

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CHURCH IN ASIA

Card. Jose Sanchez

ALLOW GREATER FREEDOM TO PROCESS OF INCULTURATION

Archbishop Alberto Piamonte

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE SHOULD BE MANDATORY SUBJECT

Archbishop Fernando Copai

GLOBALIZATION IN SOLIDARITY WITHOUT MARGINALIZATION

Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, OMI

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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As announced earlier the present issue serves as Part II on the Synod of Bishops for Asia. Published here are the interventions of the delegates and auditors from the Philippines. May our reader make plan of action along the line underscored in the Synod.

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DOCUMENTATION

Statistical overview of the Church in Asia

Cardinal Jose T. Sanchez

Member of the Council of Cardinal
and Bishops of the Secretariat of State

Our topic presents to us our Saviour as a shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep so that they may have an abundance of a new life. Moreover, he wants to gather all men into one sheepfold, so he says: "And others I have that are not of this fold: I must bring them also and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd". Indeed, he is the shepherd who will gather the scattered children of God into one sheepfold, the Saviour who will give eternal life to those who, believing in him and being baptized, become children of God and heirs of the promise.

As we focus our vision on Asia, let us take into account a minimum of statistical information pertinent to our reflection. Asia is a vast continent with a great diversity of land terrain, climate and season, inhabited by people with the most glaring plurality of culture, religion, political, economic and social conditions, where one cannot find any point of convergence on the continental level. Our *Instrumentum laboris* has accentuated this.

With a land area of 44,410,108 sq. km., Asia constitutes one third of the 135,789,529 sq. km. of the land area of the whole world. Its population of 3,456,280,000 constitutes almost two thirds of the world population of 5,682,374,000. The 989,366,000

Catholics of the world constitute 17 per cent of the world population, while the 101,210,000 Catholics of Asia constitute an insignificant 2.9 per cent of the population of Asia. It must be noted that 60,000,000, or more than one half of the Catholic population of Asia are found in that land area of 300,000 sq. km. spread over 7,000 islands known as the Philippines.

For the sake of clarity and focus, let us recapitulate: After almost 2,000 years of evangelizing activity, Asia, where our divine Saviour was born, suffered, died and rose from the dead, where the Blessed Virgin, the *Regina* and *Apostola Apostolorum* guided and inspired the first Apostles, who through their evangelizing activities generated flourishing Churches, in this part of the world that constitutes one third of the world land area and two thirds of the world population, only 2.9 per cent of the people belong to the one fold which the divine Saviour had designed to be the one People of God united in faith and communion.

Bring Good News into lives of those involved in media

Cardinal Jaime L. Sin

Archbishop of Manila, the Philippines

Mass media is conditioning the world more and more extensively. This has challenged the Church in the Philippines to carry out its evangelical mission by increasing its presence in and through mass media.

Radio Veritas Asia best represents the Church's efforts to use mass media in its evangelical mission. For 28 years now, Radio Veritas has broadcast religious programmes across the Asian continent in 17 languages. Through the efforts of priests, religious and laypersons, it informs the faith of those who already believe

in Christ and proclaims him to those who do not know him. In addition, it broadcasts programmes dealing with development and formation, and those building goodwill and unity within the Philippines and other Asian nations.

Not only must the Gospel be proclaimed through mass media; the Good News must be brought into the lives of those who control and who are engaged in mass media.

By increasing its participation in mass media, the Church evangelizes Philippine and Asian society through these instruments of social communication. By recognizing works of mass media that are outstanding in their portrayal of human values and exemplary lives, it is evangelizing mass media. The evangelization of the new instruments of social communication is of utmost importance.

There is much good news that the Church has to tell the world: in the Philippines, faith is alive in every phase of life. The Church is in dialogue with the poor, with other cultures and faiths. Religious and lay missionaries spread the good news around the world by living Christian lives. There is much work yet to be done: the field of mass media must propagate an appreciation of Filipino expressions of faith by amplifying the faith dimensions of popular Philippine festivals and customs. It must amplify the clamor for social justice raised by the poor. It must foster understanding and respect between the Church and other cultures and faiths through responsible reportage regarding peace issues.

It must ^jcommit itself to telling the truth, for only the truth truly sets us free.

Four hundred years ago, European missionaries brought our faith to us. Today our missionaries and overseas contract workers are bringing back this same faith to Europe and to other parts of the world. Truly, the best and most effective form of evangelization is the example we set by living Christian lives.

Teach by witnessing that Jesus is our only Saviour

Cardinal Ricardo J. Vidal
Archbishop of Cebu, the Philippines

Numbers 27 and 28 of the *Instrumentum laboris* call for witnessing as the primary means of making people recognize the Lord as the "one and only" Saviour. In this regard, we need to acknowledge the witnessing made by the martyrs of Asia, whose willingness to die for the faith continues to inspire their countrymen to this day. In promoting new means of evangelization, let us seriously consider the witness of the holy martyrs of Asia.

Witnessing, however, does not only consist in the tenacious adherence to the faith in the face of death. We also need to affirm witnessing as a way of life. Number 26 of the *Instrumentum laboris* briefly states that "the definitive act of salvation is accomplished by Christ through his paschal mystery, i.e., his passion, death and resurrection". It fails, however, to mention that for Christ, witnessing consists in his ministry of preaching the Good News "in season and out of season", denouncing evil and healing the sick ... so that all may have abundant life.

It would therefore be an oversight to speak of salvation that turns a blind eye to his work before the Passion. It is in this respect that accepting Jesus as Lord of one's life entails an ongoing process of conversion. This focus should, however, be accompanied by an emphasis on the social dimension of conversion, which must necessarily seek to dismantle the structures of sin.

Metanoia manifests itself as an aspiration to be free from sin in all its historical manifestations and as a preferential option for the poor. This is where the category of "liberation" is not yet outmoded and ought not to be avoided.

Church's pastoral service enhances peace and love

Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P.

Caceres, the Philippines

Two crucial tasks, among others, are before us today in this Special Synod: the first is a pastoral task to inculturate a faith that came to us with the culture of the West into the often indifferent if not hostile diaspora that is Asia. It is a pastoral task that calls for Pauline creativity and courage, for it could lead us to explore dormant areas of our ecclesial life, areas where creativity should be encouraged and legitimate initiatives not only allowed but even promoted. The second crucial task is for this Synod to take up the unique papal authority in the Asian context where nationalist and fundamental forces are at work. Our Special synod should be able to clearly present the fact that the apostolic foundation of the Church in Asia in the universal authority of Peter and his Successors — an essential part of our Catholic faith — is not primarily concerned with juridical power over local Churches and peoples but is above all a doctrinal and pastoral primacy of service which enhances those very values of harmony, peace and love which make possible dialogue and coexistence with Asian governments and religions. Such a clear and forthright exposition and affirmation could be a major defining moment of this Synod and at the same time an affirmation of the Message of the Holy Father to the government of a major nation in Asia last 1996.

Finally, as the great caravans of Asian peoples march towards a new historical epoch, let the "pusillus grex" that is the Church in Asia accompany their journey and turn it into a pilgrimage to new horizons of hope by offering through this Synod and epiphany of that fullness of life which Jesus Christ the Saviour gives.

Allow greater freedom to process of inculturation

Archbishop Alberto J. Piamonte

Jaro, the Philippines

Inculturation was the very first problem tackled by the early Church at the Council of Jerusalem. It had to do with the question of whether Gentile converts to the faith should first be made Jewish or not. The Apostles, headed by St. Peter and guided by the Holy Spirit, answered in the negative: Jewish culture was not a prerequisite to becoming Christian (Acts 15).

St. Paul said: "I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22). Following this pastoral strategy, the Church has adapted herself to local cultures whenever possible in order to evangelize people more effectively.

Today we are asking that the Church do in Asia what she did in Europe, to wit, allow the process of inculturation to take place with more freedom on the part of the local Churches. Guidelines will have to be drawn up, it is true, to forestall aberrations; but her rich history, in handling heresies and schisms should stand her well in the issuance of those guidelines and safeguards.

Asia is not even three per cent Catholic, even though Christianity was born in it. A great task lies ahead; but our hope and prayer is that this Synod will be a new Pentecost that will give renewed impetus to the evangelization of Asia in the forthcoming millennium.

Role of prayer in Asian spirituality

Archbishop Gaudencio B. Rosales

Lipa, the Philippines

Personal presence in Asia is always surrounded by a strict economy of sound, motion and space. Stillness and solitude are traits Asians are at home with. And these (traits) are really the thresholds of prayer. Keeping still is not foreign to them. Putting God in that stillness by invoking his aid, his presence and his name makes presence a prayer. But Christian prayer, addressed to the Father in Jesus, opens the person to the Father's goodness and compassion. The different stages of bondage in Asia acquire meaning, message and mission through "treasuring and pondering in the heart", through prayerful reflection. Mother Mary showed that no human episode of need will ever get lost or unattended (Lk 2:19; Jn 2:1-4). All deprivation and bondage fit into the prayer to the Father, just as all needs are satisfied in Jesus, who came "that all may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Beyond the forgiveness of sin, Jesus dismantled the wicked structures in life based on sin.

The radical base of the Asian incapacities and bondage, which is the sinfulness of man, has mostly remained untouched. We believe that Christ "has forgiven us all our sins" (Col 2:13). But sin, as the radical base for bondage, needs to be fully linked to the many structured expressions of sinfulness — greed, violence and discrimination, etc. — at various levels of life and precisely of behaviour in Asia. Thus, whatever solution or development strategy is offered must touch the foundation in Christ's own act and spirit of forgiving and redeeming. How this love and openness should touch and inspire the different models of unshackling man from enslavement becomes part of our evangelizing task. Even if man has how come upon different and new ways of making life better, Jesus is still the only Saviour. The real reason for life comes from God (Gn 1:27).

Interreligious dialogue should be mandatory subject Archbishop Fernando R. Capalla Davao, the Philippines

Unlike the dialogues in other Asian countries, the Philippines' experience started from the standpoint of the majority Church. The dialogues were held not without difficulty with the followers of Islam and of the Primal Religions of the indigenous peoples. **The** dialogues with Muslims have brought about a structure known as Bishops' "Ulama Forum" composed of 21 Catholic Bishops, 24 Muslim "Ulama" and IS Protestant Bishops. The Forum has a board of directors called a tripartite commission and a general secretariat, which implements the Forum's agreements at the grass-roots level through the dialogue sub-centres and through a board coordinated activity with other peace and dialogue partners who are already undertaking formation in dialogue and promote the culture of peace. The agreements are: similar forums for parish priests and imams, support for peace talks between Moro rebels and the Government, religious freedom of Muslim students in Christian schools, religious freedom of Filipino overseas contract workers in the Middle East, joint review of writings on Islam **and** Christianity, education of media practitioners, conflict transformation seminar in the USA in May 1998 for 3 "Ulama" and 3 **Catholic** Bishops.

Dialogues with 22 tribes have resulted in an agreement **to** establish a regional co-ordinating body to help the indigenous people rediscover the beauty and value of their culture **and** beliefs and its important role in self-determination, peace and **development**. Because of the above achievements, interreligious dialogue as **part** of the curriculum is being brought to the seminaries, **universities**, and colleges. Even the Bishops' Conference has **scheduled** a seminar for Bishops on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in

January 1999. The Synod is asked to propose interreligious dialogue as a mandatory subject in the curriculum of seminaries and schools as well as in religious houses of formation.

Globalization in solidarity without marginalization

Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, O.M.I.

Nueva Segovia, the Philippines

This intervention relates to nn. 8, 13 and 47 of the *Instrumentum laboris*. Asian social realities must include the phenomenon of *globalization*. The Church should not ignore this phenomenon. Guided by the ideology of neoliberal capitalism, the forces of free enterprise have opened up the world's markets and have created a single integrated global market. But globalization is both a blessing and a curse. Vast increases in global income, higher rates of return on capital and increased trade go hand in hand with greater marginalization of the poor, greater inequalities between countries and between rich and poor within countries.

, It is from the optic of the poor that the Churches of Asia must discern globalization in the light of the Gospel of life and the kingdom of God. Globalization has not enhanced the life of the poor. The rules of the free market are biased against them. Its benefits do not necessarily trickle down to them. In the economic arena, rich and poor cannot compete as equals. Clearly, the Spirit of the Lord is calling the Church in Asia to be a Church of the poor. Inspired by preferential love for the poor, the Church of the poor must be a prophet, denouncing inequalities resulting from globalization and announcing Gospel values of justice and love. It must embark on a "new way of being Church", concretized in basic ecclesial communities (BECs). In solidarity with one another at the micro-grassroots level, BECs are giving an effective

community faith-response to the challenge of globalization. In the light of the foregoing, I recommend: (1) that Churches in the First World be in solidarity with the poor of Asia and be their advocates, together with the Churches in Asia, for justice and equality before their own governments and the world's economic institutions (such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization); (2) that this Synod reaffirm the Holy Father's 1998 World Day of Peace Message: "Globalization without marginalization; globalization in solidarity!".

Religious formation needs serious reflection

Bishop Arturo M. Bastes, S.V.D.

Romblon, the Philippines

There are four important areas needing a change of perspective to ensure a contextualized formation of candidates for religious life in Asia. There is a need for a shift in the perspective from a Euro-centred Church to an authentically Asian Church. Even in these post-colonial times the influence of the European Church is still strong. Formation of religious was or is still mono-cultural, which is really Western. Although the Church in Asia is in the minority, religious vocations are proportionately increasing, while those of Europe are decreasing. Hence there is an urgency for contextualized formation of Asian religious, that should follow practical methodologies such as the one that includes real insertion into a typical Asian locality. A shift in the understanding of history makes us take seriously the periods "before Christ" as also "revelatory and salvific", in view of the fact that they remain Asian even if they join an international religious congregation. There is need to shift from a triumphalistic model of the Church to a Church identified with the social conditions-of the people. There is massive poverty in Asia. Candidates for the religious life in Asia should be trained to have both affective and effective commitment to the poor. Finally

there should be a shift in the understanding of spirituality from being institutional to being incarnational. Indeed, a congregation has its own charism which determines its own 'spirituality'. But more basic to this institutional spirituality is the one rooted in the Incarnation of Christ with our common humanity. The prospects of the third millennium are frightening because of the globalization of free-market forces attacking Asia and the rest of the world. For this reason the religious of Asia will have the special vocation to fight against consumerism and materialism by living a spiritual life that is intelligible to their fellow Asians. The presence of the Holy Spirit has been proven to be found in the religious traditions born in Asia. The formation of religious should include a serious reflection on the spirituality of Asians to save Asia from the onslaught of materialism coming from the globalization of free-market forces.

How are we to present Christ to non-Christians?

Bishop Teodoro C. Bacani

Titular Bishop of Gauriana

Auxiliary of Manila, the Philippines

There are two very important questions we need to answer:

- 1) How are we to present *Christ* to our Christian people so that they will be attracted to know, love and follow him more fully?
- 2) How are we to present *Christ* to non-Christians so that they will be drawn to believe in him?

The first question needs to be answered first because the fruitfulness of missionary activity depends first of all on the quality of Christian discipleship.

To Christians Christ must be presented as God-with-us, God become one of us through the power of the Holy Spirit, God become truly human, like us in all things except sin, and united

with every single human being. We must present him as sharing our lot in compassion but also saving us as the sign and presence of God for us, and our Saviour freeing us not only from temporal burdens but bringing us into communion with God and one another.

The most effective way of communicating him to non-Christians is through the Christ-like way we relate with one another in the Christian community, and with non-Christians. Having said this, we can say that to non-Christians we should proclaim Christ as an authentic human being living the fullness of humanity through the gift of himself to God and to us. We must next present him as prophet and teacher, then as Saviour, and finally as Lord and God.

We must remember that the Christ we proclaim to non-Christians is already united with them and is active in them through his Spirit who alone, finally, can give them faith in him.

Destroy the family and you destroy society

Bishop Jesus Y. Varela
Sorsogon, the Philippines

The family is the most endangered institution in Asia. The greatest threat to family and life is population control. It is the racist agenda to eradicate the unfit. It targets the poor of the Third World. It is based on manipulated or faulty statistics. It reveals a First World paranoia. The ultimate victim is family and life. Traditional family values are overturned and replaced by egoism, materialism and avarice. Direct assaults against life are made by means of contraception, sterilization, abortion. The ultimate resource — man himself — is destroyed. We must save the family.

It is the family that welcomes, protects new humans. In the family humans grow as persons, discover their liberty, recognized by parents and siblings.

Destroy the family and you destroy society.

The family has a privileged role in the new evangelization.

The family as a domestic church is located at the very core of the basic Christian community. In the Asian context the basic Christian community is the new way of being Church.

Teach God's children in Asia through radio

Bishop Ramon B. Villena

Bayombong, the Philippines

1. Our traditional methods of carrying the **Word of God** to men have been: the parish, the school and the charitable institution.

2. These traditional methods are not enough. We must use the modern means that God has given us: the air waves!

3. The medium that reaches all the children of God in Asia in the most convenient way at the cheapest price is *radio*!

4. As God gave the Roman roads to his 12 Apostles, so he gave the air waves to us.

5. The children of God in Asia are not only Catholics, they are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists, Jews — and the millions who do not know what to believe. They are hungry for God. The best way for us to reach them right here right now is *radio*.

Inculturation: maximum freedom to dialogue

Bishop Francisco F. Claver, S.J.

Bishop Emeritus of Malaybalay

Vicar Apostolic of Bontoc-Lagawe, the Philippines

We take it for a simple fact that there has been a lack of inculturation in our preaching of the Gospel in Asia. That has to be corrected not just by us Bishops but by the entire community of faith that is the Church. In the task of inculturation, the concern is over putting faith and culture together into an integral whole. The two main actors are therefore the people and the Holy Spirit. The people because they are bearers of culture — their special way of being human; the Holy Spirit because he is the giver and source of faith. Inculturation is thus at base nothing more, nothing less, than a continuing dialogue between the people and the Holy Spirit precisely on how his gift of faith can truly become integral to their way of thinking, behaving, valuing, etc. Hence, if we really want inculturation to take place, maximum freedom should be given to the partners of that dialogue, the perduring obstacles to it minimized or done away with completely. This calls for us Pastors to put trust in people and their faith — and in the Spirit, too. The kind of dialogue spoken of here takes place best in BECs (or BEC-type churches) — communities of faith that are truly discerning and prayerful, involved, participative and serious about themselves as a Church on mission. We in Asia are promoting all sorts of dialogues as part of that mission. Dialogue with religions, with cultures, with people (the poor especially, youth, women). These dialogues are for the most part with partners external to ourselves as Church. These dialogues will not prosper unless the kind of internal dialogue that we call the inculturation process also takes place — dialogue among ourselves, between top and bottom in the Church, and all of us as a community with the Holy Spirit himself.

Compassion and love for the poor

Bishop Camilo D. Gregorib

Bacolod, the Philippines

Economic globalization with its three-fold agenda of liberalization, deregulation and privatization has ushered into poor Asian countries the sad effects of ecological devastation — so visibly apparent in countries like Thailand and the Philippines. Unbridled mining and logging especially in the southern part of the Philippines have become the excuse for development which favour not the host country but the well-developed countries of the North or of the First World.

The Church in Asia continues to be the prophetic voice of our people who suffer on account of this globalization phenomenon, but the responsibility of exposing the truth of exploitation by the First World countries is and should not however be confined only to us Asian Pastors and Asian Christians. There is an equally urgent need also to conscientize our brothers in the Episcopate and Catholic faithful of First World countries regarding their own social responsibility to speak out on our behalf to their respective governments and economic policy-makers of their countries.

The *Relatio ante disceptationem* put it well when it said that "while the Church in Asia will carry on its vast network of traditional involvement in human promotion through education, health care and works of mercy, etc., in her work of evangelization the Church is also able to enter into collaboration with other groups engaged in human promotion".

Through this Asian Bishops' Synod may our voice be heard by our Brothers in the Episcopate and our Catholic brothers and sisters in the First World to influence and urge legislation in their respective governments and countries to stop all economic exploitation of the underdeveloped Asian countries.

Uphold women's dignity in society

Bishop Crisostomo A. Yalung

Titular Bishop of Ficus

Auxiliary of Manila, the Philippines

In the Gospels and in the history of the Church, women have always occupied significant roles in evangelization. Nowadays, with the increasing complexity of problems affecting women, the Church in Asia needs to continue to uphold the dignity of women, utilize their specific charisms and actively involve them in her ministry.

There are three levels being proposed so that the Church could effectively attend to these concerns:

a) *On the synodal document*

It is proposed that in recognition of the prevailing women's movement and the increasing consciousness of women's rights, a separate explicit section be made on the Church's ministry by women and for women.

b) *On the Church's pastoral ministry*

Both on the *ad intra* and *ad extra* levels, the ministry of the Church could express her respect for women. *Ad intra*, the Catholic education and the formation of the laity, especially of women, are significant venues for the ministry by women and to women. *Ad extra*, we have countless women religious and lay missionaries serving the Churches in other parts of the globe. We need to recognize also the evangelizing roles of migrant workers in other more affluent Asian countries and in Second and First World countries.

c) *On the level of human promotion*

The Church should continue to serve as the voice of the poor, the destitute and the oppressed. She could concretely exercise this task in the context of denouncing the oppressions and violence done

against women. She could do this in the context of interreligious dialogue and in the promotion of justice and peace. Setting up an office on women in parishes, Dioceses and Episcopal Conferences could help in focusing the Church's concern for women and with women.

Evangelization must first grow within local Church

Bishop Angel N. Lagdameo
Dumaguete, the Philippines

What is the role of the laity in the Asian context?

1. The laity are called to become a "communion of communities" of disciples of the Lord in predominantly Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian and Taoist contexts. Our vision for the third millennium invites us to a "new way of being Church" by fostering the conviviality for communion of all peoples of Asia and the rest of the world in a network of relationships where distinctions, diversities and differences will be used in order to unite rather than separate.

2. The lay faithful's mission in Asia and the rest of the world is to become instruments of Christ's presence, through their secularity and involvement in the world of economics, education, science, entertainment communication and politics. The question we might ask is how to effect Christian presence in the context of the economic crisis affecting, for example, East and South-East Asia today, or in the context of globalization, oppression, marginalization or authoritarian rule.

3. Consonant with the Gospel, the Church in Asia has always viewed that evangelization must first grow within the local Church and is the task of the local Church. In Asia, evangelization, to

which the laity too are called, is carried in the midst of many challenges and death-dealing forces that terrorize especially the voiceless and the defenceless poor. Evangelization must take into account the Asian spirit and sensitivity and lead to the discovery of the "many faces" of Jesus Christ on Asia soil.

4. The last aspect is the call to heal and transform by infusing the mind of Christ into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of society, by presenting the Church as a servant Church, a Church of transformation and transfiguration, "renewing the face of the earth".

Accompaniment and spiritual formation

Fr. Vicente G. Cajilig, O.P.

Executive Secretary, Office of Education
and Student Chaplaincy - FABC
(Philippines)

Spirituality in Asia, as seen by formators (rectors and spiritual directors), is considered as a form of journey and accompaniment. This journey follows a certain pathway that leads to interiority. The spiritual director gives the directee an accompaniment. While there are different schools of spirituality, most schools, if not all, exalt the role of a model. The model of all models is Christ with whom the *formandi* is configured. The directee arrives eventually at the stature of Christ.

There are variables and non-variables to consider in the spiritual journey. Of the latter, the "Word" is paramount in importance. The Person of Jesus is the object of the efforts exerted in spiritual life. The directee is to configure his actions to those of Jesus, the healer, the teacher, the servant and the sanctifier.

The person of directors is centred also in spiritual direction. A director is not so much a teacher, but a witness whom the *formandi* keenly observe and listen to. His culture must be closest to the directee (although this is not a condition *sine qua non*) for great spiritual directors, like St. John Vianney and Fr. Pio, transcend cultures and nationalities. The theology behind the spirituality of a director must be clear and well-founded in Christian principles and authentic human values.

Updating in skills (which will include tri-media) is necessary. While a lot of good common-sense judgement is an element in spiritual direction, the helps from psychological science, medical know-how and social backgrounds are very useful. Meetings on spiritual issues where participants come from Eastern and Western backgrounds produce a good synthesis.

The area of affective life is to be explored. When true affective needs, especially in childhood, are not properly attended to, this may have repercussions which could last for a lifetime. Internal burdens must be processed so that the directee with the help of the director could unlock them.

Above all, a spiritual programme that prepares spiritual directors themselves is important. While the formation in theology of clergy and religious gives the candidates a firm foundation of faith, the handling of a spiritual task would require added know-how on the journey of the spirit.

When it comes to handling difficulties, like the areas connected to sexuality, relationship and authority, the *formandi* must be taught about a clear way out. There is always a way out from problems. Trusting openness from the directee is a requirement so necessary.

On Catholic Education

Fr. Rolando V. Dela Rosa, O.R

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On the document itself. By incorporating as many pre-Synodal observations as possible, the I.L. did relatively well in presenting a situationer of Asia. However, the doctrinal part of the document seems like a mere repetition in what has already been mentioned in other recent documents of the Church. Who is the Synod's target audience? Are we addressing theologians or Catholics at large? In its present form, this document appears destined to become what one Synod Father described as "one of the best kept secrets of the Church". While recognizing the fact that Asia is a bubbling pot of cultures and languages, the document seems to presume that those, who shall read the document speak the same language or have the same framework of interpretation. The *Instrumentum laboris* has very little regard for hermeneutics. In a continent teeming with life and besieged daily by the trivializing intrusion of the mass media, meanings change very quickly.

If we want this document to be read and understood, if we want it to move the Asian Catholics or have an impact on Christians and non-Christians, a change in its rhetorics indispensable.

On Catholic Educational Institutions. In two short passages (I.L. Nos 17 and 46), the *Instrumentum laboris* recognizes the role of Catholic educational institutions in Asia as "formidable" partners in evangelization and community service. It is quite ironic, however, that these are given only superficial treatment in the document. I would like to suggest that: 1) a more serious treatment of the present situation and hopes of Asian Catholic universities be made in the document; 2) that in the Synod's search for new pastoral approaches for fresh missionary outreach, Catholic schools, especially universities, should be considered as an entry point for such missionary outreach; 3) that the Synod takes schools not only

as a tool for evangelization, but as a partner that also deserves the Church's solicitude and care. If indeed, Catholic universities are born "ex corde ecclesiae", then it should also be at the heart of the local Church's concern. Oftentimes, while paying lip service to the Catholic school's virtues, both government and Church, as well as the family and society, neglect to nurture it.

Revive fidelity to charism to respond to Spirit's call

Fr. Oscar A. Ante, O.F.M.

Minister Provincial of the
Order of Friars Minor, the Philippines

I take the invitation to "internal renewal and a revitalization of the commitment to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ through a new evangelization" (*Instrumentum laboris*, n. 5) for my reflection. In our journey forward into the future towards our Lord Jesus Christ, I look back to the life examples of St. Francis of Assisi and his followers who have worked in the missions in Asia, e.g., John of Piancarpino in Mongolia, John of Montecorvino in China, Juan de Plasencia in the Philippines and Pedro Bautista in Japan. The past mission experiences contain both lights and shadows. The heritage of those who have gone ahead of us in the journey reminds us of what they have struggled with. Knowing also how they grappled with the vital questions and issues confronting them can help us renew and revitalize our commitment to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ today.

There is a dark side in the history of Church mission: excessive desire for martyrdom at the expense of other worthy mission values; hostility to cultural adaptation and the use of human means; intransigence in one's own mission methodology; infidelity to consecrated life, and so forth. On the other hand, there were

countless missionaries who performed wonderful deeds of love and service: sharing of Christian faith, building faith-based communities, adapting the Gospel to the culture; opting to serve the poor through education and health services; witness in martyrdom; and the importance of a simple/poor and recollected/contemplative lifestyle.

I thank the Lord for the missionaries of the past. They have done their part. Today it is our turn to be open to the Holy Spirit, to continue the journey towards the reign of God the Father, which Jesus Christ proclaimed in deeds and in parables. One sure way of expressing one's gratitude to the gracious Lord in this Great Jubilee celebration is to be faithful and responsive to the call of the Spirit here and now. For us Franciscan religious in the Philippines, it means renewing and revitalizing our fidelity to our avowed charism, vision and mission.

Religious leaders should be guides to prayer

Sr. Irene Dabalus, O.S.B.

Superior General, Benedictine

Missionary Sisters of Tutzing

(Philippines)

My intervention refers to the *Instrumentum laboris*, n. 23 on the spirituality of Asian religions, which reads: "Religious authority is based not on official position, but on the religious leader's experience of God and his ability to communicate it to others". My question: what is the role of the rich tradition of Christian mysticism in the religious realities of Asia? Where have the treasures of the inner life of our Christian Churches gone? Alongside their glowing works of charity, justice, peace and the care for creation, is the "burning bush" of Christian mysticism not to be found there for those who hunger for the Absolute? Authority

and leadership in the Church can nourish communion among the People of God only with this "burning bush" on their holy ground. Bishops and religious leaders are to be guides to prayer and mentors of the interior life, not just managers and administrators of institutions. Equality, dialogue and partnership within the ranks of our own communities, between men and women, and across cultures can become real in daily life only through a life of intimacy with God, in seeking his will from moment to moment. Inter-religious dialogue with men and women of other faiths who are well-versed in centuries-old traditions of prayer impel us to share with them also our treasures of the mystical life. Those of a Benedict, Ignatius, Teresa of Avila and other spiritual stalwarts transcend cultural boundaries. Houses of formation for lay and religious can start their members onto a road of serious prayer. Do our members enjoy at least an hour of meditation daily? Concerns about the dignity of women, due participation of the laity in decision-making Church bodies, solidarity with the poor and norms for partnership between men and women gain proper perspective only against the integrity of an interior life. Then, Christianity would again be a "burning bush" on holy ground as in the days of Pentecost and can rightly offer her treasures to Asia of the many living faiths.

Modern communications to transmit Asian values

Ms. Erlinda G. So

General Manager, Radio Veritas
Asia (Philippines)

"This modern means of social communication challenges the Church of Asia toward three concrete actions": this text should be extended to four, that every Christian must be a communication

in his own way in the Spirit of the Acts of the Apostles, where faith was spread because of the communicating spirit of the believer.

To uphold, defend and promote Asian values means that Asian values must be translated into modern ways of communicating that will influence the content, the format and the process of the communication programme.

The only way to catch up with the rapid development of media technology and to defend ourselves from their manipulation is media education for all, meaning media literacy and critical use of the media.

At the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of Radio Veritas Asia in Manila 1995, the Holy Father challenged us and the Asian Bishops to continue to support this "powerful means" that "represents the Church's pastoral and missionary outreach on this continent". I therefore request the Bishops to be more creative and not afraid to use Radio Veritas Asia in their pastoral and missionary endeavours, and to be more serious and inventive in supporting this radio station which belongs to them.

Relatio Post Disceputationem

CARD. SHAN KUO-HSI, SJ

INTRODUCTION

The Synod of Bishop's Special Assembly for Asia began on 19 April, 1998 with a Solemn Eucharistic Liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica in which the Synod Fathers concelebrated with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, who took the initiative to convoke this synod as a result of his far-reaching and prophetic vision of the vast Asian continent as a land full of hope and as a promise of fruitful evangelization for the Third Millennium.

The Synod Fathers and all the participants in both St. Peter's Basilica and the Synod Hall—the "Asian Cenacle" where the bishops are gathered around Mary, Mother of the Church and under the leadership of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, Successor of Peter, Prince of the Apostles—have been and are still experiencing a new Pentecost of fraternal charity, apostolic zeal, joy and peace. They listen to each other, learn from each other, share with each other their "joys and hopes, anxieties and sorrows", and thereby come to know the pressing pastoral, missionary and many-other-related problems of the various parts of Asia.

Asian Christians are living as minority communities (except for the Philippines) in non-Christian majority countries, and daily interacting with peoples of various religions which are particular to each nation. They have many acute problems with which they have to deal in living out their Christian faith and carrying out their mission. Such interaction, both stimulating and challenging, are the real context for their daily life. They are seeking to witness to Christ and to His mission of love and service in Asia both in word and deed. The interventions which were presented in this Special Assembly reflect this varied background.

Now we have passed through the first phase of this Special Assembly in which the Synod Fathers were given the opportunity to make comments and interventions on the various subjects related to the main theme of the Synod. At this moment, we attempt to present to you a synthesis of your interventions in this *Relatio post disceptationem*, which in no way is a perfect and complete report due to a lack of time and space. However, if some important items are not mentioned in this paper, you can still present them in the small group for discussion.

PART I
GOD'S OFFER OF SALVATION
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, HIS SON,
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
IN THE CONTEXT OF ASIAN REALITIES

Introduction

The interventions of the Synodal Fathers were made in the light of the Asian realities as described in the *Lineamenta*, the *Instrumentum laboris* and the *Relatio ante disceptationem*. The Word and the Spirit were always present in the social, religious and cultural realities of Asia. But at the same time, evil and sin in all their manifold enslaving forms were also present in Asia.

It is into this world of Asia that God sent His Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit so that all may have fullness of life.

Jesus Christ in the Faith of the Church

This Synod has been a profession of the faith that the Church in Asia has inherited from the Apostles and holds with the Church of all generations and places. The following articles of the faith in Jesus Christ have been affirmed by the Synodal Fathers:

— Jesus Christ is the one and only Saviour, the Lord, the unique Mediator between God and humanity, the Reconciliation between God and the whole of creation.

— Jesus lived an authentically human life. He preached and inaugurated the Kingdom of God through his person, words, gestures, actions, and most of all, his death and resurrection. He not only proclaimed the Kingdom of God, but he ushered it into human history and brought its power to bear upon every facet of human life and society beset by sin and death.

— Jesus, the Son of God, through his incarnation in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, identified himself with every human being, except for sin. He is God-with-us and God-for-us, most especially for the poor, the insignificant, the sinner. He saves us from sin and death in order to lead us to the very life of God. Jesus is the compassion of God for us.

— Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, glorification and gift of the Spirit constitute one single salvific event, a life-giving event for all. We call this Jesus' Paschal Mystery. Through it God has opened for all the path to full communion of life with Him.

— The Risen Christ is present to all and to the whole of creation in a new and mysterious way. We, as his disciples, in turn must relate to him in faith and love and serve him in the poor.

— As the Pre-existent Logos, he was already present in creation, in history, in religions and in every human yearning for good. As the Risen One, Christ is proclaimed as the fulfillment of all creation, of all history, of all religions, and of all human yearning for fullness of life.

Salvation in Jesus Christ

Some important points regarding salvation in Jesus Christ have been affirmed by the Synodal Fathers.

— While the definitive act of salvation took place in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, the salvific value of his ministry, preaching, and works, should not be over looked.

— The reality of salvation has been expressed in various terms and images like reconciliation with God, redemption from sin, conversion to God, freedom from enslavement to sin, liberation from evil, communion with God, etc.

Perception of Jesus in Asia

Some interventions also indicated how the peoples of Asia, especially believers of other faiths perceive Jesus.

— Through the healing ministry of Christians, Jesus is looked upon as the healer.

— Jesus is seen as a man of unique compassion and love for the poor.

How to Present Jesus in Asia

There have been some proposals regarding the type of proclamation of Jesus that would appeal to Asian sensibilities.

— It was said that Asians could resonate with Jesus the Spiritual Master who opens the way to freedom. He can also be presented as the Guru, the Liberator, and the Wisdom of God present in the lives, cultures and religions of the peoples. He shares in the *kenosis* of the suffering peoples of Asia. The feminine or maternal all-embracing love of God manifested in Jesus could also appeal to Asian peoples.

— Jesus should not be proclaimed only in ontological terms but as a living person with whom we could relate. Historical and even cosmic perspectives should also be explored.

— An evocative pedagogy using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching has been recommended. The method employed for the ongoing proclamation of Jesus to believers may have to differ from that to be utilized when proclaiming Jesus to non-believers.

— The prevalent experience of suffering among Asian peoples necessitates a proclamation of a Jesus who can provide meaning to those undergoing unexplainable pain and suffering.

— The witness of life rendered by individual believers and communities to Christ constitutes a powerful proclamation of Jesus as Saviour in Asia.

— The Church must be open to the surprising and new ways by which the face of Jesus would be revealed to us in Asia.

The Church's Mission and the Holy Spirit in Asia

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." The profession of faith in Jesus Christ in this Synod has been the work of the Holy Spirit, as well as the bringing together of various Asian traditions, liturgies, cultures, languages, and concerns. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Church's mission in Asia has been expressed in various interventions.

— The Holy Spirit and the Incarnate Word. The relationship between Jesus Christ and the Spirit has been stressed in some interventions.

— The incarnation of the Son of God was the work of the Spirit, as attested already in Scriptures and the Creed of the Church.

— The earthly ministry of Jesus was also fulfilled in the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the Church, the Body of Christ

The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ, the Church was the topic of many interventions.

— Just as the physical body of Jesus was the work of the Holy Spirit so is the Body of Christ, the Church, the work of the Spirit. The Church is the mystery of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

— The Church is constantly regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables men and women to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and forms them to be Christ-like. The Spirit leads Christians to a love of the Word of God, to true prayer, and worship.

— The Holy Spirit provides the Church with a rich diversity of charisms and ministries to carry out her mission. Being the principle of unity and diversity in the Church, the Spirit guarantees the communion of diverse local Churches within the one Universal Church.

— As Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News to the poor, so does the same Spirit empower Christians to be evangelisers, bold proclaimers of the gospel on behalf of the poor, and agents of human promotion and social transformation.

The Holy Spirit and the Cultures and Religions of Asia

The action of the Spirit in the cultures and religious traditions of Asia was also much discussed in the interventions.

— Wherever there is goodness and truth of any kind in the cultures, religions and indigenous peoples of Asia, there is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit in them prepares the ground for the Church's dialogue with cultures and religions, while holding firmly the uniqueness of Christ the Saviour. The Spirit, therefore, is the primary agent of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

— The Holy Spirit is also the primary agent of the inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia. Inculturation happens when the people, who are the bearers of a culture, and the Spirit, who is the giver and source of faith, engage in dialogue.

—• The Spirit of God is powerfully present and at work in the events of history. The Church is to read the "signs of the times," to discern where the Spirit is leading history.

PART H

THE EVANGELIZING MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN ASIA

The Proclamation of Jesus Christ

The Asian bishops clearly affirm that their task is to proclaim the Good News to the vast continent of Asia. There is a consensus, rather a unanimity of view that the Church in Asia must be a missionary Church. It means that there is a great urgency for the Church to be engaged in *missio ad intra* and *missio ad gentes*.

Missio ad intra means that all local communities must be witnessing communities, witnessing the life of Jesus, especially in his God-experience or "Abba experience." *Missio ad gentes* means going beyond a "maintenance mode" and taking on a "missionary mode". It means announcing the Kingdom in word and deed so that people have an opportunity to hear the message of Jesus in all its fullness and all its beauty, and if they so choose, make an option for him.

God-Experience

At the same time, Christians must be witnesses to Jesus' love, concern and action in favour of the poor, the marginalized, the tribal, the indigenous, the migrant, the exploited, the abused, the bonded, the outcast.

The disciples' experience of the risen Lord is the cornerstone of all Christian mission at all times, especially in Asia where mission is rendered intelligible and credible only when it is witnessed to by the missionary. The missionary is one who is sent by Jesus through the Church as his disciple with a deep experience of God in Jesus Christ. His most eloquent message is his life and witness. He comes to witness to the message and the person of Jesus, all exemplified by the values, attitude, approach and action

of Jesus Christ. The missionary is the announcer of the living story of Jesus. He recounts and communicates that *Katha* (story) of Jesus to all disposed to listen to it and share in it as a community.

Progressive Proclamation and Catechesis

The role of progressive catechesis in word, worship and Christian living is to strengthen the new Christian's God-experience in Jesus Christ. Doctrinal catechesis is meant to give a solid and sure foundation to his God-experience and not vice-versa.

Evangelizing Communities

Basic Christian Communities and Charismatic movements can help Christians to have a deep God-experience in Jesus Christ. They help to establish the *koinonia*, communion, fellowship and sustain the lay person's sense of mission. They also help to have a personal insight into the word of God and its significance for daily living. The Word-experience is very important in the Asian context where the sacred word has a vital role in preserving, transmitting and communicating God-experience.

Liturgy as Proclamation

Sacred Liturgy is the source and summit of all Christian life and mission. Liturgy must be a means of Christian God-experience, word-experience and fellowship (of fellowship). Liturgy must become a great instrument of the evangelizing mission. It is indeed a great means of mission in all Asian religions. People are drawn to them through their worship, religious festivals and popular devotions.

In order to make the Church's liturgy a true God-experience and a mission-experience, there is an urgent need for liturgies to be adapted to and inculturated in Asian cultures. While being faithful to the faith-content of Christian liturgy, the liturgy of the

Asian local Churches must be suited to an Asian mentality and to Asian ways of participation.

New Ways of Presenting Jesus Christ in Asia

All the Synod Fathers agreed that there must be a new way of presenting Jesus Christ to the peoples of Asia. It is the person of Jesus Christ who needs to be presented and not doctrines about him.

There are many ways of presenting Jesus Christ which are intelligible to Asian peoples: Jesus Christ as the Teacher of true wisdom, Jesus as the Way of the Spirit, Jesus as the Teacher of Truth, Jesus as the spiritual Guide, Jesus as the Enlightened One, Jesus as the one who shares the *kenosis* of the Asian peoples.

•The presentation of Jesus Christ could come as the fulfillment of the yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples. This was done in the early Church. A gradual doctrinal catechesis about Jesus will then be able to give a sure foundation to the faith of believers.

In the Asian context there are many who accept and follow the teachings of Jesus, but they are not baptized Christians. These devotees (Christ *bhaktas*) also should be pastorally cared for and accompanied in their spiritual pilgrimage with Jesus Christ.

The Use of Non-Christian Scriptures in Evangelization

It was suggested that the cause of evangelization and inculturation will be served if a move could be made in our liturgy and prayer of the Church towards the use of non-Christian Scriptures which at times are very inspiring. Thus, non-Christians will be attracted towards Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. This point needs further reflection and study. We need also to examine the pastoral and missionary implications of such a step. There has to be also due preparation of communities if and when

such a measure is adopted by the particular Churches in Asia. The principle of graduality must also be kept in mind in introducing changes in the existing practices.

Evangelization and the Ecumenical Mission

One of the major obstacles of Christian mission in Asia has been the lack of ecumenical unity. There should be a call to shed all signs of hostility, rivalry and competition in the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Rather, there should be joy that Christ is being proclaimed to non-Christians.

Despite doctrinal, liturgical, sacramental, jurisdictional and organizational differences, cooperation in some spheres should not hinder the Churches and ecclesial communities in Asia from an ecumenical way of doing mission. The Churches will also seek to enlarge the areas of collaboration in evangelization work and a fuller participation in ecumenical bodies.

The Local Church and Evangelization

Evangelization and Legitimate Autonomy

The future of Christian mission in Asia will depend much on the Church's capacity to inculturate itself in Asian cultures. The Church's members must show that they are Asians in culture and Christians in their God-experience in Jesus Christ. Hence, there should be greater trust and responsibility placed on episcopal conferences in Asia. They should have legitimate autonomy, always safeguarding the unity of faith and morals and the role of the Petrine ministry in the Church.

We need a collegial vision of the Church in relationship between some of the local Churches and some of the Roman Dicasteries, where the principles of collegiality, subsidiarity and legitimate autonomy are to be respected.

The same holds true within the local Churches, dioceses and parish communities.

The Oriental Churches of West Asia

Churches in West Asia should work towards greater union among themselves. For this purpose, a union of the various Patriarchies will be of great use.

The Oriental Churches should have a full synodal form of Church organization and government with due safeguards to prevent abuses and politicization of Church offices. This principle should apply to such matters as appointment of bishops, the creation of eparchies and married clergy. All these points need further study, reflection and proper formulations.

Some statements about the Oriental Churches taken from the Synod for Lebanon might be inserted into the document of the Synod for Asia. It would be good to have a day set apart to commemorate all the Asian martyrs by all the Churches in Asia. Such a celebration will help the Churches in Asia to remember with gratitude the example of the martyrs and to be inspired by the same zeal.

Evangelization and the Oriental Churches in India

Vatican II has affirmed the equality of all Churches and Rites. In the light of the Council's teaching, there is an urgent need to overcome fears and misunderstandings and to grant legitimate freedom of jurisdiction and evangelization to the Oriental Churches in Asia.

Secondly, the Oriental Churches should be allowed to have necessary structures of pastoral care in those areas to which a sufficient number of Christians of Oriental Churches have migrated.

Special Concerns in the New Evangelization

Family as Object of Pastoral Care and Agent of Evangelization

Many Synodal Fathers have emphasized the importance and urgency of a renewed approach to the apostolate to the family and by the family within its neighbourhood. Family is the cradle of Asian cultures, values and religious education. The family is the place where the gift of life is valued and where filial piety to God and to parents is inculcated.

Today due to modernization and under the impact of consumerist culture many Asian families are threatened and disintegrating. Divorce, birth control, abortion, etc. are constantly on the increase. The Church needs to be close to all families, including non-Christian families. We need also to devise new forms of family apostolate and collaborate with people of other religions in this ministry. Christian families must be empowered to bear witness to others. Seminarians, priests and religious should be trained in traditional and new ways of family apostolate.

Laity

In the primitive Church, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ spread to many parts of the world because it was lived and communicated with joy and enthusiasm by lay Christians. Such involvement of the laity in the spread of the Gospel has a very special significance in the Asian context.

The laity are the first and most important missionaries of the Gospel to reach out to the millions of Asian peoples who otherwise might never be reached by missionaries from the clergy and the consecrated life.

Enabling laity to be the first missionaries of the Gospel means that the local Churches in Asia are participatory communities in Church organization. It also means that they are encouraged to

assume their proper role in the life and mission of the Church and that they be given due formation at various levels. Thus, the Church is enabled to become a communion of communities.

Youth and Evangelization

All the Synodal Fathers are convinced of the importance of youth within the particular Churches in Asia. Because of their great number, youth represent the emerging culture of Asia. At the same time, youth are also most threatened by the erosion of traditional family and religious values.

In such a situation, Youth apostolate assumes a primary role in the Church's pastoral and evangelizing concerns in Asia. Secondly, all Church personnel must be close to youth and their life-situation as well as their problems and needs. Youth should be duly represented in some of the Church's deliberation and pastoral councils. They are also to be helped to be agents of evangelization.

Women

One of the signs of the times both in society and in the Church is the increasing recognition of the role of women in every sphere of life. Women often form the majority of those who participate in the life of the Church and her mission. They are the first and most important educators of the faith. They nurture and bring to maturity religious and priestly vocations. They are active participants in every pastoral activity of the Church.

Their important role in the evangelizing mission of the Church should be recognized and encouraged. As such, they must have a proper role in the consultation and deliberation in the pastoral, catechetical and evangelizing activities of the Church and her healing and reconciling ministries.

Migrants

Migration is one of the major social phenomenon within Asia and from Asia to other continents. The Synod calls upon the home Churches and the host Churches to have special care of these migrants during the economically, culturally and morally painful and difficult period.

Migrants are not only the objects of the Church's pastoral care but also a great means of evangelization and renewal of receiving communities. Their full evangelizing potential has yet to be utilized. The pastoral care of the migrant communities is facilitated by the home communities and by information sharing and the sharing of pastoral workers. Migrant communities can also enrich the host communities with their specific ways of expressing their Christian faith.

Evangelization and Indigenous/Tribal Peoples/Dalits

When we consider the cultural and religious situation in Asia, we must not think only of the dominant cultures of Asia. Across Asia there are about 100 million indigenous peoples whose vision of life is very close to the Christian vision. Hence they are open to the Gospel message and have the potential of readily recognizing Jesus as their Saviour. Therefore, the particular Churches in Asia should give a priority to evangelizing them.

Often the indigenous peoples are culturally and economically marginalized. This is an additional reason for the Church in Asia to turn her attention to them.

The particular Churches in Asia should turn their attention to the responsive peoples and areas of Asia in all their evangelizing activities. There are also several other marginalized communities, like the Dalits in India, who have suffered for centuries at the hands of the dominant groups. They too deserve the Church's special care and support.

The Church in China

The particular Churches in Asia admire the perseverance, the witness given and the growth of the Catholic Church in China, despite severe persecution at various times during the past centuries and more recently.

The Church wants to promote reconciliation not only in society but also within the Church in China as well as to work for its full communion with the See of Peter which is an integral part of Catholic faith and in no way diminishes the Chinese Christian's commitment to national construction and the promotion of the Chinese people. The Synod looks with fraternal solidarity and great eagerness to the day when Chinese Catholics will be permitted to exercise full religious freedom. The canonization of the Chinese martyrs will be of great help and encouragement in sustaining Chinese Catholics and will be of assistance in the work of evangelization.

Special Areas of Concern in Evangelization

Education and Evangelization

The work of education has always been concomitant with the work of evangelization. Christian schools and centres of education have played an important role in Asia in the past.

But today, there is need to re-think and re-orient the apostolate of education. In the first place, it must be directed more and more towards the disadvantaged and the marginalized, so that they can be empowered to be agents of social change.

Education must be viewed as a real evangelizing activity for proclamation, inculturation, dialogue and human promotion. The educational environment provides the proper setting and the appropriate stage in life where the above values of dialogue, inculturation, human promotion and shared responsibility for the

future of a given society can be imparted, learnt and lived. The educative community and the educative plan have an evangelizing mission to carry out.

Evangelization through Defence of Human Rights

Jesus expressly spoke out in favour of the human rights of the weak, the exploited and the poor. After the example of the Master, the particular Churches in Asia are called to be defenders of human rights.

The basic human dignity and rights of millions of Asians are often violated in many ways. While helping them to regain their sense of dignity and their rights, the Church should also analyze and expose the root causes of their situation and conscientize governments and the international community of their situation.

The Healing Ministry of Jesus

Following Jesus Christ, the model of all evangelizers, the particular Churches in Asia should engage themselves in the healing ministry. This is done not simply as healthcare workers but as missionaries sent by Jesus to bring healing to people. The ministry of healing needs to be linked with the overall mission of evangelization. All Christian healthcare workers need to consider their ministry as a vocation carried out of love for Jesus and their neighbour. Each healthcare worker is a Good Samaritan.

The Church in Asia wants to express her recognition and appreciation of the great evangelizing witness given by thousands of religious men and women, doctors, nurses and other medical practitioners.

New Attitudes in Evangelization

Mission: A Work of Love

Mission is an expression of the love of the Father for the world. God so loved the world that he sent his only son into the world so that all may have life. For Jesus, the Incarnate Son, mission was an expression of his twofold love: love for the Father and love for all his brethren. Jesus wanted his apostles to be on mission with a threefold love: love for the Father, love for Him, and love for one another and for all people. This is clear from the New Testament. While entrusting his mission to Peter, Jesus asked: "Do you love me?".

All Christian mission must be born out of our love for the Father, Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit and for all peoples of Asia and the world. All our institutions and instruments of service to Asia must be imbued with this missionary love for all. Where such love exists, mission is bound to succeed.

An Asian Image of the Church

Evangelization will be greatly facilitated if the local Churches in Asia assume an Asian image in its theological, liturgical, organizational and spiritual dimensions, without sacrificing anything essential to the Catholic heritage.

This is the meaning of the phrase used in many FABC statements and writings of theologians and pastors, namely, a new way of being Church in Asia. If Christianity is to sink its roots deeper in the Asian soil and to bear more fruits, inculturation is a necessity. Only a profound process of inculturation can change her western image and give an Asian countenance to the Church.

A Kingdom Image

The Church is the community of the disciples of Jesus. Her vocation is to become an ever more perfect image of the Kingdom of God and invite others to do so. The Church is the result of the mission of the Son of God, Jesus Christ by the Father and his Holy Spirit. Hence, she is the fruit of divine mission and her nature and task is to carry on that mission.

For this reason, the Church should be in constant dialogue with the evolving cultures of peoples, inculturate herself in them and be engaged in human promotion. Dialogue, inculturation and human promotion are the way she carries out her mission to lead all to the fullness of life in God.

The Church as a Servant of Asia

The Church in Asia should avoid the image of triumphalism in Church enterprises, and take on the image of a servant. Since she desires to be of service to the peoples of Asia, she is to pursue in Asia the values of the Kingdom.

Each local Church in Asia must learn to live and adapt its life, practices and proclamation of faith in the Hindu, Buddhist, Shintoist, Confucianist, Islamic and Indigenous cultural, religious and social milieu. There cannot be one abstract formula that can be applied to different cultural groups.

Missionary Spirituality

The particular Churches in Asia need to give urgent attention to developing a missionary spirituality which emphasizes certain values such as simplicity at all levels of life, detachment from superfluous goods, silence, prayer and contemplation.

Solidarity with the poor is another important aspect of the spirituality of Jesus. Asian Christian Spirituality must be rooted

in solidarity and communion with the ordinary people of Asia. Such a spirituality will seek to bring about a positive and creative incorporation of the spiritual heritage of Asia and its great Religions.

A missionary spirituality will point to an alternative way of life to the growing consumerist and materialistic tendencies in Asian society.

Formation to Mission and Agents of Mission

Formation to Mission

The new evangelization to which reference is made so often and a new way of being Church in Asia calls for a new type of formation at every level of the Church, namely, of Christian communities, seminarians, religious men and women, people of consecrated life, priests and bishops in Asia. It should be a formation which begins with the Asian realities. Consequently, all evangelizers in Asia need to be familiar with Asian realities and able to analyze their causes. They also need to discern the work of the Spirit in and through them and what God is calling them to do in the situation. Secondly, all evangelizers should be familiar with Asian cultures and religions as well as their positive values so as to lead them to Christ. Thirdly, evangelizers should be formed to genuine Christian spirituality expressed in Asian forms. Thus, they should know authentically Christian prayer and also be familiar with Asian forms of prayer, contemplation and style of life. A truly inculturated Asian Christian spirituality is the key to the new evangelization in Asia.

Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life

During the last five hundred years, Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life, beginning with the Paris Foreign Missionaries, have rendered an invaluable service to the cause of evangelization and service to the people of Asia. In recent years a number of Asian

Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life have been established in India, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand, etc.

They are characterized by their commitment to *missio ad gentes*, *missio ad exteros* and *missio ad vitam*. They express a true communion among churches and they promote and keep alive the sense of mission among the home and host Churches. Hence, Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life should be fostered in all the local Churches of Asia. Where there are small dioceses, several dioceses, can join together in an effort to foster Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life.

PART III

THE CHURCH'S MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE IN ASIA

Integral Human Promotion

Strengthened by faith in Jesus Christ as the one who brings God's offer of saving grace to all and confirmed in her mission on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is able to approach with confidence the Asian societies in which she lives. The Church commits herself to work for integral human promotion: to the building of peace, to the establishment of justice, to the defence of human rights and to the proclamation of human solidarity and unity. The Church engages in a dialogue with each of the myriad cultures of Asia, both to affirm those values which express God's Kingdom in this world, and to challenge those elements of each culture which enslave and threaten human life and happiness. The Church has a duty to engage in a manifold dialogue with the followers of other religions in order to build more just, humane, and harmonious societies. The Church has a mission to achieve and proclaim the visible unity which Jesus Christ desired among His disciples.

Service to Life

We recognize both the social dimension of sin and that of conversion. Not only individuals have need to repent and turn away from sin so as to accept God's rule over their lives, societies are also touched by sin and are called, as did Jonah to the people of Nineveh, to convert and to dismantle the structures of sin.

A Spirituality of Service

If the Church in Asia is to preach the call to conversion, two prerequisites are necessary. The first is a spirituality which is rooted in Asian realities, one in which concern for the plight of women, workers, outcasts, etc., is not alien to one's life of prayer and worship. It is a spirituality in which concerns for establishing justice, for peacemaking, and for a life-filled harmony with the whole of creation are grounded in one's own acceptance of Jesus as Saviour.

The second precondition for announcing the living Word of life in Asia is the discipline of critical social analysis. The Church will fail to address the real issues and their causes unless Christians spend the time and energy to analyze their societies, to recognize the interconnections between trends, events, and structures, and to ask why some groups, peoples, and social classes are oppressed and who profits from such oppression.

In addressing the areas where the Church's mission of love and service in Asia demands that Christians speak out and take action in favor of human promotion, the synodal interventions singled out the several issues demanding special attention, which follow below.

Women

Despite dramatic gains in awareness of the dignity and status of women in recent years, the continuing poverty and exploitation

of women remains a serious problem throughout Asia. Discrimination and violence against women is common in the home, workplace and legal systems. Illiteracy and lack of educational opportunities are much greater among females than among males. The abortion of females greatly exceeds that of males. Women are treated as commodities in prostitution, sex tourism and entertainment industries.

The role of women as evangelizers has yet to be appreciated and promoted. Women should be given more opportunities to study theology and related subjects.

Women have an equally important role to play in dialogue. Dialogue between Christian women and those of other faiths can be an important factor in building justice and harmony in society.

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples

Indigenous peoples have been subjugated, enslaved, and exploited, and are still victims of injustice, neglect, starvation, and even genocide in many parts of Asia.

The Synod must give ample attention to Traditional Religion, based on a deep faith and trust in the one Supreme Benevolent Spirit, which in many cases has a concept of God very close to that in the Old Testament.

Faith in Jesus Christ offers indigenous peoples liberation from the oppression of evil spirits, a sense of dignity as beloved children of God, and the tools of education to overcome discrimination and poverty.

For these reasons, indigenous peoples in Asia have shown themselves to be the most open group in Asia for conversion to the Christian faith.

Migrants, Refugees and Overseas Workers

Asia has the highest number of refugees in the world, yet 29 countries in Asia have not signed international juridical guarantees for the protection of refugees.

Especially precarious is the situation of women overseas workers, often forced by economic reasons to leave their families and take up work far from their homes. They are particularly vulnerable to economic and sexual exploitation.

Proper pastoral care of refugees is not possible if their spiritual patrimony is not taken into due account. This can only be achieved through a broad cooperation among local Churches.

An area for practical "*communion*" among local Churches is that of cultural dialogue so that host societies be better prepared to create a hospitable atmosphere for immigrants and refugees.

Family

Economic pressures which force one or the other parent to migrate put serious pressures on family life. The Church in Asia needs to develop a stronger pastoral approach to families in which parents are absent for long periods.

The Church's Mission of Education

One area in which the Church in Asia has for many years been in the forefront of human promotion is that of education. In some parts of Asia, Christians are primarily known as educators and are respected for their schools and institutes of higher learning.

The Synod Fathers made the following points in regard to the apostolate of education:

— Church schools often provided the first and for a long time the only educational opportunities for girls, tribal minorities,

rural villagers and children from low castes. The Christian schools have often been the first evangelizers in Asia, and still have an important role to play in proclamation, inculturation of the faith and as laboratories for learning harmonious interreligious life.

— Concerns were expressed that economic pressures could threaten these institutions or limit their availability only to the most wealthy.

— Should not more attention be given to the development of non-formal education and literacy programs as ways of uplifting those who cannot afford formal education?

The Church's Mission of Healthcare

Another area in which the Church in Asia has for many years been in the forefront of human promotion is that of healthcare. In many parts of Asia, Christians are primarily known as healthcare providers and are respected for their hospitals and clinics.

— The extensive healthcare system run by the Church in Asia is similarly threatened by present-day economic realities. How long will such institutions be able to operate without pricing themselves out of the reach of those most in need?

— There should be greater inculturation of the Gospel in Christian healthcare facilities so that Christian core values can enter into the heart of Asian healthcare and transform it from within.

— Christian healthcare practitioners should be in dialogue with those of other faiths who practice traditional methods such as *Ayurvedic* and *Yunani* medicine, acupuncture, and low-cost alternative herbal traditions.

The Church's Mission of Social Concerns

The third area in which the Church in Asia has for many years been in the forefront of social concerns.

— Study of the Church's social doctrine. One of the over-arching realities of modern Asia is the phenomenon of globalization of the market economy. The dramatic economic recession in East and Southeast Asia has shown the fragility of the belief that a free flow of trade, finance and information will produce unlimited growth and prosperity for all. Globalization can be seen both as a blessing and as a curse. International trade is biased against poor countries, and among the effects of globalization is the growing disparity between the rich and the poor and the increasing marginalization of the poor. Another area of concern for the Church in Asia is the preservation of the ecological integrity of nature.

— Blessed are the peacemakers. Peace is the fruit of a healthy community, the result of a harmonious and mature integration of fairness, justice, love, truth, liberty and respect. Working for peace should be a central aspect of evangelization. The Christian message is a theology of the Cross and Resurrection, that is, active non-violence, or resistance without violence.

— This Synod should place the work for peace at the centre of evangelization in Asia.

— The Church should be actively involved in international and interreligious efforts for peace, such as that of the World Conference of Religions and Peace.

— An essential element in the Church's work for peace is conscientizing Christians to the evils of the arms trade, land mines and proliferation of armaments, and supporting campaigns to reduce arms expenditures.

— The people of Jerusalem long for Christian Churches around the world to speak out in favour of justice and peace in the Holy City. The Churches should not remain silent on this issue.

The Church's Mission and Inculturation

Inculturation is the call for Christians to root the values of the Gospel in every human culture. The Christian message is always in dialogue with each culture in which Christians live. This dialogue has a double movement: to affirm and confirm all that is good in the culture, and to raise a prophetic voice against all that degrades and enslaves people. In both movements, Christians are involved in a proclamation of the values of God's Kingdom.

If culture can be called the totality of expressions of human life in their complexity, inculturation can be seen as a dialogue between people and the Holy Spirit. People are the bearers of a culture, their distinctive ways of being human. The process of inculturation is the bringing together of faith and culture into an integrated whole. In this process, the main actors are the people themselves and the Holy Spirit. The path of inculturation to be followed is to trust the people to dialogue freely with the Spirit. True inculturation can be successful only if it is carried out in the context of an internal dialogue within the community and between the community and the Spirit.

The following points were raised by Synod Fathers in reference to inculturation:

— There is a need for greater flexibility and creativity in the field of liturgy. Too much energy has been spent on translating official texts. References to ancient teachings can help make catechesis more intelligible.

— When the Christian faith is insufficiently inculturated, Christians become alienated from their societies, thus limiting the impact of evangelization.

— In Asia, words come second to witness, dogmatic formulations are secondary to direct experience. The Christian message must be preached primarily through the sharing of God-experience. Has sufficient emphasis been placed in the work of evangelization on monasticism, simplicity and holiness of life?

— Genuinely inculturated celebrations of the Eucharist move Christians deeply, touching hidden reservoirs of spirituality.

— The use of mantras, "centring prayer," and yoga techniques can deepen the prayer lives of Christians in Asia.

— There is a need for the inculturation of theology. Presenting Jesus in culturally understandable ways, such as Jesus as the Guru or Jesus as Liberator, need not deny the integrity of the faith.

The ecclesial experience of the particular Churches in West Asia offers unique insights on the question of inculturation:

— Cannot many of the historical divisions in Christendom be traced to a lack of understanding of the phenomenon of inculturation?

— What the Churches of East and South Asia are striving today to achieve in terms of inculturation is what was achieved in West Asia during the First Millennium.

— The New Evangelization can result in the rediscovery of ancient Asian forms of spirituality, dating from St. Ephrem and the Oriental Fathers.

— The question of why the Church is often rejected by nations is ultimately neither one of inculturation nor of methodology, but is rather the mystery of grace accepted or refused.

— The term "Churches of West Asia" is a neologism which ignores their historical role and self-understanding as "the Oriental Churches" or the "Church of the East."

The Church's Mission and Interreligious Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue can be described as all positive and constructive relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment. Given the fact that over 97% of those with whom Christians in Asia live are followers of other religions, interreligious dialogue is an important part of the Church's mission of love and service.

The Synod Fathers made the following points on the question of interreligious dialogue:

— In Asia, special importance must be given to the dialogue of life, a grass-roots approach to living the Gospel in pluralist societies. Authentic evangelization should move from dialogue to service, leading to a deeper dialogue and even greater service of the people of Asia.

— No less attention should be given to the dialogue of religious experience. In dialogue with the spiritual traditions of Asia, Christians bear witness to the vitality of Christian traditions of asceticism and mysticism and integrate into their own faith in Christ the treasures of Asian spirituality. Dialogue can help Christians rediscover neglected riches, such as *hesychasm*, in their own tradition. This dialogue takes the form of sharing experiences of prayer, worship, contemplation, ascetical observances and the ways and methods of searching for the Absolute.

— In West Asia, the dialogue of daily life is helped by the sharing of a common culture, languages and way of life. The important question for the Church is how to witness to Jesus Christ in Arab Muslim societies: this includes the struggle to be fully integrated members of society, a witness to the evangelical freedom of the Good News of a God of love, building confidence among Christians, expressing solidarity with the poor and respecting others in their "otherness." Ongoing Christian emigration, however, raises serious questions about the continuity and survival of the Christian community in the region.

— Dialogue raises questions for Christian theological reflection. What is the role of religions?

— In dialogue, Christians not only proclaim, but must listen and learn. Christians must be sensitive to the action of the spirit in other religions and listen to what the Spirit is teaching them through those religions. The encounter with Hindu contemplation, Buddhist compassion, Confucian filial piety, Taoist simplicity, the respect for nature in Traditional Religion and the centrality of God's will in Islam can all enrich Christian understanding of the Christ of the Gospels.

— Christians should feel challenged by the way of life of deeply committed people of other faiths. Our neighbours of other faiths are often scandalized by what they see as absolutist and arrogant attitudes and rigid treatment of human problems.

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

— Dialogue should be supported by appropriate local structures. Structured encounters of religious leaders should be oriented towards the transformation of attitudes at the grass-roots level.

— Dialogue must not be limited to the followers of the "great religions" of Asia - Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Taoism, etc.
— but must include popular religiosity and the traditional religions of Asia.

The Church's Mission and Ecumenical Unity

One of the great obstacles to evangelization in Asia is the scandal of divided Christianity, and for this reason the Catholic Church has irrevocably committed herself to work the visible unity among Christ's disciples. In Asia, relations among Christians have often been marked more by indifference than by enmity, and this Special Assembly for Asia presents an opportunity for launching new ecumenical initiatives.

Interventions on the Synod floor made the following points concerning the mission to work for ecumenical unity:

— Christian unity is not a strategy, but is rooted in the very nature of the Church. Unity cannot come about solely through human efforts, but is a gift of the Spirit. The Churches in Asia must both pray for unity and open themselves to the Spirit's movements. Ecumenical initiatives must arise from the local Churches and should be fostered and promoted by the Universal Church.

— Ecumenical relations should be action-oriented, aimed at giving common witness on issues of social justice, political morality, humanitarian relief, development efforts and education on values.

— The Episcopal Conferences of Asia should invite fellow Christians to enter into a process of prayer and consultation to explore possibilities of new ecumenical structures and associations to promote Christian unity.

— Could the discipline of the Catholic Church be reconsidered to extend Eucharistic hospitality to all Christians who believe in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist?

— Christian unity not only increases the Church's credibility but provides a more effective witness; hence, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue go hand in hand.

The Church's Mission and Formation

It was pointed out that the work of evangelization also requires formation to interreligious dialogue in the following ways:

— Interreligious dialogue should be a compulsory part of training in seminaries, catechetical institutes, and houses of formation.

— It is particularly important that seminarians be well formed in the context of Asian spirituality and in Asian philosophical traditions.

— The laity must be prepared for their interreligious encounters in the marketplace.

Evangelization and Social Communications

Many Synod Fathers referred to the importance of the media of social communications in the work of evangelization. At present, diverse media are employed, but only on a small scale (except *Radio Veritas-Asia*). Some pointed out the need for cooperative efforts in this field on a diocesan, national and continental level. Four recommendations to contribute to an effective presentation of the message of Christ and his Church are:

- an active communications and public relations office in each diocese;
- formation of Catholics in this field;
- ecumenical and interreligious cooperation in affording the access of religion and religious values in the communications media and guaranteeing respect for moral values in the media;
- a communications pastoral plan on the episcopal conference and diocesan level, in accordance with the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis novae*.

CONCLUSION

After intense prayerful reflections, discussions and interventions in the Hall on the various important subjects related to the central theme of this Synod, we now reached the second phase of our programme. In this second stage, the Synod Fathers will concentrate their attention on points which need to be further developed and explored in depth through small group discussion.

Small as the Christian community in Asia is, undoubtedly God has a unique plan for her which He formulated even before the foundation of the world. So many signs on the horizon seem to tell that a new era is dawning for Asia. Destinies of millions are being shaped. It is our fervent prayer that the Lord walks with us during these days of our search, guides us at every step and leads us to conclusions that will enable us to bear powerful witness to His saving Message.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of the Asian peoples, guide us to listen more attentively to the murmurs of the Holy Spirit both in our own heart and in the group discussions, so that we may find out God's will, which is the guiding principle for our pastoral and missionary activities.

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

The following points and questions are being proposed for deeper reflection and discussion so as to bring the already rich interventions closer to the theme of the Synod and to facilitate the formulation of more concrete proposals.

Part I: Christology and Pneumatology

1. How can Jesus be proclaimed in a way that appeals to Asian mentalities and cultures?
2. How can the Church deal with some unorthodox trends among some theologians with regard to the divinity of Jesus and his unique mediation of salvation. How can Jesus be portrayed as more than simply one of the many saviours?
3. In what ways can the Church emphasize one single plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen? How can this one economy or plan of salvation in Jesus Christ become the cornerstone of the faith for seminarians, priests and all the people of God in Asia?
4. Does the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only mediator of salvation raise problems in a multi-religious context of Asia? If so, why? How can one engage in interreligious dialogue without abandoning one's essential religious identity of faith?
5. Must there be different modalities of proclaiming Jesus Christ to non-Christians and in catechesis to Christians? Which traits concerning Jesus Christ need to be emphasized in the proclamation to non-Christians?
6. In some theological circles there is a separation of the mission of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. This dichotomy has led to a one-sided appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in cultures and religions without affirming the need to proclaim Jesus

Christ as the Saviour. It might be worthwhile to reflect on this point, based on the concrete experiences of inter-religious dialogue and inculturation.

Part II: The Church's Evangelizing Mission

1. Suggest creative ways of announcing the Gospel in the difficult situations of Asia?
2. Suggest practical guidelines for pursuing evangelization in the Church's various pastoral undertakings: ecumenism, inculturation, education, apostolate to youth, family, healthcare, etc. What can be the role of the laity in this regard?
3. How can liturgical celebrations be made more of an evangelizing experience as well as one of fostering a deeper spirituality? In which way can liturgical practice be a form of inculturation?
4. What is the image of the Church in light of other religions? What attitudes should be taken on behalf of religious dialogue in order to draw profit from it?
5. How can greater communion be promoted 1) between the local Church and the Universal Church 2) among the particular Churches in Asia and 3) within in the particular Church? How can tensions be avoided in these areas, e.g., among the rites, among the particular Churches, between particular Churches and Roman Dicasteries, etc.?

Part III: The Church's Mission of Love and Service

1. How can an evangelizing quality be given to the works of human promotion in Asia in the different fields: education, healthcare, social justice issues, migrants, indigenous peoples, child labour, caste system, etc.?

2. How can Christians in Asia become agents of reconciliation in a divided world? What is presently being done and what initiatives can the Church undertake in the future?
3. In which ways does the reality of globalization impact on the pastoral activities of the Church in Asia?
4. How does the Church proclaim in action the Gospel of Life in challenging social situations facing the Asian continent: abortion, euthanasia, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc.?
5. How can the Church better respond to her mission of service to the poor and to those who suffer from the new forms of poverty in Asia: AIDS, drug addiction, prostitution, pedophilia, etc.?

Respect the rights of migrants

Cardinal Giovanni Cheli

President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care
of Migrants and Itinerant People

The choice of accelerated development made by some countries in East Asia has created intense migratory flows. However, working within the logic of capitalism, migrant labour is as vital to development as it is vulnerable because of its condition. It is a work that divides the family because it involves non-renewable short-term contracts that exclude the reuniting of families. The right of the migrant to live with his family must be respected.

Migration in Asia is strongly marked by the female element; women are employed in domestic service, in hospitals, in the hotel industry. The situation of the migrant woman is extremely vulnerable due to the system of hiring, the way their immigration is managed and the type of contract used in hiring.

The State professes a type of practical agnosticism towards the migrant, which encourages a real exploitation industry. The local Churches should identify some of the more obvious violations of human rights and dignity and propose certain lines of action to correct this.

A great many refugees live in Asia, the highest number in the world. The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that 29 countries on this continent (those more directly involved in this phenomenon) have not accepted the international conventions protecting refugees. Regarding the "boat people", the Church, the Filipino people and State have had the courage to interrupt the barbarous practice of turning these people back to the sea and have engaged only in voluntary repatriation.

With regard to the damage which tourism could suffer if left to the laws of the market, the Churches should make those responsible for the sector heed the voice of reason.

Just as a sense of pilgrimage characterizes her, the Church must undertake a path in common with all the great religions born in Asia.

Health-Care ministry in Asia must include non-Christians

Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan

Bishop Emeritus of Zacatecas, Mexico

President of the Pontifical Council

for Pastoral Assistance to Health-Care Workers

In Asia the Catholic Church has 3,287 health facilities; India particularly stands out, with 691 hospitals, 462 medical centres, 1,406 dispensaries, and 41 leprosariums in 1,994 localities. Six hundred religious orders work in these centres. The Church in Asia continues to run these centres, where long-existing diseases are treated, but other facilities have also been opened to deal with new illnesses. In this context, to carry out the presentation of Jesus Christ the Saviour and his love and service in Asia, so that people may have life and have it in abundance, we propose the following in the field of the health-care ministry:

1. The health field must continue to be a point of convergence, not just cooperation with other Christian denominations with health missions in Asia, but also with non-Christians who have been using their medical knowledge for centuries.

2. In dialogue with the solution to pain provided by the major Asian religions, this view should be examined more closely in its specificity and brought to the fullness of the Revelation which has been received for the good of all. This solution prior to the Gospel

should be seen as a preparation for it, and the revelation concerning pain in Christ as Redeemer is not parallel or superfluous in relation to that preparation, but its fulfillment and full authentication.

3. There should be ample provision for the union of all the Catholic health facilities in Asia in order to deal with the globalization of medicine by humanizing it, so that the economic resources will not be decisive, but the dignity of the patient's human personhood. Special attention must be devoted to the problems of genetic engineering as regards the as yet unborn and of euthanasia at the final stages of life.

New tool for evangelization is offered by Internet

Archbishop John Patrick Foley

Titular Archbishop of Neapolis in Proconsulari

President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications

A strong Catholic press is needed to reinforce a sense of Catholic identity and a sense of community and of communion. Catholic news agencies of professional quality can be a means of sharing experiences of Catholics throughout Asia and of communicating the news of the Church in Asia to the world, thus strengthening solidarity among Catholics.

A new tool of evangelization has now become available through the Internet. It is now possible for the Church to have its message enter directly into homes, a means of evangelizing decision-makers in society with the authentic doctrine of the Church, including its social doctrine.

We know that for many years efforts in short-wave radio have proven effective in Asia. Vatican Radio and Radio Veritas Asia offer services in many Asian languages, even in countries in which

official ideology or restriction would make the entry of those bringing the message of Christ difficult if not impossible.

The presence of the Catholic Church in television in Asia is more complex, chiefly because of the expense of television production and of terrestrial and satellite transmission, but also because of the limited access which the Church has in almost every country.

Four actions can be taken which are essential to the effective presentation of the message of Christ and of his Church in the media.

First, Bishops should make sure that they have active communications and public relations offices.

Second, Bishops should guarantee that there are Catholics prepared in the field of communications.

Third, Bishops should cooperate on the ecumenical and interreligious level to guarantee access of religion and of religious values in the communications media and to guarantee respect for moral values in the media.

Fourth, on both the conference and diocesan level, Bishops should develop a pastoral plan for communications and insure that a communications aspect forms part of every pastoral plan in accordance with the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis novae*.

Give high priority to health-care education

Archbishop Henry Sebastian D'Souza

Calcutta, India

President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India - Latin rite

It was gratifying to note that in the *Instrumentum laboris* the witness of Mother Teresa is mentioned as an authentic type of

evangelization in which proclamation is done by deeds more than by words. The preferential love for the poor, solidarity with those seeking justice and a recognition of the basic human dignity of every individual are indeed important ingredients of such evangelization.

Mother Teresa, however, was very sure about the indispensable presence of Jesus in her work. In every chapel of her communities are written the words "I thirst" of Jesus, which had inspired her to leave the security of Loreto and take the risks of the uncertainties of the streets of Calcutta. Years later she tried to explain to her sisters the meaning of this thirst and she said: "I fear for you, dear sisters, that you will go to the poor without having first experienced Jesus in your own hearts. Unless and until you have experienced the thirst of Jesus for you and your love, you will not be able to quench that thirst through your ministry to the poor".

Grinding poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy are the sad lot of millions in Asia. This condition is the major contributory factor to the population problem, which Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* recognized as bringing "added difficulties to the problems of development" (n. 37). Scientifically documented evidence exists to indicate that education of women and primary health-care education drastically curtail infant and child mortality, and are correlated with falling birth rates.

Social witness, not only in its charitable form but also through critical analytical methods, could therefore become a powerful means for evangelization. The Church in Asia must place high priority through its personnel and institutions to help eradicate illiteracy, improve the human status of women and ensure better health-care delivery systems.

In this venture, the Sister Churches of the First World are also called to play an ever-increasing role. Efforts to monitor the trade systems, ensuring protection of the weaker partners, insisting

on a human face to industry and business, sensitivity to the fallout mechanisms of a global economy which mostly affect women and children, a cancellation or at least a diminution of the international debt of developing countries and many such modern issues must be tackled from a Christian perspective if we are to create what, is called by the present Holy Father — a civilization of love.

Develop formation for all Church members

Sr Janet Wang, F.D.D.C.

President, Conference of Religious
Major Superiors of Women of Malaysia, Singapore
and Brunei (Singapore)

Twice a year, the Conference of Religious Major Superiors, men and women, meets the Conference of Bishops of the region we represent, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, to bring out common concerns, to dialogue, to share information and to forge a common vision.

1. *Dialogue.* While we are challenged to intensify inter-religious dialogue and dialogue with culture, we need to improve our capacity to dialogue within the Church at grass-roots level.

2. *A participatory Church.* The Spirit is calling us to move away from the image of a "clerical institution" (*Instrumentum laboris*, n. 13), to the building of a participatory Church, where priests, religious and laity share a common vision of Church as communion and are involved together in pastoral planning and even decision-making.

3. *Church as communion of communities.* Religious institutes have been involved in the evangelizing mission of the local Church in Asia, each according to its specific charism. However, as consecrated persons, it is our witness of fraternal life in community (*Vita consecrata*, n. 42) that speaks to the world today. Our

religious communities therefore need to be recognized as Christ-centred basic ecclesial communities within the local Church. Moreover, many of our religious sisters and brothers who have been trained are already involved in the faith formation of the laity.

Implications for formation. May I strongly recommend, also on behalf of the CRMS:

1) the seminarians be formed to a better understanding of consecrated life in the context of the ecclesiology of communion, a module on consecrated life, conducted by religious, being inserted in the course of ecclesiology;

2) that priests, religious and laity be formed together towards a new way of being Church, listening together to what the Holy Spirit is telling us as Church, the family of God in Asia.

Asia has strong cultural roots

Cardinal Paul Poupard

President of the Pontifical Council for Culture

To bring faith to culture and to inculturate it are the major challenges of the Church in Asia on the threshold of the third millennium. The pastoral care of culture rests upon the great cultural traditions of Asia so as to bring them the Good News of Christ according to the conciliar adage inspired by St. Paul: accept, purify, elevate.

When the Gospel reaches the human heart, it touches the heart of cultures and comes into contact with the great millennial religions. This is because man is always at the centre of cultures, whose core is made up of a religious dimension. The dialogue of life, to share with others the spiritual experience of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, brings to the context of Asian religions and

cultures an essential answer to the experienced of dissatisfaction, more or less radical, in contemporary life.

The plant develops from its roots, in good earth, through the labours of man, under God's sun. The Gospel finds support in Asian cultures and transforms them into moorings for the newness of Christ.

Pentecost renews itself by the breath of the Holy Spirit: each hears, in his own language, the marvels of God and communicates them in his culture, liturgy, popular religion, art and poetry, literature and philosophy, theology and mysticism.

Christ was born in Asia. After having been inculturated in Europe, then in America, and in Africa, he returns home. Within the framework of salvation history, the hour has come for Asia's fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

There must be no doubt that Christ is sole mediator

Archbishop Paul Josef Cordes

Titular Archbishop of Nis

President of the Pontifical Council 'Cor Unum'

The *Instrumentum laboris* underlines in various paragraphs the necessity for dialogue between Christian and non-Christian religions in the social and cultural areas and contexts. This dialogue cannot place in doubt that Christ is the sole mediator. Thus, one faces the difficulty of deciding those elements of faith necessarily linked to this mediation of Christ, in order to adapt non-Christian thoughts incompatible with the *Credo* of the Church.

It is well-known that some Asian religions are spreading more and more in the first world, for example, Buddhism.

A large number of Buddhist centres in the USA serve as places of "religious retreat" for actors, managers and politicians. In Germany experts count half a million people linked to Buddhism.

The growth of this religion in the Western world highlights the lack of experience in passing on the faith. Those in Asian countries who have had long contact with this religion should inform Western Pastors about possible traps in Buddhist anthropology, Buddhist methods of praying, etc. Some reflection in the *circuli minores* and some formulations of the propositions would be of help for the Pastors of the Western world.

Explore ways to make unity in Christ more visible

Archbishop Armando Trindade

Lahore, Pakistan

President of the Pakistan Episcopal Conference

The intervention refers to n. 39 of the *Instrumentum laboris*, which calls for "new ecumenical initiatives in Asia". Although ecumenical relations in Asia have but rarely reflected the animosity that has marred the history of Christianity in other parts of the world, we are still far from expressing the visible unity of mutual love that Jesus Christ desired among his disciples. There is also little joint proclamation that there is "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all".

Around the world the Catholic Church is a member of more than 50 national and regional ecumenical associations. It is a positive sign that the Catholic Churches in West Asia are full members, together with those of the Orthodox and Reformation traditions, in the Middle East Council of Churches. However, this is not the case in the rest of Asia, with very few exceptions. Can we not see this Special Assembly as a providential opportunity to

explore ways in which our unity in Christ can be made more concretely visible? I propose that the Episcopal Conferences throughout Asia invite fellow Christians of other Churches to explore possibilities of new ecumenical structures and associations which might better promote the unity which we all desire. What I propose is not simply that the Catholic Church in Asian countries become a member of existing national or regional councils of Churches. This may not prove to be the answer we are seeking. More important is that we enter into a process of prayer and consultation with other Churches by which, should the Spirit guide us in that direction, we could eventually create new ecclesial associations which could be effective instruments for the promotion of Christian unity.

Relations between Churches differ from one Asian country to another, and an appropriate form of ecumenical association in one country might not be the answer in others. What we need, together with Christians of other Churches, is to open ourselves anew to the movement and guidance of the Spirit. In *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul stated: "All the faithful are asked by the Spirit of God to do everything possible to strengthen the bonds of communion between all Christians and to increase cooperation between Christ's followers" (n. 101).

Serious consideration of religious tenets

Cardinal Francis Arinze

President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Many efforts are being made in different parts of the continent to build up good relations with Muslims, whether it be religious leaders working together for peace or for upholding basic human rights, or scholars striving to achieve greater mutual understanding, or people in mixed neighbourhoods doing their best to live in harmony. All such efforts, in their variety, are to be encouraged.

In contacts with Hindus, Buddhists and other believers in Asia, Christians authentically inserted in the culture of their country should positively show that the Church of Jesus Christ is at home among their people and culture and that this Church welcomes all that is true, noble, good or holy wherever it be found.

The traditional or tribal religions exist in most countries of Asia. They have elements which Christianity cannot ignore. They influence the lives of millions, including some of their former followers who have become Christians. If evangelization is to have deeper roots in areas where these religions exist, then careful pastoral attention to them is necessary for meaningful and lasting inculturation.

The local Church in such areas is therefore to be encouraged in initiatives aimed at acquiring a more exact knowledge of the traditional religions and the culture they influence through research, publications and teaching in seminaries and similar institutions. Also to be promoted is social action to free the tribal peoples from marginalization and the harmful effects of underdevelopment where these occur. It will be useful to set up appropriate Church commissions to make proposals to the Bishops about inculturation among tribal peoples. Wherever feasible, such action could be taken on an ecumenical basis.

The sects or new religious movements pose a pastoral challenge to the Church in most countries. Some sects are of Christian origin; some of Asian religious background; while others are syncretistic.

As the Consistory of 1991 said on the question, nothing can replace the role of the local Church, which has to study the nature and activity of the sects in its area. Why do the sects attract our Catholics? Are our Catholics well-grounded in Holy Scripture and in Christian doctrine? Is the individual made to feel appreciated and given an adequate role in the parish instead of being forgotten

because the parish church, even without him or her, is full on Sundays? Is the liturgy inculturated and does it adequately involve the congregation? Are the priests seen more as spiritual masters and men of God rather than as efficient managers? Is popular religiosity taken seriously and wisely directed?

In all these initiatives it should never be forgotten that the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and Saviour of all humanity is the high point of evangelization (cf. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 22) and that in Asia spiritual masters who initiate others into prayer and contemplation attract more than professors.

New orientation for priestly formation

Archbishop Peter Chung Hoan Ting

Kuching, Malaysia

President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia,
Singapore and Brunei

Formation of priests in Asia needs new orientations for evangelization. Knowledge of the religio-cultural situation of the continent and knowledge of their economic and cultural conditions is a must. People suffer from the violation of human rights of individuals and groups. Today a deeper knowledge of human rights in all aspects should enter into seminary formation. With the present advance of the globalization of the market economy in many Asian countries, new problems of deprivation of the poor, homogenized culture to the detriment of local cultures and indigenous traditions are a threat. Such realities should enter into the formation programmes.

In Asia, there is growing religious indifferentism, consumerist culture and individualism, a fallout of globalization. Such a situation leads to the phenomenon of fundamentalism and religious revivalism creating attitudes of intolerance and prejudice. Study

of this and ways of interreligious dialogue should be part of seminary formation, dialogue and ecumenism.

Seminary formation should include training of the laity in leadership and mission. All the faithful in the Church are co-responsible for the mission of the Church.

The training of seminarians in philosophy needs inculturation and contextualization. We must integrate Asian philosophical traditions and religious thinking into philosophical studies. In theology, the Bible as the soul of theology, the centrality of Christ and pneumatology should mark the theology in Asian seminaries. Seminarians need to be introduced to the major religions of their area, learn respect and the art of dialogue with the followers of other religions.

Spirituality in our seminaries needs to integrate the sound elements of Asian religious traditions, and priests should cultivate virtues of harmony, peace, tolerance, love of humanity and nature characteristic of the Asian ethos.

The teaching staff should do their special studies and preparation in Asia itself.

Evangelization through the mass media

Bishop George Yod Phimphisan, C.S.S.R.

Udon Thani, Thailand

President of the Bishops' Conference of Thailand

Evangelization in Asia is more challenging than ever due to the revolution in communications technologies and mass media. These innovations vastly expand our potential to reach many more people, but the Church often fails to prioritize its media opportunities, so we miss moments of grace to share the Good News through media.

Our Bangkok-based initiative with the Asian Christian Television showed we cannot fully control how our efforts are implemented.

We must be increasingly professional so as to attract the attention of ever more sophisticated audiences. Competition for their attention compels us to provide consistently attractive programming, and this demands a major financial outlay.

Even if we do not become active in mass media, the people to whom we direct our messages of hope and Good News are daily affected by all kinds of messages in contemporary Asia's multi-media world.

Professional-quality Church communications can help deliver a message that this audience sooner or later can appreciate. Evangelization in Asia will become effective as we interact realistically with the media environment in which we live and to which we offer life-giving alternatives.

Ecumenism is organic part of Church's life and work

Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy

President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

If the Good News of Jesus Christ the Saviour of all mankind has found a cold and even at times a hostile reception in many parts of Asia, some of the blame for this must surely be due to the deep divisions of those proclaiming that saving message. Nowhere are the words of the Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* more appropriate: "Without doubt this discord openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature" (n. 1).

I know that much has changed for the better in recent years. Yet I find it hard to believe that the search for greater unity among the disciples of Christ in Asia has little need of our attention during this Special Synod.

Ecumenism is not something that the Church in Asia can take up or leave aside at its pleasure. Pope John Paul II has addressed an Encyclical Letter to the Bishops and faithful of the Catholic Church throughout the world on commitment to ecumenism *Ut unum sint*, in which he recalls that "at the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture" (*Ut unum sint*, n. 3).

His Holiness makes it clear that "commitment to ecumenism is a duty of the Christian conscience enlightened by faith and guided by love" (ibid., n. 8); that "ecumenism ... is not just some sort of 'appendix' which is added to the Church's traditional activity", but "rather an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does" (ibid., n. 20).

I should like to add a word on a second aspect of evangelization in Asia that also seems not to have received the attention that it deserves. While I have always admired the great contribution that the Church has made to the well-being and development of the peoples of Asia through its most praiseworthy apostolate in the fields of education, health care and promotion of moral values in society, I have often wondered whether sufficient emphasis has been placed in the work of evangelization on monasticism and holiness of life.

Perhaps, without neglecting other forms of evangelization, the Church in Asia should concentrate more in the future on being seen as a holy Church with a deep commitment to a monastic way of life structured in conformity with Asian traditions.

Artistic expression can be valid form of evangelization

Archbishop Francesco Marchisano

Titular Archbishop of Populonia

President of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural
Heritage of the Church

Ten years ago, the Holy Father set up the Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, charging it to make the most of the vast patrimony of architecture, music, theatre and literature that the Church has created and continues to create, availing herself of the genius of various peoples and cultures. Sacred buildings, libraries, museums and archives everywhere reveal and safeguard the work of inculturating the faith in these two millennia of Christian life. The cultural heritage belongs to the logic of the Incarnation and expresses the Church's pastoral mission, which is carried out in worship, catechesis, culture and charity.

The Church's interest in cultural assets takes us back to the beginning of evangelization in every land, especially Asia, which boasts some of humanity's greatest and most ancient forms of culture and art. Even the recently evangelized and poorest Churches can build up — according to their possibilities and traditions — a cultural heritage which aims at the preservation of ecclesial memory, the formation of a Christian-inspired culture, the creation of works of art so as to express divine worship and brotherly service. Cultural assets must not discriminate against and must not distract anyone from service to the poor, since it belongs to everyone and exists for everyone.

As we await the Jubilee and the Church rethinks "the contribution given by Christianity to the culture of various peoples through evangelization by priests, religious and committed lay people" (John Paul II, Address of 28 September 1997), the Church in Asia — called to pay special attention to the poor and to dialogue

with the cultures and religions of the continent — could also consider forms of artistic expression to be a valid form of outreach and evangelization. Especially today, when visual images are regarded as so important, we should stress the catechetical and liturgical role of the Church's historical, artistic and cultural heritage. In our pastoral work we must know how to present the faithful with faith witness of those who came before them, so that there will arise in their hearts a holy desire to imitate the great deeds of their forebears.

Culture of death seriously threatens family today

Bishop Nicholas Cheong Jin-suk

Ch'ongju, Korea

President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea

Oriental cultures have maintained the large extended family composed of three generations, placing great value on close-knit family ties, the family precepts and filial piety.

However, the family today is threatened daily with the culture of death and phenomenal family disintegration. In the case of Korea, one out of five couples end their marriage in divorce. And parallel to the increasing rate of divorce, the poverty and degradation of women and children is accelerating. In Korea, when a woman is pregnant, parental care for the fetus takes an important place and the baby at birth is considered to be one-year-old. However, in the process of implementing birth control policy, abortion is widespread. Also, the imbalance between male and female created by selective abortion of girls is the most serious situation. The family is a nuclear cell of society and Church. Vatican Council II calls it a domestic church and emphasized that the family apostolate has a special value for the Church and also for civil society (*Gaudium et spes*, nn. 48-49; *Familiaris consortio*, nn. 49, 86).

Since awareness of future evangelization depends mainly on the domestic church, the family apostolate receives a priority of great importance. In order to rebuild the culture of life, all the necessary efforts should be made in the medical, juridical, educational and socio-cultural fields.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

CONCEPT OF SACRAMENTALS

Quite often my parishioners are asking me for some information about the Sacramentals. Sorry to say that myself do not have a good knowledge of them to teach those who ask for some enlightenment. Would you be kind enough to write on the Sacramentals? Thanks in advance.

A young Parish Priest

Notion. The new Codex gives us the notion of the Sacramentals by saying: "Sacramentals are sacred signs which in a sense imitate the Sacraments and they specially signify spiritual effects, achieved through the intercession of the Church" (c. 1166). The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, after giving us the same definition, adds: "By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the Sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy" (n. 1667).

The Sacramentals are objects or actions resembling the Sacraments which the Church makes use of by way of intercession to obtain specially spiritual effects. They resemble the Sacraments,

because they ordinarily consists of matter and form and are external signs which produce mainly spiritual effects. They differ, however, from the Sacraments, since they do not confer sanctifying grace nor they produce effect *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis* through the intercession of the Church. Another important difference is that, while the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, the Sacramentals have been instituted by the Church.

The Sacramentals prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it. "For well disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the Sacraments and Sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the Paschal mystery of Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ. From this source all Sacraments and Sacramentals draw their power. There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 61).

To institute new Sacramentals or to interpret those already established as well as to change or abolish them belong only to the Holy See. This exclusive power of the Holy See is justified, since the Sacramentals are living expression of our faith and only through the intercession of the Church do they produce their effects.

Minister. "The legitimate minister of the Sacramentals is a clergyman, authorized to exercise this power" (c. 1168). "Consecrations and dedications are to be performed only by Bishops or priests, if the latter have the authorization to do so" (c. 1169). Priests may perform blessings that are not reserved to the Roman Pontiff or Bishops (c. 1169, § 2). Deacons may perform only those blessings that are expressly allowed to them by law (c. 1169, § 3). Members of the laity can administer certain Sacramentals only, provided they are duly qualified according to the judgment of the local Ordinary and follow the liturgical rules (c. 1168).

Kinds of Sacramentals

There are two kinds of Sacramentals. Some are *passing or transient actions*, like blessings and consecrations. Others are *permanent*, though constituted through the passing or transient Sacramentals. The sacramental actions of blessings and consecrations are in themselves passing and transient. However the persons or objects blessed or consecrated are permanent and lasting. Regarding these persons blessed or consecrated the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says in n. 172: "Certain blessings have a lasting importance because they consecrate persons to God, or reserve objects and places for liturgical use. Among those blessings which are intended for persons are the blessing of the Abbot or Abbots of a monastery, the consecration of virgins, the rite of religious profession... The dedication or blessing of a church or an altar, the blessing of holy oils, vessels and vestments, etc. can be mentioned as examples of blessings that concern objects."

The number of Sacramentals is not fixed. It varies according to the needs of the time. Some fall into disuse at certain periods, while others are popularized. Old ones are abolished and new ones are established. At present the most common are prayers, blessings, use of holy water, images, medals, scapulars, etc.

The new Codex deprives the following persons of the faculty to make or administer the Sacramentals: a) persons who are excommunicated (c. 1331, §§ 1-2); b) persons who are interdicted (c. 1332).

Effects

Sacramentals are given in the name of the Church. They do not of themselves produce or cause any sanctifying grace. Hence they differ from the Sacraments, as we have said above. The Sacraments give divine grace or increase it, because they were instituted by Christ and given in His name. The Church makes

clear by the prayers and expressions, with which the Sacramentals are surrounded, that they depend for their effect entirely upon God's mercy.

However, the Sacramentals do have a special power of their own in addition to the value they have in common with other good works. All external good works are by their nature meritorious before God. The special spiritual power of the Sacramentals consists in the official prayer of the Church by which God is implored to bestow special graces on those who use the Sacramentals. Because of the prayer of the Church, God grants actual graces which He would not otherwise give. If the effect that is asked through the Church does not come about, it is for reasons known to God's wisdom. He knows the worthiness and needs of the one using the Sacramentals, hence He knows the measure in which He should bestow His gift.

The most remarkable effect of the Sacramentals is the delivery of the soul from venial sin and its consequences. For instance, in the blessing of a new Cross the Church asks that all who kneel before it and implore the divine majesty may be granted great remorse and pardon of faults they have committed. Of course, this refers only to the remission of venial sins, since only the Sacrament of Penance or an act of perfect contrition can remit mortal sin.

Finally, Sacramentals are used to implore and obtain also temporal favors. For this purpose the Church blesses many objects used in everyday life. In blessing a house the temporal welfare of those who live there is implored. In the blessing of a car, it is the safety of the owners who use it that is implored. In the blessing of the fields, God is asked to pour down His blessing on the harvest, so that the needs of men may be supplied by the fertile land.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers

November • December 1998

EFREN RIVERA, OP

NOVEMBER 1, 1998
SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

MATTHEW 5:1-12
T H E B E A T I T U P E S

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Beatitudes are both a proclamation that the Kingdom of God has arrived and an enumeration of the qualities required for entry into the kingdom. When reflecting on them on the Feast of All Saints, evidently, the second aspect is to be emphasized. And we must move towards the conclusion that the "Saints," that is, the upright people who are now in heaven although we on earth may not even know their names, complied with those qualities.

Focus Points. (1) V. 1 When Jesus saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside. After he had sat down, his disciples gathered around him. Jesus' audience consisted of "the crowds" and "his disciples." His teaching is for all, but as he taught in

the parable of the sower, not all bear fruit because some listen but let obstacles prevent the fruition of the Word. The disciples are the eager ones who go as near as they could to Jesus. Even they, however will be judged on the basis of whether or not they bear fruit.

(2) V. 3-11 Blest are the poor in spirit... the sorrowing... the lowly... they who hunger and thirst for holiness... they who show mercy... the single-hearted... the peacemakers... those persecuted for holiness' sake... you when they insult you and persecute you... The original Greek term for "blessed" or "blest" is better translated by "happy" since this brings out more clearly the paradox running throughout the Beatitudes. Human standards of happiness and misery are inverted in the Kingdom of God. Jesus proclaims as happy those who, in the opinion of the worldly-wise, should be unhappy. The rich and powerful of the world may declare that all poor people are miserable, yet Jesus declares that at least some of them, namely, those who are poor in spirit, sorrowing, lowly, etc. *for the sake of a truly higher quality of life or for his sake*, are far from being miserable and are, on the contrary, happier than the rich and powerful worldly people. Let us not forget the secret of this happiness. It is a person's personal response to Jesus' invitation. It is a person's radical conversion from being self-centered into being Christ-centered. The poverty demanded in members of the Kingdom of Heaven is not material destitution but an attitude of heart whereby one understands that one is totally dependent on God in the way that the man, Jesus of Nazareth, was. It is only in this situation that God can reign. The idea that God alone is the source of man's happiness is the key to the meaning of the Beatitudes.

(3) V. 12 Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great. Jesus does not say that the reward of his audience will be great *after* they reach heaven. What he says is that they should be glad and rejoice *now*, *in the present*. The implication is that

heavenly life, the truly higher quality of life, begins on earth for those who meet the qualifications.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. It is good to be with the "crowd" that listens to Jesus, but it is better to be with the "disciples" who go as near to him as possible. Best of all, we must listen to Jesus *with our hearts* and prove this with a change in attitudes and behavior. We must make the "Be-attitudes" a part of our self.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you want to be as near to Jesus as possible or be content to be one of the crowd? Share your answer with your small group.

2. The best way of learning the Beatitudes is "exposure:" get in touch with people who live the Beatitudes. You can, for example, stay with Mo. Teresa's Missionaries of Charity for a while. Or you can spend a week with the Little Sisters / Brothers of Jesus inspired by Charles Foucauld. The Missionaries of Charity are at 1030 Tayuman St., Tondo, Manila; the Little Sisters of Jesus (Regional House) at Alchan St., Barranca, 1501 Mandaluyong City; the Little Brothers of Jesus at De La Costa Homes, 9 St. Ignatius Street, Barangka, Marikina.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you met people who live the Beatitudes? Share your answer with your small group.

3. Previous to Vatican II the recommended way of venerating the saints is that of singing their glories. In the post-Vatican II period, we are constantly reminded that the best way of honoring the saints is by imitating them, not in their extraordinary deeds but in the situations they share with us. For example, it is good

to extol Mary for her Immaculate Conception, her being the Mother of God, etc. But no woman today can aspire to the privilege of Immaculate Conception or Divine Motherhood. For today's woman, the fact that Mary, too, walked the path of growth in faith, is more meaningful. She responded to the call of being a Disciple of Christ, just as we should respond to the same call. If we do, we will be just as happy as she was when she lived in this earth.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Who is your favorite Saint? Was she or he happy on earth? What did she or he do to be that happy? Share your answers with your small group.

Beatitudes of Mo. Teresa

- 1 "The poor are very great people, they can teach us many beautiful things."
- 2 "Instead of death and sorrow, let us bring peace and joy to the world."
- 3 "If you are humble, nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are."
- 4 "The world today is hungry not only for bread but hungry for love; hungry to be wanted; to be loved."
- 5 "If you really want to love, you must learn to forgive."
- 6 "We can do no great things;
only small things with great love."
"It is not how much we do, but how much love we put into what we do."
- 7 "Works of love are always works of peace."
- 8a "Do not allow yourself to be disheartened by any failure as long as you have done your best."
- 8b "Give until it hurts — with a smile."
- 8c "I am so used to seeing the smile on our people, even the dying ones smile."

NOVEMBER 8, 1998

**THIRTY SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C**

LK 20:27-38 (Short Form: 20:27, 34-38)
THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD
The Holy Spirit — Source of Immortality

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Christians today have rediscovered the good humor of Jesus (see the book, "The Humor of Jesus" by Henri Cormier, Alba House, New York, 1977). One of the instances when Jesus must have laughed was when the Sadducees argued with him, claiming that there was no resurrection. Though they must have put on somber faces, their argument was funny, and Jesus must have laughed to their faces.

Focus Points. (1) V. 27 Some Sadducees came forward (the ones who claim there is no resurrection)... Belief in the resurrection of the dead came late to Judaism, that is, after Jewish thinking was influenced by Hellenistic philosophy or at least by the Hellenistic ambiance, around 300 B.C. One should therefore expect some resistance to this belief even at the time of Christ. The party of the Sadducees, who were rivals of the Pharisees, opposed this teaching.

(2) V. 34-36 Jesus said to them: 'The children of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those judged worthy of a place in the age to come and of resurrection from the dead do not. They become like angels and are no longer liable to death. Sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God.' Jesus gives two reasons why there is no marriage in heaven: (1) resurrected people will be like the angels. St. Paul will add that

even if they will have bodies, those bodies will be "spiritual" (see 1 Cor 15:44); (2) resurrected people (or "sons of the resurrection" — a Semitic expression) will receive an inheritance from God because they are "sons of God" and that will enable them to share in God's immortality and glory. Just as God does not need marriage, resurrected people will have no need to marry.

(3) V. 38 "God is not the God of the dead but of the living. All are alive for him." Jesus clinches his argument by using a rabbinic principle accepted even by the Sadducees, namely that God could not be the God of someone who is dead. If Scriptures call him "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," these people — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must in some way be alive. Their "resurrection" will not be a big deal, in a certain sense. It will just be a question of making them fully alive."

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Belief in some form of after-life, as for example, the life of a as a "shadow" in sheol, is quite common to most religions, but belief in a resurrection — a full life-after-death in a transformed body — is much more difficult and rare (if not unique to Jewish Pharisees and Christians).

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Has belief in the resurrection made you any different from people who do not have any such belief? Share your answer with your small group.

2. In the earthly human being, God's image or likeness is incomplete in man alone, or in woman alone — the two have to complement each other (see Genesis 1: 27). In the heavenly or resurrected human being, however, God's image is completed in

each and every man or woman, and they are made immortal like God. This is the "perfection" that is attained in the other-worldly life, prepared for through growth in personality in this life. ***It is a perfection attained by people who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit. In this sense the Holy Spirit is the source of our immortality.***

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you strive for perfection as urged by Jesus in Mt 5:48? He said, "You must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Share your answer with your small group.

3. God's fullness of life will overflow to his children when he shall have resurrected them.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Does your present body help you live a fuller life? If so, how much more will that body, transformed by God's power, contribute to the fullness of your life in heaven. Don't you think so? Share your answer with your small group.

Handicapped

All human bodies on earth are, in a sense, handicapped, because they are subject to death — they are not immortal. Some are more handicapped than others, as when one is lame or blind. These handicaps, however, can be overcome if people cooperate with one another, as illustrated in the following story.

A blind man and a lame one were caught in a forest fire. They were terrified. The blind man ran straight for the fire. The lame one shouted out to him, "Don't run in that direction."

"Well, where should I run?" asked the blind man.

"The lame man told him, "I could show you the way as long as you want me to. But you would have to carry me on your shoulders. From that vantage point I could tell you where the

snakes are and the thorns and the fire; we could both come safely out of this forest."

The blind man thought that was a good idea. Through their cooperation they saved their lives.

From Willi Hoffsuemmer and Frank Mihalic.

NOVEMBER 15, 1998

**THIRTY THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME,
YEAR C**

LUKE 21:5-19

**WARNING SIGNS OF THE DESTRUCTION
OF JERUSALEM**

The Holy Spirit Will Give Wisdom and Perseverance

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Liturgical Year is about to end. In 1998, it has coincided in great part with the Year of the Holy Spirit. It is but fitting that today's Gospel Reading speaks of the Wisdom and the Perseverance that Jesus and the Holy Spirit will give to the faithful.

Focus Points. (1) V. 8-9 Jesus said, "Take care not to be misled. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he' and 'The Time is at hand.' Do not follow them. Neither must you be perturbed when you hear of wars and insurrections. These things are bound to happen first, but the end does not follow immediately." In Luke, these words are part of the observations of Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21:5-24) that happened in AD 70. Many commentators believe that Luke wrote when Jerusalem was already in ruins, and from his experience he could confirm the statement, "the end does not follow immediately." For Luke's contemporaries, the narrative is an exhortation "not to be perturbed" in spite of times of crisis. People today could also pick up this lesson.

(2) V. 12-16 "They will manhandle and persecute you, summoning you to synagogues and prisons, bringing you to trial before kings and governors, all because of my name. You will be brought to give witness on account of it. I bid you resolve not to worry about your defense beforehand, for I will give you words and a wisdom which none of your adversaries can take exception to or contradict. You will be delivered up even by your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and some of you will be put to death. The fulfillment of this prophecy of Christ was narrated by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. One of the themes he emphasizes in that book is the WITNESS to be given to Christ by his faithful followers. The story of Stephen illustrates the gift of WISDOM that convicts persecutors (see Acts 6:10). It is stated there that "it was the Spirit that prompted what he said."

(3) V. 17-19 "All will hate you because of me, yet not a hair of your head will be harmed. By patient endurance you will save your lives." The majority of Christ's followers will escape death and they will be unscarred by their experience of hard and painful times. The experience, in fact will make them stronger and better persons. In this way, the Holy Spirit ensures the INDESTRUCTIBILITY of the Church.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Much harm is done among the faithful by people who are fanatic about supposed apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary whereby she reportedly warns people about "seven days of darkness" and similar calamities that have no purpose but to instill an irrational fear among the simple-minded. Sometimes people believe these messages more than the Bible itself. The Biblical message is not bad news but Good News. When the non-believers

or the weak in faith become frenzied with worry, the true Christian believers should give witness to their faith in Christ by being "unperturbed."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Are you "perturbed" by rumours about the coming end of the world? Share your answer with your small group.

2. The eloquent WORDS and the WISDOM given to the first Filipino Saint, Lorenzo Ruiz, when he was arraigned before a Japanese tribunal shows that the promise of Christ's and God's special care for believers tried by persecution is valid for all times and places.

2.1 PoUter for sharing: Have you been inspired by the martyrdom of St. Lorenzo Ruiz? Share your answer with your small group.

3. Sometimes people survive a crisis but they are scarred for life. For example, a girl who is raped may survive but may decide never to marry or have any sex because she can not get rid of the trauma. Today, it is the job of psychologists and psychiatrists to help people overcome traumatic experiences. But the best psychologist and psychiarist is still the Holy Spirit.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced being distressed during a crisis but also being helped by prayer and your brothers and sisters in a Christian community so as to regain your balance and even grow as a person?

Perseverance in Love

It is commonplace to say that martyrs have attained sainthood because of their fidelity to Christ and their perseverance in the faith. Perhaps we should also think of the heroism of perseverance in love. It also requires sacrifices, not necessarily inflicted by others,

but undertaken from one's own volition. The following story is offered as an illustration.

Englishman Gilbert Becket tried to do business in Palestine when that territory was controlled by the Ottoman Turks. A local official thought Gilbert could be a good asset to his career and captured him. To "tame" Gilbert, he kept him in his house in the desert near Jericho, where his beautiful daughter lived. It did not take long for the girl to fall in love with Gilbert. Since she was willing to become a Christian if she could escape to a Christian country, Gilbert also grew to love her.

One day Gilbert grabbed an opportunity to escape without even saying good-bye to the girl. He got back to England and forgot about the turkish girl.

But the girl could not forget Gilbert. She left her father's house in disguise, made her way to the coast, where she learned her second English word in addition to Gilbert's name, that is, "London." She kept saying, "London" and "Gilbert" walking up and down the docks, until some sailors put her on a ship bound for England. She paid her passage with some of her jewels.

One day, Gilbert's personal servant, who had been captured with him in Palestine, said to him, "This morning down on the street I saw the turkish lady. She was going up and down the street calling out, "Gilbert! Gilbert!"

The merchant hurried to find her. When she saw him, she fainted in his arms. Soon afterwards they were married.

Adapted from Tony Castle and Frank Mihalic.

NOVEMBER 22, 1998
SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

LUKE 23:35-43
WORDS TO THE GOOD THIEF
The Spirit That Discerns What Is Good

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Every year the Sunday Liturgies end with the celebration of the Feast of Christ the King. Appropriately, at the end of the year of the Holy Spirit we have a passage that invites us to reflect on the Holy Spirit helping receptive people discern what is good.

Focus Points. (1) V. 35-37 The people stood there watching... The leaders kept jeering at Jesus...The soldiers also made fun of him... The least offensive toward Jesus among those mentioned in these verses are the people. The leaders and the soldiers were actively insulting him. We should note that later, in v. 48 it is said, "When all the people who had gathered for the spectacle saw what had happened, **THEY WENT HOME BEATING THEIR BREASTS.**" This shows that they were more receptive to Christ's gift of redemption and they started to experience its effect right after the death of Jesus.

(2) V. 38 There was an inscription over his head: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." This inscription was intended as a mockery and in fact it mistakenly gives a political coloring to the crucifixion of Jesus. To be "king of the Jews" is a political title. To be the "king of Israel" is the correct religious title of the Messiah. We, non-Jews, never think of ourselves as the "new Jews." But from the time of St. Paul, Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, were called the true Israel of God. We are the new Israel. Jesus is our king.

(3) V. 40 - 42. (One crucified criminal, rebuking the other, said): "Have you no fear of God, seeing you are under the same sentence? We deserve it, after all. We are only paying the price for what we've done, but this man has done nothing wrong." He then said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter upon your reign." And Jesus replied, "I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise." For some reason, this criminal who went with Jesus to paradise, was sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Thus he was able to DISCERN the innocence of Jesus, and the truth of his claim to be the messiah or savior of humankind.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. What the leaders did is bring to culmination what Jesus calls the "sin against the Holy Spirit" (see Lk 12:10; Mt 12:32; Mk 3:29). Because of their bad example, the soldiers, too, sinned against Jesus.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: People may be led astray momentarily by their leaders, but a good number of them, on second thought and with the prodding of the Holy Spirit, reconsider and repent. Have there been instances in your life when, upon second thought, and departing from the path of blinded leaders, you chose to do the right thing (like not aborting a baby)?

2. The Jewish leaders of the time of Jesus were too immersed in partisan politics that they saw everything, even religion itself, from a political angle. This is a pitfall our ecclesiastical and spiritual leaders today should avoid.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: What is your viewpoint on Church and politics? Share your answer with your small group.

3. In a difficult situation, we are inclined to do what those around us are doing. For example, when government, the media, and even our friends and relatives are practicing contraceptive birth control, it seems just natural for us to do the same. The one who goes against the current might become the butt of criticisms but the Bible tells us that he or she might also be able to "steal" heaven like the good thief. We should ask the help of the Holy Spirit so that we can discern the right thing to do.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you have any experience of discerning what should be done in a difficult situation? Share your answer with your small group.

Different Ending

O. Henry has a short story about a lad who was brought up in a village. In school he used to sit beside a girl and they were fond of each other. He went to the city and fell into evil ways. He became a pickpocket and a petty thief. One day he snatched an old lady's purse. It was clever work and he was pleased.

And then he saw coming down the street the girl whom he used to know, still sweet with the radiance of innocence. Suddenly he saw himself for the cheap, vile thing he was. Burning with shame, he leaned his head against the cool iron of a lamp post.

"God," he said, "I wish I could die."

If only we could give to the girl the role that Christ played toward the good thief, this story would have a different ending.

Adapted from William Barclay and Frank Mihalic.

NOVEMBER 29, 1998

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

**(National Bible Week has been transferred
to Jan. 25-31, 1999)**

YEAR OF GOD THE FATHER

"I will go to the house of my Father."

ISAIAH 2:1-5

***ALL NATIONS SHALL STREAM
TO THE LORD'S HOUSE***

MATTHEW 24:37-44

BE READY WHEN HE COMES AGAIN

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The people of Noah's time who were destroyed by the flood were reproached for being "totally unconcerned." This could be understood to mean that they had no ideal, no vision to direct their lives. What they lacked, the prophet Isaiah provides for us. We should be among the people who stream to the Father's house, established in the highest mountain raised above the hills, "that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." Concretely, these are the ways of peace.

Focus Points. (1) Isaiah 2:2-3: In the days to come, / The mountain of the Lord's house / shall be established as the highest mountain / and raised above the hills. / All nations shall stream toward it; / many peoples shall come and say: / "Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, / to the house of the God of Jacob, / That he may instruct us in his ways, / and we may walk in his paths." The "Lord's house" is the Temple of Jerusalem, as made clear in the Jerusalem Bible translation. However, for

the Christian reader, the Lord's or Father's house is reminiscent of the passage in the parable of the prodigal son who returns to his "father's house," Lk 15:20; and the passage in the Farewell Discourses where Jesus speaks of many rooms in his "Father's house" where he will prepare a place for his disciples, Jn 14:2. **o** Isaiah is evidently speaking figuratively because Mt. Sion, on which the Jerusalem Temple stood, shall never grow higher than Mt. Everest. The meaning is that the Israelite belief in ONE GOD will one day be shared by all nations. All peoples will one day seek the WISDOM of the Ten Commandments and God's Plan of Salvation for all peoples.

(2) Isaiah 2:4bc-5: They shall beat their swords into plowshares / and their spears into pruning hooks; / One nation shall not raise the sword against another, / nor shall they train for war again. / O house of Jacob, come, / let us walk in the light of the Lord! It was the "light of the Lord / God the Father" that the people of Noah's time failed to seek and that is why they fell to the depths of depravity. The house of Jacob is called to lead all other nations in seeking this light. But it could turn out, and it did turn out, that other nations — the gentiles — outstripped the house of Jacob. This light will lead to PEACE.

(3) Mt 24:39.44b. They were totally unconcerned... The Son of Man is coming at the time you least expect Just as Acts presents the Christian Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues to bring diverse people into one church as the reversal of the dispersal of people because of the confusion of languages at Babel, so also a reversal of the situation of the people of Noah's time is expected. They were unprepared, but Christians are expected to be prepared... because they have been forewarned. The key factor is not to be so immersed in earthly cares as to forget that this world is not our home. We have to think of going to our Father's house, where the Son of Man will bring us.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. God, the Creator and Father of all human beings, has never abandoned any of his children, although he chose Abraham and his promised posterity (by physical descent, the Israelites and by spiritual fatherhood, Christians and all those who seek justification through faith), to cooperate with him in bringing other nations to the summit of true worship.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: What experience do you have regarding the brotherhood and sisterhood of all human beings under the fatherhood of God? Share your answer with your small group.

2. Peace remains an elusive ideal. Christians should be among the leaders of all those who walk in the light of the Lord so that all could arrive at the mountain of Peace.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you ever worked for peace individually or with a group? Share your experience with your small group.

3. We walk in this world but, having become spiritual people through the redemption wrought by Christ for all, and filled with his Holy Spirit, we must journey to our Father's house. The Bishops of Asia, want us to do this journey in a dialogue of life with our sisters and brothers of other cultures and other religions.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you ever engaged in a "dialogue of life" — that is, related interactively and cooperatively as children of one heavenly Father — with people of other faiths and cultures? Share your answer with your small group.

God (the Father) Is Like...

God is like Bayer Aspirin: He works wonders.

God is like Ford: He's got a better idea.

God is like Dial Soap: He gives you round-the-clock protection.

God is like Coke: He's the real thing.

God is like Pan Am: He makes the going great.

God is like Hallmark Cards: He cares enough to send the very best.

God is like V.O.5 Hairspray: He holds in all kinds of weather.

God is like Tide: He gets the stain out.

Aren't you glad you know Him?

Don't you wish everybody did?

Christopher Newsletter and Frank Mihalic.

DECEMBER 6, 1998

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

Catholic Handicapped Day

ISAIAH 11:1-10

PEACE THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD

MATTHEW 3:1-12

THE REIGN OF GOD IS AT HAND

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The prophet Isaiah announced that the reign of God (the Father) will be brought about by "a shoot that shall sprout out of the stump of Jesse."... In the fullness of time, the public appearance of this "bud of Jesse that will blossom" was announced by John the Baptist, his precursor. The message that John preached will also be the message of Jesus: "Reform your lives! The reign of

God is at hand." From the image of King, Jesus will later lead the people to the more affectionate image of Father.

Focus Points. (1) Isaiah 11:9-10: There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; / for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, / as water covers the sea. / On that day, / The root of Jesse, / set up as a signal for the nations, / The Gentiles shall seek out, / for his dwelling shall be glorious. The Messiah shall abolish all that is not in consonance with the true worship acceptable to God (the Father) in his holy mountain. He will exemplify the "true worship in spirit and in truth" (see Jn 4:23). For this reason he will fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord (God the Father) through his own preaching and through the sending of the Holy Spirit on all those who believe in him. Through the Church that will continue his work, the gentiles shall seek him out. Jews and gentiles, made one people in the Church, will enjoy the PEACE described in such beautiful images in **verses 6-8: "The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb...the calf and the young lion shall browse together... the cow and the bear shall be neighbors... the lion shall eat hay like the ox... the baby shall play by the cobra's den..."**

(2) V. Mt 3:1-2. When John the Baptizer made his appearance as preacher in the desert of Judea, this was his theme: "Reform your lives! The reign of God is at hand." God's reign is his exercise of kingship over his people. Like David, the Shepherd King, God (the Father) will be a Shepherd (see Ezekiel 34:11-16) protecting his people from their enemies and pasturing them, leading them to abundant food and cool waters, and giving them rest during the heat of the day. He will guide them through his commandments and words of wisdom, and vindicate them through his Messiah, of whom the prophet Isaiah had said, "Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips" (see the First Reading). So that the people could enjoy all these benefits, they have first to reform their lives. This reform,

in capsule form, means turning away from their sins and believing in the Good News that God (the Father) himself, because of his HESED, HIS COVENANT LOVE, HIS MERCY, is reaching out to save them. They have to believe that Jesus himself is God's GOOD NEWS for their salvation.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. People's search for peace is never ending. Indeed, lasting peace shall be attained only in heaven. Each generation of people, however, have to seek as high a degree of peace as they can attain in their life-time. It is to a renewal of this quest that Advent invites us.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: What periods of peace you have experienced? Share your answer with your small group.

2. In times of grief over the loss of a loved one, many Christians find consolation in Psalm 23, the Shepherd Psalm (Catholics used to know it as Psalm 22).

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced God the Father as a Shepherd King? Share your answer with your small group.

Good News and Bad News

A study of 4,000 elderly North Carolinians in America found that participants who engaged in daily prayer or Bible study and attended worship services weekly were less likely to suffer from high blood pressure than those who didn't.

The same study, however, found that greater exposure to religious radio or television resulted in an increase in blood pressure.

Time Magazine Sept. 14, 1998

DECEMBER 8, 1998

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

LUKE 1:26-38

(Year of God the Father): THE LORD IS WITH YOU

See December 8, 1997 of this series.

DECEMBER 13, 1998

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, *GAUDETE*, YEAR A

Aguinaldo Masses begin on Wednesday, Dec. 16

ISAIAH 35:1-6. 10

GOD YOUR FATHER COMES TO SAVE YOU

MATTHEW 5:1-12

JOHN WAS GOD'S MESSENGER

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Gaudete Sunday (the Third of Advent) is a turning point in this season's celebration. From the theme of preparation and promise, we turn to that of fulfillment and anticipate it today.

Focus Points. (1) Isaiah 35:4. Say to those whose hearts are frightened: / Be strong, fear not! / Here is your God, / he comes with vindication; / With divine recompense / he comes to save you. God (the Father) normally acts through people and

events that he directs in a hidden way (through his Holy Spirit). Unspiritual people fail to see this. They prefer a dramatic intervention of God, as though that is something more effective. At the time of Isaiah God was already preparing the way for the return of the remnant of his people from exile. This will be made possible by a "gentile" emperor, Cyrus, who, in spite of appearances, will be God's servant for the fulfillment of his will, o A confirmation of God's indirect way of acting has been demonstrated in our own time. The modern state of Israel, through technology researched by its agriculturists, has accomplished what is announced in **verses 1-2: 'The desert and the parched land will exult, / the steppe will rejoice and bloom. / They will bloom with abundant flowers, / and rejoice with joyful song.'** <> The prophet promised that God will come to save his people. The big surprise is that he saved not only the Israelites but all people through a man, his Son, Jesus.

(2) Mt 11:10. It is about this man (John the Baptizer) that Scripture says, 'I send my messenger ahead of you / to prepare your way before you.' In the Scripture passage quoted from Malachy 3:1 it is God the Father who speaks. John the Baptist was God the Father's messenger. The "you" in the passage originally meant the remnant of the people of Israel that will come home from exile. In Matthew, the "you" is Jesus Christ. There is an important teaching here, namely, that Jesus is the "corporate personality" of the remnant of Israel. Jesus personifies the people of Israel.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. The Hebrew word, DABAR can be translated as "word" and also as "event." Quite often it means both, and modern commentators have coined "word-event" as its equivalent. It is

the normal way through which God communicates to his people. Hence it is important for us to recognize the "word-events" in our life.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced God working for your salvation through ordinary people and word-events? Share your answer with your small group.

2. We experience periods of preparation or anticipation and fulfillment in our life. Each in their own way, are important for our personal growth.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Are you preparing for or anticipating the Christian Second Millennial Jubilee or the year AD 2000? Share your answer with your small group.

People Do God's Work

A letter written in a childish scrawl came to the post office addressed to "God." A postal employee, not knowing what to do, opened it and read: "Dear God, My name is Tommy. I am 6 years old. My father is dead and my mother is having a hard time raising us six kids. Can you send us \$ 300?"

The postal worker was very moved. He showed the letter to his fellow workers and they all decided to take up a collection. They raised \$ 100, and sent it to the family.

A few weeks later, they received a second letter, which read: "Next time would you please send the money directly to our house? If it goes through the post office, they keep \$ 200."

DECEMBER 20, 1998
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

ISAIAH 7:10-14
THE LORD WILL GIVE YOU IMMANUEL

MATTHEW 4:18-24
THE FULFILLMENT OF THE EMMANUEL PROPHECY

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A, is the Sunday of the "Immanuel Prophecy." It is tied up with the special focus of this Sunday year after year, namely, the role of Mary in the birth of the Savior. The papal exhortation, *Marialis Cultus*, calls this the Marian Sunday of Advent.

Focus Points. (1) Isaiah 7:14. The Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. The sign, according to commentators, was something that will happen in actual fact in Isaiah's own time. That is the reason why translators usually use the word "maiden" or "young woman" instead of virgin. Nearer to the time of Jesus Christ, the Septuagint translators of the Bible will use the Greek word *parthenos*, virgin, and their translation will be adopted in the New Testament, thereby referring to Mary and her perpetual virginity, and Emmanuel (as spelled in Greek) will be Jesus Christ. Originally, in Isaiah's time, Immanuel was a real boy who, in an entirely ordinary way, was to be conceived by and born from a young woman known to Isaiah. He is special only because Isaiah gives him a prophetic name. The message is that during the boy's childhood GOD (THE FATHER) WILL BE WITH HIS PEOPLE to defend them, and thwart the plans of invaders, see Isaiah 8:10.

(2) Mt 1:22-23. All this happened to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel," a name which means, "God is with us." This text of Matthew was written around the year AD 50 or 65, that is, twenty or thirty-five years after the Resurrection of Christ in the year AD 30 — not as a journalistic report on the very day Jesus was born (probably in 6 or 4 BC). By that time, it was already clear to the disciples that Jesus Christ was God — he was the one who **literally** fulfilled the prophetic name Emmanuel (Immanuel in the original Hebrew), "**GOD IS WITH US.**" At that time, it was already the clear belief of the Church that Mary conceived Jesus as a virgin. Actually this means that JESUS HAS NO HUMAN FATHER. HIS ONLY FATHER IS GOD. Mary, however, is really and truly his mother, and later the Council of Ephesus will define that she is THEOTOKOS or Mother of God.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. God the Father is with his people to save them, that is, give them both spiritual and material, eternal and temporal benefits, specially SHALOM / PEACE.

7.7 *Pointer for sharing:* Have you experienced the SALVATION that comes from God, your Father? Share your answer with your small group.

2. Even Protestants have to admit that Mary conceived and gave birth to Christ as a virgin, because this is biblical teaching. Even Fundamentalists believe the Virgin Birth (which must not be mistaken with the Immaculate Conception). After that, Protestants and Catholics go on separate ways, because most Protestants believe that Mary was also the mother of the "brothers and sisters of Jesus"

and their father was Joseph, who had sexual relations with Mary. Catholics, however, point out that the Bible NEVER says that these "brothers and sisters of Jesus" are CHILDREN OF MARY. They could well be his cousins or even uncles and aunts because the hebrew-aramaic term has a very broad meaning. Catholics, however, have to be reminded, that although the Bible recognizes Mary's privilege of Virgin Motherhood, its main message is that Jesus Christ is unique because only God, and no human being, is his Father, and he indeed is GOD WITH US or Emmanuel.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you ever given any importance to titles of Jesus like, "Emmanuel," "Messiah," "Savior," "Lord," "Son of Man," "Son of David," and more? What title has a special meaning for you? Share your answers with your small group.

Value of a Name

The famous painter Picasso visited his local cabinetmaker to commission a mahogany cabinet for his house. To illustrate the shape and dimension he required, he drew a hasty typically abstract sketch on a scrap of paper and handed it to the craftsman.

"How much will it cost?" he asked.

"Nothing at all," replied the cabinetmaker. "Just sign your name to the sketch."

Clifton Fadiman and Frank Mihalic.

DECEMBER 25, 1998

CHRISTMAS

Mass on the day

ISAIAH 52: 7-10

GOD OUR FATHER COMFORTS US

JOHN 1: 1-18 (Short form: 1:1-5, 9-14)

THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

**Midnight Mass: Lk 2:1-14, see in Dec. 25, 1997
of this series.**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Christmas Day. This is the day Christian Filipinos have been anticipating since September 1, when the "-ber" ending months began (SeptemBER, OctoBER, NovemBER and DecemBER.). It is the day that makes them happy and great — proud to be Christians. According to the Day Mass Liturgy, it is the day when God (the Father) comforts and redeems his people; the day when we see the glory of the Incarnate Word, "the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love."

Focus Points. (1) Isaiah 52:7-10. Break out together in song, / O ruins of Jerusalem! / For the Lord comforts his people, / he redeems Jerusalem. / The Lord has bared his holy arm / in the sight of all the nations; / All the ends of the earth will behold / the salvation of our God. Almost from the very day when they made their Covenant with the Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the community life of the Israelite people was a repeating cycle of sin-punishment-deliverance — like a broken record. Isaiah announces that this cycle will finally be broken when God will send his Son to comfort and redeem his people and in fact bring salvation to all peoples of the earth.

(2) Jn 1:14 The Word became flesh / and made his dwelling among us, / and we have seen his glory: / the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, / filled with enduring love. Flesh, for John the Evangelist, is frail and subject to death; it is the exact opposite of what is strong and immortal. The wonder of the Incarnation is that God found a way to bring together in one mysterious reality — Jesus his Son — what is strong and what is frail, what is immortal and what is subject to death. The mystery of Jesus enters our camp and pitches his tent among us. Our camp will never be the same as before, because it is now filled with God's glory and his enduring love.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Comfort... redemption... salvation. These are what God wants for us and to accomplish them God Our Father sends us his Son, Jesus, who will make us his brothers and sisters.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced comfort, redemption, salvation from God, your Father, through Jesus Christ, your brother? Share your answer with your small group.

2. In spite of having become one of us, Jesus, True Son of God will continue to be a mystery that we must try to fathom deeper and deeper by uniting ourselves with him more and more.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Is Jesus someone close to you? Is he still a mystery for you? Share your answers with your small group.

A Christmas Parallel

For centuries, the Russians told a legend about a young prince called Alexis. He lived in a gigantic ornate palace, while all around

him lived hundreds of poor peasants in filthy hovels. The prince was moved to better their lot. So he began to visit them. But he could not make any real contact with them. They always treated him with high respect, and felt ill-at-ease with him.

Then he thought things over and one day came out to the people dressed as a rough and ready young doctor who wanted to devote his life to the poor. He started by renting a rat-ridden shack on a back street. He wore old torn clothes, just like the people. He lived on the plainest food. Often he did not know where his next meal would come from. He made no money because he treated everyone for free and gave away his medicines. Before long, he won the love and respect of all the people. As Prince Alexis, he had never succeeded in doing that.

Little by little, he transformed the whole spirit of the place: settling quarrels, reconciling enemies, helping people to live decent lives.

No one guessed that this young doctor was in fact the Prince himself, who had abandoned his palace and gone down among his people to become one of them.

This story is a parallel to the story of Christ and what he started to do for all of us on the first Christmas day.

John Williams and Frank Mihalic.

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FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY, YEAR A

SIRACH 3:2-6, 12-14

GOD THE FATHER HONORS AND CONFIRMS PARENTS

MATTHEW 2:13-15, 19-23

A FAMILY OBEDIENT TO GOD

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Feast of the Holy Family takes special significance as we celebrate the Year of God the Father. God — who is both Father and Mother of us all — is the exemplar of all parents. People will never appreciate God as Father / Mother unless they see His / Her traits in human fathers-mothers or their substitutes.

Focus Points. (1) Sir 3:2. The Lord sets a father in honor over his children; / a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. The commandment to honor father and mother (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16) comes from God himself. Those who break it sin not only against their parents but first of all against God. As it becomes clear in v. 5 and 12-14 this commandment is to be obeyed even by grown-up children who may already have their own children and whose parents may already be quite old and senile. <> On their part, as clarified in Colossians (Second Reading) and Ephesians, parents should also respect their children as persons and treat them with tact: "Do not nag your children lest they lose heart," Col 3:21; "Never drive your children to resentment but in bringing them up correct them and guide them as the Lord does," Eph 6:4.

(2) Mt 2:14. Joseph got up and took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what the Lord had said through

the prophet: "Out of Egypt I have called my son." The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is an example of a family obedient to God. Through this obedience each one of them, in his or her own way, contributes to the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for all humankind.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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1. Parental authority is often thought of as a rod to be feared or a burden to be borne with patience. However, reading along the lines and between the lines of Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14, we get the impression that a family can create a tradition that will make relationships between parents and children something beautiful and rewarding to everyone.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced a way of making relationships within a family beautiful and rewarding to everyone? Share your answer with your small group.

2. We read in Philippians 2:8 that it was through his obedience to the point of accepting death that Christ attained his Lordship over all humankind. He was a good Son, and so he obeyed his Father. Through his obedience all humankind benefitted. Obedience to God our Father/Mother can do wonders. It becomes easy to us when, as small children, we learn to obey our parents.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Has obedience to parents/superiors helped you lead a better life? Has it helped you be obedient to God? Share your answer with your small group.

THE HAPPY FAMILY AND THE UNHAPPY KING

A poor woodcutter lived contentedly in a little house at the edge of the forest. He earned his daily bread by chopping down trees. His grown-up sons helped him. But no matter how tired they were, he and his family always ended the day with laughing and singing.

Every evening the king passed by this happy household as he was walking back to his castle. It annoyed him that ordinary working people could be so happy. So one day he sent his messenger down to the woodcutter to tell him, "The king has given orders that by tomorrow morning you must have fifty bags full of sawdust ready for him. If you don't, you and your whole family will be killed."

"That's an impossible order," said the woodcutter. But his wife kept up his good spirits and told him, "You're right. But let us not worry about it. We have had such a good life together, that tonight we should again sing and make merry as usual. That is the way we have lived and that is the way we should die."

So they had the biggest party ever. After everyone had gone off to sleep, the woodcutter and his wife stayed up talking until sunrise. "Soon it will all be over," sobbed the lady of the house.

"Don't worry," said her husband. It is better to die in peace and contentment, than to live a life of fear and sorrow."

Just then there was a knock at the door and the woodcutter let in the expected messenger from the king. He slowly and sadly entered the house and told the woodcutter, "Cut twelve hardwood planks for a coffin. The king died last night."

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