**FINAL STATEMENT**

“That which we have seen and heard, we declare to you, that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:3-4).

We, 32 delegates from various Asian countries, gathered under the sponsorship of the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy of the FABC at the Bang Na campus of Assumption University of Thailand from October 23-27, 2006, to reflect on and discuss the question of family catechesis.

I. The topic of the family has been discussed at various FABC levels over the past few years. Based on this, we wanted to consider how our current situation affects the issue of catechesis, and how to transmit the faith to the present generation. We studied especially the role that the family plays in this, both as the object and agent, as well as the locus of catechesis itself.

II. The presentations focused on the reality of family catechesis in Asia. They began by facing us with the realization of the many problems and challenges facing families today. In many ways, as a Church, we have tended to speak in terms of the ideal family, i.e., one that envisages two parents sharing the same faith, in a stable relationship, perhaps even with the mother at home to care for and help educate the children, one shielded by church and community from the disintegrating factors affecting others.

The ideal family, however, seldom exists. Despite the reputation Asia enjoys of having a strong family structure, in all our countries the modern world is causing severe centrifugal pressures that tend to fracture the family unit, and make catechesis more difficult. Economic pressures often cause both parents to work, sometimes with one or more parents working away from the family; educational pressures cause students to spend long hours in school and study; a large percentage of inter-faith and mixed marriages weaken the witness value of the Catholic household; the rising tide of divorce means that many children are raised in single-parent households; the influence of the mass media is a constant siren song of values contrary to those of the Church. These are only some of the factors we must face realistically today.

Added to this is the fact that, in the past, most catechesis was done by church professionals. Many parents gladly left this task to priests, sisters, and official catechists, and did not see themselves as having a vital role to play in handing on the faith which was theirs. Thus, any effort to promote integral catechesis must take such as these into consideration, or it is bound to fail.

We see the task before us as critical, one that needs to be dealt with by the various episcopal conferences and dioceses. Specifically, there is a need to take the following points into serious consideration:

1) The necessity of developing a family catechesis based on a new vision of family in Asia, as already elaborated by the FABC.

2) Family catechesis in Asia must be one that aims at instilling gospel values, values that promote a more humane world, inasmuch as these are understandable and acceptable to non-Catholic partners in a marriage.
3) The need to develop new catechetical models based on the specific needs of people in our various countries.

4) All countries need a realistic approach to the reality of inter-faith marriages.

5) We must develop programs aimed at single-parent families, migrants, and family members with special needs.

6) It is important to train professional catechists, and provide centers and resources for their needs.

7) Efforts must be made to instill in parents the realization that they themselves are the primary evangelizers and faith educators of their children. The home is in reality “the domestic church,” the main locus where faith is imparted.

8) Likewise, all members of parishes and Basic Ecclesial/Christian Communities should be made to appreciate that they provide the atmosphere in which faith grows and blossoms.

III. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

On Family Catechesis

1. We affirm that the primary aim of family catechesis is the making of disciples of Christ, not simply the imparting of information about faith.

2. One of the primary means of catechesis is personal witness. This is true not only of parents, but of all in the Church. Stress should be placed on how gospel values can be lived out concretely in our lives.

3. Catechesis should help families address the proper use of the means of social communication. We, as a Church, should be more adept at using the media in our catechetical efforts. Traditional means of communication (e.g., puppets, theater, song, etc.) can easily be used in communicating the faith.

4. Effective family catechesis necessarily involves renewal of the entire parish community and even parish structures. Innovative programs (perhaps based on the RCIA model), should be developed to involve everyone in the parish in the work of family catechesis and evangelization.

On Programs

5. Marriage preparation programs should take into consideration the question of inter-cultural and inter-faith marriages, and teach the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication and acceptance of personal differences, as well as mutuality and equality in the relationship.

6. Programs should be developed to give catechists the skills needed for their mission. This includes a deeper knowledge of the Church’s teaching, communication skills, and a deeper appreciation for their role as modeling true Christian life.

7. Catechetical programs should inculcate an appreciation for the meaning and beauty of human sexuality, a respect for God’s gift of creation, and an awareness of how the value system of the world is so often opposed to the value system of Christ.

8. Parishes should have Bible-study groups in order to bring the gospel message more effectively into the lives of their families.

On the Agents

9. Parents need specific guidance in effectively living their role as the primary catechists of their children. They should be helped to see how ordinary home settings can become catechetical moments, and how opportunities are there for faith-sharing and faith formation in the home.

10. Families should be encouraged to engage in service together in their parishes, civic society, and outreach to the poor. These activities, which can be engaged in with anyone, should be seen as flowing from one’s faith commitment to Christ.
11. BECs/BCCs are an important instrument in supporting family life and catechesis. They are especially important where there is a lack of priests.

Conclusion: In making these recommendations, we are aware of the magnitude of the task we are sketching out here. We entrust ourselves and our efforts, however, into the hands of Blessed Mary, Mother of the Church and our mother, who remains our model in being one who has heard the word of God and put it into practice (Luke 8:21). May she guide us into a deeper respect for the responsibility and privilege that all parents have in being able to share their love of Jesus with their children, as they themselves remain open to the word of God in their lives and allow it to transform them, their families, and all with whom they come into contact.