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Ecclesia in Asia

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Parameters of Movements around the Church of Asia for the Third Millennium

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

The Seventh Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) ventured on the theme: *Renewed Church in Asia — A Mission of Love and Service* (Thailand, January 3-13, 2000). This traced the means and ways by which the Church could be more faithful to the mission given to the Church by Christ *that all may have life in abundance*.

The Plenary Assembly attended by some two hundred participants, recognized the different movements attaining in the Church of Asia for the new millennium.

1. *A movement towards a Church of the Poor and a Church of the Young. "If we are to place ourselves at the side of the multitudes in our continent, we must in our way of life share something of their poverty," "speak out for the rights of the disadvantaged and powerless, against all forms of injustice." In this continent of the young, we must become "in them and for them, the Church of the young'."...*
2. *A movement toward a "truly local Church," toward a Church "incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated," a Church "in dialogue with the great reli-*

gious traditions of our peoples," in dialogue with all people, especially the poor."...

3. *A movement toward deep interiority so that the Church becomes a "deeply praying community whose contemplation is inserted in the context of our time and cultures of our peoples today. Integrated into everyday life, "authentic prayer has to engender in Christians a clear witness of service and love"...*
4. *A movement toward an authentic community of faith. Fully rooted in the life of the Trinity, the Church in Asia has to be a communion of communities of authentic participation and co-responsibility, one with its pastors, and linked "to other communities of faith and to the one and universal communion" of the holy Church of the Lord. The movement in Asia toward Basic Ecclesial Communities expresses the deep desire to be such a community of faith, love and service and to be truly a "community of communities" open to build up Basic Human Communities. ...*
5. *A movement toward active integral evangelization, toward a new sense of mission... We evangelize because we believe that Jesus is the Lord and Savior, "the goal of human history,... the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations"... In this mission, the Church has to be a compassionate companion and partner of all Asians, a servant of the Lord and of all Asian peoples in the journey toward full life in God's Kingdom...*
6. *A movement toward empowerment of men and women. Empowered by the Spirit and through the Sacraments with their personal talents and skills, and by means of participatory church structures, lay men and women be involved in the life and mission of the Church by bringing the Good News of Jesus to bear upon the fields of business and*

politics, of education and health, of mass media and the world of work. This requires a spirituality of discipleship enabling both the clergy and the laity to work together in their own specific roles in the common mission of the Church... The Church cannot be a sign of the Kingdom and of the eschatological community if the fruits of the spirit to women are not given due recognition, and if women do not share in the "freedom of the children of God."...

- 7. A movement toward active involvement in generating and serving life. The Church has to respond to the death-dealing forces in Asia. By authentic discipleship, it has to share its vision of full life as promised by Jesus. It is a vision of life with integrity and dignity, with compassion and sensitive care of the earth; a vision of participation and mutuality, with a reverential sense of the sacred, of peace, harmony, and solidarity."...*

These movements are likewise seen along the vision in the *Ecclesia in Asia* which gives all peoples, regardless of race and religious persuasion, a hope for harmony in this multi-cultured continent. These same movements describe and define the parameters of renewal in the Church of Asia for the first century of the new millennium. This is a core of the *Renewed Church of Asia...* that is ever on the mission to love and serve everyone.

Ecclesia in Asia

JOHN PAUL II

*"...That They May Have Life,
And Have It Abundantly" (Jn 10:10)*

INTRODUCTION

The Marvel of God's Plan in Asia

1. The Church in Asia sings the praises of the "God of salvation" (*Ps* 68:20) for choosing to initiate his saving plan on Asian soil, through men and women of that continent. It was in fact in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning. He guided the patriarchs (cf. *Gen* 12) and called Moses to lead his people to freedom (cf. *Ex* 3:10). He spoke to his chosen people through many prophets, judges, kings and valiant women of faith. In "the fullness of time" (*Gal* 4:4), he sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Saviour, who took flesh as an Asian! Exulting in the goodness of the continent's peoples, cultures, and religious vitality, and conscious at the same time of the unique gift of faith which she has received for the good of all, the Church in Asia cannot cease to proclaim: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love endures for ever" (*Ps* 118:1).

Because Jesus was born, lived, died and rose from the dead in the Holy Land, that small portion of Western Asia became a land of promise and hope for all mankind. Jesus knew and loved this land. He made his own the history, the sufferings and the hopes of its people. He loved its people and embraced their Jewish traditions and heritage. God in fact had long before chosen this people and revealed himself to them in preparation for the Saviour's coming. And from this land, through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church went forth to make "disciples of all nations" (*Mt 28:19*). With the Church throughout the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the Third Christian Millennium marvelling at all that God has worked from those beginnings until now, and strong in the knowledge that "just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent".¹

Background to the Special Assembly

2. In my Apostolic Letter *Tertio MIlennio Adveniente*, I set out a programme for the Church to welcome the Third Millennium of Christianity, a programme centred on the challenges of the new evangelization. An important feature of that plan was the holding of *continental Synods* so that Bishops could address the question of evangelization according to the particular situation and needs of each continent. This series of Synods, linked by the common theme of the new evangelization, has proved an important part of the Church's preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

¹ John Paul II, Address to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), Manila (15 January 1995), 11: *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 1 (1995), 159.

In that same letter, referring to the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, I noted that in that part of the world "the issue of the encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions is a pressing one. This is a great challenge for evangelization, since religious systems such as Buddhism or Hinduism have a clearly soteriological character".² It is indeed a mystery why the Saviour of the world, born in Asia, has until now remained largely unknown to the people of the continent. The Synod would be a providential opportunity for the Church in Asia to reflect further on this mystery and to make a renewed commitment to the mission of making Jesus Christ better known to all. Two months after the publication of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, speaking to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, in Manila, the Philippines, during the memorable Tenth World Youth Day celebrations, I reminded the Bishops: "If the Church in Asia is to fulfil its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority".³

The positive response of the Bishops and of the particular Churches to the prospect of a Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops was evident throughout the preparatory phase. The Bishops communicated their desires and opinions at every stage with frankness and a penetrating knowledge of the continent. They did so in full awareness of the bond of communion which they share with the universal Church. In line with the original idea of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and following the proposals of the Pre-Synodal Council which evaluated the views of the Bishops and the particular Churches on the Asian continent, I chose as the Synod's theme: *Jesus Christ the Saviour and his Mission*

- Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 38: AAS 87 (1995), 30.

• No. 11: *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 1 (1995), 159.

*of Love and Service in Asia: "That they may have Life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Through this particular formulation of the theme, I hoped that the Synod might "illustrate and explain more fully the truth that Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of the world, to be clearly distinguished from the founders of other great religions".⁴ As we approach the Great Jubilee, the Church in Asia needs to be able to proclaim with renewed vigour: *Ecce natus est nobis Salvator mundi*, "Behold the Saviour of the World is born to us", born in Asia!*

The Celebration of the Special Assembly

3. By the grace of God, the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops took place from 18 April to 14 May 1998 in the Vatican. It came after the Special Assemblies for Africa (1994) and America (1997), and was followed at the year's end by the Special Assembly for Oceania (1998). For almost a month, the Synod Fathers and other participants, gathered around the Successor of Peter and sharing in the gift of hierarchical communion, gave concrete voice and expression to the Church in Asia. It was indeed a moment of special grace!³ Earlier meetings of Asian Bishops had contributed to preparing the Synod and making possible an atmosphere of intense ecclesial and fraternal communion. Of particular relevance in this respect were the past Plenary Assemblies and Seminars sponsored by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and its offices, which periodically brought together great numbers of Asian Bishops and fostered personal as well as ministerial bonds between them. I had the privilege of being able to make a visit to some of these meetings, at times presiding at the opening or closing Solemn Eucharistic Celebrations. On those

⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennia Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 38: AAS 87 (1995), 30.

⁵ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Nunlius* (Final Message), 2.

occasions I was able to observe directly the *encounter in dialogue* of the particular Churches, including the Eastern Churches, in the person of their Pastors. These and other regional assemblies of Asia's Bishops served providentially as remote preparation for the Synod Assembly.

The actual celebration of the Synod itself confirmed the importance of dialogue as a *characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia*. A sincere and honest sharing of experiences, ideas and proposals proved to be the way to a genuine meeting of spirits, a communion of minds and hearts which, in love, respects and transcends differences. Particularly moving was the encounter of the new Churches with the ancient Churches which trace their origins to the Apostles. We experienced the incomparable joy of seeing the Bishops of the particular Churches in Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, Siberia and the new republics of Central Asia sitting beside their Brothers who had long desired to encounter them and to dialogue with them. Yet there was also a sense of sadness at the fact that Bishops from Mainland China could not be present. Their absence was a constant reminder of the heroic sacrifices and suffering which the Church continues to endure in many parts of Asia.

The encounter in dialogue of the Bishops and the Successor of Peter, entrusted with the task of strengthening his brothers (cf. *Lk 22:32*), was truly a confirmation in faith and mission. Day after day the Synod Hall and meeting rooms were filled with accounts of deep faith, self-sacrificing love, unwavering hope, long-suffering commitment, enduring courage and merciful forgiveness, all of which eloquently disclosed the truth of Jesus' words: "I am with you always" (*Mt 28:20*). The Synod was a moment of grace because it was an encounter with the Saviour who continues to be present in his Church through the power of the Holy Spirit, experienced in a fraternal dialogue of life, communion and mission.

Sharing the Fruits of the Special Assembly

4. Through this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, I wish to share with the Church in Asia and throughout the world the fruits of the Special Assembly. This document seeks to convey the wealth of that great spiritual event of communion and episcopal collegiality. The Synod was a *celebratory remembering* of the Asian roots of Christianity. The Synod Fathers remembered the first Christian community, the early Church, Jesus' little flock on this immense continent (cf. *Lk* 12:32). They remembered what the Church has received and heard from the beginning (cf. *Rev* 3:3), and, having remembered, they celebrated God's "abundant goodness" (*Pss* 145:7) which never fails. The Synod was also an occasion to recognize the ancient religious traditions and civilizations, the profound philosophies and the wisdom which have made Asia what it is today. Above all, the peoples of Asia themselves were remembered as the continent's true wealth and hope for the future. Throughout the Synod those of us present were witnesses of an extraordinarily fruitful meeting between the old and new cultures and civilizations of Asia, marvellous to behold in their diversity and convergence, especially when symbols, songs, dances and colours came together in harmonious accord around the one Table of the Lord in the opening and closing Eucharistic Liturgies.

This was not a celebration motivated by pride in human achievements, but one conscious of what the Almighty has done for the Church in Asia (cf. *Lk* 1:49). In recalling the Catholic community's humble condition, as well as the weaknesses of its members, the Synod was also a *call to conversion*, so that the Church in Asia might become ever more worthy of the graces continually being offered by God.

As well as a remembrance and a celebration, the Synod was *an ardent affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour*. Grateful for the gift of faith, the Synod Fathers found no better way to celebrate the faith than to affirm it in its integrity, and to reflect

on it in relation to the context in which it has to be proclaimed and professed in Asia today. They emphasized frequently that the faith is already being proclaimed with trust and courage on the continent, even amid great difficulties. In the name of so many millions of men and women in Asia who put their trust in no one other than the Lord, the Synod Fathers confessed: "We have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God" (*Jn* 6:69). In the face of the many painful questions posed by the suffering, violence, discrimination and poverty to which the majority of Asian peoples are subjected, they prayed: "I believe, help my unbelief" (*Mk* 9:24).

In 1995, I invited the Bishops of Asia gathered in Manila to "open wide to Christ the doors of Asia".⁶ Taking strength from the mystery of communion with the countless and often unheralded martyrs of the faith in Asia, and confirmed in hope by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, the Synod Fathers courageously called all Christ's disciples in Asia to a new *commitment to mission*. During the Synod Assembly, the Bishops and participants bore witness to the character, spiritual fire and zeal which will assuredly make Asia the land of a bountiful harvest in the coming millennium.

⁶ Address to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), Manila (15 January 1995), 10: *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 1 (1995), 159.

CHAPTER I

THE ASIAN CONTEXT

Asia, the Birthplace of Jesus and of the Church

5. The Incarnation of the Son of God, which the whole Church will solemnly commemorate in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, took place in a definite historical and geographical context. That context exercised an important influence on the life and mission of the Redeemer as man. "In Jesus of Nazareth, God has assumed the features typical of human nature, including a person's belonging to a particular people and a particular land... The physical particularity of the land and its geographical determination are inseparable from the truth of the human flesh assumed by the Word".⁷ Consequently, knowledge of the world in which the Saviour "dwelt among us" (*Jn* 1:14) is an important key to a more precise understanding of the Eternal Father's design and of the immensity of his love for every creature: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn* 3:16).

Likewise, the Church lives and fulfils her mission in the actual circumstances of time and place. A critical awareness of the diverse and complex realities of Asia is essential if the People of God on the continent are to respond to God's will for them in the new evangelization. The Synod Fathers insisted that the Church's mission of love and service in Asia is conditioned by two factors: on the one hand, her self-understanding as a community of disciples of Jesus Christ gathered around her Pastors, and on the other hand, the social, political, religious, cultural and economic

¹ John Paul II, Letter Concerning Pilgrimage to the Places Linked to the History of Salvation (29 "June 1999), 3: *L'Osservatore Romano* (30 June - 1 July 1999), 8.

realities of Asia.⁸ The situation of Asia was examined in detail during the Synod by those who have daily contact with the extremely diversified realities of such an immense continent. The following is, in synthesis, the result of the Synod Fathers' reflections.

Religious and Cultural Realities

6. Asia is the earth's largest continent and is home to nearly two-thirds of the world's population, with China and India accounting for almost half the total population of the globe. The most striking feature of the continent is the variety of its peoples who are "heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions".⁹ We cannot but be amazed at the sheer size of Asia's population and at the intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions, which comprise such a substantial part of the history and patrimony of the human family.

Asia is also the cradle of the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It is the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism. Millions also espouse traditional or tribal religions, with varying degrees of structured ritual and formal religious teaching. The Church has the deepest respect for these traditions and seeks to engage in sincere dialogue with their followers. The religious values they teach await their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The people of Asia take pride in their religious and cultural values, such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work,

⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 3.

⁹ *Propositio* I.

discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry.¹⁰ They hold dear the values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, and a highly developed sense of community." In particular, they hold the family to be a vital source of strength, a closely knit community with a powerful sense of solidarity.¹² Asian peoples are known for their spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Without denying the existence of bitter tensions and violent conflicts, it can still be said that Asia has often demonstrated a remarkable capacity for accommodation and a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures. Moreover, despite the influence of modernization and secularization, Asian religions are showing signs of great vitality and a capacity for renewal, as seen in reform movements within the various religious groups. Many people, especially the young, experience a deep thirst for spiritual values, as the rise of new religious movements clearly demonstrates.

All of this indicates an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of "being Asian" is built. This "being Asian" is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul.

Economic and Social Realities

7. On the subject of economic development, situations on the Asian continent are very diverse, defying any simple classification.

¹⁰ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, 3.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹² Cf. *Pwpositio* 32.

Some countries are highly developed, others are developing through effective economic policies, and others still find themselves in abject poverty, indeed among the poorest nations on earth. In the process of development, materialism and secularism are also gaining ground, especially in urban areas. These ideologies, which undermine traditional, social and religious values, threaten Asia's cultures with incalculable damage.

The Synod Fathers spoke of the rapid changes taking place within Asian societies and of the positive and negative aspects of these changes. Among them are the phenomenon of urbanization and the emergence of huge urban conglomerations, often with large depressed areas where organized crime, terrorism, prostitution, and the exploitation of the weaker sectors of society thrive. Migration too is a major social phenomenon, exposing millions of people to situations which are difficult economically, culturally and morally. People migrate within Asia and from Asia to other continents for many reasons, among them poverty, war and ethnic conflicts, the denial of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The establishment of giant industrial complexes is another cause of internal and external migration, with accompanying destructive effects on family life and values. Mention was also made of the construction of nuclear power plants with an eye to cost and efficiency but with little regard for the safety of people and the integrity of the environment.

Tourism also warrants special attention. Though a legitimate industry with its own cultural and educational values, tourism has in some cases a devastating influence upon the moral and physical landscape of many Asian countries, manifested in the degradation of young women and even children through prostitution.¹³ The pastoral care of migrants, as well as that of tourists, is difficult and complex, especially in Asia where basic structures for this

" Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 9.

may not exist. Pastoral planning at all levels needs to take these realities into account. In this context we should not forget the migrants from Catholic Eastern Churches who need pastoral care according to their own ecclesiastical traditions.¹⁴

Several Asian countries face difficulties related to population growth, which is "not merely a demographic or economic problem but especially a moral one".¹⁵ Clearly, the question of population is closely linked to that of human promotion, but false solutions that threaten the dignity and inviolability of life abound and present a special challenge to the Church in Asia. It is perhaps appropriate at this point to recall the Church's contribution to the defence and promotion of life through health care, social development and education to benefit peoples, especially the poor. It is fitting that the Special Assembly for Asia paid tribute to the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "who was known all over the world for her loving and selfless care of the poorest of the poor".¹⁶ She remains an icon of the service to life which the Church is offering in Asia, in courageous contrast to the many dark forces at work in society.

A number of Synod Fathers underlined the external influences being brought to bear on Asian cultures. New forms of behaviour are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media and the kinds of literature, music and films that are proliferating on the continent. Without denying that the means of social communication can be a great force for good,¹⁷ we cannot disregard the negative impact which they often have. Their beneficial effects can at times be outweighed by the way in which they are controlled and used by those with questionable political, economic and ideological interests. As a result, the negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and

¹⁴ Cf. *Propositions* 36 and 50.

¹⁵ *Propositio* 44.

¹⁶ *Propositio* 27.

" Cf. *Propositio* 45.

in particular the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family. The effect of images of violence, hedonism, unbridled individualism and materialism "is striking at the heart of Asian cultures, at the religious character of the people, families and whole societies".¹⁸ This is a situation which poses a great challenge to the Church and to the proclamation of her message.

The persistent reality of poverty and the exploitation of people are matters of the most urgent concern. In Asia there are millions of oppressed people who for centuries have been kept economically, culturally and politically on the margins of society." Reflecting upon the situation of women in Asian societies, the Synod Fathers noted that "though the awakening of women's consciousness to their dignity and rights is one of the most significant signs of the times, the poverty and exploitation of women remains a serious problem throughout Asia".²⁰ Female illiteracy is much higher than that of males; and female children are more likely to be aborted or even killed after birth. There are also millions of indigenous or tribal people throughout Asia living in social, cultural and political isolation from the dominant population.²¹ It was reassuring to hear the Bishops at the Synod mention that in some cases these matters are receiving greater attention at the national, regional and international levels, and that the Church is actively seeking to address this serious situation.

The Synod Fathers pointed out that this necessarily brief reflection upon the economic and social realities of Asia would be incomplete if recognition were not also given to the extensive economic growth of many Asian societies in recent decades: a new generation of skilled workers, scientists and technicians is growing daily and their great number augurs well for Asia's

¹⁸ * Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 9.

¹⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 39.

²⁰ *Propositio* 35.

²¹ Cf. *Propositio* 38.

development. Still, not all is stable and solid in this progress, as has been made evident by the most recent and far-reaching financial crisis suffered by a number of Asian countries. The future of Asia lies in cooperation, within Asia and with the nations of other continents, but building always on what Asian peoples themselves do with a view to their own development.

Political Realities

8. The Church always needs to have an exact understanding of the political situation in the different countries where she seeks to fulfil her mission. In Asia today the political panorama is highly complex, displaying an array of ideologies ranging from democratic forms of government to theocratic ones. Military dictatorships and atheistic ideologies are very much present. Some countries recognize an official state religion that allows little or no religious freedom to minorities and the followers of other religions. Other States, though not explicitly theocratic, reduce minorities to second-class citizens with little safeguard for their fundamental human rights. In some places Christians are not allowed to practise their faith freely and proclaim Jesus Christ to others.²² They are persecuted and denied their rightful place in society. The Synod Fathers remembered in a special way the people of China and expressed the fervent hope that all their Chinese Catholic brothers and sisters would one day be able to exercise their religion in freedom and visibly profess their full communion with the See of Peter.²³

While appreciating the progress which many Asian countries are making under their different forms of government, the Synod Fathers also drew attention to the widespread corruption existing

-- Cf. *Propositio* 22.

" Cf. *Propositio* 52.

at various levels of both government and society.²⁴ Too often, people seem helpless to defend themselves against corrupt politicians, judiciary officials, administrators and bureaucrats. However, there is a growing awareness throughout Asia of people's capacity to change unjust structures. There are new demands for greater social justice, for more participation in government and economic life, for equal opportunities in education and for a just share in the resources of the nation. People are becoming increasingly conscious of their human dignity and rights and more determined to safeguard them. Long dormant ethnic, social and cultural minority groups are seeking ways to become agents of their own social advancement. The Spirit of God helps and sustains people's efforts to transform society so that the human yearning for a more abundant life may be satisfied as God wills (cf. *Jn* 10:10).

The Church in Asia: Past and Present

9. The history of the Church in Asia is as old as the Church herself, for it was in Asia that Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples and sent them to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Good News and gather communities of believers. "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (*Jn* 20:21; see also *Mt* 28:18-20; *Mk* 16:15-18; *Lk* 24:47; *Acts* 1:8). *Following the Lord's* command, the Apostles preached the word and founded Churches. It may help to recall some elements of this fascinating and complex history.

From Jerusalem, the Church spread to Antioch, to Rome and beyond. It reached Ethiopia in the South, Scythia in the North and India in the East, where tradition has it that Saint Thomas the Apostle went in the year 52 A.D. and founded Churches in

²⁴ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta*, 6.

South India. The missionary spirit of the East Syrian community in the third and fourth centuries, with its centre at Edessa, was remarkable. The ascetic communities of Syria were a major force of evangelization in Asia from the third century onwards. They provided spiritual energy for the Church, especially during times of persecution. At the end of the third century, Armenia was the first nation as a whole to embrace Christianity, and is now preparing to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of its baptism. By the end of the fifth century, the Christian message had reached the Arab kingdoms, but for many reasons, including the divisions among Christians, the message failed to take root among these peoples.

Persian merchants took the Good News to China in the fifth century. The first Christian Church was built there at the beginning of the seventh century. During the T'ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), the Church flourished for nearly two centuries. The decline of this vibrant Church in China by the end of the First Millennium is one of the sadder chapters in the history of God's People on the continent.

In the thirteenth century the Good News was announced to the Mongols and the Turks and to the Chinese once more. But Christianity almost vanished in these regions for a number of reasons, among them the rise of Islam, geographical isolation, the absence of an appropriate adaptation to local cultures, and perhaps above all a lack of preparedness to encounter the great religions of Asia. The end of the fourteenth century saw the drastic diminution of the Church in Asia, except for the isolated community in South India. The Church in Asia had to await a new era of missionary endeavour.

The apostolic labours of Saint Francis Xavier, the founding of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* by Pope Gregory XV, and the directives for missionaries to respect and appreciate local cultures all contributed to achieving more positive results in the

course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Again in the nineteenth century there was a revival of missionary activity. Various religious congregations dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to this task. *Propaganda Fide* was reorganized. Greater emphasis was placed upon building up the local Churches. Educational and charitable works went hand in hand with the preaching of the Gospel. Consequently, the Good News continued to reach more people, especially among the poor and the underprivileged, but also here and there among the social and intellectual elite. New attempts were made to inculturate the Good News, although they proved in no way sufficient. Despite her centuries-long presence and her many apostolic endeavours, the Church in many places was still considered as foreign to Asia, and indeed was often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers.

This was the situation on the eve of the Second Vatican Council; but thanks to the impetus provided by the Council, a new understanding of mission dawned and with it a great hope. The universality of God's plan of salvation, the missionary nature of the Church and the responsibility of everyone in the Church for this task, so strongly reaffirmed in the Council's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, became the framework of a new commitment. During the Special Assembly, the Synod Fathers testified to the recent growth of the ecclesial community among many different peoples in various parts of the continent, and they appealed for further missionary efforts in the years to come, especially as new possibilities for the proclamation of the Gospel emerge in the Siberian region and the Central Asian countries which have recently gained their independence, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.²⁵

²⁵ Cf. *Propositio!* 56.

A survey of the Catholic communities in Asia shows a splendid variety by reason of their origin and historical development, and the diverse spiritual and liturgical traditions of the various Rites. Yet all are united in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, through Christian witness, works of charity and human solidarity. While some particular Churches carry out their mission in peace and freedom, others find themselves in situations of violence and conflict, or feel threatened by other groups, for religious or other reasons. In the vastly diversified cultural world of Asia, the Church faces multiple philosophical, theological and pastoral challenges. Her task is made more difficult by the fact of her being a minority, with the Philippines as the only exception, where Catholics are in the majority.

Whatever the circumstances, the Church in Asia finds herself among peoples who display an intense yearning for God. The Church knows that this yearning can only be fully satisfied by Jesus Christ, the Good News of God for all the nations. The Synod Fathers were very keen that this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation should focus attention on this yearning and encourage the Church in Asia to proclaim with vigour in word and deed that *Jesus Christ is the Saviour*.

The Spirit of God, always at work in the history of the Church in Asia, continues to guide her. The many positive elements found in the local Churches, frequently highlighted in the Synod, strengthen our expectation of a "new springtime of Christian life".²⁶ One solid cause of hope is the increasing number of better trained, enthusiastic and Spirit-filled lay people, who are more and more aware of their specific vocation within the ecclesial community. Among them the lay catechists deserve special recognition and

²⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennia Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 18: AAS 87 (1995), 16.

praise.²⁷ The apostolic and charismatic movements too are a gift of the Spirit, bringing new life and vigour to the formation of lay men and women, families and the young.²⁸ Associations and ecclesial movements devoted to the promotion of human dignity and justice make accessible and tangible the universality of the evangelical message of our adoption as children of God (cf. *Rom* 8:15-16).

At the same time, there are Churches in very difficult circumstances, "experiencing intense trials in the practice of their faith".²⁹ The Synod Fathers were moved by reports of the heroic witness, unshaken perseverance and steady growth of the Catholic Church in China, by the efforts of the Church in South Korea to offer assistance to the people of North Korea, the humble steadfastness of the Catholic community in Vietnam, the isolation of Christians in such places as Laos and Myanmar, the difficult co-existence with the majority in some predominantly Islamic states.³⁰ The Synod paid special attention to the situation of the Church in the Holy Land and in the Holy City of Jerusalem, "the heart of Christianity",³¹ a city dear to all the children of Abraham. The Synod Fathers expressed the belief that the peace of the region, and even the world, depends in large measure on the peace and reconciliation which have eluded Jerusalem for so long.³²

I cannot bring to an end this brief survey of the situation of the Church in Asia, though far from complete, without mentioning the Saints and Martyrs of Asia, both those who have been recognized and those known only to God, whose example is a source of "spiritual richness and a great means of evange-

²⁷ Cf. *Pwpositio* 29.

²⁸ Cf. *Prvpositiones* 29 and 31.

²⁹ *Pmpositio* 51.

³⁰ Cf. *Propositions* 51, 52 and 53.

" *Pwpositio* 57.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*

lization".³³ They speak silently but most powerfully of the importance of holiness of life and readiness to offer one's life for the Gospel. They are the teachers and the protectors, the glory of the Church in Asia in her work of evangelization. With the whole Church I pray to the Lord to send many more committed labourers to reap the harvest of souls which I see as ready and plentiful (cf. *Mt* 9:37-38). At this moment, I call to mind what I wrote in *Redemptoris Missio*: "God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel".³⁴ This vision of a new and promising horizon I see being fulfilled in Asia, where Jesus was born and where Christianity began.

" *Propositio* 54.

³⁴ No. 3: AAS 83 (1991), 252.

CHAPTER II

JESUS THE SAVIOUR: A GIFT TO ASIA

The Gift of Faith

10. As the Synod discussion of the complex realities of Asia unfolded, it became increasingly obvious to all that the Church's unique contribution to the peoples of the continent is the proclamation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the one and only Saviour for all peoples.³⁵ What distinguishes the Church from other religious communities is her faith in Jesus Christ; and she cannot keep this precious light of faith under a bushel (cf. *Mt* 5:15), for her mission is to share that light with everyone. "[The Church] wants to offer the new life she has found in Jesus Christ to all the peoples of Asia as they search for the fullness of life, so that they can have the same fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit".³⁶ This faith in Jesus Christ is what inspires the Church's evangelizing work in Asia, often carried out in difficult and even dangerous circumstances. The Synod Fathers noted that proclaiming Jesus as the only Saviour can present particular difficulties in their cultures, given that many Asian religions teach divine self-manifestations as mediating salvation. Far from discouraging the Synod Fathers, the challenges facing their evangelizing efforts were an even greater incentive in striving to transmit "the faith that the Church in Asia has inherited from the Apostles and holds with the Church of all generations and places".³⁷ Indeed they expressed the conviction that "the heart of the Church in Asia will be restless

³⁵ Cf. *Propositii*) 5.

³⁶ Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 5.

" Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 3.

until the whole of Asia finds its rest in the peace of Christ, the Risen Lord".³⁸

The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia. Sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with others is the solemn duty of all who have received the gift of faith. In my Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, I wrote that "the Church, and every individual Christian within her, may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God's bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind".³⁹ In the same Letter I wrote: "Those who are incorporated in the Catholic Church ought to sense their privilege and for that very reason their greater obligation of *bearing witness to the faith* and to the Christian life as a service to their brothers and sisters and as a fitting response to God".⁴⁰

Deeply convinced of this, the Synod Fathers were equally conscious of their personal responsibility to grasp through study, prayer and reflection the timeless truth of Jesus in order to bring its power and vitality to bear on the present and future challenges of evangelization in Asia.

Jesus Christ, the God-Man Who Saves

11. The Scriptures attest that Jesus lived an authentically human life. The Jesus whom we proclaim as the only Saviour walked the earth as the God-Man in full possession of a human nature. He was like us in all things except sin. Born of a Virgin Mother in humble surroundings at Bethlehem, he was as helpless as any other infant, and even suffered the fate of a refugee fleeing the wrath of a ruthless leader (cf. *Mt* 2:13-15). He was subject to

³⁸ *Propositio* 8.

³⁹ No. 11: AAS 83 (1991), 260.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*-

human parents who did not always understand his ways, but in whom he trusted and whom he lovingly obeyed (cf. *Lk* 2:41-52). Constantly at prayer, he was in intimate relationship with God whom he addressed as *Abba*, "Father", to the dismay of his listeners (cf. *Jn* 8:34-59).

He was close to the poor, the forgotten and the lowly, declaring that they were truly blessed, for God was with them. He ate with sinners, assuring them that at the Father's table there was a place for them when they turned from their sinful ways and came back to him. Touching the unclean and allowing them to touch him, he let them know the nearness of God. He wept for a dead friend, he restored a dead son to his widowed mother, he welcomed children, and he washed the feet of his disciples. Divine compassion had never been so immediately accessible.

The sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf and the dumb all experienced healing and forgiveness at his touch. As his closest companions and co-workers he chose an unusual group in which fishermen mixed with tax collectors, Zealots with people untrained in the Law, and women also. A new family was being created under the Father's all-embracing and surprising love. Jesus preached simply, using examples from everyday life to speak of God's love and his Kingdom; and the people recognized that he spoke with authority.

Yet he was accused of being a blasphemer, a violator of the sacred Law, a public nuisance to be eliminated. After a trial based on false testimony (cf. *Mk* 14:56), he was sentenced to die as a criminal on the Cross and, forsaken and humiliated, he seemed a failure. He was hastily buried in a borrowed tomb. But on the third day after this death, and despite the vigilance of the guards, the tomb was found empty! Jesus, risen from the dead, then appeared to his disciples before returning to the Father from whom he had come.

With all Christians, we believe that this particular life, in one sense so ordinary and simple, in another sense so utterly wondrous and shrouded in mystery, ushered into human history the Kingdom of God and "brought its power to bear upon every facet of human life and society beset by sin and death".⁴¹ Through his words and actions, especially in his suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the will of his Father to reconcile all humanity to himself, after original sin had created a rupture in the relationship between the Creator and his creation. On the Cross, he took upon himself the sins of the world—past, present and future. Saint Paul reminds us that we were dead as a result of our sins and his death has brought us to life again: "God made [us] alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (*Col* 2:13-14). In this way, salvation was sealed once and for all. Jesus is our Saviour in the fullest sense of the word because his words and works, especially his resurrection from the dead, have revealed him to be the Son of God, the pre-existent Word, who reigns for ever as Lord and Messiah.

The Person and Mission of the Son of God

12. The "scandal" of Christianity is the belief that the all-holy, all-powerful and all-knowing God took upon himself our human nature and endured suffering and death to win salvation for all people (cf. / *Cor* 1:23). The faith we have received declares that Jesus Christ revealed and accomplished the Father's plan of saving the world and the whole of humanity because of "*who he is*" and "*what he does*" because of *who he is*". "*Who he is*" and "*what he does*" acquire their full meaning only when set within the mystery of the Triune God. It has been a constant concern of my

⁴¹ Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 3.

Pontificate to remind the faithful of the communion of life of the Blessed Trinity and the unity of the three Persons in the plan of creation and redemption. My Encyclical Letters *Redemptor Hominis*, *Dives in Misericordia* and *Dominum et Vivificantem* are reflections on the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit respectively and on their roles in the divine plan of salvation. We cannot however isolate or separate one Person from the others, since each is revealed only within the communion of life and action of the Trinity. The saving action of Jesus has its origin in the communion of the Godhead, and opens the way for all who believe in him to enter into intimate communion with the Trinity and with one another in the Trinity.

"He who has seen me has seen the Father", Jesus claims (*Jn* 14:9), In Jesus Christ alone dwells the fullness of God in bodily form (cf. *Col* 2:9), establishing him as the unique and absolute saving Word of God (cf. *Heb* 1:1-4). As the Father's definitive Word, Jesus makes God and his saving will known in the fullest way possible. "No one comes to the Father but by me", Jesus says (*Jn* 14:6). He is "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (*Jn* 14:6), because, as he himself says, "the Father who dwells in me does his works" (*Jn* 14:10). Only in the person of Jesus does God's word of salvation appear in all its fullness, ushering in the final age (cf. *Heb* 1:1-2). Thus, in the first days of the Church, Peter could proclaim: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12).

The mission of the Saviour reached its culmination in the Paschal Mystery. On the Cross, when "he stretched out his arms between heaven and earth in the everlasting sign of [the Father's] covenant",⁴² Jesus uttered his final appeal to the Father to forgive the sins of humanity: "Father, forgive them; for they know not

⁴³ *Roman Missal: Eucharistic Prayer I for Masses of Reconciliation.*

what they do" (*Lk* 23:34). Jesus destroyed sin by the power of his love for his Father and for all mankind. He took upon himself the wounds inflicted on humanity by sin, and he offered release through conversion. The first fruits of this are evident in the repentant thief hanging beside him on another cross (cf. *Lk* 23:43). His last utterance was the cry of the faithful Son: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (*Lk* 23:46). In this supreme expression of love he entrusted his whole life and mission into the hands of the Father who had sent him. Thus he handed over to the Father the whole of creation and all humanity, to be accepted finally by him in compassionate love.

Everything that the Son is and has accomplished is accepted by the Father, who then offers this gift to the world in the act of raising Jesus from the dead and setting him at his right hand, where sin and death have power no more. Through Jesus' Paschal Sacrifice *the Father irrevocably offers reconciliation and fullness of life to the world*. This extraordinary gift could only come through the beloved Son, who alone was capable of fully responding to the Father's love, rejected by sin. In Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we come to know that God is not distant, above and apart from man, but is very near, indeed united to every person and all humanity in all of life's situations. This is the message which Christianity offers to the world, and it is a source of incomparable comfort and hope for all believers.

Jesus Christ: the Truth of Humanity

13. How does the humanity of Jesus and the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of the Father shed light on the human condition? The Incarnate Son of God not only revealed completely the Father and his plan of salvation; he also "fully reveals man to-himself".⁴³ His words and actions, and above all his Death and

⁴³ John-Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 10: AAS 71 (1979), 274.

Resurrection, reveal the depths of what it means to be human. Through Jesus, man can finally know the truth of himself. Jesus' perfectly human life, devoted wholly to the love and service of the Father and of man, reveals that the vocation of every human being is to receive love and give love in return. In Jesus we marvel at the inexhaustible capacity of the human heart to love God and man, even when this entails great suffering. Above all, it is on the Cross that Jesus breaks the power of the self-destructive resistance to love which sin inflicts upon us. On his part, the Father responds by raising Jesus as the first-born of all those predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (cf. *Rom* 8:29). At that moment, Jesus became once and for all both the revelation and the accomplishment of a humanity re-created and renewed according to the plan of God. In Jesus then, we discover the greatness and dignity of each person in the heart of God who created man in his own image (cf. *Gen* 1:26), and we find the origin of the new creation which we have become through his grace.

The Second Vatican Council taught that "by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, in a certain way united himself with each individual".⁴⁴ In this profound insight the Synod Fathers saw the ultimate source of hope and strength for the people of Asia in their struggles and uncertainties. When men and women respond with a living faith to God's offer of love, his presence brings love and peace, transforming the human heart from within. In *Redemptor Hominis* I wrote that "the redemption of the world—this tremendous mystery of love in which creation is renewed—is, at its deepest root, the fullness of justice in a human Heart—the Heart of the First-born Son—in order that it may become justice in the hearts of many human beings, predestined from eternity in the First-born Son to be children of God and called to grace, called to love".⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
^f No. 9: AAS 71 (1979), 272f.

Thus, the mission of Jesus not only restored communion between God and humanity; it also established a new communion between human beings alienated from one another because of sin. Beyond all divisions, Jesus makes it possible for people to live as brothers and sisters, recognizing a single Father who is in heaven (cf. *Mt* 23:9). In him, a new harmony has emerged, in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek,... neither slave nor free,... neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Gal* 3:28). Jesus is our peace, "who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (*Eph* 2:14). In all that he said and did, Jesus was the Father's voice, hands and arms, gathering all God's children into one family of love. He prayed that his disciples might live in communion just as he is in communion with the Father (cf. *Jn* 17:11). Among his last words we hear him say: "As the Father -has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love... This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn* 15:9, 12). Sent by the God of communion and being truly God and daily man, Jesus established communion between heaven and earth in his very person. It is our faith that "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross" (*Col* 1:19-20). Salvation can be found in the person of the Son of God made man and the mission entrusted to him alone as the Son, a mission of service and love for the life of all. Together with the Church throughout the world, the Church in Asia proclaims the truth of faith: "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all" (*1 Tim* 2:5-6).

The Uniqueness and Universality of Salvation in Jesus

14. The Synod Fathers recalled that the pre-existent Word, the eternally begotten Son of God, "was already present in creation,

in history and in every human yearning for good".⁴⁶ Through the Word, present to the cosmos even before the Incarnation, the world came to be (cf. *Jn* 1:1-4, 10; *Col* 1:15-20). But as the incarnate Word who lived, died and rose from the dead, Jesus Christ is now proclaimed as the fulfilment of all creation, of all history, and of all human yearning for fullness of life.⁴⁷ Risen from the dead, Jesus Christ "is present to all and to the whole of creation in a new and mysterious way".⁴⁸ In him, authentic values of all religious and cultural traditions, such as mercy and submission to the will of God, compassion and rectitude, non-violence and righteousness, filial piety and harmony with creation find their fullness and realization".⁴⁹ From the first moment of time to its end, Jesus is the one universal Mediator. Even for those who do not explicitly profess faith in him as the Saviour, salvation comes as a grace from Jesus Christ through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the one Saviour because he alone—the Son—accomplished the Father's universal plan of salvation. As the definitive manifestation of the mystery of the Father's love for all, Jesus is indeed unique, and "it is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance, whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history's centre and goal".⁵⁰

No individual, no nation, no culture is impervious to the appeal of Jesus who speaks from the very heart of the human condition. "It is his life that speaks, his humanity, his fidelity to the truth, his all-embracing love. Furthermore, his death on the Cross speaks—that is to say the inscrutable depth of his suffering

3. ⁴⁶ Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*,

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Propositio* 5.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 6: AAS 83 (1991), 255.

and abandonment".⁵¹ Contemplating Jesus in his human nature, the peoples of Asia find their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfilled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered. Jesus is the Good News for the men and women of every time and place in their search for the meaning of existence and for the truth of their own humanity.

⁵¹ **John Paul II, Encyclical Letter** *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 7: AAS 71 (1979), 269.

CHAPTER III

THE HOLY SPIRIT: LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE

The Spirit of God in Creation and History

15. If it is true that the saving significance of Jesus can be understood only in the context of his revelation of the Trinity's plan of salvation, then it follows that the Holy Spirit is an absolutely vital part of the mystery of Jesus and of the salvation which he brings. The Synod Fathers made frequent references to the role of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation, noting that a false separation between the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit would jeopardize the truth of Jesus as the one Saviour of all.

In Christian Tradition, the Holy Spirit has always been associated with life and the giving of life. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed calls the Holy Spirit "the Lord, the Giver of Life". It is not surprising, therefore, that many interpretations of the creation account in Genesis have seen the Holy Spirit in the mighty wind that swept over the waters (cf. *Gen* 1:2). The Holy Spirit is present from the first moment of creation, the first manifestation of the love of the Triune God, and is always present in the world as its life-giving force.⁵² Since creation is the beginning of history, the Spirit is in a certain sense a hidden power at work in history, guiding it in the ways of truth and goodness.

The revelation of the person of the Holy Spirit, the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is proper to the New Testament. In Christian thought he is seen as the wellspring of life for all creatures. Creation is God's free communication of love, a communication which, out of nothing, brings everything into

⁵² Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 54: AAS 78 (1986), 875.

being. There is nothing created that is not filled with the ceaseless exchange of love that marks the innermost life of the Trinity, filled that is with the Holy Spirit: "the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world" (*Wis* 1:7). The presence of the Spirit in creation generates order, harmony and interdependence in all that exists. Created in the image of God, human beings become the dwelling-place of the Spirit in a new way when they are raised to the dignity of divine adoption (cf. *Gal* 4:5). Reborn in Baptism, they experience the presence and power of the Spirit, not just as the Author of Life but as the One who purifies and saves, producing fruits of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal* 5:22-23). These fruits of the Spirit are the sign that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (*Rom* 5:5). When accepted in freedom, this love makes men and women visible instruments of the unseen Spirit's ceaseless activity. It is above all this new capacity to give and receive love which testifies to the interior presence and power of the Holy Spirit. As a consequence of the transformation and re-creation which he produces in people's hearts and minds, the Spirit influences human societies and cultures.⁵³ "Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history. 'The Spirit of God with marvellous foresight directs the course of the ages and renews the face of the earth'".⁵⁴

Following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, the Synod Fathers drew attention to the multiple and diversified action of the Holy Spirit who continually sows the seeds of truth among

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.* 59: *loc. cit.* 885.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 28: AAS 83 (1991), 274; cf. *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

all peoples, their religions, cultures and philosophies.⁵⁵ This means that these religions, cultures and philosophies are capable of helping people, individually and collectively, to work against evil and to serve life and everything that is good. The forces of death isolate people, societies and religious communities from one another, and generate the suspicion and rivalry that lead to conflict. The Holy Spirit, by contrast, sustains people in their search for mutual understanding and acceptance. The Synod was therefore right to see the Spirit of God as the prime agent of the Church's dialogue with all peoples, cultures and religions.

The Holy Spirit and the Incarnation of the Word

16. Under the Spirit's guidance, the history of salvation unfolds on the stage of the world, indeed of the cosmos, according to the Father's eternal plan. That plan, initiated by the Spirit at the very beginning of creation, is revealed in the Old Testament, is brought to fulfilment through the grace of Jesus Christ, and is carried on in the new creation by the same Spirit until the Lord comes again in glory at the end of time.⁵⁶ The Incarnation of the Son of God is the supreme work of the Holy Spirit: "The conception and birth of Jesus Christ are in fact the greatest work accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the history of creation and salvation: the supreme grace—'the grace of union', source of every other grace".⁵⁷ The Incarnation is the event in which God gathers

⁵⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 11; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 4 and 15; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 17; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 11, 22 and 38; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 28: AAS 83 (1991), 273f.

⁵⁶ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 5.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, (18 May 1986), 50: AAS 78 (1986), 870; cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 2, 10-12; 6, 6; 7, 13.

into a new and definitive union with himself not only man but the whole of creation and all of history.⁵⁸

Having been conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Spirit's power (cf. *Lk* 1:35; *Mt* 1:20), Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah and only Saviour, was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit descended upon him at his baptism (cf. *Mk* 1:10) and led him into the wilderness to be strengthened before his public ministry (cf. *Mk* 1:12; *Lk* 4:1; *Mt* 4:1). In the synagogue at Nazareth he began his prophetic ministry by applying to himself Isaiah's vision of the Spirit's anointing which leads to the preaching of good news to the poor, freedom to captives and a time acceptable to the Lord (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19). By the power of the Spirit, Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons as a sign that the Kingdom of God had come (cf. *Mt* 12:28). After rising from the dead, he imparted to the disciples the Holy Spirit whom he had promised to pour out on the Church when he returned to the Father (cf. *Jn* 20:22-23).

All of this shows how Jesus' saving mission bears the unmistakable mark of the Spirit's presence: life, *new life*. Between the sending of the Son from the Father and the *sending of the Spirit* from the Father and the Son, there is a close and vital link.⁵⁹ The action of the Spirit in creation and human history acquires an altogether new significance in his action in the life and mission of Jesus. The "seeds of the Word" sown by the Spirit prepare the whole of creation, history and man for full maturity in Christ.⁶⁰

The Synod Fathers expressed concern about the tendency to separate the activity of the Holy Spirit from that of Jesus the Saviour. Responding to their concern, I repeat here what I wrote

⁵⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 50: AAS 78 (1986), 870.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 24: *loc. cit.*, 832.

⁶⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 28: AAS 83 (1991), 274.

in *Redemptoris Missio*: "[The Spirit] is ... not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit 'so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things'".⁶¹

The universal presence of the Holy Spirit therefore cannot serve as an excuse for a failure to proclaim Jesus Christ explicitly as the one and only Saviour. On the contrary, the universal presence of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from universal salvation in Jesus. The presence of the Spirit in creation and history points to Jesus Christ in whom creation and history are redeemed and fulfilled. The presence and action of the Spirit both before the Incarnation and in the climactic moment of Pentecost point always to Jesus and to the salvation he brings. So too the Holy Spirit's universal presence can never be separated from his activity within the Body of Christ, the Church.⁶²

The Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ

17. The Holy Spirit preserves unfailingly the bond of communion between Jesus and his Church. Dwelling in her as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16), the Spirit guides the Church, first of all, to the fullness of truth about Jesus. Then, it is the Spirit who empowers the Church to continue Jesus' mission, in the first place by witnessing to Jesus himself, thus fulfilling what he had promised before his death and resurrection, that he would send the Spirit to his disciples *so that they might bear witness to him* (cf. Jn

⁶¹ No. 29: AAS 83 (1991), 275; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, 45.

*- Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Utter Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 29: AAS 83 (1991), 275.

15:26-27). The work of the Spirit in the Church is also to testify that believers are the adopted children of God destined to inherit salvation, the promised fullness of communion with the Father (cf. *Rom* 8:15-17). Endowing the Church with different charisms and gifts, the Spirit makes the Church grow in communion as one body made up of many different parts (cf. *1 Cor* 12:4; *Eph* 4:11-16). The Spirit gathers into unity all kinds of people, with their different customs, resources and talents, making the Church a sign of the communion of all humanity under the headship of Christ.⁶³ The Spirit shapes the Church as a community of witnesses who, through his power, bear testimony to Jesus the Saviour (cf. *Acts* 1:8). In this sense, the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of evangelization. From this the Synod Fathers could conclude that, just as the earthly ministry of Jesus was accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, "the same Spirit has been given to the Church by the Father and the Son at Pentecost to bring to completion Jesus' mission of love and service in Asia".⁶⁴

The Father's plan for the salvation of man does not end with the death and resurrection of Jesus. By the gift of Christ's Spirit, the fruits of his saving mission are offered through the Church to all peoples of all times through the proclamation of the Gospel and loving service of the human family. As the Second Vatican Council observed, "the Church is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God, who has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world".⁶⁵ Empowered by the Spirit to accomplish Christ's salvation on earth, the Church is the seed of the Kingdom of God and she looks eagerly for its final coming. Her identity and mission are inseparable from the Kingdom of God which Jesus announced and inaugurated in all that he said and did, above all in his death and

^M Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 13.

^M *Propositio* 12.

* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 17.

resurrection. The Spirit reminds the Church that she is not an end unto herself: in all that she is and all that she does, she exists to serve Christ and the salvation of the world. In the present economy of salvation the workings of the Holy Spirit in creation, in history and in the Church are all part of the one eternal design of the Trinity over all that is.

*The Holy Spirit
and the Church's Mission in Asia*

18. The Spirit who moved upon Asia in the time of the patriarchs and prophets, and still more powerfully in the time of Jesus Christ and the early Church, moves now among Asian Christians, strengthening the witness of their faith among the peoples, cultures and religions of the continent. Just as the great dialogue of love between God and man was prepared for by the Spirit and accomplished on Asian soil in the mystery of Christ, so the dialogue between the Saviour and the peoples of the continent continues today by the power of the same Holy Spirit at work in the Church. In this process, Bishops, priests, religious and lay men and women all have an essential role to play, remembering the words of Jesus, which are both a promise and a mandate: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (*Acts* 1:8).

The Church is convinced that deep within the people, cultures and religions of Asia there is a thirst for "living water" (cf. *Jn* 4:10-15), a thirst which the Spirit himself has created and which Jesus the Saviour alone can fully satisfy. The Church looks to the Holy Spirit to continue to prepare the peoples of Asia for the saving dialogue with the Saviour of all. Led by the Spirit in her mission of service and love, the Church can offer an encounter between Jesus Christ and the peoples of Asia as they search for the fullness of life. In that encounter alone is to be found the

living water which springs up to eternal life, namely, the knowledge of the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (cf. *Jn* 17:3).

The Church well knows that she can accomplish her mission only in obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Committed to being a genuine sign and instrument of the Spirit's action in the complex realities of Asia, she must discern, in all the diverse circumstances of the continent, the Spirit's call to witness to Jesus the Saviour in new and effective ways. The full truth of Jesus and the salvation he has won is always a gift, never the result of human effort. "It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (*Rom* 8:16-17). Therefore the Church ceaselessly cries out, "Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love!" This is the fire which Jesus casts upon the earth. The Church in Asia shares his zeal that this fire be re-kindled now (cf. *Lk* 12:49). With this ardent desire, the Synod Fathers sought to discern the principal areas of mission for the Church in Asia as she crosses the threshold of the new millennium.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS THE SAVIOUR: PROCLAIMING THE GIFT

The Primacy of Proclamation

19. On the eve of the Third Millennium, the voice of the Risen Christ echoes anew in the heart of every Christian: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28:18-20). Certain, of the unfailing help of Jesus himself and the presence and power of his Spirit, the Apostles set out immediately after Pentecost to fulfil this command: "they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them" (*Mk* 16:20). What they announced can be summed up in the words of Saint Paul: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 *Cor* 4:5). Blessed with the gift of faith, the Church, after two thousand years, continues to go out to meet the peoples of the world in order to share with them the Good News of Jesus Christ. She is a community aflame with missionary zeal to make Jesus known, loved and followed.

There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord. The Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium since then, responding to a certain confusion about the true nature of the Church's mission, have repeatedly stressed the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work. Thus Pope Paul VI explicitly wrote that "there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the

Son of God, are not proclaimed".⁶⁶ This is what generations of Christians have done down the centuries. With understandable pride the Synod Fathers recalled that "many Christian communities in Asia have preserved their faith down the centuries against great odds and have clung to this spiritual heritage with heroic perseverance. For them to share this immense treasure is a matter of great joy and urgency".⁶⁷

At the same time the participants in the Special Assembly testified over and over again to the need for a renewed commitment to the proclamation of Jesus Christ precisely on the continent which saw the beginning of that proclamation two thousand years ago. The words of the Apostle Paul become still more pointed, given the many people on that continent who have never encountered the person of Jesus in any clear and conscious way: "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are they to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?" (*Rom* 10:13-14). The great question now facing the Church in Asia is *how* to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts, namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Proclaiming Jesus Christ in Asia

20. The Church in Asia is all the more eager for the task of proclamation knowing that "through the working of the Spirit, there already exists in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death".⁶⁸ This

⁶⁶ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 22: AAS 68 (1976), 20.

⁶⁷ *Propositi!*) 8.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 45: AAS 83 (1991), 292.

insistence on proclamation is prompted not by sectarian impulse nor the spirit of proselytism nor any sense of superiority. The Church evangelizes in obedience to Christ's command, in the knowledge that every person has the right to hear the Good News of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ.⁶⁹ To bear witness to Jesus Christ is the supreme service which the Church can offer to the peoples of Asia, for it responds to their profound longing for the Absolute, and it unveils the truths and values which will ensure their integral human development.

Deeply aware of the complexity of so many different situations in Asia, and "speaking the truth in love" (*Eph* 4:15), the Church proclaims the Good News with loving respect and esteem for her listeners. Proclamation which respects the rights of consciences does not violate freedom, since faith always demands a free response on the part of the individual.⁷⁰ Respect, however, does not eliminate the need for the explicit proclamation of the Gospel in its fullness. Especially in the context of the rich array of cultures and religions in Asia it must be pointed out that "neither respect and esteem for these religions nor the complexity of the questions raised are an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ".⁷¹ While visiting India in 1986, I stated clearly that "the Church's approach to other religions is one of genuine respect... This respect is twofold: respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man".⁷² Indeed, the Synod Fathers readily recognized the Spirit's

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 46: *loc.cit.*, 292f.

⁷⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3-4; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 39: AAS 83 (1991), 287; *Propositio* 40.

⁷¹ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 53: AAS 68 (1976), 41f.

⁷² Address to Representatives of Non-Christians Religions, Madras (5 February 1986), 2: AAS 78 (1986), 767.

action in Asian societies, cultures and religions, through which the Father prepares the hearts of Asian peoples for the fullness of life in Christ.⁷³

Yet even during the consultations before the Synod many Asian Bishops referred to *difficulties in proclaiming Jesus as the only Saviour*. During the Assembly, the situation was described in this way: "Some of the followers of the great religions of Asia have no problem in accepting Jesus as a manifestation of the Divine or the Absolute, or as an 'enlightened one'. But it is difficult for them to see Him as the only manifestation of the Divine".⁷⁴ In fact, the effort to share the gift of faith in Jesus as the only Saviour is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in light of the beliefs of Asia's great religions, deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific world views.

In the opinion of the Synod Fathers, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that Jesus is often perceived as foreign to Asia. It is paradoxical that most Asians tend to regard Jesus—born on Asian soil—as a Western rather than an Asian figure. It was inevitable that the proclamation of the Gospel by Western missionaries would be influenced by the cultures from which they came. The Synod Fathers recognized this as an unavoidable fact in the history of evangelization. At the same time they took advantage of the occasion "to express in a very special way their gratitude to all the missionaries, men and women, religious and lay, foreign and local, who brought the message of Jesus Christ and the gift of faith. A special word of gratitude again must be expressed to all the particular Churches which have sent and still send missionaries to Asia".⁷⁵

⁷³ Cf. *Propositiones* 11 and 12; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 28: AAS 83 (1991), 273f.

⁷⁴ Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 5.

" *Propositio* 58.

Evangelizers can take heart from the experience of Saint Paul who engaged in dialogue with the philosophical, cultural and religious values of his listeners (cf. *Acts* 14:13-17; 17:22-31). Even the Ecumenical Councils of the Church which formulated doctrines binding on the Church had to use the linguistic, philosophical and cultural resources available to them. Thus these resources become a shared possession of the whole Church, capable of expressing her Christological doctrine in an appropriate and universal way. They are part of the heritage of faith which must be appropriated and shared again and again in the encounter with the various cultures.⁷⁶ Thus the task of proclaiming Jesus in a way which enables the peoples of Asia to identify with him, while remaining faithful both to the Church's theological doctrine and to their own Asian origins is a paramount challenge.

The presentation of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour needs to follow a *pedagogy* which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery. Clearly, the initial evangelization of non-Christians and the continuing proclamation of Jesus to believers will have to be different in their approach. In initial proclamation, for example "the presentation of Jesus Christ could come as the fulfilment- of the yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples".⁷⁷ In general, narrative methods akin to Asian cultural forms are to be preferred. In fact, the proclamation of Jesus Christ can most effectively be made by narrating his story, as the Gospels do. The ontological notions involved, which must always be presupposed and expressed in presenting Jesus, can be complemented by more relational, historical and even cosmic perspectives. The Church,

⁷⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (14 September 1998), 72: AAS 91'(1999), 61.

⁷⁷ Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 15.

the Synod Fathers noted, must be open to the new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia.⁷⁸

The Synod recommended that subsequent catechesis should follow "an evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching".⁷⁹ The ministry of Jesus himself shows clearly the value of personal contact, which requires the evangelizer to take the situation of the listener to heart, so as to offer a proclamation adapted to the listener's level of maturity, and in an appropriate form and language. In this perspective, the Synod Fathers stressed many times the need to evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples, and they suggested images of Jesus which would be intelligible to Asian minds and cultures and, at the same time, faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Among them were "Jesus Christ as the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer, the Liberator, the Spiritual Guide, the Enlightened One, the Compassionate Friend of the Poor, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the Obedient One"⁸⁰ Jesus could be presented as the Incarnate Wisdom of God whose grace brings to fruition the "seeds" of divine Wisdom already present in the lives, religions and peoples of Asia.⁸¹ In the midst of so much suffering among Asian peoples, he might best be proclaimed as the Saviour "who can provide meaning to those undergoing unexplainable pain and suffering".⁸²

The faith which the Church offers as a gift to her Asian sons and daughters cannot be confined within the limits of understanding and expression of any single human culture, for it transcends these limits and indeed challenges all cultures to rise to new heights

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Propositio* 6.

⁸¹ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*,

6.

^K *Ibid.*

of understanding and expression. Yet at the same time the Synod Fathers were well aware of the pressing need of the local Churches in Asia to present the mystery of Christ to their peoples according to their cultural patterns and ways of thinking. They pointed out that such an inculturation of the faith on their continent involves rediscovering the Asian countenance of Jesus and identifying ways in which the cultures of Asia can grasp the universal saving significance of the mystery of Jesus and his Church.⁸³ The penetrating insight into peoples and their cultures, exemplified in such men as Giovanni da Montecorvino, Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili, to mention only a few, needs to be emulated at the present time.

The Challenge of Inculturation

21. Culture is the vital space within which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel. Just as a culture is the result of the life and activity of a human group, so the persons belonging to that group are shaped to a large extent by the culture in which they live. As persons and societies change, so too does the culture change with them. As a culture is transformed, so too are persons and societies transformed by it. From this perspective, it becomes clearer why evangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related to each other. The Gospel and evangelization are certainly not identical with culture; they are independent of it. Yet the Kingdom of God comes to people who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing elements from human cultures. Thus Paul VI called the split between the Gospel and culture the drama of our time, with a profound impact upon both evangelization and culture.⁸⁴

¹³ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 5.

^M Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 20: AAS 68 (1976), 18f.

In the process of encountering the world's different cultures, the Church not only transmits her truths and values and renews cultures from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them. This is the obligatory path for evangelizers in presenting the Christian faith and making it part of a people's cultural heritage. Conversely, the various cultures, when refined and renewed in the light of the Gospel, can become true expressions of the one Christian faith. "Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission".⁸⁵ This engagement with cultures has always been part of the Church's pilgrimage through history. But it has a special urgency today in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural situation of Asia, where Christianity is still too often seen as foreign.

It is good to remember at this point what was said repeatedly during the Synod: that the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of the inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia.⁸⁶ The same Holy Spirit who leads us into the whole truth makes possible a fruitful dialogue with the cultural and religious values of different peoples, among whom he is present in some measure, giving men and women with a sincere heart the strength to overcome evil and the deceit of the Evil One, and indeed offering everyone the possibility of sharing in the Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God.⁸⁷ The Spirit's presence ensures that the dialogue unfolds in truth, honesty, humility and respect.⁸⁸ "In offering to others the Good News of the Redemption, the Church strives to understand their culture. She

⁸⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 52: AAS 83 (1991), 300.

⁸⁶ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 9.

⁸⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 28: AAS 83 (1991), 273f.

⁸⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 56: AAS 83 (1991), 304.

seeks to know the minds and hearts of her hearers, their values and customs, their problems and difficulties, their hopes and dreams. Once she knows and understands these various aspects of culture, then she can begin the dialogue of salvation; she can offer, respectfully but with clarity and conviction, the Good News of the Redemption to all who freely wish to listen and to respond".⁸⁹ Therefore the people of Asia who, as Asians, wish to make the Christian faith their own, can rest assured that their hopes, expectations, anxieties and sufferings are not only embraced by Jesus, but become the very point at which the gift of faith and the power of the Spirit enter the innermost core of their lives.

It is the task of the Pastors, in virtue of their charism, to guide this dialogue with discernment. Likewise, experts in sacred and secular disciplines have important roles to play in the process of inculturation. *But the process must involve the entire People of God*, since the life of the Church as a whole must show forth the faith which is being proclaimed and appropriated. To ensure that this is done soundly, the Synod Fathers identified certain areas for particular attention—theological reflection, liturgy, the formation of priests and religious, catechesis and spirituality.⁹⁰

Key Areas of Inculturation

22. The Synod expressed encouragement to *theologians* in their delicate work of developing an inculturated theology, especially in the area of Christology.⁹¹ They noted that "this theologizing is to be carried out with courage, in faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Church's Tradition, in sincere adherence to the Magisterium and with an awareness of pastoral realities".⁹² I too

" John Paul II, Homily at the Mass for the Catholics of West Bengal, Calcutta (4 February 1986), 3: *Insegnamenti* IX, 1 (1986), 314.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 43.

⁹¹ Cf. *Propositio* 7.

⁹² *Ibid.*

urge theologians to work in a spirit of union with the Pastors and the people, who—in union with one another and never separated from one another—"reflect the authentic *sensus fidei* which must never be lost sight of".⁹³ Theological work must always be guided by respect for the sensibilities of Christians, so that by a gradual growth into inculturated forms of expressing the faith people are neither confused nor scandalized. In every case inculturation must be guided by compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the faith of the universal Church, in full compliance with the Church's Tradition and with a view to strengthening people's faith.⁹⁴ The test of true inculturation is whether people become more committed to their Christian faith because they perceive it more clearly with the eyes of their own culture.

The *Liturgy* is the source and summit of all Christian life and mission.⁹⁵ It is a decisive means of evangelization, especially in Asia, where the followers of different religions are so drawn to worship, religious festivals and popular devotions.⁹⁶ The liturgy of the Oriental Churches has for the most part been successfully inculturated through centuries of interaction with the surrounding culture, but the more recently established Churches need to ensure that the liturgy becomes an ever greater source of nourishment for their peoples through a wise and effective use of elements drawn from the local cultures. Yet liturgical inculturation requires more than a focus upon traditional cultural values, symbols and rituals. There is also a need to take account of the shifts in consciousness and attitudes caused by the emerging secularist and consumer cultures which are affecting the Asian sense of worship

" John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 54: AAS 83 (1991), 302.

" Cf. *ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 301.

* Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10; Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 14.

* Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 14; *Propositio* 43.

and prayer. Nor can the specific needs of the poor, migrants, refugees, youth and women be overlooked in any genuine liturgical inculturation in Asia. The national and regional Bishops' Conferences need to work more closely with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in the search for effective ways of fostering appropriate forms of worship in the Asian context.⁹⁷ Such cooperation is essential because the Sacred Liturgy expresses and celebrates the one faith professed by all and, being the heritage of the whole Church, cannot be determined by local Churches in isolation from the universal Church.

The Synod Fathers stressed particularly the importance of the biblical word in passing on the message of salvation to the peoples of Asia, where the transmitted word is so important in preserving and communicating religious experience.⁹⁸ It follows that an effective biblical apostolate needs to be developed in order to ensure that the sacred text may be more widely diffused and more intensively and prayerfully used among the members of the Church in Asia. The Synod Fathers urged that it be made the basis for all missionary proclamation, catechesis, preaching and styles of spirituality.⁹⁹ Efforts to translate the Bible into local languages need to be encouraged and supported. Biblical formation should be considered an important means of educating people in the faith and equipping them for the task of proclamation. Pastorally oriented courses on the Bible, with due emphasis on applying its teachings to the complex realities of Asian life, ought to be incorporated into formation programmes for the clergy, for consecrated persons and for the laity.¹⁰⁰ The Sacred Scriptures should also be made known among the followers of other religions; the

⁹⁷ Cf. *Propositi* 43.

⁹⁸ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*,

13.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 17.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 18.

word of God has an inherent power to touch the hearts of people, for through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit reveals God's plan of salvation for the world. Moreover, the narrative styles found in many books of the Bible has an affinity with the religious texts typical of Asia.¹⁰¹

Another key aspect of inculturation upon which the future of the process in large part depends is *the formation of evangelizers*. In the past, formation often followed the style, methods and programmes imported from the West, and while appreciating the service rendered by that mode of formation, the Synod Fathers recognized as a positive development the efforts made in recent times to adapt the formation of evangelizers to the cultural contexts of Asia. As well as a solid grounding in biblical and patristic studies, seminarians should acquire a detailed and firm grasp of the Church's theological and philosophical patrimony, as I urged in my Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*.¹⁰² On the basis of this preparation, they will then benefit from contact with Asian philosophical and religious traditions.¹⁰³ The Synod Fathers also encouraged seminary professors and staff to seek a profound understanding of the elements of spirituality and prayer akin to the Asian soul, and to involve themselves more deeply in the Asian peoples' search for a fuller life.¹⁰⁴ To this end, emphasis was placed on the need to ensure the proper formation of seminary staff.¹⁰⁵ The Synod also expressed concern for the formation of men and women in the consecrated life, making it clear that the spirituality and lifestyle of consecrated persons needs to be sensitive to the religious and cultural heritage of the people among whom they live and whom they serve, always presupposing the necessary discernment of what conforms to the Gospel and what does not.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Propositi* 17.

¹⁰³ Nos. 60; 62; 105: AAS 91 (1999), 52f.; 54; 85f.

¹⁰ » Cf. *Propositio* 24.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 25.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

* Cf. *Propositio* 27.

Moreover, since the inculturation of the Gospel involves the entire People of God, the role of the laity is of paramount importance. It is they above all who are called to transform society, in collaboration with the Bishops, clergy and religious, by infusing the "mind of Christ" into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the secular world in which they live.¹⁰⁷ A wider inculturation of the Gospel at every level of society in Asia will depend greatly on the appropriate formation which the local Churches succeed in giving to the laity.

Christian Life as Proclamation

23. The more the Christian community is rooted in the experience of God which flows from a living faith, the more credibly it will be able to proclaim to others the fulfilment of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ. This will result from faithfully listening to the word of God, from prayer and contemplation, from celebrating the mystery of Jesus in the sacraments, above all in the Eucharist, and from giving example of true communion of life and integrity of love. The heart of the particular Church must be set on the contemplation of Jesus Christ, God-made-Man, and strive constantly for a more intimate union with him whose mission she continues. *Mission is contemplative action and active contemplation.* Therefore, a missionary who has no deep experience of God in prayer and contemplation will have little spiritual influence or missionary success. This is an insight drawn from my own priestly ministry and, as I have written elsewhere, my contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation.¹⁰⁸ In Asia,

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 29.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 91: AAS 83 (1991),

home to great religions where individuals and entire peoples are thirsting for the divine, the Church is called to be a praying Church, deeply spiritual even as she engages in immediate human and social concerns. All Christians need a true missionary spirituality of prayer and contemplation. A genuinely religious person readily wins respect and a following in Asia. Prayer, fasting and various forms of asceticism are held in high regard. Renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity and silence are considered great values by the followers of all religions. Lest prayer be divorced from human promotion, the Synod Fathers insisted that "the work of justice, charity and compassion is interrelated with a genuine life of prayer and contemplation, and indeed it is this same spirituality that will be the wellspring of all our evangelizing work".¹⁰⁹ Fully convinced of the importance of authentic witnesses in the evangelization of Asia, the Synod Fathers stated: "The Good News of Jesus Christ can only be proclaimed by those who are taken up and inspired by the love of the Father for his children, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. This proclamation is a mission needing holy men and women who will make the Saviour known and loved through their lives. A fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire. So, too, successful proclamation in Asia of the Good News of salvation can only take place if Bishops, clergy, those in the consecrated life and the laity are themselves on fire with the love of Christ and burning with zeal to make him known more widely, loved more deeply and followed more closely".¹¹⁰ Christians who speak of Christ must embody in their lives the message that they proclaim.

In this regard, however, a particular circumstance in the Asian context demands attention. The Church realizes that *the silent witness of life* still remains the only way of proclaiming God's Kingdom in many places in Asia where explicit proclamation is

^{<m} *Propositio* 19.

¹¹⁰ *Propositio* 8.

forbidden and religious freedom is denied or systematically restricted. The Church consciously lives this type of witness, seeing it as the "taking up of her cross" (cf. *Lk* 9:23), all the while calling upon and urging governments to recognize religious freedom as a fundamental human right. The words of the Second Vatican Council are worth repeating here: "the human person has a right to religious freedom. Such freedom consists in this, that all should have such immunity from coercion by individuals, or by social groups, or by any human power, that no one should be forced to act against his conscience in religious matters, nor prevented from acting according to his conscience, whether in private or in public, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits".¹¹¹ In some Asian countries, this statement still has to be acknowledged and put into effect.

Clearly, then, the proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia presents many complex aspects, both in content and in method. The Synod Fathers were keenly aware of the legitimate variety of approaches to the proclamation of Jesus, provided that the faith itself is respected in all its integrity in the process of appropriating and sharing it. The Synod noted that "evangelization today is a reality that is both rich and dynamic. It has various aspects and elements: witness, dialogue, proclamation, catechesis, conversion, baptism, insertion into the ecclesial community, the implantation of the Church, inculturation and integral human promotion. Some of these elements proceed together, while some others are successive steps or phases of the entire process of evangelization".¹¹² In all evangelizing work, however, it is the complete truth of Jesus Christ which must be proclaimed. Emphasizing certain aspects of the inexhaustible mystery of Jesus is both legitimate and necessary in gradually introducing Christ to a person, but this cannot be allowed to compromise the integrity of the faith. In the end, a

¹¹¹ Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2.

¹¹² *Propositio* 6.

person's acceptance of the faith must be grounded on a sure understanding of the person of Jesus Christ, as presented by the Church in every time and place, the Lord of all who is "the same yesterday, today and for ever" (*Heb* 13:8).

CHAPTER V

COMMUNION AND DIALOGUE FOR MISSION

Communion and Mission Go Hand in Hand

24. In accordance with the Father's eternal design, the Church, foreshadowed from the world's beginning, prepared for in the old Covenant, instituted by Christ Jesus and made present to the world by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, "progresses on her pilgrimage amid this world's persecutions and God's consolations",¹¹³ as she strives towards her perfection in the glory of heaven. Since God desires "that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit",¹¹⁴ the Church is in the world "the visible plan of God's love for humanity, the sacrament of salvation".¹¹⁵ The Church cannot therefore be understood merely as a social organization or agency of human welfare. Despite having sinful men and women in her midst, the Church must be seen as the privileged place of encounter between God and man, in which God chooses to reveal the mystery of his inner life and carry out his plan of salvation for the world.

The mystery of God's loving design is made present and active in the community of the men and women who have been buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, they might walk in newness of life (cf. *Rom* 6:4). At the heart of the mystery of the Church is the bond of communion which unites Christ the

¹¹³ Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII, 51, 2: PL 41, 614; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

¹¹⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 7; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 17.

¹¹⁵ Paul VI, Address to the College of Cardinals (22 June 1973): AAS 65 (1973), 391.

Bridegroom to all the baptized. Through this living and life-giving communion, "Christians no longer belong to themselves but are the Lord's very own".¹¹⁶ United to the Son in the Spirit's bond of love, Christians are united to the Father, and from this communion flows the communion which Christians share with one another through Christ in the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ The Church's first purpose then is to be the sacrament of the *inner union of the human person with God*, and, because people's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of *the unity of the human race*.¹¹⁸ In her this unity is already begun; and at the same time she is the "sign and instrument" of the full realization of the unity yet to come.¹¹⁹

It is an essential demand of life in Christ that whoever enters into communion with the Lord is expected to bear fruit: "He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit" (*Jn* 15:5). So true is this that the person who does not bear fruit does not remain in communion: "Each branch of mine that bears no fruit [my Father] takes away" (*Jn* 15:2). Communion with Jesus, which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves, is the indispensable condition for bearing fruit; and communion with others, which is the gift of Christ and his Spirit, is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give. In this sense, communion and mission are inseparably connected. They interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, so that "communion represents both the source and fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion".¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laid* (30 December 1988), 18: AAS 81 (1989), 421.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 775.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹²⁰ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laid* (30 December 1988), 32: AAS 81 (1989), 451f.

Using the theology of communion, the Second Vatican Council could describe the Church as the pilgrim People of God to whom all peoples are in some way related.¹²¹ On this basis the Synod Fathers stressed the mysterious link between the Church and the followers of other Asian religions, noting that they are "related to [the Church] in varying degrees and ways".¹²² In the midst of so many different peoples, cultures and religions "the life of the Church as communion assumes greater importance".¹²³ In effect, the Church's service of unity has a specific relevance in Asia where there are so many tensions, divisions and conflicts, caused by ethnic, social, cultural, linguistic, economic and religious differences. It is in this context that the local Churches in Asia, in communion with the Successor of Peter, need to foster greater communion of mind and heart through close cooperation among themselves. Vital also to their evangelizing mission are their relations with other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities, and with the followers of other religions.¹²⁴ The Synod therefore renewed the commitment of the Church in Asia to the task of improving both ecumenical relations and interreligious dialogue, recognizing that building unity, working for reconciliation, forging bonds of solidarity, promoting dialogue among religions and cultures, eradicating prejudices and engendering trust among peoples are all essential to the Church's evangelizing mission on the continent. All this demands of the Catholic community a sincere examination of conscience, the courage to seek reconciliation and a renewed commitment to dialogue. At the threshold of the Third Millennium it is clear that the Church's ability to evangelize requires that she strive earnestly to serve the cause of

¹²¹ Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

¹²² *Propositio* 13.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 6.

unity in all its dimensions. Communion and mission go hand in hand.

Communion within the Church

25. Gathered around the Successor of Peter, praying and working together, the Bishops of the Special Assembly for Asia personified as it were the communion of the Church in all the rich diversity of the particular Churches over which they preside in charity. My own presence at the Synod's General Sessions was both a welcome opportunity to share the joys and hopes, the difficulties and anxieties of the Bishops, and an intense and deeply-felt exercise of my own ministry. It is in fact within the perspective of ecclesial communion that the universal authority of the Successor of Peter shines forth more clearly, not primarily as juridical power over the local Churches, but above all as a pastoral primacy at the service of the unity of faith and life of the whole People of God. Fully aware that "the Petrine office has a unique ministry in guaranteeing and promoting the unity of the Church",¹²⁵ the Synod Fathers acknowledged the service which the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Holy See's Diplomatic Service render to the local Churches, in the spirit of communion and collegiality.¹²⁶ An essential feature of this service is the respect and sensitivity which these close co-workers of the Successor of Peter show towards the legitimate diversity of the local Churches and the variety of cultures and peoples with which they are in contact.

Each particular Church must be grounded in the witness of ecclesial communion which constitutes its very nature as Church. The Synod Fathers chose to describe the Diocese as a communion of communities gathered around the Shepherd, where clergy,

¹¹⁵ *Propositio* 13; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

¹²⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 13.

consecrated persons and the laity are engaged in a "dialogue of life and heart" sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁷ It is primarily in the Diocese that the vision of a *communion of communities* can be actualized in the midst of the complex social, political, religious, cultural and economic realities of Asia. Ecclesial communion implies that each local Church should become what the Synod Fathers called a "participatory Church", a Church, that is, in which all live their proper vocation and perform their proper role. In order to build up the "communion for mission" and the "mission of communion", every member's unique charism needs to be acknowledged, developed and effectively utilized.¹²⁸ In particular there is a need to foster greater involvement of the laity and consecrated men and women in pastoral planning and decision-making, through such participatory structures as Pastoral Councils and Parish Assemblies.¹²⁹

In every Diocese, *the parish* remains the ordinary place where the faithful gather to grow in faith, to live the mystery of ecclesial communion and to take part in the Church's mission. Therefore, the Synod Fathers urged Pastors to devise new and effective ways of shepherding the faithful, so that everyone, especially the poor, will feel truly a part of the parish and of God's People as a whole. Pastoral planning with the lay faithful should be a normal feature of all parishes.¹³⁰ The Synod singled out young people in particular as those for whom "the parish should provide greater opportunity for fellowship and communion... by means of organized youth apostolates and youth clubs".¹³¹ No one should be excluded a priori from sharing fully in the life and mission of the parish because

¹²⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 15; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio Notio* (28 May 1992), 3-10: AAS 85 (1993), 839-844.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 15.

¹²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 16.

¹³¹ *Propositio* 34.

of their social, economic, political, cultural or educational background. Just as each follower of Christ has a gift to offer the community, so the community should show a willingness to receive and benefit from the gift of each one.

In this context, and drawing on their pastoral experience, the Synod Fathers underlined the value of *basic ecclesial communities* as an effective way of promoting communion and participation in parishes and Dioceses, and as a genuine force for evangelization.¹³² These small groups help the faithful to live as believing, praying and loving communities like the early Christians (cf. *Acts* 2:44-47; 4:32-35). They aim to help their members to live the Gospel in a spirit of fraternal love and service, and are therefore a solid starting point for building a new society, the expression of *a civilization of love*. With the Synod, I encourage the Church in Asia, where possible, to consider these basic communities as a positive feature of the Church's evangelizing activity. At the same time they will only be truly effective if—as Pope Paul VI wrote—they live in union with the particular and the universal Church, in heartfelt communion with the Church's Pastors and the Magisterium, with a commitment to missionary outreach and without yielding to isolationism or ideological exploitation.¹³³ The presence of these small communities does not do away with the established institutions and structures, which remain necessary for the Church to fulfil her mission.

The Synod also recognized the role of *renewal movements* in building communion, in providing opportunities for a more intimate experience of God through faith and the sacraments, and in fostering conversion of life.¹³⁴ It is the responsibility of Pastors

¹² Cf. *Propositio* 30; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 51: AAS 83 (1991), 298.

¹³ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 58: AAS 68 (1976), 46-49; John Paul II, Encyclical Utter *Redemptoris Missio*, 51: AAS 83 (1991), 299.

¹⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 31.

to guide, accompany and encourage these groups so that they may be well integrated into the life and mission of the parish and Diocese. Those involved in associations and movements should offer their support to the local Church and not present themselves as alternatives to Diocesan structures and parish life. Communion grows stronger when the local leaders of these movements work together with the Pastors in a spirit of charity for the good of all (cf. *1 Cor* 1:13).

Solidarity among the Churches

26. This communion *ad intra* contributes to *solidarity among the particular Churches themselves*. Attention to local needs is legitimate and indispensable, but communion requires that the particular Churches remain open to one another and collaborate with one another, so that in their diversity they may preserve and clearly manifest the bond of communion with the universal Church. Communion calls for mutual understanding and a coordinated approach to mission, without prejudice to the autonomy and rights of the Churches according to their respective theological, liturgical and spiritual traditions. History however shows how divisions have often wounded the communion of the Churches in Asia. Down the centuries, relations between particular Churches of different ecclesiastical jurisdictions, liturgical traditions and missionary styles have sometimes been tense and difficult. The Bishops present at the Synod acknowledged that even today within and among the particular Churches in Asia there are sometimes unfortunate divisions, often connected with ritual, linguistic, ethnic, caste and ideological differences. Some wounds have been partially healed, but there is not yet full healing. Recognizing that wherever communion is weakened the Church's witness and missionary work suffer, the Fathers proposed concrete steps to strengthen relations between the particular Churches in Asia. As well as the necessary spiritual expressions of support and encour-

agement, they suggested a more equitable distribution of priests, more effective financial solidarity, cultural and theological exchanges, and increased opportunities for partnership between Dioceses.¹³⁵

Regional and continental associations of Bishops, notably the Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the Middle East and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences have helped to foster union among the local Churches and have provided venues for cooperation in resolving pastoral problems. Similarly, there are many centres of theology, spirituality and pastoral activity across Asia which foster communion and practical cooperation.¹³⁶ It must be the concern of all to see these promising initiatives develop further for the good of both the Church and society in Asia.

The Catholic Eastern Churches

27. The situation of the *Catholic Eastern Churches*, principally of the Middle East and India, merits special attention. From Apostolic times they have been the custodians of a precious spiritual, liturgical and theological heritage. Their traditions and rites, born of a deep inculturation of the faith in the soil of many Asian countries, deserve the greatest respect. With the Synod Fathers, I call upon everyone to recognize the legitimate customs and the legitimate freedom of these Churches in disciplinary and liturgical matters, as stipulated by the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.¹³⁷ Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, there is an urgent need to overcome the fears and misunderstandings which appear at times between the Catholic Eastern Churches and the Latin Church, and among those Churches

¹³⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 14.

¹³⁶ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: L'Osservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 6.

¹³⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 50.

themselves, especially with regard to the pastoral care of their people, also outside their own territories.¹³⁸ As children of the one Church, reborn into the newness of life in Christ, believers are called to undertake all things in a spirit of common purpose, trust and unfailing charity. Conflicts must not be allowed to create division, but must instead be handled in a spirit of truth and respect, since no good can come except from love.¹³⁹

These venerable Churches are directly involved in ecumenical dialogue with their sister Orthodox Churches, and the Synod Fathers urged them to pursue this path.¹⁴⁰ They have also had valuable experiences in interreligious dialogue, especially with Islam. This can be helpful to other Churches in Asia and elsewhere. It is clear that the Catholic Eastern Churches possess a great wealth of tradition and experience which can greatly benefit the whole Church.

Sharing Hopes and Sufferings

28. The Synod Fathers were also aware of the need for effective communion and cooperation with the local Churches present in the ex-Soviet territories of Asia, which are rebuilding in the trying circumstances inherited from a difficult period of history. The Church accompanies them in prayer, sharing their sufferings and their new-found hopes. I encourage the whole Church to lend moral, spiritual and material support, and much needed ordained and non-ordained personnel to help these communities in the task of sharing with the peoples of these lands the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.¹⁴¹

^m Cf. *Propositiones* 36 and 50.

"»Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church (8 January 1996), 6: AAS 88 (1996), 41.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 50.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Propositio* 56.

In many parts of Asia, our brothers and sisters continue to live their faith in the midst of restrictions or even the total denial of freedom. For these *suffering members of the Church*, the Synod Fathers expressed special concern and solicitude. With the Bishops of Asia, I urge our brothers and sisters of these Churches in difficult circumstances to join their sufferings to those of the crucified Lord, for we and they know that the Cross alone, when borne in faith and love, is the path to resurrection and new life for humanity. I encourage the various national Episcopal Conferences in Asia to establish an office to help these Churches; and I pledge the Holy See's continued closeness to and concern for all those who are suffering persecution for their faith in Christ.¹⁴² I appeal to governments and the leaders of nations to adopt and implement policies that guarantee religious freedom for all their citizens.

On many occasions the Synod Fathers turned their thoughts to the Catholic Church in Mainland China and prayed that the day may soon come when our beloved Chinese brothers and sisters will be completely free to practise their faith in full communion with the See of Peter and the universal Church. To you, dear Chinese brothers and sisters, I make this fervent exhortation: never allow hardship and sorrow to diminish your devotion to Christ and your commitment to your great nation.¹⁴⁵ The Synod also expressed a cordial sense of solidarity with the Catholic Church in Korea, and supported "the efforts of Catholics to give assistance to the people of North Korea who are deprived of the minimal means of survival, and to bring reconciliation among two countries of one people, one language and one cultural heritage".¹⁴⁴

Likewise, the Synod's thoughts frequently returned to the Church in Jerusalem, which has a special place in the hearts of

¹² Cf. *Propositio* 51.

¹³ Cf. *Propositio* 52.

^M *Propositio* 53.

all Christians. Indeed, the words of the Prophet Isaiah find an echo in the hearts of millions of believers throughout the world, for whom Jerusalem occupies a unique and cherished position: "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her... that you may drink deeply with delight from the abundance of her glory" (66:10-11). Jerusalem, the city of reconciliation of men with God and among themselves, has so often been a place of conflict and division. The Synod Fathers called upon the particular Churches to stand in solidarity with the Church in Jerusalem by sharing her sorrows, by praying for her and cooperating with her in serving peace, justice and reconciliation between the two peoples and the three religions present in the Holy City.¹⁴⁵ I renew the appeal which I have often made to political and religious leaders and to all people of good will to search for ways to ensure the peace and integrity of Jerusalem. As I have already written, it is my own fervent wish to go there on a religious pilgrimage, like my predecessor Pope Paul VI, to pray in the Holy City where Jesus Christ lived, died and rose again and to visit the place from which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles went forth to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.¹⁴⁶

A Mission of Dialogue

29. The common theme of the various "continental" Synods which have helped to prepare the Church for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is that of the *new evangelization*. A new era of proclamation of the Gospel is essential not only because, after two millennia, a major part of the human family still does not acknowledge Christ, but also because the situation in which the

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 57.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Letter Concerning Pilgrimage to the Places Linked to the History of Salvation (29 June 1999), 7; *L'Osservatore Romano* (30 June - 1 July 1999), 9.

Church and the world find themselves at the threshold of the new millennium is particularly challenging for religious belief and the moral truths which spring from it. There is a tendency almost everywhere to build progress and prosperity without reference to God, and to reduce the religious dimension of the human person to the private sphere. Society, separated from the most basic truth about man, namely his relationship to the Creator and to the redemption brought about by Christ in the Holy Spirit, can only stray further and further from the true sources of life, love and happiness. This violent century which is fast coming to a close bears terrifying witness to what can happen when truth and goodness are abandoned in favour of the lust for power and self-aggrandizement. The new evangelization, as a call to conversion, grace and wisdom, is the only genuine hope for a better world and a brighter future. The question is not whether the Church has something essential to say to the men and women of our time, but how she can say it clearly and convincingly!

At the time of the Second Vatican Council, my predecessor Pope Paul VI declared, in his Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, that the question of the relationship between the Church and the modern world was one of the most important concerns of our time. He wrote that "its existence and its urgency are such as to create a burden on our soul, a stimulus, a vocation".¹⁴⁷ Since the Council the Church has consistently shown that she wants to pursue that relationship in a spirit of dialogue. The desire for dialogue, however, is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples; it is an essential part of the Church's mission because it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church can accomplish her mission only in a way that corresponds to the way in which God acted in Jesus Christ: he became man,

¹⁴⁷ AAS 56 (1964), 613.

shared our human life and spoke in a human language to communicate his saving message. The dialogue which the Church proposes is grounded in the logic of the Incarnation. Therefore, nothing but fervent and unselfish solidarity prompts the Church's dialogue with the men and women of Asia who seek the truth in love.

As the sacrament of the unity of all mankind, the Church cannot but enter into dialogue with all peoples, in every time and place. Responding to the mission she has received, she ventures forth to meet the peoples of the world, conscious of being a "little flock" within the vast throng of humanity (cf. *Lk* 12:32), but also of being leaven in the dough of the world (cf. *Mt* 13:33). Her efforts to engage in dialogue are directed in the first place to those who share her belief in Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour. It extends beyond the Christian world to the followers of every other religious tradition, on the basis of the religious yearnings found in every human heart. Ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue constitute a veritable vocation for the Church.

Ecumenical Dialogue

30. Ecumenical dialogue is a challenge and a call to conversion for the whole Church, especially for the Church in Asia where people expect from Christians a clearer sign of unity. For all peoples to come together in the grace of God, communion needs to be restored among those who in faith have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord. Jesus himself prayed and does not cease to call for the visible unity of his disciples, so that the world may believe that the Father has sent him (cf. *Jn* 17:21).¹⁴⁸ But the Lord's will that his Church be one awaits a complete and courageous response from his disciples.

Cf. *Propositio* 42.

In Asia, precisely where the number of Christians is proportionately small, division makes missionary work still more difficult. The Synod Fathers acknowledged that "the scandal of a divided Christianity is a great obstacle for evangelization in Asia".¹⁴⁹ In fact, the division among Christians is seen as a counter-witness to Jesus Christ by many in Asia who are searching for harmony and unity through their own religions and cultures. Therefore the Catholic Church in Asia feels especially impelled to work for unity with other Christians, realizing that the search for full communion demands from everyone charity, discernment, courage and hope. "In order to be authentic and bear fruit, ecumenism requires certain fundamental dispositions on the part of the Catholic faithful: in the first place, charity that shows itself in goodness and a lively desire to cooperate wherever possible with the faithful of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities; secondly, fidelity towards the Catholic Church, without however ignoring or denying the shortcomings manifested by some of her members; thirdly, a spirit of discernment in order to appreciate all that is good and worthy of praise. Finally, a sincere desire for purification and renewal is also needed".¹⁵⁰

While recognizing the difficulties still existing in the relationships between Christians, which involve not only prejudices inherited from the past but also judgments rooted in profound convictions which involve conscience,¹⁵¹ the Synod Fathers also pointed to signs of improved relations among some Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities in Asia. Catholic and Orthodox Christians, for example, often recognize a cultural unity with one another, a sense of sharing important elements of a common ecclesial tradition. This forms a solid basis for a

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ John Paul II, Address at the General Audience (26 July 1995), 4: *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 2 (1995), 138.

¹⁵¹ Cf. John Paul II, Address at the General Audience (20 January 1982), 2: *Insegnamenti* V, 1 (1982), 162.

continuing fruitful ecumenical dialogue into the next millennium, which, we must hope and pray, will ultimately bring an end to the divisions of the millennium that is now coming to a close.

On the practical level, the Synod proposed that the national Episcopal Conferences in Asia invite other Christian Churches to join in a process of prayer and consultation in order to explore the possibilities of new ecumenical structures and associations to promote Christian unity. The Synod's suggestion that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be celebrated more fruitfully is also helpful. Bishops are encouraged to set up and oversee ecumenical centres of prayer and dialogue; and adequate formation for ecumenical dialogue needs to be included in the curriculum of seminaries, houses of formation and educational institutions.

Interreligious Dialogue

31. In my Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* I indicated that the advent of a new millennium offers a great opportunity for interreligious dialogue and for meetings with the leaders of the great world religions.¹⁵² Contact, dialogue and cooperation with the followers of other religions is a task which the Second Vatican Council bequeathed to the whole Church as a duty and a challenge. The principles of this search for a positive relationship with other religious traditions are set out in the Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, promulgated on 28 October 1965, the Magna Carta of interreligious dialogue for our times. From the Christian point of view, interreligious dialogue is more than a way of fostering mutual knowledge and enrichment; it is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission, an expression of the mission *ad gentes*.¹⁵³ Christians bring to interreligious dialogue the firm belief that the

¹⁵² Cf. No. 53: AAS 87 (1995), 37.

¹⁵³ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 55: AAS 83 (1991), 302.

fullness of salvation comes from Christ alone and that the Church community to which they belong is the *ordinary means* of salvation.¹⁵⁴ Here I repeat what I wrote to the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: "Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all people, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without failing Jesus Christ who is 'the way and the truth and the life'... The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people".¹⁵⁵

In the process of dialogue, as I have already written in my Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, "there must be no abandonment of principles nor false irenicism, but instead a witness given and received for mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience, and at the same time for the elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings".¹⁵⁶ Only those with a mature and convinced Christian faith are qualified to engage in genuine interreligious dialogue. "Only Christians who are deeply immersed in the mystery of Christ and who are happy in their faith community can without undue risk and with hope of positive fruit engage in interreligious dialogue".¹⁵⁷ It is therefore important for the Church in Asia to provide suitable models of interreligious dialogue—evangelization in dialogue and dialogue for evangelization—and suitable training for those involved.

Having stressed the need in interreligious dialogue for firm faith in Christ, the Synod Fathers went on to speak of the need

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*: *he. cit.*, 304.

¹⁵⁵ No. 4: AAS 83 (1991), IOIf.

¹⁵⁶ No. 56: AAS 83 (1991), 304.

¹⁵⁷ *Propositio* 41.

for a *dialogue of life and heart*. The followers of Christ must have the gentle and humble heart of their Master, never proud, never condescending, as they meet their partners in dialogue (cf. *Mt* 1:29). "Interreligious relations are best developed in a context of openness to other believers, a willingness to listen and the desire to respect and understand others in their differences. For all this, love of others is indispensable. This should result in collaboration, harmony and mutual enrichment".¹⁵⁸

To guide those engaged in the process, the Synod suggested that a directory on interreligious dialogue be drawn up.¹⁵⁹ As the Church explores new ways of encountering other religions, I mention some forms of dialogue already taking place with good results, including scholarly exchanges between experts in the various religious traditions or representatives of those traditions, common action for integral human development and the defence of human and religious values.¹⁶⁰ I repeat how important it is to revitalize prayer and contemplation in the process of dialogue. Men and women in the consecrated life can contribute very significantly to interreligious dialogue by witnessing to the vitality of the great Christian traditions of asceticism and mysticism.¹⁶¹

The memorable meeting held in Assisi, the city of Saint Francis, on 27 October 1986, between the Catholic Church and representatives of the other world religions shows that religious men and women, without abandoning their own traditions, can still commit themselves to praying and working for peace and the good of humanity.¹⁶² The Church must continue to strive to preserve

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 57: AAS 83 (1991), 305.

¹⁶¹ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrate!* (25 March, 1996), 8: AAS 88 (1996), 383.

¹⁶² Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 47: AAS 80 (1988), 582.

and foster at all levels this spirit of encounter and cooperation between religions.

Communion and dialogue are two essential aspects of the Church's mission, which have their infinitely transcendent exemplar in the mystery of the Trinity, from whom all mission comes and to whom it must be directed. One of the great "birthday" gifts which the members of the Church, and especially her Pastors, can offer the Lord of History on the two thousandth anniversary of his Incarnation is a strengthening of the spirit of *unity and communion* at every level of ecclesial life, a renewed "holy pride" in the Church's continuing fidelity to what has been handed down, and a new confidence in the unchanging grace and mission which sends her out among the peoples of the world to witness to God's saving love and mercy. Only if the People of God recognize the gift that is theirs in Christ will they be able to communicate that gift to others through *proclamation and dialogue*.

CHAPTER VI

THE SERVICE OF HUMAN PROMOTION

The Social Doctrine of the Church

32. In the service of the human family, the Church reaches out to all men and women without distinction, striving to build with them a civilization of love, founded upon the universal values of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom, which find their fulfilment in Christ. As the Second Vatican Council said so memorably: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts".¹⁶³ The Church in Asia then, with its multitude of poor and oppressed people, is called to live a communion of life which shows itself particularly in loving service to the poor and defenceless.

If in recent times the Church's Magisterium has insisted more and more upon the need to promote the authentic and integral development of the human person,¹⁶⁴ this is in response to the real situation of the world's peoples, as well as to an increased consciousness that not just the actions of individuals but also structures of social, political and economic life are often inimical

¹⁶³ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

¹⁶⁴ In many ways the point of departure was the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII (15 May 1891) which ushered in a series of solemn Church statements on various aspects of the social question. Among these was the Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967) which Pope Paul VI issued in response to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and a changed world situation. To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of that Encyclical, I released the Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987) in which, following the earlier *Magisterium*, I invited all the faithful to see themselves as called to a mission of service which necessarily includes the promotion of integral human development.

to human well-being. The imbalances entrenched in the increasing gap between those who benefit from the world's growing capacity to produce wealth and those who are left at the margin of progress call for a radical change of both mentality and structures *in favour of the human person*. The great *moral challenge* facing nations and the international community in relation to development is to have *the courage of a new solidarity*, capable of taking imaginative and effective steps to overcome both dehumanizing underdevelopment and the "overdevelopment" which tends to reduce the person to an economic unit in an ever more oppressive consumer network. In seeking to bring about this change, "the Church does not have technical solutions to offer", but "offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a concrete situation".¹⁶⁵ After all, human development is never a merely technical or economic question; it is fundamentally a *human and moral question*.

The social doctrine of the Church, which proposes a set of principles for reflection, criteria for judgement and directives for action,¹⁶⁶ is addressed in the first place to the members of the Church. It is essential that the faithful engaged in human promotion should have a firm grasp of this precious body of teaching and make it an integral part of their evangelizing mission. The Synod Fathers therefore stressed the importance of offering the faithful—in all educational activities, and especially in seminaries and houses of formation—a solid training in the social doctrine of the Church.¹⁶⁷ Christian leaders in the Church and society, and especially lay men and women with responsibilities in public life, need to be well formed in this teaching so that they can inspire

¹⁶⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 41: A AS 80 (1988), 570f.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation Ubertatis Conscientia* (22 March 1986), 72: AAS 79 (1987), 586.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 22.

and vivify civil society and its structures with the leaven of the Gospel.¹⁶⁸ The social doctrine of the Church will not only alert these Christian leaders to their duty, but will also give them guidelines for action in favour of human development, and will free them from false notions of the human person and human activity.

The Dignity of the Human Person

33. Human beings, not wealth or technology, are the prime agents and destination of development. Therefore, the kind of development that the Church promotes reaches far beyond questions of economy and technology. It begins and ends with the integrity of the human person created in the image of God and endowed with a God-given dignity and inalienable human rights. The various international declarations on human rights and the many initiatives which these have inspired are a sign of growing attention on a worldwide level to the dignity of the human person. Unfortunately, these declarations are often violated in practice. Fifty years after the solemn proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many people are still subjected to the most degrading forms of exploitation and manipulation, which make them veritable slaves to those who are more powerful, to an ideology, economic power, oppressive political systems, scientific technocracy or the intrusiveness of the mass media.¹⁶⁹

The Synod Fathers were well aware of the persistent violations of human rights in many parts of the world, and particularly in Asia, where "teeming millions are suffering from discrimination, exploitation, poverty and marginalization".¹⁷⁰ They expressed

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Pwpositio* 21.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laid* (30 December 1988), 5: AAS 81 (1989), 400-402; Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), 18: AAS 87 (1995), 419f.

¹⁷⁰ *Pwpositio* 22; cf. *Pwpositio* 39.

the need for all God's people in Asia to come to a clear awareness of the inescapable and renounceable challenge involved in the defence of human rights and the promotion of justice and peace.

Preferential Love of the Poor

34. In seeking to promote human dignity, the Church shows a preferential love of the poor and the voiceless, because the Lord has identified himself with them in a special way (cf. *Mt* 25:40). This love excludes no one, but simply embodies a priority of service to which the whole Christian tradition bears witness. "This love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future. It is impossible not to take account of the existence of these realities. To ignore them would mean becoming like the 'rich man' who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (cf. *Lk* 16:19-31)".¹⁷¹ This is especially so with regard to Asia, a continent of plentiful resources and great civilizations, but where some of the poorest nations on earth are to be found, and where more than half the population suffers deprivation, poverty and exploitation.¹⁷² The poor of Asia and of the world will always find their best reason for hope in the Gospel command to love one another as Christ has loved us (cf. *Jn* 13:34); and the Church in Asia cannot but strive earnestly to fulfil that command towards the poor, in word and in deed.

Solidarity with the poor becomes more credible if Christians themselves live simply, following the example of Jesus. Simplicity

^{1,1} John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 42: AAS 80 (1988), 573; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation *Libertatis Conscientia* (22 March 1986), 68: AAS 79 (1987), 583.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. *Propositi*/) 44.

of life, deep faith and unfeigned love for all, especially the poor and the outcast, are luminous signs of the Gospel in action. The Synod Fathers called on Asian Catholics to adopt a lifestyle consonant with the teachings of the Gospel, so that they may better serve the Church's mission and so that the Church herself may become a Church of the poor and for the poor.¹⁷³

In her love for the poor of Asia, the Church concerns herself especially with migrants, with indigenous and tribal peoples, with women and with children, since they are often the victims of the worst forms of exploitation. In addition, untold numbers of people suffer discrimination because of their culture, colour, race, caste, economic status, or because of their way of thinking. They include those who are victimized on the basis of their conversion to Christianity.¹⁷⁴ I join the Synod Fathers in appealing to all nations to recognize the right to freedom of conscience and religion and the other basic human rights.¹⁷⁵

At the present time Asia is experiencing an unprecedented flow of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and overseas workers. In the countries to which they come, these people often find themselves friendless, culturally estranged, linguistically disadvantaged and economically vulnerable. They need support and care in order to preserve their human dignity and their cultural and religious heritage.¹⁷⁶ Despite limited resources, the Church in Asia generously seeks to be a welcoming home to the weary and heavy-burdened, knowing that in the Heart of Jesus, where no one is a stranger, they will find rest (cf. *Mt* 11:28-29).

In almost every Asian country, there are large aboriginal populations, some of them on the lowest economic rung. The

¹⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 39.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 22.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 36.

Synod repeatedly noted that indigenous or tribal people often feel drawn to the person of Jesus Christ and to the Church as a community of love and service.¹⁷⁷ Herein lies an immense field of action in education and health care, as well as in promoting social participation. The Catholic community needs to intensify pastoral work among these people, attending to their concerns and to the questions of justice which affect their lives. This implies an attitude of deep respect for their traditional religion and its values; it implies as well the need to help them to help themselves, so that they can work to improve their situation and become the evangelizers of their own culture and society.¹⁷⁸

No one can remain indifferent to the suffering of the countless children in Asia who fall victim to intolerable exploitation and violence, not just as the result of the evil perpetrated by individuals but often as a direct consequence of corrupt social structures. The Synod Fathers identified child labour, paedophilia and the drug culture as the social evils which affect children most directly, and they saw clearly that these ills are compounded by others like poverty and ill-conceived programmes of national development.¹⁷⁹ The Church must do all she can to overcome such evils, to act on behalf of those most exploited, and to seek to guide the little ones to the love of Jesus, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 18:16).¹⁸⁰

The Synod voiced special concern for women, whose situation remains a serious problem in Asia, where discrimination and violence against women is often found in the home, in the workplace and even within the legal system. Illiteracy is most widespread among women, and many are treated simply as commodities in prostitution, tourism and the entertainment indus-

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Propositi* 38.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 33.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

try.¹⁸¹ In their fight against all forms of injustice and discrimination, women should find an ally in the Christian community, and for this reason the Synod proposed that where possible the local Churches in Asia should promote human rights activities on behalf of women. The aim must be to bring about a change of attitude through a proper understanding of the role of men and women in the family, in society and in the Church, through greater awareness of the original complementarity between men and women, and through clearer appreciation of the importance of the feminine dimension in all things human. The contributions of women have all too often been undervalued or ignored, and this has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. The Church in Asia would more visibly and effectively uphold women's dignity and freedom by encouraging their role in the Church's life, including her intellectual life, and by opening to them ever greater opportunities to be present and active in the Church's mission of love and service.¹⁸²

The Gospel of Life

35. The service of human development begins with the service of life itself. Life is a great gift entrusted to us by God: he entrusts it to us as a project and a responsibility. We are therefore guardians of life, not its proprietors. We receive the gift freely and, in gratitude, we must never cease to respect and defend it, from its beginning to its natural conclusion. From the moment of conception, human life involves God's creative action and remains forever in a special bond with the Creator, who is life's source and its sole end. There is no true progress, no true civil society, no true human promotion without respect for human life, especially the life of those who have no voice of their own with which to defend

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Propositio* 35.

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*

themselves. The life of every person, whether of the child in the womb, or of someone who is sick, handicapped or elderly, is a gift for all.

The Synod Fathers wholeheartedly reaffirmed the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent Magisterium, including my Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, on the sanctity of human life. I join them here in calling upon the faithful in their countries, where the demographic question is often used as an argument for the need to introduce abortion and artificial population control programmes, to resist "the culture of death".¹⁸³ They can show their fidelity to God and their commitment to true human promotion by supporting and participating in programmes which defend the life of those who are powerless to defend themselves.

Health Care

36. Following in the steps of Jesus Christ who had compassion for all and cured "all kinds of disease and illness" (*Mt* 9:35), the Church in Asia is committed to becoming still more involved in the care of the sick, since this is a vital part of her mission of offering the saving grace of Christ to the whole person. Like the Good Samaritan of the parable (cf. *Lk* 10:29-37), the Church wants to care for the sick and disabled in concrete ways,¹⁸⁴ especially where people are deprived of elementary medical care as a result of poverty and marginalization.

On numerous occasions during my visits to the Church in different parts of the world I have been deeply moved by the extraordinary Christian witness borne by religious and consecrated persons, doctors, nurses and other health care workers, especially those working with the handicapped, or in the field of terminal

¹⁸³ *Propositio* 32.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. John Paul II. Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (11 February 1984), 28-29: AAS 76 (1984), 242-244.

care, or contending with the spread of new diseases such as AIDS. Increasingly, Christian health care workers are called to be generous and self-giving in tending the victims of drug addiction and AIDS, who are often despised and abandoned by society.¹⁸⁵ Many Catholic medical institutions in Asia are facing pressures from public health care policies not based on Christian principles, and many of them are burdened by ever increasing financial difficulties. In spite of these problems, it is the exemplary self-giving love and dedicated professionalism of those involved that make these facilities an admirable and appreciated service to the community, and a particularly visible and effective sign of God's unfailing love. These health care workers must be encouraged and supported in the good that they do. Their continuing commitment and effectiveness is the best way to ensure that Christian values and ethics enter deeply into the health care systems of the continent and transform them from within.¹⁸⁶

Education

37. Throughout Asia, the Church's involvement in education is extensive and highly visible, and is therefore a key element of her presence among the peoples of the continent. In many countries, Catholic schools play an important role in evangelization, inculturating the faith, teaching the ways of openness and respect, and fostering interreligious understanding. The Church's schools often provide the only educational opportunities for girls, tribal minorities, the rural poor and less privileged children. The Synod Fathers were convinced of the need to extend and develop the apostolate of education in Asia, with an eye in particular to the disadvantaged, so that all may be helped to take their rightful

Cf. *.Propositi!*) 20.

Cf. *ibid.*

place as full citizens in society.¹⁸⁷ As the Synod Fathers noted, this will mean that the system of Catholic education must become still more clearly directed towards human promotion, providing an environment where students receive not only the formal elements of schooling but, more broadly, an integral human formation based upon the teachings of Christ.¹⁸⁸ Catholic schools should continue to be places where the faith can be freely proposed and received. In the same way, Catholic universities, in addition to pursuing the academic excellence for which they are already well known, must retain a clear Christian identity in order to be a Christian leaven in Asian societies.¹⁸⁹

Peacemaking

38. At the end of the twentieth century the world is still threatened by forces which generate conflicts and wars, and Asia is certainly not exempt from these. Among these forces are intolerance and marginalization of all kinds—social, cultural, political, and even religious. Day by day fresh violence is inflicted upon individuals and entire peoples, and the culture of death takes hold in the unjustifiable recourse to violence to resolve tensions. Given the appalling situation of conflict in so many parts of the world, the Church is called to be deeply involved in international and interreligious efforts to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation. She continues to insist on the negotiated and non-military resolution of conflicts, and she looks to the day when nations will abandon war as a way of vindicating claims or a means of resolving differences. She is convinced that war creates more problems than it ever solves, that dialogue is the only just and noble path to agreement and reconciliation, and that the patient and wise art of peacemaking is especially blessed by God.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *Propositi* 21.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

Especially troubling in Asia is the continual race to acquire weapons of mass destruction, an immoral and wasteful expenditure in national budgets, which in some cases cannot even satisfy people's basic needs. The Synod Fathers also spoke of the vast number of landmines in Asia, which have maimed or killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people, while despoiling fertile land which could otherwise be used for food production.¹⁹⁰ It is the responsibility of all, especially of those who govern nations, to work more energetically for disarmament. The Synod called for a stop to the manufacture, sale and use of nuclear, chemical and biological arms and urged those who have set landmines to assist in the work of rehabilitation and restoration.¹⁹¹ Above all the Synod Fathers prayed to God, who knows the depths of every human conscience, to put sentiments of peace in the hearts of those tempted to follow the ways of violence so that the biblical vision will become a reality: "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (*Is* 2:4).

The Synod heard many testimonies concerning the sufferings of the people of Iraq, and about the fact that many Iraqis, especially children, have died because of the lack of medicines and other basic commodities deriving from the continuing embargo. With the Synod Fathers, I wish to express once again my solidarity with the Iraqi people, and I am particularly close in prayer and hope to the sons and daughters of the Church in that country. The Synod prayed that God will enlighten the minds and hearts of all those who bear responsibility for bringing about a just solution to the crisis, in order that an already sorely tried people may be spared further suffering and sorrow.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Propositi* 23.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁹² Cf. *Propositio* 55.

Globalization

39. Considering the question of human promotion in Asia, the Synod Fathers recognized the importance of the process of economic globalization. While acknowledging its many positive effects, they pointed out that globalization has also worked to the detriment of the poor,¹⁹³ tending to push poorer countries to the margin of international economic and political relations. Many Asian nations are unable to hold their own in a global market economy. And perhaps more significantly, there is also the aspect of a *cultural* globalization, made possible by the modern communications media, which is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialistic. The result is an eroding of traditional family and social values which until now had sustained peoples and societies. All of this makes it clear that *the ethical and moral aspects of globalization* need to be more directly addressed by the leaders of nations and by organizations concerned with human promotion.

The Church insists upon the need for "globalization without marginalization".¹⁹⁴ With the Synod Fathers, I call upon the particular Churches everywhere, and especially those in the Western countries, to work to ensure that the Church's social doctrine has its due impact upon the formulation of ethical and juridical norms for regulating the world's free markets and for the means of social communication. Catholic leaders and professionals should urge governments and financial and trade institutions to recognize and respect such norms.¹⁹⁵

^{1,3} Cf. *Propositi* 49.

^m John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace (I January 1998), 3: AAS 90 (1998), 50.

^{""} Cf. *Propositio* 49.

Foreign Debt

40. Furthermore, in her search for justice in a world marred by social and economic inequalities, the Church cannot ignore the heavy burden of debt incurred by many developing nations in Asia, with its consequent impact upon their present and future. In many cases, these countries are forced to cut down spending on the necessities of life such as food, health, housing and education, in order to service their debts to international monetary agencies and banks. This means that many people are trapped in living conditions which are an affront to human dignity. While aware of the technical complexities of this matter, the Synod recognized that this issue tests the capacity of peoples, societies and governments to value the human person and the lives of millions of human beings more highly than financial and material gain.¹⁹⁶

The approach of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is an opportune time for the Episcopal Conferences of the world, especially of the wealthier nations, to encourage international monetary agencies and banks to explore ways of easing the international debt situation. Among the more obvious are a renegotiation of debts, with either substantial reduction or outright cancellation, as also business ventures and investments to assist the economies of the poorer countries.¹⁹⁷ At the same time the Synod Fathers also addressed the debtor countries. They emphasized the need to develop a sense of national responsibility, reminding them of the importance of sound economic planning, transparency and good management, and invited them to wage a resolute campaign against corruption.¹⁹⁸ They called upon the

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 48.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 51: A AS 87 (1995), 36.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *Propositi* 48.

Christians of Asia to condemn all forms of corruption and the misappropriation of public funds by those holding political power.¹⁹⁹ The citizens of debtor countries have too often been victims of waste and inefficiency at home, before falling victim to the international debt crisis.

The Environment

41. When concern for economic and technological progress is not accompanied by concern for the balance of the ecosystem, our earth is inevitably exposed to serious environmental damage, with consequent harm to human beings. Blatant disrespect for the environment will continue as long as the earth and its potential are seen merely as objects of immediate use and consumption, to be manipulated by an unbridled desire for profit.²⁰⁰ It is the duty of Christians and of all who look to God as the Creator to protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of God's creation. It is the Creator's will that man should treat nature not as a ruthless exploiter but as an intelligent and responsible administrator.²⁰¹ The Synod Fathers pleaded in a special way for greater responsibility on the part of the leaders of nations, legislators, business people and all who are directly involved in the management of the earth's resources.²⁰² They underlined the need to educate people, especially the young, in environmental responsibility, training them in the stewardship over creation which God has entrusted to humanity. The protection of the environment is not only a technical question; it is also and above all an ethical issue. All have a moral duty to care for the environment, not only for their own good but also for the good of future generations.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 22; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 44: A AS 80 (1988), 576f.

²⁰⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 287.

²⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰² Cf. *Pwpositio* 47.

In conclusion, it is worth remembering that in calling on Christians to work and sacrifice themselves in the service of human development the Synod Fathers were drawing upon some of the core insights of biblical and ecclesial tradition. Ancient Israel insisted passionately upon the unbreakable bond between worship of God and care for the weak, represented typically in Scripture as "the widow, the stranger and orphan" (cf. *Ex* 22:21-22; *Dt* 10:18; 27:19), who in the societies of the time were most vulnerable to the threat of injustice. Time and again in the Prophets we hear the cry for justice, for the right ordering of human society, without which there can be no true worship of God (cf. *Is* 1:10-17; *Am* 5:21-24). In the appeal of the Synod Fathers we thus hear an echo of the Prophets filled with the Spirit of God, who wants "mercy not sacrifice" (*Hos* 6:6). Jesus made these words his own (cf. *Mt* 9:13), and the same is true of the Saints in every time and place. Consider the words of Saint John Chrysostom: "Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Then do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him silken honours in the temple only then to neglect him when he goes cold and naked outside. He who said; 'This is my body' is the One who also said, 'You saw me hungry and you gave me no food'... What good is it if the Eucharistic Table groans under the weight of golden chalices, when Christ is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger, and then with what remains you may adorn the altar as well!"²⁰³ In the Synod's appeal for human development and for justice in human affairs, we hear a voice which is both old and new. It is old because it rises from the depths of our Christian tradition, which looks to that profound harmony which the Creator intends; it is new because it speaks to the immediate situation of countless people in Asia today.

CHAPTER VII

WITNESSES TO THE GOSPEL

A Witnessing Church

42. The Second Vatican Council taught clearly that the entire Church is missionary, and that the work of evangelization is the duty of the whole People of God.²⁰⁴ Since the whole People of God is sent forth to preach the Gospel, evangelization is never an individual and isolated act; it is always an ecclesial task which has to be carried out in communion with the whole community of faith. The mission is one and indivisible, having one origin and one final purpose; but within it there are different responsibilities and different kinds of activity.²⁰⁵ In every case it is clear that there can be no true proclamation of the Gospel unless Christians also offer the witness of lives in harmony with the message they preach: "The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living... Everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary".²⁰⁶ Genuine Christian witness is needed especially now, because "people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories".²⁰⁷ This is certainly true in the Asian context, where people are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument. The experience of faith and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit thus becomes the basis of all missionary work, in towns

^{2m} Cf. Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 2 and 35.

⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 31: AAS 83 (1991), 277.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 42: *he. cit.* 289.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

or villages, in schools or hospitals, among the handicapped, migrants or tribal peoples, or in the pursuit of justice and human rights. Every situation is an opportunity for Christians to show forth the power which the truth of Christ has become in their lives. Therefore, inspired by the many missionaries who bore heroic witness to God's love among the peoples of the continent in the past, the Church in Asia strives now to witness with no less zeal to Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Christian mission demands no less.

Conscious of the Church's essentially missionary character and looking to a new outpouring of the dynamism of the Holy Spirit as the Church enters the new millennium, the Synod Fathers asked that this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation should offer some directives and guidelines to those working in the vast field of evangelization in Asia.

Pastors

43. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the Church to accomplish the mission entrusted to her by Christ. Before sending out his disciples as his witnesses, Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn* 20:22), who worked through them and stirred the hearts of those who heard them (cf. *Acts* 2:37). The same is true of those whom he sends out now. At one level, all the baptized, by the very grace of the Sacrament, are deputed to take part in continuing the saving mission of Christ, and they are capable of this task precisely because God's love has been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to them (*Rom* 5:5). But on another level this common mission is accomplished through a variety of specific functions and charisms in the Church. The principal responsibility for the Church's mission has been entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and their successors. By virtue of episcopal ordination and hierarchical communion with the Head of the Episcopal College, Bishops receive the mandate and authority to teach, govern and sanctify the People of God. By the

will of Christ himself, within the College of Bishops, the Successor of Peter—the rock upon which the Church is built (cf. *Mt* 16:18)—exercises a special ministry of unity. Bishops therefore are to fulfil their ministry in union with the Successor of Peter, the guarantor of the truth of their teaching and of their full communion in the Church.

Associated with the Bishops in the work of proclaiming the Gospel, priests are called upon at ordination to be shepherds of the flock, preachers of the good news of salvation and ministers of the sacraments. To serve the Church as Christ intends, Bishops and priests need a solid and continuing formation, which should provide opportunities for human, spiritual and pastoral renewal, as well as courses on theology, spirituality and the human sciences.²⁰⁸ People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit (cf. *Rom* 8:5). The reverence which Asian peoples have for those in authority needs to be matched by a clear moral uprightness on the part of those with ministerial responsibilities in the Church. By their life of prayer, zealous service and exemplary conduct, the clergy witness powerfully to the Gospel in the communities which they shepherd in the name of Christ. It is my fervent prayer that the ordained ministers of the Churches in Asia will live and work in a spirit of communion and cooperation with the Bishops and all the faithful, bearing witness to the love which Jesus declared to be the true mark of his disciples (cf. *Jn* 13:35).

I particularly wish to underline the Synod's concern for the preparation of those who will staff and teach in seminaries and theological faculties.²⁰⁹ After a thorough training in the sacred sciences and related subjects, they should receive a specific

²⁰⁸ Cf. *Propositi* 25.

*» Cf. *ibid.*

formation focused on priestly spirituality, the art of spiritual direction, and other aspects of the difficult and delicate task that awaits them in the education of future priests. This is an apostolate second to none for the Church's well-being and vitality.

The Consecrated Life and Missionary Societies

44. In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, I emphasized the intimate connection between the consecrated life and mission. Under its three aspects of *confessio Trinitatis*, *signum fraternitatis* and *servitium caritatis*, the consecrated life shows forth God's love in the world by its specific witness to the saving mission which Jesus accomplished by his total consecration to the Father. Recognizing that all action in the Church has its support in prayer and communion with God, the Church in Asia looks with profound respect and appreciation to the contemplative religious communities as a special source of strength and inspiration. Following the recommendations of the Synod Fathers, I strongly encourage the establishment of monastic and contemplative communities wherever possible. In this way, as the Second Vatican Council reminds us, the work of building up the earthly city can have its foundation in the Lord and can tend towards him, lest those who build labour in vain.²¹⁰

The search for God, a life of fraternal communion, and service to others are the three chief characteristics of the consecrated life which can offer an appealing Christian testimony to the peoples of Asia today. The Special Assembly for Asia urged those in the consecrated life to be witnesses to the universal call to holiness and inspiring examples to Christians and non-Christians alike of self-giving love for everyone, especially the least of their brothers and sisters. In a world in which the sense of God's

Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 46.

presence is often diminished, consecrated persons need to bear convincing prophetic witness to the primacy of God and to eternal life. Living in community, they attest to the values of Christian fraternity and to the transforming power of the Good News.²¹¹ All who have embraced the consecrated life are called to become leaders in the search for God, a search which has always stirred the human heart and which is particularly visible in Asia's many forms of spirituality and asceticism.²¹² In the numerous religious traditions of Asia, men and women dedicated to the contemplative and ascetical life enjoy great respect, and their witness has an especially persuasive power. Their lives lived in community, in peaceful and silent testimony, can inspire people to work for greater harmony in society. No less is expected of consecrated men and women in the Christian tradition. Their silent example of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience, can become an eloquent witness capable of touching all people of good will and leading to a fruitful dialogue with surrounding cultures and religions, and with the poor and the defenceless. This makes the consecrated life a privileged means of effective evangelization.²¹³

The Synod Fathers recognized the vital role played by religious orders and congregations, missionary institutes and societies of apostolic life in the evangelization of Asia in past centuries. For this magnificent contribution, the Synod expressed to them the Church's gratitude and urged them not to waver in their missionary commitment.²¹⁴ I join the Synod Fathers in calling on those in the consecrated life to renew their zeal to proclaim the saving truth of Christ. All are to have appropriate formation

²¹¹ Cf. *Propositi!*) 27.

²¹² Cf. John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata* (25 March 1996), 103: AAS 88 (1996), 479.

^{2,3} Cf. Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 69: AAS 68 (1976), 59.

²¹⁴ Cf. *Propositi!*) 27.

and training, which should be Christ-centred and faithful to their founding charism, with emphasis on personal sanctity and witness; their spirituality and lifestyle should be sensitive to the religious heritage of the people among whom they live and whom they serve.²¹⁵ While maintaining respect for their specific charism, they should integrate themselves into the pastoral plan of the Diocese in which they work. The local Churches, for their part, need to foster awareness of the ideal of the religious and consecrated life, and promote such vocations. This requires that each Diocese should devise a pastoral programme for vocations, including the assignment of priests and religious to full-time work among the young to help them hear and discern the call of God.²¹⁶

In the context of the communion of the universal Church, I cannot fail to urge the Church in Asia to send forth missionaries, even though she herself needs labourers in the vineyard. I am glad to see that in several Asian countries missionary institutes of apostolic life have recently been founded in recognition of the Church's missionary character and of the responsibility of the particular Churches in Asia to preach the Gospel to the whole world.²¹⁷ The Synod Fathers recommended "the establishment within each local Church of Asia, where such do not exist, of missionary societies of apostolic life, characterized by their special commitment to the mission *ad gentes, ad exteros and ad vitam*".^{21*} Such an initiative is sure to bear abundant fruit not only in the Churches which receive the missionaries but also in the Churches which send them.

The Laity

45. As the Second Vatican Council clearly indicated, the vocation of lay people sets them firmly in the world to perform the most

^{2,5} Cf. *ibid.*

²¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

²¹⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 28.

²« *Ibid.*

varied tasks, and it is here that they are called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.²¹⁹ By the grace and call of Baptism and Confirmation, all lay people are missionaries; and the arena of their missionary work is the vast and complex worlds of politics, economics, industry, education, the media, science, technology, the arts and sport. In many Asian countries, lay people are already serving as true missionaries, reaching out to fellow Asians who might never have contact with clergy and religious.²²⁰ To them I express the thanks of the whole Church, and I encourage all lay people to assume their proper role in the life and mission of the People of God, as witnesses to Christ wherever they may find themselves.

It is the task of the Pastors to ensure that the laity are formed as evangelizers able to face the challenges of the contemporary world, not just with worldly wisdom and efficiency, but with hearts renewed and strengthened by the truth of Christ.²²¹ Witnessing to the Gospel in every area of life in society, the lay faithful can play a unique role in rooting out injustice and oppression, and for this too they must be adequately formed. To this end, I join the Synod Fathers in proposing the establishment at the diocesan or national level of lay formation centres to prepare the laity for their missionary work as witnesses to Christ in Asia today.²²²

The Synod Fathers were most concerned that the Church should be a participatory Church in which no one feels excluded, and they judged the wider participation of women in the life and mission of the Church in Asia to be an especially pressing need. "Woman has a quite special aptitude in passing on the faith, so much so that Jesus himself appealed to it in the work of

^{3,9} Cf. **Dogmatic Constitution on the Church** *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

²²⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 29.

²²¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²²² Cf. *ibid.*

evangelization. That is what happened to the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at Jacob's well: he chose her for the first expansion of the new faith in non-Jewish territory".²²³ To enhance their service in the Church, there should be greater opportunities for women to take courses in theology and other fields of study; and men in seminaries and houses of formation need to be trained to regard women as co-workers in the apostolate.²²⁴ Women should be more effectively involved in pastoral programmes, in diocesan and parish pastoral councils, and in diocesan synods. Their abilities and services should be fully appreciated in health care, in education, in preparing the faithful for the sacraments, in building community and in peacemaking. As the Synod Fathers noted, the presence of women in the Church's mission of love and service contributes greatly to bringing the compassionate Jesus, the healer and reconciler, to Asian people, especially the poor and marginalized.²²⁵

The Family

46. The family is the normal place where the young grow to personal and social maturity. It is also the bearer of the heritage of humanity itself, because through the family life is passed on from generation to generation. The family occupies a very important place in Asian cultures; and, as the Synod Fathers noted, family values like filial respect, love and care for the aged and the sick, love of children and harmony are held in high esteem in all Asian cultures and religious traditions.

Seen through Christian eyes, the family is "the domestic Church" (*ecclesia domestica*).²²⁶ The Christian family, like the

³³³ John Paul II, Address at the General Audience (13 July 1994), 4: *Insegnamenti* XVII, 2 (1994), 40.

³³⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 35.

²²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

³³⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

Church as a whole, should be a place where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life and the gift which the family members bring to the wider community. The family is not simply the object of the Church's pastoral care; it is also one of the Church's most effective agents of evangelization. Christian families are today called to witness to the Gospel in difficult times and circumstances, when the family itself is threatened by an array of forces.²²⁷ To be an agent of evangelization in such a time, the Christian family needs to be genuinely "the domestic Church", humbly and lovingly living out the Christian vocation.

As the Synod Fathers pointed out, this means that the family should be active in parish life, partaking of the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance, and being involved in service to others. It also means that parents should strive to make the moments when the family naturally comes together an opportunity for prayer, for Bible reading and reflection, for appropriate rituals presided over by the parents and for healthy recreation. This will help the Christian family to become a hearth of evangelization, where each member experiences God's love and communicates it to others.²²⁸ The Synod Fathers also acknowledged that children have a role in evangelization, both in their family and in the wider community.²²⁹ Convinced that "the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family",²³⁰ I once again propose for study and implementation what I wrote on the theme of the family in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, following the Fifth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1980.

²²⁷ Cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio ante disceptationem: VOsservatore Romano* (22 April 1998), 6.

²²¹ Cf. *Propositio* 32.

²²⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 33.

²³⁰ John Paul II, Address to the Confederation of Family Advisory Bureaus of Christian Inspiration (29 November 1980), 4: *Insegnamenti* III, 2 (1980), 1454.

Young People

47. The Synod Fathers were particularly sensitive to the theme of youth in the Church. The many complex problems which young people now face in the changing world of Asia impel the Church to remind the young of their responsibility for the future of society and the Church, and to encourage and support them at every step to ensure that they are ready to accept that responsibility. To them the Church offers the truth of the Gospel as a joyful and liberating mystery to be known, lived and shared, with conviction and courage.

If young people are to be effective agents of mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care.²³¹ In agreement with the Synod Fathers, I recommend that, where possible, every diocese in Asia should appoint youth chaplains or directors to promote the spiritual formation and apostolate of young people. Catholic schools and parishes have a vital role in providing all-round formation for the young, by seeking to lead them in the way of true discipleship and developing in them the human qualities that mission requires. Organized youth apostolates and youth clubs can provide the experience of Christian friendship which is so important for the young. The parish, and associations and movements, can help young people to cope better with social pressures by offering them not only a more mature growth in the Christian life but also help in the form of career guidance, vocational training and youth counselling.

The Christian formation of young people in Asia should recognize that they are not only the object of the Church's pastoral care but also "agents and co-workers in the Church's mission in her various apostolic works of love and service".²³² In parishes and dioceses, young men and women should therefore be invited

²³¹ Cf. *Propositio* 34.

²³² *Ibid.*

to take part in the organization of activities which concern them. Their freshness and enthusiasm, their spirit of solidarity and hope can make them peacemakers in a divided world; and, on this score, it is encouraging to see young people involved in exchange programmes between the particular Churches and countries in Asia and elsewhere fostering interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Social Communication

48. In an era of globalization, "the means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media".²³³ The world is seeing the emergence of a new culture that "originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology".²³⁴ The exceptional role played by the means of social communication in shaping the world, its cultures and ways of thinking has led to rapid and far-reaching changes in Asian societies.

Inevitably, the Church's evangelizing mission too is deeply affected by the impact of the mass media. Since the mass media have an ever increasing influence even in remote areas of Asia, they can assist greatly in the proclamation of the Gospel to every corner of the continent. However, "it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is necessary to integrate that message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications".²³⁵ To this end, the

^{2,5} John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 37: AAS 83 (1991), 285.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

Church needs to explore ways of thoroughly integrating the mass media into her pastoral planning and activity, so that by their effective use the Gospel's power can reach out still further to individuals and entire peoples, and infuse Asian cultures with the values of the Kingdom.

I echo the Synod Fathers' commendation of *Radio Veritas Asia*, the only continent-wide radio station for the Church in Asia, for its almost thirty years of evangelization through broadcasting. Efforts must be made to strengthen this excellent instrument of mission, through appropriate language programming, personnel and financial help from Episcopal Conferences and Dioceses in Asia.²³⁶ In addition to radio, Catholic publications and news agencies can help to disseminate information and offer continuing religious education and formation throughout the continent. In places where Christians are a minority, these can be an important means of sustaining and nurturing a sense of Catholic identity and of spreading knowledge of Catholic moral principles.²³⁷

I take up the recommendations of the Synod Fathers on the point of evangelization through social communications, the "ar-eopagus of the modern age", in the hope that it may serve human promotion and the spreading of the truth of Christ and the teaching of the Church.²³⁸ It would help if each Diocese would establish, where possible, a communications and media office. Media education, including the critical evaluation of media output, needs to be an increasing part of the formation of priests, seminarians, religious, catechists, lay professionals, students in Catholic schools and parish communities. Given the wide influence and extraordinary impact of the mass media, Catholics need to work with the members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, and with the followers of other religions to ensure a place for spiritual

²³⁶ Cf. *Pmpositio* 45.

^{2,7} Cf. *ibid.*

²³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

and moral values in the media. With the Synod Fathers, I encourage the development of pastoral plans for communications at the national and diocesan levels, following the indications of the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae*, with appropriate attention to the circumstances prevailing in Asia.

The Martyrs

49. However important programmes of formation and strategies for evangelization may be, in the end *it is martyrdom which reveals to the world the very essence of the Christian message*. The word itself, "martyr", means witness, and those who have shed their blood for Christ have borne the ultimate witness to the true value of the Gospel. In the Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, *Incarnationis Misterium*, I stressed the vital importance of remembering the martyrs: "From the psychological point of view, martyrdom is the most eloquent proof of the truth of the faith, for faith can give a human face even to the most violent of deaths and show its beauty even in the midst of the most atrocious persecutions".²³⁹ Through the ages, Asia has given the Church and the world a great host of these heroes of the faith, and from the heart of Asia there rises the great song of praise: *Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*. This is the song of those who died for Christ on Asian soil in the first centuries of the Church, and it is also the joyful cry of men and women of more recent times like Saint Paul Miki and his companions, Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and his companions, Saint Andrew Dung Lac and his companions, Saint Andrew Kim Taegon and his companions. May the great host of Asian martyrs, old and new, never cease to teach the Church in Asia what it means to bear witness to the Lamb in whose blood they have washed their shining robes (cf. *Rev* 7:14)! May they stand as indomitable witnesses to the truth

^{3W} No. 13: AAS 91 (1999), 142.

that Christians are called always and everywhere to proclaim nothing other than *the power of the Lord's Cross!* And may the blood of Asia's martyrs be now as always the seed of new life for the Church in every corner of the continent!

CONCLUSION

Gratitude and Encouragement

50. At the end of this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation which, seeking to discern the Spirit's word to the Churches in Asia (cf. *Rev* 1:11), has endeavoured to set forth the fruits of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, I wish to express the Church's gratitude to all of you, dear Asian brothers and sisters, who have contributed in any way to the success of this important ecclesial event. First and foremost, we again praise God for the wealth of cultures, languages, traditions and religious sensibilities of this great continent. Blessed be God for the peoples of Asia, so rich in their diversity yet one in their yearning for peace and fullness of life. Especially now, in the immediate vicinity of the 2000th anniversary of the Birth of Jesus Christ, we thank God for choosing Asia as the earthly dwelling place of his incarnate Son, the Saviour of the world.

I cannot fail to express my appreciation to the Bishops of Asia for their deep love of Jesus Christ, the Church and the peoples of Asia, and for their testimony' of communion and generous dedication to the task of evangelization. I am grateful to all those who form the great family of the Church in Asia: the clergy, the men and women religious and other consecrated persons, the missionaries, the laity, families, the young, indigenous peoples, workers, the poor and afflicted. Deep in my heart there is a special place for those in Asia who are persecuted for their faith in Christ. They are the hidden pillars of the Church, to whom Jesus himself speaks words of comfort: "You are blessed in the Kingdom of heaven" (cf. *Mt* 5:10).

The words of Jesus reassure the Church in Asia: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (*Lk* 12:32). Those who believe in Christ are still a small

minority in this vast and most populous continent. Yet far from being a timid minority, they are lively in faith, full of the hope and vitality which only love can bring. In their humble and courageous way, they have influenced the cultures and societies of Asia, especially the lives of the poor and the helpless, many of whom do not share the Catholic faith. They are an example to Christians everywhere to be eager to share the treasure of the Good News "in season and out of season" (2 *Tim* 4:2). They find strength in the wondrous power of the Holy Spirit who, despite the generally small numbers of the Church in Asia, ensures that the Church's presence is like the yeast which mixes with the flour in a quiet and hidden way till it is all leavened (cf. *Mt* 13:33).

The peoples of Asia need Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Asia is thirsting for the living water that Jesus alone can give (cf. *Jn* 4:10-15). The disciples of Christ in Asia must therefore be unstinting in their efforts to fulfil the mission they have received from the Lord, who has promised to be with them to the end of the age (cf. *Mt* 28:20). Trusting in the Lord who will not fail those whom he has called, the Church in Asia joyfully makes her pilgrim way into the Third Millennium. Her only joy is that which comes from sharing with the multitude of Asia's peoples the immense gift which she herself has received—the love of Jesus the Saviour. Her one ambition is to continue his mission of service and love, so that all Asians "may have life and have it abundantly" (*Jn* 10:10).

Prayer to the Mother of Christ

51. Faced with such a challenging mission, we turn to Mary, for whom, as the Synod Fathers said, Asian Christians have a great love and affection, revering her as their own Mother and the Mother of Christ.²⁴⁰ Throughout Asia there are hundreds of Marian

²⁴⁰ Cf. *Propositi* 59.

sanctuaries and shrines where not only the Catholic faithful gather, but also believers of other religions too.

To Mary, model of all disciples and bright Star of Evangelization, I entrust the Church in Asia at the threshold of the Third Millennium of the Christian era, trusting absolutely that hers is an ear that always listens, hers a heart that always welcomes, and hers a prayer that never fails:

O Holy Mary, Daughter of the Most High God,
Virgin Mother of the Saviour and Mother of us all,
look tenderly upon the Church of your Son
planted on Asian soil.
Be her guide and model
as she continues your Son's mission
of love and service in Asia.
You fully and freely accepted the Father's call
to be the Mother of God;
teach us to empty our hearts
of all that is not of God,
that we too may be filled
with the Holy Spirit from on high.
You pondered the mysteries of God's will
in the silence of your heart;
help us on our journey
to discern the signs of God's powerful hand.
You went quickly to visit Elizabeth
and help in her days of waiting;
obtain for us the same spirit of zeal and service
in our evangelizing task.
You sang the praises of the Lord;
lead us in joyful proclamation of faith
in Christ our Saviour.
You had compassion on the needy
and spoke to your Son on their behalf;

teach us never to fear
to speak of the world to Jesus
and of Jesus to the world.
You stood at the foot of the Cross
as your Son breathed his last;
be with us as we seek to be one
in spirit and service with all who suffer.
You prayed with the disciples in the Upper Room;
help us to wait upon the Spirit
and to go wherever he leads us.
Protect the Church from all the powers
that threaten her.
Help her to be a true image
of the Most Holy Trinity.
Pray that through the Church's love and service
all the peoples of Asia may come
to know your Son
Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of the world,
and so taste the joy of life in all its fullness.
O Mary, Mother of the New Creation
and Mother of Asia,
pray for us, your children, now and always!

Given at New Delhi, in India, on the sixth day of November
the year 1999, the twenty-second of my Pontificate.

Signing and Publication of Ecclesia in Asia*

JOHN PAUL II

Your Eminences,
My Brother Bishops,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. *"Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come... from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead" (Rev 1:4-5).*

To the Father of endless mercies I give all thanks and praise that I am once again on the blessed soil of Asia. I rejoice with you in the communion which transcends all time and joins in love Christians of "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (*Rev 5:9*). As a pilgrim, I pay homage to the continent which is the cradle of great religious traditions and ancient civilizations. How can we not be moved by Asia's ceaseless passion for the Absolute, for what is beyond our earthly vision?

In the peace of the Risen Lord, we meet on Asian soil to seal the fruits of the Synod which we celebrated in Rome close to the Tomb of the Apostle Peter. I thank Archbishop de Lastic,

* Apostolic Visit to India, 6 November 1999, New Delhi-Cathedral.

the Indian Bishops, and the civil authorities for all that they have done to make this visit possible. I hail the many priests, religious women and men and lay faithful throughout Asia who spend their lives for Christ and the Gospel. I am grateful to the representatives of the Christian Churches and ecclesial communities who grace this gathering with their presence, and my thoughts turn too to the followers of other religions who look to this meeting with interest and respect. Peace be upon you all!

2. The Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops surveyed the situation of the Church in Asia and of the entire Asian continent in the perspective of the Lord's command to preach the Gospel to all nations. We did so, conscious that the world advances towards ever new possibilities of development and that Christians have special responsibilities as we enter the Third Christian Millennium. Together, we sought to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and the hearts of Pastors. This involved sharing "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1) of all Christ's followers on this continent. The Synod was not only a profound experience of brotherhood in the episcopal ministry, but above all a powerful *encounter with Jesus Christ* who takes to himself the joys and sorrows of the world.

Listening with heart and mind, the Synod Fathers heard the peoples of Asia cry out in a host of tongues: "Which is the door that leads to life?" And we heard Jesus say: "I am the door". *Yes, Jesus Christ is the door that leads to life!* We heard Asians cry out: "Who will open the door for us?" And there came the reply of Christ: "I will open the door and lead you into life". We heard the voice of Asia's peoples ask: "But how will you open the door and lead us into life?" To this Jesus replied: *"I will lay down my life for you!"* Then Asia asked: "But how will you lay down your life for us?" And the reply of Jesus involves us all: "I have already done so on Calvary, and I continue to give myself for

you in my mystical Body, the Church, and in my sacramental Body, the Eucharist, offered for the salvation of the world!" The Synod was an ardent affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour and it remains a call to conversion, so that the Church in Asia might become ever more worthy of the graces continually being offered by God (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 4).

3. Most of the Churches of Asia are comparatively small in number, but they have shown themselves great in fidelity to Christ and to the Gospel, even in times of persecution. They are Churches that have known the shedding of blood, and *the host of Asian martyrs is surely their greatest glory. Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*. Christians like Saint Andrew Kim Tae-gon, Saint Paul Miki, Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, and countless other holy men and women on this continent show us how fully the grace of Christ can penetrate the hearts of Asian peoples.

From such unforgettable witness, *the Churches of Asia learn the way of love and loving service*, and they learn *that an eminent fruit of love is justice*. It is surely the work of the Holy Spirit that Asian Christians are turning more and more to the defence of human dignity and the pursuit of justice. This service of the human person is grounded not in the illusions of ideologies but in respect for the creative act of God who made man and woman in his own image (cf. *Gen* 1:26). Christians expend immense energies in practical charity, and in human promotion and liberation, in obedience to the Lord's command that we love one another as he has loved us (cf. *Jn* 13:34).

4. In some cases, Asian Christians dwell in lands scarred by conflicts, which are at times presented as the effect of religion. What a travesty of true belief this is! How unfaithful not only to the Gospel but also to the great insights of the religions of Asia, which in their different ways teach tolerance and goodness. People of all religions must emphatically show that *religion and peace go together!*

But let there also be *peace for religion*. Let the right to freedom of belief and worship be respected in every part of this continent! For if this most basic of rights is denied, then the whole edifice of human dignity and freedom is shaken. *Ecclesia in Asia* clearly notes that in parts of Asia explicit proclamation is forbidden and religious freedom is denied or systematically restricted (No. 23). In such situations the Church bears witness through a 'taking up of her cross', all the while urging governments to recognize religious freedom as a fundamental human right.

5. Since *Asia suffers greatly from the wound of division between Christians*, the Synod urges all Christ's followers to work ever harder to be "of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (*Phil 2:2*). It likewise asks the whole Church in Asia to pour herself out in the *colloquium salutis*, the saving dialogue which reaches out to the followers of other religions and to all men and women of good will. In this dialogue, the word which we must speak is *the word of the Cross of Jesus Christ*. For in him who emptied himself completely on the Cross the fullness of life is found (cf. *Phil 2:6-11*). The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* invites the peoples of Asia to contemplate *the figure of the crucified Jesus*, who leads us through darkness to the door that opens on to *the fullness of life which humanity seeks*. With a special passion, Asia has always sought that fullness.

We speak of a life which comes to us, not when the world's pain is averted or left behind, but when it is entered and *transfigured by the power of self-emptying love*, the love which is most clearly symbolized in the pierced heart of the Saviour on the Cross. This is the love which makes Christian holiness possible. It gives rise to proclamation, to loving solidarity with those in need, to respect for and openness to every human being and to all peoples.

Let no one fear the Church! Her one ambition is to continue Christ's mission of service and love, so that the light of Christ may shine more brightly, and the life that he gives may be more accessible to those who hear his call.

6. In presenting the fruit of the Synod's work in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, you, the Bishops, are being asked to make ever greater efforts to spread the Gospel of salvation throughout the length and breadth of the human geography of Asia. The question is not whether the Church has something essential to say to the men and women of our time, but how she can say it clearly and convincingly! (Cf. No. 29). The Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, and we who bear his name must follow that same path. With Saint Gregory of Nyssa we must pray for the strength to fulfil the ministry entrusted to us: "Show me, Good Shepherd, where green pastures and restful waters lie; call me by my name, that I may hear your voice" (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 2).

Successors of the Apostles, responsible for the Body of Christ, *shepherd the Church in Asia with loving care*, through every dark valley to green pastures and restful waters.

May Mary, "dawn of the mystical day" (*Akathistos*, Stanza 5), gather you to herself, that you may be strengthened for the work ahead. Through her intercession, may the Holy Church find strength to continue to the end the mission entrusted to her by the Lord. *"To him who loves us. . . to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"* (Rev 1:5-6).

Homily*

JOHN PAUL II

"Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true" (Eph 5:8-9)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Today throughout this vast country many people are celebrating the *Festival of Lights*. We rejoice with them, and in this Eucharist here in New Delhi, in India, on the continent of Asia, we too exult in the light and bear witness to the One who is "the true light that enlightens every man" (*Jn* 1:8).

God, the Father of mercies, has given me the joy of coming among you to promulgate the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia, the result of the labours of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops* held last year in Rome. What was this Synod for Asia? It was a gathering of Bishops representing the Church on this continent. What did the Bishops do? Above all, they listened in prayer to the Spirit; they reflected on the path followed so far by the Church among the peoples of Asia; they recognized the grace of the "hour" that the Church is now living

* Apostolic Visit to India, 7 November 1999, New Delhi-Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

on this continent; they committed the entire People of God to ever greater fidelity to the Lord and to the evangelical task which he has entrusted to all the baptized for the good of the human family.

2. Here today, dear brothers and sisters, you represent the Catholic community not only of India but of the whole Asian continent, and / *place in your hands the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation as a guide for the spiritual and pastoral life of the Church on this continent* as we enter a new century and a new Christian Millennium.

It is fitting that this document has been signed and issued in India, the home of many of Asia's time-honoured cultures, religions and spiritual traditions. These ancient Asian civilizations have shaped the lives of the peoples of this continent and have left an indelible mark on the history of the human race. Distinguished representatives of various Christian Communities and of the great religions of India are present here today. I greet them all with esteem and friendship, and I place before them my hope and dream that the next century will be a time of fruitful dialogue, leading to *a new relationship of understanding and solidarity among the followers of all religions*.

3. I wish to thank Archbishop Alan de Lastic, the pastor of the Archdiocese which is hosting this Eucharistic assembly, for his kind words of welcome. I greet all my brother Bishops of the Latin Church, of the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church. I embrace the Cardinals and Bishops who have come from other countries to share the joy of this occasion.

/ am grateful to the large number of priests present, who share the one priesthood of Jesus Christ with the Bishops and priests of Asia and the world. Dear brother priests, take as your rule of life those words of the Ordination liturgy: "Receive the Gospel of Christ whose servant you are, meditate on the Law of God, believe what you read, preach what you believe and practise what you preach".

With great affection in the Lord / *greet the men and women Religious*. Whether you are engaged in contemplation or working in the active apostolate, your witness to the supremacy of the spirit places you at the very heart of the Church's life and mission in Asia. For this, I thank you and encourage you.

In a special way I entrust the fruits of the Synod to the members of the laity, for it is you above all who are called to transform society by infusing the 'mind of Christ' into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the world in which you live (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 22). One of the main challenges before you is to *bring the light of the Gospel to bear on the family, and on the defence of human life and dignity*. You bear witness to your faith in a world of contrasts. On the one hand there has been enormous economic and technological progress, on the other there still exist situations of extreme poverty and injustice. The Synod re-echoed the cry of the ancient Prophets, the cry for justice, for the right ordering of human society, without which there can be no true worship of God (cf. *Is* 1:10-17; *Am* 5:21-24; *Ecclesia in Asia*, 41). *The Church looks to the lay men and women of Asia to reflect the light of Christ wherever the darkness of sin, division and discrimination distorts the image of God in his children*.

4. *"The light shines in the darkness has not overcome it"* (*Jn* 1:5). These words of Saint John in today's Gospel speak to us of Jesus Christ. His life and work are the light which illumines our journey to our transcendent destiny. The Good News of the Saviour's Incarnation, and of his Death and Resurrection for our sake, illumines the Church's path as she makes her pilgrim way through history towards the fullness of Redemption.

The Synod which we are closing today rejoiced at the thought of Jesus' birth on Asian soil. The Eternal Word took flesh as an Asian! And it was on this continent, through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Church went forth

to spread the Good News. With Christians throughout the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the new millennium, giving thanks for all that God has worked from those beginnings until now. Just as the first millennium saw the Cross firmly planted in the soil of Europe, and the second in that of America and Africa, so may the Third Christian Millennium witness *a great harvest of faith* on this vast and vital continent (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 1).

5. As we stand on the threshold of the Great Jubilee which will commemorate the two thousandth anniversary of the Birth of Jesus Christ, the community of his disciples is called to redress the great refusal mentioned in the Prologue of Saint John's Gospel: *"the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to his own, but his own did not accept him"* (IdO-11). The Eternal Word, "the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (*ibid.*, 1:9). But instead of spreading freely, that light is often hindered and obscured by darkness. In the heart of the sinner, that light is rejected. And the sins of individuals coalesce and harden into social structures of injustice, into economic and cultural imbalances which discriminate against people and force them to the margins of society. The sign that we are truly celebrating the Jubilee as the year of the Lord's favour (cf. *Is* 61:2) will be *our conversion to the light and our efforts to restore equity and to advance justice at every level of society*.

6. *"To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God"* (*Jn* 1:12).

In the Eucharist we give thanks to God the Father for his many gifts to us, and especially for the gift of his beloved Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Jesus Christ is the faithful and true witness* (cf. *Rev* 3:14).

The Synod reminds Asian Christians that "Jesus' perfectly human life, devoted wholly to the love and service of the Father and of man, reveals that *the vocation of every human being is*

to receive love and give love in return" (ibid., 13). In the Saints we marvel at the inexhaustible capacity of the human heart to love God and man, even when this involves great suffering. Does not also the legacy of so many wise teachers in India and in the other lands of Asia point in a similar direction? Such teaching is still valid today. Indeed, it is needed more than ever! The world will only be transformed if men and women of good will, and whole nations, genuinely accept that the only path worthy of the human family is the path of peace, of mutual respect, understanding and love, and solidarity with those in need.

Dear brothers and sisters, what does the Church need of her members at the dawn of a new millennium? Above all, *that you be witnesses who are convincing because you embody in your lives the message you proclaim.* As *Ecclesia in Asia* reminds us all: a fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire. The Gospel can only be preached if Bishops, clergy, those in the consecrated life, and the laity are themselves on fire with the love of Christ and burning with zeal to make him known, loved and followed (cf. No. 23).

This is the Synod's message: *a message of love and hope for the peoples of this continent.* May the Church in Asia heed this message so that all "may have life and have it abundantly" (*Jn 10:10*). Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Angelus

At the end of this Eucharistic celebration, we turn with confidence to Mary, Mother of God. Two thousand years ago the Blessed Virgin gave birth to the incarnate Word on Asian soil. Today, Mary continues to cooperate in the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the baptized. In their daily lives, may the Church's sons and daughters follow the example of Mary, imitating her ability to discern God's will in every circumstance;

her total self-offering in love; her boundless fidelity and tireless devotion; her strength, capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; her capacity always to speak words of support and encouragement.

To you, Mother of the Church, we entrust the results of the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops: lead the Church in Asia in the joyful proclamation of faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour, and in generous service to the peoples of this continent.

To you, Model of Holiness, we entrust the clergy, the consecrated men and women, and the laity of the Church in Asia: renew and sustain them in a spirit of zeal and in their commitment to the great task of evangelization and service.

To you, Mirror of Justice, we entrust those responsible for the destiny of this continent: may they seek tirelessly the common good, and work for the true spiritual and material development of the peoples of this continent.

To you, Mother of Mercy, we entrust the poor, the needy and the suffering: teach us to be one in spirit with them, in order to serve them as our brothers and sisters.

To you, Mother of the Redeemer, we entrust the young people of Asia: to them the Church offers the truth of the Gospel as a joyful and liberating message, and asks them to use their freshness and enthusiasm, their spirit of solidarity and hope as peacemakers in a divided world.

Mary, Mother of the New Creation, pray for us, your children, now and always!

Meeting with Representative of other Religions and other Christian Confessions*

JOHN PAUL II

Distinguished Religious Leaders,
Dear Friends,

1. It is a great joy for me to visit once again the beloved land of India and to have this opportunity in particular to greet you, the representatives of different religious traditions, which embody not only great achievements of the past but also the hope of a better future for the human family. I thank the Government and the people of India for the welcome I have received. I come among you as a pilgrim of peace and as a fellow-traveller on the road that leads to the complete fulfillment of the deepest human longings. On the occasion of *Diwali*, the festival of lights, which symbolizes the victory of life over death, good over evil, I express the hope that this meeting will speak to the world of the things which unite us all: our common human origin and destiny, our shared responsibility for people's well-being and progress, our need of the light and strength that we seek in our religious convictions. Down the ages and in so many ways, India has taught that truth which the great Christian teachers also propose, that men and women "by inward instinct" are deeply oriented towards God and

* Apostolic Visit to India, 7 November 1999, New Delhi-Vigyan Bawan.

seek him from the depths of their being (cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, q. 60, art. 5, 3). On this basis, I am convinced that together we can successfully take the path of understanding and dialogue.

2. My presence here among you is meant as a further sign that the Catholic Church wants to enter ever more deeply into dialogue with the religions of the world. She sees this dialogue as *an act of love which has its roots in God himself*. "God is love", proclaims the New Testament, "and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him... Let us love, then, because he has loved us first... no-one who fails to love the brother whom he sees can love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn 4:16, 19-20).

It is a sign of hope that the religions of the world are becoming more aware of their shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family. This is a crucial part of *the globalization of solidarity* which must come if the future of the world is to be secure. This sense of shared responsibility increases as we discover more of what we have in common as religious men and women.

Which of us does not grapple with the mystery of suffering and death? Which of us does not hold life, truth, peace, freedom and justice to be supremely important values? Which of us is not convinced that moral goodness is soundly rooted in the individual's and society's openness to the transcendent world of the Divinity? Which of us does not believe that the way to God requires prayer, silence, asceticism, sacrifice and humility? Which of us is not concerned that scientific and technical progress should be accompanied by spiritual and moral awareness? And which of us does not believe that the challenges now facing society can only be met by building a civilization of love founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty? And how can we do this, except through encounter, mutual understanding and cooperation?

3. *The path before us is demanding*, and *there is* always the temptation to choose instead the path of isolation and division, which leads to conflict. This in turn unleashes the forces which make religion an excuse for violence, as we see too often around the world. Recently I was happy to welcome to the Vatican representatives of the world religions who had gathered to build upon the achievements of the Assisi Meeting in 1986. I repeat here what I said to that distinguished Assembly: "Religion is not, and must not become a pretext for conflict, particularly when religious, cultural and ethnic identity coincide. *Religion and peace go together*: to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction". Religious leaders in particular have the duty to do everything possible to ensure that religion is what God intends it to be — *a source of goodness, respect, harmony and peace!* This is the only way to honour God in truth and justice!

Our encounter requires that *we strive to discern and welcome whatever is good and holy in one another*, so that together we can acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral truths which alone guarantee the world's future (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2). In this sense dialogue is never an attempt to impose our own views upon others, since such dialogue would become a form of spiritual and cultural domination. This does not mean that we abandon our own convictions. What it means is that, holding firmly to what we believe, we listen respectfully to others, seeking to discern all that is good and holy, all that favours peace and cooperation.

4. It is vital to recognize that there is a close and unbreakable bond between peace and freedom. Freedom is the most noble prerogative of the human person, and *one of the principal demands of freedom is the free exercise of religion in society* (cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3). No State, no group has the right to control either directly or indirectly a person's religious convictions, nor can it justifiably claim the right to impose or impede the public

profession and practice of religion, or the respectful appeal of a particular religion to people's free conscience. Recalling this year the fiftieth anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, I wrote that "*religious freedom constitutes the very heart of human rights*". Its inviolability is such that individuals must be recognized as having the right even to change their religion, if their conscience so demands. People are obliged to follow their conscience in all circumstances and cannot be forced to act against it (cf. Article 18)" (*Message for the 1999 World Day of Peace*, 5).

5. In India the way of dialogue and tolerance was the path followed by the great Emperors Ashoka, Akbar and Chatrapati Shivaji; by wise men like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda; and by luminous figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Gurudeva Tagore and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who understood profoundly that to serve peace and harmony is a holy task. These are people who, in India and beyond, have made a significant contribution to the increased awareness of our universal brotherhood, and they point us to a future where our deep longing to pass through the door of freedom will find its fulfilment because we will pass through that door together. To choose tolerance, dialogue and cooperation as the path into the future is to preserve what is most precious in the great religious heritage of mankind. It is also to ensure that in the centuries to come *the world will not be without that hope which is the life-blood of the human heart*. May the Lord of heaven and earth grant this now and for ever.

Presentation of Ecclesia in Asia*

CARD. PAUL SHAN

It is with much joy that I now present to you the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness John Paul II.

This precious document is named *Ecclesia in Asia*. The Holy Father, who attended personally our general sessions, describes the Special Assembly of the Bishops Synod for Asia as an outstanding expression of ecclesial communion. The same must be said of *Ecclesia in Asia*. For, in the words of the Holy Father "*it seeks to convey the wealth of that great spiritual event of communion and Episcopal collegiality*". This he does by making his own all the important insights of the Synodal Fathers and enriching them with his words of wisdom and timely remarks. I do believe that in this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation we have the Magna Carta for the evangelization of Asia in the Third Millennium.

Ecclesia in Asia has an Introduction, seven Chapters and a Conclusion. The different topics are neatly subdivided into 51 articles.

* Presentation of the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of His Holiness John Paul II on Jesus Christ the Savior and his Mission of Love and Service in Asia: "That they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 19:10).

The first article of the Introduction, entitled *The Marvel of God's Plan in Asia* vibrates with emotion and exultation. It sounds as a biblical song of praise and thanksgiving. This is how the document begins and I quote:

"The Church in Asia sings the praises of the «God of salvation» (Ps 68:20) for choosing to initiate his saving plan on Asian soil, through men and women of that continent. It was in fact in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning. He guided the patriarchs (cf Gen 12) and called Moses to lead his people to freedom (cf. Ex 3:10). He spoke to his chosen people through many prophets, judges, kings and valiant women of faith. In «the fullness of time» (Gal 4:4), he sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Savior, who took flesh as an Asian! Exulting in the goodness of the continent's peoples, cultures, and religious vitality, and conscious at the same time of the unique gift of faith which she has received, the Church in Asia cannot cease to proclaim: «Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love endures for ever» (Ps 118:1).

... With the Church throughout the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the Third Christian Millennium marveling at all that God has worked from those beginnings until now, and strong in the knowledge that «just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent.»" (Ecclesia in Asia, Art. I).

Article 2 gives us the *Background to the Special Assembly*, The Holy Father recalls how the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops was part of the program set out by His

Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* to face the challenges of the New Evangelization. It was indeed a very important part, given the challenges posed to the Church in Asia by the encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions. He also recalls that two months after the publication of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, during the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of the Asian Bishops Conferences in Manila he said to them:

«If the Church in Asia is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority.»

All throughout the preparatory phase, the Holy Father says, it was evident the positive response and collaboration of the Bishops and particular Churches to the prospect of a Special Assembly for Asia. In line with the original idea of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and following the proposals of the Pre-Synodal Council he made the choice of the Synod's theme: Jesus Christ the Savior and his Mission of Love and Service in Asia: «That they may have Life and have it abundantly» (Jn 10:10). And he explains:

Through this particular formulation of the theme, I hoped that the Synod might «illustrate and explain more fully the truth that Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of the world, to be clearly distinguished from the founders of other great religions.» As we approach the Great Jubilee, the Church in Asia needs to be able to proclaim with renewed vigor: Ecce natus est nobis Salvator mundi, «Behold the Savior of the World is born to us,» born in Asia!

The Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops took place from 18 April to 14 May 1998 in the Vatican. It came after the Special Assemblies for Africa (1994) and America (1997), and

it was followed at the year's end by the Special Assembly for Oceania (1998). For almost a month, the Synod Fathers and other participants, gathered around the Successor of Peter, and sharing in the gift of hierarchical communion, gave concrete voice and expression to the Church in Asia. The Holy Father seems to have been impressed by the intense ecclesial and fraternal communion that he sensed among the Asian bishops. For this he gives credit to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and its offices, which periodically has brought together great numbers of Asian Bishops and fostered personal as well as ministerial bonds between them. He himself on some occasions was able to observe directly the encounter in dialogue of the particular Churches, including the Eastern Churches, in the person of their Pastors. These and other regional assemblies of Asia's Bishops served providentially as remote preparation for the Synod Assembly. He describes the celebration of the Special Assembly with the following words:

"The encounter in dialogue of the Bishops and the Successor of Peter, entrusted with the mission of strengthening his brothers (cf. 1k 22:32), was truly a confirmation in faith and mission. Day after day the Synod Hall and meeting rooms were filled with accounts of deep faith, self-sacrificing love, unwavering hope long-suffering commitment, enduring courage and merciful forgiveness, all of which eloquently disclosed the truth of Jesus' words: «I am with you always» (Mt 28:20) (art. 3)

With this Apostolic Exhortation the Holy Father wishes to share with us the fruits of the Special Assembly which, according to him was a unique experience of communion and Episcopal coUegiality, a celebratory remembering of the Asian roots of Christianity and of the early Christian community, a recognition of the Asian religious traditions and civilizations with their profound philosophies and ancient wisdom, a celebration of what the Lord has done for the Church in Asia as well as a call to

conversion. Above all the Special Assembly was an ardent affirmation and profession of Faith in Jesus Christ the Savior and a renewed commitment to Mission, (art. 4)

In line with the methodology used by *Instrumentum Laboris* and in response to the wishes of the Synod Fathers, Chapter I of *Ecclesia in Asia* begins with an analysis of the Asian Context.

The Synod Fathers insisted that the Church's mission of love and service in Asia is conditioned by two factors: on the one hand, her self-understanding as a community of disciples of Jesus Christ gathered around her Pastors, and on the other hand, the social, political, religious, cultural and economic realities of Asia. Therefore the situation of Asia was examined in detail during the Synod by those who have daily contact with the extremely diversified realities of such an immense continent. Chapter I of *Ecclesia in Asia* gives us an excellent synthesis on this respect. It has four articles: Asia, the Birthplace of Jesus and the Church (5); Religious and Cultural realities (6); Economic and Social Realities (7); Political Realities (8) and the Church in Asia: Past and Present (9).

The Holy Father closes the presentation of the Asian Context with these encouraging remarks:

"I cannot bring to an end this brief survey of the situation of the Church in Asia, though far from complete, without mentioning the Saints and Martyrs of Asia, both those who have been recognized and those known only to God, whose example is a source of «spiritual richness and a great means of evangelization... At this moment, I call to mind what I wrote in Redemptoris Missio: "God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel.» This vision of a new and promising horizon I see being fulfilled in Asia, where Jesus was born and where Christianity began."

As the Synod discussion of the complex realities of Asia unfolded, it became increasingly obvious to all that the Church's unique contribution to the peoples of the continent is the proclamation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the one and only Savior for all peoples. What distinguishes the Church from other religious communities is her faith in Jesus Christ, and she cannot keep this precious light of faith under a bushel (cf. Mt 5:15). The analysis also shows that the proclamation of Jesus as the only Savior can present particular difficulties in the Asian cultures, given that many Asian religions teach divine self-manifestations as mediating salvation. But these difficulties, says the Holy Father, "far from discouraging the Synod Fathers, add an even greater incentive in striving to transmit the faith that the Church in Asia has inherited from the Apostles and holds with the Church of all generations and places".

Indeed they expressed the conviction that "the heart of the Church in Asia will be restless until the whole of Asia finds its rest in the peace of Christ, the Risen Lord". Deeply convinced of this, the Synod Fathers were equally conscious of their personal responsibility to grasp through study, prayer and reflection the timeless truth of Jesus in order to bring its power and vitality to bear on the present and future challenges of evangelization in Asia, (art 10)

The following chapters II, III and IV bring us to the heart of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*. With the reflections of the Synod's Fathers and the personal insights of the Holy Father, we are now blessed with an excellent Christological Catechesis bound to inspire our people for generations to come.

First, under the subtitle: *Jesus Christ, the God-Man who saves*, (art. 11) there is a short but powerful presentation of what the Scriptures say about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Savior, who walked the earth in full possession of a human nature, one like us in all things except sin. Then we are led to

reflect on *The Person and Mission of the Son of God* (art 12). That God took upon himself our human nature and endured suffering and death for our salvation is, in the words of St. Paul, "the scandal" of Christianity (cf. 1 Cor 1:23). Aware of this the Holy Father reminds us that "Jesus Christ revealed and accomplished the Father's plan of saving the world and the whole of humanity because of "who he is" and "what he does because of who he is". "Who he is" and "what he does" acquire their full meaning only when set within the mystery of the Triune God.

It has been a constant concern of my Pontificate to remind the faithful of the communion of life of the Blessed Trinity and the unity of the three Persons in the plan of creation and redemption. My Encyclical Letters Redemptor Hominis, Dives in Misericordia and Dominum et Vivificantem are reflections on the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit respectively and on their roles in the divine plan of salvation. We cannot however isolate or separate one Person from the others, since each is revealed only within the communion of life and action of the Trinity. The saving action of Jesus has its origin in the communion of the Godhead, and opens the way for all who believe in him to enter into intimate communion with the Trinity and with one another in the Trinity.

... In Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we come to know that God is not distant, above and apart from man, but is very near, indeed united to every person and all humanity in all of life's situations. This is the message which Christianity offers to the world, and it is a source of incomparable comfort and hope for all. (art. 12)

The third point of this Christological Catechesis in *Ecclesia in Asia*, deals with another aspect of the Mystery of Jesus which is very close to the heart of the Holy Father. It echoes the masterful

statement of Vatican II: *The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For... Christ the Lord... by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. (Gaudium et Spes, art. 22):* Hence *Ecclesia in Asia* rightly calls Jesus *The Truth of Humanity*. To the question how does Jesus, the Incarnate Son of the Father, shed light on the human condition, the Holy Father answers emphatically that His words and actions, and above all his Death and Resurrection, reveal the depths of what it means to be human. Through Jesus, every human person can finally know the truth of oneself. Jesus' Life, so perfectly human, wholly spent in the love and service of the Father and of humanity, reveals the true vocation of every human being. In Him we discover the greatness and dignity of each person in the heart of God, who creates us in his own image (cf. Gen 1:26). Then the Holy Father adds:

The Second Vatican Council taught that «by his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, in a certain way united himself with each individual». In this profound insight the Synod Fathers saw the ultimate source of hope and strength for the people of Asia in their struggles and uncertainties, (art. 13)

But Jesus not only restored communion between God and humanity. He also established a new communion between human beings alienated from one another and give to every one the ability and possibility to work with Him in building the Kingdom.

Beyond all divisions, Jesus makes it possible for people to live as brothers and sisters, recognizing a single Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt 23:9). In all that he said and did, Jesus was the Father's voice, hands and arms, gathering all God's children into one family of love. (I.

In recent years, due to closer contacts with masters of non-Christians Religious systems, some began to question the uniqueness and universality of salvation in Jesus. *Ecclesia in Asia* addressed this important question in the closing article of chapter II, which I quote:

The Synod Fathers recalled that the pre-existent Word, the eternally begotten Son of God, "was already present in creation, in history and in every human yearning for good". Through the Word, present to the cosmos even before the Incarnation, the world came to be (cf Jn 1:14,10; Col 1:15-20). But as the incarnate Word who lived, died and rose from the dead, Jesus Christ is now proclaimed as the fulfillment of all creation, of all history, and of all human yearning for fullness of life. Risen from the dead, Jesus Christ «is present to all and to the whole of creation in a new and mysterious way». In him, «authentic values of all religious and cultural traditions, such as mercy and submission to the will of God, compassion and rectitude, non-violence and righteousness, filial piety and harmony with creation find their fullness and realization». From the first moment of time to its end, Jesus is the one universal Mediator. Even for those who do not explicitly profess faith in him as the Savior, salvation comes as a grace from Jesus Christ through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the one Savior because he alone - the Son - accomplished the Father's universal plan of salvation. As the definitive manifestation of the mystery of the Fathers love for all, Jesus is indeed unique, and «it is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance, whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history's center and goal. (Art. 14)

The Christological catechesis of *Ecclesia in Asia* continues in chapter III with a simple yet profound meditation on the *Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of Life*. Thus, the Holy Father makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is an absolutely vital part of the mystery of Jesus and of His Salvation, His reflections and those of the Synod's Fathers help us to appreciate with deeper Faith and devotion the most relevant doctrines of the Theology of the Holy Spirit, namely: *The role of the Holy Spirit in Creation and History* (art. 15); *The Holy Spirit and the Incarnation of the Word* (16); *The Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ* (17) and *The Holy Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Asia* (18). There was one additional reason for these theological reflection on the Holy Spirit at this point. Lately there has been a tendency in some quarters to create a false separation between the work a Jesus and that of the Spirit which would jeopardize the truth of Jesus as the unique and universal Savior. The Synod's Fathers, in their discussions, expressed concern about such a tendency and the Holy Father taking note of it says:

"The Spirit is... not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit «'so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things'». The universal presence of the Holy Spirit therefore cannot serve as an excuse for a failure to proclaim Jesus Christ explicitly as the one and only Savior. On the contrary, the universal presence of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from universal salvation in Jesus. The presence of the Spirit in creation and history points to Jesus Christ in whom creation and history are redeemed and fulfilled. The presence and action of the Spirit both before

the Incarnation and in the climactic moment of Pentecost point always to Jesus and to the salvation he brings. So too the Holy Spirit's universal presence can never be separated from his activity within the Body of Christ, the Church, (art. 16)

As we enter into chapter IV, entitled *Jesus, the Savior: Proclaiming the gift*, we feel at once the enthusiasm, the vigor and the passion with which the Holy Father, once more, insists on what he calls the primacy of proclamation. He seems to suspect that here in Asia we are all very busy doing many good things every where but are rather shy, timid and slow in proclaiming the gift that we have received in Jesus Christ. The Holy Father assures us that his insistence on proclamation is prompted not by sectarian impulse nor by the spirit of proselytism nor by any sense of superiority. We must evangelize, in obedience to Christ's command, because every person has the right to hear the Good News of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ..., because such is the supreme service which can offer to the peoples of Asia..., because this is the best gift we can give in response to their most profound longings and aspirations. Thus he says:

The Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium since then, responding to a certain confusion about the true nature of the Church's mission, have repeatedly stressed the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work. Thus Pope Paul VI explicitly wrote that «there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed». This is what generations of Christians have done down the centuries. With understandable pride the Synod Fathers recalled that «many Christian communities in Asia have preserved their faith down the centuries against great odds and have clung to this spiritual heritage

with heroic perseverance. For them to share this immense treasure is a matter of great joy and urgency».

Yet the Holy Father is clearly aware that the proclamation of Jesus as the only Savior provokes problems and difficulties which are peculiar to our Asian context. The Synod's Fathers during the Assembly, make reference to such problems and the Apostolic Exhortation takes note of them.

«Some of the followers of the great religions of Asia have no problem in accepting Jesus as a manifestation of the Divine or the Absolute, or as an 'enlightened one'. But it is difficult for them to see Him as the only manifestation of the Divine». In fact, the effort to share the gift of faith in Jesus as the only Savior is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in light of the beliefs of Asia's great religions, deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific world views. In the opinion of the Synod Fathers, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that Jesus is often perceived as foreign to Asia. It is paradoxical that most Asians tend to regard Jesus - born on Asian soil - as a Western rather than an Asian figure. Thus the task of proclaiming Jesus in a way which enables the peoples of Asia to identify with him, while remaining faithful both to the Church's theological doctrine and to their own Asian origins is a paramount challenge. (art. 20)

Therefore, the big question presently confronting us, given the religious and cultural context of Asia, is not why should we proclaim the Good News of Christ's Salvation but HOW.

In response to this pivotal question, *Ecclesia in Asia*, suggests certain Methodological Guidelines, to assist us in our attempts to develop a more inculturated form of Evangelization.

First, *An attitude of loving respect and esteem for our listeners*. This respect is twofold: respect for the persons in their quest for answers to the deepest questions of their life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in them. *"The Synod Fathers readily recognized the Spirit's action in Asian societies, cultures and religions, through which the Father prepares the hearts of Asian peoples for the fullness of life in Christ"*.

Second, *A gradual pedagogy*. The presentation of Jesus Christ as the only Savior needs to follow a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of His mystery. *In the initial proclamation, for example, «the presentation of Jesus Christ could come as the fulfillment of the yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples»*.

Third, *Narrative methods* akin to Asian cultural forms are to be preferred. In fact, the proclamation of Jesus Christ can most effectively be made by narrating his story, as the Gospels do. *The ontological notions involved, which must always be presupposed and expressed in presenting Jesus, can be complemented by more relational, historical and even cosmic perspectives. The Church, the Synod Fathers noted, must be open to the new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia*.

Fourth, *"Evocative" pedagogy*, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching should be followed in the subsequent catechesis after the initial presentation.

Fifth, *Adaptation* to the dispositions and level of maturity of those to be evangelized by fostering personal contact with them and a good understanding of their concrete life situation.

"In this perspective, says the Apostolic Exhortation, the Synod Fathers stressed many times the need to evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples, and they suggested images of Jesus which would be

intelligible to Asian minds and cultures and, at the same time, faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Among them were «Jesus Christ as the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer, the Liberator, the Spiritual Guide, the Enlightened One, the Compassionate Friend of the Poor, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the Obedient One». Jesus could be presented as the Incarnate Wisdom of God whose grace brings to fruition the «seeds» of divine Wisdom already present in the lives, religions and peoples of Asia. In the midst of so much suffering among Asian peoples, he might best be proclaimed as the Savior who can provide meaning to those undergoing unexplainable pain and suffering, (art.20)

Subsequently, the Holy Father approaches with courage and lucidity *The Challenge of Inculturation*.

In the Apostolic Exhortation he describes culture as "the vital space within which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel". Therefore Evangelization and Inculturation are naturally and intimately related. Thus Paul VI called "the split between the Gospel and culture the drama of our time" (E.N. 20), with a profound impact upon both evangelization and culture.

"Through inculturation the Church, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of her mission. This engagement with cultures has always been part of the Church's pilgrimage through history. But it has a special urgency today in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural situation of Asia, where Christianity is still too often seen as foreign.... The penetrating insight into peoples and their cultures, exemplified in such men as Giovanni da Montecorvino, Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili, to mention only a few, needs to be emulated at the present time. ... But it is good to remember at this point what was said repeatedly during

the Synod: that the Holy Spirit is the prime agent of the inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia. ... To ensure that the process of inculturation is, done soundly, the Synod Fathers identified five key areas for particular attention, namely, theological reflection, liturgy, the formation of priests and religious, catechesis and spirituality.

Chapter IV on *Proclaiming the Gift of Salvation in Jesus Christ*, ends with some pointed reflections on *Christian Life as Proclamation*. Obviously, the degree of credibility of a Christian Community in the work of proclaiming the Lord, depends on the quality and depth of its experience of God. The Holy Father has many personal insights regarding this matter. He says for example:

... Mission is contemplative action and active contemplation. Therefore, a missionary who has no deep experience of God in prayer and contemplation will have little spiritual influence or missionary success.... My contacts with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those in Asia has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation... In Asia, home to great religions where individuals and entire peoples are thirsting for the divine, the Church is called to be a praying Church, deeply spiritual even as she engages in immediate human and social concerns. All Christians need a true missionary spirituality of prayer and contemplation, (art. 23)

Three key words are now highlighted in the Apostolic Exhortation: *Communion, Mission and Dialogue*.

The content of chapter V of *Ecclesia in Asia* could be rightly defined a serious study on contemporary *practical Ecclesiology*. Using the theology of communion, the Second Vatican Council could describe the Church as the pilgrim People of God to whom all peoples are in some way related. On this basis the Synod Fathers stressed the mysterious link between the Church and the

followers of other Asian religions, noting that they are «related to [the Church] in varying degrees and ways». The Holy Father makes an excellent summary of the topics developed in this chapter, in the last paragraph of art. 24.

"In the midst of so many different peoples, cultures and religions «the life of the Church as communion assumes greater importance». In effect the Church's service of unity has a specific relevance in Asia where there are so many tensions, divisions and conflicts, caused by ethnic, social, cultural, linguistic, economic and religious differences. It is in this context that the local Churches in Asia, in communion with the Successor of Peter, need to foster greater communion of mind and heart through close cooperation among themselves. Vital also to their evangelizing mission are their relations with other christian Churches and ecclesial communities, and with the followers of other religions. The Synod therefore renewed the commitment of the Church in Asia to the task of improving both ecumenical relations and interreligious dialogue, recognizing that building unity, working for reconciliation, forging bonds of solidarity, promoting dialogue among religions and cultures, eradicating prejudices and engendering trust among peoples are all essential to the Church's evangelizing mission on the continent. All this demands of the Catholic community a sincere examination of conscience, the courage to seek reconciliation and a renewed commitment to dialogue. At the threshold of the Third Millennium it is clear that the Church's ability to evangelize requires that she strive earnestly to serve the cause of unity in all its dimensions. Communion and mission go hand in hand."

This statement of the Holy Father needs to be seriously pondered. As you well know, ours is a history of conflicts and

divisions within our Catholic communities and since the success of our Mission depends on our union with the Lord and our communion within the Church (Jn₄15: 5 & Jn 15:2), the Apostolic Exhortation gives us some pointers for a sincere examination of conscience and plan of action:

- a. Each local Church should become what the Synod Fathers called a *participatory Church*, a Church, that is, in which all live their proper vocation and perform their proper role. Every member's unique charism needs to be acknowledged, developed and effectively utilized.
- b. Greater *involvement of the laity* and consecrated men and women *in pastoral planning and decision-making*, through such participatory structures as Pastoral Councils and Parish Assemblies.
- c. The value of *basic ecclesial communities* must be underlined as an effective way of promoting communion and participation in parishes and Dioceses, and as a genuine force for evangelization.
- d. The modern *renewal movements*, well integrated in the life and mission of the parish, have an important role to play in building communion, in providing opportunities for a deeper experience of God and in fostering conversion of life, (art.24)

Within the perspective of ecclesial communion, the Holy Father also calls for greater *solidarity* among the particular Churches of Asia where relations have sometimes been tense and difficult because of differences in ecclesiastical jurisdictions, liturgical traditions or missionary styles. The Bishops present at the Synod acknowledged that even today within and among the particular Churches in Asia there are sometimes unfortunate divisions, often connected with ritual, linguistic, ethnic, caste and ideological differences. Some wounds have been partially healed,

but there is not yet full healing. Recognizing that wherever communion is weakened the Church's witness and missionary work suffer, the Apostolic Exhortation proposes the following concrete steps to strengthen mutual concern and solidarity: a. More equitable distribution of priests; b. More effective financial solidarity; c. Cultural and theological exchanges; d. Increased opportunities for partnership between dioceses, (art. 25)

Subsequently special attention is given to the Catholic Eastern Churches, principally of the Middle East and India. "They have been from Apostolic times the custodians of precious spiritual, liturgical and theological heritage". Here the Holy Father calls upon everyone to recognize the legitimate customs and the legitimate freedom of these Churches in disciplinary and liturgical matters. Then he adds:

These venerable Churches are directly involved in ecumenical dialogue with their sister Orthodox Churches, and the Synod Fathers urged them to pursue this path. They have also had valuable experiences in interreligious dialogue, especially with Islam. This can be helpful to other Churches in Asia and elsewhere. It is clear that the Catholic Eastern Churches possess a great wealth of tradition and experience which can greatly benefit the whole Church, (art. 27)

Under the title "Sharing Hopes and Sufferings" and with the same intention of strengthening communion within the Church, the Holy Father lovingly remembered the local Churches of the ex-Soviet Asian territories, the Church in China, Vietnam, Korea and the Church in Jerusalem, which has a special place in the hearts of all Christians, (art. 28)

In the Introduction of this Apostolic Exhortation we read that the "actual celebration of the Synod itself confirmed the importance of *Dialogue* as a *characteristic mode* of the life of the Church in Asia". Consequently the ecclesiological reflections of the Holy

Father on the Church as Communion and on the Mission of the Church conclude with the question of Dialogue. He begins by stating that the Church's desire for dialogue "is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples. It is an essential part of the Church's mission". It has its origin in the ongoing, loving dialogue of salvation with which the Father addresses every person through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nothing but fervent and unselfish solidarity with the men and women of Asia prompts the Church's dialogue. "Her efforts to engage in dialogue are directed in the first place to those who share her belief in Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior. It extends beyond the Christian world to the followers of every other religious tradition, on the basis of the religious yearnings found in every human heart. Ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue constitute a veritable vocation for the Church, (art. 29)

Ecumenical Dialogue, in the words of the Apostolic Exhortation, is a challenge and a call to conversion for the whole Church but especially in Asia. Here our non-Christians friends need to see among the Christians more transparent signs of unity and reconciliation.

The Synod Fathers acknowledged that the scandal of a divided Christianity is a great obstacle for evangelization in Asia.... Therefore the Catholic Church in Asia feels especially impelled to work for unity with other Christians, realizing that the search for full communion demands from everyone charity, discernment, courage and hope.

For a fruitful ecumenical dialogue certain fundamental dispositions are required on the part of the Catholic faithful: *Willingness to cooperate* with the faithful of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities; *fidelity* to the Catholic Church; a *discerning* heart and a sincere desire for *purification and renewal*.

On the practical level, The Apostolic Exhortation, following the desire of the Synod's Fathers, proposed that the national Episcopal Conferences in Asia invite other Christian Churches to join in a process of prayer and consultation in order to explore the possibilities of new ecumenical structures and associations to promote Christian unity, (art. 30)

Finally, the Holy Father closes chapter V with the important issue of Interreligious Dialogue indicating that this is a task which the Second Vatican Council bequeathed to the whole Church as a duty and as a challenge and that the advent of a new millennium offers a great opportunity for such a dialogue with the leaders of the great world religions. Then he recalls the principles to be followed in this search for a positive relationship with other religious traditions are set out in the Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the Magna Carta of interreligious dialogue for our times. In addition, the Holy Father repeats here what he wrote to the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences:

«Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all people, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without failing Jesus Christ who is 'the way and the truth and the life'.

... The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people».

In Interreligious Dialogue, as I have already written in my Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio, «there must be no abandonment of principles nor false irenicism, but instead

a witness given and received for mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience, and at the same time for the elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings». Only those with a mature and convinced Christian faith are qualified to engage in genuine interreligious dialogue. «Only Christians who are deeply immersed in the mystery of Christ and who are happy in their faith community can without undue risk and with hope of positive fruit engage in interreligious dialogue». It is therefore important for the Church in Asia to provide suitable models of interreligious dialogue - evangelization in dialogue and dialogue for evangelization - and suitable training for those involved.

To guide those engaged in the process, the Synod suggested that a directory on interreligious dialogue be drawn up. It is important to continue searching for suitable models of Interreligious Dialogue and appropriate training programs for this complex task of the mission of the Church, (art. 31)

At this point *Ecclesia in Asia* all through chapter VI, entitled *The Service of Human Promotion*, addresses with unusual courage and wisdom, for the sake of the Asian poor, all the burning issues of contemporary human society, namely: Respect for Human Life, Health Care, Education, Disarmament, Globalization, Foreign Debt, and Environment, (art. 34, 41)

The Church's preferential love for the poor call on all the pastors and faithful to urgently come to the rescue of the teeming multitudes of Asian poor, with special concern for the women and children, who are often the victims of the worst kind of exploitation.

This section of *Ecclesia in Asia* is indeed a very eloquent and timely confirmation of what the Second Vatican Council said so memorably: *The joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties*

of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (G.S. 1)

As we get to the end of the Apostolic Exhortation we can sense that the most fervent desire of the Holy Father is to see the Church become in the Third Millennium a community of Faithful Witnesses, a more genuine and transparent Witnessing Church. Thus he says:

Genuine Christian witness is needed especially now, because «people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than- in teaching, and in life and action than in theories». This is certainly true in the Asian context, where people are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument. Therefore, inspired by the many missionaries who bore heroic witness to God's love among the peoples of the continent in the past, the Church in Asia must strive now to witness with no less zeal to Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

Following the desire of the Synod's Fathers, The Holy Father in the last chapter of this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation offers some directives and guidelines to those working in the vast field of evangelization in Asia: The Bishops and the Clergy, the Religious and members of Missionary Societies, the Laity, the Family and those working in the field of Social Communications.

Finally he reminds all of us that the ultimate witness to the true value of the Gospel, was given by the Martyrs. The word itself "martyr" means witness. Therefore the Holy Father closes his reflections on the Witnessing Church by stressing the vital importance of remembering our Martyrs and says:

Through the ages, Asia has given the Church and the world a great host of these heroes of the faith, and from the heart of Asia there rises the great song of praise: Te martyrum

candidatus laudat exercitus. This is the song of those who died for Christ on Asian soil in the first centuries of the Church, and it is also the joyful cry of men and women of more recent times like Saint Paul Miki and his companions, Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and his companions, Saint Andrew Dung Lac and his companions, Saint Andrew Kim Taegon and his companions. May the great host of Asian martyrs, old and new, never cease to teach the Church in Asia what it means to bear witness to the Lamb in whose blood they have washed their shining robes (cf Rev 7:14)! May they stand as indomitable witnesses to the truth that Christians are called always and everywhere to proclaim nothing other than the power of the Lord's Cross! And may the blood of Asia's martyrs be now as always the seed of new life for the Church in every corner of the continent.

The Holy Father concludes the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation by expressing the Church's gratitude to all those who in different ways have contributed to the success of the Special Assembly of the Bishops Synod for Asia. He is also grateful to all those who form the great family of the Church in Asia: the clergy, the men and women religious and other consecrated persons, the missionaries, the laity, families, the young, indigenous peoples, workers, the poor and afflicted. To those who are now suffering for their Faith he says: *Deep in my heart there is a special place for those in Asia who are persecuted for their faith in Christ. They are the hidden pillars of the Church, to whom Jesus himself speaks words of comfort.*

The last page of *Ecclesia in Asia* is a moving prayer to Mary, Mother of Christ, to whom the Holy Father entrusts the Church in our continent at the threshold of the Third Millennium, *trusting absolutely that hers is an ear that always listens, hers a heart that always welcomes, and hers a prayer that never fails.*

I can not close my presentation, albeit incomplete, without expressing my profound admiration and gratitude to the Holy Father for this splendid gift that he has given us. In several important areas of theological and pastoral reflection *Ecclesia in Asia* is truly a masterpiece. I hope and pray that it will be seriously studied and faithfully implemented, so that "just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and on the second on that of the Americas and Africa, may the Third Millennium bring a plentiful harvest of Faith in our vast and vital continent".

A New Way of Being Church in Asia*

CARD. JULIUS DARMAATMADJA

Beloved Holy Father, John Paul II,
Our honorable Hosts and Guests,
Dear Fellow Members of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia,
Dear Fraternal Delegates, Auditors, Experts and all participants of the Synod.
The blessings of the Lord be upon each and all of us.

1. Beloved Holy Father, five years ago, on 10 November, 1994, Your Holiness officially announced in your Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* that the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops was to be convoked. Today, five years after that announcement, we "welcome you" in this city of Asia, the Capital City of India, New Delhi, to officially close our Synod following the session we held in Rome a year-and-a-half ago, from 19 April to 14 May, 1993. We are grateful that this closing can be carried out in Asia, more precisely here in New Delhi, one of the many cities which are, so representative in the purpose of commemorating so important an event for the Churches of Asia. Very fittingly we offer our greatest thanks to the Government of India which

* Closing Remarks at the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia.

has so graciously allowed all of us in these days to officially close our Synod. Furthermore, from this exalted place we eagerly awaited the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation from Your Holiness, to be proclaimed officially for the first time. This Pastoral Directive is the final document of our Synod, which Your Holiness accords us as the Vicar of Christ, Head of the Universal Church, so that this document is of the Universal Church as well. This Pastoral Directive will prove most useful for us as we move forward together to enter the Third Millennium, since for that purpose, according to your urging and wish, we held the Synod, at the dawn of the Great Jubilee of the Nativity of our Saviour.

2. Dear Sisters and Brothers, after experiencing that assembly from 19 April to 14 May, 1998, numerous benefits have accrued to us directly, according to our individual perspectives, based on differences of locality and the situations in which our Church has taken root and come into existence. Today with deep gratitude we have listened to our beloved Pope John Paul II deliver to us his "Apostolic Exhortation" as the crowning point of the whole process of the journey with us. The attention of all of us has undoubtedly focused on this pastoral directive. I, as one of the participants among many, have been-asked to present a "closing remark". It would be impossible for me to express all that you might hope of me at this time. In the present circumstances I wish to limit myself to presenting only one of the many matters that I consider important as the fruit of the recent Synod. Would that it echo some of your own experiences and impressions and is beneficial as well for you and for the many Churches, both in Asia as well as other places. What I wish to share is this: the importance of a New Evangelization. A New Evangelization which includes within it the attempt to reshape the concrete form of a New Presence of the Churches of Asia, as a constitutive part of the Evangelization of Asia, The form of this New Presence is new precisely because it increasingly takes on the face of Asia and is therefore increasingly communicable. Aside from specifically

characterizing Asia, it at the same time becomes the more meaningful for Asian society, particularly for the poor and underprivileged, since the Church's presence truly addresses their needs, both material as well as inner needs as human beings. In fact the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the world has shown us an important way of looking Evangelization in a new way. Of course we are called to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles. But *Gaudium et Spes* noted that we can learn also from the world, precisely because we are faithful to Jesus; that is, we can find Jesus present in the world. He has always been present and working in the world, including the world of Asia.

3. The more we are convinced of the necessity that Jesus be announced as the Saviour of all humankind and consequently that we are the more committed to this "mission for Asia!", the more as well do we become aware that if we wish to achieve greater success, then there is no other way than to reshape "our way of being Church in Asia". And what must become the new aspect regarding "our new way of being Church in Asia" is, first, that we continue our search for a fuller way for the Church to be rooted in Asia and to grow more in Asian appearance. It means: we are searching for ways to make the particular Churches, fully and deeply present in the one Church of Christ shepherded by the Pope as the unifying factor in our one faith in Jesus Christ, but at the same time deeper and deeper rooted in our own cultures and in our deepest inner aspirations as peoples of Asia. In saying this, what we have chiefly in mind is the opinion that within the Churches of Asia itself there is also the need for differences among them. For, distinct from the religious traditions and major spiritualities such as are found in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, there are still other strong and numerous religious currents as found in Taoism, Confucianism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism and Shintoism, which in different and uneven ways influence the attitudes of the life of society in specific areas or nations here in Asia. And this still hasn't touched on the beliefs of tribes and

the teachings of many sages which permeate local cultural life. There are areas which are more strongly influenced by Islam, other areas by Hinduism, Buddhism or Shintoism. It is important that the local Churches be capable of seeing the religious values and the culture they embody, which need to be considered specifically as partners in dialogue for the area in question. Religious and cultural aspects which bear values of universal goodness and truth, fittingly are to be accepted as treasures, since they approximate the marks of the guidance of the Holy Spirit who has been working within these cultures and living human institutions (Cf. JRM no. 28). In the eyes of religious adherents and practitioners of such values, the new way the Church bears itself will enable these people to understand us better, enable them to come closer to us, but also enrich us in return in the way we live our christian lives.

4. That is the reason why in our synodal discussions in 1998 we arrived at the consensus that: "The Churches must be immersed in the diverse contrasting and even conflicting realities of Asia. Only such immersion will help the Church define her mission to the people of Asia in an intelligible and acceptable manner" (Prop. No. 3). In the context of immersing ourselves in these local cultural and religious values, what we are speaking of is: the existence of authentic values that we can discover therein, such as: mercy, submission to the will of God, compassion, rectitude, non-violence, righteousness, filial piety', harmony with creation, etc. (Cf. Prop. No. 5). With the same spirit, discussing the manner of presenting Jesus Christ as initial proclamation, we spoke of: Jesus Christ as the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer, the Liberator, the Spiritual Guide, the Enlightened One, the Compassionate Friend of the poor, the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the Obedient One, etc. Of course it must be kept in mind that this needs to be completed with a fuller catechesis on Jesus Christ as truly God and Man. (Cf. Prop. No. 6). Precisely because this task urges, us to root the Church in this local religious culture and reality, we therefore support "inculturation in the field of

theology, of priests and religious, catechesis, spirituality, etc."(Cf. Prop. No. 36). Our theologians deserve to be suitably supported so as to delve into these themes in a manner that is at once serious and courageous but also faithful to Sacred Scripture and Church Tradition (Cf. Ibid, and Prop. No. 7). In matters that involve inculturation of such a nature, "Local Bishops Conferences" should be fittingly granted a more significant role in decision making. (Cf. Prop. No. 36)

5. Second, our new way of being Church should be meaningful for the people of Asia. "Considering all the Challenges in Asia, we felt that the Synod theme is quite relevant. 'Being Church in Asia' today means 'participating in the mission of Christ the Savior in rendering his redemptive love and service in Asia,' so that Asian men and women can more fully achieve their integral human development, and "that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10). ... In addition to offering hope and new life in Jesus Christ and serving directly people who are needy in so many ways, we must also take part in the task of striving to dismantle unjust structures whether in the economic, political, cultural or government realm, as well as of building a new culture of life characterized by love, truth, honesty and justice. It is in this aspect of our Christian mission that the laity play a key role, that is in those areas of life where they, more than the priests and religious, are living in the midst of the world and its activities. Empowerment and ongoing formation of our lay people are a must. (Cardinal Julius Darmaatmadja, Closing Remarks, 13 May, 1998, no. 6).

6. Those ideas 'mentioned before resonated the same concerns that were highlighted in the FABC's first meeting in Manila, in the year 1970, expressing their full awareness that the Churches in Asia carry a mission that needs to touch "cultural, religious, social, economic and even political needs" throughout Asia. There was a growing need to respond prophetically to the ever-growing

challenges emerging from the changes in Asian countries, as a sign of the Church's commitment to authentic integral human development, which is founded on the Incarnation of the Son. The new way of being Church in Asia, therefore, is expected to become in a concrete way a Church "with" and "for" the people in order to achieve their integral human development, culminating in the fullness of life given by Our Lord Jesus Christ. The new way of being Church in this way gives birth also to a proper New Evangelization.

7. Our New Evangelization means, then, bringing the Good News into all dimensions of human life and society and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it anew. It is a new life in a real communion of people and groups of people with each other and with God, gratefully reenacted in the breaking of bread: a life in real brotherhood and sisterhood. It is a life full of hope against all hopes. It is a life of meeting every kind of challenge to creativity in the Holy Spirit. It is the fullness of the Reign of God that Jesus proclaimed and that we are to proclaim in our respective contexts. The Church is the reality which signifies the presence of the Reign of God (LG. A.1). The special Asian assembly of the Synod, of Bishops helps the whole people of God in Asia to keep this vision in heart and mind and try to put it into practice in their lives. It helps us, the Churches of Asia, to have the vision of Jesus giving the fullness of life, as John has depicted it. Our new Evangelization should, on the one hand, reveal the all-transforming power of the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus Christ. It should, on the other hand, speak about justice, peace and the wholeness of creation as fruits and signs of God's eschatological realm. Hence, Christian answers to threats to life are an integral part of the confession of Christian faith.

8. Granted that the nations that comprise Asia have not all accomplished the same level of development, nevertheless it can be said that the nations of Asia in general are developing countries.

While having a socio-economic dimension of its own, development is the modern expression of an essential dimension of this common human vocation: to convert people to authentic human values and to deepen and fulfill these values in Christ. In other words: addressing these problems and especially insisting on the nature and characteristics of authentic human development belongs to the Church's pastoral ministry. In her pastoral ministry, the Church formulates social teaching that consists in a set of principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and directives for action in concrete historical situations. Thus here in Asia faith becomes a prophetic movement of resistance against sin and structures of sin and a proclamation of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ as an alternative reality in human history and beyond. To be able to express this adequately the Asian Churches need contextualized theology through inter-disciplinary approaches with deep insight into people's historical reality.

9. The proclamation of the Gospel in Asia has been, is and should always be about the same Jesus Christ the Saviour of the whole of humankind. The Constitution of the Vatican II about the Revelation has told us to remember, that the Son of God has incarnated in a particular culture in a particular person. Embracing this faith should make us aware, how unified is God with our respective culture. Since Mary said "yes" accepting the work of the Holy Spirit in her, we are saved by the very presence of Her Son in her human person from the Holy Spirit, in this sense, while bringing this session to a close, and placing our faith in "the guiding power of the Holy Spirit", under the protection of Mary, Mother of the Church, we beg the blessing and favor of the Holy Father so that we are able to accomplish this 'communicative' and 'meaningful' proclamation to the people of Asia, who are in fact radically religious, and at the same time badly in need of almost everything. Yes, it is true that there is no authentic evangelization without announcing Jesus Christ, Saviour of the whole human race. But for Asia, there will be no complete evangelization unless there

is dialogue with other religions and cultures. There is no full evangelization if there is no answer to the deep yearnings of the peoples of Asia. There is no convincing and trustworthy announcement of Jesus as the Saviour, unless along with, or even preceding this announcing, the Church presents the actual loving ministry of Jesus which rescues people from situations of injustice, persecution, misery, and in the place of these brings life, yes, even life in abundance. With this new spirit, let us greet with gratitude the coming of the Great Jubilee of the Nativity of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, entering the third millennium.



**POM JOHN PAUL II
DELHI VISIT 1999**

INTER-RELIGIOUS LEADERS' MEETING

Organized by

**Inter-Ritual Committee of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India
CBCI Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue
Delhi Archdiocesan Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue**

Date

Sunday 7th November, 1999

Tune

From 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Venue

**Vigyan Bhavan
Maulana Azad Road
New Delhi-110 001**

PROGRAMME

- 5:00 p.m.** **Arrival of His Holiness at the Dais**
 Offering of bouquet to His Holiness
 Offering of a Rose Blossom to each Religious Leader
 Lighting of the Lamp
- 5:02 p.m.** **Prayer: Asatoma sadgamaya**

FELICITATIONS

- Moderator:** **Most Rev. Alan de Lastic**
 (Archbishop of Delhi and President, Catholic Bishops'
 Conference of India)
- 5:04 p.m.** **Shankaracharya Madhavananda Saraswati**
 (Hindu - Jagatguru)
- 5:06 p.m.** **Dr. Mufti Mohammed Mukkarram Ahmed**
 (Muslim - Imam)
- 5:08 p.m.** **Bhai Manjit Singh Sahib (Sikh - Jathedar)**
- 5:10 p.m.** **Acharya Mahaprajna (Jain - Muni)**
- 5:12 p.m.** **Dr. K. Raja Ratnam (President, NCCI)**
- 5:14 p.m.** **Samdhong Rinpoche (Buddhist - Monk)**

5:16 p.m.	Ervad Cawas Daraius Bagli (Parsi - Priest)
5:18 p.m.	Shri Ezekiel Isaac Malekar (Jewish - Rabbi)
5:20 p.m.	Zena Sorabjee (Bahai - Representative)

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

5:59 p.m. Presentation of Book: Rt. Rev George Punnakottil
(Chairman, CBCI Commission for Ecumenism & Dialogue)

Christianity

Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. *Matthew 7:12*

Hinduism

This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you. *Mahabharata, XIII: 114*

Islam

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. *an-Nawawi, 40 Hadith, 13*

Sikhism

Do not create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone. *Guru Arjan Devji 258, Guru Granth Sahib*

Jainism

In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self. *Mahavira*

Buddhism

A state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me will also not be so for him; and how can I impose on another a state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me?
Samyutta Kikaya, V

Zoroastrianism

That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self. *Dadistan-i-Dinik, 94.5*

Judaism

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the law: all the rest is commentary. *Talmud, Shabbat 31a*

Baha'i

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. *Baha'ullah. Tablets of Bha'ullah, 71*

LET MY COUNTRY AWAKE

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action -
Into that heaven of freedom my Father, let my country awake.

(Rabindranath Tagore)

Press Statement: Pope Blesses India in Papal High Mass

**COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION BUREAU
CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF DELHI**

***CALLS ON PEOPLE TO IMBIBE MOTHER TERESA'S
LOVE AND SERVICE FOR THE POOR***

NEW DELHI, Sunday, November 8, 1999

Pope John Paul II said special prayers for India and used the Sanskrit word *Shanti* to invoke Peace at the Papal High Mass at the open air Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here this morning as he rounded off the religious ceremonies concluding the Synod for Asia. More than 300 Bishops and a thousand priests celebrated the Mass with the Holy Father as more than 70,000 people packed the stands of the stadium. People had started queuing up from early morning to enter the heavily guarded stadium.

The Pope, a personal admirer of Mother Teresa, remembered her specially. Indians have been expecting the Vatican to expedite the process of the Canonisation of the immensely popular missionary. While no announcements were expected during the Papal visit on this, the Pontiff departed from the liturgy to add "From this land, which preserves the mortal remains of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, I appeal to the whole Church never to forget her

witness of evangelical love, specially towards the poorest of the poor. Mother Teresa loved India. She is with the people of India forever."

'Bharat to Aashirwad... Shanti' (Blessings on India... Peace) the Pope said thrice towards the end of the service attended by over 70,000 Catholics from Delhi and the nearby states. Intercessor' prayers for the Pope, the religious leadership and for the nations of Asia were said in Hindi, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog and Thai were said by representatives from several Asian countries. There were no representatives from the People's Republic of China though many other countries were represented by Bishops, priests, nuns or lay people.

But this was a Mass with a strong Indian flavour, the special altar shaped as hands raised in prayer, flanked by a portrait of Mother Teresa to the left and the Gospel to the right. A massive brass Indian lamp stood in the foreground, a number of bright *diyas* (earthen oil lamps) painted on the rising stage decorated the terraced sanctuary, and a group of tribal men and women dancing to folk music as they ushered in the procession of priests and bishops. Bishops of the Oriental rites lent a special colour to the solemn ranks of the clergy.

The Pope had last night promulgated the document *Ecclesia in Asia* (Church in Asia) containing his apostolic exhortations which form guidelines for the Church in the next century in the world's most populous and multi-religious continent. He formally presented the document to 30 chosen representatives of the peoples of Asia after the Papal Mass.

The Pope also gave Holy Communion to a group of people representing a cross section of Asian Catholics. Among them was 76-year-old woman Mrs. Moksha Pakiam who had come from Bangalore.

The mass began with the Rt. Rev. Alan de Lastic, Archbishop of the host archdiocese of Delhi, welcoming the Holy Father. The Archbishop welcomed the Pope both in Hindi and in English, as he also wished the people of India a happy Diwali.

The Pope also began his homily with a mention of Diwali. "Today throughout this vast country many people are celebrating the Festival of Lights. We rejoice with them and in this Eucharist here in New Delhi, in India, on the continent of Asia, we too exult in the light and bear witness to the One who is "the true light that enlightens every man. Speaking of the synod, he said the Synod committed the entire people to ever greater fidelity to the Lord and to the evangelical task which he has entrusted to all the baptized for the good of the human family".

"It is fitting that this document has been signed and issued in India, the home of many of Asia's time-honoured cultures, religions and spiritual traditions. These ancient Asian civilizations have shaped the lives of the peoples of this continent and have left an indelible mark on the history of the human race. Distinguished representatives of various Christian Communities and of the great religions of India are present here today. I greet them all with esteem and friendship, and I place before them my hope and dream that the next century will be a time of fruitful dialogue, leading to a new relationship of understanding and solidarity among the followers of all religions," the Pope said.

The Supreme pontiff of the Catholic church told his Bishops and priests "Receive the Gospel of Christ whose servant you are, meditate on the Law of God, believe what you read, preach what you believe and practise what you preach". To the religious nuns and brothers, he said "Whether you are engaged in contemplation or working in the active apostolate, your witness to the supremacy of the spirit places you at the very heart of the Church's life and mission in Asia." He told the ordinary Catholics they faced the challenge of bringing the light of the Gospel to bear on the family,

and on the defence of human life and dignity. "You bear witness to your faith in a world of contrasts."

"On the one hand there has been enormous economic and technological progress, on the other there still exist situations of extreme poverty and injustice. The Synod re-echoed the cry of the ancient Prophets, the cry for justice, for the right ordering of human society, without which there can be no true worship of God. The Church looks to the lay men and women of Asia to reflect the light of Christ wherever the darkness of sin, division and discrimination distorts the image of God in his children"

The Pope once again reminded the people that Jesus was born on Asian soil. "The Eternal Word took flesh as an Asian! And it was on this continent, through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Church went forth to spread the Good News. With Christians throughout the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the new millennium, giving thanks for all that God has worked from those beginnings until now. Just as the first millennium saw the Cross firmly planted in the soil of Europe, and the second in that of America and Africa, so may the Third Christian Millennium witness *a great harvest of faith* on this vast and vital continent," he said.

"The Synod reminds Asian Christians that "Jesus' perfectly human life, devoted wholly to the love and service of the Father and of man, reveals that the vocation of every human being is to receive love and give love in return" he said. The world will only be transformed if men and women of good will, and whole nations, genuinely accept that the only path worthy of the human family is the path of peace, of mutual respect, understanding and love, and solidarity with those in need," the Pope said.

Division of a Diocese and Patrimonial Goods

ARTEMIO BALUMA

When a new diocese is created from an existing one, how do we proceed with the division and separation of patrimonial goods?

Canonical Provision

Can. 122 provides: "When an aggregate which is a public juridical person is divided in such a way that part of it is joined to another juridical person, or a distinct public juridical person is established from one part of it, the first obligation is to observe the wishes of the founders and benefactors, the demands of acquired rights and the requirement of the approved statutes. Then the competent ecclesiastical authority, either personally or through an executor, is to ensure:

1° That the divisible common patrimonial goods and rights, the monies owed and the other liabilities, are divided between the juridical persons in question in due proportion, in a fashion which is equitable and right, taking account of all the circumstances and needs of both;

2° That the use and enjoyment of the common goods which cannot be divided, be given to each juridical person and also that

the liabilities which are proper to each are the responsibility of each, in due proportion, in a fashion which is equitable and right."

Application of the Law

Before proceeding to any division, one requisite is to observe the wishes of founders and benefactors. This portion of the law seems to apply more to parishes and religious foundations. In the case of the division of a diocese, the territorial component is already determined by the Holy See. The towns secluded from the mother diocese are now included in the new diocese. Naturally, the Catholic residents in the new diocese will have it as their diocesan domicile or quasi-domicile.

As to ecclesiastical goods, commenting on the abovementioned canon, E. Molano writes: "If there are no statutory provisions or particular intentions, the allocation of the goods of the divided or separated entities is the responsibility of ecclesial authority, who must fulfill it with justice and equity" explains the Canon as follows: The rights and patrimonial goods and obligations are to be divided. And given that justice considers proportional equality, and not mathematical — to each his own is not the same as to each the same — and considers proportional equality in the concrete existence of every case, the canon follows that principle; and because of this, the canon repeats in paragraphs 1 and 2 that this division be done with due proportion from equity and right, considering all the needs and circumstances and situation, present and foreseeable in the immediate future, above all of the new entity [diocese, parish, seminary, university]. The indivisible goods in a practical sense and value, which is what principally the law considers in more immediate form, are those which, if divided, would lose much of their value; for instance, a library, a collection. (*Code of Canon Law, Annotated*, [Montreal, Wilson & Lafleur, 1993], 139).

Vatican n Documents

Christus Dominus [n. 22] states that, for bishops to carry out their pastoral function effectively, this "requires not only a proper determination of the territorial limits of the diocese but also a reasonable distribution of clergy and resources in accordance with the needs of the apostolate." In n. 23, it reads, "...resources for the care of personnel and the maintenance of institutions should be already in hand or at least it should be foreseen that they will be provided from elsewhere."

Ecclesiae Sanctae [n. 12] mandates episcopal conferences to examine the existing territorial division of churches: "...the status of diocese with regard to territory, personnel and possessions are to be properly investigated; the opinion is to be sought of each individual bishop directly involved as well as to the bishops of the entire province or ecclesiastical region within whose limits the revision of diocese is being considered..." And continues: "... in the division of dismemberment of diocese there should be an equitable and suitable distribution of priests and seminaries."

What are these Rights and Patrimonial Goods

Concretely, what are these rights and patrimonial goods? Lands, cemeteries, churches, convents, seminaries, schools, auditoria, buildings for rent, social action centers, chapels, cash in bank, cash on hand, receivable loans, investments, rentals, cars, jeepneys, motorcycles, machines, etc. These are the properties subject to partition upon the division of a diocese to create a new one.

Justice considers proportional, not mathematical, equality, as the law contemplates. Hence,, division is not strictly 50-50, 55-45 or 60-40, which is mathematical. The law says the division is to be *ex aequo et bono*, according to what is equitable and just, the circumstances and the needs of the new diocese being considered.

Also, consideration be due to the possibility of a further division of the mother diocese. In other words, some assets, material or pecuniary, be reserved in case of further division.

Example of Indivisible Good

Let us take a seminary building. In case of division of the diocese, the seminary is to remain undivided, but its maintenance may be shouldered not "half-in-half" but in proportion to the number of seminarians each diocese has.

At times, the seminary has its own foundation or seed money. Its interest is to be used first. And if there must be applied first to defray the expenses in accordance with the intention of the donors. If the two sources (foundation interest and grants) are insufficient, then the balance is defrayed by both dioceses prorated to their number of students. It would be unfair to let the diocese with less seminarians share one half of the expense while the other has more students. As a note, if the grant is intended to be spent for that year, it would be inappropriate to deposit it with the capital or foundation, then use only its interest. Doing so defeats the intention of the donor that ought always to be respected and borders what is commonly called as technical malversation.

Liabilities

In the same manner, the liabilities should be shared proportionately. Perhaps, a practical way would be to liquidate all obligations to creditors prior to the division of assets, so that the fledgling local church would not be saddled with debts and to give the new local ordinary a fresh start with zero indebtedness.

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW

**Ecclesia in Asia in Homiletic and Bibliarasal
Pointers for March - April 2000**

EFREN RIVERA, OP

<{ **JUBILEE YEAR** }> 11) MARCH 5, 2000

NINTH SUNDAY IN ORD. TIME (Yr. B)

**Theme 1: THE HUMANITARIAN MOTIVE
OF THE SABBATH**

Deuteronomy 5:12-15: The Third Commandment

**Mark 2:23 - 3:6 (2:23-28): The Question about
the Sabbath**

**Theme 2: THE APOSTOLATE — MIRROR
OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY**

H Corinthians 4:6-11: Spiritual Treasure in Clay Pots

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

*We refer our readers to : "Biblical Notes for Homilies" in
the Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas, Vol. XLVII, No. 522, p. 126-
127.*

B. REFLECTION POINTS
BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS,
WE LISTEN AND SHARE

Pointers for sharing on Dt 5:12-15 and Mk 2:23 - 3:6..

Connect these readings with the following words of "Ecclesia in Asia": "Jesus knew and loved this land. He made his own the history, the sufferings and hopes of its people. He loved its people and embraced their Jewish traditions and heritage..." (EA n. 1).

o Share your insights with your small group

Questions connected with the Second Reading (II Cor 4:6 11), to be touched on, if possible, during the sharing: Do you give "absolute priority" (see EA n. 2) to Evangelization as the "joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ?"

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING
"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION OF THE HOLY FATHER
JOHN PAUL II ON JESUS CHRIST THE SAVIOR
AND HIS MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE IN ASIA

INTRODUCTION (N. 1-4)

SUMMARY

1. The Marvel of God's Plan in Asia.

It was in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning... and in the fullness of time he sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Savior, who took flesh as an Asian!

Jesus knew and loved this land. He made his own the history, sufferings and the hopes of its people.

Just as in the first millenium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millenium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent.

2. Background to the Special Assembly

In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente (TMA)*, 10 November 1994, the Pope noted that in Asia the issue of the encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions is a pressing one.

In Manila, in 1995, the Pope reminded the Bishops: "If the Church in Asia is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority."

The Pope chose the Synod's theme: "*Jesus Christ the Savior and his Mission of Love and Service in Asia: "That they may have Life and have it abundantly"*" (Jn 10:10).

3. The Celebration of the Special Assembly

The actual celebration of the Synod (from 18 April to 14 May 1998 in the Vatican) confirmed the importance of dialogue as a characteristic mode of the Church's life in Asia.

The Special Assembly was *an encounter in dialogue*:

(1) of the particular Asian churches, including the Eastern Churches, in the person of their pastors...

(2) of the Bishops and the Successor of Peter... a confirmation in faith and mission...

The Synod was a moment of grace because it was an encounter with the Savior who continues to be present in his

Church through the power of the Holy Spirit, experienced in fraternal dialogue of life, communion and mission.

4. Sharing the Fruits of the Special Assembly

The Synod was a *celebratory remembering* of the Asian roots of Christianity.

(1) It was a remembrance:

A) of the first Christian community, the early Church, Jesus' little flock on this immense continent (cf. Lk 12:32).

B) It was also an occasion to recognize the ancient religious traditions and civilizations, the profound philosophies and the wisdom which have made Asia what it is today.

C) Above all, the peoples of Asia themselves were remembered as the continent's true wealth and hope for the future.

(2) It was a celebration:

A) of the extraordinarily fruitful meeting between the old and the new cultures and civilizations of Asia, marvelous to behold in their diversity and convergence, especially when symbols, songs, dances and colors came together in harmonious accord around the one Table of the Lord in the opening and closing Eucharistic Liturgies.

B) This was not a celebration motivated by pride in human achievements, but one conscious of what the Almighty has done for the Church in Asia (cf. Lk 1:49). In recalling the Catholic community's humble condition, as well as the weaknesses of its members, the Synod was also a *call to conversion*, so that the Church in Asia might become ever more worthy of the graces continually being offered by God.

As well as a remembrance and a celebration, the Synod was an *ardent affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ the Savior*.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. The theme of the First and Gospel Readings, "The Humanitarian Motive of the Sabbath can be tied up with the observations of the Pope that it was in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning (see "Ecclesia in Asia" — EA — n. 1).

Abraham and his descendants were Western Asians. They had to sojourn in Egypt because of famine, and there they were enslaved. As slaves they never had a day of rest. When God delivered them from slavery, he gave them "rest," and commanded them to observe the Sabbath.

The Sabbath or day of rest is an institution that originated from Western Asia. But today it is observed throughout the world. It is a sign that the biblical religion has merged, to some extent, with the religions and cultures not only of the rest of Asia but also of the whole world.

Similarly, the teaching of Jesus Christ that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,"— a teaching first pronounced in a Western Asian Land and for Western Asian people — has influenced religious teachings in the rest of Asia and the whole world.

The compassionate love of Jesus that is evident in today's Gospel Reading is what has attracted millions of Asians to Jesus. The churches of Asia today must continue to proclaim this compassionate love. It is something we must proclaim and give witness to in our dialogue-of-life with Asians of other faiths. This is our commitment. And being true to our commitment is all that the Pope and the Holy Spirit asks from us. The Pope does not ask us to *convert* Asians of other faiths. If *conversion* is at all mentioned in *Ecclesia in Asia* (n. 4), the call to conversion is directed to the Christian Catholic Churches so that they might become "ever more worthy of the graces continually being offered by God."

2. The theme of the Second Reading, "The Apostolate, Mirror of the Paschal Mystery" (suffering and death but eventual triumph because of resurrection) is also found in n. 4 of *Ecclesia in Asia*:

Grateful for the gift of faith, the Synod Fathers found no better way to celebrate the faith than to affirm it in its integrity, and to reflect on it in relation to the context in which it has to be proclaimed and professed in Asia today. They emphasized frequently that the faith is already being proclaimed with trust and courage on the continent, even amid great difficulties... in the face of the many painful questions posed by the suffering, violence, discrimination and poverty to which the majority of Asian peoples are subjected...

<{/ JUBILEE YEAR }> 12) MARCH 12, 2000

LENT I (Yr. B)

Unified theme: THE LONG ROAD TO GLORY

Genesis 9:8-15:	God's Covenant with Noah
I Peter 3:18-22:	Suffering for Doing Right
Mark 1:12-15:	The Temptation of Jesus

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

*We refer our readers to "Biblical Notes for Homilies,"
Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas Vol. XLVII, No. 523, p. 127-131.*

B. REFLECTION POINTS BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. The struggle between good and evil is exemplified by the contest between Jesus

and Satan; good will triumph in the end, just as, after his public ministry, Jesus triumphed over death by his Resurrection. Have you experienced triumph over sin or a sinful situation? Share your experience with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING

"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

CHAPTER I THE ASIAN CONTEXT (N. 5 - 9)

SUMMARY

5. Asia, the Birthplace of Jesus and of the Church

Knowledge of the world in which the Savior "dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14) is an important key to a more precise understanding of the Eternal Father's design and of the immensity of his love for every creature.

Likewise, a critical awareness of the diverse and complex realities of Asia is essential if the People of God on the continent are to respond to God's will for them in the new evangelization. The Synod Fathers insisted that the Church's mission of love and service in Asia is conditioned by two factors:

- 1) on the one hand, her self-understanding as a community of disciples of Jesus Christ gathered around her Pastors,
- 2) and on the other hand, the social, political, religious, cultural and economic realities of Asia.

6. Religious and Cultural Realities

Asia is the earth's largest continent and is home to nearly two-thirds of the world's population, with China and India

accounting for almost half the total population of the globe. The most striking feature of the continent is the variety of its peoples who are "heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions."

Asia is also the cradle of the world's major religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It is the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism. Millions also espouse traditional or tribal religions.

The religious values taught by all these manifestations of faith await their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Without denying the existence of bitter tensions and violent conflicts, it can still be said that Asia has often demonstrated (1) a remarkable capacity for accommodation and (2) a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures.

Despite the influence of modernization and secularization, Asian religions are showing signs of greater vitality and a capacity for renewal, as seen in reform movements within the various religious groups.

Many people, especially the young, experience a deep thirst for spiritual values, as the rise of new religious movements clearly demonstrates.

There is an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of "being Asian" is built. This "being Asian" is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul.

7. Economic and Social Realities

Some countries are highly developed, others are developing through effective economic policies, and others still find themselves in abject poverty, indeed among the poorest nations on earth.

In the process of development, materialism and secularism are also gaining ground, especially in urban areas. These ideologies, which undermine traditional, social and religious values, threaten Asia's cultures with incalculable damage.

It can be recalled that the Church has contributed to the defence and promotion of life through health care, social development and education to benefit peoples, especially the poor.

It is fitting that the Special Assembly paid tribute to the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta... she remains an icon of the service to life which the Church is offering in Asia, in courageous contrast to the many dark forces at work in society.

Recognition is given to the extensive economic growth of many Asian societies in recent decades: a new generation of skilled workers, scientists and technicians is growing daily and their great number augurs well for Asia's development.

The future of Asia lies in cooperation, within Asia and with the nations of other continents, but building always on what Asian peoples themselves do with a view to their own development.

8. Political Realities

While appreciating the progress which many Asian countries are making under their different forms of government, the Synod Fathers also drew attention to the widespread corruption existing at various levels of both governments and society.

However, there is a growing awareness throughout Asia of people's capacity to change unjust structures.

9. The Church in Asia: Past and Present

The history of the Church in Asia is as old as the Church herself.

Persian merchants took the Good News to China in the fifth century. The first Christian Church was built there at the beginning of the seventh century. During the T'ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), the Church flourished for nearly two centuries. The decline of this vibrant Church in China by the end of the First Millenium is one of the sadder chapters in the history of God's People on the continent.

In the thirteenth century the Good News was announced to the Mongols and the Turks and to the Chinese once more. But Christianity almost vanished in these regions for a number of reasons, among them the rise of Islam, geographical isolation, the absence of an appropriate adaptation to local cultures, and perhaps above all a lack of preparedness to encounter the great religions of Asia. The end of the fourteenth century saw the drastic diminution of the Church in Asia, except for the isolated community in South India.

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the Church in many places where missionaries worked from the 16th to the 19th centuries was still considered as foreign to Asia, and indeed was often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers.

At the Second Vatican Council a new understanding of mission dawned and with it a great hope. The following became the framework of the Church's new commitment:

- (1) The universality of God's plan of salvation
- (2) the missionary nature of the Church
- (3) the responsibility of everyone in the Church for this task.

In the vastly diversified cultural world of Asia, the Church faces multiple philosophical, theological and pastoral challenges.

Her task is made more difficult by the fact of her being a minority, with the Philippines as the only exception, where Catholics are in the majority.

The Spirit of God continues to guide the Church in Asia. One solid cause of hope is the increasing number of better trained, enthusiastic and Spirit-filled lay people.

There are Asian Churches in very difficult circumstances: in China, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, for example.

The Saints and Martyrs of Asia, both recognized and those known only to God, have given us, by their example a source of spiritual richness and a great means of evangelization.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON "THE LONG ROAD TO GLORY"

1. The Scripture readings for the First Sunday in Lent touch on various motifs, all of them connected with the Paschal theme of passage from sin and death to a glorious new life. The theme in Mark's narrative of the Temptation of Jesus is that Jesus initiates a struggle with Satan. The outcome of this struggles is not expressly stated. It seems that Mark intended to summarily and symbolically indicate the struggle of Jesus with Satan during his entire public ministry, a struggle marked by temptations and exorcisms.

The struggle of Jesus with Satan is continued by the struggle of evangelizers to show people — despite the obstacles thrown in their path by Satan — that Jesus Christ is indeed the Savior who will fully satisfy people's intense longing for God. The homily for this Sunday could be based on n. 9 of "Ecclesia in Asia" that is summarized above.

2. The homily for this Sunday could also be on the positive and negative aspects of the rapid changes taking place within Asian societies, as described in "Ecclesia in Asia" n. 7. Here is an outline.

Here are areas of societal life where rapid changes are taking place producing positive and negative results:

(1) Urbanization. Huge urban conglomerations emerge. Often they have large depressed areas where organized crime, terrorism, prostitution and the exploitation of the weaker sectors of society thrive.

(2) Migration. It exposes millions of people to situations which are difficult economically, culturally, and morally. . People migrate within Asia and from Asia to other continents for many reasons, among them poverty, war and ethnic conflicts, the denial of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The establishment of giant industrial complexes is another cause of internal and external migration, with accompanying destructive effects on family life and values.

(3) Tourism. Though a legitimate industry with its own cultural and educational values, tourism has in come cases a devastating influence upon the moral and physical landscape of many Asian countries, manifested in the degradation of young women and even children through prostitution.

(4) Population growth. This is not merely a demographic or economic problem but especially a moral one. At this point it is appropriate to recall:

a. the Church's contribution to the defence and promotion of life through health care, social development and education to benefit peoples, especially the poor.

b. Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She is an icon of the service to life which the Church is offering Asia, in courageous contrast to the many dark forces at work in society.

(5) External influences on Asian cultures through mass media, literature, music, films. New forms of behavior are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media and the kinds of literature, music and films that are proliferating on the continent. The negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and in particular the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family.

(6) Exploitation of poor people, especially women, the girl child, indigenous or tribal people.

Positively, the Synod recognizes the extensive economic growth of many Asian societies in recent decades. Moreover, a new generation of skilled workers, scientists and technicians is growing daily and their great number augurs well for Asia's development.

The future of Asia lies in cooperation, within Asia and with the nations of other continents, but building always on what Asian peoples themselves do with a view to their own development.

<0 JUBILEE YEAR {}> 13) MARCH 19, 2000

LENT II, YEAR B

Unified Theme: SACRIFICE OF THE BELOVED

Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18: God Commands

**Romans 8:31-34: Abraham to Offer Isaac
Whoever Believes in Him
Will Not Be Disappointed**

Mark 9:2-10: The Transfiguration

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

We refer our readers to Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos Vol. XLVII, No. 523, p. 131-132.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. We have to listen to God carefully and with our hearts in order to know "*who Jesus is*" and then we have to proclaim "*what he does*" because of *who he is*" (see EA 12). From your experience of ordinary Catholics, what can you say of their knowledge of who Jesus is and what he does because of *who he is*"? Is it sufficient? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING

"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

CHAPTER II JESUS THE SAVIOR: A GIFT TO ASIA (N. 10-14)

SUMMARY

10, The Gift of Faith

The Church's unique contribution to the peoples of the continent is the proclamation of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the one and only Savior for all peoples.

This faith in Jesus Christ is what inspires the Church's evangelizing work in Asia, often carried out in difficult and even dangerous circumstances.

The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to

Asia: Those who are incorporated in the Catholic Church ought to sense their privilege and for that very reason their greatest obligation of *bearing witness to the faith* and to the Christian life as a SERVICE to their brothers and sisters and as a fitting RESPONSE to God.

11, Jesus Christ, the God-Man Who Saves

The Jesus whom we proclaim as the only Savior walked the earth as the God-Man in full possession of a human nature. He was like us in all things except sin.

Through his words and actions, especially in his suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the will of his Father to reconcile all humanity to himself.

Jesus is our Savior in the fullest sense of the word because his words and works, especially his resurrection from the dead, have revealed him to be the Son of God, the pre-existent Word, who reigns for ever as Lord and Messiah.

12. The Person and Mission of the Son of God

The faith we have received declares that Jesus Christ revealed and accomplished the Father's plan of saving the world and the whole of humanity because of "*who he is*" and "*what he does*" because of *who he is*". "*Who he is*" and "*what he does*" acquire their full meaning only when set within the mystery of the Triune God.

Only in the person of Jesus does God's word of salvation appear in all its fullness, ushering in the final age.

The mission of the Savior reached its culmination in the Paschal Mystery.

Through Jesus' Paschal sacrifice *the Father irrevocably offers reconciliation and fullness of life to the world.*

This is the message which Christianity offers to the world, and it is a source of incomparable comfort and hope for all believers.

13. Jesus Christ: the Truth of Humanity

The Incarnate Son of God not only revealed completely the Father and his plan of salvation; he also "fully reveals man to himself. His words and actions, and above all his Death and Resurrection, reveal the depths of what it means to be human. Through Christ, man can finally know the truth of himself. Jesus' perfectly human life, devoted wholly to the love and service of the Father and of man, reveals that the vocation of every human being is to receive love and give love in return.

Above all, it is on the Cross that Jesus breaks the power of the self-destructive resistance to love which sin inflicts upon us.

On his part, the Father responds by raising Jesus as the first-born of all those predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. At that moment, Jesus became, once and for all, both the revelation and the accomplishment of a humanity re-created and renewed according to the plan of God.

When men and women respond with a living faith to God's offer of love, his presence brings love and peace, transforming the human heart from within.

Jesus makes it possible for people to live as brothers and sisters, recognizing a single Father who is in heaven. In him, a NEW HARMONY has emerged, in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek,... neither slave or free, ... neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

Jesus is our peace... He prayed that his disciples might live in communion just as he is in communion with the Father.

In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross.

14. The Uniqueness and Universality of Salvation in Jesus

The pre-existent Word, the eternally begotten Son of God, WAS ALREADY PRESENT IN CREATION, IN HISTORY AND IN EVERY HUMAN YEARNING FOR GOOD.

RISEN FROM THE DEAD, Jesus Christ is present to all and to the whole of creation in a new and mysterious way. In him, authentic values of all religious and cultural traditions, such as mercy and submission to the will of God, compassion and rectitude, non-violence and righteousness, filial piety and harmony with creation find their fullness and realization.

From the first moment of time to its end, Jesus is the one universal Mediator. Even for those who do not explicitly profess faith in him as the Savior, salvation comes as a grace from Jesus Christ through the communication of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the one Savior because he alone — the Son — accomplished the Father's universal plan of salvation. As the definitive manifestation of the mystery of the Father's love for all, Jesus is indeed unique, and it is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance, whereby, WHILE BELONGING TO HISTORY, HE REMAINS HISTORY'S CENTRE AND GOAL.

NO INDIVIDUAL, NO NATION, NO CULTURE IS IMPERVIOUS TO THE APPEAL OF JESUS WHO SPEAKS FROM THE VERY HEART OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.

Contemplating Jesus in his human nature, the peoples of Asia find their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfilled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON 'THE SACRIFICE OF THE BELOVED'

1. At the Transfiguration the Father proclaimed Jesus as his Only Son; his Beloved; today we have to proclaim "Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the one and only Savior for all peoples" (EA 10).

We have to proclaim him "as the only Savior (who) walked the earth as the God-Man in full possession of a human, nature. He was like us in all things except sin" (EA 11).

2. God's love shown in the sacrifice of his beloved Son deserves the answer of our own self-sacrificing love.

We give our response best by carrying out our task of evangelization "in difficult and even dangerous circumstances" (EA 10).

The mission of the Savior reached its culmination in the Paschal mystery... On the Cross Jesus uttered his final appeal to the Father to forgive the sins of humanity... the Father accepted by irrevocably offering "reconciliation and the fullness of life to the world" (EA 12).

<{} JUBILEE YEAR {}> 14) MARCH 26. 2000

LENT m YEAR B

Unified Theme: CHRIST, THE POWER
AND WISDOM OF GOD

Exodus 20:1-17:	The Ten Commandments
1 Corinthians 1:22-2:5:	Christ, the Power and the Wisdom of God
John 2:13-25:	Jesus Cleans the Temple

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

We refer our readers to Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinos Vol. XLVII, No. 523, p. 132-133.

B. REFLECTION POINTS BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. (1) Do you have experiences that show the Wisdom and Power of Jesus in your life? Share your answer with your small group, o (2) Jesus taught that the Ten Commandments can be summed up in two commandments that are so intimately connected that they can be considered as only one: love God; love your neighbor. Have you experienced in your life the Wisdom of such a simplification?

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING "ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

NOTE: *Chapter III is linked with EASTER II, see farther on.*

CHAPTER IV: JESUS THE SAVIOR — PROCLAIMING THE GIFT (N. 19-23)

SUMMARY

19. The Primacy of Proclamation

There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord... there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.

20. Proclaiming Jesus Christ in Asia

The Church's insistence on proclamation is prompted not by sectarian impulse nor the spirit of proselytism nor any sense of

superiority. The Church evangelizes in obedience to Christ's command, in the knowledge that every person has the right to hear the Good News of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ.

The Church proclaims the Good News with loving respect and esteem for her listeners...This respect is twofold: (1) respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and (2) respect for the action of the Spirit in man.

The effort to share the gift of faith in Jesus as the only Savior is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in light of the beliefs of Asia's great religions, deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific world views.

The difficulty is compounded by the fact that Jesus is often perceived as foreign to Asia,

The presentation of Jesus Christ as the only Savior needs to follow a *pedagogy* which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery. Clearly, the initial evangelization of non-Christians and the continuing proclamation of Jesus to believers will have to be different in their approach.

The presentation of Jesus Christ could come as the fulfilment of the yearnings expressed in the mythologies and folklore of the Asian peoples. In general, narrative methods akin to Asian cultural forms are to be preferred.

Subsequent catechesis should follow an evocative pedagogy using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic of Asian methodology in teaching.

We have to rediscover the Asian countenance of Jesus and identify ways in which the cultures of Asia can grasp the universal saving significance of the mystery of Jesus and his Church.

21. The Challenge of Inculturation

Evangelization and inculturation are intimately related to each other. The Gospel and evangelization are certainly not identical with culture; they are independent of it. Yet the Kingdom of God comes to people who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing elements from human cultures.

The Church takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them. This is the obligatory path for evangelizers in presenting the Christian faith and making it part of a people's cultural heritage... It has a special urgency today in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural situation of Asia, where Christianity is still too often seen as foreign.

The Holy Spirit is the prime agent of the inculturation of the Christian faith in Asia. The same Holy Spirit who leads us into the whole truth makes possible a fruitful dialogue with the cultural and religious values of different peoples, among whom he is present in some measure, giving men and women with a sincere heart the strength to overcome evil and the deceit of the Evil One... The Spirit's presence ensures that the dialogue unfolds in truth, honesty, humility and respect.

The process of inculturation must involve the entire People of God, since the life of the Church as a whole must show forth the faith which is being proclaimed and appropriated.

22. Key Areas of Inculturation

The areas of particular attention are: theological reflection, liturgy and the Biblical apostolate, the formation of priests and religious, (catechesis and spirituality), the role of the laity.

Theological work must always be guided by respect for the sensibilities of Christians, so that by a gradual growth into inculturated forms of expressing the faith, people are neither confused nor scandalized.

Liturgical inculturation requires more than a focus upon traditional cultural values, symbols and rituals. There is also need to take account of the shifts in consciousness and attitudes caused by the emerging secularist and consumer cultures which are affecting the Asian sense of worship and prayer. Nor can the specific needs of the poor, migrants, refugees, youth and women be overlooked in any genuine liturgical inculturation in Asia.

An effective biblical apostolate needs to be developed in order to ensure that the sacred text may be more widely diffused and more intensively and prayerfully used among the members of the Church in Asia. The Synod Fathers urged that it be made the basis for all missionary proclamation, catechesis, preaching and styles of spirituality.

On the formation of evangelizers (seminarians, priests, religious men and women, the laity):

(1) Seminarians should acquire a solid grounding in biblical and patristic studies and a detailed and firm grasp of the Church's theological and philosophical patrimony, and on the basis of this preparation, they will then benefit from contact with Asian philosophical and religious traditions.

(2) in the formation of men and women in the consecrated life, the spirituality and lifestyle of consecrated persons needs to be sensitive to the religious and cultural heritage of the people among whom they live and whom they serve, always presupposing the necessary discernment of what conforms to the Gospel and what does not.

(3) The role of the laity is of paramount importance. It is they above all who are called to transform society, in collaboration with the Bishops, clergy and religious, by infusing the "mind of Christ" into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the secular World in which they live.

23. Christian Life as Proclamation

Mission is contemplative action and active contemplation. Therefore, a missionary who has no deep experience of God in prayer and contemplation will have little spiritual influence or missionary success.

The future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation. In Asia... the Church is called to be a praying Church, deeply spiritual even as she engages in immediate human and social concerns.

The work of justice, charity and compassion is interrelated with a genuine life of prayer and contemplation, and indeed it is this same spirituality that will be the wellspring of all our evangelizing work.

Evangelizers must themselves be "on fire with the love of Christ and burning with zeal to make him known more widely, loved more deeply and followed more closely. Christians who speak of Christ must embody in their lives the message that they proclaim.

The silent witness of life still remains the only way of proclaiming God's Kingdom in many places in Asia where explicit proclamation is forbidden and religious freedom is denied or systematically restricted.

Evangelization today is a reality that is both rich and dynamic. It has various aspects and elements: witness, dialogue, proclamation, catechesis, conversion, baptism, insertion into the ecclesial community, the implantation of the Church, inculturation and integral human promotion. Some of these elements proceed together, while some others are successive steps or phases of the entire process of evangelization.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON "CHRIST: THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD"

1. Evangelization in Asia should use "images of Jesus which would be intelligible to Asian minds and cultures and, at the same time, faithful to Sacred Scriptures and Tradition" (EA n. 20). Among the images recommended are: "Jesus Christ as the Teacher of Wisdom, the Healer, the Liberator..."

2. In particular, "Jesus could be presented as the Incarnate Wisdom of God whose grace brings to fruition the 'seeds' of divine Wisdom already present in the lives, religions and peoples of Asia" (EA n. 20).

<{ **JUBILEE YEAR** {> 15) APRIL 2, 2000

LENT IV, YEAR B

Unified Theme: SALVATION THROUGH GRACE

**2 Chronicles 36:14-16. 19-23: Beginning and End of
the Babylonian Captivity**

Ephesians 2:4-10;

From Death To Life

John 3:14-21:

**Lifted Bronze Snake, Lifted
Son of Man**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

We refer our readers to Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos Vol. XLVII, No. 524, p. 213-214.

B. REFLECTION POINTS BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN AND SHARE

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. God has made it easy for us to be saved: all we have to do is to look up to

Jesus Christ and ask for mercy. Yet, so many people put up a wall between themselves and the experience of salvation by thinking that they have to "pay for their sins." Have you, by experience, encountered this attitude? How did you help to take it away? Praying over a person is sometimes a great help for this.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING

"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

CHAPTER V: COMMUNION AND DIALOGUE FOR MISSION (N. 24- 31)

SUMMARY

24. Communion and Mission Go Hand in Hand

At the heart of the mystery of the Church is the bond of communion which unites Christ the Bridegroom to all the baptized. Through this living and life-giving communion, "Christians no longer belong to themselves but are the Lord's very own."

The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the *inner union of the human person* with God, and, because people's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of *the unity of the human race*. In her this unity is already begun; and at the same time she is the "sign and sacrament" of the full realization of the unity yet to come.

It is an essential demand of life in Christ that whoever enters into communion with the Lord is expected to bear fruit... In this sense, communion and mission are inseparably connected.

The Church's service of unity has a specific relevance in Asia where there are so many tensions, divisions and conflicts, caused

by ethnic, social, cultural, linguistic, economic and religious differences.

25. Communion within the Church

The Diocese is a *communion of communities* gathered around the Shepherd, where clergy, consecrated persons and the laity are engaged in a 'dialogue of life and heart' sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Ecclesial communion implies that each local Church should become a "PARTICIPATORY CHURCH", a Church, that is, in which all live their proper vocation and perform their proper role. In order to build up the "communion for mission" and the "mission of communion", every member's unique charism needs to be acknowledged, developed and effectively utilized. In particular there is a need to foster greater involvement of the laity and consecrated men and women in pastoral planning and decision-making, through such participatory structures as Pastoral Councils and Parish Assemblies.

The *parish* remains the ordinary place where the faithful gather to grow in faith, to live the mystery of ecclesial communion and to take part in the Church's mission.

Basic ecclesial communities are an effective way of promoting communion and participation in parishes and Dioceses, and as a genuine force for evangelization... They aim to help their members to live the Gospel in a spirit of fraternal love and service, and are therefore a solid starting point for building a new society, the expression of *a civilization of love*.

Basic communities will only be truly effective if they live in union with the particular and the universal Church, in heartfelt communion with the Church's Pastors and the Magisterium, with a commitment to missionary outreach and without yielding to isolationism or ideological exploitation.

Renewal Movements have a role in building communion, in providing opportunities for a more intimate experience of God through faith and the sacraments, and in fostering conversion of life. It is the responsibility of Pastors to guide, accompany and encourage these groups so that they may be well integrated into the life and mission of the parish and Diocese.

Those involved in associations and movements should offer their support to the local Church and not present themselves as alternatives to Diocesan structures and parish life.

26. Solidarity Among the Churches

Concrete steps to strengthen relations between the particular Churches in Asia presupposes the necessary spiritual expressions of support and encouragement as well as: equitable distribution of priests, more effective financial solidarity, cultural and theological exchanges, and increased opportunities for partnership between Dioceses.

27. The Catholic Eastern Churches

There is an urgent need to overcome the fears and misunderstandings which appear at times between the Catholic Eastern Churches (especially in the Middle East and India) and the Latin Church, and among those Churches themselves, especially with regard to the pastoral care of their people, also outside their own territories (especially in the case of migrants).

These venerable Churches are directly involved in ecumenical dialogue with their sister Orthodox Churches... They also had valuable experiences in interreligious dialogue, especially with Islam.

28. Sharing Hopes and Sufferings

There is need for effective communion and cooperation with
(1) the local Churches present in the ex-Soviet territories of Asia...
(2) the churches in those many parts of Asia where our brothers

and sisters continue to live their faith in the midst of restrictions or even the total denial of freedom... (3) the Catholic Church in Mainland China... (4) the Catholic Church in North Korea... (5) the Church in Jerusalem.

29. A Mission of Dialogue

From the time of the Second Vatican Council the Church has consistently shown that she wants to pursue her relationship with the modern world in a spirit of dialogue. The desire for dialogue is not simply a strategy for peaceful coexistence among peoples; it is an essential part of the Church's mission because it has its origin in the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue constitute a veritable vocation for the Church.

30. Ecumenical Dialogue

Ecumenical dialogue is a challenge and a call to conversion for the whole Church, especially for the Church in Asia where people expect from Christians a clearer sign of unity.

31. Interreligious Dialogue

Contact, dialogue and cooperation with the followers of other religions is a task which the Second Vatican Council bequeathed to the whole Church as a duty and a challenge.

There is need in interreligious dialogue for firm faith in Christ and a need for *a dialogue of life and heart*. The followers of Christ must have the gentle and humble heart of their master, never proud, never condescending, as they meet their partners in dialogue.

Some forms of dialogue already taking place with good results are: (1) scholarly exchanges between experts in the various religious traditions or representatives of those traditions, (2)

common action for integral human development, and (3) the defence of human rights and religious values.

It is very important to revitalize prayer and contemplation in the process of dialogue.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON "SALVATION THROUGH GRACE"

1. By redeeming humankind through his death on the Cross, Jesus Christ has made salvation such an easy thing, objectively. All one has to do is to accept Jesus's saving grace. In practice, however, people continue to put obstacles to salvation. It is the mission of the Church to take away such obstacles. To fulfill this mission, the Church must first be true to her "inner self." If one asks what is this "inner self" of the Church, the answer is this: At the heart of the mystery of the Church is the bond of communion which unites Christ the Bridegroom to all the baptized. Through this living and life-giving communion, "Christians no longer belong to themselves but are the Lord's very own." (See EA 24).

2. Renewal Movements are a great help in removing the obstacles of salvation. They play an important role "in building communion, in providing opportunities for a more intimate experience of God through faith and the sacraments, and in fostering conversion of life." (See EA 25).

LENT V, YEAR B

Unified Theme: SUFFERING EXTERIORIZES

Jeremiah 31:31-34: The New Covenant Is Announced

Hebrews 5:7-9: Christ Learned Through

His Sufferings To Be Obedient

**John 12:20-33: A Grain of Wheat That Dies Produces
Much Fruit**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

We refer our readers to Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos Vol. XLVII, No. 524, p. 214-215.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. Christians "die to themselves" when they follow the social teachings of the Church. These teachings are not exactly about the interior life of faith, but they are about its *ethical and social* consequences. Have you experienced a radical change in yourself as a result of taking to heart the social teachings of the Church? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING

"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

CHAPTER VI THE SERVICE OF HUMAN PROMOTION (N. 32-41)

SUMMARY

32. The Social Doctrine of the Church

In the service of the human family, the Church reaches out to all men and women without distinction, striving to build with them a civilization of love, founded upon the universal values of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom, which find their fulfilment in Christ.

Not just the actions of individuals but also structures of social, political and economic life are often inimical to human well-being.

"Overdevelopment" tends to reduce the person to an economic unit in an ever more oppressive consumer network.

We have to stress the importance of offering the faithful — in all educational activities, and especially in seminaries and houses of formation — a solid training in the social doctrine of the Church.

33. The Dignity of the Human Person

Human beings, not wealth or technology, are the prime agents and destination of development. Therefore, the kind of development that the Church promotes reaches far beyond questions of economy and technology. It begins and ends with the integrity of the human person created in the image of God and endowed with a God-given dignity and inalienable human rights.

We have to be aware of the persistent violations of human rights in many parts of the world, and particularly in Asia, where teeming millions are suffering from discrimination, exploitation, poverty and marginalization.

34. Preferential Love of the Poor

In seeking to promote human dignity, the Church shows a preferential love of the poor and the voiceless, because the Lord has identified himself with them in a special way (cf. Mt 25:40). This love excludes no one, but simply embodies a priority of service to which the whole Christian tradition bears witness.

In her love for the poor of Asia, the Church concerns herself especially with migrants, with indigenous and tribal peoples, with women and with children, since they are often the victims of the worst forms of exploitation. In addition, untold numbers of people suffer discrimination because of their culture, color, race, caste, economic status, or because of their way of thinking. They include those who are victimized on the basis of their conversion to Christianity.

35. The Gospel of Life

The service of human development begins with the service of life itself. Life is a great gift entrusted to us by God: he entrusts it to us as a project and a responsibility. We are therefore guardians of life, not its proprietors. We receive the gift freely and, in gratitude, we must never cease to respect and defend it, from its beginning to its natural conclusion.

The demographic question is often used as an argument for the need to introduce abortion and artificial population control programmes. The faithful are to resist "the culture of death".

36. Health Care

The Church in Asia is committed to becoming still more involved in the care of the sick, since this is a vital part of her mission of offering the saving grace of Christ to the whole person.

37. Education

Throughout Asia, the Church's involvement in education is

extensive and highly visible, and is therefore a key element of her presence among the peoples of the continent.

The system of Catholic education must become still more clearly directed towards human promotion, providing an environment where students receive not only the formal elements of schooling but, more broadly, an integral human formation based upon the teachings of Christ.

3\$, peacemaking

The Church insists on the negotiated and non-military resolution of conflicts, and she looks to the day when nations will abandon war as a way of vindicating claims or a means of resolving differences. She is convinced that war creates more problems than it ever solves, that dialogue is the only just and noble path to agreement and reconciliation, and that the patient and wise art of peacemaking is especially blessed by God.

39. Globalization

While globalization has its positive aspects, it has also worked to the detriment of the poor, tending to push poorer countries to the margin of international economic and political relations.

Perhaps more significantly, there is also the aspect of a *cultural* globalization, made possible by the modern communications media, which is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialistic. The result is an eroding of traditional family and social values which until now had sustained peoples and societies. All of this makes it clear that the *ethical and moral aspects of globalization* need to be more directly addressed by the leaders of nations and by organizations concerned with human promotion.

40. Foreign Debt

To international monetary agencies and banks: explore ways

of easing the international debt situation. Among the more obvious are a renegotiation of debts, with either substantial reduction or outright cancellation, as also business ventures and investments to assist the economies of the poorer countries.

To debtor countries: develop a sense of national responsibility; remember the importance of sound economic planning, transparency and good management; wage a resolute campaign against corruption.

41. The Environment

The protection of the environment is not only a technical question; it is also and above all an *ethical* issue. All have a moral duty to care for the environment, not only for their own good but also for the good of future generations.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON "SUFFERING INTERIORIZES"

1. The interior life with a social dimension is what the Pope calls "a civilization of love". It is to this interior life that the Church addresses herself in her involvement in social questions: the Church does not have technical solutions to offer, but offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a concrete situation. We have to offer to the faithful — in all educational activities, and especially in seminaries and houses of formation — a solid training in the social doctrine of the Church. (See EA32).

2. The social doctrine of the Church not only will alert Christian leaders to their duty, but will also give them guidelines for action in favor of human development, and will free them from false notions of the human person and human activity. (See EA n: 32-33).

3. Peacemaking. See EA n. 38.
4. The Conclusion of *Ecclesia in Asia* chapter VI can itself be a very good sermon. It is the last paragraph of n. 41.

<{} **JUBILEE YEAR** {}> 17) APRIL 16, 2000

PALM SUNDAY, YEAR B

Unified Theme: OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH

Isaiah 50:4-9: The Obedience of the Lord's Servant
Philippians 2:6-11: Christ's Humility and Greatness
Mark 14:1 — 15:47 The Passion and Death
of Jesus Christ

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BD3LIARASAL STEP 3

We refer our readers to Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos Vol. XLVII, No. 524, p. 215-216.

B. REFLECTION POINTS
BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS,
WE LISTEN AND SHARE

Pointers for sharing on the Unified theme: In traditional Christian preaching, the theme of Christ's passion and death is never separated from the theme of his resurrection on the third day. Have you adopted this viewpoint? Has it helped you be a better Christian? Share your answers with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING
"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

NOTE: CHAPTER VII WITNESSES TO THE GOSPEL (N. 42-49) is best connected to Easter, see farther on.

CONCLUSION (N. 50 51)

SUMMARY

5&__Gratitude and Engouragement

First and foremost, we again praise God for the wealth of cultures, languages, traditions and religious sensibilities of this great continent. Blessed be God for the peoples of Asia, so rich in their diversity yet one in their yearning for peace and fullness of life.

The words of Jesus reassure the Church in Asia: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Lk 12:32). Those who believe in Christ are still a small minority in this vast and most populous continent. Yet far from being a timid minority, they are lively in faith, full of hope and vitality which only love can bring. In their humble and courageous way, they have influenced the cultures and societies of Asia, especially the lives of the poor and the helpless, many of whom do not share the Catholic faith.

The Church in Asia joyfully makes her pilgrim way into the Third Millenium. Her only joy is that which comes from sharing with the multitude of Asia's peoples the immense gift which she herself has received — the love of Jesus the Savior. Her one ambition is to continue his mission of service and love, so that all Asians "may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

51. Prayer to the Mother of Christ

Mary, model of all disciples and bright Star of Evangelization ~ hers is an ear that always listens, hers a heart that always welcomes, and her a prayer that never fails.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON "OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH"

1. Christians in Asia are still a small minority in this vast and most populous continent. But they are a minority of those

who have determined to follow Christ's obedience unto death. And so, far from being a timid minority, they are lively in faith, full of the hope and vitality which only love can bring. In their humble and courageous way, they have influenced the cultures and societies of Asia, especially the lives of the poor and the helpless, many of whom do not share the Catholic faith.

2. A Homily could be preached on the following portion of the Prayer to the Mother of Christ at the conclusion of *Ecclesia in Asia*:

"You stood at the foot of the Cross
as your Son breathed his last;
be with us as we seek to be one
in spirit and service with all
who suffer.

<{} **JUBILEE YEAR** {}> 18) **APRIL 23,2000**

EASTER

**Unified Theme: THE CENTRAL MYSTERY
 OF OUR FAITH**

**Acts 10:34a. 37-43: Peter's Kerygma to the Household
 of Cornelius**

**Colosians 3:1-4: You Have Been Raised To Life With
 Christ**

John 20:1-9: Peter and John See the Empty Tomb

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

We refer our readers to Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos Vol. XLVII, No. 524, p. 216-217.

B. REFLECTION POINTS
BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS,
WE LISTEN AND SHARE

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. Witnessing to the resurrection of Christ can be done in different ways, as the narratives of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ show. What is your way? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILISTS COVERING

"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

CHAPTER VII: WITNESSES TO THE GOSPEL

SUMMARY

42. A Witnessing Church

Since the whole People of God is sent forth to preach the Gospel, evangelization is never an individual and isolated act; it is always an ecclesial task which has to be carried out in communion with the whole community of faith.

The mission is one and indivisible, having one origin and one final purpose; but within it there are different responsibilities and different kinds of activity.

In every case it is clear that these can be no true proclamation of the Gospel unless Christians also offer the witness of lives in harmony with the message they preach.

Genuine Christian witness is needed especially now, because people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in theories. This is certainly true in the Asian context, where people are more persuaded by holiness of life than by intellectual argument.

The experience of faith and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit thus becomes the basis of all missionary work.

This Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation offers some directives and guidelines to those working in the vast field of evangelization in Asia.

43. Pastors

People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the spirit (cf. Rom 8:5). The reverence which Asian peoples have for those in authority needs to be matched by a clear moral uprightness on the part of those with ministerial responsibilities in the Church.

By their life of prayer, zealous service and exemplary conduct, the clergy witness powerfully to the Gospel in the communities which they shepherd in the name of Christ.

44. The Consecrated Life and Missionary Societies

Under its three aspects of *confessio Trinitatis*, *signum fraternitatis* and *servitium caritatis*, the consecrated life shows forth God's love in the world by its specific witness to the saving mission which Jesus accomplished by his total consecration to the Father.

Recognizing that all action in the Church has its support in prayer and communion with God, the Church in Asia looks with profound respect and appreciation to the contemplative religious communities as a special source of strength and inspiration.

The Synod Fathers and the Pope strongly encourage the establishment of monastic and contemplative communities wherever possible.

The search for God, a life of fraternal communion, and service to others are the three chief characteristics of the consecrated life

which can offer an appealing Christian testimony to the peoples of Asia today... All who have embraced the consecrated life are called to become leaders in the search for God, a search which had always stirred the human heart and which is particularly visible in Asia's many forms of spirituality and asceticism... This makes the consecrated life a privileged means of effective evangelization.

The Synod Fathers and the Pope recommend the establishment within each local Church of Asia, where such do not exist, of missionary societies of apostolic life, characterized by their special commitment to the mission "*ad gentes, ad exteros and ad vitam.*"

45. The Laity

By the grace and call of Baptism and Confirmation, all lay people are missionaries, and the arena of their missionary work is the vast and complex worlds of politics, economics, industry, education, the media, science, technology, the arts and sports.

It is the task of the Pastors to ensure that the laity are formed as evangelizers able to face the challenges of the contemporary world, not just with worldly wisdom and efficiency, but with hearts renewed and strengthened by the truth of Christ.

So that the Church in Asia could stand out as a participatory Church, the wider participation of women must be assured. For example, men in seminaries and houses of formation need to be trained to regard women as co-workers in the apostolate. Women should be more effectively involved in pastoral programmes, in diocesan and parish pastoral councils and in diocesan synods...

46. The Family

The family occupies a very important place in Asian cultures... and family values like filial respect, love and care for the aged and the sick, love of children and harmony are held in high esteem in all Asian cultures and religious traditions.

The family is not simply the object of the Church's pastoral care; it is also one of the Church's most effective agents of evangelization. Christian families are today called to witness to the Gospel in difficult times and circumstances, when the family itself is threatened by an array of forces.

Parents should strive to make the moments when the family naturally comes together an opportunity for prayer, for Bible reading and reflection, for appropriate rituals presided over by the parents and for healthy recreation.

47. Young People

To young people the Church offers the truth of the Gospel as a joyful and liberating mystery to be known, lived and shared, with conviction and courage.

If young people are to be effective agents of mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care.

Catholic schools and parishes have a vital role in providing all-round formation for the young, by seeking to lead them in the way of true discipleship and developing in them the human qualities that mission requires.

Since young people are not only the object of the Church's pastoral care but are also agents and co-workers in the Church's mission, in parishes and dioceses, young men and women should be invited to take part in the organization of activities which concern youth.

The freshness and enthusiasm of young people, their spirit of solidarity and hope, can make them peacemakers in a divided world.

48. Social Communication

The world is seeing the emergence of a new culture that originates not just »iom whatever contents is eventually expressed,

but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology.

The exceptional role played by the means of social communication in shaping the world, its cultures and ways of thinking has led to rapid and far-reaching changes in Asian societies. Inevitably, the Church's evangelizing mission too is deeply affected by the impact of the mass media.

It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications.

Evangelization through social communications is the "areopagus of the modern age." We need whatever help we can get to ensure a place for spiritual and moral values in the media.

49. The Martyrs

It is martyrdom which reveals to the world the very essence of the Christian message.

Through the ages, Asia has given to the Church and the world a great host of these heroes of the faith...may the blood of Asia's martyrs be now as always the seed of new life for the Church in every corner of the continent!

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON 'THE CENTRAL MYSTERY OF OUR FAITH'

1. The Resurrection of Christ is doubtless the center of Christian faith. The first reading underlines its centrality by relating it to the past, present and future. The second reading points to it as giving a new dimension to moral conduct in daily living. The Gospel reading recalls how nobody expected the resurrection and how the disciples had to be helped by signs in order to believe in the mystery.

Ecclesia in Asia says: "the heart of the Church in Asia will be restless until the whole of Asia finds its rest in the peace of Christ, the Risen Lord." (EA 10). For this to happen, the Church in Asia has to be "A witnessing Church" — see summary above, n. 42.

2. A sermon could be preached on how different members of the Church can give witness to the Risen Christ, see the summaries above, nn. 43 to 49.

<Q JUBILEE YEAR {}> 19) APRIL 30, 2000

EASTER II, YEAR B

Unified Theme: A WITNESSING COMMUNITY

Acts 4: 32-35: The Believers Share Their Possessions

1 John 5:1-6: Our Victory over the World

John 20:19-31: Jesus Appears To His Disciples

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing on the Unified Theme. Love of God and neighbor is the greatest witness to the resurrection. This becomes clear when we realize that no one can love God or neighbor properly unless he has overcome the "world" and no one overcomes the world unless he, through faith, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, participates in Christ's victorious resurrection. ~ Have you overcome the world — at least that part of it with which you have day-to-day contact? Why or why not? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES COVERING

"ECCLESIA IN ASIA"

CHAPTER III: THE HOLY SPIRIT — THE LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE (N. 15-18)

SUMMARY

15. The Spirit of God in Creation and History

A false separation between the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit would jeopardize the truth of Jesus as the one Savior of all.

In Christian Tradition, the Holy Spirit has always been associated with life and the giving of life... It is not surprising, therefore, that many interpretations of the creation account in Genesis have seen the Holy Spirit in the mighty wind that swept over the waters (cf. Gen 1:2). The Holy Spirit is present from the first moment of creation, the first manifestation of the love of the Triune God, and is always present in the world as its life-giving force.

Since creation is the beginning of history, the Spirit is in a certain sense a hidden power at work in history, guiding it in the ways of truth and goodness.

The revelation of the person of the Holy Spirit, the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is proper to the New Testament. In Christian thought he is seen as the wellspring of life for all creatures. Creation is God's free communication of love, a communication which, out of nothing, brings everything into being.

The presence of the Spirit in creation generates order, harmony and interdependence in all that exists.

Created in the image of God, human beings become the dwelling-place of the Spirit in a new way when they are raised to the dignity of divine adoption (cf. Gal 4:5). Reborn in baptism, they experience the presence and power of the Spirit, not just as the Author of Life, but as the One who purifies and saves, producing fruits of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

These fruits of the Spirit are the sign that God's love has been poured out into our hearts... this love makes men and women visible instruments of the unseen Spirit's ceaseless activity.

As a consequence of the transformation and re-creation which he produces in people's hearts and minds, the Spirit influences human societies and cultures... The Holy Spirit continually sows the seeds of truth among all peoples, their religions, cultures and philosophies.

The Holy Spirit of God is the prime agent of the Church's dialogue with all peoples' cultures and religions.

16. The Holy Spirit and the Incarnation of the Word

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ are in fact the greatest work accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the history of creation and salvation: the supreme grace — "the grace of union," source of every other grace. The Incarnation is the event in which God gathers into a new and definitive union with himself not only man but the whole creation and all of history.

Rejecting a tendency in some thinkers to separate the activity of the Holy Spirit from that of Jesus the Savior, the Pope repeats his teaching in *Redemptoris Missio*: The Spirit is not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the

gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and dum up all things.

The universal presence of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the universal salvation in Jesus.

17. The Holy Spirit and the Body of Christ

The Holy Spirit preserves unfailingly the bond of communion between Jesus and his Church. Dwelling in her as in a temple, the Spirit guides the Church, first of all, to the fullness of truth about Jesus.

Then, it is the spirit who empowers the Church to continue Jesus' mission, in the first place by witnessing to Jesus himself.

The work of the Spirit in the Church is also to testify that believers are the adopted children of God.

Endowing the Church with different charism and gifts, the Spirit makes the Church grow in communion as one body made up of many different parts.

The Spirit gathers into unity all kinds of people, with their different customs, resources and talents.

The Spirit shapes the Church as a community of witnesses who, through his power, bear testimony to Jesus the Savior.

18. The Holy Spirit and the Church's Mission in Asia

Just as the great dialogue of love between God and man was prepared for by the Spirit and accomplished on Asian soil in the mystery of Christ, so the dialogue between the Savior and the peoples of the continent continues today by the power of the same Holy Spirit at work in the Church.

Deep within the people, cultures and religions of Asia there is a thirst for "living water"... the knowledge of the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES ON 'A WITNESSING COMMUNITY'

1. The three readings of this Sunday emphasize the fact that the whole life of the Christian community is summed up by saying that it is a community that gives witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This topic is fully discussed in Ch. **VII** of *Ecclesia in Asia*, summarized above in connection with Easter. Here we propose that the topic be enlarged or deepened to include the role of the Holy Spirit in this witnessing.

"It is the Spirit who empowers the Church to continue Jesus' mission, in the first place by witnessing to Jesus himself, thus fulfilling what he had promised before his death and resurrection, that he would send the Spirit to his disciples *so that they might bear witness to him* (cf. Jn 15:26-27). The work of the Spirit in the Church is also to testify that believers are the adopted children of God destined to inherit salvation, the promised fullness of communion with the Father" (cf. Rom 8:15-17). — (EA 17).

2. A good sermon can be preached following the thoughts of *Ecclesia in Asia n. 18*, summarized above. The following words of the document could be included in the sermon:

"The Church ceaselessly cries out, "Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love!" This is the fire which Jesus casts upon the earth. The Church in Asia shares his zeal that this fire be re-ignite now (cf. Lk 12:49)."

The Jubilee Song

*It's a time of joy, a time of peace
A time when hearts are then set free
A time to heal the wounds of division.*

*It's a time of grace, a time of hope
A time of sharing the gifts we have
A time to build the world that is one~.*

*It's the time to give thanks
To the father, son and spirit.
And with Mary, our Mother
We sing this song:*

*Open your hearts to the Lord
And begin to see the mystery
That we are all together
As one family ... no more walls,
No more chains, no more selfishness
And closed doors...
For we are in the fullness
of God's time...
It's the time of the Great Jubilee.*

*It's a time of prayer, a time of praise,
A time to lift our hands to God, a time
to recall all our graces.*

*It's a time to touch, a time to reach
Those hearts that often wander, a time
to bring them back to God's embrace.*