

AsIPA General Assembly VII

**FABC OLF AsIPA (BEC) Desk
& BEC National Team of Thailand**

**“Bann Phu Waan” Pastoral Training Center
of Bangkok Archdiocese, Thailand
22-28 October 2015**



**SCCs/BECs Living with People
of Different Faiths and Beliefs**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
PREFACE	5
MESSAGES	
Stanislaw Cardinal Rylko	7
Archbishop Patrick D’Rozario, C.S.C.	10
Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij	12
Dr. Bibiana Joohyun Ro	13
Bishop Friedrich J. Lobinger	15
Rev. Joseph G. Healey	16
Bishop Peter Kang	17
PROGRAMME	18
FINAL STATEMENT	20
HOMILY - INAUGURAL MASS	
Archbishop Paul Tschang In-Nam	25
KEYNOTE ADDRESS	
Bishop Devsritha Valence Mendis	29
Read by Bishop Emmanuel Fedlis Fernando	
Rev. Dr. William LaRousse, MM	38
Rev. Dr. Thomas Vijay, SAC	53
GROUP DISCUSSION	
GUIDE FOR COUNTRY GROUP DISCUSSION	62
COUNTRY GROUP REPORTS	
Bangladesh	63
India	64
Indonesia	65
Japan	66
Korea	67
Malaysia	67
Philippines	69
Sri Lanka	69
Thailand	70
Vietnam	71
Myanmar	72



DISCUSSION ON “SCCs/BECs Living with people of Different Faiths and Beliefs”	75
GROUP DISCUSSION REPORTS	75
NEW AsIPA MODULES	
Introduction to AsIPA new modules	80
Spiritual formation of leaders	89
Interreligious dialogue	94
EXPOSURE PROGRAMME	112
The Catholic Church in Thailand & BECs	113
BEC in Bangkok Archdiocese	118
BEC in Ratchaburi Diocese	120
BEC in Chanthaburi Diocese	121
Guideline for Exposure	124
Sharing of Exposure Programme	127
MEETING OF THE BISHOPS WITH AsIPA RESOURCE TEAM	
Report of the AsIPA Desk	134
Note from the meeting with bishops	140
PLANNING	142
Planning Reports	143
EVALUATION	151
IN MEMORIAM	155
APPENDICES	157



FOREWORD

The documentation of the AsIPA General Assembly VII held in Bangkok, Thailand on October 22-28, 2015 is in your hands right now. It is an attempt to treasure what had happened during those days when, as a community of AsIPA practitioners, the participants lived out again the experience of participation and communion from the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in their local churches. It is not easy to capture every happening therefrom, but I hope going through this document will recall to your mind and present those happy days they had shared together.

The theme of the AsIPA GA VII: “SCCs/BECs Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs” was relevant in our present day amidst the yearning for peace, harmony, understanding and love in our era and social context. With this particular theme the AsIPA General Assembly VII showed significance and important stories and role of SCCs for inter-religious dialogue in the neighborhood in our daily life. The Keynote addresses as well as the feedback from the exposure program in Thai context could very well become another starting point to build up a “better world” in the Kingdom-Way beyond different faiths and beliefs.

I encourage you to continue to commit to build and nourish SCCs in an integral pastoral approach which is a new way, a new method and a new expression of evangelization. This approach of being Church is novel, authentic and effective, but at the same time very challenging. The integral pastoral approach is a journey needed to start, fruits no doubt will be collected on the way, and final achievement may be envisioned but never targeted for a given moment.

I extend my heartiest appreciation to each and every participant for their contributions to make the Assembly a success, in particular the AsIPA Resource Team, the Thai Local Organizing Team, and the funding agencies.

Wishing you a pleasant and enriching reading of this Document that it becomes a source of inspiration for your role in building up SCCs towards God’s Kingdom in your milieu.

May God be praised!

In communion and fraternal bond of friendship, I remain,

Archbishop Patrick D’Rosario, C.S.C.
Archbishop of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Chairman – FABC Office of Laity and Family



PREFACE

The AsIPA General Assembly VII evoked and encouraged all the participants to broaden our perspective and deepen our understanding of SCCs/BECs in Asia and other continents as well. We listened and shared our lived experiences and stories of SCCs/BECs and the importance of interreligious dialogue focusing on ‘SCCs/BECs living with people of different faiths and beliefs’ as the theme during the AsIPA GA VII. It brought participants to discern and make pastoral responses to difficulties and challenges of SCCs/BECs in the light of the Word. Indeed, it was a journey for us in walking together filled with joy and hope as ‘a community of communities’.

Now, we wish to share and provide abundant harvests and resources of the AsIPA GA VII for pastoral teams and leaders of SCCs/BECs. Therefore, we collected and refined our treasures of sharing, input, country reports, modules, exposure program and other various materials of the AsIPA GA VII. We hope this publication could be a source of inspiration and guidance for SCCs/BECs of Asia in creative and collaborative ways. Also we expect that it shows and underpins a vision of the Church in Asia, a participatory Church through SCCs/BECs, more deeply and firmly.

The SCCs/BECs based on families of the grass-roots in Asia are called to become “the Church which goes forth as a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (Evangeli Gaudium, 24. 198) as Pope Francis has emphasized the Church should be of the poor and for the poor.

I extend my deep gratitude to all the participants, Thai Local Organizing Team, AsIPA Resource Team, Member Arch/bishops of the Office of Laity & Family-FABC, Funding Agencies, other benefactors and those who were involved in the AsIPA GA VII in various ways for their contribution, cooperation, support, friendship and partnership to the AsIPA GA VII. In addition, very special thanks to Thai Editorial Team & Press led by Br. Michael Thinaratana Komkris and Sr. Rosa Supha Thongamphai for preparing this publication. Indeed, words cannot express our deep gratitude and appreciation to you all for your great service and commitment.

May the Lord bless and encourage each of us to become Spirit-filled evangelizers. Jesus is the model of evangelization which brings us to the very heart of people (EG, 269). “Jesus, looking upon you, love you” (cf. Mk 10, 21).

Dr. Bibiana Joohyun Ro
Executive Secretary of AsIPA (BEC)
Desk of FABC Office of Laity and Family

Messages





PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
PRO LAICIS



Vaticano, September 28, 2015

Dearest friends in Christ,

It is with great joy that I address all participants in the meeting “Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs” organized by the Office of Laity and Family of the Federation of Asian Bishop’s Conferences from 22-28 October 2015.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity prepared in 2010 (August 31 – September 5), in Seoul, Korea, the Congress of Asian Catholic Laity, entitled *Proclaiming Jesus Christ in Asia Today*.

On that occasion we had the possibility of getting to know first-hand the vitality, dynamism and witness that the Catholic Church gives in Asia. Especially the lay people, a religious minority in the most populated continent, are capable of having a very strong bond with the Church and act in a multicultural and multi-religious context as a “creative minority”¹, with alive and positive values, capable of influencing the peoples’ future.

For this reason Saint John Paul II praised: “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”².

Referring to the Catholic laity of Asia, Benedict XVI, on the occasion of the 2010 Congress of Asian Catholic Laity, affirmed that “As part of the mosaic of the continent’s different peoples, cultures and religions, they have been entrusted with a great mission: that of bearing witness to Jesus Christ, the universal Saviour of mankind. This is the supreme service and the greatest gift that the Church can offer to the people of Asia”³.

Small Christian Communities and Basic Ecclesial Communities, often animated and guided by lay faithful, are a privileged place where the rediscovering of ones’ own Christian identity, the specific lay vocation, and the deep meaning of Baptism can take place.

They have to make an effort to be more and more a concrete occasion for formation, and, at the same time, in the Church and in society a witness of Faith

¹ Cfr. BENEDICT XVI, Interview during the flight to the Czech Republic, 26 September 2009.

² JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 9.

³ BENEDICT XVI, Letter to Card. Stanisław Ryłko on the occasion of the Congress of Asian Catholic Laity, 10 August 2010.

and values able to orient the life of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

The current year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Decree on the apostolate of lay people *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (18 November 1965).

This important document deserves to be rediscovered and studied in depth. It reminds us that the lay faithful, immersed in the secular world, have to take care of all of its components, “namely, the good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic matters, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations, and other matters of this kind, as well as their development and progress”⁴, and have to “take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they must act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere. As citizens they must cooperate with other citizens with their own particular skill and on their own responsibility. Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice of God’s kingdom”⁵.

In a context as the one of Asia, living with people of different Faiths and Beliefs, the Small Christian Communities and the Basic Ecclesial Communities must become capable of not enclosing themselves, and not conceiving their own existence as being a function only within the Church. They have to open all fields of society to new paths to bring their contribution and their service.

This is the first priority objective that Pope Francis recommends to the Church of our times everywhere and in all fields, reaching the farthest geographical and existential peripheries.

Pope Francis is asking all Catholics to participate fully and to be responsible in a Church that “has to go forth to everyone without exception”⁶, and especially towards the poor, because “there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them”⁷.

Today, after fifty years from the closing of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis notices that “Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society”⁸.

Today lay faithful involved in Small Christian Communities and the Basic Ecclesial Communities have a task, particularly in a multicultural and multi-

⁴ Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 7.

⁵ *Idem*.

⁶ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 48.

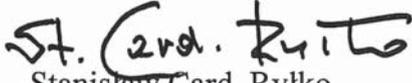
⁷ *Idem*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 102

religious context like that of Asia. Each community must examine and reflect on their identity, their vocation, their formation and their responsibilities in the Church. Specifically, they have to face the challenge of transforming their identity in mission, going forth to the peripheries and bringing their precious contribution of values, dialogue, mercy and justice everywhere by witnessing with their lives and works the joy of the Gospel and the beauty of being Christian.

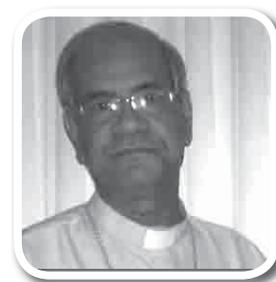
To all of you, to your families and to all Christian lay faithful in Asia I send cordial greetings in Christ certain that, under the maternal protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the fruits of your work will be abundant for the whole Church and for your Asian countries.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Stanisław Card. Rylko
President



Archbishop Patrick D’Rozario, C.S.C.
Archdiocese of Dhaka
Chairman of Office of Laity and Family of FABC



October 14, 2015

Dear participants of the VII AsIPA General Assembly,

Cordial greetings from the FABC Office of Laity and Family and its AsIPA Desk. As the Chairman of the FABC Office for Family and Laity, I extend my heartiest appreciation for the VII AsIPA General Assembly you have cooperated in preparation and now participating in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs). The SCC was adopted as an integral pastoral approach for New Way of Being Church envisioned in Asia.

In this age of globalization there is also an authentic trend of going to the base, to the small, to the source, to the origin, etc. The call to build the Church from the grass-root level focusing on family and Christian Communities in the village and in the neighborhoods, is therefore a contextual and effective pastoral approach.

Pastoral experiences have proved that in order to build a Church as People of God, as community of Christ’ disciples in the world, a Church which is participatory, Church which promotes leadership of everyone in the organic communion of the community, a Church with a mission of evangelization in dialogue with poor, culture and religions, etc. the building of Small Christian Communities is a sine-qua-non.

In our culture in the sub-continent, natural small communities already exist geographically with necessary social infra-structure. These communities are needed to be evangelized and empowered with Gospel values, in order that they become truly Christian Communities with a mission to evangelize. They are communities of families and a support community for every family.

The integral pastoral approach is a journey needed to start, fruits no doubt will be collected along the way, the final achievement may be envisioned but never fully achieved at a given time, it is a continuous effort of becoming, a process towards the vision.

The FABC has been encouraging Dioceses to use the AsIPA method to move towards that vision of communion and we have gone a long way as we gather for the VII General Assembly, 25 years since that visionary V FABC Plenary Assembly was held in 1990. We are actually having it in the same venue when the first and second AsIPA General Assembly were held, here at the Baan Phuwan Pastoral Center of Bangkok Archdiocese. We thank God for inspiring so many and for the day to day energy we received as AsIPA was put into use to renew our local churches.

Personally I want to thank you all for making the effort to come bringing your newness from actual pastoral experiences to share with one another as we move together to reach the common vision. In this General Assembly we will be reflecting on the modules already existing and at the same time, we will learn to use new ones, especially those on interreligious dialogue which is the context in most of our countries. We have a very timely theme for this General Assembly: “SCCs/BECs Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs.”

I regret not to join this time and I certainly will be remembering you in my pleas to God and may you have a truly enriching and renewing experience during the VII AsIPA General Assembly and may you always feel “the joy of the Gospel”.

In communion and fraternal bond of friendship, I remain,



Archbishop Patrick D'Rozario, C.S.C.

Archdiocese of Dhaka

Chairman of Office of Laity and Family of FABC



**Message from
Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij
Archbishop of Bangkok**

Dear **participants of the VII AsIPA General Assembly,**

After the first and the second AsIPA General Assemblies were held in the Archdiocese of Bangkok since 1996, once again this Seventh General Assembly is being held here in 2015. On behalf of the local church of Bangkok, I welcome all of you, dear participants.

In our Pastoral Plan 2010-2015, the Catholic Church in Thailand defined the main pastoral care in forming and developing ecclesial community as *“the key and the most important principle,”* and also to *“Take ecclesial community as the approach of living and a community of love and fraternal unity, which would lead to the proclamation of the good News in all dimensions, namely pastoral care and renewal of Christian life, missionary work, ecumenism, inter-religious relationship and social pastoral....”* Again recently in April 2015, our First Plenary Council insisted on developing the laity in the context of *“communion of communities”* as our pastoral priority towards New Evangelization. Here in Thailand, though we Catholic are a small minority, but we are already making use of small Christian communities to proclaim the Good News by **“living with people of different faiths and beliefs.”** Thus the theme of this General Assembly fits very well in our contextual reality and our effort to renew the church in Thailand.

With divine blessing, I wish that all of you will have a very happy and fruitful time during this VII AsIPA General Assembly, and bring home its fruits to share with your collaborators in building up SCCs / BECs all over Asia.

Bangkok, 18th October 2015: Mission Sunday



Francis X. Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij

**(Francis X. Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij)
Archbishop of Bangkok**



Dr. Bibiana Joo Hyun Ro

Executive Secretary of AsIPA (BEC)

Desk of Office of Laity and Family of the FABC

Dear Participants,

On behalf of AsIPA (BEC) desk I sincerely welcome all of you to the VII AsIPA General Assembly. First of all, I would like to express my respect, friendship and gratitude to you all for your collaboration and participation in the VII AsIPA GA. We are so privileged to have you, 122 participants from 18 countries. Indeed, the process of preparing this VII AsIPA GA has already created and strengthened solidarity of SCCs among ourselves.

We are gathering together here with one heart and one mind in Christ specially, embodying the communion of communities - a participatory Church through SCCs. However, the situation of SCCs in our context is different and various in its implementation and growth. Some of us have been actively involved in promoting SCCs for decades with persistence, passion and commitment. Some of us have been aware of the vision and importance of SCCs, but could not implement it so much. Also some of us have just shown interest and intention to start SCCs.

In this regard, I hope that the VII AsIPA GA could be a platform and cornerstone for inspiring, encouraging, supporting and enriching one another in a journey towards a participatory Church. I am convinced that stories of SCCs in Asia, prophetic voices of the grassroots and our sharing will fill us with the joy of the Gospel so that we can empower and nourish “all the members of the People of God” to “become missionary disciples” and “agents of evangelization” in SCCs. ¹

¹Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013 no. 120.

As the theme of VII AsIPA GA is “Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs”, we hope SCCs are becoming a seedbed for witness to dialogue, peace, justice and integrity of creation in the neighborhood. It implies that SCCs are not merely one of many movements in the Church, but rather are the Church on the move seeking her rebirth as “a Church which is poor and for the poor”.²

I would like to invite you to pray that the Holy Spirit guide us to discover, explore and experience this vision of the SCCs and methods, witness, fruits and challenges of SCCs in hope, joy and deep faith during the VII AsIPA GA.

Now I would like to express our deep thanks to the Thai Organizing team for this event, Chairman, Archbishop Louis Chamniern Santisukniran, Vice-chairman Bishop Vira Arpondratana, host archdiocese of Bangkok, Cardinal Francis X. Kriengsak Kovithavanij and all the Thai BEC Local Team Coordinators and volunteers for their tireless efforts and great service to organize the VII AsIPA GA. Also we are so grateful to Most. Rev. Paul Tschang Innam, Apostolic Nuncio to Thailand, Myanmar and Laos for his presence with us. Once again, thank you so much to you all for your participation.

Jesus Christ is whispering to us and SCCs. “Do not be afraid!” Go forth towards all the peripheries. “Go...I am with you always” (Mt. 28:19-20).



Dr. Bibiana Joohyun Ro

Executive Secretary of AsIPA (BEC)

Desk of Office of Laity and Family of the FABC

²Ibid. no. 198.



Friedrich Joseph Lobinger,
Bishop Emeritus of Aliwal North,
South Africa

Message from South Africa

Dear Participants of the VII AsIPA General Assembly,

With great joy I send you my greetings and blessings. I remember the many times when, together with my friend Oswald, I was able to cooperate with you in the earlier Assemblies.

This year your Assembly coincides with the Synod of Bishops in Rome on the topic of the Vocation and Mission of the Family. It is therefore your and my prayer that the most basic unit of the Church, the Small Christian Communities, may search for ever more suitable ways how these basic communities may develop deep Christian family spirit.

As you are assembling with the bible in your hands may the Lord's word come true that those who deeply share and live the Word of God are His true family, His mother and brother and sister (Mk 3, 33ff).

May God bless you all,

12 October, 2015
+ Friedrich Joseph Lobinger,
Bishop Emeritus of Aliwal North, South Africa



Rev. Joseph G. Healey, M.M.

Maryknoll Society

For the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team

Message from the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team

Prayers and blessings from Eastern Africa for the success of the VII AsIPA General Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand from 22 to 28 October, 2015. The 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the nine countries of the AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) Region are in deep solidarity with you. The theme of “Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs” is very timely, urgent and important in Asia and in the whole world. It will contribute to enable SCCs/BECs to be open to respect, understand and learn from people of different faiths and beliefs. The rich diversity of SCCs/BECs around the world is mirrored in the six continental sections of our Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website (www.smallchristiancommunities.org). Let us share with each other and learn from each other as seen in the African Proverb one hand washes the other.

October 12, 2015

Rev. Joseph G. Healey, M.M.

Maryknoll Society

For the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team



Peter Kang
Bishop of Cheju

Message from Bishop Peter Kang, Bishop of Cheju, South Korea

Oct. 23th, 2015

Dear Friends,

We are in the final stage of the Synod. This afternoon we received the final document newly elaborated after lots of interventions made by 263 bishops and the result of small group discussions.

I could read just few pages and I feel it's been gently but very intelligently reformulated for the good of the Church. I believe the Holy Spirit helps us serve a wonderful dish with our deficient recipes.

I sincerely hope that all the participants of the AsIPA General Assembly VII would receive abundant Grace of God and become most active agents of Small Christian Communities in Asia so that the Good tidings of Jesus could be proclaimed and implemented in the grassroots of all Asia! Being united in the prayer,

Yours Sincerely in Christ,
+ Peter Kang
Bishop of Cheju

Programme

Theme: SCCs Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs

Time	Oct. 22 (Thur.)	Oct. 23 (Fri.)	Oct.24 (Sat.)	
	Arrival			
7:00 - 8:00		Breakfast	Breakfast	
8:00 - 8:50		Gospel Sharing : 7 Steps (Luke 12:54-59)	Gospel Sharing : Group Response (Luke 13:1-9)	
8:50 - 9:00		Break	Break	
9:00 - 9:10		Introduction	Introduction	
9:10 - 10:15		Keynote 1) (Bishop Valence Mendis)	Keynote 2 (Fr. Bill Larousse) * Group Photo	
10:30-11:00		Tea Break	Tea Break	
11:00-12:00		Country Group Discussion	*Regional Group Discussion on keynote address	
12:00 - 12:30		Country Group Reports in plenary	*Reports in Plenum on the discussion.	
12:30 - 14:30		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14:30 - 16:00		13:30-15:30 Registration	Country Group Reports continued	Mixed Groups AsIPA Text B/12B on IRD
16:00 - 16:30	Welcome	Tea Break	Tea Break	
16:30 - 17:00	16.30 - 17.30 pm Inaugural Mass (Presider: Apostolic Nuncio)	*Country Group Reports continued	*Thai Presentation on the Church and SCCs in Thailand *Guideline for the Exposure on SCCs	
17:00 - 17:30		*Presentations of Observers&Countries in Asia		
17:30 - 18:00	Break	Break	Break	
18:00 - 19:00	Dinner	Holy Eucharist - India	Holy Eucharist - Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam	
19:00 - 19:40		Dinner	Dinner	
20:00 - 21:00	*Bible Enthronement *Introduction and Welcome	*8.00-8.40 pm Steering Committee: Representative of Each Country + ART *Drafting Committee for Final Statement *8.40 - 9.00 pm Facilitators' Meeting	8-9 pm Bishops' Meeting with ART *Drafting Committee for Final Statement	

Oct.25 (Sun.)	Oct. 26 (Mon.)	Oct. 27 (Tue.)	Oct. 28 (Wed.)
Exposure			Departure
Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
EXPOSURE OUTING	Gospel Sharing : 7 steps (Luke 13: 10-17)	Gospel Sharing: Look-Listen -Love (Luke 13: 18-21)	Prayer of the Church (Feast of Simon and Jude)
	Break	Break	Break
	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
	* Sharing on exposure experience: Reports by diocese in plenary (5 reports)	: Introduction to Training Modules in plenary : Mixed Small Groups do AsIPA Text F/2 *Interaction	*Final Statement Final reading *Country/Diocese Planning Reports *Evaluation
	Tea Break	Tea Break	Tea Break
	*Introduction on Spiritual Formation of Leaders in plenary * Mixed small groups do AsIPA Text E/7	*Continuation of AsIPA text F/2 *Second reading of the Final statement in plenum	*11:00-12:00 Holy Eucharist - Myanmar, Sri Lanka *12:00-12:30 Thanks & Closing
	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
	*First reading of the Final Statement * Countries Report -Story telling on IRD in SCCs	Harvesting/recapturing the vision of the Church and SCCs in order to move forwards	
	Tea Break	Tea Break	
	Mixed Small Groups do AsIPA text B12/C	Evaluation & Planning by country groups	
	Break	Break	
	Holy Eucharist - China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan	Holy Eucharist - Bangladesh, Pakistan, Germany	
	Dinner	Dinner	
	**8.00-8.40 pm Steering Committee meeting: *Drafting Committee for Final Statement *8.40 - 9.00 pm Facilitators' Meeting	Cultural Night	

FINAL STATEMENT

AsIPA VII General Assembly

FABC OLF AsIPA (BEC) Desk & BEC National Team of Thailand

Bann Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center, Bangkok Thailand

22 (Thur.) - 28 (Wed.) October, 2015

“GO...I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS” (Mt 28:19-20)

SCCS/BECS LIVING WITH PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS AND BELIEFS

INTRODUCTION

A. We, the 118 participants - 13 bishops, 57 priests, 14 religious and 34 lay - from 15 countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Africa/SECAM-Ghana, and Germany) came together at Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Centre in Bangkok in Thailand to participate in the VII Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) General Assembly from October 22nd to 28th, 2015. We aimed to deepen our communion and to discover our source of inspiration from the Word and the Eucharist, especially to share our experiences in Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities (SCCs/BECS) on living with people of different faiths and find creative ways to bring deeper peace and solidarity in our world.

B. As part of the program, we visited a few SCCs in three dioceses of Thailand. The visit was an impressive experience of openness and harmonious living with people of different faiths as we were welcomed by them even in their mosques and temples and shared the joys and hopes of interreligious life. We were also strengthened by the faith of SCCs as we joined them for gospel-sharing and visiting the neighborhood. We deeply thank the Church of Thailand for the very warm and generous hospitality and witness of a Church that is alive.

SCCs/BECS AN EXPRESSION OF COMMUNION AND MISSION

C. This assembly is important because we celebrate fifty years of Vatican II and twenty five years of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Fifth Plenary Assembly in Bandung, Indonesia. Vatican II redefined the Church as People of God and put communion at the heart of what it means to be Church. The foundation of communion is to be understood in the context of the Holy Trinity. Communion, however, is intrinsically linked to mission because mission shapes the way we are to be church (Ecclesia in Asia [EA] 24). The People of God, where every baptized participates in the priestly, prophetic and kingly role of Christ (Lumen Gentium [LG], Chapter 1) naturally forms local faith communities.



D. The efforts of the FABC to understand communion from an Asian context has been greatly beneficial. Its constant thrust in forming SCCs/BECs have resulted in many local churches in Asia taking steps to promote them. At FABC V, it was clearly mentioned that the Church in Asia will have to be a communion of communities, where laity, religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as brothers and sisters in a common mission (FABC V 5,8)

E. SCCs/BECs have been viewed as the direct fruit of this people of God in communion and mission theology of Vatican II. In its reception in Asia, FABC has supported the growth of SCCs/BECs as a New Way of Being Church. The reports from different countries saw the SCCs/BECs en flesh the Vatican II vision of Church as follows:

1. People have experienced a deepening of the faith through the SCC/BECs.
2. SCCs/BECs have become a 'launching pad' to nurture the laity; those who have been trained have become more confident facilitators of SCCs with the clear vision of the Church; grown in awareness of their dignity and call as baptized and have become co-responsible with the ordained in the mission of the church.
3. Thirst for Jesus and His Word has deepened with the different Bible sharing methods used in SCC/BECs; By living the Word of God, they edify each other, even to the non-believers, not only by words but action as well.
4. SCCs/BECs have broken down barriers between priests and people as priests and even bishops now sit together with them for SCCs/BECs meetings.
5. SCCs/BECs are growing and more dioceses are promoting it.
6. The AsIPA General Assemblies become sources of revival for the SCCs/BECs. The AsIPA tools enable them to develop a deeper relationship with God through the Word and the Eucharist. The AsIPA methods and texts are very helpful and fruitful to New Evangelization of families, communities, and the parishes. Publication of locally-designed modules is also happening.

F. However, there are still many areas of improvement as follows:

1. Many of the laity are traditional and not open to the new challenges for the renewal of the Church; on the other hand, those who are involved in Church activities lack ongoing formation.
2. Many parishes are still clergy-centered and do not involve the SCCs/BECs in the parish activities.
3. SCCs/BECs are not made as a pastoral priority in the dioceses; transfer of priests without supportive replacement can affect the functioning of SCCs/BECs; there are also not sufficiently-motivated priests, religious and lay animators to promote and nurture SCCs/BECs;
4. It is not easy to get the youth involved in SCCs/BECs.
5. Mass Media, tuitions, seasonal farming, employments, etc hinder some from participation in SCC/BEC activities.
6. In some countries, church leaders could hardly go to SCC/BEC meetings because of political and religious restrictions.

G. However, more than the talks, reports and discussions, we the participants in this assembly also experienced being a communion-in-mission as we deepened our relationship with Jesus and with one another through sharing the Word of God and celebrating the Eucharist everyday. The AsIPA texts on Spiritual Formation, Training of Leaders and Inter-religious Living motivated us to go forward. The Word of God has also challenged us especially in living with people of different faiths. In this assembly, we took on this challenge seriously.

SCCs/BECs IN THE MULTI-RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF ASIA

H. Asia, the birthplace of many of the world's ancient civilizations and religions, is a continent blessed by vibrant communities with their colorful mixture of cultures, religions and philosophies, many of which are more ancient than Christianity. St. John Paul II also identifies and appreciates this multi-religious nature of Asia when he said "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." (EA 6)

I. While Asia is a home to some two-thirds of the world's population, nevertheless it remains the continent with the smallest Christian population. About 85% of the world's non-Christians live in Asia. In Asia only 4.5% of the total population is Christian and only less than 3% of Asia's population is Catholic. In the face of this multi-religious and minority situation of Christians in Asia the FABC, positively appreciating this pluralism and diversity as enriching, call upon the SCCs/ BECs to engage into a dialogue with the people of other faiths.

SCCs/BECs LIVING WITH THE NEIGHBORS OF DIFFERENT FAITHS

J. Although ignorance and intolerance of other religions continue to plague society and have produced tensions, conflicts and violence, in this assembly we have exchanged a lot of positive stories on inter-religious dialogue through SCCs/BECs that have inspired us. From these stories, we learned:

- 1) To have genuine inter-religious dialogue, we honestly recognize our differences as well as our common beliefs. Genuine inter-religious dialogue begins first by entering deeply into our own faith. It also means entering into the skin of the people of the other religions and try to see the world as they see it. To enter into a dialogue demands we are poor in the spirit, in order to be rich in love. Love is the method of dialogues.
- 2) SCCs/BECs engage in the "dialogue of life" with our brothers and sisters of other religious traditions, greeting them on their feast days and being with them in life's vulnerable moments such as sickness, natural calamities and death. Relationships and friendships built in these dialogues assist us to support, encourage and reach out to each other.
- 3) SCCs/BECs also engage in a "dialogue of action" acting as good Samaritans to peoples of other faiths, and working with them on issues of justice, peace and solidarity for the common good.

4) SCCs/BECs exercises the “dialogue of religious experience” by entering into their spiritual traditions through prayer and sharing. It is done through a life of listening/learning and a constant reflection on what God may be saying through these other religious traditions. In and through interfaith dialogues we mutually exchange our divine experience.

CHALLENGES FACED BY SCCs/BECs IN INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

K. God “wants every one to be saved and reach the full knowledge of the truth” (1Tim. 2:4). In this line, the Church also says it rejects nothing that is true and holy in the other religions (NA2). In our engagement with peoples of other faiths, we are faced with the following challenges.

1. Our failure in giving our people a sufficient understanding of Christian identity and its teachings may cause confusion in IRD.
2. Lack of knowledge about the other religions, fear of the unknown, suspicion, lack of self-critical assessment, superiority and inferiority complexes, disparity between those taking part in dialogue, confusion between faith and reason, culture and religion may also hinder IRD.
3. Lack of qualities needed for dialogue like attentiveness, kindness, respect, patience, forgive-ness, acceptances of the other person as belonging to the same human family also affect IRD.
4. Lack of enthusiasm in witnessing and proclaiming Christ and substituting proclamation with dialogue can pose a challenge to the mission of Church. (EN 41, RM 42)
5. Instrumentalization of dialogue for personal, political or economic gain blocks authentic IRD.
6. Lack of proper understanding of God’s Kingdom also affects IRD. SCCs/BECs are challenged to witness and to make these values reign on earth and to do this in solidarity with all people of the human family.
7. Besides strengthening the already existing SCCs/BECs, there is a need to form and encourage Basic Human Communities (BHCs) that can be a powerful means for communal peace and harmony and help us to move from religiosity to genuine deep Spirituality. (FABC Papers No. 48, 1987)
8. Theological issues raised by IRD such as concept of God (are we praying to the same God), concept of the People of God (are they also people of God (LG 2,16), Jesus as the only Saviour (EA10), relativism, inculturation (Christianity as a foreign religion), etc. may generate negativity towards people of other faiths. IRD is an attitude that makes us capable of meeting God in the mysterious ways God is present in other religions. It also reminds us and our SCCs/BECs to find creative paths in articulating and living our faith in multi-religious context. (EA 18)

We therefore recommend:

- 1) To the SCCs/BECs:
 - That special effort is made to involve the youth and the family in SCCs/BECs
 - That SCCs/BECs seriously enter into inter-religious dialogue
 - That we unite ourselves with the people of other faiths in our efforts to promote human rights and address especially issues of the environment, poverty, injustice and violence

2) To the bishops and priests:

- To ensure strong supportive structures at the national and diocesan levels
- As spiritual leaders they need to be at the forefront of inter-religious dialogue promoting unity in and outside the church

3) To the FABC - AsIPA Desk:

- To develop a pastoral plan, resource materials and training programs that can help promote IRD at the SCC, parish and diocesan level
- To pursue IRD at a deeper and more comprehensive level

L. Our experience in this general assembly has strengthened us and challenged our SCCs/BECs even more to be “solid starting points for a new society based on a civilization of love” (Redemptoris Misio 51, EA 25) especially as Pope Francis challenges us to be a church of mercy and compassion (Misericordia Vultus 15).

We want to thank our SCC/BEC pastoral teams and especially our SCC/BEC communities who untiringly live the Christian faith and its mission. We also acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous support given to us by Missio-Aachen and the local organizing committee, as well as the FABC-OLF Office, AsIPA Desk for overall coordination work.

Ending this Assembly on Oct.28, the very same day that the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions 50 years ago challenges our SCCs/BECs even more to promote inter-religious living. May our dear mother Mary intercede for us as live creatively and faithfully with people of different faiths!



HOMILY - INAUGURAL MASS



Archbishop Paul Tschang In-Nam

Apostolic Nuncio to Thailand

22 October 2015

Shrine of Bl. Nicholas, Sampran

Brother Bishops and Priests,
Religious men and women,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to join you in the Eucharistic Celebration this evening, which marks the opening of the 7th AsIPA General Assembly, to be concluded on next Wednesday, 28th October.

First of all, I welcome you all to Thailand. I wish that you may feel at home, comfortable, in this Land of Smile. I wish you also a pleasant stay and a fruitful meeting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is a great pleasure to greet all the Bishops, Priests, Religious men and women, Lay faithful who are taking part in this Meeting, organized by the FABC Office of Laity and Family, AsIPA Desk, and the Thai National Team for Basic Ecclesial Communities.

1. I understand that the theme of your present meeting is: “Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs”. I agree with you that, as you mentioned in your invitation letter, “the theme is very timely, urgent and important in Asia and the world.” Asia is a vast Continent where the Church is called to live together with different Religions and Cultural traditions. In Asia we have very few countries where Christianity is a major Religion (Philippines, Vietnam), while the majority of people in other countries profess Islam (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia), Hinduism (India), Buddhism (Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka), etc. The situation of the Catholic Church in this Asian Continent varies from place to place. In some countries of the Middle East the Catholic Church is facing fierce and merciless persecution at the hands of Muslim extremists (“Islamic State” and others). There are countries where the Religious Freedom of their citizens is constitutionally guaranteed and also practiced. In others, even though the Constitution of the country mentions Human Rights and Religious Freedom, in practice, the Church is to face different kinds of discrimination, difficulties, control and restrictions; in some countries, even particular legislation that is frequently used against religious minorities. There are also challenges like “mixed marriages”, which offers us chances as well as dangers. There are also other issues like “polygamy”, “infant marriages”, which threaten our Christian concept of marriage and family. As Shepherds of the Local Church and as Church leaders, you are well aware of those situations, difficulties and challenges which you are to discuss and examine with your colleagues during these days of your meeting.

2. In this context, I would like to share with you what Pope Francis told the Asian Bishops during his Pastoral Visit in Korea in 2014, on the occasion of the Asian Youth Day.

The Pope is well aware of the situation of the Church in this Asian continent and the challenges that it faces. It is a “pusillus grex, a small flock”, immersed in the vast continent, with its vast land, population, with its ancient cultures and tradition. The Church is “a true mustard seed, a very small seed”, sown in the vast continent of Asia, “which is charged to bring the light of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.”

The mission of the Church is giving witness to the Gospel: “On this vast continent which is home to a great variety of cultures, the Church is called to be versatile and creative in her witness to the Gospel through dialogue and openness to all.” Thus, “Dialogue is an essential part of the mission of the Church in Asia.”

The Christians are here in Asia “not as conquerors” to destroy the rich cultural identity of the Asian citizens, but as friends and brothers to bring our own contribution to enrich further their rich tradition/identity through “fraternal dialogue”.

The Holy Father underlines that, in undertaking dialogue with individuals and cultures, our point of departure and our fundamental point of reference is our own identity, our identity as Christians. “We cannot engage in real dialogue unless we are conscious of our own identity... If we are to speak freely, openly and fruitfully with others, we must be clear about who we are, what God has done for us, and what it is that he asks of us.”

Our Christian identity, our faith calls us to mission, it makes us bear fruits of justice, goodness and peace in our society. “Faith by nature, ‘goes out’, it seeks understanding; it gives rise to testimony; it generates mission... Our identity as Christians is ultimately seen in our quiet efforts to worship God alone, to love one another, to serve one another, and to show by our example not only what we believe, but also what we hope for, and the One in whom we put our trust (cf. 2 Tim 1:12).”

The Holy Father repeatedly underlines that the Christ-centered life, faith-abiding life is the point of departure for every meaningful dialogue with the modern world. “Once again, it is our living faith in Christ which is our deepest identity, our being rooted in the Lord... It is from this deep identity – our being grounded in a living faith in Christ – it is from this profound reality that our dialogue begins, and this is what we are asked to share, sincerely, honestly and without pretension, in the dialogue of everyday life, in the dialogue of charity... Because Christ is our life (cf. Phil 1:21), let us speak ‘from him and of him’ readily and without hesitation or fear,” concludes Pope Francis.

3. The Biblical Readings which you have chosen for today’s Mass, are appropriate for our reflection on the mission of the Church in Asia.



The First Reading (Eph. 1:3-14) talks us repeatedly about: “Blessing”. It reads: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens”. It’s such a joyful message that we are called to proclaim. We Christians are messengers of blessing. What is this blessing? St Paul explains us that it’s about God’s mercy/love with which He chooses us and makes of us His adoptive sons and daughters through Jesus Christ: “He (=God) chose us in him (=Christ), before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ”.

The fact that we are chosen by God is a blessing. A call to holiness is a blessing. To be called to be children of God is a blessing. All these blessings are given to us through Jesus Christ and in Him.

The result of such a blessing is our redemption: “In him (=Christ) we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us”.

“In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ”.

The Gospel (Mt 15:21-28) offers us an example of this salvation brought to us in Jesus Christ. The Lord heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman who has been tormented by a demon. To the supplications and insistent prayers of a mother, Jesus has mercy on her says in reply: “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly from that hour. In Jesus Christ we are healed. In him we are saved. Through his blood we are cleansed from our sins.

4. Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Let’s praise God and give Him glory! By His grace we are entrusted with the grateful mission to proclaim the Christian message of salvation, the joyful message of blessing, “the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation”.

Through the intercession of Our Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and model of missionary outreach, may the Holy Spirit guide you and inspire you in your apostolate.

I ask also your prayers for our Holy Father Pope Francis and those who are gathered in Rome for the Synod of Bishops (4-25 October 2015), to reflect on the fundamental values of the Christian family, the challenges it faces in today’s world, and find out some pastoral approaches in order to help those brothers and sisters who are in particular situations or difficulties. I ask your prayers and support for the successful outcome of the Synod, for the good of the Church. God who works wonders, may guide the Church so that it may become a sign of God’s mercy and salvation in this world of today.



KEYNOTE

ADDRESSES



Small Christian Communities and Ecclesial communion



Bishop Devsritha Valence Mendis

Bishop of Chilaw, Sri Lanka



Read by **Bishop Emmanuel Fedlis Fernando**

in the absence of Bishop Valence

INTRODUCTION

At the very outset it is important to realize that the significance of the Small Christian Communities emerges from the very understanding of what is meant by 'Church'. Jesus Christ founded the church and entrusted the apostles with the task of announcing the good news of salvation to all nations (cf. MK 16/15-16). Church is therefore the vehicle by which this salvific message of the good news of the Lord Jesus is transmitted. It is of utmost importance therefore to perceive in depth the very nature and purpose of the church, which enables us to understand the significance of the SCCs.

The word church is derived from the Greek word '*Ekklesia*' which denotes 'people coming together'. In the Greek version of the Old Testament we see "*Ekklesia*" being used to refer to the 'people of God'. In the Latin translation the word 'ecclesia', brings out the same idea, namely, 'gathering of God's people.'

The notion of 'gathering' is a dynamic reality. This dynamism is what we understand as communion or as relationship. Thus, the meaning of 'ecclesia' or church means a communion which has effective vertical and horizontal dimensions. First; it is God's people gathering in communion with God and second it is God's people gathering or in communion (*Koinonia*) with one another. It is this profound reality that is meant, each time we pronounce the word 'Church'.

The aspect of communion in the Old Testament

As the creation narrative explains in the book of genesis, God created the human being in order to be in communion with Him and with the creation itself. It is the disobedience of Adam and Eve that damaged this relationship.

The covenant with Abraham can be called the first specific expression of God's intent of establishing a people to call "His Own", with whom God would be in communion. Abraham was specifically called by God to become the Father of great a community, and God would bring salvation to all nations through this community. (cf. Gen. 17/4-8)

The exodus experience ratifies the aspect of communion that God by then, has established with the people. The call of Moses is a very moving episode where God says "I have observed the misery of

my people who are in Egypt” (EX. 3/7). God promised Moses a land where the people would settle down and they were to be called God’s people’. (cf. EX 6/7-9) At Sinai, God established a covenant with Israel, which is a proto-type of God’s intention to be in constant communion that has gradually been established among them.

Breaking this communion was a matter of serious concern. It was tantamount to being unfaithful to God. What we find in the prophets is their clarion call for the people to be faithful to the community. (Cf. Jer. 3/11-14). God wanted to gather them and keep them together as a community. Thus, from this very nature of the ‘people of God’, the idea of shared leadership, shared life, and the participating roles and the responsibility towards one another in the community were very apparent. The ‘Ten Commandments’, which was the practical sign of the fidelity to the covenant manifests one’s relationship to God as well as to the community. This relationship as in the case of any social relationship, is based on justice. Thus, the involvement with the community (communion) is not merely a matter of convention or tradition but rather it is a matter of justice.

The aspect of communion in the New Testament

The foundation of communion is to be understood in the context of the Holy Trinity. The communion of the Triune God, Father, Son and the Spirit can be seen as the communion ‘Par Excellence’. The Trinitarian Model is implanted in the people of God by way of their Baptism. It is in the name of the Trinity that one is baptized. The very baptism of the people of God calls for a life of communion with God and with the community of believers. The ‘communion’ in the community forms the very nature of the church. Without the aspect of ‘communion’, the community will only be a physical structure. After all the invitation of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels to love God and one’s neighbor, which Jesus considers as the highest norm in His teachings, is an invitation for a life of loving communion. The spirit of communion prevalent in the early church as found in the Acts of the Apostles is well known (Acts 2/42).

The Acts of the Apostles show that the faithful lived in great solidarity, so much so, they owned everything in common. It is implied in Acts of the Apostles that the secret for the expansion of the community is this deep sense of sharing among the faithful. (cf. Acts 2/42-47). There was a spiritual as well as a practical communion in the apostolic church.

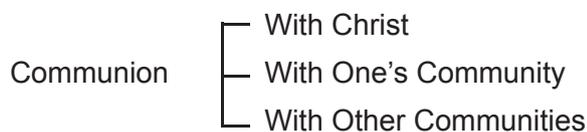
In the Pauline Epistles we see clearly the presence of the aspect of ‘*Koinonia*’. The Eucharist is presented by St. Paul as the foundation of communion.

“The cup of blessing which we bless is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Co. 10/16-17)



The close relationship between the one who receives the body and blood of Christ and the community is also shown here. The receiving of the body and blood of Christ will lead one to a SCCs Living with Peoples of Different Faiths and Beliefs VII AsIPA General Assembly fellowship with the other fellow Christians on one hand and establish a deeper union with Christ on the other hand.

This '*Koinonia*' according to Paul can be figured as follows:



The spiritual communion with Christ leads to a collaboration in real life. There was sharing of the resources (gifts) whether they be material or spiritual for the good of the community (Phil- 4:2). The Community became dynamic because of the involvement of everyone in a common mission to bear witness to the Lord. What is important to note is that in the early church, communion was seen not merely a social relationship which resulted in a friendship, rather it brought about a common consciousness to proclaim Christ as a witnessing community. In other words the communities became evangelizing communities.

St. Paul animated and instructed them and kept in constant touch with them (Cf. Phil 1:1, Acts 20:28-31) through his letters and apostolic journeys. As the Pastor of the communities, St. Paul set the pace by maintaining a communion with them.

Vatican II on Communion

The 2nd Vatican Council underlines the importance of 'Communion' in many instances. '*Lumen Gentium*' presents the church as the sacrament of union with God and with the community.

"The church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, in so far as they are united to their pastors, are also quite appropriately called churches in the New Testament" (LG. 26).

'*Lumen Gentium*' also states that the mission of the church is not an exclusive property of the Clergy and Religious. The laity has a very specific role to play (cf. LG. 4). This role is not merely to help in the external affairs of the church but to be part and parcel of the mission of evangelization in the church. The mission is a collective one in which the Priests, Religious and Laity have a participatory role. (cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6).

The church has constantly emphasised the importance of communion which has to be lived in the Christian communities.

Pope Saint John Paul II – A Civilization of Love

In *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope Saint John Paul II has a specific section on “Ecclesial Basic Communities”. It is stated that ‘Ecclesial Basic Communities’ are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach. They are groups of Christians who at the level of the families or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, scripture reading, catechesis and discussion of human and ecclesial problems. These communities are a sign of vitality within the church, an instrument of formation and evangelization and a solid starting point for a new society based on a ‘civilization of love’. (cf. RM. 51)

Pope Saint John Paul II continues the same theme in ‘Ecclesia in Asia’ and exhorts the churches in Asia to build up communities and to be in communion with one another, if they are to be authentic witnesses to the Lord.

FABC and the Ecclesiology of Communion

The efforts of the FABC to understand the Ecclesiology of communion from an Asian script has been greatly beneficial. Its constant thrust in forming SCCs have resulted in many local churches in Asia taking steps to promote them.

In the final statement of the fifth plenary assembly of the FABC in Bandung, Indonesia in 1990, in paragraph 8, it was clearly mentioned that the church in Asia will have to be a communion of communities, where laity, religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as brothers and sisters in a common mission. It is a participatory church where everybody’s gifts are recognized and actuated so that the church and its mission may be fulfilled. (cf. for all peoples of Asia, FABC documents, Vol. 1, pg. 287). At the last FABC Plenary Assembly held in Vietnam, recalling the 40 year journey of the FABC, the progress of the Small Christian Communities was reviewed. The fact that the church in Asia should be a communion of communities was reiterated.

The emphasis on ‘communion’ has enabled the Asian church to speak on the relevance of a spirituality of communion. It is a spirituality of discipleship in following in the footsteps of Jesus, whose communication with Abba His Father meant a mission of love of humankind and the cosmos. It is a spirituality that responds from the depths of the spirit to the brokenness and disharmonies of our Asian world. With such spirituality we become persons of God-experience, credible and effective in telling the story of Jesus to Asia. A personal and practical demonstration of a spirituality of communion would be, the solidarity and cooperation in the mission of evangelization at various levels of the church, within the local church and among local churches. (cf. FABC Papers, No. 138, pg 39-40).

New Evangelization

Pope Benedict XVI initiated a Dicastery for the promotion of 'New Evangelization', which the Holy Father sees as an imperative in the context of growing secularism.

The term "New Evangelization" recalls the need for a renewed means of proclamation, in today's world which is witnessing a drama of fragmentation which no longer acknowledges a unifying reference point. People are experiencing a dichotomy between their faith life and life in society. It often occurs that people wish to belong to the church, but they are strongly shaped by a vision of life which is in contrast with the faith.

Because of this reality in the world today, Pope Benedict speaks about the urgency of proclaiming the salvific mystery with renewed vigor to convince the contemporary person, who is often distracted and insensitive. (Cf. Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for promoting the New Evangelization)

In the context of secularism, growing migration in Asia and the disturbing levels of poverty, the model that the church in Asia proposes is the SCCs which is referred to as the 'new way of being church' which was highlighted already in the AsIPA general assembly I, held in Thailand in 1996 in this very same Baan Phu Waan pastoral centre. What's 'new' in this 'new way', is that Priests, Religious, and Laity take an active role in evangelization realizing that it is a cooperate responsibility.

One of the basic truths about the Basic Christian Communities is that it provides space for everyone to feel a sense of belonging to the church. One of the issues that most of the local churches are facing today is that people feel as if they are strangers in the church; I mean in the community of God's people. There is an urgency to create a close link between the pastor in the parish and to the members of the community. In large parishes many of the sheep can be easily lost if there is no effort to reach out to them. This outreach for those already baptized but living in the periphery is a matter of immediate concern which the SCCs have the potential to address.

Then we have another category in our churches namely the nominal Christians who are lukewarm in their faith or who have lost their faith totally. SCC is a tool that could reach out to them as well, with renewed vigor, as recommended in the agenda of new evangelization.

The SCCs are created by small local groups (neighborhood groups) of Christians who meet regularly to pray and sing, to reflect on God's word and help each other by sharing in, listening to each other's problems of everyday life and solving them. The SCC should not be viewed as another society but it should be seen as the "way of living", or "the way of being church". It is a collective responsibility of all the faithful in the community.

Practical Situations of Concern – Pastoral Challenges

The promotion of the SCCs should not be taken up in isolation. There are certain other urgent socio-pastoral issues that have to be given attention simultaneously. The most important among them would be the pastoral care of the family and caring for the poor. These have a direct ripple effect on the formation of the SCCs.

(a) Pastoral care of the family

It is not possible to build the SCCs without the pastoral care of the family. While the SCCs are being promoted in a parish, the concern of the parish towards the “family” is crucial in today’s context. It is necessary to understand the situations within which marriage and family are lived today, in order to fulfill the task of “communion”. Without the spirit of communion in the family it will not be practical to think of communion in the SCCs. It will be like trying to build a house without the foundation. Thus, a greater understanding and care of the existing realities regarding the family is essential in the field of SCCs. (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 04)

The Christian home which must manifest to all people, Christ’s living presence in the world and the authentic nature of the church must be imbued with God’s presence. (*Gaudium et spes*, 48). This essential aspect has been challenged today by many contemporary socio-economic factors. Globalization and technological advancement have brought about social changes that have serious impact on the family unity and cohesion. Cherished family values are under siege. The new culture of communication has enabled families to communicate and maintain contact across great distances; on the other hand the undue use of it has brought about damaging results to family relationships. Migration has brought about devastating results to the family which is a serious concern to be considered in new evangelization.

There is need for discernment and renewal in the understanding of the Christian view of human life and dignity, as breakdown of families and new forms of families become more frequent. There are now families of single parents, of divorced parents, families of parents at least one of whom is absent for a prolonged period of time due to migration. Children have become the worst victims of such imbalanced situations (cf. *FABC papers No. 113*).

Without being pastorally sensitive to these challenges of the family, the effort to promote SCCs may be unproductive. There should be a parallel effort in the pastoral care of the family in the parish and in the local church.

(b) Renewal in Social Commitment

In *Porta Fidei* (cf. No. 14), the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI speaks about the importance of Charity, specially the concern for the poor and less privileged. As St. Paul reminds us: “So faith, hope, love abide, those three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). With even stronger

words St. James says: “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to him, ‘go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jm. 2:14-18).

The SCCs have much to do with the Church’s solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. In fact, the church has numerous institutions that look after the poor. These should continue, perhaps, in a much bigger way. There should be clear structures in parishes to look after the economically poor and the needy. Nevertheless, it doesn’t speak merely of feeding the hungry or housing the homeless. Poverty is often the result of unjust structures. It is also the effect of selfishness on the part of a few. The Word of God calls the Church to take up the cause of the poor and to seek justice on their behalf. Holy Father Pope Francis reminds us of the urgency of this task.

The advocacy on behalf of the poor is a demand that arises from scripture. We are not just to clothe the destitute, but also to speak up for them and uphold their rights. The call of the church no doubt is to render aid for the physical needs of the poor. But, the call is also to be committed to the need of justice for which advocacy is necessary, (cf. FABC Papers No. 133) and to create a better world for the poor. In order to do this task effectively the Church engages in a dialogue today with various international organizations which are committed towards the same task. This has to be done locally too depending on the challenges in each country. The church becomes credible when the poor and the marginalized are part of it. This is the path that Pope Francis opens to us by calling a special ‘Year of Mercy.’

There are thousands of church institutions throughout the world engaged in this task. There are situations of alarming poverty and absolute helplessness. Often children and women are the worst victims of such situations. Human trafficking, child labour, sexual harassment of migrant workers, domestic violence are some of the most alarming issues. A new evangelization has to take these issues seriously. The concern for the poor should arise from one’s faith. Faith without charity bears no fruit; while charity without faith is a mere sentiment. (cf. PF. 14). Issues of this nature will be too formidable to handle in the SCCs without the backing of the local church.

(c) Forming Lay Leaders

The local churches have a responsibility to form their leaders. Often lack of preparation of lay leaders is seen as the cause for failure in forming the SCCs. Preparing the ground is essential for the success of the SCCs. A well formed group of lay people should animate the entire programme for which they should be empowered.

Formation of the Lay Leaders is an essential tool for the SCCs to function smoothly. A small group of committed and interested lay people should be motivated and given special training about leadership.

This preparation should be seen as an investment within the framework of a participatory church.

There should also be on-going formation for the leaders who will be the animators of this programme. Constant care, encouragement, support and guidance of the leaders will go a long way for the sustenance of the SCCs.

In every parish we have people of good will who serve in various lay apostolates. They include the catechists and other lay missionaries who are concerned with evangelization. They are a real resource to the local churches. This group should be essential participants in SCCs. We should target first towards a well confirmed group of leaders and second, towards a group of essential participants. They need to be motivated as well. They should be convinced that the final goal of being connected to the lay associations, (eg:- Liturgy Group, Legion of Mary, Vincent De Paul Society, Charismatic Group, Family Apostolate Group, Caritas Group, Youth Group, PMS Group) should have a necessary connection to the SCCs in their own locality. Their impact should be felt by the parish. This impact to the parish could be made to feel only by way of their connectedness to the SCCs. If not these groups will be only serving themselves; like a stream or a river that does not meet the ocean.

Another topic of great importance for most of our Asian countries where we live as minorities is the need to relate to people of other faiths. Therefore in our SCCs, we need to make an effort to relate with these people of different faiths.

CONCLUSION

The FABC has been constant in its insistence on the importance of the SCCs. A considerable amount of progress is seen already in many local churches.

The church in Asia, in order to be alive and authentic in its witness in the present day world, presents the SCCs as the way of being church. The centrality of 'Communion' is nurtured and sustained by the SCCs. It is a tool that brings together the scattered children of God.

In the context of growing secularism and fundamentalism in Asia in order to shepherd the flock and keep them together, there is no other way rather than promoting the SCCs, where the laity will gradually be more involved in the work of evangelization, thereby making the vision of a participatory church a reality. The SCCs is an opportunity to make the communities more caring, loving and thereby creating a sense of belonging to the church. Pope Francis has often highlighted the need to reach out to those who are in the periphery. The Small Christian Community is the way to eliminate the situation of peripheral existence.

Today we certainly need a mechanism to hold our parish communities intact. For that matter there is no better methodology than that of the SCCs which is not simply a way of promoting communion but rather that which is communion itself.

There are other parallel aspects that need to be attended which are prerequisites for the SCCs. Among them the family apostolate, the youth and children's apostolates takes pride of place. The accent placed in the parish on the poor and the marginalized goes a long way in the formation of SCCs.

Motivating the Pastors to search for new paths for evangelization is a felt need. The traditional parochial structure has to be surpassed and it is high time to go to the flock and specially look for the lost ones and those who are most vulnerable in the face of growing secularism.



SCCs/BECs LIVING WITH PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS AND BELIEFS

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Introduction

Let me begin by expressing my understanding of a keynote address. A keynote address is an opening address to a conference, a seminar or an assembly. I think that is where the idea of key comes in. It is like a key that opens a door. So it is some notes that act like a key to open a topic that will be explored. The topic will be explored in many ways over a few days, so the keynote address is not a complete all comprehensive final word on a topic but an opening introduction to the further exploration of that topic. So I do not plan to say everything, not could I say everything, but just to offer some thoughts to open our exploration of the topic of our Catholic BECs living with people of different faiths and beliefs.

There are two aspects of the topic of living with peoples of different faiths and beliefs. One is how can we be open to respect, understand and learn from these people of different faiths and beliefs who are our neighbors and the second is – how can we bear Christian witness to these people. The key here is to understand how the Church understands other faiths and beliefs and our relation to them.

The topic of BECs living with people of different faiths and beliefs is well chosen and it is well worded. The focus is living with people who are of other religious traditions. It is our relationship to people of other religions.

This is an excellent topic at this time because the last day of this assembly is October 28. That day will be the 50th anniversary of the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (Nostra Aetate, NA). October 28, 1965 this declaration was proclaimed by Pope Paul VI. It is this declaration that launched the Church in a new way into seeking out relationships with people of other religions. “The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.” (NA, 2) Our exploration of BECs living with people of different faiths and beliefs is a type of celebration of this anniversary.

This relationship with people of other religious traditions, or interreligious relationships has been called interreligious dialogue. This is our standard Catholic terminology. However, at times the word dialogue has been open to misunderstanding. That is why I said that the topic is well worded since it emphasizes being with and positively interacting with people of other religions. Perhaps it will be helpful for us that when we hear interreligious dialogue, we think of interreligious relationships.

In order to offer some ideas on this, I will use our Church documents. This will give us a common basis and understanding for our days together. The use of these documents will also allow us to refer to them in the future. These documents can be used for study and reflection in our BECs.¹ I assume that much of what I will say you have heard already but I hope to help us, through these Church documents, open the door to a deeper understanding of interreligious dialogue.

To explore the understanding of interreligious dialogue will help us to better understand how we can be open to respect, understand and learn from these people of different faiths and beliefs who are our neighbors and how can we bear Christian witness to these people. These are two sides of the same coin. Pope Francis has said in his 2013 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium*, EG): “In this dialogue, ever friendly and sincere, attention must always be paid to the essential bond between dialogue and proclamation, which leads the Church to maintain and intensify her relationship with non-Christians.... Evangelization and interreligious dialogue, far from being opposed, mutually support and nourish one another.” (EG, 251)

Not New

This topic of interreligious dialogue and BECs is not new. In Hong Kong in 1977 the somewhat newly formed FABC organized an Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church. This colloquium acknowledged the many already existing Basic Christian Communities or what we call BECs. It encouraged the development of these BECs, and it recognized the need for lay leadership roles in these Basic Christian Communities. One of the mentioned possible lay ministries in the Church would be a ministry of interreligious dialogue.² Therefore, prior to 1977 there were established

¹Some of the important documents from the Second Vatican Council are the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*, NA); the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*, LG); the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, (*Gaudium et Spes*, GS); the *Declaration on Religious Freedom: On the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious* (*Dignitatis Humanae*, DH) and the *Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church* (*Ad Gentes*, AG).

Also some key official papers that have originated from the now called Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue are the 1984 document *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission* (commonly called just *Dialogue and Mission*, DM); the 1991 document *Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (commonly called just *Dialogue and Proclamation*, DP); and the 2014 document *Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue* (DTC).

From St. Pope John Paul II we can refer to the Encyclical of 1990 *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (*Redemptoris Missio*, RM) and the 1999 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation for Asia (*Ecclesia in Asia*, EA).

From Pope Francis we can refer to his 2013 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium*, EG).

Another very important contribution is the FABC Papers No. 48 from 1987 which is the *Theses on Interreligious Dialogue: An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection*. These were prepared by the Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). Today it is known as the Office of Theological Concerns.

²“Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church: Conclusions,” 5 March 1977, Hong Kong, in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991*, ed. Gaudencio Rosales and Catalino Arévalo (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992), 67-92.

BECs and there was already reflection on lay ministry that included interreligious dialogue as to “promote understanding and appreciation between living faiths of the world and, together with the members of those other religious traditions, foster concerns for men and society as these spring from a faith commitment.”³

The First Assembly of the FABC in 1974 was an effort to ground the work of mission in the local context of each of the peoples of Asia and this concretely means a continuous and humble dialogue with cultures, religions, and the poor. This “triple dialogue” with cultures, religions, and the poor from the first assembly in 1974 has been seen as an articulation of the heart of the FABC through all of the years. The Asian Bishops envision dialogue as our way of being Church. This goes back to the beginning, the first assembly of 1974.

Always New

Just this year, 2015, in May, at the BITA V of the Office of Theological Concerns, the importance of interreligious dialogue and basic ecclesial communities was specifically mentioned as a key area of concern of the local churches of Asia. The grassroots level is where interreligious dialogue needs to take place.

Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism

This however calls for another clarification. The colloquium of 1977 spoke of interreligious dialogue. In our Catholic tradition, as I mentioned, our relations with people of different faiths and beliefs we call by the term interreligious dialogue. In the Vatican we have the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

It would be good to distinguish this from the term ecumenism. Our Catholic tradition uses the term ecumenism to speak of our relations with fellow believers in Jesus Christ. These brothers and sisters with faith in Christ are separated from us but they have the right to be called Christian as believers and followers of Christ. We share the same faith in Christ. Ecumenism is oriented to the visible unity that Christ desires for His Body, the Church. In the Vatican we have the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

In most of our Asian Bishops’ Conferences we have an Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue. The FABC has the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. We tend to put together, unlike at the Vatican, the two types of dialogue, ecumenical and interreligious in one commission. Putting them together in one commission does not mean the two are the same. We maintain the terminology of both ecumenical and interreligious. The terminology of interreligious dialogue and ecumenism helps us to understand the difference between the two. In reality when we speak of our neighbors, we encounter both other Christians and followers of other religious traditions.

³Ibid., 80,

In our Catholic understanding the term interreligious dialogue is clearly distinguished from the term ecumenism and it is not a wider form of ecumenism.

However, it is also good to be aware that the concept and the term wider ecumenism exists and is used. This is the reality. Wider ecumenism is used to refer to both the movement for Christian unity and dialogue with other religions. This is based on the Greek word that is at the root of ecumenism which means the home/house or household

of God and it encompasses all of creation in God's house or home. The term wider ecumenism lumps together ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, collaboration with civil society and respect for the environment.

While ecumenism is oriented toward visible Christian unity, interreligious dialogue does not aim to bring about the unity of all the religions or to bind them all into a super one religion which weaves together elements from them all religions into a single whole.

The purpose of interreligious dialogue is to bring about better mutual understanding and cooperation between people who are believers from different religions, of different faiths and beliefs, in service of the truth and the common good.

There are similarities between the two types of dialogue, ecumenical and interreligious. However to distinguish between the two reminds us of the different goals of each. The use of the terminology really helps us better understand what is important in each. Other terminology is also used but it seems to lack the clarity of our traditional or standard Catholic terminology. To simplify and clarify what we are dealing with; I will use our standard term interreligious dialogue.

What Interreligious Dialogue Is Not

I know that it sounds negative to start with what interreligious dialogue is not but clarifying what it is not will help us grasp what it is.

We have already said it is not ecumenism.

Interreligious dialogue is not some type of negotiation. The word dialogue is sometimes used to refer to negotiations. Negotiation implies a compromise. A good negotiator can find compromises and after a certain time, one will arrive at agreements acceptable to all. This is not interreligious dialogue.

Interreligious dialogue is not just conversation. Interreligious dialogue is not just sitting in a formal setting and talking. Talking will certainly be part of interreligious dialogue but is not limited or reduced to only talking.

Interreligious dialogue is not merely a comparative study of religions. A comparative study of religions is learning about the other intellectually but not necessarily an encounter of people.

Interreligious dialogue is not the search for the least common denominator.

Interreligious dialogue is not debate. In a debate, there are arguments back and forth, with winners and losers.

Interreligious dialogue is not for conversion to another religion. It is not proselytism. It is not a social phenomenon for tangible practical benefits. It is not a hobby. It is not for only a few elite.

What Interreligious Dialogue Is

The 1991 document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation (DP)* clarifies what it means by the term dialogue. "Dialogue can be understood in different ways. Firstly, at the purely human level, it means reciprocal communication, leading to a common goal or, at a deeper level, to interpersonal communion. Secondly, dialogue can be taken as an attitude of respect and friendship,

which permeates or should permeate all those activities constituting the evangelizing mission of the Church. This can appropriately be called "the spirit of dialogue." (DP, 9). While it admits these meanings, this is not what is meant by interreligious dialogue. Reciprocal communication, interpersonal closeness and respect and a spirit of dialogue are all important and absolutely necessary, but they are not what this document considers as interreligious dialogue. It is something more.

"Thirdly, in the context of religious plurality, dialogue means 'all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment' (DM, 3), in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions. It is in this third sense that the present document uses the term dialogue for one of the integral elements of the Church's evangelizing mission." (DP, 9)

Interreligious dialogue is about intended positive relationships with people of different faiths that is directed to mutual enrichment and mutual understanding. There needs to be a mutual witness, witnesses witnessing to other witnesses, and an exploration of religious convictions. All this is in obedience to truth and with respect for freedom.

One of the Integral Elements of the Church's Evangelizing Mission

The Church's evangelizing mission, or more simply evangelization, refers to the mission of the Church in its totality. The Church accomplishes her evangelizing mission through a variety of activities. Therefore, there is a broad concept of evangelization. Within this concept there are different essential elements. Interreligious dialogue is one of these.

The 1984 document of the now Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Mission (DM)* previously had affirmed that the evangelizing mission of the Church is one but there are a number of principal elements can be mentioned "It indicates the principal elements of this mission: presence and witness; commitment to social development and human liberation; liturgical

life, prayer and contemplation; interreligious dialogue; and finally, proclamation and catechesis. (DM, 13)” (DP, 2) Interreligious dialogue is one of the component elements and authentic forms of the one evangelizing mission of the Church. “The totality of Christian mission embraces all these elements. It is the duty of all. Every local church is responsible for the totality of mission.” (DM, 13-14)

Pope St. John Paul II asserts the same in the Encyclical of 1990 On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate (Redemptoris Missio, RM). In Chapter V on the Paths of Mission he writes that “Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways. Among these ways, some have particular importance in the present situation of the Church and the world.” (RM, 41) He then goes on to list them as witness, proclamation, conversion and baptism, forming local churches, ecclesial basic communities, inculturation, dialogue with our brothers and sisters of other religions, promoting development by forming consciences, works of charity and human promotion. (RM, 42-60)

About dialogue with our brothers and sisters of other religions he writes: “Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church’s evangelizing mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission ad gentes; indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions.... In the light of the economy of salvation, the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission ad gentes. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable.” (RM, 55)

In the Apostolic Exhortation after the Asian Synod (Ecclesia in Asia, EA) St. John Paul II wrote: “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.’” (EA, 23) He again insists that dialogue is an integral element of the Church’s evangelizing mission.

He added that “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.” (EA, 24)

This section is very insightful since it deals with mission in Asia. It articulates for us that what is essential to the Church’s evangelizing mission for our BECs is interreligious dialogue. Interreligious relationships with our neighbors are what we are to do; it is our way of being Church. We reach out. But it spells out for us some of the tasks involved in a simple way. Building unity and solidarity and engendering trust among peoples is for us part of what is essential to our faith community.

Often in situations of conflict and violence, these are identified as religious in nature. Most people believe that the conflict is not really religious but religion is used to heighten emotions in situations of

perceived social or economic injustice. In these difficult situations the task of peace building on the grassroots level is the task of the BECs. St. John Paul II said that religion and peace correspond to one another. Any form of violence is opposed to the true essence of religion. “Religion is not, and must not become, a pretext for conflict, particularly when religious, cultural and ethnic identity coincide. In recent days, sadly, I have had reason to affirm once more that: ‘No one can consider himself faithful to the great and merciful God who in the name of the same God dares to kill his brother.’ Religion and peace go together: to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction.”⁴

Approach to Other Religions, Openness, Respect and Enrichment

The basic understanding of the Church’s evangelizing mission is that it is first and foremost a participation in the Trinitarian missions that are the dynamic of Trinitarian communion. The Church participates in the very mystery of the communion-in-mission Triune God. The Church understands itself within the dynamic mystery of God.

God’s mission is understood as God moving in salvific love towards all He has created. That movement of God, God’s self-communication, is in view of gathering all people to be one people, one community in the same way that the Trinity is the one community of the Father, Son and Spirit. That is the same communion-in-mission that should characterize the Church. The fulfillment of God’s plan is to gather all people to be one people. Therefore, “The foundation of the Church’s commitment to dialogue is not merely anthropological but primarily theological. God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women.” (DP, 38)

“(Interreligious) dialogue is fundamental to the Church, which is called to collaborate in God’s plan with her methods of presence, respect and love towards all persons.” (DP, 39)

Another way to think of dialogue is not our dialogue with other people but of God’s dialogue with all humanity in which we are called to participate. Pope Paul VI spoke of the dialogue of salvation in his Encyclical of 1964 On the Church (Ecclesiam Suam, ES). “Religion of its very nature is a certain relationship between God and man. It finds its expression in prayer; and prayer is a dialogue. Revelation, too, that supernatural link which God has established with man, can likewise be looked upon as a dialogue. In the Incarnation and in the Gospel it is God’s Word that speaks to us.... Indeed, the whole history of man’s salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which He prolongs with men in so many different ways.” (ES, 70)

“This relationship, this dialogue, which God the Father initiated and established with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit, is a very real one, even though it is difficult to express in words. We must examine it closely if we want to understand the relationship which we, the Church, should establish and foster with the human race. God Himself took the initiative in the dialogue of salvation....

⁴ John Paul II, “To the Participants in the Sixth Assembly of the World Conference for Religion and Peace (WCRP) at the Synod Hall,” Rome, November 3, 1994.

We, therefore, must be the first to ask for a dialogue with men, without waiting to be summoned to it by others. The dialogue of salvation sprang from the goodness and the love of God. ‘God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. (Jn 3:16)’ Our inducement, therefore, to enter into this dialogue must be nothing other than a love which is ardent and sincere.” (ES, 71-73)

If fact, Pope Paul VI has said that he wants the word dialogue to be applied “[t]o this internal drive of charity which seeks expression in the external gift of charity.” (ES, 64) Dialogue can be understood as the outward gift of God’s love freely offered to others.

Since God has established a relationship with all humanity, all humanity and their religions have been touched by God’s presence. “The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.” (NA, 2)

St. John Paul II reminds us that all humanity is part of God’s plan. “In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wishes to share with them the fullness of his revelation and love. He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain ‘gaps, insufficiencies and errors.’” (RM, 55)

He goes on to say that “Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. It is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills. Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the ‘seeds of the Word,’ a ‘ray of that truth which enlightens all men’; these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind. Dialogue is based on hope and love, and will bear fruit in the Spirit. Other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ’s presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all.” (RM, 56)

If this theological foundation of interreligious relations is part of our spirituality and our prayer, it will enable us to see with the eyes of faith the presence of God in peoples and in their religions. If we say God is present and active, we need to respect that presence and we also need to be enriched by the presence and activity of God in drawing all humanity to himself. “God’s word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us.” (EG, 179)

Forms of Dialogue

The document *Dialogue and Mission* of 1984 identified four forms of dialogue. These four forms originated with the reflection of the FABC on interreligious dialogue and were used in both the document *Dialogue and Mission* and *Dialogue and Proclamation*.

- 1) The dialogue of life.
- 2) The dialogue of action.
- 3) The dialogue of theological exchange.
- 4) The dialogue of religious experience.

Dialogue and Proclamation also opens the topic of a dialogue with cultures. This is a topic that still needs to be explored, the mutual relationship between religions and cultures.

Dialogue of Life

The dialogue of life is defined as “where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.” (DP, 42)

Dialogue and Mission had said: “Every follower of Christ, by reason of his human and Christian vocation, is called to live dialogue in his daily life, whether he finds himself in a majority situation or in that of a minority. He ought to bring the spirit of the Gospel into any environment in which he lives and works, that of family, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political life. Dialogue thus finds its place in the great dynamism of the church’s mission.” (DM, 30)

All believers and all communities of believers, all BECs, are called to be committed to dialogue as a necessary and essential element of the evangelizing mission of the Church.

“Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way” (RM, 57)

Dialogue of life is a daily way of living and interacting with our neighbors of different faiths. We strive for harmonious relationships. This type of dialogue is spontaneous. This has been going on for centuries where people of different faiths have lived side by side and interacted with one another. It starts from our common humanity. It is this dialogue of life where the Church lives interreligious dialogue on the grassroots level. Each BEC is called to be a grassroots center of positive and constructive interreligious relations.

We must add that there needs to be a striving, and an effort to live in an open and neighborly spirit. People can also live side by side with little or no interaction. We need to take the initiative to establish positive relationships. As Pope Paul VI said, we must take the initiative because God first opened His dialogue of salvation with all humanity.

“We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man’s relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: ‘He who does not love does not know God’ (1 John 4:8).” (NA, 5)

Pope Francis has said in his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* that interreligious dialogue “is in the first place, a conversation about human existence or simply, as the bishops of India have

put it, a matter of 'being open to them, sharing their joys and sorrows.' In this way we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking." (EG, 250)

This striving to live in a neighborly spirit and to promote positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths can begin by spontaneously reaching out and sharing human life its joys and sorrows and to share our common human problems and preoccupations.

The dialogue of life can be as simple as being friends. Friendship opens us to mutual understanding and mutual enrichment. The role of true friendship must never be underestimated.

This can be expressed by mutual presence at significant moments in human life, like the celebrations for baptism or initiation rites, graduations, marriage and funerals. This, of course, would be by invitation and would need sensitivity as to how one would participate. Generally this means to invite people and accept invitations to the common human celebrations around these important life events.

This concept could extend to celebrations of religious feasts. There is the practice in many places in Asia to join in the celebrations of the feasts of other religions and to invite members of other religions to join in our feasts such as Christmas and Easter. This practice is done at the BEC level since it involves neighbors.

There could be jointly planned reciprocal visits to places of worship. This would entail hospitality and welcome and to offer explanations of worship and symbolism.

For example, the major seminary in Davao has an exposure program for all of the seminarians with Muslim communities. The seminarians live with the members of the neighboring BEC and benefiting from the good relationships and openness that has

been built up by the BEC with their neighbors. This is jointly planned each year by both the BEC and Muslim community.

The Vatican has messages on significant feasts of other religions. In the past year, for example, there were a message to Muslims for the end of Ramadan, a message sent to Buddhists for the Feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri, a message to Jains on the occasion of the feast of Mahavir Jayanti, a message to Sikh on the occasion of the feast of Prakash Diwas and a message to Hindus on the occasion of the Feast of Deepavali. These messages could be given to the leader of the respective community of another faith. This type of giving of messages is a way of sowing the seeds of a relationship. There might not be immediate results but they are a sign of reaching out for harmonious relationships.

Youth could be encouraged to participate in school, cultural or sports events to have the experience of being with one another and knowing one another.

The FABC Papers No. 48 from 1987 which is the Theses on Interreligious Dialogue: An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection offers a concept of basic human communities. The primary belonging in terms of a faith community is the BEC, a community of communion, participation and mission. “[B]ut at the same time, the human community to which a person belongs in a multireligious situation, is not limited to the economic, cultural, social and political levels. There is also a community at a religious level underlying differences, which is to be explored and experienced in dialogue. Hence, the normal living and viable unit in a multireligious situation would seem to be a basic human community in which religions are not sources of differentiation and division, but help, through dialogue, a common human pursuit for liberation and wholeness. In a multireligious situation, for a Christian who is aware of being in mission, belonging to such a human community would seem obvious. Such a community would be in its own way a symbol of the Kingdom.” (Theses on Interreligious Dialogue, 4.4)

Dialogue of Action

The dialogue of action is defined as action “in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.” (DP, 42)

Living together harmoniously, sharing joys and sorrows, and human problems and preoccupations, flows into an effort to help one another. The service of the other in need can be an expression of this. Offering mutual assistance can be part of this.

This type of action can be sporadic, a spontaneous action based on a specific need. This has taken place in response to disasters. Like a fire that destroys many houses or flooding.

A more permanent type of action can be collaborated on together for common concerns by forming more stable associations. These common concerns can be humanitarian societal concerns that are addressed jointly. One area of common concern would be the care of our common home, respect for creation as a way of respecting one another, the poor and future generations.

There could be projects of common concern that are started by one faith group to which they invite people of other faith groups.

There could a joint common project that is initiated in an interreligious way. From the very beginning all things are discussed and done together. The entire process will

require a monitoring of the participation of all. Together the goal will need to be clarified and articulated, what needs to be done, how it will be done and who will do it will require constant interreligious discussions on the project.

Some specific areas that are important are mentioned in the 2014 document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue (DTC). Defending human dignity, religious freedom and promoting the exercise of human rights are areas for the dialogue of action. All of these have their foundation in the very dignity of the human person.

Work for peace and justice are important. “Catholics are called to work with all people of goodwill, including followers of other religions, to build a peaceful society. But peace can come to fruition only when human rights are respected, especially the right to profess one’s own religion according to the dictates of a properly formed conscience and within just limits legitimately set by civil society.” (DTC, 60)

Religious leaders, even at the BEC level, can build bridges with other religious groups by reaching out to other religious leaders and establishing bonds of trust and friendship. “A sense of solidarity in joy and suffering emerges out of such encounters among religious leaders and is extended to members of their communities who, in turn, strive for peace and harmony, and for the alleviation of poverty and defense of human rights within the wider society. The religious leaders have their particular responsibility ‘to imbue society with a profound awe and respect for human life and freedom; to ensure that human dignity is recognized and cherished; to facilitate peace and justice; to teach children what is right, good and reasonable!’” (DTC, 66)

The Dialogue of Theological Exchange

The dialogue of theological exchange is defined as when “specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other’s spiritual values.” (DP, 42)

While there might not be “specialists” at the BEC level, this form of dialogue can help inform our BECs to better understand and appreciate interreligious relationships.

The Dialogue of Religious Experience

The dialogue of religious experience is defined as “where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.”(DP, 42)

While this form of dialogue usually takes place among those in different monastic traditions, the concept of religious experience can also simply be understood as the experience of worship. Sensitivity and awareness of the reality of religious experience can broaden our understanding of interreligious relations.

Formation for Interreligious Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is for mature believers well grounded in their faith. In interreligious relationships all must always retain their religious identity. “Those who promote interreligious dialogue must be persons well-formed in their particular traditions, possessing a clear religious identity. In addition, basic human qualities and virtues are also essential requirements for any interreligious encounter.” (DTC, 3)

An obstacle to interreligious dialogue is an inadequate grounding in one’s own faith and also an insufficient knowledge and understanding of the belief and practices of other religions.

“Many of these obstacles arise from a lack of understanding of the true nature and goal of interreligious dialogue. These need therefore to be constantly explained. Much patience is required.” (DP, 52)
“For Catholics, dialogue requires a well-grounded knowledge of the Church’s doctrine, ‘solid faith and spiritual and personal maturity.’” (DTC, 31)

“As they deepen their own faith, Catholics will be better able to understand the meaning, the need for and the importance of meeting believers of other religions, as well as the possibilities and fruits of such dialogue.” (DTC, 32)

“Clearly, religious identity is a necessary condition for any genuine interreligious dialogue. Experience has shown that for the individual firmly rooted in his or her own religion, dialogue can offer a unique occasion to deepen one’s own religious beliefs, thereby facilitating growth and maturity. In the measure that a person is strongly aware of his or her identity, he or she becomes capable of mutual enrichment with the other.” (DTC, 42)

The local Church through the BECs must give also special attention to the youth. Young Catholics need good formation both “doctrinally and spiritually, to strengthen their self-identity, and to prepare them for interreligious encounters with their peers in other religions.” (DTC, 76)

Aims of Interreligious Dialogue

Let me repeat the definition of interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue means “all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions.” (DP, 9)

The first aim is to strive to live together harmoniously in peace and human encounter, to have positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths. It starts from our common humanity. “One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God.” (NA, 1)

A second aim could be expressed as mutual understanding and mutual enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. Mutual understanding and mutual enrichment is the intention of our harmonious interacting with our neighbors of different faiths.

The third aim is to collaborate in a friendly open and respectful interreligious manner for integral human development, human dignity, religious freedom, peace, justice, care of creation and promoting the exercise of human rights.

The fourth aim of interreligious dialogue is at a deeper level and more difficult to articulate. It is more than harmoniously living together. It is more than mutual understanding and enrichment. It is more than cooperation for common human needs. It is this deeper level. It is the aim of witnesses bearing their faith witness to each other and the exploration of respective religious convictions. It is a deeper mutual commitment to God.

“It must be remembered that the Church’s commitment to dialogue is not dependent on success in achieving mutual understanding and enrichment; rather it flows from God’s initiative in entering into a dialogue with humankind and from the example of Jesus Christ whose life, death and resurrection gave to that dialogue its ultimate expression.” (DP, 53)

“In this dialogue of salvation, Christians and others are called to collaborate with the Spirit of the Risen Lord who is universally present and active. Interreligious dialogue does not merely aim at mutual understanding and friendly relations. It reaches a much deeper level, that of the spirit, where exchange and sharing consist in a mutual witness to one’s beliefs and a common exploration of one’s respective religious convictions. In dialogue, Christians and others are invited to deepen their religious commitment, to respond with increasing sincerity to God’s personal call and gracious self-gift which, as our faith tells us, always passes through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the work of his Spirit.” (DP, 40)

“The fruit of dialogue is union between people and union of people with God, who is the source and revealer of all truth and whose Spirit guides men in freedom only when they meet one another in all honesty and love. By dialogue we let God be present in our midst; for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God.”⁵

Being Together for Prayer

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has given us pastoral orientations on prayer in our interreligious reality. I will present these so that we can be aware of these directions.

“Often in the context of interreligious relationships, there comes a desire to pray together.... It is important, however, to understand that being able to pray in common requires a shared understanding of who God is. Since religions differ in their understanding of God, ‘interreligious prayer’, meaning the joining together in common prayer by followers of various religions, is to be avoided.” (DTC, 82)

“On very exceptional occasions, people of different religions may come together to pray for particular needs in a ‘multi-religious prayer’ service. Practically speaking, this allows persons to be in each other’s presence while praying, without actually praying in common. Pope John Paul II articulated an important principle regarding this after the first interreligious meeting at Assisi in 1986: ‘Certainly we cannot ‘pray together’, that is, engage in a common prayer, but we can be present while others pray. In this way we manifest our respect for the prayer of others and for the attitude of others before the Divinity; at the same time we offer them the humble and sincere witness of our faith in Christ, Lord of the universe.’ Therefore, such a service should be conducted with certain prudence, and the participants need to be of a human and spiritual maturity. It is worth recalling the concluding moment of that historic meeting in Assisi, where the prayers of the representative of each religion, one after another, in a suitably distinct moment, were recited, while all the others present assisted with a

⁵John Paul II, Address on the Occasion of the Meeting with the Exponents of Non-Christian Religions, Madras, (India), 5 February 1986.

respectful attitude, both interior and exterior, of one who is a witness of the supreme effort of other men and women to seek God. In preparing for occasions of 'multi-religious' prayer, any practice that may give the impression of relativism or syncretism, such as the invention of 'para-liturgical' services and the preparation and use of common prayers acceptable to all religions as well as compiling and reading excerpts from so called 'sacred books' of different religions during public ceremonies are to be avoided. Indeed, preference should be given to silence and personal prayer during such gatherings. Thus, it should be evident to all who participate that these occasions are moments of being 'together for prayer, but not prayer together.' Similarly, when representatives of other religions are invited to attend Catholic liturgies, they should not be invited to pray or exercise a ritual proper to their religion." (DTC, 83)

Conclusion

We have tried to open the door to insights based on our Church teaching to enlighten how our BECs as a way of being Church can live with people of different faiths and beliefs.

This is an essential to the Church, missionary by its very nature. The Church insists that interreligious dialogue is one of the essential elements of her being Church. Since BECs are communities of Catholic faith, they are communities of the Church. They are a way of being Church. As a way of being Church they are responsible for the totality of the Church's evangelizing mission and all elements of that mission, including interreligious dialogue.

God has begun His dialogue of salvation with all humanity. The Holy Spirit is present and active in the lives of all people. All people are touched by the grace that comes from the cross of Christ. This is our theological basis for dialogue.

There is a saying "To be religious is to be interreligious." We can say that to be a Christian community is to be engaged in interreligious dialogue. It must be an essential element of every BEC.



FABC BANDUNG VISION, A FULFILLMENT OF VATICAN II VISION OF A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH



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Introduction

We thank God for Bishop Oswald Hirmer of fond memories and Bishop Fritz Lobinger, who through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, became for us the beacons and trail blazers of ‘the New Way of Being Church’ in Asia. The 5th Plenary Assembly of the FABC at Bandung, Indonesia in 1990 articulated and documented that vision for the whole Church in Asia. Bp. Hirmer walked with us step by step in enabling us to capture that vision and be the protagonists for its realization in our parishes across Asia. Today 25 years later, this paper offers us a chance to look back and evaluate the paths we walked and thank God for enabling us to make SCCs a concrete and powerful way of renewing the Church at the grassroots.

The New Ecclesiology of Vatican II

When St. John XXIII opened the windows of the Church through the Vatican II the Holy Spirit led the bishops of the Church to script a radically renewed ecclesiology which we have in *Lumen Gentium*. It spoke of the Church as “a Sacrament” – “a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all men”¹, a mystery being unfolded in the course of human history². Moving away from the previous understanding of Church as a hierarchy, Chapter II of *Lumen Gentium* went back to the biblical notion of Church as ‘the People of God’³, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims for his own to proclaim his glorious works” (1 Pr. 2:9). We have a very clear description of that understanding of Church their life in the Acts of the Apostles, especially in chapters 2 and 4 where the Apostles and the faithful worked together in close fellowship and partnership to proclaim and witness to the gospel (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). They allowed the Word to transform their lives and lead them. The new Vatican II vision of the Church as “The People of God” evolved into a very clear understanding of the dignity and co-responsibility of the every member of the Church in furthering the mission of the Church which can be realized only with the active and wholehearted involvement of every believer. St. Pope John Paul II elucidated it thus:

¹ LG, 1.

² Ibid, 2

³ Ibid, 9

“The Second Vatican Council confirmed this tradition in its description of the missionary character of the entire People of God and of the apostolate of the laity in particular, emphasizing the specific contribution to missionary activity which they are called to make. The need for all the faithful to share in this responsibility is not merely a matter of making the apostolate more effective, it is a right and duty based on their baptismal dignity, whereby the faithful participate, for their part, in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. Therefore, they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right, whether as individuals or in associations, to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world. This obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ. Furthermore, because of their secular character, they especially are called to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering these in accordance with the will of God.”⁴

The FABC Bandung Vision

The 5th Plenary Assembly of the FABC at Bandung in Indonesia in 1990 gave us a concrete proposal to implement the Vatican II ecclesiology in the Church in Asia. They stated that the future Church in Asia will be a ‘communion of communities where, gathered around the Word, clergy, religious and laity will accept each other as Brothers and Sisters’⁵. In the last 25 years after the FABC 5th Plenary Assembly, we have been able to give concrete shape to this Vatican II vision through the establishment of SCCs in several Asian countries. We see the mystery of Church being unfolded in a new way in a small believing community in a certain neighbourhood, gathered around the Word and reflecting together. It has helped the little faith community to discover the power of being church locally in an authentic way.

St. John Paul II envisioned a “New Evangelization” for the Church today. It was he himself in his IX pastoral trip to Latin America who emphasized even more the meaning of the expression “new evangelization”: grafted on the roots of the announcement brought by the first missionaries and animated by a “renewed apostolic ardour” we can speak of a “new evangelization” if it is: **“new in ardour, new in its methods, new in its expressions”**.⁶

Through SCCs tens of thousands of Catholics who were passive in the past, have become energized and filled with the Spirit to serve the community and witness to the Word. It has given them a very concrete and authentic sense of “Being Church”, which is nothing less than “following-Jesus-in-mission”⁷. Now evangelization happens in their neighbourhood by spirited, may be poor or illiterate, lay people. SCCs are indeed a tool for this new way of evangelizing – new in ardour, new in its method and new in its expressions. One will be amazed about the ways and means they use to evangelize. Already in 1996 the All India Consultation on “New Pentecostalism” stated that

⁴ RM 71

⁵ Final Statement of the FABC Plenary Assembly V, 1990, 8.1.

⁶ THE ACTIVITY OF COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS, Pastoral and Missionary Commission “THE HOLY SPIRIT:

PROTAGONIST OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION” (http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01111997_p-72_en.html).

⁷ Final Statement of the FABC Plenary Assembly V, 1990, 9.1.

“SCCs is a special grace from the Holy Spirit and “have the potential to become channels of God-experience, of encounter with the Word, deep fellowship and of pastoral care”⁸. In the same manner, the Synod Fathers called upon Christian communities to “devise approaches to Christian initiation which, through listening to the Word, celebrating the Eucharist and the communal living of love and fellowship, will lead to a growth in faith”⁹. The Word has a central place in the life of the Church. Dei Verbum states that the Church has always venerated the Word as she has venerated the Eucharist.¹⁰ and that the Sacred Scriptures is a mirror for the pilgrim people to see the face of God¹¹. 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.¹² This is what SCCs do; it invites all the faithful in it to gather around the living Word and allow it touch their lives and manifest an active sense of holiness through loving service of their neighbours. It is an authentic way of being Church which at once transforms both the individual and the community.

“The Holy Spirit sanctifies the people of God through the ministry and the Sacraments. However, for the exercise of the apostolate he gives the faithful special gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), besides “allotting them to each one as He wills” (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11), so that each and all, putting at the service of others the grace received may be “as good as the stewards of God’s varied gifts,” (cf. 1 Pr. 4:10), for the building up of the whole body in charity (cf. Eph. 4:16).”¹³ It is with deep conviction that I say that it is the Holy Spirit who initiated and empowered SCCs to implement the Vatican vision of the Church.

SCCs offer the 21st century Church a great hope

There is no doubt in my mind that SCCs gives the Church in the 21st century a great hope. Dioceses like Mangalore in India testify that SCCs have really provided our faithful a strong bonding that they no more join other sects looking for more meaningful worship or fellowship. Our parishioners encounter the Risen Lord through Gospel Sharing and witness to Him with great joy in their neighbourhood through many activities rooted in faith. If all the parishes in our countries were fully transformed into Communion of Communities and if animation of SCCs become a major pastoral activity of the dioceses and parishes, I have no doubt in my mind that Asia would be evangelized in ways we can never imagine. It is top-to-down evangelization which may be difficult; but we have so many thousands of SCCs engaging in evangelizing their neighbourhoods. I agree with His Grace, Archbishop Abraham Viruthakulangara of Nagpur, India, when he said:

“I am deeply convinced that SCCs is the only way to achieve full faith maturation of a parish community. SCCs, when facilitated well, have the potential to get the whole community to create

⁸ “The Challenge of Neo-Pentecostalism – Final Statement of the All India Consultation”, 1996 at NBCLC Bangalore, in Fr. Thomas Vijay SAC, Sr. Agnes Peter Chawadi, and Mr. Joseph D’souza eds., *The Teachings of Church on SCCs* (Nagpur: PAC Publications, 2nd edition, 2012), no. 28, page 87 ⁹ Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops XIII ordinary general assembly, “The New Evangelization For The Transmission of The Christian Faith”, 2012, 13.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ DV, 21.

¹¹ Ibid, 7.

¹² RM, 42.

¹³ AA, 3.

a sense of belonging and be empowered to be at the service of the community and society. There needs to be no doubt that in the future, the basic structure of the Church will be SCCs. In SCCs people to people conscientization happens and they become responsible for the living out of the faith within their local context of time.”¹⁴

His view is a reflection of the changes which has taken place in the theological understanding of SCCs and the pastoral significance of these communities today.

Our gathering here on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Vatican II and the Silver Jubilee of the FABC Vision of the New Way of Being Church, is of paramount importance in discerning the mind of the Holy Spirit for the Church in Asia and our journey into the future. The completion of that journey can happen only if we give appropriate responses.

Buzz with your neighbour: (report after 4 minutes)

- ◆ What changes have the vision of the New Way of Being Church brought to your parishes?
- ◆ What challenges still remain before you in realizing that vision fully?

Some Suggestions

- a. The bishops of Asia, in consideration of the definite stand FABC and all our Bishops National Conferences have taken to make SCCs a pastoral priority, should give SCCs a prominent place in the organizational set up at national, diocesan and parish levels. Since it is given the status of a pastoral priority, it should get that status in pastoral organizational set up.
- b. We need to think of ways of animating all those people who still hesitate to be part of the SCCs and promote SCCs, and they still make the majority in every segment of the faithful.
- c. Motivate those good priests and sisters out there, who think that SCCs is not their business, to get actively involved in SCCs.
- d. Ensure that transfers do not lead to destruction of SCCs built by the previous priest.
- e. Let the bishop of every diocese stipulate a time when all the parishes in his diocese will be transformed into communion of SCCs and make sure that there is a well-trained team at every level for continued formation.
- f. Provide necessary resources in adequate measure so that the SCC animation work can be sustained without delay or hindrance.

¹⁴ Archbishop Abraham of Nagpur in addressing the Meeting of the Nagpur Archdiocesan SCC team meeting on July 4th 2015

SCCs Make the Merciful God Visible

Pope Francis tells us: “Since we have received mercy in abundance from God, we are obliged to be merciful. “Should not you have mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? (Mk. 18:33)”.¹⁵ “Mercy is the very foundation of Church’s life”.¹⁶ “It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy.”¹⁷

“Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism.”¹⁸

SCCs all over the world have borne witness to the infinite mercy of God. Let me site one example. In St. John the Baptist SCC in the Parish of St. Martin de Pores in Nagpur, a child had leukemia and he needs blood transfusion for the rest of his life. His blood group is A+ which is a very rare group. The SCC tried to find out persons with that blood group without any success. So they went to the blood bank and made an agreement with them to give equivalent amount of blood every month in order to provide the required blood for this child for the rest of his life.

SCCs are the fountain of God’s mercy and the most concrete location and source for making God’s mercy visible. It is however, very important that we help every SCC to become aware of the significance of Holy Father’s call to make God’s mercy visible and encourage and train SCCs to be agents of God’s mercy in the neighbourhood.

Discuss (in buzz groups): What are the ways we can help our SCCs to become agents of God’s mercy? (report after 4 minutes)

SCCs Protect Environment

Pope Francis expresses his deep concern for mother earth: “This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Misericordiae Vultus, 9

¹⁶ Ibid, 10.

¹⁷ Ibid, 12.

¹⁸ Ibid, 15.

¹⁹ Laudato Si, 2.

While by God's providence there is abundance of resources for all, how come that global society, with all its technological and scientific progress, is ridden with gross injustice, human deprivation and unwillingness to hear the call for solidarity with the poor and marginalized? Why do people think that human rights issues can be expended while they take great care to protect their selfishness and greed for huge profits? ²⁰

Holy Father states that "the majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers" and so there is a great need and possibility for "... religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity".²¹

The Church can really use all its educational institutions to conscientize children from a very young age and also offer special formation for adults on environmental responsibility. It can certainly teach "ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity."²²

"All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education."²³ As Holy Father says, ecological conversion is not merely a task of a few interested or motivated individuals; but it is the demand on the whole community and it must be made a responsibility of the whole community.²⁴ Through SCCs we can form the believing community to take care of mother earth within our neighbourhood. This will be a concrete way to respond to the all of our beloved Holy Father.

"An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence "must not be contrived but found, uncovered".[155]"²⁵

The most holy Trinity is a perfect communion of relationships, not just within themselves; it goes beyond to every created persons and reality of this wonderful universe. It then obliges all of us to follow this model of being lovingly connected with all human persons and with the whole of creation. "The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity."²⁶

20 Ibid, 158

21 Ibid, 201

22 Ibid, 211

23 Ibid, 214

24 Ibid, 219

25 Ibid, 225

26 Ibid, 240

In many countries, SCCs are a great source of inspiration for living environmental spirituality in many different ways. They organize and fight against environmental pollution, plant trees, clean surroundings, collect and reuse waste, conduct awareness sessions and similar other environment friendly activities, growing more in communion with the nature.

We have some models from parishes in Bombay archdiocese which try to promote environmental spirituality through SCCs. I invite Mr. Elvin Colaco from Bombay to briefly explain to us how SCCs in Mumbai parishes try to live and promote environment-friendly life.

SCCs Evangelize Families

We all know that families today are attacked from all angles of life, be it economical, spiritual, emotional, opportunities of life, environmental, moral and so on. SCCs can support and strengthen families on an ongoing basis. The national and diocesan level SCC coordination teams can do much to train and motivate SCC leaders to carry Holy Fathers concern for families, for spreading divine mercy and environmental spirituality to many more locations and several avenues. The meeting of the National council for SCCs in India had the following to say about the role of SCCs in evangelizing families.

The second AsIPA General Assembly emphasizes the importance of supporting families to become missionary which in turn will strengthen SCCs. It stated: “The Vatican II reminded us that the family is the domestic church. The SCCs start revitalizing this basic cell so that as branches deeply incorporated in the vine, they may bear much fruit. The SCCs provide the way to carry on the mission of Christ not only in the Church but also in families, in the society and in the world at large.”²⁷

The children attending weekly meeting of the SCCs in St. Peter’s parish Sampran, Bangkok, Thailand, join in the 7 steps Gospel Sharing and their sharing shows that the Word has touched their hearts and moved them to serve other children in their neighbourhood or in their school and the expressions on the faces of the elders sitting there reveal that they too are moved by what their own children say – a very clear sign of how the Holy Spirit continues to evangelize families in an SCC context. The same is the experience of the children’s monthly Gospel Sharing group in Parvati Nagar, Ajni parish, Nagpur, India, years ago when a Sister used to organize it for them. The same children also attend the common SCC meeting of the area and the parents were amazed and moved to see how children come to understand faith and loving service so easily. Pope John Paul II acknowledges that SCC gatherings can assist families to overcome anonymity, renew and catechize themselves and its individual members experience more person-centred evangelization.²⁸ “The family, which is the cornerstone of faith life and witness, is deeply affected by the trends of the secular world and stands in immediate need of re-evangelization. Again, SCCs have much to offer in this context. Honest sharing in a small community should, in fact, enhance family members in their ability to share faith

²⁷ 2nd AsIPA General Assembly, Baan Phu Waan Bangkok, 2000, statement no. 2.4, in Church Teaching on SCCs , 37.

²⁸ Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, 1999, 41.

within their homes. Family members who share honestly and support other family members will find it natural to do the same in their small community. There is a great richness in the relationship between small communities and the family when people reflect on and share their journeys and thus come to recognize the sacred in the ordinary events of life.”²⁹

Discuss in Buzz groups (5 minutes)

Discuss ways SCCs can evangelize families in your country.

Conclusion

Looking back to the 25 years of promoting the FABC Bandung vision of the New Way of Being Church in Asia, we can see that SCCs have become a powerful instrument of God for evangelization and there can be no doubt that these communities have huge potential to renew the Church and transform the world. It is a challenge to us SCC animators to provide right leadership and guidance to strengthen SCCs to be such an instrument of God in the Church in the world. Let pray and do our role effectively.



²⁹ Thomas A. Kleissler, Margo A. LeBert, Mary C. McGuinness, *Small Christian Communities, A Vision of Hope* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 211.



GROUP DISCUSSION



GUIDE FOR COUNTRY GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How have SCCs been a “starting point”; “seed-bed”; “launching pad” and nurturer of the laity and the whole Church for Communion and Mission?
2. What have been some of the fruits of the SCCs in relation to laity and their participation in the Mission of Jesus and their growth in the Word?
3. What have been some of the pains – the challenges, major obstacles to developing and sustaining SCCs which can activate laity in the mission of Christ and the Church?
4. In relation to the theme of the VII AsIPA General Assembly, can you provide a few stories of inter-faith dialogue that take place in SCCs and among their neighbours? (Inter-faith dialogue here is referring to the everyday dialogue of life as well as the intentional dialogue on faith and beliefs between people of different faiths. Inter-faith Dialogue at the official level or academic levels is not included here.)

Country groups - discuss Part Two of the report Qs 1,2,3&4 and choose who will report in the plenary

As country groups, you can start to reflect on ideas and plans for their own diocese or country (handout planning guideline will be given)

Reporting by country groups in plenum, will be 10 minutes for each and will be made by regions (eg. South Asian countries will report one after the other and the same process for East Asia and South East Asia).

Countries represented by one participant (Germany, Cambodia, Vietnam, China and SECAM) will be given time when the countries with full delegation finish.



COUNTRY GROUP REPORTS

Bangladesh

1. How have SCCs been a “starting point”; “seed-bed”; “launching pad” and nurturer of the laity and the whole Church for Communion and Mission?

SCCs are gradually emerging lay leadership in the communities, parishes and dioceses. Through SCCs laities are deeply understanding and coping with steward leadership. In Bangladesh, traditional leadership system is autocratic. SCCs are playing a vital role here to promote steward leadership. The leadership dimension in SCCs is being adopted by many of our church bodies, movements, societies and organizations.

Many of the Parish Pastoral Councils are restructured and formed with direct delegation of SCCs. So the SCCs became the source and basic of parish life and leadership.

Members in SCCs are doing apostolic works like preparing candidates for sacraments, preparing liturgy for Sunday and Feast-day Masses, assisting the Priests in pastoral works when required.

SCCs are doing charity works by supporting for education of the poor children and youth, providing financial assistance to the people in need, visiting and prayer over the sick, etc. SCCs are rendering these services within the Christian communities and towards the people of other faiths too.

SCCs are living together Christ centered in love and unity. People of other faiths always praise the practicing love and unity observed in the neighborhoods which is a great way for evangelization.

2. What have been some of the fruits of the SCCs in relation to laity and their participation in the Mission of Jesus and their growth in the Word?

There are many people nowadays to assist in pastoral and evangelical works of the parish. They are now realizing that carrying out the mission of the church is not only the job of the Priests and religious persons, but it is their baptismal responsibility to participate in the same.

People were used to depend on financial assistance of missionary priests and religious in early days of the Church. But we are observing a drastically change in the situation. People are now becoming financially capable and more and more open to contribute financially towards the church.

Word of God is becoming the basic of all the church activities. People are aware to hear what God speaks to them in any particular activity or problem.

Sense of belongingness is developed in last few decades. People are now more aware that the Church is of their own, not only of Bishops, Priests and Religious. So nurturing SCCs is their own responsibility.

3. What have been some of the pains- the challenges, more obstacles to developing and sustaining SCCs which can activate laity in the mission of Christ and the Church?

Dependency on priests for promoting and nurturing SCCs.

Financial struggles of the people.

High illiteracy rate, for which many feel shy and afraid to join in GS in tribal and village areas.

Lack of male participation in GS. Though they are very active while being nominated for social and church leadership.

Hardship to integrate AsIPA with the local social structures in some places especially in Hill Tracts areas.

Hard to motivate to restructure the parish councils in which SCCs will be delegated.

Few Bishops and many priests are not convinced yet.

Frequent change of priests. Interest for AsIPA varies from priest to priest.

AsIPA is one of the pastoral priorities in Bangladesh. But still few Dioceses are not undertaking.

India

1. How has the SCC's been the starting point for lay participation?

SCC's have been the starting point, the seed-bed of the laity and the whole church for Communion and Mission. The laity have a good understanding of SCC's as a basic unit of the Church and growing sense of equality and common dignity among them. A great number of formation programs at various levels are going on to empower the laity in almost all the dioceses. The following could be said is the impact.

1. People have experienced a deepening of the faith through the SCC's.
2. Evangelizing through Gospel Sharing for people through the communities.
3. Decision making and participation go hand in hand. People have been encouraged to be more involved in their parishes.
4. People from different classes, backgrounds, cultures come together on a common platform.
5. There is a space for creativity through culture.



6. Every activity of the parish is organized through the SCC's.
7. Women have come to the fore because of the SCC's.
8. Family problems are solved through the follow-up done through SCC's.
9. SCC's have broken down barriers between priests and people as priests and even bishops now sit together for SCC meetings.
10. Christian lifestyle has changed because of SCC's. Before people would not know others, but SCC's have brought about a bonding through meetings. From Isolation to togetherness.

2. **What have been the fruits of the SCC's.**

SCC's have made a strong and great impact on the life of the faithful. The first impact is the deepening of faith among the people. The spirit of service has increased. The mindset of priests has changed. From persons of authority who kept their distance, they now think of themselves as facilitators. SCC units are growing and more and more dioceses are promoting it. The gap between the rich and poor is being bridged because with awareness, the rich are helping the poor. Training programs and experience in outreach through SCC's have helped our people to become more confident and become good leaders. The SCC National Conference in Goa saw more than 8000 people take part and this was possible because of people's involvement and generous contributions.

3. **The challenges before the SCC's**

1. There is a lack of support from clergy and religious to the lay persons for the SCC's.
2. Transfer of priests can affect the functioning of SCC's. the new priest may not be as involved.
3. No On-going formation for the people which makes specialists difficult. Many people know a little but a need for all to know much more.
4. Many people complain about lack of time because of busy work schedules.
5. We have not made much headway in youth ministry
6. Laity not recognized or acknowledged for the work they do.
7. Lack of commitment from the laity
8. Domination and power struggle from some people.
9. Problem of illiteracy, poverty holding people back.
10. Traditional people find it difficult to change and accept this new way of being church.

Indonesia

1. Asipa Moduls have been used in SCCs, and people learned a lot, for example about the Gospel Sharing and SCCs. They learned about communion, about the Church Mission. From this point we try to arrange another moduls, due to the Diocese vision and mission, for examples the modul for leadership, modul for social action, modul for education, modul for family apostolate, modul for enviroment etc. By doing this, we empowered the laity to participate in the Church Mission.

2. The fruits of the SCCs are : the use of Gospel text is now growing up among the member of SCCs. The participation on Liturgy role, on political issues, vocation, economic issues, social action, participation of the Religious Congregation also growing up.
3. We see the support and the role of clergy is still less, due to the demand of SCCs life that demand the clergy to sacrifice a lot, for example the priest has to prepare his time to be together with the people in SCCs. Clergy have to change their life style, due to their timetable and personal agenda. Another pain is related to the way of thinking of the people, there is difference between the urban people and the people who are staying in the villages. SCCs are better developed in villages and periphery, among the simple people, not in the cities.
4. In relation to the Interfaith dialogue we find that SCCs contribute a lot to a better relationship among Catholics and other faith. Visit each other is now better. Catholic community started Credit Union, and another people from another religion joined and they are feeling helpful with the program. Catholic Community is minority in Indonesia, among the very big population of Islam, so the Interfaith dialogue is still a struggle and big work.

Japan

1. As a “Seed bed”, the SCCs were introduced to Japan in the year 1997. That was 18 years ago. There was a lot of enthusiasm to introduce SCCs in the Archdiocese of Nagasaki. The Archbishop of Nagasaki called the Korean Bishops to introduce briefly about SCCs for the diocesan priests. In the beginning, the 7 Steps Gospel Sharing was practiced in religious communities, convents and formation centers. Later on it was introduced at the parish level, but it never succeeded. For example, in one parish when the priest introduced the 7 Steps of Gospel Sharing, some came voluntarily, some by force and others just ignored. The main problem is the transfer of priest. When the priest was transferred, people did not continue the GS.
2. Regarding the fruits, the GS has not been stopped yet. It has been practiced in the Bible groups and other small groups, and it has brought about a significant impact on the laity, especially for spontaneous prayers as well as leading the group sharing. In order to get more impact on SCCs we translated “OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER” in Japanese and published “SCCs INTRODUCTORY GUIDE BOOK”. We hope that these books would help us to carry on the GS at the parish as well as SCCs in neighborhood.
3. Challenges:
 There is a lack of cooperation and understanding among the clergy.
 Priests are satisfied with the catechesis, homily and bible classes.
 Most of the laity is not aware of SCCs.
 The people are closed-minded.

Korea

It's been 25 years to start SCCs in Korea.

There are many fruits of SCCs, such as the lay people are getting close to the word of God, and now many people are really good at gospel sharing, not only in SCCs but also in other apostolic communities and devotion groups. SCCs spreaded it out. So at the moment, most people in Catholic church in Korea are getting familiar with the name of SCCs and they are aware of the meaning of SCCs. They are conscious about the collaboration of the lay, religious and clergy. Moreover, these days SCCs based on the family are emerging. In this kind of SCCs, parents and children have an opportunity to communicate each other deeply in front of the Word. It's a really good way to build a solid family and to solve a problem within family.

However, there are some obstacles too. We started SCCs from the competence as a pastoral strategy of the diocese. Therefore clericalism is still working inside. We know it's a way of being church, but the context and environment of the church haven't changed that much. That makes the vision of SCCs soffocated. The laity still depend on the clergy. Even a member of successful SCCs often ask a priest, "What can I do? Just tell me what to do."

It's very difficult to promote the autonomy of the laity. And we need different leadership of the lay, too. The leader of SCCs often imitate the behavior of Clergy which is very dominant. To overcome this, these days the pastoral institute of the CBCK is trying to settle down the training course which is focusing on the parish. To join this course, participants have to enroll as a parish team. In this course from the beginning to the end, the laity, religious and the priest of the parish are sit at the same table, and discuss about their parish. Through this process they share their vision and make a strategy together. Participants really enjoyed this course, and obtained meaningful fruits after that. We think that for the participatory church, it has to be started from a first step of training or education. The lay people don't have to be educated by priests, but trained together. It will be a very good experiences.

In addition, SCCs in Korea are represented by particular bishops and priests. We need to broaden it to other people and invite them to join us as core members.

We are still on the way to build SCCs in Korea. So pray for us.

Malaysia

1. BECs as nurturer of the laity

Through BECs, we have seen a lot of laity who used to be just Sunday Mass goers, getting more involved in church activities and serving in various ministries.

The churches in Peninsular Malaysia, which comprises of three dioceses, has been holding pastoral convention, namely the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC) every ten years, with the first PMPC held in 1986. (Note: the PMPC IV will be held in 2016). One of the primary focus of PMPC is always about the formation of the laity and how the laity through the BECs can be a witness of Christ in the community.

Every year, based on the pastoral theme set by the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Team (PMPT), BEC reflection paper is prepared and distributed to all BECs for them to share in their monthly gathering. This is one way where the laity are being kept abreast and live out the pastoral direction set by the church.

2. The fruits of BECs

- BECs have created greater sense of belonging of the laity to the church and to the Catholic community.
- The laity get to know the Catholics staying in the same neighbourhood.
- BEC members care for each other especially in times of need, including visiting the sick members at home or in the hospital.
- BECs member serve in the liturgy during mass in church.
- BEC pray the rosary from home to home in the month of October.
- BEC carried out outreach program, such as visiting the old folk home and the orphanage.

3. The Challenges

- Due to lack of commitment, BEC members are not willing to take up the leadership role. This has resulted in some BECs became inactive or not functioning.
- A lot of members are not attending BECs monthly gathering. As the monthly BEC gathering is usually held on a weekday (e.g. every second Wednesday of the month), some members couldn't make it due to the need to stay back late in the office.
- Not the entire family is active in BEC, usually only one person from each family will attend BEC gathering and these are mostly elderly person or women.

4. Inter-faith Dialogue

- Generally, BECs interact with people of other religion staying in the same neighbourhood during the open house at feast day such as Chinese New Year, Hari Raya, Deepavali, etc. During Christmas season, some BEC members will invite neighbour of other religion to join the Christmas carolling and party.
- Some BEC members will also pray for the sick people of other religion during hospital visit. Initially, these sick people were not keen to talk to the BEC members. But after explaining to them the purpose of their visit, these people began to have conversation

with the BEC members, and most of them would express that they felt lonely and deserted as their family members have not been visiting them for a long time. After the conversation, the BEC members offered to pray for them and they had accepted it delightfully. There were a few Muslims among the sick people visited.

Philippines

- 1. SCC is a starting point, seed bed, launching pad and nurturer of the laity for:**
 - It provides the opportunity for the laity to practice their baptismal commitment;
 - The SCC leads to re-define the role of ordained minister as enabler, animator and facilitator in the nurturance of the laity's participation in the renewal of the Church;
 - SCC builds up the laity and nurtures them to be part of the Church's mission in evangelizing the faithful;
 - The laity learns to be assertive in their role as members of the Church.
- 2. FRUITS of the SCCs:**
 - Laity are open for dialogue with the clergy in expressing their needs;
 - Laity are getting more involved in the Church mission;
 - Laity realized their dignity as baptized and therefore are becoming co-responsible and participative workers with the ordained ministers; and
 - Laity have realized that they are not mere followers of the ordained ministers but have the equal rights and responsibilities in building God's Kingdom.
- 3. PAINS/CHALLENGES to DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING SCCs**
 - Lack of support of ordained ministers to SCC building and strengthening;
 - Some of the lay movements and mandated organizations are not yet open to the forming of SCCs as an expression of a Renewing Church;
 - Many of the clergy resist to form SCCs/BECs in their respective parishes possibly out of ignorance and lack of exposure;
 - Many of the laity are not open to the new challenges for the renewal of the Church. They feel comfortable with the old traditional way of being Church

Sri Lanka

- 1.** The VI GA in Sri Lanka had become a source of Revival in the SCCs. Similarly the celebration of 20 years of the existence of SCC in Sri Lanka too has become a 'launching pad' to nurture the Laity Lay people who have been trained as animators and facilitators of SCCs have understood clearly the vision and mission of the Church. Some lay leaders have grown up to the extent of challenging the priests constructively.

2. The Fruits

- Improvement of the caste system and rich- poor disparity
- Deeper urge and thirst for the Word of God has improved with the different Bible sharing methods used in SCCs

3. Pains and struggles

- Internal migration due to the war -People who have been uprooted and relocated have no roots in that place
- External migration- people moving out of Sri Lanka for greener pastures
- Leaders and animators leaving the homeland for better prospects
- Loss of leadership and continuity
- Not all the bishops and Dioceses are at the same level. Statements have been made but not made as a Pastoral priority. If a good number of priests and Bishops are convinced and become active contributors, the SCCs would thrive.
- Urban areas, Mass Media, tuitions etc use up much part of the day and time and hence to time for SCC
- In villages, the seasonal farming and employments do not permit any extra activities like SCC gathering.

Thailand

1. How have BECs been a Starting points:

- Making awareness of how BECs. is effective to Christian life, pastoral works of pastors by using AsIPA texts.
- Keep on promoting BECs at all levels, to target group, especially to the priests, nuns, catechists and parish councils unceasingly
- More than that, try to build devoted BECs leaders who, in the future, will become a models and catalysts for the members in rendering service.
- Encouraging the communities to be the center on God's words, to be enriched by the local cultural values.

2. The fruits: what have been some of the fruit of the SCCs in relation to laity and their participation in the mission of Jesus....

A. First of all before we will share about the fruit of BECs / SCCs

"BECs can not bear fruits fully if we can not open ourselves to the province of God.

A. If we try to do so (in the first question)

The fruit of BECs/SCCs.are.....

- Become the bridge between the communities and pastor
- they (target group) will become the witness of God's love in their daily life to the people around them.
- By living the word of God, they edify each other, even to the none-believers, not only by words but action as well.



- By using the AsIPA texts, they enable to develop their relation with God deeper and deeper through the Word and Eucharist.

3. Pains and Challenges:

Problems:

- Not just listening but do nothing of promoting BECs...
- Globalization, individualism, consumerism: Self-centeredness, many excuse, murmuring,
- Some of pastors and nuns show themselves as the experts on BECs process, but do nothing.
- Most parishes do not involve in BECs because every thing depend on the priests.
- Not easy to get the young and the school involved in BECs.
- Animators, facilitators are not quite confident in their role of sustaining BECs.
- Not sufficient priests, religious and lay leaders in working for BECs.

The challenges:

- Convincing the pastors and to all who may concern
- integrating BECs spirit in other Catholic organizations.
- Take time and be patience, not to be in a hurry to establish BECs.
- Need to create network at all levels.

Vietnam

Two delegates of Vietnam participated in the AsIPA General Assembly for the first time: Fr. Peter Do Duy Khanh, assistant priest of the Cathedral of archdiocese of Saigon, and Fr. Louis Nguyen Anh Tuan, secretary of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam.

The situation of the Church in Vietnam

In 1954, during the war with French colonial, millions of people fled to the southern part of Vietnam among whom were Catholics who sought to run away from Communism to keep their faith alive. The faith grew in number in the southern, meanwhile the Church in the northern just existed and lived in silence. In the 1975 eventually the communist won in the civil war and unified the country. There were more than 1 million people who fled for asylum to evade the new regime. The Church in Vietnam has been gathered in some ways, and above all the first Bishops' Conference of the whole nation in 1980 was established. The religious freedom was initially very limited under the new atheist regime. But it has been changed progressively year after year. That was the reason why the Church in Vietnam hardly had contacts with other sister Church in the world, particularly in Asia. Bishops could hardly go to FABC meetings for nearly 20 years.

Now Vietnam has more or less 90 million inhabitants with more than 6 million Catholics, that is nearly 7% of population. There are 26 dioceses in which 3 are archdioceses (Hanoi, Hue, Saigon or Hochiminh city). Besides Hanoi, Saigon is the most important city of Vietnam in relation to economic, cultural, political and religious aspects. Two delegates to the AsIPA GA VII are diocesan priests

coming from Saigon. In all Vietnam, there are 8 seminaries with numerous young vocations. In the archdiocese of Saigon at present there are more than 100 communities of religious congregations. The faith in Vietnamese families has grown during the hardship of the war onwards.

SCCs/BECs as a way to evangelize

There is no SCC in Vietnam if we consider it in a strict way of AsIPA. Nevertheless, there are small Christian communities in all parishes. Dioceses in the sense of Catholic tradition are still alive and very effective in evangelization. There are many strong small communities in the form of Catholic Action associations/movements, such as Region of Mary, Groups of devotion to the Sacred Heart, Groups of Catholic Moms, Movement of The Eucharistic Kids, Focolare Movement, Couples for Christ, Kolping Family, Family of the Lord, Emmanuel Communities, etc.

The Holy Spirit acts freely through all these communities, both traditional and new ones. I would like to share with you two stories to affirm the fact.

- Several years ago, the old ladies in one group of Region of Mary in the parish of Fr. Peter Khanh, who is here now, often came to visit and care for the old Buddhist monk in the neighboring Pagoda who suffered grave illness. He was touched by the goodness and kindness of the Catholic ladies. At the time of terminal sickness the monk asked to be baptized to convert to Catholicism.
- The witness of Catholic family of the wife of one communist party member finally attracted him to the Catholic faith. I visited him monthly to share the Word of God together with the small community of his wife's sisters and others in the family.

Conclusion:

Small Christian Communities, either traditional or modern ones, are a way to evangelize effectively. I find that the AsIPA methods are very helpful and fruitful to the New Evangelization of our communities, families, the cells of Ecclesial community and of the Church. How to implement AsIPA in both the traditional and new communities building? That is my question.

Myanmar

Social-Political Changes and the Involvement of the Church

The biggest number of actors in the civil society of Myanmar (still) has a religious background. Religious background means primarily NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which originate in the Buddhist Sangha, the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC), the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM). Their contribution first of all in the field of education and capacity building – is fundamental for the development of a society where participation of all social and ethnic groups is the base for justice and peace.

Our Catholic Church in Myanmar is a small minority, literally the Biblical “small flock”, but promising in her education and Karuna Social Services which aim at the benefit of the whole society.

Through these tasks the Church enters the sphere of civil society as one actor among a plurality of others.

The Church in Myanmar aims at bridge-building in the midst of a plurality of cultural, ethnic and religious traditions which will further diversify if a nation opens its doors to the worldwide civil society and gets closer links with international networks. Such a “service of unity” may present a promising challenge for the “small flock” of Myanmar’s Catholic Church.

To face such challenge, the Church in Myanmar needs well educated, competent and experienced lay leaders and therefore it is necessary to organize formation programme for the capacity-building of the lay people for the specific tasks of dialogue with people of other faiths and beliefs including mediation in conflictive situations. In Myanmar context, it is mainly the task of lay people to move and to be engaged in civil society organizations through SCCs.

Regarding the role of the Church in Myanmar in the current transformations, under the guidance of the principle of subsidiarity, one of the pillars of our Catholic Social Teaching, “freedom and room for action” for Church actors, primarily lay people, is needed to undertake tasks, works and projects on their own initiative and according to their own competence. An effective participation in a developing civil society also needs the creation or extension of professional structures and of course an investment in capacity-building in order to better serve the people.

The concrete step taken by the local Church in response to the afore mentioned challenges is introducing of AsIPA in the life and mission of the local Church in Myanmar.

1) In 1996, AsIPA course was conducted in Yangon for the first time. Despite an attempt to implement AsIPA programme throughout the whole country, it was discontinued due to various reasons.

The interest in AsIPA revived in early 2013. In 2015, National AsIPA Workshop was successfully conducted at the complex of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) in Yangon. It was facilitated by Ms. Bibiana, Ms. Cora and Fr. Albert. It was followed by AsIPA workshops at diocesan levels in several other dioceses.

2) Following the workshops, we could draft some action plans in the followings:

- 1) To renew the Church in Myanmar through the new way of being Church;
- 2) To train lay leaders;
- 3) To sustain the Church in Myanmar by promoting Basic Ecclesial Communities/Small Christian Communities (BECs/SCCs) at Archdiocesan/Diocesan level;
- 4) To set up National as well as Archdiocesan/Diocesan BECs/SCCs Team. For the realization of the afore mentioned action plans, National AsIPA Team, with the following tasks, has been established:

- 5) Coordination among Archdiocesan/Diocesan BECs/SCCs Teams;
- 6) Exchange of news and information sharing;
- 7) Translating English AsIPA texts into Burmese as well as producing own AsIPA materials with adaptation to Myanmar context for advanced BEC/SCCs trainings;
- 8) To draft national work plans with the representatives of the Archdiocesan/Diocesan BECs/SCCs Teams.

Here are a few challenges in implementing AsIPA:

- 1) Ongoing formation for the lay leaders is lacking. After having conducted the training/workshops, the follow-up mechanism is missing.
- 2) AsIPA text in vernacular languages is far from being realized.
- 3) Some bishops and some priests are not showing interest in training the lay faithful in SCC.
- 4) The traditional structure of the Church, top-down approach, is still in place in some of the dioceses in Myanmar with very little room for the laity to participate in the mission of the Local Church.

Please pray for the people of our country that is ready to vote for a new government on November 8, 2015. Thank you for your attention.



DISCUSSION ON SCCs/BECs Living with people of Different Faiths and Beliefs

Guide for country grouping discussion

- a. How SCCs/BECs understand living with people of different faiths and beliefs.
- b. What is SCCs/BECs understanding of Interreligious dialogue.
- c. What have been some difficulties and challenges
- d. What have SCCs/BECs done to establish positive relations with neighbours of other faiths?

Group discussion reports

Indian Group

- a. How BECs understand living with people of different faiths and beliefs.
 - Most powerful way if do extend our SCCS with people of other faiths.
 - It is being practised but not spoken, it is lived in their own way but theoretically not told.
 - Culture binds people (Hindus, Christians) together automatically. No problem to relate to people of other faiths.
 - Dialogue of faith is being practiced.
 - We need to make more effort to mingle with people of other faiths.
 - BCC has to play a major role.
- b. BECs understand IRD
 - SCCs has not yet looked at Inter Religious Dialogue and not focused on that.
 - SCCs first and foremost need to understand its own group and faith; we need to deepen ourselves first well only then we can go to people of other faiths. People may lose our faith if our faith is not strengthened. When someone speaks eloquently people of our faith may be attracted and may leave our own faith.
- c. Difficulties and challenges
 - We need to have a smooth transition from SCCs to Basic Human communities.
 - We also need to have a proper understanding on the spirituality of the SCCs.
 - When we have superiority feeling and go for dialogue it will betray us.
 - If we do not know of Hindus and Muslims we will not enter into an interreligious dialogue with proper motivation and the spirit of it.
 - There is no openness from people, whose need is it? Is it people's or of the priests and leaders. People are not ready to come out.
 - New Christians will get confused if have inter religious dialogue,
 - There must be proper catechesis and training before starting inter religious training.
 - We have to move from religiosity to spirituality.
 - We are not convinced whether the rich experience will help us.

d. What have SCCs done for positive relations.

- In other areas like Tamil Nadu people come to SCCs and later the people of other faiths come for prayers. This is specially seen in the month of April when the children have exams, the children of other faiths along with our own catholic students come for prayer and are happy with it. This removes the fear of the exam and get success in exam.
eg. Kunti diocese and Dumka dioceses have conscientization program.
eg Kottar diocese have a lot of SCCs which have become Small Human communities.
Besides there are a lot of students parliaments or Children Neighbourhood Parliaments.
- When there are issues like social issues, dignity of women, girl child the people of all faiths come together for rallies and these rallies are organized by Muslims and Hindus.

Group of Korea-Japan-Taiwan-Vietnam

a. BECs Understanding of Living with people of different faiths and beliefs:

- To live in peace, in presence with other people neighbouring in sorrow and happiness, in commitment to social and human development.

b. BECs Understanding of Interreligious dialogue:

- Acknowledge that other religions are good, contains potential seeds of truth, of wisdom. Respect other people beliefs, faiths, and have friendship.
- Reciprocal communication, closeness, and respect.
- Positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment. Trying to know in depth other religious convictions.

c. Difficulties and challenges:

- Mentalities of triumphalism: considering one's own faith and religion the best humbling other faiths, religions.
- Anti-witnesses, or weakness of faith, lack of conviction in Catholic faith in Jesus Christ, in His Church.

d. What our BECs have done to establish our positive relations with neighbours of other faith?

- Interreligious in action: attracting other people through activities of social charity, for example, BECs going visit the poor, marginalized, abandoned people, and inviting them to attending to these acts, and then inviting them to BECs' meetings when opportune occasion comes. In events such as funerals, people of other faiths could find the beauty of the communion acting out among Catholics and would be attracted to our faith. Catholic should be allowed to go to temples, pagodas, to express their communion love with friends, neighbours, relatives in different faiths. In occasion such as feast of village, town, to memorize, honour any of their heroes or divinities, Catholics respecting and expressing fraternity of humankind can come to participate to some extent.

GROUP of Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia

- a. BECs UNDERSTAND LIVING WITH OTHER FAITHS AND BELIEFS through:
 - Awareness of Inter-religious Dialogue
 - Mutual Relationship and Respect – e.g. Marriages of people of different faiths and beliefs
 - More welcoming and tolerant to their religious practices

- b. BECs UNDERSTAND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE:
 - Know the importance of IRD
 - IRD is expressed in celebrations –e.g. Ramadan
 - IRD is done in the diocesan, parish and BECs
 - IRD is experienced in an indirect way through Credit union among poor Christians and Muslims

- c. BEC DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES
 - Existence of Fundamentalist Muslims
 - Negative perception of the Muslims
 - Many Christians are not interested of IRD
 - Government policy on religious activities

- d. BECs ESTABLISH POSITIVE RELATION WITH OTHER FAITHS through:
 - Credit union among Christian and Muslims
 - Christmas and Festival Celebrations
 - Ramadan and Edil'feter
 - Sports and Socio-Cultural activities

Indonesia

In Indonesia now we have some organizations, even are established by the government, to live and to practise the interreligious dialogue, and to develop the atmosphere of tolerance among the religions in Indonesia. The government understands very much about the importance of good tolerance among religions in Indonesia, because in fact there are more than one religion in Indonesia acknowledged by the government. The most popular organization for inter-religious dialogue is what we call FKUB (Forum Komunikasi antar Umat Beragama). FKUB is under the Departement of Religion, and it present in the level of the president office, in the province level and in the lower level. FKUB is established by the government by a special rule, under the Departement of Religion, and consist of the representatives of all religions which have been aknowledged by the government. FKUB has some programm and agenda, for examples visiting the holy place or building of all religions. It also has to help any religion who is going to build new building like Churches, Temples, etc. FKUB also can arrange what we call silaturahmi, a kind of gathering together with all member from all religions,

for examples regarding Idulfitri, Christmas or any fiesta. FKUB also has responsibility to promote good relationship among the religions, and if there is any conflict then FKUB has to help to stop the conflict. It is interesting that the government under the Departement of Religion, prepare a budget, to support the agenda of FKUB. We are feeling helpful with the role of FKUB, although there are some unsuccessful agenda. The Catholic representative for FKUB are priest and some laity. They are doing their best to promote the Church Mission on the Inter-religious Dialogue within the FKUB. Some of the laity who are elected to join FKUB come from SCCs.

Thailand

- a) BECs living in the same community with people of Different Faiths and Beliefs, they know each other, work together, and participate in wedding and funeral. BEC Home visiting reach out to non-catholic family as well.
- b) Understanding IRD as academic or documents of the church is still very rare for BECs, but they integrate dialogue of life in their ordinary living in family, school, parish and neighbors. More and more IRD activities are organized in diocesan and parish level.
- c) Our challenges: differentiate between Thai culture and religions is not clearly be understood, more information is needed.
- d) There are many positive outcomes as we do gospel sharing. Some friends of other religion join us. We share, visit, care and help those in need without discrimination. We work together in Parish feast day, Christmas and cultural celebration in the local community.



NEW ASIPA

MODULES



1. Spiritual life

Becoming convinced and committed Christians. Developing personal, private prayer life. Motivation to serve and faith. Moving from culture and Christian faith.

2. Attitudes, values, awareness

Awareness of social responsibility. Awareness of community relations. Making community the priority. Making sharing with other leaders and with the community a priority. Service-attitude instead of power attitude.

3. Skills

How to animate a group and a large community. How to invite and influence others. How to lead ritual Celebrations. How to conduct meetings. How to solve conflicts. How to communicate.

4. Information, knowledge, insight

Theological knowledge and insight. General knowledge, e.g. about social about economy, about media.

INTRODUCTION TO ASIIPA NEW MODULES

Aims and Methods of AsIPA Series Introducing new 'Community Training Series' (E) AND 'Formation and Training of Leaders series' (F)



Fr. T. L. Rohan Dominic, CMF
AsIPA Resource Team Member

In this morning session, we would like to introduce to you one of the new AsIPA series the ART has prepared. Introducing new modules of AsIPA Texts is one of the aims of the AsIPA General Assemblies. As informed earlier by Bibiana and others, we have produced 15 new AsIPA texts and we are introducing them one by one during this General Assembly. Yesterday, we have gone through a module in E series (Be what you Preach) which is from the Community Training Series.

The new Texts are:

- 4 texts on IRD in B series
- 6 texts on New E series
- 5 texts on New F series

Since 1993 AsIPA texts have been in use in several countries. They were also translated into many languages.

They are categorized under 4 titles

- A – Gospel Sharing
- B – Small Christian Communities
- C – Participatory Church
- D – Training for Pastoral Leaders

In this General Assembly two new titles E and F are introduced.

The AsIPA texts have helped many dioceses and parishes to move towards a life of participation and communion. Thus these materials have become signs and instruments for the renewal in the Church.

But, the underlying vision of the texts, as well as the principles involved and the methods used have not been published. They were communicated in all the workshops through words and performances. Some participants of the workshops were able to gather the methodology while participating in the AsIPA workshops.

However, we know that oral communication and non-verbal communication will not reach everyone. Even if it is communicated well, the whole idea won't reach all who hear it.

Experience has shown that some of the animators, who after attending the workshops even more than once on AsIPA, still conduct the sessions as teaching sessions. It shows that all the participants were unable to catch the methodology properly, while participating the workshop/training.

Hence, the ART was contemplating to respond to this issue by producing a series on the aims and methodology of AsIPA Texts by adapting the Lumko 10 on "Towards Non dominating Leadership". The result is the new 'F' series of AsIPA Texts.

This publication of "F" series is on the other hand intended for the pastoral workers (Priest , Religious and Lay) who want to reflect on their efforts of community building and of training of emergent leaders. It is also intended for those who have the task of coordinating these efforts in the dioceses and centers.

These are practical texts They are very simple and intended to avoid long theoretical considerations. These texts aim to assist the leaders, trainers and pastoral workers a practical change, which is based on a Christian vision

We are not presenting here a complete vision or a completely proven method of achieving it. However, what is presented in the texts are not an unreal dream too, but it is the reflection of several years of practical work done in the dioceses and parishes towards the vision of a Participatory Church. Much of it in the texts are already a reality, although much more has still to prove its worth.

Lumko Institute in South Africa has produced many training materials for the leaders. 'Lumko 10' of the Training for Community Ministries series, "Towards Non-Dominating Leadership" is one among them. It has following 5 parts with several sub-headings under each part.

1. The vision of a Community-orientated ministry
2. The main Principles of Training Emergent Leaders
3. The methods of Training
4. Introducing pastoral workers to Training methods
5. Sharing responsibility

From them we have designed 5 sessions in the form of AsIPA booklets as trial texts. These trial texts are meant to try in our parishes and communities. And those who try these texts are expected to send their feedback to the AsIPA Desk to improve the texts.

One will be taken now in groups - AsIPA F 2 : Training Emergent Leaders: It requires a different method involving Adult Education Principles.

AsIPA F/2

Training emergent leaders: It requires a different method involving adult education principles.

A. METHOD OF TRAINING ADULTS

INTRODUCTION

In several countries in Asia we have the SCCs functioning for some years now. As a result, along with the existing members of the associations we have many new leaders who have come forward to render their service. We have in almost all the parishes the parish pastoral councils too. The type of training imparted to the fulltime pastoral workers like priests and religious sisters is known to us. It is in the seminary or other formation centres. There is a regular syllabus with residential facilities.

The training imparted to the rest of the leaders is more to fulfil a task or needed service. Most of them have their own regular family and job responsibilities. They render their part time service. All of them are adults. Hence we need to ask ourselves in this session: what should be the content and method of this training.

The story of a training programme.

Read the story in the whole group and work in buzz groups to discuss the questions before collecting the answers in the whole group.

The head office of a big company had organised a training programme for the finance department staff of all its branches. The notice was sent to the local managers to send two finance staff for training. The local managers selected the two staff. One was the head of the finance department and the other was the accounts clerk who maintained the accounts for the branch office. The accounts clerk was a busy man who worked in a number of other companies as well for a few days each week. The full days programme consisted of two talks by the CEO and finance director on presenting the company accounts from an ethical point of view and for the tax department, another talk was on company finance policies. There was some discussion on the company's policies. After the training at headquarters, the local branch CEO inquired into the usefulness of the training. The finance department head said that it was useful for him since he is involved with the decision making along with the group CEO and finance department members. However he said that presentations were boring and he found it difficult to concentrate. But the accounts clerk said that it was merely a waste of time for him since he was not in any way benefitting because he was only maintaining the accounts and in no way was he involved in the decision making.



Questions:

1. *What do you think of this training? Was it necessary and why?*
2. *Why did the two persons feel differently about the training?*
3. *The policy talk would be useful to the decision makers. What about the accounts clerk?*
4. *Other than lecture type what type of training would be more effective?*
5. *How is this story related to training of leaders in our parishes?*

SUPPLEMENT

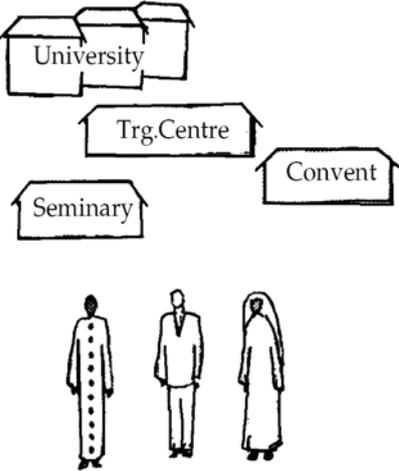
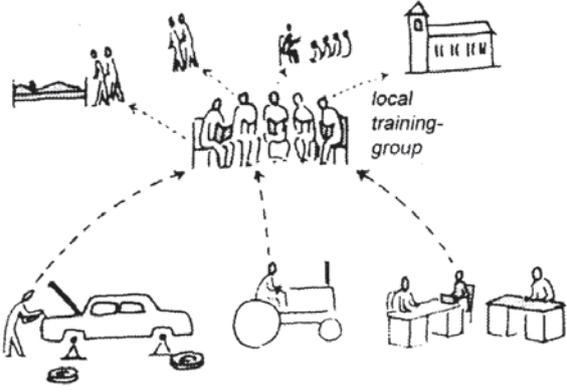
1. The training is necessary. The finance department of the company needs to be transparent and clear on what and how to run the department. There may have been a lot of criticism regarding the processes and competence of the financial department heads.
 - The budgeting and balancing of accounts is crucial to the well being of the company and is linked to its objectives and targets.
2. The accounts clerk is in no way involved in the decision making. His work is mainly technical hence he found it a waste of time.
3. Adults are not accustomed to listen to lectures. They should not be treated like children. They have a lot of experience in their own field.
 - a. More interaction and discussion would have made the training interesting to adults.
 - b. The questions which they would ask would have made the training more pointed to their needs.
4. The training in our parishes is often lecture style and not directly related to the ministry and the vision of the parish.

B. WHO IS AN EMERGENT LEADER Vis-a-vis A FULL-TIME LEADER?

With the term “emergent leaders” we refer to leaders who emerge from within a Christian community and usually remain with that community. They will usually be self-supporting, will have an occupation, will do their work for the community in their spare-time and without any remuneration, will have a family, and will not be very young. They usually have acquired a more-than-average experience in living with a Christian community, but they have not received any religious formation besides the instructions which everybody receives in the community. They are usually among the most convinced and the most reliable members of the community.

Question for buzzing:

Look at the picture. What are the advantages of training the full time leaders and emergent leaders?

	
<p>Full-time leaders</p>	<p>Emergent leaders</p>
<p>-Many of them receive training when they are young.</p>	<p>-They are orientated towards life issues and are easily discouraged by theory which seems unrelated to life.</p>
<p>-They do not mind too much if the syllabus contains items which are not connected with a concrete task.</p>	<p>-They are highly motivated to learn about the specific tasks they want to fulfil, but are not motivated to learn items only because they are on the syllabus.</p>
<p>-They do not know what exact task they will later fulfil.</p>	<p>-They know what tasks they will fulfil.</p>
<p>-They are preparing for any task.</p>	<p>-They absorb and remember what is connected with past experience and what is useful for tasks which they will fulfil immediately.</p>
<p>-They aim at a life-time vocation, not at a concrete task.</p>	<p>-They participate well, but can withdraw easily if they feel that training is irrelevant or that they cannot manage their tasks.</p>
<p>-They will not withdraw from the training or from parts of it because it is not well presented.</p>	<p>-They attend training sessions after returning tired from work.</p>
<p>-They attend training in the morning, when still fresh.</p>	<p>-They have a public image and want to preserve it. They do not want to make fools of themselves. They hesitate to risk officiating with insufficient training.</p>
<p>-They have much courage to try out new approaches, or do something they are not sure of.</p>	<p>-They want to “learn by doing”, and are easily discouraged from attending if learning is too theoretical.</p>
<p>-They may dislike being told that things to be learnt will become useful only after completion of their studies, but they accept it as inevitable.</p>	<p>- They will remain in the training group only if they feel confident that they can follow the training and are making progress.</p>

C. THE FOUR AREAS OF TRAINING

1. Work in groups of 5 to 8 persons
2. Study the following four areas carefully, keeping in mind the advantages listed above of training emergent and full time leaders.
3. After 30 minutes report to the whole group your answer to the questions given below.

When training is conducted by the local priest, the emergent leader (or the pastoral worker) is given the necessary skill to conduct the desired task. It may also include the conducting of rituals such as Sunday service, funerals, catechism instructions etc. On the other hand when the training is conducted by experts in the training centre, often they place emphasis on information, knowledge and insights.

Let us remember that there are four distinct areas of an integral formation of a pastoral leader. They are the following:

1. **Spiritual life**

Becoming convinced and committed Christians.

Developing personal, private prayer

Purifying the motivation to serve and lead.

Maturing in the faith

Moving from natural religiosity to Christ

Integrating culture and Christian faith

2. **Attitudes, values, awareness**

Awareness of social responsibility

Awareness of community relations

Making community-building the priority

Making team-work a priority,

Making sharing with other leaders and with the community a priority

A Service-attitude instead of power-attitude

3. **Skills**

How to animate a group and a larger community

How to invite and influence others

How to lead ritual celebrations

How to conduct meetings

How to solve conflicts

How to communicate

4. Information, knowledge, insights.

Theological knowledge and insights

General knowledge eg. about society, the economy, media

It is a well-known fact that we generally tend to give importance to knowledge and skills during training. Attitudinal and spiritual formation is often neglected when we train emergent leaders. It is more difficult. However it is also very important.

Questions:

- 1. Do you think we have given sufficient emphasis to all these areas in the past in our training programmes?**
- 2. What happens to leaders if we neglect the change of attitudes and spiritual formation in our formation?**
- 3. What are the practical ways we can impart this formation?**

Supplement:

- We wanted the tasks to be performed quickly.
 - We have given importance mainly to skills and knowledge.
 - The leaders are busy with their domestic responsibility. They cannot afford to spend more time for training.
 - Locally there are not many leaders who can impart this integral training
 - The parish priest is also busy with many pastoral tasks to perform. He needs helpers to carry out these tasks with minimum formation.
- The leaders may not find growth in their Christian life and may not find self-fulfilment when they perform the various tasks.
 - They may not be able to impart deeper convictions to the people when their own faith-life remains shallow.
 - The community members may not see any perceptible change in their life as Christians.
- They can have regular recollections
 - They can have sessions on spiritual formation at regular intervals.
 - They can regularly evaluate their ministry as a group along with the parish priest and seek mutual guidance and encouragement.

D. Advantages and disadvantages of leaders trained locally or at a centre

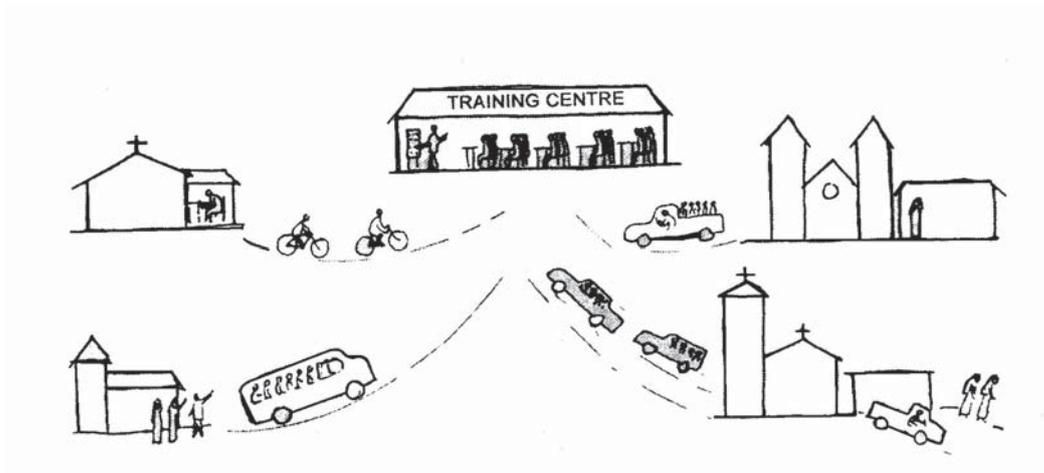
When we speak of centralized training we mean training at a diocesan centre or a regional centre. It is conducted by diocesan trainers or other non-local experts. It takes place without the local priest and without the other full-time pastoral leaders of the parish. The local pastoral workers may arrange the training or provide the necessary transportation etc but are not a part of the training nor are they present for it.



Look at the picture below:

Discuss the following question:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the training by the regional centre?



The advantages:

- + It is more professional
- + More uniform
- + Trainers have more time and are better equipped.
- + They have wider experience from different places/ areas.
- + They meet leaders from other regions or areas.

The disadvantages:

- The trainees may adopt a superiority complex.
- The content of training may be less adapted to local needs.
- It can be more theoretical and come into conflict with the local situation.
- The local priest and other pastoral workers may become apprehensive and may not give sufficient encouragement since they have not trained them.
- Their mistakes may be magnified.
- There may not be a real unity among all the existing and emerging leaders.
- The centralized training is expensive, less frequent and very few may benefit.

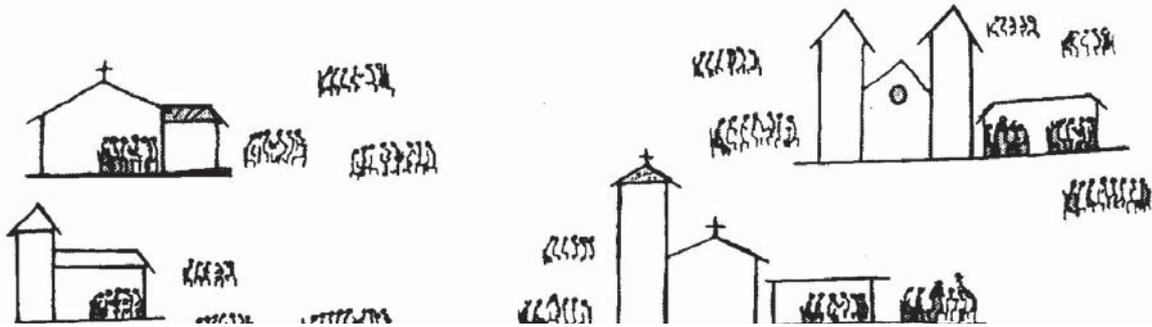
Local Training:

This training is carried out by the local priest and other local pastoral workers. It will take place either in their very community or in their parish centre.

Look at the picture below:

Discuss the following question:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the training locally?



The advantages:

- + The participants continue to feel that they are a part of the local people.
- + The community and other pastoral workers who impart the training also grow in the process. There may be greater unity among them.
- + The training will be more suited to the local needs, less theoretical and task oriented.
- + The training is more easily followed up during the day-to-day work in the communities.
- + The pastoral workers know the trainees, see the results of the training, can easily correct mistakes and encourages those who fail.
- + The training groups will be smaller in number and more numerous. They will reach more people.
- + It could be more frequent. The spouses also can get a chance once a way.

The disadvantages:

- It is often of lower quality and can overlook theory.
- The trainees can become too dependent on the trainers.
- It may lack diocesan unity and uniformity.
- It may come in to conflict with the arrival of the new parish priest to the parish. He may not be in favour of continuing the training.

CONCLUSION & SUMMARY

A Healthy combination of these approaches may be a solution:

1. Frequent training by the local trainers with occasional training by the diocesan trainers.
2. Joint training. The diocesan training team comes to the community and conducts the training along with the local pastoral trainers.
3. Division of subjects. Some of the subjects are learnt locally and others at the diocesan centre.

We conclude the session with spontaneous prayer.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF LEADERS



Fr. Arthur Cyril Pereira
AsIPA Resource Team Member

We send leaders for training let us say, as facilitators for SCCs, for teaching Catechism, social work, as extraordinary Eucharistic ministers etc.

We feel very happy when they come back and perform their tasks very well. Some of them become highly efficient too.

We need to ask ourselves whether in the long run, they have become better Christians, grown in their spiritual life, whether the tasks that they perform actually spring from their inner being.

If they are really spirit filled, their very ministry will gradually transform them as Christ's representatives. They will be committed leaders and will easily find acceptance in the community by the members.

Any integral training will consist generally of four different interconnected areas:

1. Information or knowledge
2. Skills
3. Attitudes, values, awareness
4. Spiritual life

1. Information or knowledge: Knowledge of Scripture, teaching of the Church, meaning of SCCs, general knowledge of human sciences, media etc.

2. Skills: The leaders need to learn to conduct group meetings, learn to facilitate, to solve conflicts, to communicate efficiently, to invite and influence others, to conduct prayers service, to write reports, to train others etc.

3. Attitudes, values, awareness: Inculcate in themselves the necessary spiritual and human values, give top priority for community building, be aware of social responsibility, give importance to team building, service-attitude instead of power-attitude, importance to co-responsibility, respect the dignity of the individual etc.

4. Spiritual life: Developing personal and private prayer, become convinced and committed Christian, maturing in faith, integrating culture and Christian faith, right motivation to serve and lead, acquired the heart and mind of Christ etc.

It is a fact that generally we have given importance to the first two areas and neglected the remaining two.

We as pastors feel happy that the tasks are performed and we are satisfied.

They teach catechism, they distribute communion, they conduct the SCC meeting and submit the report etc.

As a result not only they but also our community may not grow spiritually and their faith life also may remain shallow.

This particular aspect is ensured in the case of priests and religious. They have their annual retreat, monthly recollection with confession, daily meditation, breviary. Of course, the daily mass etc.

*“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak”
(Mt. 26:41)*

Hence we need to emphasise the spiritual formation of our pastoral workers and leaders.

The Lumko institute has several training sessions related to the same. One such booklet is 15M and 15P. We have adapted this, as AsIPA booklets .

In all there are 17 sessions in that book. We have this time taken 6 sessions in the form of AsIPA booklets for trial text. One will be taken now in groups, AsIPA E/7.



AsIPA E/7

“Be what you preach”

Prepare beforehand:

Newsprint

Bibles for all participants

Copies of this text

INTRODUCTION

In this session we would like to become more aware of the reasons why the life style of leaders must bear out their words. We are all familiar with this theme called “Be what you Preach”. However today we wish to deepen our understanding of this call which touches all of us – bishops, priests and all other leaders.

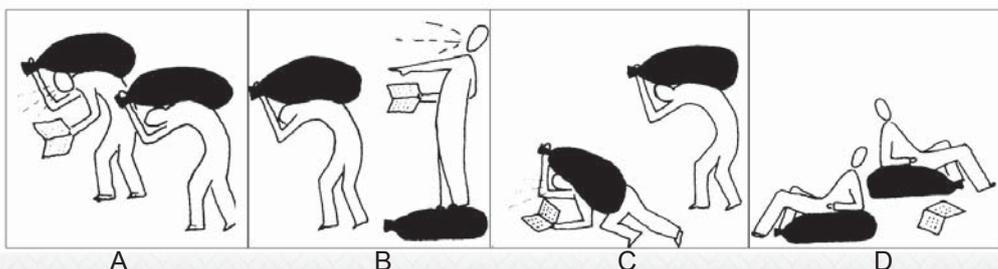
Following Christ is wonderful, but it can also be like a burden. The lifestyle which Christ expects of all Christians is often highly demanding and we experience it like a burden. The task of transforming this world in the spirit of Christ can be like a burden which we carry for years. Not only the leaders of the church carry this burden, but also each Christian.

As Jesus says: “Shoulder my yoke and learn from me” Mat 11:29

The leaders of the Church carry this burden side by side with all members of the Church. How does the word which they announce compare with their own way of carrying the burden?

STEP 1. PREACHING THE WORD AND DOING THE WORD

- Form small groups of 2 – 3 persons
- Study the scripture passages listed below and consider to which of the four pictures A to D each text belongs.
- All groups should study the first four texts.
- If there is time take the rest of the texts
- Be prepared to report back
- Complete in the whole group any incomplete texts.



BIBLE PASSAGES:

1. Mat 23:1-5;
2. Mat 26:69-75;
3. Heb 2:10-18;
4. 1Cor 9:16;
5. Mat 23:13-15;
6. Mat 23:23-28;
7. Heb 4:15;
8. Heb 5:7-8;
9. Phil 4:9;
10. 2 Tess 3:7;
11. Jo 8:46.

Note to facilitator: In the report-back it is not wise to let all groups give a full report. It is better to call out one after the other of the bible passages and ask all groups how they allocated it. It is important to ask for the reasons why they did so. Ask for comments on those reasons. Give an opportunity to ask questions.



E

What does the Word of God say about one who preaches only certain parts of God's message and consistently leaves out those which would be a challenge to his own way of life? Can this happen today?

STEP 2. PREACHING THE WORD SELECTIVELY

Discuss the following questions in the whole group.

1. Do you think these four pictures represent the main options with which we are confronted in our work in the Christian community?
2. Are there other possibilities of how our life-style and the word we preach are inter-related?

PICTURE D

1. Let us consider picture D more closely. What does it mean?... It is not easy to find scripture passages for it. But does it really occur only rarely?
2. Could you try to invent a story of a Christian community where this is happening?

3. The picture shows a leader who stopped preaching altogether. But others would be similar to him, who stopped preaching a certain part of the gospel.

PICTURE E

- While picture D showed a leader who stopped preaching altogether, E shows one who stopped preaching a certain part of the gospel. Usually there is a reason for leaving out a certain truth. It is not forgetfulness, but a fear of a certain truth. Could we think of such a temptation. Let us try to describe it.
- While this can happen with one person, can it also happen with a whole group of leaders, or a whole community? Could it happen that the whole community finds a certain type of truth too challenging and too threatening, and so they become silent about it? Can you think of examples?

PICTURE C

- Let us also consider picture C more closely (unless this came up already during the report-back).
- What do we see happening?
- We only quoted one scripture passage relating to this picture: the denial of Peter. Are there any other bible passages relating to this picture of a leader who fell? (Eg. the pride of the apostles; their disbelief; their running away when Jesus was taken prisoner; the quarrel between Paul and Mark; and the many faults reported in the letters of the Apostles).

Reflect on the following questions in the plenary or in small groups.

1. How can leaders of Christian community help each other to be what they preach?
2. Christ was very strict towards certain religious leaders, but very merciful toward others. To whom was he strict and to whom merciful? And why did he react differently?
3. What must a leader do if he has committed a serious offence? What should his colleagues do? What should the community do? What should the priest do?

STEP 3. GOSPEL SHARING

Scripture text Rev 1:1-20 or another suitable one.
Follow the 7 steps of gospel sharing.

Yahweh, you examine me and know me,
You know if I am standing or sitting,
You read my thoughts from far away,
Whether I walk or lie down, you are watching,
You know every detail of my conduct.

Ps 139



INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE



Ms. Wendy Louis

AsIPA Resource Team Member,
Executive Secretary of the Office of Laity & Family of FABC

In our Asian context, almost all our Small Christian Communities find themselves situated within other faith communities. In today's conflict ridden world we need dialogue more than ever. The dialogue that was called for by the Second Vatican Council and reverberated by the FABC many plenary assemblies. One very important aspect of Dialogue is the dialogue that takes place between neighbours of different faiths. The new AsIPA texts presented below are a first attempt at producing materials for SCCs to use to train themselves to understand and practice Interreligious Dialogue.

Part of the 'B' Series (blue) on training for Small Christian Community members with their facilitators

B12a – A Common Ground for Interreligious Dialogue - Together we seek the One we long for. In this first module we want to understand that no matter what our belief, the deep longing for God comes from the mysterious knowledge people have that only God provides the answers to the ultimate questions in our lives – the answers that we seek to the purpose of our lives and the meaning of our death.

B12b – Interreligious Dialogue and Small Christian Communities - An Integral part of the Evangelising Mission of the Church.

In this second module we would like to understand the place of Interreligious Dialogue in the evangelising mission of the Church and how it is distinct from Proclamation. This module is very long and can easily be divided into two or more sessions. Facilitators must give time for concepts to be fully explored and discussed.

B12c – What and Why Interreligious Dialogue.

In this third module we look more deeply into why we want to engage in Interreligious dialogue and the basic requirements for anyone engaging in IRD. This text is for a group of Catholics who want to enter into Interreligious Dialogue with their neighbours or colleagues. The session is a preparation for interreligious dialogue. It is very important that we understand what interreligious dialogue is and that we develop the skills needed for meaningful dialogue. We are very clear that this is not an academic or theological level of dialogue but dialogue of ordinary people in their everyday circumstances of life.

B12d – Listening with the Heart - Dialogue is speaking and deep listening.

In this module we want to become more aware of the way we speak about our faith, the different layers of feeling and thinking that make up our beliefs and also become more aware of how well and deeply we listen when someone is speaking.

AsIPA B/12a

A Common Ground for Interreligious Dialogue Together we seek the One we long for

“Oh Lord, our hearts are restless until they rest in you” St Augustine

INTRODUCTION

In this session we want to realize that in every person there is an innate longing for God. This longing we understand, in our Christian tradition, comes from the conviction that we are created by God in God’s own image and likeness. As Christians we understand that God acted first and created us and then journeyed with us to make us his own people. For many religions this is not the case. They believe that we must seek God and attain his approval by good works. No matter what our belief, the deep longing for God comes from the mysterious knowledge people have that only God provides the answers to the ultimate questions in our lives the answers that we seek to the purpose of our lives and the meaning of our death.

A. LET US READ FROM THE BIBLE

Read Genesis 1: 26-31

1. Read the text twice clearly and slowly.
2. Repeat any word or phrase from the text
3. Keep a moment of silence – let the Lord speak to your heart
4. Share what you have heard in your heart from the text.

B. LET US STUDY TOGETHER A PARAGRAPH FROM THE CATECHISM

1. Read together the following paragraph #33
2. In buzz groups (pairs) try to say what you understand from the text.
3. Discuss how this text is related to the text of Scripture that we just read. (Genesis 1: 26-31)

“The human person : with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God’s existence. In all this, he discerns again about his spiritual soul. The soul, ‘the seed of eternity, we bear in ourselves, irreducible to merely material, can have its origin only in God.’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] #33)

C. OUR LONGING FOR GOD TODAY

Let us reflect and discuss using the following questions:

1. What are some of the ways we can see that all people have a longing for God?
2. Why can we say that dialogue about God, life and death is possible between people of different faiths?

SUPPLEMENT

Question One:

- *We find many people worship in many different forms – in temples, mosques, churches, at home, in the forest. There are a great many places where people gather to worship God according to their own beliefs.*
- *People have many ways of communicating with God, with prayer, music, signs and symbols that represent the deities and the divine.*
- *Some people seek meaning in their lives by serving the less fortunate, by giving up wealth and power to live ascetic lives, through Wisdom literature and many other ways.*
- *When tragedy strikes people, they look to God for answers and for comfort even if they have not been active in any faith tradition.*

Question Two:

- *We believe that all are made to enter into a relationship with God and that God is our common Creator and Father/Mother. This makes dialogue between us possible and fruitful.*
- *We believe and have experienced that people long to talk about what will happen to them when they die or what their purpose is on earth. Dialogue on the fundamental truths of life as we see it can help people in their seeking.*

CONCLUSION

Let us pray that we may have the mind and heart of God who came to be with us and to enter into a relationship with us.

1. We read from the Gospel of John 1: 1-5

2. We repeat some sentences: (take turns to repeat the following verses slowly and prayerfully)

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
- All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.
- Through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race;
- The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- Through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race,
- The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.



3. Reflection (can be read like a psalm with right and left sides taking turns to echo the lines.)

- The Word existed since the beginning. The Word was God.
- o God exists before any man and woman.
- God is the source of all life.
- o There is an inborn longing for God in every person.
- God is light for all.
- o In Dialogue we can approach the light together
- Darkness also existed.
- o Let us not choose the darkness
- Light was more powerful than darkness.
- o The Light was source of life for everyone.

4. Let us pray.

God our Father and Mother, we ask that you show us how to approach people with deep love and respect. Give us hearts to see the deep inner longing of each and every person for you. Give us the courage and grace to journey with all your people and to love and serve them as you would have us do. We make this prayer in Jesus name. Amen.

- Close with a hymn or a 'Glory be...'



AsIPA B/12b

Interreligious Dialogue and Small Christian Communities An Integral part of the Evangelising Mission of the Church

INTRODUCTION

In this session we would like to understand the place of Interreligious Dialogue in the evangelising mission of the Church and how it is distinct from Proclamation.

Dialogue and Proclamation, are two aspects of the one Evangelizing Mission of the Church. Evangelization itself has many aspects, but for our discussion today, let us understand evangelization as all that we do and say as a Catholic Community and as followers of Christ to share the hope that we have in the Risen Jesus and the faith that gives us that hope. To evangelize is to bring the Good News of Salvation as Jesus Commanded through word and witness.

A. THE EVANGELISING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Read the following paragraphs and discuss the relationship and distinguishing features of proclamation and dialogue.

1. Proclamation

“Proclamation is the communication of the Gospel message, the mystery of salvation realised by God for all in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. It is an invitation to a commitment of faith in Jesus Christ and to entry through baptism into the community of believers which is the Church...”(DP #10)¹

2. Proclamation and Dialogue

“The practise of dialogue raises problems in the minds of many. There are those who would seem to think, erroneously, that in the Church’s mission today dialogue should simply replace proclamation. At the other extreme some fail to see the value of interreligious dialogue.” (DP #4c)²

3. Christians and People of other faiths

In 1994 the Secretariat for Non-Christians in Rome said the following: “The Second Vatican Council has marked a new landmark in the relations of the church with the followers of other religions. ... In a world of change (we recognise) the ideal of dialogue”.

4. The love of God gives the Church a mission

“God is love (1John4:8,16) This saving love of God has been revealed and communicated to mankind in Christ and is present and active throughout the world by means of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the living sign of that love... This mission, Christ’s own, is one of love because in him it finds its source, goal and way of proceeding (AG 2). Each aspect and activity of the Church’s mission must



therefore be imbued with the spirit of love if it is to be faithful to Christ... it is the duty of all, according to the example of Jesus, as expressed in the early Church and in the lives of Saints..." (DM 9-12)³

5. Motivation for missionary evangelization

The FABC has also spoken about the motivation for missionary evangelization:

"Why indeed, should we evangelize?... a) We evangelize, first of all, from a deep sense of gratitude to God.... b) But, mission is also a mandate.... c) We evangelize also because we believe in the Lord Jesus.... d) We evangelize also because we have been incorporated by baptism into the Church, which is missionary by its very nature.... e) And finally, we evangelize because the Gospel is leaven for liberation and for the transformation of society." (FABC V #3.2).⁴

6. Interreligious dialogue as part of the Church's evangelizing mission

The Asian Bishops together with Pope John Paul II have expressed it as follows: "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.... 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." (EA 31)⁵

7. Dialogue is one element in the Evangelizing Mission of the Church

"We bear this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7).



Evangelization is: A 'Single, Complex, Articulated Reality' (DM13)

The evangelizing mission of the Church contains many elements and is very rich and varied. As we try to understand the importance of dialogue and the attitudes needed, it is important not to lose sight of all the other important aspects of the Church's evangelizing mission.

“Every church, even one made up of recent converts, is missionary by its very nature, and is both evangelized and evangelizing. Faith must always be presented as a gift of God to be lived out in community (families, parishes, associations), and to be extended to others through witness in word and deed. The evangelizing activity of the Christian community, first in its own locality, and then elsewhere as part of the Church's universal mission, is the clearest sign of a mature faith.

A radical conversion in thinking is required in order to become missionary, and this holds true both for individuals and entire communities. The Lord is always calling us to come out of ourselves and to share with others the goods we possess, starting with the most precious gift of all - our faith. The effectiveness of the Church's organizations, movements, parishes and apostolic works must be measured in the light of this missionary imperative. Only by becoming missionary will the Christian community be able to overcome its internal divisions and tensions, and rediscover its unity and its strength of faith.” (RM 49)⁶

Question for reflection and discussion

From your own experience and from the above texts, what do you understand by “the evangelizing mission of the Church”?

B. WHAT IS INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE?

Let us now ask ourselves the question: What is Interreligious Dialogue?

Read the following texts and discuss the question below:

“All positive constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment in obedience to truth and respect for freedom” (DP#9).

1. There are four commonly accepted forms of interreligious dialogue. These are summarised in the 1991 joint document of the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Dialogue and Proclamation (DP#42):
 - a. The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
 - b. The dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
 - c. The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.



- d. The dialogue of religious experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.

Questions for discussion:

- 1. Why would these forms of dialogue be useful or important? Which form of dialogue are you familiar with explain?**
- 2. If you have engaged in the Dialogue of Life or Common Action, share some stories and examples.**

C. WHY INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE?

Assign groups of three with one or two paragraphs each to read and try to explain to each other. (20 minutes)

Pope Saint John Paul II gives us six points in his document “Redemptoris Missio”.

These are the six theological foundations summed up as follows:

1. The Common origin and single destiny of the human race in God. (In RM this is often referred to as the “Mystery of Unity” of the human race in paragraphs 3, 7, 11 and 28.)
2. It means that we are on a common journey and we all seek the fullness of life and truth. This makes it necessary for us to search and explore together the truth about God.
3. Universal Salvation in Jesus Christ. We believe that all peoples are loved and saved by Jesus Christ. No one is excluded from his saving love and will. Since we believe this we have a duty to seek the face of Christ in our sisters and brothers of other faiths and participate in the saving work of Christ.
4. Active presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit blows where she wills and works beyond the boundaries of the Church. We need to follow the leading of the Spirit to reach out to all no matter of what race, religion of culture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
5. Universality of the Reign of God. The Kingdom of God can be found wherever there is love and where truth is defended. Our hope in dialogue is to make God all in all for all peoples.
6. “In Interreligious Dialogue the Church seeks to discover “the seeds of the Word” that are found in the persons and religious traditions of human kind. The Church is “stimulated both to discover and acknowledge signs of Christ’s presence and in the working of the Spirit as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of revelation which she has received for the good of all”. (RM #56)

Pope Francis speaking to the President of Turkey in 2014 said:

7. “Mr President, interreligious and intercultural dialogue can make an important contribution to attaining this lofty and urgent goal (of peace and sustainable development), so that there will be an end to all forms of fundamentalism and terrorism which gravely demean the dignity of every man and woman and exploit religion.

Fanaticism and fundamentalism, as well as irrational fears which foster misunderstanding and discrimination, need to be countered by the solidarity of all believers. This solidarity must rest on the following pillars: respect for human life and for religious freedom, that is the freedom to worship and to live according to the moral teachings of one's religion; commitment to ensuring what each person requires for a dignified life; and care for the natural environment."⁷

CONCLUSION

In this session we looked at

1. The Evangelising Mission of the Church and how dialogue is an integral part of that Mission.
2. The forms of dialogue and how we can engage in such dialogue
3. Why Interreligious dialogue is so important – its theological foundations.

Let us reflect together

What can we do as a Small Christian Community to strengthen our relations with the people of different faiths in our neighbourhood?

What can we do to teach ourselves to be more skilled at dialogue? What would help us enter into interreligious dialogue?

Pray and sing to close the session.

ENDNOTES

1. Dialogue and Proclamation (DP) – Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Pub 1991 Vatican City by Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.
2. Ibid #4c
3. The attitude of the church towards the followers of other religions - Reflections and orientations on dialogue and mission, (DM) Secretariat for Non-Christians, Vatican city, Pentecost 1984 paragraphs 9-12
4. FABC Plenary Assembly 5, Bandung, Indonesia 1990. Para 3.2

5. *Ecclesia in Asia (EA)*, post-synodal Apostolic exhortation, Pope John Paul II *On Jesus Christ the saviour And his mission of love and service In asia*: 1999, Vatican City, Rome. Para 31 (full text follows) "...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. ... 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*. (RM55) Christians bring to interreligious dialogue the firm belief that the 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". 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". 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.

Having stressed the need in interreligious dialogue for firm faith in Christ, the Synod Fathers went on to speak of the 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 (cf. Mt 11:29). "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".

6. *RM49 Redemptoris Missio (RM)*-On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, Pope John Paul II, Pub 1990, Vatican Press. Rome.

7. Pope Francis to President of Turkey, November 2014.

RESOURCES ON IRD

1. The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions, reflections and orientations on Dialogue and Mission. (DM) 1984, Vatican City
2. Dialogue and Proclamation (DP) – Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Pub 1991 Vatican City by Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelizaion of Peoples.
3. Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia in Asia (EA), post-synodal Apostolic exhortation, On Jesus Christ the saviour And his mission of love and service In Asia.
4. FABC Plenary Assembly 5, Final Statement 1990, Bandung, Indonesia.
5. FABC Office of Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs (OEIA), a glimpse at dialogue in Asia 30th anniversary first bishops' institute for interreligious affairs (BIRA), 2010. FABC Paper 130
6. Kroeger, James MM, Dialogue – Interpretive Key for the Life of the church in Asia, 2010, FABC Paper 131.
7. Cajilit, Vincente & University Santo Tomas, Center for Contextualised Ethics with Michel, Thomas, Module Making for Dialogue with Islam, FABC Papers 114.
8. Chia, Edmund, Interreligious Dialogue in pursuit of Fullness of Life in Asia, FABC 7th Plenary Assembly, 2000, FABC Papers 92k.
9. Kramer & Vellguth, Mission and Dialogue – approaches to a communicative understanding of mission. 2012, Herder, Germany



AsIPA B/12c

What and Why Interreligious Dialogue?

INTRODUCTION

In this session we look more deeply into why we want to engage in Interreligious dialogue and the basic requirements for anyone engaging in IRD. This text is for a group of Catholics who want to enter into Interreligious Dialogue with their neighbours or colleagues. The session is a preparation for interreligious dialogue. It is very important that we understand what interreligious dialogue is and that we develop the skills needed for meaningful dialogue.

Another important point is that interreligious dialogue should be, in this context, kept close to our life experiences and the capacity of the members. We are not aiming at any form of debate, theological discussion or discourse which requires special knowledge and expertise. For the dialogue of life with people of other faiths, wisdom and deep listening and sharing can be done by everyone. It requires that we trust in the Holy Spirit and love the ones who are participating in the dialogue.

In this short module we can only deal with one small part of the whole meaning of interreligious dialogue. We are not entering into the other forms of dialogue that were mentioned in an earlier text.

A. WHAT IS INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Here is one definition.

“Interreligious dialogue is a meeting of people of differing religions, in an atmosphere of freedom and openness, in order to listen to the other, to try to understand that person’s religion, and hopefully to seek possibilities of collaboration. It is hoped that the other partner will reciprocate, because dialogue should be marked by a two-way and not a one-way movement. Reciprocity is in the nature of dialogue. There is give and take. Dialogue implies both receptivity and active communication.”ⁱ

1. Let us put this definition into our own words and add to it in order to understand it well.
2. After 10 minutes, ask the small groups to give their version of the definition above.

SUPPLEMENT

Note that the basic elements of commitment to one’s own faith; a desire to grow in the knowledge of the truth; a love for those with whom we dialogue are part of any definition of interreligious dialogue.

3. Discuss in the whole group briefly:

Questions for reflection:

1. *What is your experience of sharing your faith with someone of a different faith and how do you feel about it?*
2. *Could you say it is a dialogue?*
3. *Is there a mutual desire to learn and listening and speaking by both? How did you feel during and after the dialogue?*

Allow for open and free discussion. Put some key words and points on a white board. Compare these points with those raised in the supplement after allowing some time for all to read the 'Elements in Interreligious Dialogue'.

SUPPLEMENT

Elements in Interreligious Dialogue

- Participants have a deep respect for each other
- Participants together seek to know the truth about God and humanity more deeply
- Participants question to deepen the listening experience and to clarify meaning
- There is no such thing as right and wrong belief as we are sharing our personal, lived faith in order to bring greater friendship and unity.
- After such a time of dialogue, we seek to know more and to meet again to continue to grow in our understanding and appreciation of one another.

B. WHY ENTER INTO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE?

Read the following little story. Tell your own story if you prefer as long as you can explain why moving to a deeper level of listening and sharing can help us grow in our appreciation and love of our neighbours of other faiths.

Maria and Ria have known each other for a very long time. They meet regularly at the neighbourhood market and occasionally they even share a cup of tea in their homes in between their chores. Their children are in the same school and they regularly meet as families in the school and nearby shopping mall. Now, the parish is announcing a training to help the members of Small Christian Communities to learn how to dialogue with people of different faiths. Maria can't understand why she needs to do this training since faith and religion is one's own private affair and she and Ria, who is Buddhist, have been talking to each other for at least 10 years. Why rake up controversies? What more do we need to learn? she asked a member of the SCC. He explained: There are different levels of conversations that we have with friends and acquaintances. We are being invited to speak about what gives us hope and what we believe in a deeper way and we are also being invited to really listen to what helps our friends and neighbours in times of crises. What they believe about life and death and God.



Questions for discussion in buzz groups (10mins):

- a) *What are some reasons you find in the story for entering into a dialogue about faith with your friends and neighbours of other faiths?*
- b) *What are some additional reasons for interreligious dialogue?*

SUPPLEMENT

Read the points of this supplement quietly and after 5 minutes or less, discuss the significant points for you. These points are very important and if they have not been raised in the earlier discussion, take time to ensure that people understand the points.

We are living peacefully and we tolerate each other well already. What more is needed?

- We could grow from tolerance to appreciation of each other's beliefs
- We need to grow in the way we respect each other and give importance to our common humanity.
- To become more fully human and happier persons we need to communicate more deeply and nurture deeper friendships.
- We are seekers in life. We are always trying to understand the truths about ourselves and others and the world around us. We can seek together with people of different faiths as they offer us their understanding of the world.
- We are on a common human journey to the fullness of life and we always have something to learn.
- For real peace and harmony to exist we need more than superficial relationships and tolerance.

C. WHEN CAN WE SAY WE ARE READY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE?

While conversations in daily life between people of different faiths can be entered into by everyone and belongs to human life, there are some qualities or conditions that belong to interreligious dialogue that are necessary if the dialogue is to achieve the aims listed in B above.

Read the following points and add your own if possible.

1. You need to be firm in your own faith and clear in what you believe.
2. You have observed and experienced how your faith is alive within your family, your community and in the Church.
3. You really long to understand the faith of those living around you.
4. You are willing to share your beliefs and speak about them with people of other faiths with the deepest respect.

Questions for reflection

Personal reflection:

1. *What do you think of the list of qualities or conditions above?*
2. *Do you feel that you have the necessary qualities and have met the conditions for interreligious dialogue? Which quality or condition needs to be strengthened at this time for you?*

Small group discussion:

3. *Are there any qualities or conditions you would like to add or change?*
4. *Why is it important to be firm in our own faith before entering into interreligious dialogue?*

SUPPLEMENT

I should be happy to share my faith, with joy and with respect. However, after reflecting and discussing I may not feel ready to engage in Dialogue of Religious Experiences and Beliefs.

I can however, continue in the Dialogue of Life and in the Dialogue of Social Action, for example at Christmas time, we can invite our neighbours of other faiths and explain some of our signs and symbols.

D. STEPS TOWARDS INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

- From our personal reflections and group discussions, let us agree on two or three ways in which we can improve our ability to enter into Interreligious dialogue.
- Using the qualities and conditions list with any additional points, ask which ones we can work on in the coming week/s. We will report on our progress at the next meeting.
(For example, we may feel that we are weak when it comes to being 'firm' in our faith especially to speak about our belief in the saving love of God, who Jesus is for us, or the mercy of God, or life after death. We may want to try reading up on these areas and sharing with our SCC members what we believe and live as a way to build up our own convictions and articulation of them.)

CONCLUSION

Let us pray together:

- For peace and unity in our country, society and neighbourhood.
- For the grace to speak about our faith in ways that touches the hearts of those we want to dialogue with.
- For a greater insight into the truths of our faith as we prepare ourselves for dialogue.
- For the patience and love to develop listening skills for dialogue.
- For all the people in our neighbourhood, school (name your place) who belong to the different faiths.

End with a hymn or a prayer everyone knows.

i. Cardinal Francis Arinze, *Meeting Other Believers: The Risks and Rewards of Interreligious Dialogue* (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing – Fowler Wright Books, 1997), 5.



AsIPA B/12d

Listening with the Heart

Dialogue is speaking and deep listening

INTRODUCTION

If someone of a different religious tradition asks you 'What do you believe about life after death for human beings, how would we respond? Would we find ourselves repeating what we learnt from our catechism or what we heard the priest say? If we thought about it would we find that some of our beliefs are tied up with our culture or surroundings and have little to do with the teachings of the Catholic faith? So, what do we actually believe? Have we ever had a chance to express our faith in simple words that relate to life?

In this session we want to become more aware of the different layers of feeling and thinking that make up our beliefs and also become more aware of how well and deeply we listen when someone is speaking.

A. ENTERING INTO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

If we think honestly and carefully we will realise that our beliefs are not so simple since, as human beings we may belong to cultures that have their own customs and rituals pertaining to life and death; we may belong to a particular ethnic community that has rich and long standing traditions and meanings provided or we may have been converted as adults and we have not left behind some of the old religious beliefs or practices from our previous religion.

Most people have these 'layers' of belief, understanding and faith woven together in a dynamic fabric of everyday life. Many people are not very aware of how all the different influences in our lives play a part in our daily living and choices. Sometimes these 'layers' make understanding more challenging and can give way to misunderstanding. We need to ask questions to clarify the meaning of things that are said.

Take 20 minutes for the following activity:

1. Sit in pairs or triads.
2. Choose one of the following topics.
 - a. What I believe about prayer
 - b. What I believe about the resurrection from the dead
 - c. What I believe about pain and suffering
 - d. What I understand about 'being saved by Jesus'.

3. Take some time to make notes or just to reflect quietly
4. Now share with your partner/s what you understand or believe and give some life experience if there are any related to this belief. You are encouraged to ask questions to clarify and understand.
5. Evaluate yourselves. How did you do? Did you find any time in your sharing when you were sharing your customs rather than your faith? Is there much room for improvement on how we express our faith?

Let us practice the other topics on your own or with your communities in the coming weeks and do an evaluation each time.

B. LISTENING WITH THE HEART

One of the key skills in interreligious dialogue is the capacity to listen, to clarify and to listen with the heart as well as the head. For this reason also, we need to take many steps in our journey with people of various faiths. As we saw in part A, Interreligious dialogue has many forms and we can work with people of other faiths on common concerns; we can become friends by supporting them in difficult times or celebrating life with them at various stages. The Dialogue of Religious experience is not usually the first step in our dialogue even though we desire to build unity and peace and deeper appreciation between all peoples of faith.

Keeping this in mind, let us put our listening ability to the test and continue to practice to listen with love, humility and respect.

C. DIALOGUE NEEDS GOOD LISTENING SKILLS

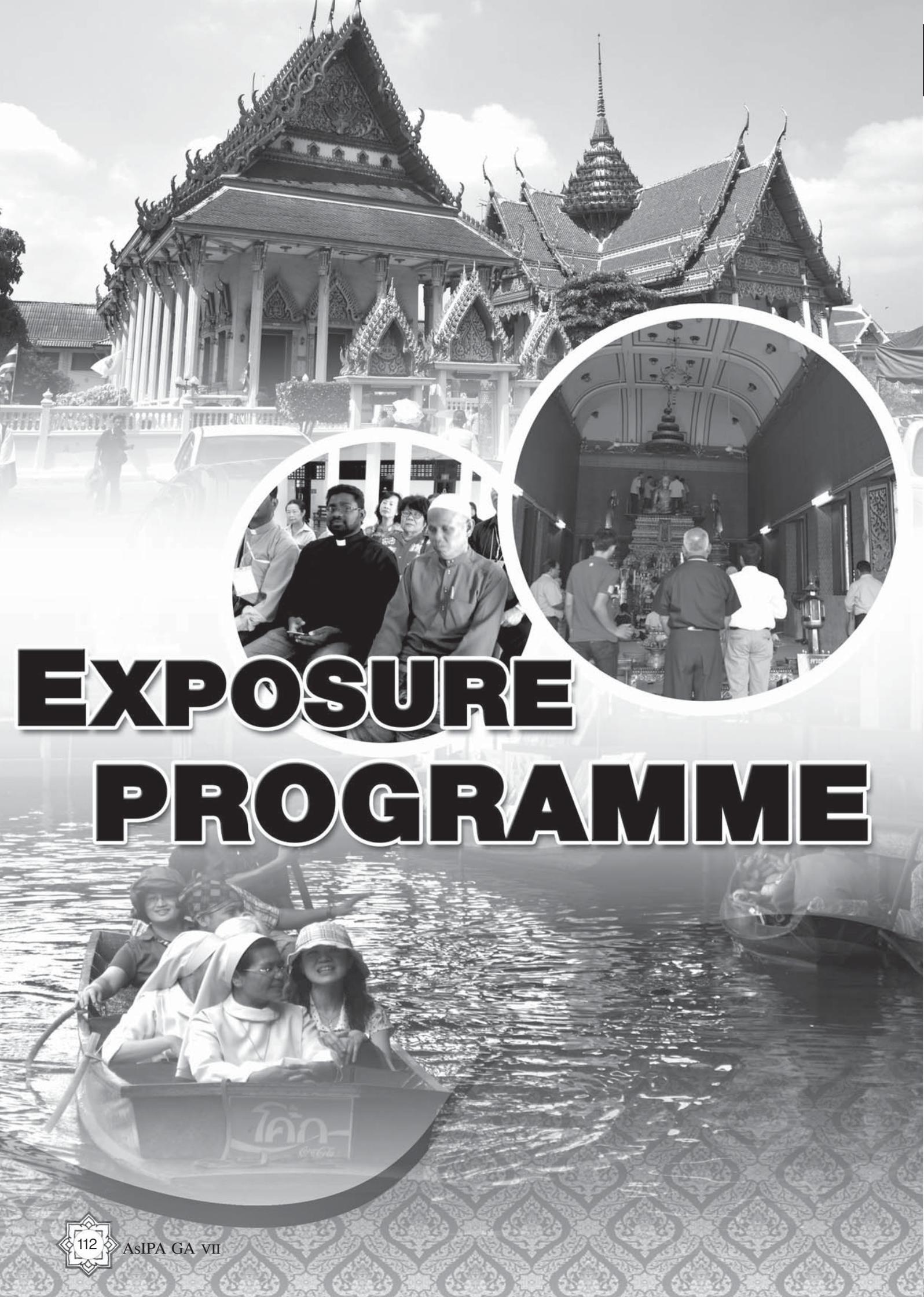
Let us practice our listening skills by doing the following exercise.

1. Choose ONE topic of common concern for the whole group. Some suggested topics:
 - a) Passing on faith to children is more difficult today
 - b) Our faith should impact the way we work
 - c) The Sacrament of Penance is still relevant today
 - d) We can use social media for evangelization
 - e) What I love about the Mass
2. Think about it for three or four minutes. Think about what you want to say on your chosen topic.
3. Form a circle with five or six people.
4. First person begins to talk for one minute on the chosen topic.
5. Second person has to repeat accurately what the first person said. All agree that the content is accurate before he/she can continue to talk on the topic themselves. The third person then repeats accurately what was said before beginning to talk themselves and it goes on...
6. Complete the circle in this way.

D. CONCLUSION

- Consider for a moment. If you had to give yourself a score or grade from one to ten. Ten is the best listener. What would you give yourself? Do you think you can improve your listening skills?
- As part of our effort to listen more deeply to people, during the coming weeks try to listen more carefully than usual to people when they are speaking.
- Pause, face them and listen. These could be your family members, neighbours in the corridor or market place, colleagues at work.
- Let us pray for the humility and love to listen with our whole being and to desire unity and peace so that we are able to become people of dialogue.





EXPOSURE PROGRAMME



Dr. Michael Thinaratana Komkris, FSG.

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1. History

1.1 Ayutthaya the Capital of Siam.

a. Under the Padroado System

- 16 c. Portuguese missionaries
- 1544 Audience with Phra Jairaja (King)
- 1567 Dominican Friars
- 1582-1767 Franciscan Missionaries
- 1607 Jesuit missionaries

b. Under Propaganda Fide

- 1662 MEP (Msgr. Lambert de la Motte, et al.)
- 1664 Msgr. Francois Pallu, et al. / The Synod in Ayutthya, Siam
- 1665 Founded the “College General”
- 1669 First hospital
- 1674 Msgr. Laneau was nominated the Apostolic Vicar of Siam (600 Siamese Catholics in Ayutthaya, Phitsanulok, Lopburi, Samskhok and Bangkok)
- 1688 Revolution & Persecution (Phra Phetraja)
- 1691 Seminary given back
- 1709-1733 Reign of King Taisra, persecution: No Thai & Pali language in teaching religion
- 1743-1744 Continuing persecution
- 1767 The invasion of Burma & The fall of Ayutthaya

1.2 Thonburi & Bangkok as capitals of Siam

- 1768-1782 King Taksin & the expulsion of the missionaries
- 1782 King Rama I (1782-1809) sent for missionaries
- In 1785 there were 413 Siamese Catholics (Santa Cruz church, Thonburi), 379 Cambodian Catholics & 580 Annamite Catholics (Immaculate Conception church, Samsen district)
- 1802 about 2500 Christians
- 1811 about 3000 Christians

1827	Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction given to Apostolic Vicar of Siam
1835	1500 Annamite Christians settled at Samsen (St. Francis Xavier church)
1841	Ecclesiastical Regions: Mission of Oriental Siam (Siam & Laos) and Mission of accidental Siam (Malayan Peninsula, Sumatra & South Burma)
1841-1862	Msgr. Pallegoix & Prince Mongkut
1875-1909	Msgr. Jean Louis Vey: serious expansion period; many religious Orders were invited
1909-1947	Msgr. Perros
1932	King Rama VII: from Absolute Monarchy to Democracy

1.3 “Siam” became “Thailand” in 1939

Since the Catholic Church in Thailand had increased through zealous labor of Bishops and Missionaries, and indications had shown greater growth in the future, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide judged that the time was ripe to establish the Sacred Hierarchy in Thailand. Strong support was also given by two former Apostolic Delegates to Thailand; namely, Right Reverend Msgr. John Gordon and Right Reverend Msgr. Angelo Pedroni. Therefore, on December 18, 1965 two ecclesiastical Provinces of Bangkok and Thare Nongseng were created.

The Ecclesiastical Province of Bangkok is made up of:

- The Metropolitan Church of Bangkok, formerly an Apostolic Vicariate.

Suffragan Dioceses are:

- Diocese of Ratchaburi, created on Dec. 18, 1965. Previously it was erected an Apostolic Vicariate on April 3, 1941
- Diocese of Chanthaburi, created on Dec. 18, 1965. Formerly it was erected an Apostolic Vicariate on October 18, 1944 and was assigned to the native clergy.
- Diocese of Chiangmai, created on Dec. 18, 1965. It was erected an Apostolic Prefecture in 1960.
- Diocese of Nakhon Sawan was erected and became the suffragan diocese of Bangkok Metropolitan on February 25, 1967.
- Diocese of Surat Thani was created on June 26, 1969 by the Bull “Qui Regno Christi” and was assigned to the Salesian priests.
- Diocese of Nakhon Sawan was erected on Feb.25, 1967.

The Ecclesiastical Province of Thare-Nongsaeng includes:

- The Archdiocese of Tharae-Nongsaeng which was created by the Bull “Qui in fastigio” of December 18, 1965. It was erected an Apostolic Vicariate on December 21, 1950.

Suffragan Dioceses are:

- Diocese of Ubon Ratchathani, created on Dec. 22, 1965 by the decision of the Holy See. It had been erected an Apostolic Vicariate on May 7, 1953.
- Diocese of Udon Thani, created on Dec. 18, 1965. Previously it was erected an Apostolic Prefecture on May 7, 1953.

- Diocese of Nakhon Ratchasima, created on Dec. 18, 1965. Formerly it was erected an Apostolic Vicariate on March 22, 1965.

Conclusion:

Today, in the ten dioceses of Thailand, the various responsibilities of the ten Bishops are well coordinated through the regular meetings of the Episcopal Conference. The whole population of Thailand is around 60 million inhabitants (statistic of 1994), but the Catholic population is hardly 250,000; that is only about 0.4%

In spite of the presence of various different religions in the country, people live in peace and harmony. And so, in a true spirit of friendship, the Catholic Church continues to collaborate in the spiritual and social development of the country.

2. Present situation of BECs in Thailand

The Statistics of Thai Catholic in 2014 show that there are 369, 636 Catholics out of the population 66, 243, 398 in all. Among them there are a total of 2, 388 priests and religious.

It may not be fair to give figure or number of BECs in all dioceses, considering the quality or intensity of their living out the experience of BEC spirit. Perhaps certain classification can justify the figures. In Thailand, though the pastoral policy is to give BEC a priority since 2010, or even a decade earlier, BEC had a hard time to take off from the runway due to many distinctive local factors in each diocese. The most important one is how the bishop could motivate the pastors and the people to see the importance of BEC as being the inherent nature of community Church. Another factor is how far the BEC diocesan committee could operate with collaboration of all sectors. Thirdly, how Catholic understand BEC as an integral part of their lives, while there are a lot of catholic activities and organizations calling themselves “groups” in par with BEC. Thus so many still mistakenly think of BEC as just “another new group” of pious association being imposed on them.

In spite of basic confusion in the understanding, we can say that BEC in all the 10 dioceses in Thailand is gaining ground surely but slowly. Firstly, to give a fair picture, we may classily our realities into 3 categories.

Some 5 dioceses can be mentioned as active and rather successful in introducing BECs. In one archdiocese after 9 years, there are 431 BECs in all 74 parishes, though not all are equally strong. Another archdiocese with 64 BECs in 31 parishes, while a number of GS groups are gaining ground. In another diocese there are blooming 178 BECs from most of the parishes. Another diocese can count 62 BECs in all, though not in all parishes. In another diocese, 51 BECs in 25 parishes with a well organized coordinating body and a full time BEC coordinator.

Secondly, cultural factors also have great part in the forming of BECs. In one diocese there all about 400 small communities of believers who are used to group themselves for prayers and liturgy. At least half of them could be numbered as in its initial stage of BECs. Another diocese started BEC in earnest after Bundung Statement came about. But out of 45 BECs then there are just a few that are still thriving today.

The third category is still in their initial effort toward success. One diocese, with about 15 BECs, is still struggling to get the support of the pastors. Also another diocese, after many ups and downs, can count 10 surviving BECs in 6 parishes. One diocese is still preparing parish pastoral councils to promote the importance of BEC after many attempts and efforts, successes and failures in the past.

Thai national team for BECs

We have a national team set up by CBCT in 2010. This team comprises 2 categories of personnel:

- a) Core team with 3 members, each one is responsible for one department. All 3 departments are headed by a BEC National Coordinator (NC). In this core team there is 1 priest, 1 religious Sister and 1 religious Brother. The 3 departments are:
 - Promotion & Coordination
 - Formation & Training
 - Documentation & PR
- b) 10 BEC coordinators, who are all priests, from 10 dioceses. Each diocese has its own BEC Coordinating Committee who plans and coordinates all BEC diocesan activities down to parish level. They also organize regional training once a year, and a few common meetings few times yearly.

The National Team tried to empower Regional / Diocesan teams, and to maintain Networking through:

- Policy making in line with CBCT Pastoral priority on BEC
- Organizing four SCC Theology courses of 30 days for animators once a year since 2011 with the help of some resource persons from India
- Diocesan coordinators' meeting 3 times, to plan and review BEC progress together
- Assisting regional and diocesan animators formation training programs, PPC program
- Visits and consultations with diocesan coordinators
- Promoting the use of AsIPA texts and methodology
- PR through Catholic media and printed materials.

Some of the significant areas of growth in BEC formation in the last one year in Thailand at national, region, and diocesan levels, and our areas of focus for the next one year

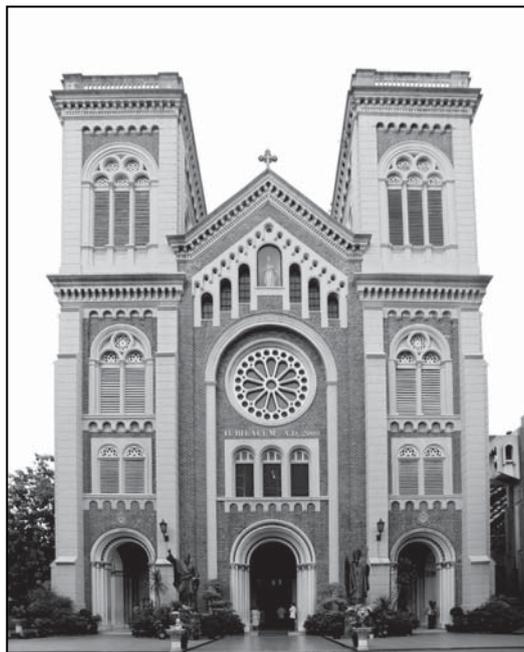
a) Growth during the last year:

- Setting up new BECs in action
- Forming BEC committees (with monthly meeting in one diocese, as well as at deanary level in one diocese)
- Clear yearly planning
- Conducting regular animators' formation programs & Animators' skill training
- More and more priests get involved in building up BECs
- Initiating youth to understand BECs
- BEC Rally
- PR through Facebook, Line
- Preparing monthly meeting guide
- Integrating BEC with catholic organizations
- Promoting love for the Scripture and how to read sacred texts
- Creating interest in BEC among the laity by helping them to understand its goals & benefits
- Visits and sharing faith experience
- Becoming participative in actions or services for local communities.

b) Focus for the future

- Coordinating committee at work at the regional and deanary levels
- Promoting BEC in all parishes
- Promoting the living out the word of God in daily life
- Promoting interest in the Bible through readings which is basic to faith sharing & evangelization
- Training BEC skills for youth
- On-going formation for BEC committees
- Visiting, encouraging and joining BECs' meetings
- Leaders' skill training and initiating the word of God
- Reviving BECs that stopped having meetings for years
- Strengthen existing BECs
- Helping other Catholic organizations to understand BEC and its importance.

Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) in Bangkok Archdiocese



Basic Ecclesial Community of Bangkok Archdiocese started in 1992 when Fr. Virasak, 2 other priests and 2 lay persons attended the program: “Renewal of the Church Through Community” in Malaysia. Fr. Virasak later had some of LUMKO texts translated into Thai for the use of training BEC leaders.

In 1997, Fr. Witthaya took charge of coordinating BEC. Later he also had AsIPA texts translated and published for the use in Bangkok and other dioceses at parish & religious communities levels. In 2010, BEC was formally established in the Archdiocese, coordinated by Fr. Piyachart. At present Fr. Thanomsak is the diocesan coordinator.

Presently there are 59 BECs in 30 parishes of Bangkok archdiocese. The 7 step GS and Look, Listen, Love methods are used. For the past 3 years, we prepared 36 monthly GS kits for the use, a project initiated by CBCT.

BEC activities are:

1. Diocesan and zonal bi-monthly coordinator meeting to plan and follow up BEC formation programs as well as visiting BECs.
2. BEC coordinators / leaders Formation sessions. Between 2011 – 2015 we have conducted 26 sessions.
3. BEC Rally. The first rally took place on August 22, 2015 attended by 400 participants.
4. BEC for youth: We prepared a set of manuals integrating BEC methodology into catechism for grade 1 to 10, with the help of the Catechetical Commission. In 2015 a training session on BEC for youth was conducted in collaboration with the Youth Desk.

5. Public Relation: Progress report write-ups are regularly given through monthly Diocesan Bulletin, as well as through www.thaibec.com and talks.
6. Other activities of BECs are community clean-up, visiting the sick, community aerobic exercise, visiting non-catholic, wakes in the parish and funeral for non-catholic.

Challenges:

Most of the BEC meeting attendants are elderly persons and too few. Youth are not so much interest in BEC; animators need more skill training. The city life in Bangkok setting makes BEC rather difficult to hold meetings.

Exposure Guide

Cluster 1:

1. Mass and inter-religious meeting at Assumption Cathedral, and visits to Our Lady of Lourdes' Parish and St. Louis' Parish.
2. OL of Lourdes: The interest to start BEC went back 15 years ago but became true in 2011, having 2 BECs now.
3. In 2009, one of the parish council members of St. Louis' attended BEC formation program and introduced GS to the members. Now there are 4 BECs.

Cluster 2:

- 1) Mass and inter-religious meeting at Santa Cruz Parish, and visits to St. Louis Marie Parish and St. Peter's Parish.
- 2) St. Louis Marie's Parish, Bangkai held its first BEC meeting in 2013.
- 3) St. Peter's Parish, Sampran. The interest in GS started 20 years ago and BEC formally took shape in 2011. Presently there are 8 BECs and 4 GS groups.

Cluster 3:

- 1) Mass and inter-religious meeting at St. Theresa's Parish, and visits to St. Raphael's Parish and Holy Infant Jesus' Parish.
- 2) St. Raphael's Parish, Samutprakan, started BEC in 2013. Now there are 3 BECs.
- 3) Holy Infant Jesus' Parish. The first 4 leaders got BEC training in October 2014 and had GS since then.

Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) in Ratchaburi Diocese



Basic Ecclesial Community of Ratchaburi Diocese started in the decade of 1970 after some priests had taken pastoral renewal courses in Philippines. They put hard efforts to implement BEC in various parishes. In the mean time Better Word Movement seminar was introduced in Sampran. Those priests and religious who had the same vision formed team to get start in some parishes.

In 1976, at St. Michael Parish, Ratchaburi, Fr. Peter Surin had organized the parish into 6 BECs which still function now. At Nativity of our Lady Cathedral, Fr. Joseph Chaisuk had lay leader training and set up 8 BECs which met for GS monthly till 1985. At Sacred Heart parish, Wat Pleng, 6 BECs were also active then. At St. Anthony Parish,

Fr. Joseph Wirote Intarasuksun took hard effort in renewal for the whole parish which outcome as organizations, catechists and youth were active for various ministries in 15 BECs. However it depended on personal interest, no long plan project to carry on the activities when the priests transferred. In early 1980 some parishes still meet for gospel sharing with priests or religious assistance. Later only structure remained, these parishes carried on activities on community base whatever occurred yearly, but gospel sharing faded away.

In 1991, Fr. Peter Surin and Sr. Cecilia, PBVM attended Lumko Asia Course on “Renewal of the Church Through Community” during September 9 – October 5 in Hua Hin. Then in 1992 some more priests attended another seminar in Malaysia to reinforce the important of BEC. Any how the lay leaders for gospel sharing were still under way. After 2000 there were many attempts to foster lay leadership. Some priests organized BEC exposure for the parishioners in neighboring countries or other dioceses.

Lately some more priests attained SCC Theology courses organized by CBCT in order to envision their mind and sharpen their skill to animate and support BEC. Fr. Bunsong Hongthong had recharged gospel sharing in St. Anthony and Sacred Heart parishes while he was parish priest there. Right now Fr. Wirot Seangpairao takes charge of coordinating BEC. There are 5 parishes that meet for GS, more and more lay leaders become interested in Biblical Pastoral Ministries. They visit the sick, care for the poor, pray for the dead, join the wedding and participate in local celebrations even for non Catholic neighborhood. There are seminars for Parish Council and Interreligious dialogue frequently. In some small parishes which operate as one BEC they still need skilled GS facilitators.

Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) in Chanthaburi Diocese



The Diocese of Chanthaburi follows the Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Thailand. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand gave guidelines in determining the direction of pastoral works since the year 2000.

Backgrounds of BEC in the Diocese of Chanthaburi

- 1983 2 priests and 1 sister were trained in "The Better World Movement" in Philippines.
- 1991 6 lay persons went to observe SCCs in Malaysia and Singapore.
- 1995 *The diocese sent 6 priests to observe SCCs at Malacca, Malaysia.
*The results of the observed trips were:
 - +Encouraging the laities to read more the Word of God.
 - +Encouraging the 7 Steps Method of Gospel Sharing.
- 1997 The diocese sent 3 priests for Bible course at NEMI.

The progress of BEC activities during 2000 – 2015

- 2003 The diocese sent 5 priests and Mother Superior Sriprai Krathong to observe SCCs in Malaysia.
*** For 20 years since 1983 to 2003 the Diocese of Chanthaburi had given priority to the new trend of pastoral care. She had continuously been sending priests, sisters and lay persons to observe the new trend in building up Basic Ecclesial Communities in other dioceses.

- 2007-2010 *The Church policy in Thailand determined 2007-2010 to be “The Year of the Word of God.”
*The Desk for Biblical Ministries held an assembly on the Year of the Word of God at Thammasat Center. There was a cooperation between the priest council and pastoral council in order to make a manual of practical way for the Year of the Word of God, and the vision was “Chanthaburi’s Christians know to love and to live the Word of God.”
- 2008 In November, the Desk for Clergy invited Bro. Thinaratana from CBCT to share about SCCs during their retreat.
- 2010 *In July, the diocese sent 3 priests, 1 sister and 3 laity to observe BEC works at the Archdiocese of Tharae – Nonseang.
*In August – September, 2 priests were sent to attend Theology on SCCs in India.
- 2011 The period of promoting BEC among the priests and pastoral councils.
*In June, The diocese held the assembly and published the Pastoral Plan 2010 – 2015 of the Diocese of Chanthaburi: To build the community of discipleship using Basic Ecclesial Community.
*June 27-29, the Commission for Parish Church made a trip to observe BECs at St. Peter church, Sampran.
*July 9, held a retreat for pastoral council in Hua Phai District and Sakao District.
*August 28, held the retreat for pastoral council in Chanthaburi District.
*October 25-27, held the annual assembly on the topic: “To build the community of Discipleship with the Chanthaburi way of Basic Ecclesial Communities.”
*December 5-6, the Diocesan Executive Committee held a seminar for priests and pastoral council on the operation of BEC in the diocese.
- Outcomes : +Priests and pastoral council acknowledged the priority of BEC tasks.
+2 parishes (9 BECs) had started BEC activities.
- 2012 To concentrate on the promoting of BEC works for all Christians.
Outcomes : +Parish priests invited BEC team to give homily during the Eucharistic celebrations.
+Christians in the parish acknowledged BEC tasks.
+3 parishes (13 BECs) had started BEC activities.
- 2013 Plan to establish BECs continuously using Awareness Programs in the parish and district.
Outcomes : +The majority of Christians acknowledged the priority of BEC process.
+5 parishes (19 BECs) had started BEC activities.
- 2014 BEC planned to train leaders.
* the BEC leaders were active in Churches.
* Follow up the BEC activities in District level.

Outcomes : + In some churches BEC leaders emerged.

+14 parishes (32 BECs) had increasingly started BEC activities.

2015 BEC planned priority in monitoring.

*BEC office was set up. There is a priest in charge of BEC's activities.

*BEC office organized visiting parishes in need, and giving assistant in starting BEC's activities.

*BEC Central Office arranged the regional meetings and workshops for leaders and coordinators in order to demonstrate BEC Activities and set up BECs in district level.

Outcomes: +2 Churches had strong BEC leaders.

+ In 5 districts of Chantaburi Diocese there are BEC committees.

+There are 40 parishes in the Diocese of Chanthaburi, 26 parishes (55 BECs) that started BEC activities as follows :

- Srakao District 7 parishes ; 4 parishes (7 BECs).

- Prachinburi District 8 parishes ; 3 parishes (6 BECs).

- Hua Phai District 6 parishes ; 6 parishes (14 BECs).

- Sriracha District 9 parishes ; 9 parishes (10 BECs).

- Chanthaburi District 10 parishes ; 4 parishes (18 BECs).

Benefits & Challenges of BEC in the diocesan mission.

*BEC is both target and process of leading ecclesial communities to be the communities of disciples, encouraging the neighbors to live as small Christian community.

*BEC is a new trend of pastoral ministries that encourages the laity to act as missionary in the evangelization.

*BEC is a new trend of pastoral ministries that encouraging the laity to be witnesses.

*BEC is a new trend of evangelization according to the priority of the Catholic Church.

*BEC is an essential tool of Pastoral council in working for Christian brotherhoods.

*BEC makes the ecclesial community alive and takes care of each another.

*BEC members have the Word of God to be the center of their lives, regularly meet and share the Word of God.

*In starting BEC, the priest is a key-person in sustaining leaders and looking after BEC activities under the structure of parish.

*Lay leader is a must in order to keep BEC activities going well.

*The best way of starting BEC activities is to start with pastoral council, the representatives of each zone in the parish.

*The challenge of BEC for the pastoral councils is that they have to see the necessity of BEC and start it.

*The challenge of BEC for the priests is how to integrate BEC into the structure of pastoral council.

Guideline for Exposure

Why an exposure programme?

In learning about SCCs we have both theory and practice. In the classroom we learn about the concepts and the principles related to SCCs. We search for the reasons for SCCs.

There are parishes here in Thailand which have SCCs— they have lived the experience of SCCs. They are a resource for us to learn from the living reality of these SCCs. They have translated the theory into a living reality and we should admire their efforts.

Our visit to the SCCs in these parishes is also to extend the hand of friendship and fellowship in the Holy Spirit. We are ambassadors of Christ and we are privileged to be invited to visit a living community whether they are fully developed or just beginning their communitarian life.

What to look out for?

We should go on our visit with an open mind as sisters and brothers in Christ to learn and observe. We can look for the following areas in the life of our SCCs:

1. How did they initiate the process – what is the history of this SCC, who were the key persons responsible?
2. How important is Gospel Sharing?
3. What training was provided and what did they participate in?
4. What is the role of the leaders – the Parish priest, the Parish Pastoral Council, the animators of the small Christian Communities, etc?
5. Is there rotating leadership among the animators?
6. What are the services and activities carried out by the SCCs?
7. Do the members of the SCCs appreciate their community? What about their neighbours, do they also appreciate the community? Who and how many are attending the meetings of the SCCs?
8. How are the SCCs sustained?
9. What were some difficulties and challenges and how did they overcome them?
10. What are the links between the SCCs and the parish community and other SCCs?
11. Do you feel that this SCC is growing or is it staying in the same place with no growth?
12. How is the relationship of this SCC with the people of different faiths and beliefs in the neighbourhood?
13. What are the common activities that this SCC do with people of different faith and beliefs in the neighbourhood?

Build each other up

As observers we may come across situations or decisions that are apparently wrong. We should never comment or criticize, rather, we should ask the reasons for such a situation and try to understand it. In the course of interactions with the community, if they ask for your opinion or suggestions on a problem they are facing, it is better to share your own experience rather than giving advice or corrections. As visitors, we would like to appreciate and affirm all the good things that we see and hear and keep silent on things we feel are not so good.

After our visit, the community should feel motivated to live their SCC life more actively and faithfully. They should feel encouraged by us and not demoralized.

Finally, remember not to take notes or read from this paper during the visit. Just keep the points in mind and prepare yourself beforehand.

Kindly share the gifts you have brought from your country with the SCC you visit.
Have a fruitful visit.



Exposure to SCCs / BECs on 25th October.

In the Archdiocese of Bangkok: (60)

Sata Cruz Cluster

- Our Lady of Lourdes's (Bangsakae) 5
- St. Louis Marie's (Bangkae) 5
- St. Peter's (Sampran) 10

Nongchok Cluster

- St. Theresa's (Nongchok) 8
- St. Raphael's (Paknam) 6
- Holy Infant's (Km.8) 6

Assumption Cathedral Cluster

- St. Louis's (Sathorn) 12
- Fatima's (Din Dang) 8

In the Diocese of Chantaburi: (40)

Chonburi Cluster

- Ss. Philip & James' Parish (Hua Pai) 20
- Holy Name of Jesus' (Chonburi) 4
- Sacred Heart's (Si Racha) 6

Pattaya Cluster (Nong Prue)

- St. Nicholas' (Pattaya) 10
- Assumption's (Pattaya)

In the Diocese Rachaburi: (30)

- St. Joseph's (Baan-pong)
- St. Anthony's (Wat Kok)
- Sacred Heart's (Wat Pleng)
- St. Magaretta's (Bang Tan)



Sharing of Exposure Programme

I. ARCHDIOCESE OF BANGKOK

1. What touched you most in the experience?

- a. Their hospitality and welcome
- b. Appreciate the faith of the archdiocese of Bangkok
- c. Appreciate the history of the Church of Bangkok
- d. The expose by a lay theologian on Catholics and Buddhists
- e. Quality of Christian life
- f. Their openness in sharing the Word of God
- g. The Interreligious dialogue environment especially personal relationship among Priests, Monks and Imams.
- h. Deeper understanding and respect to each others' religious beliefs and faith
- i. The sharing of the deaf and dumb
- j. The priest cares for the poor and marginalized in the community
- k. The visit to the Buddhist Temple and Mosque
- l. The 7 Steps Gospel Sharing
- m. No difficulty between the three religions
- n. At the Gospel Sharing only one woman shared from her heart
- o. The presence and participation of youth was encouraging
- p. Sharing from the heart
- q. A Buddhist participate in Gospel Sharing
- r. The Gospel sharing
- s. The Eucharist
- t. The inter faith dialogue

2. Share some insights from the experience

- a. Participatory approach in the liturgical celebrations
- b. Their openness towards other religions
- c. The Word of God is open for all to understand even for deaf and dumb
- d. Strong family bonding in the SCCs
- e. Dignity of human life
- f. Perseverance in continuing BECs
- g. Sharing responsibilities
- h. Good organization
- i. Experience of true sense of community and love
- j. Hospitality of the people and the sharing at dinner

- k. Good leadership among the laity
- l. Commitment of the laity
- m. Willingness to move forward
- n. The Gospel Sharing was very open and good
- o. The celebration of the Sunday liturgy was good
- p. The organization of the parishes in the diocese
- q. The Diocesan group for Inter religious dialogue
- r. Life sharing was good and spontaneous
- s. There is good awareness of BECs
- t. After Gospel Sharing, there was a blessing by the older ladies of the community
- u. The Church of Thailand is providing quality of life

3. Some observations

- a. Parish Leadership
 - i. approachable
 - ii. encouraging
 - iii. good coordination and active participation
 - iv. good pastoral leadership one with the people
 - v. preparing the second line of leadership
 - vi. the parish priest's interest in IRD
 - vii. active involvement of PPCs in BECs
- b. SCC history
 - i. Units have a good history in the parish
 - ii. Eager to inform about their history and good explanation of the history
 - iii. Culture very basic and united
- c. SCC Leadership
 - i. Rotating non dominating
 - ii. Prepared the second line of leadership
 - iii. Friendly in harmony
 - iv. The leader was good and planned for next meeting
- d. Gospel Sharing
 - i. They are familiar with 7 Steps Gospel Sharing Method
 - ii. From the heart and followed the expression
 - iii. Fraternaly, sincere and concrete
 - iv. Very good
- e. Relationship with people of other faiths
 - i. Cordial
 - ii. Dialogue at every level
 - iii. Very close with Buddhist monks
 - iv. Good understanding
 - v. Impressive

- vi. Share festivals like Christmas
- vii. The Thai culture was the uniting factor
- f. Other interesting observations
 - i. Everyone carries a Bible
 - ii. Welcoming and making one feel as family
 - iii. There is a good relationship of the Church in Bangkok and other faiths communities,
 - iv. There is a true concern in diocese on IRD
 - v. The leadership of the parish priest
 - vi. Good support from the parish priest
 - vii. No mention of PPCs
 - viii. Good presentation of the history of the Church in Thailand
 - ix. Good cooperation among leaders
 - x. Good fellowship dinner
 - xi. Good Catholic fellowship
 - xii. Women are more involved in Church activities
 - xiii. The country leadership in promoting communal harmony
 - xiv. Visiting the sick and disabled
 - xv. The SCC built a house for a poor family

4. Some questions you may have to ask

- a. Is there any thing that has happened to damage the Inter Religious harmony?
- b. How was the Inter Religious Dialogue environment developed in Bangkok?
- c. How can we learn from the Church in Thailand the sense of being Church?
- d. How can the Church of Thailand be a source of inspiration for others?
- e. In Gospel Sharing how long can a person speak?
- f. Was there always IRD and unity?
- g. How are BECs supported in the parish?
- h. Do the BEC members meet regularly in the parish?
- i. Is there a stage by stage training for the BEC members?

II. DIOCESE OF RATCHBURI

1. What touched you most in the experience?

- a. The hospitality of the people
- b. Their simple sincerity
- c. They are living the Gospel
- d. IRD started 20 years ago
- e. Warm welcome
- f. Hospitality

- g. Full participation
- h. The contribution of men was remarkable
- i. Cooperation of ages and families
- j. Harmony among religions
- k. Down to earth religious tolerance and co-existence
- l. Dialogue is taking place in its entirety

2. Share some insights from the experience

- a. Conviction of one's own faith and allowing others to follow theirs
- b. Hospitality
- c. Pray and work together
- d. A lot of joy in the community
- e. Presentation of diocesan IRD in the parish
- f. Lay leadership has developed
- g. Harmonious living with people of different faiths
- h. Old and young participated in 7 Steps
- i. In one parish the people are very motivated
- j. Struggling through failures and waiting for God's help
- k. IRD is very fruitful and viable
- l. What they do is based on Scripture and Church teachings
- m. This is a post Vat II church
- n. The Parish Priest was the animator and told the people what to do, they do only 4 steps of Gospel Sharing
- o. Need to invite more families in the SCCs
- p. Need more training

3. Some observations

- a. Parish Leadership
 - i. Parish Priest did not participate, the participants did not meet the parish Priest
 - ii. In one parish the Parish Priest took on the leadership role
- b. SCC history
 - i. No mention of history
- c. SCC Leadership
 - i. OK
 - ii. not clear
 - iii. lay leadership
 - iv. not very strong
 - v. women take the lead
- d. Gospel Sharing
 - i. Did not follow the steps

- ii. Not clear of the steps
- iii. They did not bring Bibles for Gospel Sharing
- iv. Very well informed and family spirit
- e. Relationship with people of other faiths
- f. Other interesting observations
 - i. There was a lot of happiness, joyful and generosity
 - ii. Visits to the sick and elderly
 - iii. They improvise the steps in GS
 - iv. Need more training
 - v. Less children and men
 - vi. Using cell phones during Gospel Sharing

4. Some questions you want to ask

- a. What is the vision of the SCCs?
- b. How are the BECs divided in the parish?
- c. How did the BECs solve the IRD issues?
- d. Why don't they do 7 Steps and allow them to be touched by the Word since there was no silence nor sharing of the Word?
- e. Is it peace loving country due to the Buddhist presence?

III. DIOCESE OF CHANTBURI

1. What touched you most in the experience?

- a. The hospitality and welcome
- b. Praying with the Buddhist monks
- c. Bible enthronement before Gospel Sharing
- d. In one parish the Gospel Sharing was done very well
- e. The moves of dialogue between Catholics and Buddhist
- f. The program was well prepared
- g. Simple way of life
- h. They are living in faith and culture
- i. A gospel community with a mission
- j. Good relationships between Parish Priest, PPC members and people, good team spirit
- k. The visit to the Sikh temple and the welcome to our participants
- l. The meeting of people in the parish
- m. The commitment of the leaders
- n. Involvement of the youth

2. Share some insights from the experience

- a. Enthusiastic even though the group is new
- b. Good sharing of stories
- c. Welcoming and openness of the parish priest
- d. Sharing their goods among the poor
- e. The Buddhist monks and volunteers welcomed us to the Temple
- f. The Catholics and the Buddhist know one another and show respect and network with the Government
- g. The veneration of the Bible in Gospel Sharing
- h. Word of God and action go together
- i. The Church and the Mosque coexist and collaborate
- j. They are examples of living Christianity

3. Some observations

- a. Parish Leadership
 - i. The Parish Priest and PPC members are trying to empower people
 - ii. Parish Priest very supportive
 - iii. Well organized
 - iv. Good presentation
- b. SCC history
 - i. New group so a new culture of SCC is yet to take place
 - ii. There are ups and downs but the BECs are growing
 - iii. Feeling of oneness and friendship
- c. SCC Leadership
 - i. Need to be appreciated
 - ii. Lay empowerment, animating leadership
 - iii. The leaders are motivated
 - iv. Room for improvement
- d. Gospel Sharing
 - i. In the learning process
 - ii. Many came forward to share
 - iii. Good but could be improved
 - iv. Good sharing
 - v. Participative
- e. Relationship with people of other faiths
 - i. Good, open and spontaneous
 - ii. Open for dialogue and willing to learn from others
- f. Other interesting observations
 - i. Sharing of life with Muslims and Buddhists
 - ii. Sharing and accepting the scriptures of all religions

- iii. Integrating Gospel and life by visiting sick and needy
- iv. The visit should not be only for providing material help but also to listen and pray for them
- v. They meet once a month, could be more frequent
- vi. All went well
- vii. Respecting people of all cultures
- viii. They need more formation
- ix. The action following Gospel Sharing is good

4. Some questions you want to ask

- a. Is there a way to make BECs in the parish strong?
- b. How will the involvement of Parish Priests and priests of the diocese help in BECs?
- c. How often are the leaders trained?
- d. Why did the Buddhist not dine with us?



MEETING OF THE BISHOPS WITH ASIPA RESOURCE TEAM

1. Report of the AsIPA Desk



I. A Brief Outline of AsIPA (BEC) Desk

AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) is the way to implement a new way of being Church: a participatory Church.

1. Background of Establishment

During the FABC Plenary Assembly V in 1990 the Asian Bishops declared that the direction to go in the third millennium is to become a Church of communion and participation following the Vatican II vision: the Church (must become) a “communion of communities where laity, religious and clergy recognize and accept each other as sisters and brothers...it must be a Participatory Church...” (FABC V, 8.1.1-2). The bishops immediately proposed to find a way to implement this vision with formation programmes. As a result, AsIPA desk was established under the Office of the Laity of the FABC in 1993. AsIPA has evolved and become the overarching guideline and way to build up SCCs/BECs in Asia towards a participatory Church.

2. The Meaning of AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach)

- **Asian:** being authentic local Churches of Asia who reflect and respond to the reality of Asia.
- **Integral:** seeking harmony and balance between the faith and the life, between the spiritual and the social, between the individual and the community, between the hierarchical leadership and the co-responsibility of the laity; it is therefore integral in both its approach and its content.
- **Pastoral:** implementing and witnessing the vision of the new way of being Church; training the people of God particularly lay people, to carry out their mission in the Church and in the world. It requires a new style of leadership--empowering, enabling and shared leadership.
- **Approach:** as a process of realizing the vision of a participatory Church aiming to building up communities of Christ-centered (the Word-centered), Community-centered, and Mission-oriented.

3. AsIPA General Assemblies (GAs)

The General Assemblies have been a source of support, inspiration and growth for many national and diocesan teams and commissions promoting SCCs/BECs and the exchange of resources, experiences and friendship. The GAs have shown a very concrete way of building up a participatory Church - a communion in mission and mission to communion. Six AsIPA GAs were held once every three years as follows.

	Date	Place	No. of Participants	No. of Countries	Theme
I	1996	Bangkok,	34	8	Reflection on the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach
	November 5-15	Thailand			
II	2000	Bangkok,	105	13	A New Way of Being Church in the New Millennium
	October 12-21	Thailand			
III	2003	Seoul,	123	16	SCCs/BECs – Empowering People to Serve
	September 2-9	South Korea			
IV	2006	Trivandrum,	273	14	SCCs/BECs Towards a Church of Communion
	November 8-15	India			
V	2009	Davao,	225	17	Do this in Memory of me (Lk. 22:19): Bread Broken and Word Shared in SCCs
	October 20-28	Philippines			
VI	2012	Nainamadama,	151	16	“Go you are sent forth”(Mt. 10:5): following Jesus in mission: Small Christian Communities serving and ministering
	October 18-24	Sri Lanka			

4. AsIPA International/National Training Courses

Different AsIPA training courses with exposure to SCCs/BECs at Asian, national and diocesan levels have been held in almost all the member conferences of the FABC in 17 countries from the beginning. The AsIPA International Training Workshop Series as an on-going training course over three years for diocesan and national teams responsible for forming SCCs/BECs have been run since 2010. These courses have been rated as very helpful in deepening our understanding of a vision and improving the skills needed in a participatory Church.

5. ART (AsIPA Resource Team) and National/Diocesan Team

The first AsIPA General Assembly in 1996 created an Editorial Board to oversee the creation and publication of new AsIPA training modules. The Editorial Board became the AsIPA Resource Team (ART) in 2004. As of December 2014, the ART consists of 11 persons from 7 countries, meeting together at least once a year, organizing Asian level training courses and accepting invitations from different countries and dioceses to assist them in their training workshops as well as developing AsIPA materials.

There are national teams under the bishops' conferences for promoting SCCs/BECs in 7 countries, Bangladesh, India, Korea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand besides many diocesan teams in most of the member conferences of the FABC – with translated materials and more contextualized training modules.

6. Materials Developed

AsIPA texts consist of four (with two new series added at the VII GA) series of materials with specific objectives that will assist the facilitators and the participants in training courses. They can be used for parish training teams, small Christian communities, neighborhood groups and even for sessions with larger groups. They are prepared as a guide for a participatory process. AsIPA texts have been translated into more than 15 Asian languages. They have been evaluated as useful and efficient tools.

II. AsIPA International Training Courses since 2010

1. BILA I on SCCs in 2010

It was focused on the vision of the communion of communities and role of bishops in building SCCs. It was designed specifically for new dioceses and new bishops. As a result, most of countries participated in this BILA designed some plans practically to embody a new vision of the Church, a participatory Church. This BILA produced a final statement too.

- Dates: October 18 (Mon.)-23 (Sat.) 2010
- Venue: Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand
- Number of Participants:
 - 89 participants: bishops 12, priests 44, religious sisters 9, laity 24
 - From 14 countries: Bangladesh (13), Hongkong (2), India (6), Indonesia (2), Korea (1), Macau (1), Malaysia (2), Mongolia (1), Myanmar (2), Philippines (11), Singapore (4), Sri Lanka (7), Taiwan (13), Thailand (24)

2. AsIPA One International Training Course in 2010

This course aimed at learning the vision of a participatory church, understanding SCCs/BECs, knowing foundations for community building, acquiring key pastoral tools for SCCs/BECs and learning gospel sharing methods and awareness programmes.

- Dates: October 25 (Mon.)-30 (Sat.) 2010
- Venue: Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand
- Number of Participants:
 - 88 participants (bishops 1, priests 50, religious sisters 12, laity 25)
 - From 13 countries: Bangladesh (13), India (6), Indonesia (1), Korea (1), Macau (1), Malaysia (6), Mongolia (1), Myanmar (2), Philippines (10), Singapore (1), Sri Lanka (2), Thailand (39)

3. AsIPA Two International Training Course in 2011

The AsIPA Two Course aimed at acquiring more practical and concrete pastoral tools and skills for nourishing SCCs/BECs including an exposure programme on SCCs. It provided additional gospel sharing methods, how to make awareness programmes and strengthened pastoral skills.

- Dates: October 13 (Thur.)-21 (Fri.) 2011
- Venue: The Pacific Palace Hotel, Batam Island of Pangkalpinang Diocese, Indonesia
- Number of Participants:
 - 64 participants: bishops 2, priests 25, religious sisters 5, Seminarian 1, laity 31



- From 11 countries: Hong Kong (2), India (4), Indonesia (20), Korea (3), Malaysia (1), Myanmar (8), Philippines (2), Singapore (1), Sri Lanka (1), Taiwan (5), Thailand (17)

4. VI AsIPA General Assembly in 2012

Those who have been in charge of forming SCCs at national or diocesan level participated in VI AsIPA GA. It aimed to deepen communion among all SCCs leaders to further the mission; identify different ministries in the SCCs to promote the Kingdom of God; identify resource materials found useful in building SCCs in different countries and a forum for AsIPA practitioners to share their experiences. We achieved these objectives as some of main gains and challenges were described on the final statement of VI AsIPA GA.

- Dates: October 18th (Thur.) - 24th (Wed.) 2012
- Venue: Chintana Center, Nainamadama, Sri Lanka
- Theme: “Go you are sent forth” (Mt.10:5) - following Jesus in mission Small Christian Communities serving and ministering
- Co-organizers: AsIPA (BEC) Desk, Catholic Bishops Conference of Sri Lanka, National SCCs Teams of Sri Lanka
- Total Number of Participants: 151 participants from 16 countries (Bangladesh 7, India 23, Indonesia 8, Korea 12, Malaysia 4, Mongolia 1, Myanmar 7, Pakistan 2, Philippines 4, Singapore 3, Sri Lanka 61, Taiwan 2, Thailand 10, Germany 4, South Africa 1, Switzerland 2) - 11 bishops, 71 priests, 12 religious sisters and 57 laity

5. AsIPA Three International Training Workshop in 2013

AsIPA (BEC) Desk has designed the AsIPA International Training Workshop Series as an on-going training course over three years for diocesan and national teams responsible for fostering SCCs/BECs. The aim of the AsIPA Three International Training Workshop was achieved in following areas; to journey together as AsIPA (BEC) teams in building a participatory Church, to deepen the understanding and develop skills in Awareness Programme, Amos Programme etc., to understand social teachings of the Church, and to realize that the importance of spiritual formation of SCCS leaders

- Dates: Oct. 7(Mon.)-12(Sat.), 2013
- Venue: Camillian Pastoral Care Center in LatKrabang, Bangkok, Thailand
- Theme: Sustaining SCCs and deepening the experience of mission
- Co-organizers: AsIPA (BEC) Desk, Catholic Bishops Conference of Thailand, National BEC Teams of Thailand
- Number of Participants: 77 participants from 11 countries (Bangladesh 2, India 5, Indonesia 5, Korea 6, Malaysia 6, Myanmar 5, Pakistan 3, Sri Lanka 3, Taiwan 12, Thailand 27, Vietnam 3)- 2 bishops, (2 bishops, 36priests, 11 religious sisters and 28 laity)

6. BILA II on SCCs in 2014

- Dates: Sept. 25th (Thur.)-30th (Tue.) till the evening, 2014
- Venue: Camillian Pastoral Care Center in LatKradbang, Bangkok, Thailand
- Theme: SCCs leading to New Evangelization

- Number of Participants: 107 participants from 11 countries of Asia (Bangladesh 4, India 23, Indonesia 3, Korea 4, Myanmar 13, Pakistan 6, Philippines 7, Sri Lanka 5, Taiwan 5, Thailand 34, Vietnam 2; Singapore 1 as a member of AsIPA Resource Team) (17 Bishops, 62 Priests, 12 Religious Sisters, 16 lay persons)

III. Supporting National/Diocesan Training Courses on SCCs/BECs since 2011

1. The 28th Annual Seminar for Thai priests in 2011

This seminar followed the content of the BILA I on SCCs at the request of the Thai Bishops who attended the programme October in 2010 and facilitated by the AsIPA Resource Team. Around 300 priests attended from all the dioceses of Thailand at this seminar held every two years for all the priests of Thailand.

- Dates: July 11 (Mon.)-15 (Fri.) 2011
- Venue: Baan Phu Waan, Sampran, Thailand
- Topic: Priests- Pastoral Ministers of Communities of Christ's Disciples
- Contents: a vision of a participatory Church, understanding SCCs, enabling leadership in SCCs, pastoral tools for sharing the vision with our people, gospel sharing methods and awareness programmes
- Number of Participants: about 300 Thai priests and 10 bishops

2. AsIPA II Training Workshop in Bangladesh in 2012

CCP (Christian Communities Program) Desk of Laity Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh and AsIPA(BEC) desk co-organized the Workshop. The programme was designed very similar to AsIPA Two International Training Course in 2011. Participants remarked they deepened their understanding of a vision, new way of being Church and of gospel sharing methods etc. It became thrust to strengthen SCCs national/diocesan teams and their network in Bangladesh as well.

- Dates: August 13(Mon.)-18 (Sat.) 2012
- Venue: CBCB center Mhommadpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Number of Participants: 58 participants from all seven dioceses

3. SCCs Workshops in Myanmar in 2013 and 2015

The laity commission of Myanmar initiated National SCCs Workshop for diocesan directors of SCCs and pastoral core team in Myanmar. The laity commission of diocese of Myitkyina organized SCCs workshop for diocesan priests and lay leaders of SCCs. Bishop Francis Daw Tang, chairman of laity commission of Myanmar and was fully present for the workshop.

A. Myanmar National SCCs Workshops in 2013

Participants expressed that they were well informed about the importance of SCCs and Gospel sharing in the new way of being Church through this workshop. All most all committed they will promote gospel sharing in their parish and diocese.

- Dates: July 22 (Mon.)- 24(Wed.), 2013
- Venue: CBCM center, Yangon, Myanmar
- Number of Participants: 22 participants from 13 dioceses(3 laity, 2 religious sisters, 1 deacon, 15 priests, 1 bishop).
- Facilitator: Dr. Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro (Executive Secretary of AsIPA Desk) with local team

B. SCCs Workshop in diocese of Myitkyina in 2013

All most all diocesan priests and laity who are actively working in the parishes attended it. Participants realized that SCCs will strengthen the church through the participation of SCCs in every parish. As follow-up plan a SCCs seminar was held on Nov. 19 to 22, 2013 at the diocesan level. Each parish was required to send five candidates to be future facilitators of the diocese.

- Dates: July 29(Mon.)-30(Tue.), 2013
- Venue: the Pastoral Central of Diocese of Myitkyina
- Number of Participants: 59 participants(48 laity, 2 religious sisters, 18 priests, 1 bishop)

C. National SCCs Workshops in 2015

- The National AsIPA Workshop (April 7-11, the Center of CBCM in Yangon): 37 participants from 12 Arch/dioceses
- The AsIPA Workshop for Kalay and Hakha dioceses (April 13-17, Bishop's Compound in Kalay): 70 participants (2 bishops, 68 representatives);
- The BECs/AsIPA Workshop for Myitkyina and Banmaw dioceses (April 19-24, Pastoral Center of Myitkyina): 50 participants (36 from Myitkyinan and 14 from Banmaw);

4. AsIPA Workshop in Pakistan in 2013

The revival of AsIPA in Pakistan has been good news. The National Laity Commission of the PCBC under the guidance of Bp. Max J. Rodrigues, chairman of NLC has organized three AsIPA workshops in Pakistan. AsIPA Resource Team conducted the workshops with local facilitators as follows.

- A. AsIPA Workshop in Lahore for the AsIPA leaders: 10th -12th Nov.2013
- B. AsIPA Workshop for major superiors and all bishops: 13th Nov.2013
- C. AsIPA Workshop in Karachi for the AsIPA leaders: 14th -16th Nov.2013

IV. Other Projects (Publication and Developing Modules) since 2009

1. AsIPA Research Project with EAPI

The East Asian Pastoral Institute was commissioned to study the effectiveness of the AsIPA process as well as the implementation of the process in five dioceses in five different countries--India, Korea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand that claim to be using the AsIPA methodology, process and materials between 2009 and 2010. The final results were published in July 2011 in a double issue of the East Asian Pastoral Review (EAPR). The results of this survey was explored by AsIPA Resource Team and presented in AsIPA GA VI in 2012.

2. Publishing of AsIPA General Assembly V and VII documentation

3. Developing AsIPA Modules in 2015

4 modules on IRD, 6 Modules on Spiritual Formation, 5 Modules on Training Trainers

2. Note from the meeting with bishops



The meeting was presided by Bishop Francis Vira, DD, Bishop of Changmai, Thailand. Twelve Bishops attended from India, Indonesia, S. Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Six of them were attending the AsIPA General Assembly for the first time. After the prayer led by Bp. Cyprian, Bp. Vira thanked them for joining this event. Ms. Bibiana Roh, Exec. Secretary of AsIPA Desk, gave a brief explanation of what AsIPA stands for and its efforts since 2010. Eight of the members of the AsIPA Resource Team (ART) were present. Ms. Wendy Louis, Exec. Secretary of the FABC Office of Laity and Family under which the AsIPA Desk is among 4 other Desks, presented the composition and areas of concern of each.

The Bishops presented what is being done in their respective countries/ dioceses and expressed interest in the tasks of the AsIPA Desk:

Bp. Vira narrated how Thailand has made the efforts to build Small Christian Communities to strengthen the faith life of the people and for evangelization, as high priority.

Bp. Cyprian of India, expressed his gratitude and appreciation for all the efforts being done in India, especially the 30-day Theological Course on SCCs. Inquiries were made when the next 30-day course will be held. Aside from the course in India, it was also announced that a similar course is being offered in Bangkok. The Bishops of Sri Lanka also expressed their interest that a similar course be offered in their country. The 30-day course give the participants a chance to do immersion in the communities and the Bishops expressed appreciation how it helps their seminarians who receive not only a head level understanding about SCCs, but some experience as well. Fr. Vijay, who is in charge of the course, expressed the present constraints he is undergoing to finance the courses. Bp. Hilarius from Indonesia expressed how he saw his people change after so many years of effort, like planting a tree where there is a need to take care of the roots which takes place as people pray

together with the Word, strengthening one another. He put much emphasis on encouraging the people to read and pray with the Gospel. He affirmed how the AsIPA method was most helpful in bringing about this change.

Bp. Ri of Korea explained the importance of offering a method that will help the “people enter deeply into the living Word of God,” which is expressed very clearly in *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis. He also gave importance to the need to face the challenge of the world living out the social dimension of our faith.

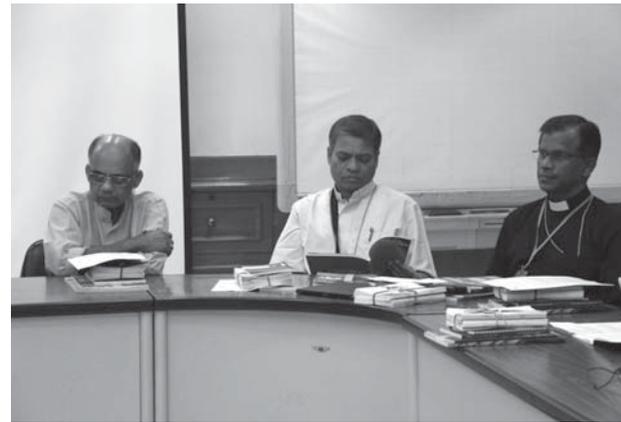
Bp. Rimando from the Philippines, expressed the challenge to help the people deepen their faith through the Word and the Sacrament.

Bp. Samson of Pakistan presented the importance of inviting Religious Sisters and give them training to use this method since they have much influence in the Church in Pakistan.

Bp. Sebastian from India, expressed how the Church is so institutionalized and hence depriving the pastors of time to be with the people and to give them training.

During dinner time, Wendy expressed the need to invest more in training lay leaders. Her second point was on the need to re-integrate ministries for women and family life and to coordinate efforts at the grass root level in our small communities.

Bp. Vira ended with a word of thanks: “you have made me understand my episcopacy more!” He invited all to continue sharing during the remaining days of the General Assembly.



PLANNING

GUIDELINE FOR PLANNING

Country: _____ Diocese: _____ Parish: _____

1. What are your objectives for the next three years to promote and sustain the SCCs in your country/diocese/parish, foster greater communion and initiating interreligious dialogue?

Examples for Objectives

- a) *To promote SCCs in ten parishes of the diocese within the next two years.*
- b) *To establish parish/diocesan animation team.*
- c) *To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel sharing groups using 7 Steps and/or other methods like Group Response method and Look-Listen-Love.*
- d) *To raise awareness of SCCs on IRD.*

2. Prepare specific time bound action plans to realize these objectives.

The program should be:

- S= Specific
- M= Measurable
- A= Achievable/ Attainable
- R= Realistic/Resources available
- T= Time bound

Examples for concrete tasks:

What	Where	when	How	who
1. Training of SCC leaders				
2. Producing resource materials		What Topics?		For whom?
3. Awareness Programmes on IRD				

Planning Reports

Bangladesh

1. What are your objectives for the next three years to promote and sustain the SCCs in your country/diocese/ parish, foster greater communion and initiating interreligious dialogue?
 - a) To promote SCCs in 7 dioceses in 21 parishes within the next two years.
 - b) To activate diocesan teams and establish parish teams in 21 parishes.
 - c) To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel sharing groups using 7 steps and/ or other methods like Group Response method and Look-Listen-Love.
 - d) To raise awareness of SCCs on IRD.
2. Action Plan:

What	Where	When	How	Who
National Workshop	Dhaka	June 2016	Gospel Sharing Methods, IRD	National and Diocesan Team Members
	Rajshahi	June 2017	Leadership, IRD	Same participants
	Mymensingh	June 2018	Awareness Program, IRD	Same participants
Diocesan Workshop	All seven dioceses	June-August 2016	Gospel Sharing Methods, IRD	Diocesan Team Members, SCC Animators, Representative from all Parishes
		June-August 2017	Leadership, IRD	
		June-August 2018	Awareness Program, IRD	
Producing resource materials	Dhaka	December 2016	Translation of new booklets of series B, E and F in Bengali.	National Office of SCCs

India

Objectives

Recognizing the fact that *Jesu Christ Jayanti* (Jubilee) 2000 takes the formation of SCCs as a pastoral priority for the Church in India, and keeping in mind the significant progress achieved so far we propose the following:

1. To promote and assist in the **formation of Diocesan Animation Teams** in all the dioceses.
2. To develop appropriate **formation programs, modules** for priests, religious and bishops for the concept of the New Way of Being Church and its implementation
3. To promote suitable **formation programs for Seminarians and Novices** in all formation houses to enable them to take up leadership role in the model of NWBC as they start their ministries after their ordinations and professions.
4. To promote **awareness on Inter Religious Dialogue and collaboration** with people of other faiths with the long term objective of moving on to BHC.

We propose these objectives to the **National Service Team (NST) for SCCs** in India for its consideration to draw appropriate Action Plans for the Dioceses of India.



Indonesia

The Objectives for the next three years :

Diocese of Tanjungkarang :

1. Report to the Bishop about the AsIPA GA VII
2. If the Bishop decides to start Asipa Programm, then the plan to introduce and to promote AsIPA and SCCs be set up soon for some selected parishes and among priests
3. Promoting AsIPA Programm will be done in cooperation with Pangkalpinang Diocese

Diocese of Pangkalpinang :

1. Reinforce 7 Steps Gospel Sharing and initiate Group Response and Look-Listen-Love method
2. Raise awareness of SCCs on Inter-religious Dialogue
3. Get AsIPA Method introduced to all SCCs in all parishes around the diocese
4. Having more skilled, faithful and humble leaders and facilitators

Specific Action to realize the objectives :

1. Strengthen the animation team with refresh programm : Vicariate and Parish level
2. Prepare and produce materials and modules to be used during the sessions of getting the objectives realized.

Japan

What	Where	When	How	Who
Make an animation team	Catholic center	In a year	Call by name	Fr. Nakahama Mr. Nagano
Formation Course	South District	In a year	Using by text books	AsIPA Team
AsIPA Seminar for Priests	Catholic center	Next Year	Meeting with Bishop	Fr. Nakahama Mr. Nagano
Publish detailed information on AsIPA	Catholic Center	Next year		Fr. Nakahama Mr. Nagano

Korea

1. We have a national gathering of SCCs every year
2. To promote SCCs we will meet more people and parishes
3. We find the AsIPA Texts very effective so we will make efforts to translate them.
4. We will use other methods of Gospel sharing
5. We will collaborate more using IRD Texts
6. We find it difficult to sustain our training and developing resources so we are planning to establish a kind of SCC centre or Institute for sustainable support

Malaysia

The representatives from Malaysia will propose to our dioceses to look into the following areas:

- 1) To explore the use of various Gospel Sharing methods with the aim to encourage BEC members to be more active in the sharing of the Word of God.
- 2) To continue to raise awareness and provide guidance for BECs to engage in interreligious dialogue.
- 3) To provide on-going formation on spirituality and facilitating skills for the BEC leaders.

Pakistan

Diocese of Karachi

1. To promote SCCs in 8 parishes of the diocese within the next two years
2. To establish Parish and Diocesan Teams
3. To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel Sharing groups using 7 Steps and other methods like Group Response and Look-Listen-Love
4. To raise awareness of SCCs on IRD
5. Training of SCC leaders at the Cathedral on 12 Dec 2015: two from each parish
6. Prepare resource materials for all parishes
7. Awareness programs on IRD of basic issues for IP office, staff and students of schools and institutions

Diocese of Lahore

1. To promote SCCs in 8 parishes of the diocese within the next two years
2. To establish Parish and Diocesan Teams
3. To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel Sharing groups using 7 Steps and other methods like Group Response and Look-Listen-Love
4. To raise awareness of SCCs on IRD
5. Training of SCC leaders in Lahore on 20/11/2015: two from each parish
6. Prepare Seven Steps Gospel Sharing materials for all parishes and leaders
7. Awareness programs on IRD of basic issues for staff and students of schools and institutions by April 2016

Diocese of Quetta

1. To promote SCCs in 8 parishes of the diocese within the next two years
2. To establish Parish and Diocesan Teams
3. To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel Sharing groups using 7 Steps and other methods like Group Response and Look-Listen-Love
4. To raise awareness of SCCs on IRD
5. Training of SCC leaders in Quetta in Jan 2016: two from each parish
6. Prepare Seven Steps Gospel Sharing materials for all parishes
7. Awareness programs on IRD of basic issues for staff and students of schools and institutions after 1 year

Diocese of Hyderabad

1. To promote SCCs in 8 parishes of the diocese within the next two years
2. To establish Parish and Diocesan Teams
3. To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel Sharing groups using 7 Steps and other methods like Group Response, and Look-Listen-Love
4. To raise awareness of SCCs on IRD
5. Training of SCC leaders in Mirpurkhas for two leaders from each parish using correspondence and power point presentations
6. Produce materials on 7 Steps Gospel Sharing for SCC Leaders
7. Awareness programs on IRD for staff and students of schools and institutions by April 2016

Philippines

Objectives:

- 1) To raise awareness of SCCs/BECs on Inter-religious dialogue
- 2) To introduce, initiate and re-enforce Gospel Sharing methods in different groups and SCCs/BECs.
- 3) To revitalize the SCCs/BECs in the dioceses and parishes.

WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	HOW	FOR WHOM
1.BEC ANNUAL VICARIAL GATHERING In the DIOCESE OF BAYOMBONG	St. Vincent Parish, Madela, Phils Lunduyan Pastoral Center	December	By conducting awareness session, holy mass, fellowship	LEADERS/MEMBERS
2. QUARTERLY BEC MEETING	Lunduyan Pastoral Center	November	Review of Activities Evaluation/Planning	BEC Animators
3. AWARENESS	Lunduyan Pastoral Center	April	Session on IRD	Leaders/Members
4. GOSPEL SHARING DURING MEETING	Maryknoll Center, Bangkok	Monthly	Look, Listen & Love	Marknoll Bangkok Team
5. IRD in ACTION	Mon Buddhist Temple	School Calendar	Informal Education Regular Meeting with Buddhist Monk	Migrant Children
6. GOSPEL SHARING	Household Faith Communities Mission of Charity Convent Love Flock Faith Community PCLM Centers	Regular Meetings Twice a month Once a month Weekly	Introduce 7 Steps Method; Look, Listen, Love Introduce Gospel Sharing & IRD Session on IRD & Gospel Sharing Session on IRD & Gospel Sharing	Neighbors in the villages Workers of the Sisters of Charity Leaders and community Lay Missioners & Staff
7. BEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	Paco, Manila	Nov. 11-14, 2015	SHARING OF BEC EXPERIENCES	BEC LEADERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Sri Lanka

1. Introduce AsIPA to 10 more parishes where it is not functioning.
2. Increase the number of cells
3. Make a special request to the Bishops to prioritize SCCs
4. Re-enforce the Animation team
 - a. Form a good national team
 - b. Strengthen the Diocesan and Parish Animation Teams
 - c. Have Sinhala and Tamil teams
5. Special efforts to introduce AsIPA texts (as many try to take short cut methods) to:
 - a. Presbyters
 - b. Leaders at the National level
 - c. Diocesan teams
6. Introduce other Gospel Sharing Methods
7. Dialogue: Without provoking the hearts of the faithful, we take a gradual process of awareness building on IRD
8. Meeting of National and Diocesan committees in 2016
9. 30 days Theology course on SCCs in Sri Lanka

Taiwan

This is a plan from one deanery

1. To promote and sustain the SCCs in the 14 parishes
2. To establish Deanery Animation Team
3. To initiate and re-enforce Gospel Sharing groups using 7 Steps Gospel Sharing method, Groups Response and Look-Listen-Love
4. To raise awareness of SCCs on Social Justice, Ecological problems
5. Prepare specific time bound action plan to realize these objectives.



Thailand

1. What are your objectives for the next three years to promote and sustain in SCCs in your country, foster greater communion and initiating interreligious dialogue?
 - a) To organize SCC National Assembly
 - b) To produce resource materials and translate new AsIPA text
 - c) To train SCC leaders
 - d) To establish national net working

2. Prepare specific time bound action plans to realize these objectives.

What	Where	When	How	Who
1. Organizing SCC Assembly	Cheangmai	Oct 2017		SCC leaders
2. Translating new AsIPA texts		2016		Core team
3. Training of SCC leaders	Deanery & diocesan level	Feb -Mar 2016-2017	Basic SCC SCC Theo	Lay leaders Priests & Rel.
4. Establishing net work	Camillian Centre Ladkrabang	28 Jan 2016 Twice a year	Meeting	core team and diocese representatives



EVALUATION

Country _____

Position: Priest ___ Religious Sr. ___ Lay woman ___ Lay man ___

Kindly tick all appropriate boxes that correspond to your answer rating from 4 to 1 (with #4 as highest):

1. How well did we achieve our objectives?

- 1.1. A forum for AsIPA practitioners to share their experiences
- 1.2 To deepen communion among all SCC leaders to further the mission
- 1.3 To indentify resource materials useful in building SCCs in different countries
- 1.4 To discover the source of our inspiration for peace and solidarity in the Word and Eucharist.
- 1.5 To enable SCCs/BECs to bear witness to people of different faiths and beliefs.
- 1.6 To enable SCCs/BECs to be open to respect, understand and learn from people of different faiths and beliefs.
- 1.7 To find creative ways of bringing about greater peace and solidarity with people of different faiths and beliefs.

No.	4.VERY GOOD	3. GOOD	2. FAIRLY WELL	1.NOT SO WELL
1.1.				
1.2.				
1.3.				
1.4.				
1.5				
1.6				
1.7				

2. How well were the following sessions done?

- 2.1. Country reports on SCC work since AsIPA GA VI
- 2.2. Key note addresses on SCC & Ecclesial Communion
- 2.3. Key note addresses on SCCs & IRD
- 2.4. AsIPA Sessions on IRD (B/12B & B 12/C)
- 2.5. AsIPA Sessions on "F 2" series (Training trainers)
- 2.6. AsIPA Sessions on "E 7" (Spiritual Formation)
- 2.7. AsIPA Sessions on "F 2" series (Training trainers)
- 2.8. Talk on Harvesting/Recapturing the vision of SCCs to Move towards
- 2.9. Story Telling on IRD in SCCs

No.	4.VERY GOOD	3. GOOD	2. FAIRLY WELL	1.NOT SO WELL
2.1.				
2.2.				
2.3.				
2.4.				
2.5				
2.6				
2.7				
2.8				
2.9				

- 3. How well was the exposure experience in the parish SCCs?
- 4. How would you rate the food, lodging and other facilities?
- 5. How was the cultural night?
- 6. How would you rate your own participation? Comment.

No.	4.VERY GOOD	3. GOOD	2. FAIRLY WELL	1.NOT SO WELL
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

- 7. What are your most significant learnings/experiences/insights from the VII AsIPA GA?
Please list and comment: _____

- 8. What new facilitating skills did you learn from the facilitators of this Assembly?

- 9. What two words best describe your experience at this AsIPA General Assembly?

- 10. What are your one or two suggestions for the next AsIPA General Assembly?

You may write more at the back, if needed.
Thank you very much for your cooperation!



Collation Of The Evaluation Forms

	4. Very good	3. Good	2. Fairly well	1. Not so well	No. of answers	Mean score
1. How well did we achieve our objectives?						
1.1 A forum for AsIPA practitioners to share their experiences	27	26	5		58	3.38
1.2 To deepen communion among all SCC leaders to further the mission	24	38	3		65	3.32
1.3 To identify resource materials useful in building SCCs in different countries	26	10		60	3.23	
1.4 To discover the source of our inspiration for peace and solidarity in the Word and Eucharist.	23	31	3	1	58	3.31
1.5 To enable SCCs/BECs to bear witness to people of different faiths and beliefs	24	28	8		60	3.27
1.6 To enable SCCs/BECs to be open to respect, understand and learn from people of different faiths and beliefs.	26	26	6		58	3.34
1.7 To find creative ways of bringing about greater peace and solidarity with people of different faiths and beliefs.	24	21	15		60	3.15
2. How well were the following sessions done?						
2.1. Country reports on SCC work since AsIPA GA VI	23	33			56	3.41
2.2 Key note addresses on SCC & Ecclesial Communion	27	30	2		59	3.42
2.3 Key note addresses on SCCs & IRD	36	21			57	3.63
2.4 AsIPA Sessions on IRD (B/12B & B 12/C)	18	39	1		58	3.33
2.5 AsIPA Sessions on "F 2" series (Training trainers)	21	35	2		58	3.33
2.6 AsIPA Sessions on "E 7" (Spiritual Formation)	21	32	2	1	56	3.30
2.7 AsIPA Sessions on "F 2" series (Training trainers)	21	32	1		54	3.37
2.8 Talk on Harvesting/Recapturing the vision of SCCs to Move towards	19	29	5		53	3.26
2.9 Story Telling on IRD in SCCs	14	26	9		49	3.10
3 How well was the exposure experience in the parish SCCs?	41	11	1		53	3.75
4 How would you rate the food, lodging and other facilities?	43	14			57	3.75
5 How was the cultural night?	13	23			36	3.36
6 How would you rate your own participation? Comment	12	29	7		48	3.10

7. What are your most significant learnings/experiences/insights from the VII AsIPA GA?

Please list and comment:

- IRD between Christians and Buddhists
- Learnt to build IRD and witness
- New modules
- Working in groups
- Exposure
- Group sharing
- Fr. Vijay's presentation
- The challenges of the countries
- The Keynote addresses
- Well organized
- The different Gospel Sharing methods
- The family spirit of the participants
- Cordial relationships at the GA7
- All respected
- Re-energized to work of SCCs
- The need to accompany SCCs
- Training of leaders
- The ART team work
- Well organized
- The sense of unity and the joy of being together among the participants
- BECs is the New Way of Being Church
- IRD and BECs will improve the life of the Church
- It was nice to meet our Asian friends and learn from them
- Learnt how to make the SCCs alive.
- Good to see the Bishops participating
- Learnt many things about Ecclesial Communion and Spiritual formation
- IRD and SCCs
- Learnt more about SCCs
- This was the first time I got a chance to facilitate in the mixed group
- Sense of community in the mixed group
- The humble way of mixing with people of different groups
- The facilitators encouraged everyone in the group to participate
- The Gospel Sharing in the small groups was very touching

8. What new facilitating skills did you learn from the facilitators of this Assembly?

- All arrangements done to the minutest details
- Problem solving skills and facilitating session
- Without the Bible it is possible to animate communities
- Participatory facilitation
- New modules were good
- Everyone was given opportunities to speak
- IRD lessons and F2, F7, B/12B and B/ 12C
- The importance of giving priority to all in SCCs
- Non Dominating Leadership
- Gospel Sharing Skills
- Importance of the Word and Eucharist to strengthen SCCS
- Team Work and planning
- Gospel Sharing methods
- The skills to make people more participative
- Some facilitators need to come better prepared
- The importance of making sacrifices for the SCCs
- Be alive and patient
- The ART humble way of speaking and good cooperation
- Fr. Vijay's short stories
- All sessions on IRD
- The facilitators were skillful and united and we must learn from them
- The lesson "Be what you preach"
- The adapted lessons from Lumko were good
- Learnt how to share experiences and community sharing
- Participatory method
- IRD and elements of training
- Team Presentation
- Coordination and cooperation
- Dialogue and sharing method
- New awareness for communication
- Facilitation and rotating leadership involving all in the process
- The session on emergent leadership

9. What two words best describe your experience at this AsIPA General Assembly?

- Excellently done
- Animating experience
- Unforgettable
- Encouraging and empowering
- Very enriching
- Self empowerment
- Food and rooms good
- Too many small group work
- Enriching and satisfying
- Cordial and communion
- Enriching and excellent organization
- Enriching and educating
- Enlightened and encouraged
- Unity and love
- Love and joy
- Enriching experience
- Informative and sharing
- Great learning
- Awareness of IRD and Dialogue in SCCs
- Love is the method of dialogue
- Faith formation
- Learning from experience
- Children of God
- Well organized
- One in mission
- Humility of participants
- Very enriching
- Change maker
- Very fruitful
- Patience and hope in the Word of God
- Need to be convinced Christians
- Christ centered
- Word and sharing
- Unity in the Word
- SCCs a pastoral priority
- SCCs only way to Spiritual maturity
- SCCs instruments of God
- Dialogue and leadership
- Friendship and desire to do Gospel Sharing
- Importance of Gospel Sharing and House Visiting
- Learning and planning
- Knowing and sharing from other countries
- Community experience
- New experience
- GO – ON
- Very good place/preparation
- Totally benefitting
- Good training and team work
- Committed Christians
- Dialogue and harmony
- Good training
- Religious harmony
- God father of all religions
- Joyful Thanksgiving

10. What are your one or two suggestions for the next AsIPA General Assembly?

- More participation of the laity
- More on Gospel Sharing
- There must be a pre-requisite for attendance
- More Bishops and national coordinators to be encouraged to participate
- Include ½ day local sight-seeing
- An ideal IRD with practical learning
- Suggestion of venue for next GA: Tokyo, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia
- Less theory
- Sessions on family
- Separate meeting for national coordinators
- It would be good to use videos and pictures to illustrate a point
- Keynote to have short stories and not so much theological content
- To invite someone from Lumko Institute
- Encourage more Bishops from host nation to participate
- Learning and reporting on IRD
- More on Church documents
- More Local priests and leaders should be invited
- The action should flow from me
- More on participatory Church
- One or two days more
- We should have more participation of youth
- Skill training
- For certain session use a long time
- For sessions on IRD we should have invited people of other faiths
- More exposure days
- The schedule was too tight with little time for rest
- More free time after dinner
- Provide more time for training modules
- Next venue must be like Bann Phu Waan
- More faith sharing
- Time to visit host country
- More inputs on how to put new materials into practice in one's own country
- Focus on one topic and a shorter time.

IN MEMORIAM



Bishop Hilarius Moa Nurak SVD :

Born : February 21, 1943, in Weetabula, Indonesia

Priest Ordination : August 2nd, 1972, member of Divine Word Congregation (SVD)

Consecrated as Bishop of Pangkalpinang : August 2nd, 1987

Died : April 29th, 2016, in Mt. Alvernia Hospital, Singapore.

Almighty and Merciful God had called home His beloved and faithful servant Bishop Hilarius Moa Nurak SVD., the Bishop of Pangkalpinang, Indonesia, on April 29th 2016, at the age of 73.

In the spirit of prayer and sacrifice, Bishop Hilarius had served his assignment as a shepherd in the Diocese of Pangkalpinang, Indonesia, for 29 years. He dedicated himself to shepherding the people of God in his diocese, trusted to him by God, until the last day of his life. With strong will, faith and determination, he led the people of God of Pangkalpinang Diocese to a New Way of Being Church, in the spirit of communion and participation.

Moreover, he had been a pioneer to announce a vision of the Church, a participatory Church and implement it through SCCs (Small Christian Communities) in Asia since 1990. He inspired, guided and encouraged pastoral core team/facilitators of SCCs in Asia through various international training courses and AsIPA General Assemblies. He willingly hosted AsIPA Two International Workshop in Batam in 2012 and led it successfully. Also he accepted to host AsIPA General Assembly VIII in 2018.

His spirit of faith, witness and passion to the Word of God will guide and accompany us towards a journey to a participatory Church of Asia.

May Merciful God rewards his faithfulness and works, and grant unto him an everlasting life.





Fr. Joseph Coração de Jesus Dias

Born: January 8, 1958 in Malad, Mumbai, India

Priest Ordination: May 1, 1989

Member of Divine Word Congregation (SVD)

Died: March 31, 2016 at Shanti Bhavan

(Provincial House), Jharsuguda, India

Rev. Fr. Joseph Dias SVD was a Divine Word Missionary fully committed to the SCCs. He was a very active member of the National Service Team for SCCs in India for over 20 years. He was actively promoting SCCs in his parish in Sambalpur diocese, was the SCC diocesan and Orissa Regional Coordinator for several years. He has given hundreds of workshops across the length and breadth of the country for several years.

He used to say that as a Divine Word Missionary, doing and promoting Gospel Sharing is at the heart of his personal and congregational charism and he did it with passion. He was involved in Asian level workshops too. In between his work, he managed to complete his Ph.D. On "From SCCs to Basic Human Communities" from the St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary Bangalore, India and was a professor of that seminary for M. Th. Students.

On March 26th Holy Saturday 2016, while he was taking lunch, he had a cardiac arrest and died in spite of getting him to the hospital within 15 minutes. The SCCs project lost a passionate promoter and an ardent believer.

May the good Lord bless him with eternal peace.





APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1

Information Flier



Office of Laity and Family
Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences
CAEC, 2 Highland Road, #02-02, Singapore 549102
Tel: 65-68587081; Hp: 65-96265911; Fax: 65-68583005
Email: fabc.laityfamily@gmail.com

Women's Desk

AsIPA (BEC) Desk

Youth Desk

fabc.laityfamily@gmail.com

asipa.fabc@gmail.com

asianyouthdesk@gmail.com

March 9, 2015

To: The President of Episcopal Conference his Delegate

The Person in Charge of Commission for Small Christian Communities (SCCs)/Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) and of SCCs/BECs National/Diocesan Teams

Re: VII AsIPA General Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand from 22 to 28 October, 2015

Greetings of peace in the Lord!

We are glad to announce that VII AsIPA General Assembly will be held in Bann Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center, Bangkok, Thailand from October 22 (Thur.) to 28 (Wed.), 2015 organized by the AsIPA (BEC) Desk of the Office of Laity & Family of the FABC and Thai National Team for Basic Ecclesial Communities. The theme is "Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs". The theme is very timely, urgent and important in Asia and the world.

We hope those who have been responsible for fostering SCCs/BECs at national or diocesan level can participate in VII AsIPA General Assembly. AsIPA General Assemblies have been a forum for AsIPA practitioners to share their experiences, useful resource materials and deepen communion among participants to further the mission for SCCs/BECs.

In the particular theme of this assembly and relevant programme, it will contribute to enable SCCs/BECs to be open to respect, understand and learn from people of different faiths and beliefs. Furthermore, we expect it could help to find creative ways of bringing about greater peace and solidarity with people of different faiths and beliefs at the grass-roots in Asia.

The details of the VII AsIPA General Assembly are attached with an application form. We would appreciate your response and application form return by July 3, 2015.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

With cordial best regards,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop Patrick D'Rozario, C.S.C.
Archdiocese of Dhaka
Chairman of Office of Laity and Family of FABC

Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro
Executive Secretary
FABC-OLF-AsIPA (BEC) Desk



VII AsIPA General Assembly
FABC OLF AsIPA (BEC) Desk & BEC National Team of Thailand
Bann Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center, Bangkok Thailand
22 (Thur.) - 28 (Wed.) October, 2015

1. Dates

- October 22 (Thur.) to 28th (Wed.), 2015 (7 days with arrival and departure);
 - Arrival on 22th October (by noon time at the airport in Thailand)
 - Departure on 28th October (after 12:30 pm followed by lunch onwards)

2. Venue

- Bann Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center, Bangkok, Thailand

3. Theme and Objectives

- **Theme: SCCs/BECs Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs**
- **General Objectives**
 - a. To be a forum for AsIPA practitioners to share their experiences
 - b. To deepen communion among all SCCs/BECs leaders to further the mission
 - c. To identify resource materials found useful in building SCCs/BECs in different countries
- **Specific Objectives**
 - d. To discover the source of our inspiration for peace and solidarity in the Word and Eucharist.
 - e. To enable SCCs/BECs to bear witness to people of different faiths and beliefs.
 - f. To enable SCCs/BECs to be open to respect, understand and learn from people of different faiths and beliefs.
 - g. To find creative ways of bringing about greater peace and solidarity with people of different faiths and beliefs.

4. Participants and Registration

- Total Number of Participants: 150 persons
 - 110 overseas + 30 Local + 10 resource persons (Full time participants)
- Criteria for Participation
 - ❖ This is an AsIPA General Assembly and all those working for the participatory Church through SCCs/BECs are welcome. The area of particular interest in this Assembly is SCCs/BECs living with people of other faiths and beliefs.
 - ❖ Delegations coming should comprise Regional, National and / or Diocesan Teams who work with SCCs/BECs and the Bishops in charge. Kindly pay attention to bring women and youth who are part of the team with at least three years' experience.

- Registration
 - ❖ Applications should be sent to AsIPA desk through the national SCCs/BECs team within the country by July 3, 2015 at the latest.

5. Fee / Expenses

- Tiered Registration Fee
 - ❖ Full Registration Fee: 350 USD per participant
 - ❖ Subsidized Registration Fee: 250 USD per participant
- Any reimbursement or subsidies will have to be requested through the national SCCs/BECs team within the country. AsIPA desk will negotiate it with the coordinator of the national SCCs/BECs team before confirmation of application.
- Kindly those in need try to get some financial help from the local and funding agencies for your participation to VII AsIPA GA.

6. Visa

- The local organizing team of Thailand will inform the visa application process later for those who apply.

7. Preparation

- Recommendation and Guideline for country/diocese report to VII AsIPA GA will be provided in May.
- Further information will be sent to you in due time once your application is received.

APPLY NOW. APPLICATION FORM ATTACHED



VII AsIPA General Assembly
FABC OLF AsIPA (BEC) Desk & BEC National Team of Thailand
Bann Phu Waan Pastoral Training Center, Bangkok Thailand
22 (Thur.) - 28 (Wed.) October, 2015

APPLICATION FORM – VII AsIPA General Assembly

Name (underline family name): _____ Male Female

Name you wish to be called: _____

Designation: _____

Country: _____ Diocese: _____

National _____ or Diocesan _____ Team (✓ tick where appropriate)

I will need a letter of invitation for Visa purpose: Yes No

Please fill items 1 – 6 as shown on passport (All personal information will be kept confidential).

1. Full Name: _____ 2. Nationality: _____

3. Passport Number: _____ 4. Date of Birth: _____

5. Passport Issue Date: _____ 6. Expiration Date: _____

Tel no: _____ Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Contact Person (for the team): _____

Tiered Registration Fee (per participant):

a) Full: 350 USD b) Subsidized: 250 USD

Any special dietary needs: _____

Vegetarian: Yes No

Please kindly send this application to the AsIPA (BEC) Desk by July 3, 2015. More information and guidelines will be sent once your application is received.

Send to: Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro, Executive Secretary, AsIPA Desk of Office of Laity and Family of the FABC

EMAIL: asipa.fabc@gmail.com or FAX: 82-2-460-7545 or ADDRESS: 643-1, Junggok 1-dong, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul, Korea (Zip Code 143-912)

APPENDIX 2

Appreciation Note



Office of Laity and Family
Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences
CAEC, 2 Highland Road, #02-02, Singapore 549102
Tel: 65-68587081; Hp: 65-96265911; Fax: 65-68583005
Email: fabc.laityfamily@gmail.com

Women's Desk

fabc.laityfamily@gmail.com

AsIPA (BEC) Desk

asipa.fabc@gmail.com

Youth Desk

asianyouthdesk@gmail.com

November 5, 2015

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ – Basic Ecclesial Communities, parishioners and parish priests
Cordial greetings in the Risen Lord!

We, the 118 participants – 34 lay, 14 religious, 57 priests and 13 bishops - from 15 countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Africa/SECAM-Ghana, and Germany) came together at Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Centre in the Archdiocese of Bangkok in Thailand to participate in the VII Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) General Assembly from October 22nd to 28th, 2015. The theme was “Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities Living with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs”.

We could complete the VII AsIPA General Assembly successfully with big support and service of Thai organizing team for this assembly and the Church of Thailand.

On behalf of all delegates we would like to express our deep gratitude and fraternal solidarity in Christ to you all, especially to those who engaged in organizing the exposure programme on BECs for your hospitality, generosity, sharing, friendship and love. We visited a few BECs in three dioceses of Thailand. The visit was an impressive experience of openness and harmonious living with people of different faiths as we were welcomed by them even in their mosques and temples and shared the joys and hopes of interreligious dialogue. We were also strengthened by the faith of BECs as we joined them for gospel sharing and visiting the neighborhood. You encouraged, inspired and enriched us abundantly. We have treasured and brought this experience, learning and insights back to our communities and the Church.

We hope that the BECs of Asia are becoming a seedbed for witness to dialogue, peace, justice and integrity of creation in the neighborhood in our journey towards new evangelization. In this journey, let us support, accompany and pray for one another.

Jesus Christ is encouraging us and BECs. “Do not be afraid!” You are “missionary disciples” (GS, 120). “Go...I am with you always” (Mt. 28:19-20).

Once again, thank you so much and bless you all.

In communion and fraternal bond of friendship, we remain,

Bibiana Joohyun Ro
Executive Secretary
FABC-OLF-AsIPA (BEC) Desk

Fr.Thinaratana Komkris
Thailand National Coordinator
for Basic Ecclesial Communities

On behalf of the 118 participants of the VII AsIPA General Assembly



APPENDIX 3

List of Participants

NAME	MINISTRY	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
AFRICA				
Fr. Melchior-Thumaini Edouard	SCEAM/SECAM	+243997453389	dumedo2@gmail.com	
BANGLADESH				
Fr. Paul Gomes	Rajshahi	01715002046	gomespaul@yahoo.com	CBCB Center, 24/C, Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207
Fr. Stanislaus Gomes	Dhaka	01712259798	fr.stanislaus@gmail.com	
Fr. Anjon Jambil	Mymensingh	01718132986	anjonjambilz@gmail.com	CBCB Center, 24/C, Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207
Fr. Costa Subrato Theotonius	Rajshahi	01732467575	subratafr@gmail.com	CBCB Center, 24/C, Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207
Sr. Lilian Rozario, SR.	Rajshahi	01771108296	rozarioamrita@gmail.com	
Mr. Manik Willver D Costa	Chittagong	01817205374	secretary@ctgdiocese.com	Bishop's House, Patherghata, Chittagong - 4000
Mr. Felix Ashakra	Sylhet	01716223151	willver.m@gmail.com	
Mrs. Bithika Rozario	Dhaka	01731953891	ccp.bang@gmail.com	CBCB Center, 24/C, Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207
GERMANY				
Mr. Michael Meyer	Germany Missio	+49 16097011843	meyer@missio-aachen.de	MISSIO Goethestr. 43, D-52064, Aachen, Germany
INDIA				
Bp. Sebastian Kalapurackath	Buxar	8987684955	bpbuxar@gmail.com	Bishop House, Nayee Bazar, Buxar PO & Dist.802101, Bihar, India
Bp. Gabriel Kujur	Daltanganj	9431138791	kujurgabriels@gmail.com	Bishop's House, Daltanganj P.O., Palamu Dt., 822101, Jharkhand, India

NAME	MINISTRY	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
Bp. Cyprian P. Monis	Asansol	9474549292	bpcmonis@gmail.com	Bp. Cyprian Monis, Bishop's House, Sacred Heart Presbytery, G. T Road (West), W-Bengal, India
Bp. Stephan Rotluanga	Aizawl	9436155281	steverta@rediffmail.com	Bishop's House, Ramthar Veng, P.B. 45, Aizawi; - 796001 Mizoram
Bp. Bishop Niranjan Sualsingh	Sambalpur	9438625953	bishopniranjan@gmail.com	Bishop's House, Ainthapali, District Sambalpur, Odisha - 768004, India
Fr. Biju Mathew	Indore	9981396480	bijumathewuk@yahoo.co.in	Bishop's House, 10 Old Sehere Road, P.B. No 168, Indore - 452 001 (M.P.) India
Fr. Gandhi Paulchamy	Tamil Nadu, S. India	9994-300675 9842131751	gandhifr@gmail.com	Small Christian Communities, Tamil Nadu Biblical Catechical and Liturgical Centre, Marakkanam Rd., Tindivanam-604001, Villupuram Dt., TamilNadu, South India.
Fr. Hippoletus Toppo	Tezpur	8761900190	hippoletustoppo@gmail.com	C/o, Sr. Martina Thabah
Fr. Joseph Coracao	Sambalpur	9437543512	joediassvd@rediffmail.com	St. Mary's Church, Mahatabnagar, Burla
De Jesus Dias	Poona	9922755570	frlouis55@gmail.com	P.O. Sambalpur Dist, Odisha-768017, India
Fr. S.A. Louis	Imphal	91 9862 742178	smart_markin@yahoo.co.in	St. Francis Xavier Church, Pune-Mumbai, India
Fr. Mark Thang Khan Ai				Road, Chinchwad, Pune 41109, Maharashtra, India
Fr. Philip Ekka	Rourkela	919937813744 0661-2111646	philipbrisa@gmail.com	Office of Small Christian Communities, Archbishops' House, P.O. Box 35, Imphal 795001, Manipur, India
Fr. D'Souza Savio Fortunatus	Mumbai	9820670851	saviofrancis6@yahoo.co.in	Seva Sadan, Y/18 Civil Township, Rourkela-769004, Odisha, India
Sr. Christin Aleyamma Joseph	Kolkata	9433952910	srchristin.joseph@gmail.com	Our Lady of Forsaken Church, Gate No. 7, Malvani Colony, Malad (West) Mumbai 400095, India
Sr. Martina Thabah	Guwahati	9402155176	martinathabah@gmail.com	Holy Cross Convent, I, Asgar Mistry Lane, Gobra 3, 46 Kolkata, West Bengal, India Missionary Animation Center, MSMHC Generalate, Little Flower Convent,

NAME	MINISTRY	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
Sr. Roshni Bakhla	Khunti	9. 19471E+11	roshnibaxla@yahoo.com	Ursuline Provincialate, Kanke Road 273/303, Ranchi - 834008 Jharkhand, India
Mr. Elvin S. Colaco	Archdiocese of Bombay	9833578458	yasminelvin@yahoo.co.in	Flat No. 305, Sholay, Off J. P. Road, Seven Bungalows, Andheri West, Mumbai 400 061, India
Mr. K. Lalthanama	Aizawl	9774376048	jeromezama@gmail.com	S/o K. Darrgaia, H.No.C-124 Near Presbyterian Pastor Qtr., India
INDONESIA				
Bp. Moa Nurak Hilarius	Pangkalpinang	62 812 7170507	hilariusvd@gmail.com	Keuskupan Pangkalpinang, Jln. Batu Kadera 545 A, Indonesia
Fr. Francis Xaverius Tatu Mukin	Pangkalpinang	62 813 67436998	hilariusmaonuraksvd@gmail.com	Semabung, Pangkalpinang, Bangka, Indonesia
Fr. Lucius Poya	Pangkalpinang	628221 73202138	ngkomukin@yahoo.com	Pastoran Tembesi, Perumahan Griya Permatas, Jln. Permata Block A No. 38, Perumnas Baru, Batuaji, Batam 29432,
Fr. Piet Yoenanto Sukowiluya	Tanjung Karang	(062) 081 369486284	mas_voy@yahoo.com	Keuskupan Tanjungkarang, Jln. Moh. Yamin No. 12, Tanjungkarang, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
Fr. Stanislaus Bani	Pangkalpinang	62 813 68442005	bani_stanis@yahoo.com	Pastoran Katolik Koba, Jln. Listrik, Koba, Bangka Tengah, Indonesia
Fr. Yakobus Hariprabowo	Tanjung Karang	62813 614793229	prabowohari@yahoo.com	Keuskupan Tanjungkarang, Jln. Moh. Yamin No. 12, Tanjungkarang, Indonesia
Ms. Yayuk Indriati	Pangkalpinang	62 812 7850573	yhariprabowo@gmail.com	SMP Budi Mulia, Jln. Budi Mulia, Pangkalpinang 33131, Bangka, Indonesia
JAPAN				
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APPENDIX 4

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Opening



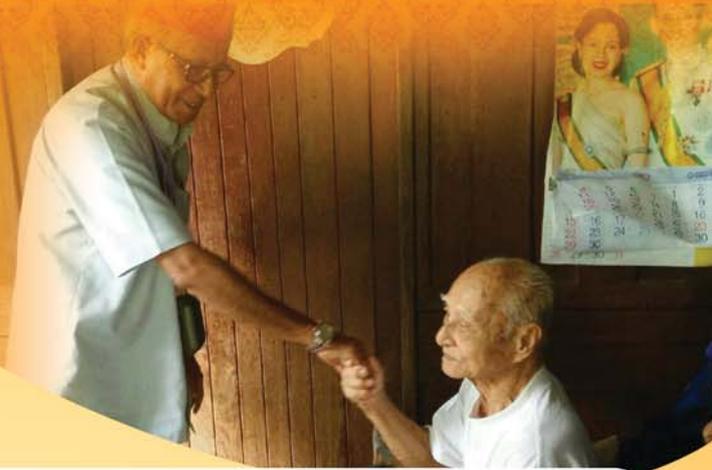
Activities







Exposure







Praise & Thanks

