

# Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)-OLF-Youth Desk

## 3<sup>rd</sup> BILA on YOUTH

**Catholic Youth – Transformed by Christ and His Church, Transforming Asia**

*[Re-living the experience of the Samaritan Woman (John 4)].*

August 3 – 7, 2015 / Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

## FINAL STATEMENT

### I. INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the Gospel story of the Samaritan Woman, we, the ninety five (95) delegates<sup>1</sup> from various Episcopal Commissions<sup>2</sup> and Catholic Organizations for Youth in Asia (COYA)<sup>3</sup> gathered together at Pace Bene FSIC Retreat Centre, Papar, Sabah, Malaysia from August 3-7, 2015 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bishops' Institute for Lay Apostolate (BILA) on Youth,<sup>4</sup> under the auspices of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Office of the Laity and Family – Youth Desk (FABC-OLF-YD).

Looking into the realities of the youth today, BILA III focused on the theme: **Catholic Youth – Transformed by Christ and His Church, Transforming Asia** [Re-living the experience of the Samaritan Woman (*John 4*)], with the following objectives:

- To reflect on and evaluate the changing needs and concerns of young people vis-à-vis the present realities of Asia in the context of pastoral youth ministry.
- To encourage the bishops and youth animators in committing themselves further to assist and accompany the youth towards a personal and growing relationship with Christ and His Church.
- To empower the participants in motivating and shepherding young people as agents of the Gospel in the face of burning issues today (e.g. moral relativism, religious discrimination, the poor and the marginalized, and globalization).
- To identify resources and establish networks that will recognize and support pastoral workers in youth apostolate in Asia.

BILA III began with a celebration of Mass at the Holy Rosary Church in Limbahau and warm welcome from the local community. We were touched by their rich cultural expressions and the generosity of the welcome. The following day, the participants visited five communities to celebrate the Mass and share meals together. This was followed by dialogue on issues affecting the youth and village communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Consisting of three (3) Archbishops, nine (9) Bishops, twenty two (22) priests, five (5) religious, two (2) deacons, one (1) brother and forty seven (47) youth animators from the Youth Commissions.

<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

<sup>3</sup> COYA was formed in 2008, and is composed of CFC-YFC, Fondacio Asia, FIMCAP Asia, Hatsal Youth Ministry Institute, ICPE, and Jesus Youth.

<sup>4</sup> The BILA is a platform for the bishops, youth ministers and collaborators from Asia to come together to reflect and deepen the experience of youth apostolate, and to discern the orientations for the future. BILA I on Youth was held in 1997 and BILA II on Youth was in 2007.

Assisted by the keynote address and other inputs,<sup>5</sup> we reflected on the present changing realities of the young. We were challenged to pass through ‘Samaria’, to offer Jesus to the young as a source of new life so that they too can transform others. We drew inspiration from the faith testimonies of fellow youth ministers in light of the story of the Samaritan woman. The workshops<sup>6</sup> provided us the opportunity to learn new skills and insights for our ministry.

With all our experiences, exposure,<sup>7</sup> and meaningful encounters we acknowledge that we can be transformed by Christ and we offer the fruits of our reflections. We recognize several issues, identified guiding principles and recommendations for youth ministry.

## II. CHALLENGES OF YOUTH MINISTRY

We acknowledge the growth of youth ministry which is evident across various Churches in Asia. Many youth have become important resource in ministry and help their peers to encounter Christ. They have shown exemplary passion and commitment. Amongst other things, they offer themselves to organise and serve at confirmation camps and retreats, formation programs, and are key in different ministries. They are a blessing to our Church for which we give thanks.

Some of the major issues and realities that came out as a result of the sharing of all the participants of BILA III on youth are as follows:

### A. The challenges that confront the youth today:

1. Youth search for their identity, the truth and meaning of life. Like the Samaritan woman, they thirst for God and seek meaningful relationships.
2. However with the fast changing Asian societies and the impact of technology, we see and hear their struggles in life:
  - They need guidance, direction, to find purpose and to grow in self-esteem.
  - Because of their negative experiences, they have difficulty to trust others.
  - More than previous generations, the youth today experience greater stress at work, study and the problem of unemployment.<sup>8</sup>
  - A large number of youth become migrants due to economic and educational reasons, and in their search for better lives.
  - In some parts of Asia, victims of human trafficking and forced labour are largely young people. Many illegal migrants and prisoners are also young people.

<sup>5</sup> Keynote address was delivered by Bishop Leopoldo Jaucian, SVD, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Youth, CBCP. Other inputs were given by His Grace William Goh, Archbishop of Singapore; His Grace Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur; and the pastoral synthesis by Bishop Joel Baylon, Chairman FABC-Youth Desk.

<sup>6</sup> Workshop topics : Moral Relativism, Stewardship of God’s Creation, Intentional Discipleship, Pastoral Care for Ministry Workers, and Theology, Methodology and Skills for Youth Ministry.

<sup>7</sup> The outstations were St. Joseph (Papar), St. Patrick (Kinuta), St. Monica (Moindang), St. Theresa of Avila (Kogopon).

<sup>8</sup> Asia’s 36 million unemployed youth account for more than half the region’s unemployed population (Unleashing Youth In Asia, by McKinsey Center for Government, October 2014 Cheryl Lim Andrew Grant Solving for the “Triple-E” challenge of youth: Education, Employment and Engagement, citing International Labor Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013).

- Consumerism has affected our young. They live in a culture of instant gratification, have short attention spans and become easily addicted to technology. These lead to self-absorption and indifference.
  - Many have fallen victim to drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and experience same sex attraction.
3. Furthermore, Asian youth lack access to education, suffer from financial difficulties, and material poverty and its consequences. They also live in conditions of cultural, religious and structural discrimination which deprive them of opportunity for growth. Proselytisation in some parts of Asia is a major concern.

#### **B. The challenges within the Church today:**

As we survey the challenges confronting the young in Asia we also acknowledge the need for us as Church to be transformed by Christ in the following areas:

1. An increasing number of youth have difficulty relating to certain aspects of the faith and the Mass. They then do not practice their faith and experience spiritual poverty.
2. There is clericalism or priest centeredness in many of our ministries.
3. We find competition instead of collaboration among different realities.

#### **C. The challenges that confront youth ministry today**

Our common struggles as bishops, priests, religious and laity working with the youth are:

1. We feel inadequate in our roles for lack of formation, and have difficulty to listen to and understand the young.
2. We struggle with lack of time and energy. There is a need to multi-task due to insufficient number of ministry workers.
3. We face the temptation to compromise our prayer life due to the busy rhythm of life.
4. There is a common tendency for us to overlook self-care.
5. There are temptations to be complacent and remain in our comfort zones.
6. The migration of youth for work or studies affects the stability of our ministry.

#### **D. The challenges of lay youth ministers today**

Among the many challenges, the following are specific to our lay youth ministers:

1. They realise the need to be initiated into the spiritual life and grow deeper in their relationship with God.
2. Some youth ministers struggle with inadequate remuneration and lack of funds for ministry.
3. At times, they face lack of openness and support from their superiors.
4. They struggle with the instability of lay vocations due to changes in the state of life, and the lack of recognition and uncertainty of their role in the church.

### **III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

For our deliberations and recommendations, BILA III looked at the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman as guide. The keynote address offered three important insights from *John 4* which helped us frame our guiding principles for youth ministry:

1. **We have to pass through Samaria:** This pertains to attitudes of Jesus towards those in the fringes of our society.

- a. To have a concern and compassion for all, especially those who are despised and pushed to the margins of society.
- b. To be welcoming and genuinely interested in these youth. Patience, presence and availability are attitudes for authentic relationships with them.
- c. To listen to youth with openness, without judgement and in a respectful way so as to understand them and enter into meaningful dialogue with them.

**2. We have to offer Jesus to the young as their source of new life:**

- a. To explore with the young, human brokenness as a result of sin and proclaim the healing power of God's love and mercy in Christ.
- b. To understand that genuine and lasting transformation comes from the experience of God's love in Christ.
- c. To initiate the youth into the life of prayer, to be faithful in prayer and to pray with the young.

**3. Young people are moved to transform others as a fruit of their own transformation:**

- a. To believe in the young and help them realise their great potential.
- b. To deliberately prepare the young for the work of mission as the fruit of genuine transformation and the means to grow in one's faith.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

At the end of BILA III, we make the following recommendations:

*For all who care for the young in Asia:*

1. To be continually transformed through prayer and daily encounters with the Lord.
2. To continue to respect and value the youth as gift and vital part of the Church today and its future.
3. To provide regular opportunities for dialogue between Church leaders and young people as well as youth ministers.
4. To empower the youth and provide opportunities for them to minister to their peers.
5. To lead the youth to discover the treasure of the Church's teachings and experience encounters with God through the Mass and the other sacraments.
6. To explore new methods and ways of reaching out to the young especially those who suffer in the peripheries.
7. To lead the youth intentionally to become disciples through the ministry of presence, dialogue and witness.

*Particularly for Youth ministers:*

8. To give sufficient attention to youth ministers' needs and set-up support structures to enable them to address concerns such as loneliness and burnout.
9. To help youth ministers remain relevant through ongoing formation.
10. To keep youth ministers updated with technology and youth culture.
11. To share resources between dioceses, offices and movements as a Church in communion.
12. To call and train more full time lay youth ministers in our dioceses, parishes and organizations, and provide suitable remuneration.
13. To plan for youth ministry 'succession,' respect the teams and work done previously and do proper documentation of events and tools for continuity.
14. To channel the idealism and energy of the youth for social justice and address dehumanising issues in our cultures and societies.
15. To provide spaces or create opportunities to train our youth to understand and engage in inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue.
16. To transform Asia, we humbly acknowledge and invite everyone to reflect further ways to reach out beyond our comfort zones to the 'peripheries'.

## **CONCLUSION**

We would like to acknowledge the many things unsaid but felt and sensed in the conversations and exposure. Following Jesus, we need to train and develop in us the right ears, eyes and hearts, to genuinely listen to the desires and longings of our Asian peoples.

We recognize the Lord's gift of youth ministers, the lay, religious, priests and bishops who dedicate their lives to serve young people. As we continue to allow ourselves to be transformed by Christ, may the Holy Spirit continue to strengthen our joy and commitment in reaching out to the youth in Asia, and give us His wisdom in bringing His light, love and hope to them.

We entrust ourselves, our ministries, the young people of Asia, and all the realities we are confronted with to the intercession of Mary, that first young and ardent disciple, and mother of our Lord.

August 7, 2015, Pace Bene, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

## SUMMARY STATEMENT – BILA III on YOUTH

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### II. CHALLENGES OF YOUTH MINISTRY

We acknowledge the growth of youth ministry across various churches in Asia. Many youth have become important resource in ministry and help their peers to encounter Christ. They have shown exemplary passion and commitment and are a blessing to our Churches.

#### A. The challenges that confront the youth today:

Youth search for their identity, the truth and meaning of life. Like the Samaritan woman, they thirst for God and seek meaningful relationships. However with the fast changing Asian societies and the impact of technology, we see and hear their struggles in life. They need guidance to find purpose and to grow in self-esteem.

Because of their negative experiences, they have difficulty to trust others. More than previous generations, the youth today experience greater stress and unemployment. A large number of youth become migrants in their search for better lives. Victims of human trafficking, forced labour, illegal migrants and prisoners are largely young people.

Consumerism has affected our young. They live in a culture of instant gratification, have short attention spans and become easily addicted to technology. These lead to self-absorption and indifference. Many have fallen victim to drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and experience same sex attraction. Many Asian youth lack access to education, suffer from material poverty and its consequences. Many also live in conditions of cultural, religious and structural discrimination which deprive them of opportunity for growth. Proselytisation in some parts of Asia is a major concern.

#### B. The challenges within the Church today:

We also acknowledge the need for us as Church to be transformed by Christ. An increasing number of youth have difficulty relating to certain aspects of the faith and the Mass. They then do not practice their faith and experience spiritual poverty. There is clericalism in many of our ministries. We find competition instead of collaboration among Church realities.

#### C. The challenges that confront youth ministry today:

Our common struggles as bishops, priests, religious and laity working with the youth is we feel inadequate in our roles. We struggle with lack of time and energy. We multi-task due to insufficient number of ministry workers. We face the temptation to compromise our prayer life and overlook self-care due to the busy rhythm of life. We can remain in our comfort zones. And the migration of youth affects the stability of our ministry.

#### D. The challenges of lay youth ministers today:

They realise the need to be initiated into the spiritual life and grow deeper in their relationship with God. Some youth ministers struggle with inadequate remuneration and lack of funds for ministry. At times, they face lack of openness and support from their superiors. They struggle with the instability of lay vocations due to changes in the state of life, and the lack of recognition and uncertainty of their role in the Church.

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### III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We looked at the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman to frame our guiding principles for youth ministry:

#### **We have to pass through Samaria:**

- To have a concern and compassion for all, especially those in the margins of society.
- To be welcoming and genuinely interested in these youth.
- To listen to youth with openness, without judgement and in a respectful way.

#### **We have to offer Jesus to the young as their source of new life:**

- Into human brokenness, we proclaim the healing power of God's love and mercy.
- Genuine transformation comes from the experience of God's love in Christ.
- Initiate the youth into the life of prayer; be faithful in prayer, and pray with the young.

#### **Young people are moved to transform others as a fruit of their transformation:**

- To believe in the young and help them realise their great potential.
- To deliberately prepare the young for the work of mission.

### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

*For all who care for the young in Asia:*

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5. To help youth discover the treasure of Church's teachings and experience God's love and presence through the sacraments.
6. To explore new ways of reaching out to the young especially those in the peripheries.
7. To lead the youth intentionally to discipleship through our presence, dialogue, witness.

*Particularly for Youth ministers:*

8. To give attention to youth ministers' needs & set-up support structures for pastoral care
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14. To channel the idealism and energy of the youth for social justice in our societies.
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### Conclusion

Following Jesus, we need to train and develop in us the right ears, eyes and hearts, to genuinely listen to the desires and longings of our Asian peoples. We recognize the Lord's gift of youth ministers, the lay, religious, priests and bishops who dedicate their lives to serve young people. We entrust ourselves, our ministries, the young people of Asia, and all the realities we are confronted with to the intercession of Mary, that first young and ardent disciple, and mother of our Lord.

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