

## Among Ourselves

# Are The Hearts Of The Pastors Of The Church In Asia Close To The Asian Family?

Are the hearts of the Pastors of the Church in Asia close to the Asian Family? If some of us correctly sense the spirit of urgency and sincerity accompanying the more than two years of preparations for the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, we would acclaim a loud Yes! The actual proceedings and process of the Assembly, was one that was open to the Spirit and to one another and to discovering and searching together. There is no doubt that just like most fathers and mothers in the family, our pastors and shepherds recognise the significance and magnitude of the many and varied concerns that have been expressed about the family. We began to see anew the need for a renewed commitment to examine more critically the underlying causes of the multi-faceted forces that confront us today and at the same time our diverse



and varied responses in many of our countries. The signs are all around us — we need a new creativity in charity and new courage to continue to announce the Gospel of Justice and Peace at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was clear that the hearts of our pastors and shepherds are full of love and compassion for the family and its members: parents, children, youth and the elderly. But they would rightly acknowledge that love can only find genuine expression in responses that are relevant and effective in the context of our own times and in the specific situations of each of our countries and regions.

It is obvious that the wisdom that was expressed in the choice of the theme was both significant and relevant to the growing importance given to the family. Our reflections have led us to see the centrality of the evangelising family as the thrust of our evangelising mission in Asia. The family as the “Basic Ecclesia” takes us one step nearer to the realisation of our Vision of the

## CONTENTS

<b>The Asian Family Toward A Culture Of Integral Life .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Message of the 8th Plenary Assembly of the FABC .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Charter Of The Rigths of The Family .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Prayer For The Asian Family .....</b>	<b>18</b>

con't on page 19 >

---

# THE ASIAN FAMILY TOWARD A CULTURE OF INTEGRAL LIFE

## **INTRODUCTION: The Hope of the Asian Family for Life in Fullness**

1. The hope, the aspiration, the dream of the Asian family for life in fullness in the Reign of God is one that never fades. Even in the midst of seemingly insurmountable misery and poverty, Asian families live this hope not without reason with vibrant, even exuberant joy. The positive experiences of Asian families who find continuing happiness and well-being by being family are signals of the Spirit of God at work. Sustaining this hope is the profound Asian sense of the sacred and Asia's rich spiritual resources. God, the ultimate Being and Creator of Life, is the reason for this hope. It is God's Spirit working in the cultures of Asia that sustains and explains the closeness, harmony, resiliency, relative stability and many other positive values that endure in Asian families. It is God's Spirit that provides a vision of the Asian family on a journey of communion, solidarity and mission to the Reign of God. All these are reasons for hope.
2. To reflect on the Asian family and its hope for life in fullness, the Bishops of Asia have come together for the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) on the theme "The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life." They realize that their gathering as shepherds of God's "little flock" in Asia from August 17 to 3, 2004 is a great blessing from the Lord.<sup>1</sup> Only last year, 2003, for the first time on Asian soil, in Manila, the Fourth World Meeting of Families pressed upon the Church the crying concern for the Family and its utmost significance in the divine plan of salvation.
3. Especially is this concern urgent in the light of world developments. For the past two decades rapid cultural, scientific and technological developments alongside economic and political developments have been impacting human society heavily. At the very center of this social ferment is the Family, the cellular receptor of emerging cultures as well as initiator, for good or for bad, of influential cultural forces. Even today we refer to the Family as a point of reference for social, political, economic and religion-based ideal relationships. As a world body the United Nations continues to consider the family as the basic unit of society though some neo-liberal trends in the West have questioned it. The social teaching of the Church has always accepted the

family as the first basic cell and community of society. Undoubtedly the first and fundamental structure for human ecology is the family.

4. The universal Church consistently insists on the paramount importance of the Family as the way by which all history passes and as the domestic church or the church that is the home.<sup>2</sup> The Acts of the Apostles reminds us that the faith spread "from house to house" (Acts 20:20).<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II has already convoked the World Meeting of Families on four different occasions in order to underline the indispensable role of the Christian Family in charting the destiny of humankind in the light of faith and the Gospel. It is in the background of world developments and the general response of the universal Church that the reflection of FABC on the Asian family takes on both universal and local meaning. There is no doubt that global developments have an impact even on the remotest rural Asian family.
5. As Bishops in Asia we hope that the following reflection would contribute toward even deeper reflection on the Asian family in view of relevant and effective pastoral care. We also hope that it would serve as a reference document for Asian Episcopal Conferences and dioceses toward a vision of family ministry and its general pastoral orientations. We begin our reflection on the pastoral challenges that the Asian family confronts.

## **I. PASTORAL CHALLENGES TO THE FAMILY IN ASIA.**

### **1. Family Traditions and Values.**

6. In the midst of swift, sweeping, and even revolutionary changes in the world, Asians continue to value marriage as sacred. Children are cherished as treasures and gifts of God. To show love for their children, parents are willing to undertake all kinds of sacrifices in providing for their health, their education and general welfare. Nuclear families remain close-knit. Such closeness of relationships is also true in the extended family. The elderly, retired members of the family, parents and grandparents still receive great respect and care within the family setting, notwithstanding the many difficulties and sacrifices involved. They are listened to, honored, and loved. It is the elders that



Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, OMI during the presentation of the interventions and revision of the Working Document of the 8th FABC Plenary Assembly

assure the family's cohesiveness. The hospitality of Asian families, even of the very poor, is proverbial. Despite many serious difficulties from within and without, Asian families have relatively high stability. They are resilient and ready to sacrifice in the face of great hardship. With their deep religiosity and sense of the divine, they are effusively optimistic. Most Asian families being rural, they have a natural closeness with God's creation. These values are especially exhibited by indigenous peoples, considered as generally among the poorest in Asia who are relatively untouched by technological culture. Many other values endure in Asia as part of family tradition and are bright hopeful spots in the Asian landscape.<sup>4</sup> It is tradition that sustains the resilience of the Asian family in the face of poverty and of different death-dealing forces in today's world. The positive values in the Asian family tradition are seeds of God's Word and can help serve as the "rock" on which we build our Asian homes, as in Jesus' parable of the wise man (see Mt. 7: 24-25; Lk. 6: 47-48). It is, therefore, imperative that families consciously practice and develop these positive values, so that their great worth may not diminish but is enhanced.

7. Still some values are ambivalent. Strong kinship and

family-centeredness, for instance, has also its downside. Graft and corruption, nepotism, political and economic cronyism in Asia are often due to inordinate concern for family, to the dominant and selfish desire to serve the interests of the family, of kin and cronies — at the expense of the common good. This might even lead to strong clannishness that would divide rather than unite the whole community or society. Today, however, pervasive realities, some old, many others quickly emerging are making Asian families vulnerable to profound social changes, especially under the impact of globalization. These social changes are reshaping moral and religious beliefs, self-concepts of individuals and families, even the very structures of marriage and family.

8. While we need to be aware of the different cultural situations in Asia, we can recognize major commonalities in the situation of Asian families. Admittedly, a rather different and especially difficult situation is that of the family in the former Soviet Republics. With a small Catholic minority, a generation seems to have been lost because of long years without the free exercise of religion. Beliefs regarding marriage and family are quite far from the Christian norm.<sup>5</sup>

---

## 2. A Variety of Family Forms

9. Almost common now in Asia are family situations that are certainly different from what Asians consider the “traditional” and even “ideal” family. Intercultural families and inter-faith families that result from “mixed marriages” abound. In such marriages couples might find adjustment to each other much more difficult than if they were of the same faith. Also increasing in number are families with single parents, families with separated parents and cases of remarriage for one or both partners. Some parents are separated permanently while others temporarily because of work. No longer rare are children whose parents are divorced and children living with grandparents. There are families where only the father or only the mother is around with the children, families where parents only come once or twice a year and families where children do not have common fathers or mothers. There are also many families where the parents are not married and are not able to offer stability to their children. And there are homes where parents do not wish to have children or delay having children. Less and less do we see the traditionally close-knit Asian “extended family” of parents, their children, their grandparents, their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law and grandchildren. “Nuclear families” tend to have lesser communication with other members of the extended family. Further, within the extended family are conflicts, e.g. with in-laws, that need a process of conflict resolution and the healing power of forgiveness.
10. With the advance of new liberation movements and growing neo-liberal and post-modern thinking, other forms of “families” are slowly beginning to emerge in more secularized and liberalized Asian countries, albeit, with great disapproval, such as families with same sex partners. Some of these family forms are deeply disturbing. They challenge our traditional understanding of the “Christian family” where the sacramental marriage between man and woman is the norm as well as the beginning of the family. We might even raise the question whether couples really believe in marriage as a sacred covenant or merely as a legal contract. Moral questions could also be raised about a common practice of having a civil marriage first and at a later time a church marriage. In some societies this may be due to a family’s lack of available funds or due to clan law or customs and traditions.
11. How to consider in the light of faith this varied situation of families, how to help married couples and families reflect on these situations in the light of their commitment to the Reign of God, how to assist families in order to be pro-active, and thus generally how to

provide pastoral guidance – these are challenges of great magnitude to every parish in Asia.

## 3. The Poverty of Asian Families and Economic Globalization.

12. The first major challenge confronting the vast majority of Asian families is massive poverty. It is the tragic reality of poverty that they must contend with everyday and are unable to escape from. Many poor young people have difficulty to think of marriage and start a family because of the lack of basic means of support and sustenance. But today’s Asian poverty has a new dimension. This is the process of neo-liberal economic globalization that is producing a new world order to which every country has to be conformed lest it be left behind on the road to economic progress as defined by developed countries. But globalization is ambivalent at best. Yearly United Nations Human Development reports regularly observe that economic globalization has aggravated the situation of poor people and of poor countries - and particularly of the poor in poor countries. The effect of globalization on the poverty may be noted in at least three areas:

- a) 13. **The Poverty of Rural Families.** Slowly many farm products of agricultural families are less in demand as economic liberalization and deregulation – the twin requirements of economic globalization – enable the freer entry of imported farm products, sold at even cheaper prices than local products. Unable to be competitive, deprived of government safeguards or safety nets to shield such farm products from unfair competition, rural families experience a new economic poverty-causing factor beyond their control. Similarly, the great majority of Asian farmers do small-scale farming. They cannot compete with the increasing trend of big business venturing into corporate farming, even as the technology of Genetically Modified Organism or GMO is increasingly becoming widespread, making Asian small farmers dependent on corporations and technology often beyond their understanding and financial reach. Moreover, often saddled with problems of land ownership, rural families find their land becoming unproductive in the light of such emerging conditions. Aggravated by migration to urban centers, the above situation results in the stagnation of rural communities. Noteworthy is the observation that “the problem of the Japanese rural families is not economic poverty, but the collapse of the

---

agricultural villages themselves”.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in situations of poverty, families are sometimes driven to the extreme of selling bodily organs so as to survive.

b) 14. **The Poverty of Urban Families.** The phenomenon of urbanization in Asia is not recent. But the migration of the rural poor to urban settings has never been as rapid and as numerous as in the past few decades. Globalization has not only caused in poor countries an inability to compete even in the agricultural field. It has also increased an exodus of the poor from rural areas in search of jobs that are scarce because of the level of economic development in most Asian countries. The growth and proliferation of slums in urban centers attest to this rapid urbanization. Poverty conditions of the urban poor are even harsher in terms of habitat, family living conditions, family space and privacy, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. Since slum dwellers stay on either government owned or privately owned properties, they run the risk of being ejected and rendered homeless. These are inducements sometimes in desperation to criminality, abuse in the family, and family break-up.

c) 15. **The Phenomenon of Asian Migration.** In the light of the economic situation of Asian families, literally millions of Asians leave their families behind to look for jobs that often are not commensurate with their knowledge and skills. Certainly, the more economically developed Asian societies such as those of Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand as well as the oil-rich Middle East countries are favorite destinations. Tragically migrant workers often labor in circumstances of grave discrimination and exploitation. Asia is the great exporter of cheap labor. It is true that salaries they earn abroad are significantly much more than they can earn in their home countries, but at the price of the stability of their families, the proper education and maturation of their children, who are deprived of the presence, the guidance, and love of both parents at their most formative and impressionable age.

16. Moreover, indigenous peoples who migrate for purposes of work face a greater cultural dislocation than do other groups of the population. They lose many

of the positive values so cherished by their own indigenous communities. They experience great difficulties in re-entry as well. Thus we see a close link between the two priorities of FABC VII, namely migrant workers and indigenous peoples.

17. In sum, migrant workers and their families urgently need great pastoral care from the churches of sending and receiving countries. Pastoral care for migrant workers is, in fact, one of the five pastoral priorities of the Church in Asia.<sup>7</sup> A careful and compassionate implementation of the guidelines and directives of the recent Instruction, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, would demonstrate the Church's great pastoral concern.<sup>8</sup>

18. Cutting across these dimensions of Asian poverty is a new phenomenon which development reports call “the feminization of poverty.” A realization is dawning that much of the burden of poverty is borne by women. In most cases it is the husband who might be providing the resources necessary for the family to survive, but it is the wife who has to cope with making both ends meet as she tries to feed and clothe the children, cook for them, take care of them when they are sick, care for old members of the extended family. There does not seem to be any timetable for her. Housekeeping is not a job simply from 7:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., with a couple of hours for a noon break. The daughters have to pitch in whenever they can. Oftentimes mother and daughters have to help earn a few more amounts outside the home, whenever possible. It would appear that poverty hits women more than men.

#### 4. Landlessness and Loss of Ancestral Domain

19. Compounding the poverty situation of Asian families is the fact of landlessness. Millions of families in Asia do not own or till their own land. Large estates owned by the few show the great imbalance in the distribution of Asia's resources, one more sign of the social injustice that deprives the many poor of a real chance for a better future. Land reform in many Asian countries remains a problem, especially where wealth controls political power and prevents legal opportunities for a more balanced land distribution.

20. Land is life – this axiom is especially true for the indigenous families. They have from time immemorial considered the land, the rivers and the forests as their own even without any legal ownership paper to show. Exploiting this indigenous understanding of ownership as well as the law, loggers, miners, farmers from lowland areas encroach into the ancestral domain of indigenous peoples and reduce their boundaries year

---

after year. Often indigenous communities have to uproot themselves and retreat farther into the mountains to avoid conflict. But certainly their rights to land and to their own economic and cultural development are violated. Moreover patterned on the neo-liberal model of development that is promoted by economic globalization government development projects in indigenous ancestral domain sometimes work against the integral development of indigenous peoples.

### **5. Cultural Globalization and Its Impact on the Family**

21. Of even greater value significance, economic globalization is also bringing cultural globalization in its wake. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Western secularism has been strongly influencing Asian societies. But at no time has the secularizing process, now with a significant post-modern spirit of individualistic sense of freedom, been more rapid and effective in reshaping the value systems of Asian families than in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The bearers of this change are economics, as we have seen, and the on-going revolution in mass global communication that has truly made the world a global village.
22. The technological revolution has, indeed, many positive features. It is bringing into Asia a deeper awareness of individual dignity, autonomy, and human rights so

characteristic of the West. It creates and promotes global solidarity almost instantaneously in times of great disaster. It has made knowledge of the world and of the human person to grow by leaps and bounds. The application and sharing of that knowledge has generally and significantly improved human life.

23. But there is terrible downside to this process of cultural globalization. A technological culture is rapidly emerging that is uprooting families from their traditional cultures and creating anonymous societies in urban areas. Its spirit, informed by neo-liberalism, secularism, materialism, hedonism and consumerism, is alien to the religious-oriented cultures of Asia. Relational, interconnected and interdependent lifestyles of Asian peoples are also undermined. Many values of the technological culture run counter to Asian family values. A growing techno-mindset is weakening marital and familial relations of intimacy and love. Many no longer see marriage as a lifetime commitment. Thus cohabitation without marriage is no longer very rare in urban areas where anonymity takes away some of the traditional stigma connected with this. Even now there are attempts to change the traditional concepts of marriage and family, and even the value of life. So pervasive and enticing is this post-modern and secular spirit in the tools of social communication, especially mass media, that it has managed subtly and insidiously to capture the souls of many Asians.
24. Since families are both the repositories and channels of



Some of the Participants of the 8th FABC Plenary Assembly

---

culture, the impact of the emerging secular culture in Asian families is, indeed, very disturbing. Frequently it is the elite of Asian families that are the first receivers of such secular culture, for it is among them that the tools of social communication are most available. But the emerging culture also reaches down to the grassroots since local TV, radio, and cinema and the media programs served by the West whose values and portrayal of family and life gradually become normative for viewers and listeners. Ironically, tools of social communication such as television, computers and internet, mobile phones, that are meant to enhance communication and reinforce family ties become hindrances to family relations as the members spend less quality time with one another. Family rituals, meals and recreation together are less. No doubt such negative influences contribute to the increase of divorces, family break-ups and the juvenile crime rate as well as the breakdown of family discipline.

25. Moreover, cultural globalization is also creating new forms of poverty. New technologies and the ways by which they are improving learning and even ways of modern living are simply beyond the reach of poor families. Thus in addition to material poverty, a new form of poverty, a poverty of knowledge and of access to knowledge, is further marginalizing poor families. Pope John Paul II has called this phenomenon the poverty, not of the “have-nots”, but of those who *do not know*. If the wealth of industrialized nations is based much more on “the possession of know-how, technology and skills” than on natural resources,<sup>9</sup> then the poverty of other nations may be construed as due largely to the absence of this new kind of wealth. In addition we need to recognize that more than economic and technological poverty is spiritual poverty, a poverty of moral and religious convictions and values.<sup>10</sup>
26. We also have to note that one of the responses of some sectors to the unsettling cultural changes made by globalization is recourse to fundamentalism. This seems to provide for their adherents clear and definite answers to the problems of life, such as complex issues of justice and love, marriage, the family, inter-faith relationships, politics and governance. In its extreme form, fundamentalism has given rise to intolerance and even terrorism, increasingly a source of tension in Asian societies.

## 6. Patriarchy in Asian Families and Societies

27. With regard to the roles of women and men in the Asian family and in the wider society, patriarchy remains sadly the determining factor. Rooted in the Latin word, “pater” or father, patriarchy has become a pejorative term. But in early Christianity the word “pater” was used in the

light of Jesus’ Abba experience, his filial relationship of love with God and hence it was emptied of its dominative and oppressive elements. There is, indeed, a need of retrieving for our times the Gospel significance of “pater,” as shown in the generous and forgiving love of the father in Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son, or the dominion of love that the prayer to “Our Father” expresses, or the servant-headship that Jesus himself exemplified for his disciples at the Washing of the Feet. In this sense, one can have “paternal love” or “paternal authority” without being paternalistic. Today as in earlier Jewish and Graeco-Roman societies, patriarchy is understood with its negative meaning. As such the social attitude of patriarchy is embedded in social structures and has fundamentally determined gender inequality and the superior role of men. The world view of patriarchy lies deep in the cultural and religious subconscious of Asia and dominates politics, economics, human relationships, childrearing views and practices, stereotypes about men and women, community roles, etc. Patriarchy defines man in terms of prowess, brawn, authority and domination. It is at the basis of male chauvinism in society and of men’s authoritarianism in the family. On the other hand patriarchy defines woman in terms of meekness, submissiveness and subordination. It regards women as subordinate human beings and generally establishes a double standard to govern the behavior of men, women, boys and girls. For instance, based on such patriarchal world-view the infidelities of a husband against his wife and his irresponsible behavior to his children are more likely to be condoned and tolerated than those of the wife.<sup>11</sup>

28. In some countries patriarchy reveals its evil features in sex selection procedures during pregnancy. In those countries, the preference for the male child has created a tremendous imbalance of sex ratio in the population. Science has tragically assisted this evil feature of patriarchy through pre-natal sex identification and selection resulting in the abortion of thousands of female fetuses.

## 7. Woman and the Girl-Child.

29. The acknowledgement of equality in fundamental dignity, the achievement of parity in educational advancement and attainment and in supporting the family have slowly challenged the traditional authority role of husbands in Asian families. Indeed in recent years the role of women has slowly and gradually shifted. For women from the poorer sectors of society, professional education is not so much the psychological choice but the result of economic

---

pressure to seek work outside the home in order to help the family care for the children or assure their family's survival especially in situations when husbands or sons do not earn enough for their families. Hence much of the traditional home-role and child-rearing role of mothers and daughters has been passed on to others. Unfortunately such changing roles often simply involve a mere transfer of the traditional home role responsibility to persons at a lower economic level, such as domestic helpers or poor relatives. This is the case of mothers who work full time in schools and in government offices. This shift in women's home-role responsibilities is especially demonstrated in urban settings where nurse-maids, domestic helpers and even grandparents take care of the children and the home while wives do full time work in their chosen professions as doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, lawyers, business managers, etc.

30. However, the slow shift toward equality and partnership in husband-wife relationships has not prevented cases of battered wives and other forms of discrimination and oppression against women at home and at work. In a few Asian countries tradition sadly justifies violence against wives and girl children especially in rural areas. In such countries, in addition to the onerous and oppressive dowry tradition, wives bear the added burden of trying to prove themselves truly worthy of becoming part of the immediate and extended family of their husbands. While the boy-child is favored, the girl-child suffers discrimination in her early years.<sup>12</sup> She might even become the victim of infanticide. Finally, in many parts of Asia women-trafficking for commercial sex either locally or abroad is not an infrequent phenomenon and does not even spare children. All these pastoral challenges cry for appropriate pastoral response.

31. We note the positive developments that various forms of women's liberation movements have achieved in Asia. They have drawn public attention to the issues of violence within the family, female fetus abortion and to the need for more egalitarian relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, sons and daughters. In all countries of Asia are women, especially mothers, working for social emancipation through social and political advocacy, cooperatives, Grameen banking, appropriate technology, literacy and health programs, etc

## **8. Youth in the Family**

32. Given the intrusiveness of information technology and mass media, there is no doubt that the emerging and ambivalent post-modern culture is seeping into the

family sanctuary. It is especially affecting the youth. With usually greater opportunities for education than their elders, the youth also have greater access to the world of communication. This may be both a blessing and a curse, the world of communication being ambivalent. The youth communicate with one another in the new language of a technological culture. This is why quality time in the family is so necessary. It is the time of owning and exploring their identity. It is the family that provides them with stability. When they lack the guidance of their parents, they imbibe the values of the new culture, at times uncritically. As a result the emerging culture establishes value gaps between old and young. The young themselves might even experience a crisis of values. They are torn between the values treasured in their traditional homes that may not always be positive and the secular values in the extra-domestic fora that may not always be negative. As family relationships deteriorate there could be a resort to escapism, sometimes through drugs that victims mistakenly believe would help them forget their tribulations.

33. Yet as other FABC assemblies have noted, the youth of Asia are often at the vanguard of social and religious transformation in many countries, leading various social emancipation and advocacy movements, participating in movements of renewal in the Church, and emerging as leaders in the Church's pastoral programs and in Basic Ecclesial Communities. Identifying the Youth of Asia as one of the five major pastoral priorities<sup>13</sup> reinforces the hope of the youth and in the youth. Asia being the continent of the youth, the youth are not simply the future of the Church in Asia but the present.

## **9. Child Labor**

34. Yet another phenomenon affecting Asian families is the widespread practice of child labor. Driven by poverty and social inequalities, millions of children are engaged in labor. The phenomenon might even stem from a cultural view that parents consider their children as "properties" to be used for the welfare of the whole family. Thus, parents themselves allow or even encourage their children to pick up odd jobs in the streets, in factories and shops in order to supplement the family income, provide more food at the table, and help support their own education.<sup>14</sup> But the necessary consequences of child labor are the lack of integral growth and development of children, high illiteracy rates, malnutrition, the phenomenon of abandoned or "street children" without their parents and homes, and high incidence of juvenile crime and delinquency.

## 10. Ecology

35. Environmental degradation in Asia also impacts Asian families negatively. The long term ecological balance is sacrificed for short term economic gain in the systematic and sometimes unbridled destruction of forests and water resources. Droughts and floods often result from such destruction and soil productivity is altered. The agricultural efficiency of rural families is thus significantly reduced. In the sprawling urban areas of Asia, environmental degradation takes another form. Air pollution and inefficient waste management are major problems and cause many illnesses, especially respiratory, particularly for the urban poor families, reducing further the quality of their lives.

## 11. Population Programs

36. Moreover, government population programs are especially targeting poor families. The over-all objective, as usually claimed, is a healthy population and the reduction of population to meet decreasing food production. The Malthusian doomsday thesis is still very much a part of official government thinking despite the scientifically valid alternative views of economists who see the thesis as basically a myth that has been regularly disproved by population and food production trends in the past three decades.

37. The political and economic agenda of developed countries with regard to the populations of poor countries do not seem to be well known. Yet it is clear that foreign aid for development requires developing

countries to legislate population reduction measures. These measures emphasize artificial contraception and advocate the legalization of abortion, at least in certain cases. Grounded on the secular and neo-liberal ideology of economic development, these measures obviously promote a “culture of death”. A contraceptive mentality and the rise of premarital sex among the youth and the increasing pervasiveness of the global secular culture are not unconnected.

38. Moreover in the population control agenda is a belief that the migration of many Asians to other countries for the proverbial greener pastures is an economic and sometimes security threat. On the other hand many Asian observers believe that in targeting the poor the population reduction programs of governments conveniently sidestep the more difficult task of social and structural reforms toward poverty reduction, required by a more just distribution of resources and more equitable access to the fruits of development. In contrast to the above is the situation of South Korea and Japan whose very low birth rates and ageing populations are creating major problems of decreasing labor force and deteriorating public pension services. They are presently striving to increase their populations.<sup>15</sup>

39. Through government population programs and other means, powerful lobby organizations with linkages to official international organizations and to private and semi-government organizations in Asian countries are influencing governments and public opinion to accept secular and liberal ideas about human life, family, children, and marriage. Thus the moment of the

conception of human life, the termination of unborn human life, the nature of marriage as that of man and woman and as a lifetime commitment, the meaning of woman’s health, the notion of “human right” over the human body in relation to human choice – all these are being redefined. These philosophical ideas now introduced into all Asian countries through certain strands of various emancipation movements in the West with their local counterparts, through mass media and legislation run counter to some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Church.

## 12. The Family and HIV / AIDS

40. The specter of HIV / AIDS in Asia is yet another reason that government population programs adduce in order to emphasize the



Women participants during the 8th FABC Plenary Assembly

population programs adduce in order to emphasize the

---

idea of “safe sex” and the use of artificial contraception. Thus the population control campaign has strategically transformed the issue of “safe sex” into a health and political issue with the use of the ambiguous term “the right to reproductive health.” In this way, the moral dimension of the problem has been conveniently ignored.

41. Indeed, we need to recognize that HIV / AIDS as a disease is hitting many Asian countries severely. It is still on the rise with ominous signs of becoming an Asian human catastrophe of epic proportions. Consequently the Church in Asia has to confront the disease on several pastoral fronts – medically through compassionate care for HIV / AIDS victims and their families, politically through principled influence on national legislatures, and morally through teaching and unceasing advocacy of the Church’s moral doctrines particularly in the social sphere related to the issues involving HIV / AIDS. On each of these fronts Asian families have a major role to play that the whole Church has to discern, support and promote. But other than confronting the issue of HIV / AIDS, families also have to contend with other issues of health that have moral, medical and pastoral implications. Therefore, the Church is challenged, for instance, to provide adequate holistic health care for those with addiction problems.

### **13. Families in the Midst of Conflict**

42. In many parts of Asia hundreds of thousands of families are affected by armed conflicts of various origins. Thousands of families are regularly displaced from their homes by sporadic or sustained military skirmishes. Fears, tensions, anxieties, insecurities are often the lot of parents concerned about the safety and future of their families. The education of their children is seriously interrupted and jeopardized. Diseases prey on displaced families trying to fend for themselves in the miserable conditions of many evacuation camps. At a more profound level, displaced families bitterly harbor in themselves the prejudices, biases, viewpoints, attitudes, and values that are at the heart of political, economic, ideological, ethnic and religious conflicts in Asia. Communalism and fundamentalism are dimensions of these conflicts. Children of war grow up with the real possibility that they would be bearers of future wars, carrying into the future the roots of conflict that their fathers and mothers had borne in their own minds and hearts. It is heartening that in some conflict-ridden countries, mothers who are the most vulnerable to the burdens and sufferings of conflict have organized themselves as peace advocates. Strongly nurturing and caring,

sensitive to in-depth needs, keenly irenic, women – indeed, mothers – have played a special role in waging peace, not war.

### **14. Bio-Genetic Threats to Life**

43. Today the incredibly rapid advances of science have expanded our knowledge of human life and continue to provide valuable scientific information. The Human Genome Project is potentially of immense benefit for humankind. There is a future where the most serious ills that have hitherto no known cures could be cured. In the light of faith these advances have immensely increased our awe of God’s infinite creative power. On the other hand, from these tremendous scientific and technological developments have emerged profound bioethical issues regarding the sacredness and dignity of life from its very beginning and regarding human stewardship of God-given life.
44. When the production of embryonic stem cells through human embryonic cloning was first announced their therapeutic potential to cause the healing or replacing of diseased body parts was immediately recognized. Embryonic stem cells are derived from human embryos that are either produced for therapeutic purpose or for reproductive purposes from in vitro fertilization. Thousands of human embryos are destroyed in order to produce embryonic stem cells. Since then some researchers in Korea have reportedly succeeded in producing embryonic stem cells. In 2003 the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan submitted a comment to the government’s Panel on Bioethics and protested against the production of human embryos for research purposes and therapeutic human cloning. Passionate debates continue among scientists, moral theologians, ethicists, and religious leaders. These developments are not foreign to Asia, because experiments are now going on in some Asian countries. More disturbing is the fact that ideas contrary to Church teachings are now being used to justify the production and destruction of human embryos such as the idea that human embryos are human beings but not human persons. The specter of genetics becoming eugenics, selectively and scientifically producing super-humans or “designer babies” and a super-race, is looming over humankind trying to play God.
45. Clearly human embryonic cloning and the production of embryonic stem cells by way of destroying human embryos are serious affronts to human dignity and the sacredness of human life. Even when their intentions, i.e., for therapeutic or reproductive purposes, might be good, the production, manipulation and destruction of human embryos to obtain suitable embryonic stem cells

---

are not morally acceptable.<sup>16</sup> “The Holy See supports research on stem cells of post-natal origin since this approach –as has been demonstrated by the most recent studies – is a sound, promising, and ethical way to achieve issue transplantation and cell therapy that could benefit humanity.”<sup>17</sup> In a pro-active stance, the Church has to be vigilant about these developments entering the doors of Asia.

### 15. Families and Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities

46. A truly positive development in Asia is the growing awareness of the place and role of the family in the building of Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities toward a new way of being Church. The family is the basic cell of society and the fundamental ecclesial community, the Church that is the home.<sup>18</sup> In Asia today there is a growing realization that the family has to be the focus of integral evangelization and the essential building block of the BEC / BHC and even of the local Church as a whole. In other words, the Church begins in the home, not in the parish. In the light of this perspective a rethinking of pastoral programs has to be done. Already in many approaches to the building of small communities that make up the parish, much attention is given to the family and to clusters of families, such that all the pastoral programs of parishes are aimed at building up family life.

### 16. Summing Up

47. We have discerned many forces in the pastoral situation. They may be death-dealing forces or life-giving forces. The emerging secular, post-modern culture is at best ambivalent. It possesses many positive features that contribute to the positive development of a culture of integral life. Cultural, economic, political, religious factors – including structures - influence the Asian family for good or for worse. However, other forces such as Asia’s massive poverty, divisions, conflicts, exploitation and oppressive structures are facilitated by the process of economic and cultural globalization and are death-dealing. They threaten not only the quality of life but also the very survival of many Asian families. Even life itself is threatened by genetic developments. Certainly caste-ism, patriarchy and gender inequality, poverty, child labor, land problems, ecological degradation and social conflicts are major death-dealing forces. Such threatening forces lead to the devaluing of positive values that have traditionally characterized Asian families such as close kinship inclusive of extended families, love of children, respect and care for the elderly, harmony, a deep moral and religious sense, a deep respect for life and care for the life in the womb, a profound reverence for the

sacred. They threaten our religious understanding of the origin and nature of life as well as the nature and structure of the family and marriage. They contradict responsible stewardship of human life considered seamless from conception to death, the sacramentality of marriage between man and woman and its God-given purpose. In a word, the pastoral situation in Asia, negative or positive, profoundly affects the life, the unity and harmony – communion and solidarity – of Asian families, values of God’s Reign that once characterized the whole of creation, flowing as it did from the love and life of God and the covenant that God made with humanity. These biblical values will be the themes of our theological-pastoral reflection.

48. The pastoral situation is truly a great challenge to the Church’s family ministry in Asia. Almost 20 years ago the Asian Bishops said:

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the Church in Asia is that posed by the Asian family. The Asian family is the cellular receptacle of all Asia’s problems, poverty, repression, exploitation and degradation, divisions and conflicts. The family is directly affected by the religious, political, economic, social and cultural problems of Asia, by the problems relating to women, health, work, business, education, etc.<sup>19</sup>

49. Hence these are the overarching pastoral questions that we wish to address: Can the Church in Asia, particularly the domestic church, respond adequately to the pastoral challenge so described? In what way can the Church reflect pastorally and theologically – and relevantly - on the death-dealing and life-giving forces in Asia that affect the life, the unity and communion and solidarity of Asian families? How can the Church be effective through relevant pastoral programs for the Asian family?

---

<sup>1</sup> Since its inception in 1974 the FABC in plenary session has presumed the major role of the family in evangelization. Only the 4<sup>th</sup> FABC Plenary Assembly on the Laity in 1986 gave more than just a passing mention of the family, devoting 10 paragraphs to the challenges confronting the family, its indispensable role in evangelization and in the formation not only of the laity, but also of the Church as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> *Lumen Gentium (LG)*, 11; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11; *Familiaris Consortio (FC)*, 21. From the Latin word *domus*, home, the term *domestic church* shall be used throughout the paper although it might conjure up related words such as “domesticated,” “domestic worker” that can evoke images of inferiority, passivity, submissiveness, and timidity.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted all scriptural quotations are from The New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>4</sup> See The International Social Survey Program (ISSP), 2002; cited by the Bishops of South Korea, Intervention on the Working Paper (CBCJ, IWP), July 22, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, in Kazakhstan it is “difficult to speak of ‘Catholic’ or even ‘Christian’ families due to the many mixed marriages with non-practicing Christians, with Muslims, or non-believers.” In fact, “Kazakhs who become Christians are often ostracized or even threatened with death by their relatives or co-nationals.” Thus Family Ministry has to start from the beginning with the training of suitable personnel. See Report of the Conference of the Bishops of Kazakhstan for the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the FABC, pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan, Intervention on the Working Paper (CBCJ, IWP), July 1, 2004, p. 1

<sup>7</sup> See FABC VI, Manila, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> From the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Rome, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> See *Centesimus Annus* (CA), 32

<sup>10</sup> The Japanese Bishops state that while other Asian families face economic poverty, “the major poverty confronting Japanese families is spiritual poverty,” CBCJ, IWP, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Even as the authority of fathers has weakened in Japanese

families with mothers managing the household, “we still find sexism in society (especially in the companies)”, CBCJ, IWP, July 1, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> According to international sociological categories, “girl-child” and “boy-child” refer to children below four years of age.

<sup>13</sup> See FABC VI, Manila, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> While Japan strictly follows the prohibition of child labor, it is of record that Japan is a destination country for working children from other countries, see CBCJ, IWP, p. 2, citing the annual report of the U.S. State Department, June 2004.

<sup>15</sup> See CBCJ, IWP, p. 2; CBCJ, IWP, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> See Intervention by the Holy See Delegation at the Special Committee of the 57<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations on Human Embryonic Cloning, 23 September 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* The Holy See refers, for instance, to stem cells developed from adult bone marrows.

<sup>18</sup> To be noted is the observation of the Bishops of Japan who believe that in Japan “it is not possible for the family to be the basic cell of the ecclesial community” since “we can often find only one Catholic in so many families”, CBCJ, IWP, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Final Statement of the 4<sup>th</sup> FABC Plenary Assembly, Tokyo, 16-25 September 1986, no. 3.4.1, in For All the Peoples of Asia, Rosales and Arevalo, eds., 1992, p. 184.



Participants from the East Asia

---

# Message of the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the FABC To the People of God in Asia and People of Good Will 17 - 23 August 2004

Gathered in Daejeon, Korea for the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, we bishops, together with priests, religious and laypeople from various countries in Asia, reflected on the theme *The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life*, in the spirit of listening to God and to the voices of Asian families.<sup>1</sup> As this assembly comes to a close we are confirmed in the conviction that the family is truly God's gift and blessing to Asia!

We celebrate the signs of hope that abound in the Asian families. Inspired by religious and cultural values and traditions, many families strive to remain committed to the ideals of family life. They draw strength from Asian values like a profound reverence for life, closeness to and respect for nature, strong family ties, personal relationships, hospitality, the spirit of welcome, respect for elders, filial piety, caring for the young. The enduring spirituality and religiosity in the family and the sense of the sacredness of marriage, family and children are a cause for joy and have made many families the cradles of vocations. Faced with great odds, they manifest resilience and endurance. The Asian family is strengthened by and also transmits these values. We marvel at how the values of indigenous peoples and other religions enrich Asian families. Intercultural and inter-religious marriages also provide opportunities for spiritual enrichment, and become symbols of unconditional love in the midst of complex cultural and religious issues these marriages face. We thank you, families, for safeguarding genuine values and we encourage you to persevere.

We also share the anxieties of the Asian families. New realities impinge on the well-being of many families. An emerging global neo-liberal culture that propels individualism, selfishness and greed, with lifestyles and mindsets inspired by materialism and secularism, poses a threat to the family. Elite globalization has caused untold poverty and migration. Wars and conflicts also displace people from homes. Families face the impact of the means of social communication and coercive population programs on family values. The spread of HIV/AIDS, illegal drugs, and pornography has harmed families, especially the youth who are most vulnerable. The rise of marital divorce and break-up signals the dwindling cohesion of the family. Abortion and other attempts to manipulate human life present a severe problem. A contraceptive mentality is undermining genuine conjugal love.

The continuing oppression of women and children is lamentable. Values that have served as foundations of the family are vanishing at an alarming rate, one result being the diminishing number of vocations in some countries. We cannot also ignore the complex situation of families with single, separated, or remarried parents and the effects on the children. We unite ourselves with you, Asian families as you courageously struggle with these difficult issues.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we envision all families living by Love that comes from God, for only Divine Love strengthens and nurtures Life. God is love (I Jn 4:8) and out of love God sent the Son to bring us life (I Jn 4:9). In God's plan of salvation, the Son became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and became part of the family of Mary and Joseph. We desire that the values of the Reign of God taught by Jesus (Mt 5-7) may take root in Asian families and bloom into a culture of life. A culture of life respects and protects God's gift of human life in all its dimensions from conception to death. A culture of life vigorously opposes the forces that destroy, exploit and oppress human life. A culture of life actively promotes responsible parenthood and the primacy of human life and dignity over efficiency, capital and profit. A culture of life promotes family values from indigenous people and other religions. We believe that families, steeped in the prayer and spirituality, are sanctuaries where love is faithfully shared and life responsibly generated, enriched and defended. By their shared love, communion and mutual service, Asian families can help foster communion and solidarity in faith communities and in society as we work towards forming one family of humankind.

As pastors of the Church convinced of God's unfailing love, we bishops will look for every opportunity to promote the good of families. We commit ourselves to strengthen Family Ministry so as to assist and accompany all families, especially those in dire need, on their journey towards fullness of life. In a particular way we would like express our affection and concern to the Catholic families in China and North Korea. We are one with our Catholic brothers and sisters in China as they meet the challenge of transforming the Church into one family of God.

As builders of communities, we appeal to our governments, groups concerned for the welfare of families, educational institutions, mass media producers and promoters, our brothers and sisters of other religious beliefs, and all people of good will to join us in strengthening the family as the focal point for the promotion of a civilization of love and a culture of life.

We entrust Asian families to God, the Fountain of Love and Life. We pray that you may "put on love, the perfect bond" (Col 3:14). Families of Asia, become what you are – God's gift of love and life for Asia!

---

<sup>1</sup> The 181 participants from 22 Asian countries were made up of 6 Cardinals, 24 Archbishops, 56 Bishops and priests, religious men and women, and laypeople. We note with sadness the absence of delegates from China.

---

# CHARTER OF THE RIGHTS OF THE FAMILY

The Charter of the Rights of the Family appeared two years after *Familiaris Consortio*, which contained a reference to the Charter. It is intended for all families, whether or not they are Christian. Especially in the light of the population-control movement's influence in the United Nations, the Charter is particularly timely.

*Presented by the Holy See to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today's world October 22, 1983*

## Preamble

Considering that:

- A. The rights of the person, even though they are expressed as rights of the individual, have a fundamental social dimension which finds an innate and vital expression in the family;
- B. The family is based on marriage, that intimate union of life in complementarity between a man and a woman which is constituted in the freely contracted and publicly expressed indissoluble bond of matrimony and is open to the transmission of life;
- C. Marriage is the natural institution to which the mission of transmitting life is exclusively entrusted;
- D. The family, a natural society, exists prior to the State or any other community, and possesses inherent rights which are inalienable;
- E. The family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society.
- F. The family is the place where different generations come together and help one another to grow in human wisdom and to harmonize the rights of individuals with other demands of social life;
- G. The family and society, which are mutually linked by vital and organic bonds, have a complementary function in the defense and advancement of the good of every person and of humanity;
- H. The experience of different cultures throughout history has shown the need for society to recognize and defend the institution of the family;
- I. Society, and in a particular manner the State and International Organizations, must protect the family through measures of a political, economic, social and juridical character, which aim at consolidating the unity and stability of the family so that it can exercise its specific function;
- J. The rights, the fundamental needs, the well-being and the values of the family, even though they are progressively safeguarded in some cases, are often ignored and not rarely undermined by laws, institutions and socio-economic programs;
- K. Many families are forced to live in situations of poverty which prevent them from carrying out their role with dignity;
- L. The Catholic Church, aware that the good of the person, of society and of the Church herself passes by way of the family, has always held it part of her mission to proclaim to all the plan of God instilled in human nature concerning marriage and the family, to promote these two institutions and to defend them against all those who attack them;
- M. The Synod of Bishops celebrated in 1980 explicitly recommended that a Charter of the Rights of the Family be drawn up and circulated to all concerned;

The Holy See, having consulted the Bishops' Conferences, now presents this "Charter of the Rights of the Family" and urges all States, International Organizations, and all interested Institutions and persons to promote respect for these rights, and to secure their effective recognition and observance.

## Article 1

All persons have the right to the free choice of their state of life and thus to marry and establish a family or to remain single.

- a) Every man and every woman, having reached marriageable age and having the necessary capacity,

---

has the right to marry and establish a family without any discrimination whatsoever; legal restrictions to the exercise of this right, whether they be of a permanent or temporary nature, can be introduced only when they are required by grave and objective demands of the institution of marriage itself and its social and public significance; they must respect in all cases the dignity and the fundamental rights of the person.

- b) Those who wish to marry and establish a family have the right to expect from society the moral, educational, social and economic conditions which will enable them to exercise their right to marry in all maturity and responsibility.
- c) The institutional value of marriage should be upheld by the public authorities; the situation of non-married couples must not be placed on the same level as marriage duly contracted. Article

### **Article 2**

Marriage cannot be contracted except by free and full consent duly expressed by the spouses.

- a) With due respect for the traditional role of the families in certain cultures in guiding the decision of their children, all pressure which would impede the choice of a specific person as spouse is to be avoided.
- b) The future spouses have the right to their religious liberty. Therefore to impose as a prior condition for marriage a denial of faith or a profession of faith which is contrary to conscience, constitutes a violation of this right.
- c) The spouses, in the natural complementarity which exists between man and woman, enjoy the same dignity and equal rights regarding the marriage.

### **Article 3**

The spouses have the inalienable right to found a family and to decide on the spacing of births and the number of children to be born, taking into full consideration their duties towards themselves, their children already born, the family and society, in a just hierarchy of values and in accordance with the objective moral order which excludes recourse to contraception, sterilization and abortion.

- a) The activities of public authorities and private organizations which attempt in any way to limit the freedom of couples in deciding about their children constitute a grave offense against human dignity and justice.

- b) In international relations, economic aid for the advancement of peoples must not be conditioned on acceptance of programs of contraception, sterilization or abortion.
- c) The family has a right to assistance by society in the bearing and rearing of children. Those married couples who have a large family have a right to adequate aid and should not be subjected to discrimination.

### **Article 4**

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception.

- a) Abortion is a direct violation of the fundamental right to life of the human being.
- b) Respect of the dignity of the human being excludes all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo.
- c) All interventions on the genetic heritage of the human person that are not aimed at correcting anomalies constitute a violation of the right to bodily integrity and contradict the good of the family.
- d) Children, both before and after birth, have the right to special protection and assistance, as do their mothers during pregnancy and for a reasonable period of time after childbirth.
- e) All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, enjoy the same right to social protection, with a view to their integral personal development.
- f) Orphans or children who are deprived of the assistance of their parents or guardians must receive particular protection on the part of society. The State, with regard to foster-care or adoption, must provide legislation which assists suitable families to welcome into their homes children who are in need of permanent or temporary care. This legislation must, at the same time, respect the natural rights of the parents.
- g) Children who are handicapped have the right to find in the home and the school an environment suitable to their human development.

### **Article 5**

Since they have conferred life on their children, parents have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate them; hence they must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.

- a) Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural traditions of the family which favor the good and the dignity of the child; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly.
- b) Parents have the right to freely choose schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions. Public authorities must ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom.
- c) Parents have the right to ensure that their children are not compelled to attend classes which are not in agreement with their own moral and religious convictions. In particular, sex education is a basic right of the parents and must always be carried out under their close supervision, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them.
- d) The rights of parents are violated when a compulsory system of education is imposed by the State from which all religious formation is excluded.
- e) The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the functioning of schools and in the formulation and implementation of educational policies.
- f) The family has the right to expect that the means of social communication will be positive instruments for the building up of society, and will reinforce the fundamental values of the family. At the same time the family has the right to be adequately protected, especially with regard to its youngest members, from the negative effects and misuse of the mass media.

#### **Article 6**

The family has the right to exist and to progress as a family.

- a) Public authorities must respect and foster the dignity, lawful independence, privacy, integrity and stability of every family.
- b) Divorce attacks the very institution of marriage and of the family.

- c) The extended family system, where it exists, should be held in esteem and helped to carry out better its traditional role of solidarity and mutual assistance, while at the same time respecting the rights of the nuclear family and the personal dignity of each member.

#### **Article 7**

Every family has the right to live freely its own domestic religious life under the guidance of the parents, as well as the right to profess publicly and to propagate the faith, to take part in public worship and in freely chosen programs of religious instruction, without suffering discrimination. \

#### **Article 8**

The family has the right to exercise its social and political function in the construction of society.

- a) Families have the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and effectively, as well as to protect the rights, foster the good and represent the interests of the family.
- b) On the economic, social, juridical and cultural levels, the rightful role of families and family associations must be recognized in the planning and development of programs which touch on family life.

#### **Article 9**

Families have the right to be able to rely on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities in the juridical, economic, social and fiscal domains, without any discrimination whatsoever.

- a) Families have the right to economic conditions which assure them a standard of living appropriate to their dignity and full development. They should not be impeded from acquiring and maintaining private possessions which would favor stable family life; the laws concerning inheritance or transmission of property must respect the needs and rights of family members.
- b) Families have the right to measures in the social domain which take into account their needs, especially in the event of the premature death of one or both parents, of the abandonment of one of the spouses, of accident, or sickness or invalidity, in the case of unemployment, or whenever the family has to bear extra burdens on behalf of its members for reasons of old age, physical or mental handicaps or the education of children.
- c) The elderly have the right to find within their own

---

family or, when this is not possible, in suitable institutions, an environment which will enable them to live their later years of life in serenity while pursuing those activities which are compatible with their age and which enable them to participate in social life.

- d) The rights and necessities of the family, and especially the value of family unity, must be taken into consideration in penal legislation and policy, in such a way that a detainee remains in contact with his or her family and that the family is adequately sustained during the period of detention.

### Article 10

Families have a right to a social and economic order in which the organization of work permits the members to live together, and does not hinder the unity, well-being, health and the stability of the family, while offering also the possibility of wholesome recreation.

- a) Remuneration for work must be sufficient for establishing and maintaining a family with dignity, either through a suitable salary, called a "family wage," or through other social measures such as family allowances or the remuneration of the work in the home of one of the parents; it should be such that mothers will not be obliged to work outside the home to the detriment of family life and especially of the education of the children.
- b) The work of the mother in the home must be recognized and respected because of its value for the family and for society.

### Article 11

The family has the right to decent housing, fitting for family life and commensurate to the number of the members, in a physical environment that provides the basic services for the life of the family and the community.

### Article 12

The families of migrants have the right to the same protection as that accorded other families.

- a) The families of immigrants have the right to respect for their own culture and to receive support and assistance towards their integration into the community to which they contribute.
- b) Emigrant workers have the right to see their family united as soon as possible.
- c) Refugees have the right to the assistance of public

authorities and International Organizations in facilitating the reunion of their families.

### Sources and References

- A. "Rerum novarum", no. 9; "Gaudium et spes", no. 24.  
B. "Pacem in terris", Part 1; "Gaudium et spes", nos. 48 and 50;  
"Familiaris consortio", no. 19; "Codex Iuris Canonici", no. 1056.  
C. "Gaudium et spes", no. 50; "Humanae vitae", no. 12; "Familiaris consortio", no. 28.  
D. "Rerum novarum", nos. 9 and 10; "Familiaris consortio", no. 45.  
E. "Familiaris consortio", no. 43.  
F. "Gaudium et spes", no. 52; "Familiaris consortio", no. 21.  
G. "Gaudium et spes", no. 52; "Familiaris consortio", nos. 42 and 45.  
I. "Familiaris consortio", no. 45.  
J. "Familiaris consortio", nos. 46.  
K. "Familiaris consortio", nos. 6 and 77.  
L. "Familiaris consortio", nos. 3 and 46.  
M. "Familiaris consortio", no. 46.

#### art. 1

- "Rerum novarum", no. 9; "Pacem in terris", Part 1; "Gaudium et spes", no. 26; "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", no. 16, 1.  
a) "Codes Iuris Canonici", nos. 1058 and 1077; "Universal Declaration", no. 16, 1.  
b) "Gaudium et spes", no. 52; "Familiaris consortio", no. 81.  
c) "Gaudium et spes", no. 52; "Familiaris consortio", nos. 81 and 82.

#### art. 2

- "Gaudium et spes", no. 52; "Codex Iuris Canonici", no. 1057; "Universal Declaration", nos. 16, 2.  
a) "Gaudium et spes", no. 52.  
b) "Dignitatis humanae", no. 6.  
c) "Gaudium et spes", no. 49; "Familiaris consortio", nos. 19 and 22; "Codex Iuris Canonici", no. 1135; "Universal Declaration", no. 16, 1.

#### art. 3

- "Populorum progressio", no. 37; Gaudium et spes, nos. 50 and 87; Humanae vitae, no. 10; Familiaris consortio, nos. 30 and 46.  
a) Familiaris consortio, no. 30.  
b) Familiaris consortio, no. 30.  
c) Gaudium et spes, no. 50.

#### art. 4

- Gaudium et spes, no. 51; Familiaris consortio, no. 26.  
a) Humanae vitae, no. 14; Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Procured Abortion, November 18, 1974; Familiaris consortio, no. 30.  
b) Pope John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 23, 1982.

- d) Universal Declaration, no. 25, 2; Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble and no. 4.  
 e) Universal Declaration, no. 25, 2.  
 f) Familiaris consortio, no. 41.  
 g) Familiaris consortio, no. 77.

**art. 5**

- Divini Illius Magistri, nos. 27-34; Gravissimum educationis, no. 3; Familiaris consortio, no. 36; Codex Iuris Canonici, nos. 793 and 1136.  
 a) Familiaris consortio, no. 46.  
 b) Gravissimum educationis, no. 7; Dignitatis humanae, no. 5; Pope John Paul II, Religious Freedom and the Helsinki Final Act  
 (Letter to the Heads of State of the nations which signed the Helsinki Final Act), 4b; Familiaris consortio, no. 40; Codex Iuris Canonici, no. 797.  
 c) Dignitatis humanae, no. 5; Familiaris consortio, nos. 37 and 40.  
 d) Dignitatis humanae, no. 5; Familiaris consortio, no. 40.  
 e) Familiaris consortio, no. 40; Codex Iuris Canonici, no. 796.  
 f) Pope Paul VI, Message for the Third World Communications Day, 1969; Familiaris consortio, no. 76.

**art. 6**

- Familiaris consortio, no. 46.  
 a) Rerum novarum, no. 10; Familiaris consortio, no. 46; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, no. 17.  
 b) Gaudium et spes, nos. 48 and 50.

**art. 7**

- Dignitatis humanae, no. 5; Religious Freedom and the Helsinki Final Act, 4b; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, no. 18.

**art. 8**

- Familiaris consortio, nos. 44 and 48.  
 a) Apostolicam actuositatem, no. 11; Familiaris consortio, nos. 46 and 72.  
 b) Familiaris consortio, nos. 44 and 45.

**art. 9**

- Laborem exercens, nos. 10 and 19; Familiaris consortio, no. 45; Universal Declaration, nos. 16, 3 and 22; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, nos. 10, 1.  
 a) Mater et magistra, Part II; Laborem exercens, no. 10; Familiaris consortio, no. 45; Universal Declaration, nos. 22 and 25; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 7, a, ii.  
 b) Familiaris consortio, nos. 45 and 46; Universal Declaration, no. 25, 1; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, nos. 9, 10, 1 and 10, 2.  
 c) Gaudium et spes, no. 52; Familiaris consortio, no. 27.

**art. 10**

- Laborem exercens, no. 19; Familiaris consortio, no. 77; Universal Declaration, no. 23, 3.

- a) Laborem exercens, no. 19; Familiaris consortio, nos. 23 and 81.  
 b) Familiaris consortio, no. 23.

**art. 11**

- Apostolicam actuositatem, no. 8; Familiaris consortio, no. 81; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, nos. 11, 1.

**art. 12**

- Familiaris consortio, no. 77; European Social Charter, 19.

**The 8<sup>th</sup> FABC Plenary Assembly**  
 Daejeon Catholic University  
 (St. Joseph Major Seminary and  
 St. Jeong Hasang Education Center)  
 Daejeon, Korea  
 August 17-23, 2004

**PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY**

Lord, God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

Father, you are Love and Life. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all the families in the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, may prove mightier than all the weakness and trials through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her worldwide mission in the family and through the family.

Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life forever and ever. Amen.

**(Pope John Paul II)**

con't from page 1 >

Church of Asia of A New Way of Being Church through the Basic Ecclesial Communities, seen as the Communion of Families.

The movement of the Spirit was evident as the Central Committee of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) accepted and initiated a new format and a more participatory processes for the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly. This format was based on Synods of Bishops and was indeed refreshing for the Bishops and their Consultors. The Bishops of Asia are now familiar with both the preparation of the Working Document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) and Group Work. Furthermore, it brought back into focus the Pastoral Spiral Methodology of the FABC. It seems that it was the combination of these factors that generated such interest, enthusiasm and energy shown by so many in the Church all over Asia.

Although not all countries were able to participate fully for various reasons, the thorough preparations, the time together in small regional groups and even national groups at times, made us realise that we can no longer talk in general or address issues and questions in the abstract. We need to find ways and means to tackle the many



ambiguities and lack of clarity as to the concrete way forward for the family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is linked, of course, to the increasingly complex and diverse realities of the world of Asia and their overt and subtle effect on the family. It is also obvious that the changing socio-economic conditions and cultural differences both within our own countries and among the Asian Regions have brought both to the Church and the family some new dilemmas.

Our way forward has thus to be related to a greater understanding of the underlying causes of Why the Asian family is affected by both the socialising forces and the break down of the internal workings of the family. These came through in the various Regional Working Groups, where in depth discussions and sharing attempted to relate issues affecting the family to our lives as members of the Church.

Family Life and Ministry today needs a more holistic and integral and inclusive approach. This can come about with the greater emphasis on the family as the focal point of evangelisation. The People of God need first to be Community and a Church in Communion. If the heart of the family is Communion (Common Union) of the husband and wife, the family needs to find a rightful place in the very heart of the Church in being in dialogue with their pastors and building a new Church as Communion of Families.

Taking off from this starting point and with this thrust in mind, the various Offices of the FABC are being challenged to continue this on-going dialogue with as many in the Church in Asia, as possible. We hope that as a Community and in Communion, we can address some of the vital issues affecting the family and identify concrete ways to respond to them. This will be a positive way to carry forward both the ideas and reflections that have been generated at the Plenary Assembly and to find new and creative approaches to implement the various recommendations at all levels within the Church in Asia.

We are glad to bring to you in this issue of the INFO the Part One of the Final Document, the Final Message of the 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the FABC and the Charter of the Rights of the Family. The focus on the Asian Family and the process of the Assembly has made it clear that a truly dialoguing church is only possible when we make decisions that are participatory. It is this participation that enriches our dialogue and makes us experience Church as a Community in Communion with one another. We hope to continue these reflections and work towards becoming the Prophetic Church in Asia by our commitment to the Asian Family toward an Integral Culture of Life.

**Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC**  
Executive Secretary

**Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC**  
*Editor*

*Editorial Consultants:*

**Manolita Gonzales**      **Ma. Celeste S.C. Gimena**  
**Teresita M. Aparente**    **Aurelio Joaquin**

*Info is the newsletter of the Office for Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. News and articles may be freely reproduced with acknowledgement except those reproduced "with permission."*

**Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences**  
**OFFICE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
1451 P. Guevarra St., Sta. Cruz, Manila 1014, Philippines  
P.O. Box 180, Manila 1099, Philippines

**PRINTED MATTER**  
**AIR MAIL**