

## FINAL STATEMENT OF THE SECOND ASIAN LAITY MEETING

19-24 MARCH 2001

Baan Phu Waan, Samphran, Thailand

*'You are standing firm in unity of Spirit and exerting yourselves with one accord for the faith of the Gospel.'* Philippians 1:27b

### I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, the participants of the Second Asian Laity Meeting represent 15 countries of Asia (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam). We, lay women, men, youth and sisters with our priests and bishops gathered here at the Pastoral Training Centre 'Baan Phu Waan', Samphran, Thailand from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2001 have been reflecting on the theme – ***"Laity: A Moving Force of Love and Service in a Renewed Church"***. In continuity with the first Asian Laity meeting which reflected on *"The Commitment of the Laity in the Church's Mission with Special Reference to Implementing the Social Teachings"* our theme links up with the social teachings of the Church as well as the theme of FABC 7<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of January 2000 which was *"A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service"*.
- 1.2 The regional gatherings of laity in South, South-East and East Asia have been reflecting on the social teachings of the Church in the context of their regional realities. This has been a continuing process of growth and maturity in the faith.
- 1.3 Objectives of this meeting are:
  - 1.3.1 To animate the potential of the family and laity in the workplace as a moving force of love and service, witnessing to Gospel values.
  - 1.3.2 To discover possibilities of joining with brothers and sisters of other faiths in responding in love and service to the many challenges facing Asia.
  - 1.3.2 To build solidarity with other Church organizations, laity of other countries and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in the service of human promotion.
- 1.4 We have missed those local Churches who could not be present: Cambodia, Laos, Mainland China, Myanmar, North Korea and the countries of Central Asia. It is heartening to note the presence of Uzbekistan in this meeting.

### 2. OUR EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 We began with an exposure to some aspects of our Asian reality. In keeping with the Church's invitation to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths, with cultures and with the poor, we visited centres where an alternative life-style was adhered to; where AIDs sufferers, the elderly, the oppressed and exploited could find care, comfort and hope; where women, children and youth, the victims of a globalised market economy, could find help, guidance and a

new lease of life. We encountered many people who have suffered deeply from the battering of society.

- 2.2 Our exposure helped us to learn, to see, to feel and share in the suffering of others. Inspired by the example of those who work with them we were convinced that “love and service” rather than “take and exploit” is the key to human happiness. We realized that heart and wisdom, more than money or knowledge, enables people to find meaning in life, that greater strength and joy comes from forming meaningful relationships and working with different groups sharing similar concerns and interests, to foster solidarity and collaboration towards a more humane society.
- 2.3 The regional reports gave us an overview of the burning issues and the Church’s response. The attempts of the local Churches to resolve these problems gave us hope. There are lay people genuinely involved with those who are suffering and lay people working for justice and the promotion of human rights. Considering, however, the immensity of the problem, our response as laity has been inadequate.
- 2.4 Our resource persons and the different representatives of NGOs, offered us insights and possibilities to live our mission as agents of change in the world.
- 2.5 We are grateful for the opportunity we had to bond with each other through personal sharing, group discussions and working together. The preparation and daily celebration of the Eucharist was the source of our inspiration and communion. The cultural evenings deepened our fellowship and heightened our appreciation for the beauty and diversity of Asian cultures.

### **3. CHALLENGES**

- 3.1 Basic Ecclesial Communities / Small Christian Communities offer the laity a way to link faith and life and help us grow in awareness of our situations. In these small communities formation in the faith, in particular in the social teachings of the Church, can help us develop a sense of mission and become a moving force to bring about conversion and change in Church and Society. *“They aim to help their members to live the Gospel in a spirit of fraternal love and service, and are therefore a solid starting point for building a new society, the expression of a civilization of love”.* (EA #25)
- 3.2 We are called to be credible witnesses by a *“lifestyle that is consonant with the teachings of the Gospel ... Solidarity with the poor becomes more credible if Christians themselves live simply, following the example of Jesus”* (E.A.#34)
- 3.3 We are called to be a moving force of love and service in communion with the Church and to implement her social teachings, personally and in community, working with all people of good will to face common social concerns.
- 3.4 There is an urgent need to respond to the Church's call to public life. The world of politics and the workplace are the pre-eminent places where the laity are called to transform society.

3.5 We are particularly challenged to undertake advocacy for the promotion of human rights.

#### **4. RESOLUTIONS**

We resolve:

- 4.1 To emphasize a more systematic and thorough formation of the laity in its understanding of its identity and role, and in the social teachings of the Church offered regularly and in simplified form.
- 4.2 To utilize the process of exposure, reflection and action which we found so helpful in the formation of the laity.
- 4.3 To commit ourselves to work with our local Churches to implement the plans of action in our own countries.
- 4.4 To form Gospel-based communities that give the laity opportunities to become a moving force of love and service.
- 4.5 To build greater solidarity among the Churches of Asia and with peoples of other faiths to strengthen our work on behalf of the poor.
- 4.6 To encourage and assist the family to actively take up its unique role based on the social teachings of the Church.

#### **5. IN CLOSING,**

- 5.1 Enriched and edified by our experiences of these days together, we return with renewed determination and strength to take up our challenges.
- 5.2 We are very grateful to our Holy Father for his message sent to us participants. His words, that although we represent a very small minority in Asia "*just a little yeast is capable of leavening an entire mass of dough... And so we are prepared to set off once more on our Christian life with Him, in the sure knowledge that Jesus is humanity's only hope and salvation*" (cf. Novo Millennio Ineunte, #29)
- 5.3 We end our second Asian Laity Meeting on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation and pray that through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Asia, we too can say 'Yes' to the radical call of the Gospel to be poor and to be one as we begin the new millennium.
- 5.4 We thank our gracious host and co-organizer, the Catholic Council of Lay Organizations of Thailand for their hospitality. We also thank the FABC Office of Laity for bringing us together from all over Asia.