

FINAL STATEMENT

**GO, YOU ARE SENT FORTH! FOLLOWING JESUS IN MISSION:
SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES SERVING AND MINISTERING**

1. COMING TOGETHER

1.1. We the participants of the AsIPA General Assembly VI of the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) - 57 lay people, 71 clergy, 11 bishops, 12 religious from 16 countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand; also from Germany, South Africa, Switzerland) came together here at Chintana Center, Nainamadama in Sri Lanka from 18-24 October 2012, to share our experiences, to deepen communion among us and to reflect on the theme of mission.

1.2. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Laity and Family (FABC OLF), AsIPA (BEC) Desk and participants of this assembly express our deep gratitude to the Church in Sri Lanka, especially the local organizers of this event led by the Most Reverend Kingsley Swampillai, Bishop of Trincomalee, for the warm hospitality extended to us, the efficient rendering of logistic and technical support and the edifying experience of Church as communion evident in the daily process of the assembly and especially through the exposure in the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities (SCCs/BECs) in the dioceses of Chilaw, Kurunegala and Colombo. We also thank our host diocese, Chilaw, especially Most Reverend Valence Mendis, Bishop of Chilaw for the warm welcome extended to us.

1.3. We also would like to thank the Papal Nuncio His Excellency, Joseph Spiteri for gracing our event and imparting a Papal blessing. We remember with gratitude the late Bishop Oswald Hirmer for journeying with us till his death on 5 March 2011. We deeply appreciate Most Reverend Bishop Emeritus Fritz Lobinger for accompanying us. We thank Propaganda Fidei and MISSIO for long years of friendship and support.

1.4. It is providential that we could gather in the midst of important events and celebrations in the Catholic Church all over the world: the 50th year of Vatican II, the 20th year of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Year of Faith October 11 2012 – November 2013), the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of Faith and the 40th anniversary of the FABC. We hope that our ecclesial gathering here in Asia contributes to the discernment and renewal happening in the universal church as it strives to be more faithful to Jesus and at the same time responsive to the challenges of our world.

1.5. We are conscious of the painful realities that continue to exist in some of our countries but are also encouraged by the positive developments we have strived hard to achieve. We are aware of the abject and ever deepening poverty even as we acknowledge how extensive economic growth has benefitted our people especially the poor and the young. We are heirs to ancient traditions and bearers of cultures so varied and rich and we are so saddened by the threat and damage to our Asian cultures brought about by materialism, secularization and individualism that accompanies distorted economic development, together with the negative effects of migration and

globalization. We are pained by the growing fundamentalist tendencies in some religious traditions even as great strides have been made in inter-faith harmony and solidarity. We are appalled by the continued existence of corrupt governments, politicians, judiciary officials, administrators and businessmen; the degradation of our women, young girls and even children, even as people especially through peoples' and non-governmental organizations have become more ardent in promoting human rights and social justice.

1.6. It is to be admitted that many problems exist in the church. Clericalism and hierarchical dominance as well as the apathy of a majority of the baptized to the mission of the Church continue to exist. However we have seen much growth in grassroot Christian communities, in the way they live their faith.

1.7. In the midst of these socio-political and religious realities, we in this 6th AsIPA General Assembly took upon ourselves the theme: **“Go, You are Sent Forth. Following Jesus in Mission: Small Christian Communities Serving and Ministering”**. We wanted to seriously take the challenge of responding to the local as well as global realities that are experienced in the daily lives of our peoples in grassroot settings and make our SCCs/BECs sincerely follow the footsteps of Jesus in our life of communion and mission.

2. JOURNEYING IN FAITH

2.1. In our on-going faith journey towards a participatory church, we looked critically into our work in AsIPA by going through the research done in SCCs/BECs in five parishes from five dioceses in five Asian countries that have been using AsIPA to build up a participatory church.

2.2. In the spirit of the theme of the 5th AsIPA General Assembly: “Bread Broken and Word Shared”, we saw in the research data how our SCCs/BECs live as Eucharistic communities - people growing in their faith and life of discipleship, in their relationships within the family, in the neighborhood, in their involvement in parish life and especially in their participation in Eucharistic celebrations. They see this growth as a direct result of their regular sharing on the Word of God and the constant effort to live the Christian faith.

2.3. However, the research findings on the AsIPA process made us realize that in the life of the SCCs/BECs, we need to give greater emphasis to the area of mission. Although certain efforts towards reaching out to neighbours in need and joining neighbours of different religious traditions in social events (such as weddings, birthdays, feasts, burials) are made, much of these are done as individual efforts. The growth in spiritual life achieved in the SCCs/BECs has yet to sufficiently flow into active mission towards the needy, marginalized, oppressed and people of other faiths.

2.4. The country reports presented in the assembly also affirmed the results of the research and highlighted new initiatives taken in the SCCs/BECs. Gospel Sharing continues to invite people into a more faithful following of Jesus. Formation and awareness programmes continue to be designed to deepen people's understanding and living out of the faith. Additional training for new parish formation teams and diocesan teams is being done. Increase in the attendance and participation in Eucharistic celebrations is noted. Strengthening of political and social action in SCCs/BECs is also reported.

2.5. Some new initiatives were noted in the following areas: focusing on the formation of the clergy and religious, as well as the youth; new bible formation programmes and bible sharing

methods; new areas of ministry such as those serving prisoners and migrants; restructuring parish life, Parish Pastoral Councils and leadership systems to serve the Church in the neighbourhood.

2.6. The most inspiring part of our journey here in the AsIPA General Assembly VI was the exposure experience in twenty one parishes. They showed how the AsIPA methodology helped the people to be rooted in the Word of God. It also revealed that a sense of belonging as Church had increased and they experience a greater level of Christian communion. Familiarity and knowledge of the bible has increased among the people and they are learning to seek answers to their struggles in the light of the Word of God. We were inspired by the family-oriented leadership and touched by the culture in the daily lives of people, in their joys, hopes and celebrations.

3. FOLLOWING JESUS IN MISSION

3.1. God has called us not as individuals but as a community (LG,9). Through baptism the Lord has invited and commissioned all the faithful to be at the service of the Church and humanity (cf. 1Pet.2:9; LG,31; AA,3).

3.2. We affirmed that SCCs/BECs are a force for mission and evangelization in the Church and they are an effective means of promoting communion and participation (RM,51;EA,24,25). SCCs/BECs are “solid starting points of a new society based on a civilization of love” (RM,51).

3.3. Faith has to be lived, shared, witnessed to and proclaimed simultaneously. One should not think that SCCs/BECs are just programs and activities but are to be experienced as a participatory Church in our daily life. In a situation where human dignity and environmental ecology are not respected, the life and mission of SCCs/BECs should flow from a deeper sense of charity and social justice towards the building up of God’s kingdom.

3.4. Being sensitive to Asian realities - multi-religious, multi cultural, multi-lingual – we are called to link our SCCs/BECs with people of other faiths so that SCCs/BECs can become salt and light to the world (cf.Mt.5:13-16). The people of other faiths are our neighbours and the Lord has given us the command to love our neighbours as ourselves (cf.Lk.10:29-37). In response to the Lord’s command, SCCs/BECs in the long run can help in developing small neighbourhood/human communities. These communities promote peace, justice and harmony in society.

4. SERVING AND MINISTERING

4.1. Since the church is communion, there should be participation and co-responsibility in mission and ministries. The multifaceted Asian realities create unique ministerial situations in Asia that call our SCCs/BECs to evolve new forms of pertinent ministries. Moreover many Asian countries have their own unique problems, which demand contextual ministries. The ministry of healing, dialoguing with other Christians and people of other faiths, helping migrants and internally displaced people, providing homes for orphans of war, empowering abandoned women, fighting against nuclear power, working for justice, peace and reconciliation, defending the rights of individuals, groups and nationalities, creating new opportunities for the unemployed, fighting against corruption, ministering to youth gone astray, taking care of the abandoned elderly, are some examples of such new ministries. Thus an explosion of lay ministries is experienced in the churches of Asia thanks to the SCCs/BECs which have become the birthplace of such new ministries, enfleshing in our time the Pauline understanding of the Body of Christ (cf.1Cor. 12).

4.2. Many new ministries cannot be satisfactorily done at the level of the SCCs/BECs alone. National and diocesan SCCs/BECs teams should enable more networking with other SCCs/BECs within the local church and even across the world as well as joining hands with other agencies working in the same direction.

4.3. New ministries are emerging as a response to the needs of the time and place and are essentially spontaneous and local. Ministries are to be exercised at different levels – SCCs/BECs, parish and diocese - and must be done as a team so that we avoid individual domination and eliminate the fear of creating parallel structures to that of ordained ministries. These ministries must be practiced on a rotating basis so that many get a chance to participate and the local church becomes truly a participatory church. These new ministries demand proper training and formation so that ministers become truly equipped followers of Jesus in mission (cf. Eph. 4:7-16).

4.4. In animating and forming these new ministries that emerge from the interaction of SCCs/BECs and the contextual realities of Asia, the role of bishops, priests and religious is vital. It should be that of enabling. They become ‘servant leaders’ and ‘people growers’. They inherit the vision of a participatory church in their formation and are equipped with the skills necessary to become enabler priests and religious (cf. Jn.13:1-20, Mk 10:35-45).

4.5. In this way, the vision of Vatican II with regard to mission and ministries can be materialized through the SCCs/BECs. The One mission of Christ can be achieved through the exercise of a variety of ministries (AA, 2,10). The church through SCCs/BECs can truly become a communion that is sent forth following Jesus in mission; serving and ministering.

5. GO, YOU ARE SENT FORTH

As we move forward in our journey towards a participatory Church, we recommend the following.

5.1. That SCCs/BECs be called upon to become homes for migrants and the displaced as they experience a sense of loss and confusion in leaving behind their own communities.

5.2. That SCCs/BECs, while fighting the consumerist and individualistic values brought about by globalization, be called to embrace the people who are affected by it and work hard to bring them into the civilization of love.

5.3. That SCCs/BECs realize that one of their important duties is to form good social and political leaders with Christian values and vision, in a society where we see corruption at various levels of leadership,

5.4. That SCCs/BECs be called to work for Christian unity (ecumenism) and be agents of interfaith dialogue within families and in the neighborhood in the context of religious pluralism.

5.5. That SCCs/BECs facilitate a deeper ownership of the vision of a participatory Church and co-responsibility.

5.6. That Church and SCC leaders recognize the gifts and talents of all, to build up the body of Christ by exercising an enabling leadership style.

5.7. That SCCs/BECs motivate the participation of non-active members such as the men and youth by listening to them first and engaging them in ways that they find meaningful.

5.8. That SCCs/BECs members and leaders are given theological and pastoral formation so that the *sensus fidelium* is promoted and strengthened.

5.9. That SCCs/BECs work hard to deepen the faith of their members by providing them better catechesis on the deposit of faith in this Year of Faith as the Holy Father invites the Church to go through a new evangelization,.

5.10. That SCCs/BECs make use of the Group Response Gospel Sharing Method and Amos Programmes whereby they can become real prophetic communities.

SCCs/BECs are sent forth to follow Jesus in mission serving and ministering. This is a long but rewarding journey that can be made only in the power of the Risen Lord. May Mary who by her presence inspired the first community of disciples to be a true community, guide and accompany our SCCs/BECs on the way to the Kingdom of God. And the Spirit of the Lord who calls us to a new evangelization, energize our SCCs/BECs towards a deeper and more courageous following of Jesus in our world. “Go, and I will be with you always until the end of time!” (cf.Mt. 28:20)

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