parties in the name of the Church.

The presence, therefore, of the solemnizing priest or deacon must be *active*, not merely passive. The legislator gives the authentic and restrictive interpretation of the term *assist* with regards to the qualified witness, as different from the presence of the two ordinary witnesses. The Church's witness himself is to ask and accept the manifestation of the consent of both contracting parties in the name of the Church whom he represents.

c) *Two ordinary witnesses*. In addition to the assisting priest or deacon there must be present, when the contracting parties exchange their marital consent, two ordinary witnesses, who together with contracting parties and the assisting priest or deacon have to sign the marriage contract after its celebration. It should be pointed out that the case of our consultant deals only with these two ordinary witnesses. Thus, we shall elaborate on whatever refers to them only.

2. Ordinary witnesses

a) *Number of witnesses*. The 1917 Code stated in its canon 1094: "et coram duobus *saltern* testibus". The 1983 Code says in canon 1108: "et coram duobus testibus". The omission of the term "*saltern*" (at least) in the new Codex should not be interpreted as if the Church's present law allows less than two witnesses in the celebration of a valid marriage. The word *saltern* has been obviously omitted for not being necessary. Canon 1108 reads: "Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of... two witnesses." Therefore, marriages celebrated

in the presence of only one witness should clearly be considered as invalid, "even if celebrated in bona fide," as the S. Congr. Concilii said in January, 1673. Obviously there can be more than two witnesses, but not less.

b) *Qualification of the two witnesses.* The Church does not require for the two witnesses any special qualification for the valid celebration of marriage. Hence, it will be enough if they are capable of giving testimony of their having seen and heard the exchange of marital consent done by both contracting parties upon the request of the assisting priest or deacon. The Church's law requires only what the natural law does, i.e. that both witnesses have reached the age of reason and are able to discern what they have seen and heard during the mutual declaration of consent given by the contracting parties and testify about this fact.

Other qualifications required to be witnesses for judicial matters, as to be more than fourteen years (can. 1150), or of legal age (Art. 3 of *The Family Code of the Philippines*), are not required by the Church for witnesses as necessary for the validity of marriage. Likewise, persons below the age of puberty, who have reached the age of discretion, can be witnesses in a valid marriage. They can be either male or female, lay persons or clerics both religious or secular, baptized or pagans, even baptized who are excommunicated, heretics, schismatics. There is no law whatsoever in the Church's Code prohibiting non-Catholic persons, baptized or pagans to be witnesses in a marriage celebration.

However, considering that marriage between baptized is always a sacrament, it is strongly recommended to choose Catholic instead of non-Catholic witness, persons who are well known for their honesty instead of persons of ill repute or bad fame. The reverence to the sacrament of marriage asks for a careful selection. The S. Congr. of the Holy Office declared on August 19, 1891, that "heterodox persons should not be used as witnesses in a Catholic marriage; they can be, however, tolerated

by the local Ordinary for a grave cause, as long as there is no scandal" (Collect, of the S. Congr. de Propaganda Fide, 2, n. 1765). Obviously, diocesan statutes given on this matter, with some restricting guidelines, should be followed.

e) *Disqualified persons.* From what has been said above, we can say that the following persons cannot be admitted as witnesses in the celebration of a valid Catholic marriage:

1) those who have not reached yet the use of reason or discretion, since they are not capable to discern or judge with their minds what they perceive with their eyes and ears and cannot, therefore, give testimony of what has happened during the celebration of marriage;

2) insane persons who have reached the age of reason, but are not able to give a reasonable testimony about what they perceive with their senses;

3) those who are under the effect of immoderate drinking alcoholic liquor, as well as those who are drug addicts;

4) those who are hypnotized or sleeping during the marriage celebration;

5) those who during the exchange of the marital consent of the contracting parties are totally distracted;

6) those who are deaf or blind.

d) *Choice of the two witnesses.* The right to choose the persons who will be the ordinary witnesses in a canonical marriage belongs to the contracting parties, not to the parish priest, Gasparri says. Of course, the laudable customs and existing diocesan statutes should be taken into consideration and be respected.

Obviously, the designation of the two witnesses should be done before the wedding day or at least before the wedding ceremony. However, witnesses not having been designated before the celebration of marriage itself, the parties may accept as witnesses other persons from the congregation, who, having been called and invited by the parties themselves, by their parents or relatives, or by the assisting priest or deacon, are willing to perform such duty. In such cases it can be truly said that the contracting parties explicitly choose or give their consent to the persons who will perform the role of witnesses.

An *explicit* designation of witnesses, however, should not be taken as a necessary requirement for the validity of marriage. Capello says that the lack of an *explicit* designation does not affect even the licitness of marriage. Obviously, the choice of witnesses should be done before the marriage celebration, so that the persons concerned, knowing and being conscious of their role as witnesses, will pay full attention to observe carefully the whole ceremony and thus fulfill their duty according to the truth with religious fidelity. They have to give testimony of the already contracted marriage by signing the marriage contract with the contracting parties and the assisting priest or deacon.

e) *Implicit acceptance*. We believe that as long as there is no *positive and explicit refusal and rejection* of the contracting parties to manifest their marital consent before the witnesses, as required by the Church's law, it is to be assumed that they want to get married according to the Church's desire, doing all things that are necessary for the validity of their marriage. This desire to contract valid marriage, as the Church wants them to do, implies to accept what perhaps they actually ignore or are actually overlooking, but nevertheless can be done and is really done by others without being necessary their *actual* knowledge and willingness. This can happen when marriage is solemnized in the church by the priest or deacon before the congregation of

faithful and no witnesses have been previously invited by the contracting parties or, having being invited, are not present during the marriage celebration for one reason or another.

Some authors even discuss the question whether the contracting parties should be actually conscious of the presence of the two witnesses for the validity of marriage. We agree with Payen, saying that marriage is valid when the contracting parties know that their consent should be given for a valid marriage, they want to comply with this legal requirement and the witnesses are really present. It cannot be expected and required from the contracting parties to have *actual* consciousness of the witnesses' presence at a moment they have to center their whole attention to the question addressed to them by the assisting priest or deacon asking and receiving their marital consent.

f) *Confirmation of implicit acceptance.* Payen says in his book *De Matrimonio*, 1929, p. 169: "*Quamvis nulli testes fuerint ulla expressa ratione designati, certe valet matrimonium initum in ecclesia coram parrocho et fidelibus. Item certe valet, absente, ad normam canonis 1098 (of 1917 Codex, reproduced by 1983 Codex, can. 1116), parrocho. Ex responso S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 'quatenus testibus certe constet de praestatione consensus,' validum sine dubio consistit matrimonium*" (S.C. de Prop. Fide, July 2, 1827: Collect. 1, n. 794, ad 2). The same opinion is held by Gasparri, *De Matrimonio*, 1932, pp. 120-121).

The reason is obvious. Those persons present at the public celebration of marriage can easily observe and testify that the mutual consent of the contracting parties has been normally given according to the law. This can be said specially of those persons who are near to the place where the assisting priest or deacon asks and receives the consent of the contracting parties. Besides, ordinarily there is one or two persons serving and helping the assisting priest during the ceremony, who see the whole procedure

of the exchange of marital consent and thus can give testimony of the same.

In the case of a marriage contracted with the extraordinary canonical form according to can. 1116, the parents, relatives and friends of the contracting parties, present at the exchange of their mutual consent, can certainly be considered as true witnesses, even if they are not expressly designated to perform such role.

Reason itself does not require an explicit designation. We should bear in mind that the Church resorted to impose the law of the canonical form, requiring the presence of two witnesses, in order to avoid the so-called *clandestine* marriages. Such danger cannot be thought of in the above mentioned cases. The mere fact that marriage is solemnized *publicly* in the church shows that the contracting parties are conscious and willing to celebrate their wedding in the presence of the faithful, giving their mutual consent according to the Church's law.

Let us not forget either that the two ordinary witnesses have no *active* part or role to play, as the assisting priest or deacon does. The two witnesses have only to observe whether the contracting parties exchange or not their marital consent and, having done this, testify by signing with the assisting priest or deacon the marriage contract signed also by the contracting parties.

It seems according to reason, therefore, that no explicit designation of witnesses is necessary for the validity of marriage celebration. Other persons present at the celebration can play the role of witnesses in a valid marriage. The fact that the contracting parties have not designed them, does not imply their refusal to comply with the Church's desire.

g) *Simultaneous presence.* To end up our long answer to the case, we say that the two witnesses' *simultaneous* presence

is required at the time when the assisting priest or deacon asks and accepts the mutual consent of the contracting parties. It is not enough, therefore, if the contracting parties give first their consent before the priest or deacon with only one witness, and later on do the same before the same priest or deacon with only the other witness, who was absent before.

h) *Physical presence*, necessary also for marriage validity, takes place when all persons required by law are present in the place, where the marriage celebration is held. If the physical presence of all is wanted, the simultaneous presence cannot exist. Both go together. This is the reason why the opinion of some authors cannot be accepted. They hold the possibility of giving the marital consent by phone or television. Undoubtedly the simultaneity is possible, when the consent is transmitted by phone or television; but the physical presence of all persons concerned in the same place is lacking. The Church requires *simultaneous and physical* presence of the contracting parties, the assisting priest or deacon and the two witnesses.

i) *Moral presence*. Obviously, simultaneous and physical presence of the two witnesses, required by law, are not enough, if they are to give a trustworthy testimony of the valid celebration of marriage they have witnesses. Only their moral and conscious presence at the celebration may enable them to sign the marriage contract according to the truth. Moral presence implies a willfull and mental attention to what they see and hear during the celebration of marriage. It is necessary, therefore, that the witnesses be conscious that the parties being asked by the priest or deacon, freely answer in the affirmative. Thus, they should avoid all distractions at the moment, if they want to fulfill their duty faithfully.

j) *Intention and knowledge not necessary*. It should be noted, however, that it is not necessary that the witnesses have an *explicit and actual intention* to perform their duty. What is

really necessary in the witnesses is to see and hear the exchange or marital consent, as it is ordinarily done. Nor it is necessary that the witnesses have personal knowledge that the consent of the contracting parties before the priest or deacon is essential for the validity of the marriage, nor that their own testimony is necessary to prove the celebration of a valid marriage. What is necessary is that, having being present during the exchange of marital consent of the parties, they give testimony of what they have seen and heard according to the truth.

We repeat again that, for practical reasons, the two witnesses should be placed near the contracting parties, so that they can easily see and hear the exchange of the marital consent, main object of the testimony they have to give by signing the marriage contract.

In short, our answer to the consultant priest is that the marriage dealt with in the case was valid. We take into consideration what the consultant says: "The Church was full of faithful waiting for the Mass." Only one witness chosen by the parties was present; the other was absent. The parties and their parents decided also to go ahead with the wedding. They did not reject and discard the possibility of the not arrival of the absent witness and the necessity, therefore, of a possible substitute. Besides, we know that a celebrated marriage enjoys the favor of the law (c. 1060): it is to be considered as valid until the contrary is proven.

Their decision to go ahead implies that they wanted to get married validly by doing what the Church requires by law. The parish priest could call and invite any of the faithful present to be witness. Even if he did not do this, any of those who were near the couple and were able to follow the exchange of the marital consent could sign the marriage contract with the chosen witness, who was present.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers **July - August 1998**

EFREN RIVERA, OP

JULY 5, 1998

**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C**

**LUKE 10:1-12, 17-20 (Short form: 10:1-9)
THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE DISCIPLES
GO AHEAD OF JESUS**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

In the plan of the Third Gospel, Jesus ends his Galilean ministry with his Transfiguration (Lk 9:28 ff), and "firmly resolves to proceed toward Jerusalem..." (Lk 9:51). Luke now inserts eight chapters (10 to 17) that constitutes his "Special Section," that is, material that he does not share with Mark and Matthew or which they put in a different order.

Attentive to our celebration of the Year of the Holy Spirit in 1998, we should see the Holy Spirit as the one who goes ahead of Jesus and works secretly among people so that they could become the harvest of the Lord.

Focus Points. (1) V. 1-2 The Lord appointed a further seventy-two and sent them in pairs before him to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them: "The harvest is rich but the workers are few; therefore ask the harvest-master to send workers to his harvest." If we divide 72 by 12 we get 6. The six sets of twelve disciples added to the twelve apostles (see Luke 9:1) result in 7 sets of preachers or "workers" in the Lord's farm. ◇ God the Father is the "harvest-master"; Jesus is the Principal Worker who is assisted by his followers; and the Holy Spirit is the one who goes ahead of Jesus and his followers to prepare the harvest secretly.

(2) V. 3-9 'Be on your way, and remember... On entering any house, first say, 'Peace to this house...' Stay in the one house eating and drinking what they have, for the laborer is worth his wage... Into whatever city you go... cure the sick there. Say to them, 'The reign of God is at hand.'" If we skip the prohibitions and warnings, we see four instructions of Jesus to his missionaries: (1) Bring Peace to the house where you will stay; (2) Receive your shelter, food and drink as your wage; (3) Cure the sick; (4) Proclaim the Good News of the Reign of God.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. Even before Christian missionaries come to a place to invite people to the Christian faith, the Holy Spirit is already working there to prepare the Lord's harvest.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Asian people are deeply spiritual. Have you met non-Christian Asians who are deeply spiritual? Share your answer with your small group.

2. It is true that "evangelization" means planting the Church and building it up in a certain place. But today's Gospel Reading invites us to think of it as: (1) Bringing Peace; (2) Making friends with people of goodwill who may not yet share your convictions; (3) Healing people; (4) Proclaiming the Good News (not necessarily "converting" people to your religion).

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you ever evangelized anyone who is under constraint not to change his or her religion? Share your experience with your small group.

Morning Prayer

It is interesting to note that in today's Gospel Reading Jesus asks his disciples to pray before they proceed to their work of preparing people for his coming. There is some connection between this and the following story.

A governor in the CALABARZON (Calamba, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) area was called in to mediate in a three-day deadlock occurring when some employees and employers got entangled in a strike. Arriving on the scene at two o'clock in the morning, in the middle of a heated debate that started about twelve hours earlier, he merely stepped up and naively said, "My mother always told me not to forget my morning prayers. It is already two o'clock in the morning, so let me say my morning prayers before I join you in your discussions."

He asked everyone to stand and then intoned the "Our Father," "Hail Mary," and "Glory Be." Following the common practice, he waited for the people to say the second parts of the prayers, which they did in a sort of mumble.

After that, they all sat down more relaxed and fifteen minutes later the strike ended.

JULY 12, 1998

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

**LUKE 10:25-37 — PARABLE OF THE
GOOD SAMARITAN**
Not What But Who

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

If the Holy Spirit is active even outside the Judeo-Christian religion, with more reason can we say that He/She/It is active within the Jewish religion. In today's Gospel Reading we find the Holy Spirit guiding a Pharisee (see Mt 22:34) - Lawyer (Scribe, Mk 12:28).

Focus Points. (1) V. 25-29 On one occasion a lawyer stood up to pose this problem to Jesus: "Teacher, what must I do to inherit everlasting life?" Jesus answered him...But because he wished to justify himself he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Although the Parable of the Good Samaritan is special to Luke, its introductory episode — the lawyer's question — is shared by Luke (10:25-27) with Matthew (22:34-40) and Mark (12:28-31). Mt 22:35 and Lk 10:25 point out that the lawyer wanted to "test" Jesus (see RSV). But when he asked, "Who is my neighbor?" it was most probably the Holy Spirit who was prodding him.

(2) V. 30-37 "There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho... xxx Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who treated him with compassion." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do the same." The power of Christ's Parable of the Good Samaritan was such that it touched the heart of the Pharisee-Lawyer. This was possible because the Holy Spirit was working secretly in the

latter's innermost being. It is not easy for a Jewish Pharisee to admit that a foreigner, a despised Samaritan, would have more "compassion" and therefore would be more god-like than a Jewish priest or Levite.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. It sometimes happens that people start out by following their human spirit and then, all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit takes them by surprise and they follow the Holy Spirit.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Did the Holy Spirit ever lead you to "change course" in your life... in your plans... in your projects? Share your answer with your small group.

2. In the 1998 Philippine elections, Catholic Bishops told the people WHAT kind of president the country needs. This did not prove to be very helpful to the Filipino electorate, who were more interested in determining WHO among the actual candidates should be called upon to lead the people in facing the challenges already inside the house or knocking at the door. We should train ourselves not only to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us on WHAT should be done but also on WHO IS THE MAN OR THE WOMAN WHO SHOULD DO IT. It is something that the apostolic Church often did (see Acts 1:24; 6:3-5; 13:2-3, etc.).

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Did the Holy Spirit ever help you choose the right person to do something important in your parish or community? Share your experience with your small group.

Brothers Who Cared and Shared

The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that we fulfill the commandment to love our neighbor when we show compas-

sion to a person in need. We can go one step further and anticipate the needs of people. The following story is in this vein.

Two brothers worked together on a family farm. One was unmarried and the other married with children. Following the charge laid on them by their parents before they died, they shared their expenses and profits 50-50.

One day the single brother said to himself: "You know, it is not right that my brother and I should share the produce 50-50. After all, I'm all alone, and my needs are simple. My poor brother has to take care of his wife and three children. How can he live as well as I live if we divide our produce 50-50?"

So, in the middle of the night he took a sack of grain from his bin, crept over the field between their houses and dumped it into his brother's bin.

Meanwhile, unknown to him, his brother had the same thought. He said to himself, "It is not right that my brother and I should share the produce 50-50. After all, I am a married man and my wife brought some wealth with her and with that we and our children can live a comfortable life. In my old age my wife and children will look after me. My brother will have to depend on his savings." So he, too, in the middle of the night, but on a different day of the week, took a sack of grain from his bin and sneaking across the field, deposited it in his brother's bin.

For years, both were puzzled as to why their supply did not dwindle. Then one night it just so happened that they both set out for each other's houses at the same time. In the dark, they bumped into each other carrying their sacks. While sprawled on the road beside their sacks it slowly dawned on them what was happening. They rose to their feet as if on a signal and embraced one another.

Their story shows how the Holy Spirit builds community through brotherly caring and sharing. That's what the parable of the Good Samaritan calls "compassion" (Lk 10:37). Jesus concluded his teaching by saying, "Then go and do the same."

JULY 19, 1998

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

LUKE 10:38-42 — MARTHA AND MARY

One of Them Was Moved By the Spirit

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Luke has put Jesus on an artificial journey to Jerusalem starting at 9:51. Since the journey ends with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem in 19:28 ff., what is narrated in chapter 10 should logically happen far from Jerusalem. The mention of Bethany in today's Gospel Reading underscores the artificiality of Luke's arrangement. Bethany is only an hour's walk from Jerusalem.

Taking 1998, the Year of the Holy Spirit as our vantage point, we can see in Martha a person who is moved by the human spirit and in Mary a person moved by the Holy Spirit.

Focus Points. (1) **V. 38-40** Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him to her home. She had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord's feet and listened to his words. Martha, who was busy with all the details of hospitality, came to him and said, "Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me all alone to do the household tasks? Tell her to help me." Both Martha and Mary were friends of Jesus (see Jn 11:5) and there is nothing reprehensible in what either of them did. But in this particular episode, Martha was merely moved by the human spirit in her desire to do something extraordinary in terms of hospitality since

her guest was no less than Jesus, the renowned prophet. By contrast, Mary, was moved by the Holy Spirit although, ironically, she didn't move much, having positioned herself at the Lord's feet to listen to his words.

(2) V. 41-42 The Lord in reply said to her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things; one thing only is required. Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it." Most probably, in the historical context, Jesus told Martha that only one dish will suffice for his meal. However, Luke's phraseology in v. 42 b, "Mary has chosen the better portion..." etc., indicates that he wants his readers to understand a deeper meaning in Jesus' words. Mary is moved by the Holy Spirit to do something that, for *disciples* of Jesus should be a first priority, that is, *listen to the words of the Lord*.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. "Good, better, best/ Never let them rest./ 'Til the good is better,/ and the better, best." This Verse should guide the formation of Christian disciples. As soon as the Holy Spirit lights up in us that faith in Jesus Christ that saves us, we become good, like Martha in today's Gospel Reading. But then, we must be open to the same Holy Spirit to make us better and to strive for the best, like Mary.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Is there a recent incident in your life that became an occasion for you to grow spiritually? Share this with your small group.

2. Recall what is written in Lk 10:23-24: "Turning to his disciples he said to them privately: 'Blest are the eyes that see

what you see. I tell you, many prophets and kings wished to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.'" In today's Gospel Reading it is a woman, Mary, who is moved by the Holy Spirit and does what a disciple of Christ should do, that is, listen to his words, and thereby be blest.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Did you ever feel greatly blessed because you listened to the words of the Lord? Share your answer with your small group.

Martha and Mary in a Catechism Class

A High School Catechism class studying the story of Martha and Mary was told to tell a story or make a poem that will illustrate their difference in character. The best assignments turned in were the following.

MARTHA.

An American actress became convinced that she was losing her hearing. She went to a specialist who gave her a thorough checkup. The doctor pulled out a gold timepiece and asked, "Can you hear this ticking?"

"Of course," said the actress.

The specialist walked to the door and held up the watch again. "Now can you hear it?"

The actress concentrated and said, "Yes, I can hear it clearly."

The doctor walked out of the door and into the next room and said, "Can you hear it now?"

"Yes."

"My dear lady," the doctor said, "there is nothing wrong with your hearing. You just don't listen."

MARY.

Her thoughts were slow,
her words were few
and never formed to glisten.
But she was a joy to all her friends —
You should have heard her listen.

JULY 26, 1998
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C

LUKE 11:1-13
INFALLIBLE GIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Luke's short treatise on prayer in 11:1-13 is comparable to that of Matthew 6:5-12. The catechesis of Matthew is addressed to people who, from youth, have been accustomed to pray but who may fall victim to routine. It is a catechesis for Christian converts from Judaism. Luke, for his part, has in mind people who have to be taught to pray and who need encouragement. It is a catechesis for gentiles converted to the Christian faith.

Focus Points. (1) V. 2-4 "When you pray, say: 'Father... subject us not to the trial.'" We have to compare Luke's text of the Our Father with that of Matthew and for this purpose the following arrangement will be helpful.

LK 11:2-4

Address:
Father,

MT 6:9-13

Address:
Our Father in heaven,

Five petitions:

- (1) **hallowed be your name,**
(2) **your kingdom come.**

xxx

- (3) **Give us each day our daily bread.**

- (4) **Forgive us our sins**

for we too forgive all who do us wrong;

- (5) **and subject us not to the trial.**

xxx

Seven petitions:

- (A) **hallowed be your name,**

- (B) **your kingdom come,**

- (C) **you will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

- (D) **Give us today our daily bread,**

- (E) **and forgive us the wrong we have done as we forgive those who wrong us,**

- (F) **Subject us not to the trial**

- (G) **but deliver us from the evil one.**

It is an innovation of this prayer to address God as ABBA (Father, in Aramaic, the language of Jesus; in Hebrew it would be "Ab" or "Abinu."). The address has a communitarian connotation made explicit by Matthew's wordings, "Our Father." For the first disciples of Jesus who were Jews, God is the Father of the people of Israel (see Hosea 11:1-4). < The sanctifying of God's name signifies an eschatological action of God which is clearly connected with the coming of the kingdom of God (see Ezekiel 20:41; 28:22-26; 36:20f; 38:16-23; 39:21-29). It is only when the reign of God is manifest and his power and holiness are fully revealed that the first petition (1/A) will be fully answered. The meaning of this prayer-petition is that the Christian community be allowed to participate in this grand design of God. Christians ask that they be allowed to imitate Jesus who glorified his Father in and through his ministry. < **"THY KINGDOM COME"** is the primary and central petition of the Lord's Prayer. Christians, individually and communally, can and must pray for the final coming of God's reign for, by so doing, they enter into

God's plan and, so to say, make God's business their concern too.

With the third petition in Luke's text, the prayer departs from the long range, eschatological view and turns to short range or daily concerns. We pray that God may *continue to give the Christian community the necessities of life*. We ask for bread, not for cake or trimmings.

The Christian community that prays has already experienced God's forgiveness when each member believed in the Good News of Jesus Christ. This has led each believer to forgive people who have caused pain in one's life. This communitarian experience of having been forgiven and being enabled to forgive becomes the basis of the petition that new, daily sins of individuals and of the community be forgiven by God.

Luke's petition 5 is colored by his preoccupation over daily concerns, and although, as in Matthew's petition F, "temptation" is in the singular, it can be understood as a collective noun for "every sort of trial," see James 1:2. In Matthew, "temptation" is the final onslaught of Satan in the end-time. In Luke, the petition can be paraphrased thus: "Do not allow our community or any of its members to succumb to, or be too absorbed in any big trial that might come today."

(2) V. 13 "If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Jesus promises the infallible giving of the Holy Spirit to anyone who persistently prays for this Gift with childlike confidence.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. The words of "The Lord's Prayer" that Matthew and

Luke have in common came from the lips of Jesus himself, speaking in Aramaic. Though these words, when originally spoken by Jesus all had an eschatological perspective — to large extent retained by Matthew but modified by Luke — the genius of this prayer makes it adaptable to the legitimate concerns of all peoples at all times and places.

/./ Pointer for sharing: As you advanced in age and wisdom, have you also learned to appreciate "The Lord's Prayer" more and more? Share your answer with your small group.

2. The Charismatic movement marked by a manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, has alternatively grown strong and weak through the centuries. For example, it was strong during the apostolic times but it was weak in the fourth century of the Christian era. It flourished during the time of St. Francis and St. Dominic (twelfth-thirteenth centuries) but it seemed like a spent force from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Again, when the New World was opened to missionaries in the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries the blowing of the Spirit was strong. We are now indeed blessed that again, in our own time, the Spirit is manifesting *itself* among us *in dramatic* ways. Yet, there are still many who resist surrendering themselves to the Holy Spirit.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you persistently prayed, with childlike confidence, for the coming of the Holy Spirit to take charge of your life? Share your answer with your small group.

Hillel and Maimon

A famous old Eastern philosopher named Hillel had a young clever and pleasant disciple named Maimon. The master was gratified with his student's progress. But later on, he was sadly surprised to see that the young man began to trust too much in his own philosophy and increasingly less in prayer. "Why should I pray?" he said. "God is all-knowing; He does not require our

words to know our needs. And God is kind: of his own accord He will give us what is good for us. Moreover, God is eternal; can we change the Eternal by prayer?" Thus he reasoned and ceased to pray.

His wise master sat with a serious face in the shade of a palm tree. "Master, why are you so sad?" asked the young disciple.

"Why? Because I have a friend who until now has carefully cultivated his fields and lived well from them, but now he has cast aside plow and scythe, and intends to leave the fields to themselves, saying that he can live from them without work."

"Has he lost his senses?" asked the youth.

"By no means. On the contrary, he is otherwise a clever man. But now he says: 'God is almighty, therefore He can easily give me bread without my having to plow with my eyes fixed on earth. And God is good. He will furnish a table for me.'

"But, master, this is tempting God," exclaimed the young disciple.

"It is, indeed, my son. But I am speaking of you. Are you not tempting God in like manner? Is prayer less than work? This man in his sloth does not want to fix his eyes on the earth in order to receive material good, and you, in your conceit, do not want to turn your eyes to heaven in order to receive spiritual good."

From Bishop Tihamer Toth and Frank Mihalic

AUGUST 2, 1998
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C

LUKE 12:13-21
THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Jews were accustomed to submit practical questions like the division of inheritance to their rabbis for a practical decision. The very fact that, in Luke's gospel, one such problem was presented to Jesus, tells us that in the eyes of the people Jesus had gained the stature of an authoritative "Teacher." However, he uses his authority only for the Reign of God and refuses to condone the petitioner's attitude of absorption in this world's goods. Luke uses this as the occasion for the parable of the Rich Fool.

Focus Points. (1) V. 15 Then he said to the crowd, "Avoid greed in all its forms. A man may be wealthy, but his possessions do not guarantee him life." Greed, as defined by Jesus, is seeking to guarantee the enjoyment of life through one's possessions. It is a wrong principle of living that may be found among the rich and the poor alike. Having possessions is not to be equated with enjoying life.

(2) Y. 16-21 He then told them a parable in these words: "There was a rich man... x x x That is the way it works with the rich man who grows rich for himself instead of growing rich in the sight of God." What Jesus condemns is not "growing rich" since this can be done "in the sight of God," but growing rich FOR HIMSELF. The rich Christian must see himself as a STEWARD of earthly goods to be used for the benefit

of the community and not just for himself. ◇ A person can "grow rich in the sight of God" only when he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. Because of God's goodness as a Provident Father, the earth has enough material goods for everyone's need. No human being should live a life of deprivation that makes him inhuman. But the devil has introduced GREED in the hearts of evil persons making them amass more than their share of the earth's goods, thus depriving others of the means for a decent human life.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced liberation from GREED and/or liberation from NEED? Share your answer with your small group.

2. Some of the followers of Christ were rich people who "grew rich in the sight of God." Examples are: "Mary called the Magdalene... Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who were assisting (Jesus and the Twelve) out of their means," Lk 8:2-3; Zacchaeus,- Lk 19:1-10; Lazarus, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Jn 12:1-3; Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, Jn 19:38-41. In the Acts of the Apostles we have the examples of the Cypriot Joseph Barnabas, 4:36-37; Cornelius, 10:1-2; Lydia, 16:14-15.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced "growing rich in the sight of God?" Share your answer with your small group.

The Price of Joy

There was once a poor shoemaker who was always in a good mood. He was so happy that he sang from morning to night.

There were always children standing at his window and listening to him sing.

Next door to him lived a very rich man. He spent entire nights counting his money, and then went to bed in the morning. But he could not sleep because of the shoemaker's singing. One day he figured out how he could keep the shoemaker from singing.

So he invited the shoemaker to come over and see him. He did. To his great surprise, the rich man gave him a little bag filled with gold coins. When the shoemaker got back home, he opened the little bag. Never in his life had he ever seen so much money. He counted it all out carefully, but first he drove away all the children so that they will not see how wealthy he had become.

The shoemaker was so afraid to let his bag of gold out of sight and so he took it along to bed at night. But even there he kept thinking about the money and could not sleep.

Next day he got up and took the money up to the attic. But on second thought he was afraid it was not safe there, and this worried him the whole day. Next morning he brought the money downstairs again. He then thought of hiding it among his clothes, but his nephew might come to borrow a jacket and see the bag of money. He then thought of making a little cabinet with a key in his bathroom, and he spent the whole day working at this. That whole week he was worried that he might have visitors who will want to use the bathroom and get curious about the little locked cabinet.

He was so preoccupied with the money that he never got back to making shoes. Nor could he sing anymore. He was always thinking of a better place to hide the money that he didn't care about anything else. One day he pretended to beautify his garden but he actually made a hole in the wall where he put his money before plastering up the whole wall.

Then he realized that nobody came to see his new garden. Not a single child had visited him all these days. Nobody came to have his shoe repaired and chat with him while waiting.

Finally the shoemaker was so unhappy that he smashed his new garden wall to get the bag of gold, and he hurried back to his neighbor with it. "Please take this money back," he said. "Worry about it has made me sick, and even my friends do not come to see me anymore. I would rather be a shoemaker, like I was."

Soon the shoemaker was again as happy and carefree as before and he sang to his young friends' content and worked the whole day.

Adapted from Willi Hoffsuemmer and Frank Mihalic.

AUGUST 9, 1998

**NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C**

**LUKE 12:32-48 (Short form: 12:35-40)
KINGDOM VALUES**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

As expressed in the prayer that Jesus taught, the seeking of God's Kingdom or Reign should be the primary concern of any Christian disciple. In today's Gospel Reading, long form, Luke collects some sayings of Jesus that encourage the values of the Kingdom that the disciples of Jesus should cultivate: (1) No fear. A Christian belonging to the Lord's "little flock," must have confidence in his heavenly Father, v. 32; (2) Have a treasure in heaven, v. 33-34; (3) Prepare, as vigilant servants, for the Master's return (he is the Servant of the Lord), vv. 35-48; (4)

Be a faithful and wise steward/servant in the Master's household, vv. 41-48.

Taking into consideration this year's celebration of the Year of the Holy Spirit, we shall focus on confidence (v. 32) and on being a community of servants/disciples who must live up to the example of "The Servant of Yahweh" who is their Master (v. 37).

Focus Points. (1) V. 32 Jesus said to his disciples: Do not live in fear, little flock. It has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. The community of Christ's disciples should avoid two opposite temptations: (1) first, that of thinking that they are "big" and powerful; (2) and second, that of being fearful because of the community's littleness. At the time of Christ himself and his apostles, the first temptation was not really pertinent, but it will be a real danger to Christianity backed by worldly powers and counting millions of adherents. The second temptation was a daily challenge faced by Christians during the first three centuries of the Christian era. It was with the help of the Holy Spirit that early Christians learned to be fearless in the face of distressing circumstances.

(2) V. 37 It will go well with those servants whom the master finds wide-awake on his return. I tell you, he will put on an apron, seat them at table, and proceed to wait on them. At this point the parable of the Waiting Servants takes an allegorical addition. Serving one's servants is never done by an earthly master. The Master here is evidently Jesus Christ who said, "Who, in fact, is the greater — he who reclines at table or he who serves the meal? Yet I am in your midst as the one who serves you," Lk 22:27. According to Jn 13:1-17 Jesus actually did this at the Last Supper. *Jesus Christ is Yakweh's "Servant"* according to Acts 3:13 and by implication according to Lk 4:17-21 and Acts 8: 32-33 where Isaian texts about the Yahweh's Servant are applied to Jesus. Like him, his disciples must become servants too, servants of the Christian community.

◇ According to Is 42:1, and 61:1 (read by Jesus at the synagogue at Nazareth, Lk 4:17-18), *the Servant of Yahweh was Spirit-filled*. According to Is 50:4-5 he is Yahweh's Disciple. Christians, too, must become Spirit-filled and must form communities of disciples.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. Although, in the Philippines, Catholics are estimated to be 85% of the population, only about 30% of them are regular church-goers. How many of these "faithful church-goers" are true disciples of Christ? Ten percent, maybe? In the end we see that the true Christians among Filipinos are indeed a minority, a "little flock."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced a marked improvement in the quality of your Christian life after participating in a Christian formation program? Share your answer with your small group.

2. The Second Provincial Council of the Philippines want Filipino Catholics to form Spirit-filled communities of disciples, led by servant-leaders. In such communities, even the Bishops and priests are learners. They learn from Word-Events in the community's life. They learn from the experiences and insights of lay community members, young and old, rich and poor, learned or unschooled. They learn from the Holy Spirit blowing in the community.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Is there a "community of disciples" in your parish? If so, how did it come about? If not, why not? Share your answers with your small group.

Bible Study

At a certain Bible Study session, the following conversation was carried on.

First student: "How can I love God as the Bible tells me to? How can I give him my whole heart?"

Second student: "You must empty your heart of all created things."

Lady Teacher: "That is a misleading answer. Don't be afraid to fill your heart with the good people and the good things you love, for the love of God won't occupy space in your heart any more than a singer's voice occupies in a concert hall. The singer's voice floods the hall. It remains in undisputed possession of the hall, no matter how packed the hall is with people. The presence of those people is no threat to it. The only threat would come from a rival voice attempting to drown it out."

Spiritual Director: "Amen to that, Sister! Let me add that the values of God's Kingdom can go hand in hand with human values. Such values only conflict with the devil's nonsense."

AUGUST 16, 1998

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LUKE 12:49-53

THE CRISIS BEFORE PEACE

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The coming of Jesus to a people, not only in past history, and in our time, as well as in the future, marks a time of decision, a crisis in which none can be neutral. It is like the cycle of a mango fruit. You start by cutting up the mango and eating

it. Then you plant the seed and let it rot. Only then will a new mango plant rise, and only after a few years will you have a fruit-laden mango tree.

Focus Points. (1) V. 49-50 Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to light a fire on earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited! I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over!" The fire that Jesus wishes to see kindled is that which PURIFIES people, especially communities. It is a fire lighted on the cross with Jesus' suffering and death, and which was spread by the missionaries who evangelized the world starting on Pentecost, when they were filled by the Spirit sent by Jesus. The "baptism" is the Passion of Jesus which will "plunge" Jesus into a sea of suffering. The thought of this coming eschatological trial filled Jesus with that anguish which became most acute during his last days in Jerusalem (see Jn 12:27) and at the garden of Gethsemane, (see Mk 14:34; Mt 26:38; Lk 42-44). This anguish was at its worst when Jesus borrowed words from the Psalmist (Ps 22:2) to exclaim, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" while he hung on the cross (see Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46).

(2) V. 51-53 Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? I assure you, the contrary is true; I have come for division. From now on, a household of five will be divided three against two and two against three... Jesus came to fulfill the messianic prophecies, including that about *the judgment of Israel* in Micah 6-7, which contains the words, "the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies are those of his household," Mi 7:6. ◇ At this point there seems to be a contact between Luke and John. In Johannine theology, Christ, by his very presence, causes division: people must be for or against the light (see Jn 8:12; ch. 9).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. There are things, like clothes and our human body, that can be purified by water. But there are also things like iron, silver and gold, that can only be purified by intense heat. Societies like the ancient Jewish people could be purified only by drastic measures like those activated by Christ when he taught about the deficiencies of the Mosaic law and the hypocrisy of the rabbinic approach to God.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Are there elements in our Christian religion that need to be purified, now that Christianity has existed for almost 2000 years? Share your answer with your small group.

2. To light a phosphorous match stick, you have to strike the match head hard on the igniting surface, if you just draw it over slowly and lightly, no fire will burst forth. Similarly, if any conversion to the Christian faith is to take place, people must take drastic action. In the case of the Jewish people, they had to make a choice between their religious leaders — the priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees — and Jesus Christ. Initially this causes turmoil but in the end there will be peace.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Christ's teaching about salvation through faith in him is so radical that it cannot be put on the same level as any other faith, even with the Jewish faith which prepared for it. As St. Paul put it, "those things I used to consider gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. I have come to rate all as loss in the light of the surpassing knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish *so that Christ may be my wealth.*" (Ph 3:7-8.). ◇ Do you also consider Christ as your wealth? Explain your answer to your small group.

Lead Kindly Light

When John Newman was in anguish about remaining an Anglican or converting to Catholicism, he wrote this poem:

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
 Lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
 Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
 Lead thou me on.

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
 Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
 The night is gone,.

And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

AUGUST 23, 1998

**TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C**

**LUKE 13:22-30
PARABLES OF THE NARROW DOOR
AND THE CLOSED DOOR**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Jewish students of the Bible were preoccupied about the salvation of Israelites — will they all be saved or not? The regular answer was that all Israel would have a place in the future kingdom, with the exception of "sinners" like tax collectors and prostitutes. Luke recalls Jesus' teaching on this matter and enlarges it to include the question of the salvation of the gentiles.

Focus Points. (1) **V. 23-24** **Someone asked him, "Lord, are they few in number who are to be saved?" He replied, "Try to come in through the narrow door. Many, I tell you, will try to enter and be unable."** In the Jerusalem temple as in our old churches, there are giant doors that are seldom opened, and they have little doors through which people ordinarily pass. To enter through the narrow door is to use the ordinary passageway. The "many" who will try to enter and be unable are those who will try to force their way — through learning, power, money or influence of some sort — but will not possess or cannot show what God requires, that is, faith in Jesus Christ. These are not necessarily the great majority of the ordinary people. On the contrary most of these "rejects" will come from the learned, influential and rich people who rejected the impulse of the Holy Spirit to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

(2) V. 25-27 "When once the master of the house has risen to lock the door and you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Sir, open to us,' he will say in reply, 'I do not know where you come from.'" Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your company. You taught in our streets. But he will answer, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Away from me, you evildoers!'" The parable is no longer that of the Narrow Door but has shifted to the Closed Door. The main lesson is that the Jewish people were given a definite time-frame within which they could respond to Christ's invitation to put their faith in him. It is not enough for them to have invited him for a meal or to have observed him teaching in the streets. By their sin of OMISSION they had become evildoers!

(3) V. 28-30 "There will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets safe in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves rejected. People will come from the east and west, from the north and south, and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God. Some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last." The tragedy of the Jewish leaders and their followers at the time of Christ is that they failed to open their hearts to the faith that justified their ancestors. By contrast, many non-Jewish people will become believers in Christ.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. The learned, rich, powerful, privileged, or influential people are often the ones in danger of not entering through the "narrow door."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Being a very "ordinary" person sometimes becomes a passport to a grand experience. Share on this topic with your small group.

2. A sin of omission can make a person an evildoer.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Can you give examples of very serious sins of omission? Share your answer with your small group.

3. The Holy Spirit, who leads people to faith in Jesus Christ, blows wherever He/She/It wills.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you know people whom you did not expect to become good Christians but did, and people whom you expected to become holy, but became trouble-makers? Share your answer with your small group.

Success and Failure

In the life of faith as in business, it is hard to predict who will succeed and who will fail. Consider the following record of some businesses.

In its first year, Coca-Cola sold 400 Cokes.

The Apple microcomputer was turned down by both Hewlett Packard and Atari, but had first-year sales of \$ 2.5 million.

In his first year in the automobile business, Henry Ford went bankrupt. Two years later, his second company also failed.

Dr. Seuss's first children's book was rejected by 23 publishers; the 24th publisher sold 6 million copies.

**AUGUST 30, 1998
TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY,
YEAR C**

**LUKE 14:1.7-14
PARABLES OF PLACES AT TABLE
AND CHOICE OF GUESTS**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Even when Jesus joined others at meals, he followed the impulse of the Holy Spirit to avail himself of the occasion to teach people how they could be more responsive to God's Holy Will.

Focus Points. (1) V. 8-11. He went on to address a parable to the guests, noticing how they were trying to get the places of honor at the table: "When you are invited by someone to a wedding party, do not sit in the place of honor in case some greater dignitary has been invited... xxx For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." The scribes and Pharisees arrogated to themselves privileges and demanded preferential treatment on the grounds of their observance of the Law and on their standing as religious men. They took for granted that God would also show them preferential treatment and give them the first places in the heavenly kingdom. Jesus corrects this attitude in the guise of giving a lesson on etiquette.

(2) V. 12-14 He said to the one who had invited him: "Whenever you give a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends or brothers or relatives or wealthy neighbors. They might invite you in return and repay you. No, when you have a reception, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the

blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just." This is surely an instance when Jesus showed his sense of humor. Imagine spending so much for a reception and your guests of honor will be the beggars! Ridiculous! Most certainly this caused a stir among the guests. They probably thought: this Jesus must be kidding or he must be out of his mind! In fact, however, Jesus had a serious message. Rich people must try to have a treasure in heaven. Their earthly life must be a preparation for the resurrection of the just. They must live simply on earth so that others may simply live.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

1. During the discussion about Church renewal at the Second Vatican Council it was suggested that Church people and in particular religious men and women should give up their privileges. During church functions, for example, why should special seats be reserved for them while ordinary lay people have to stand far away from the altar? Why should they have servants in their convents when their brothers and sisters at home do all the housework? Why should they be exempt from taxes?

././ Pointer for sharing: Should church people have privileges from society and/or from God? Share your answer with your small group.

2. Helping the poor is a thankless task unless you are seeking their votes as a politician or looking forward to the resurrection of the just.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Has your life been enriched by lessons you learned from the poor? Share your answer with your small group.

Earthly Materials in Heaven

A wealthy matron, upon reaching heaven, was assigned to a very plain house. She objected, but St. Peter said, "Well, that is the house you prepared for yourself."

"Whose is that fine mansion across the road?" she asked.

"It belongs to your gardener."

"How is it that he has one so much better than mine?"

St. Peter answered: "The houses here are prepared from the materials that you send up while you are living on earth. We do not choose them. You do that by cultivating or neglecting the virtues or values of Christian life."