The Joy of Communion

Christmas is not just a time for human beings to connect with each other. Christmas is God himself getting connected with the human race. In the stillness of the night, Almighty God becomes Emmanuel – God with us. The transcendent one becomes immanent – one with us. God himself came to share communion with us and to help us experience the joy of communion with him and our brothers and sisters.

At the end of the year just ending with celebration of Christmas I experience a new joy for communion with my people. The source of this joy is the coming of the Word of God, taking flesh in order to dwell among us. That Christmas is celebrated a feast of the Incarnation. “For God so loved the world that he gave His only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (Jn. 3:16-17). I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude for granting me the joy of communion with all of you and also in a particular way with those who interacted with me and worked with me in the FABC - Office for Laity and Family (OLF).

As I come to the end of my term as Chairman of the OLF on 31st December 2018, I want to thank everyone for the support and cooperation. I thank Fr. Cajetan Menezes for running the office at a very crucial junction during this transition period, and executing the programmes planned ahead by the OLF & OLF-AsIPA Desk. I thank Fr. Gustavo A. Benitez (Cambodia) for his service to the FABC OLF Youth desk and wish him all the best for his new appointment in Italy from June 2019. I welcome Archbishop Gilbert Garcia (Philippines) as the new Chairperson of the OLF from 1st January 2019. Also, welcome Fr. Emmanuel K. Rosario (Bangladesh) as the new Executive Secretary of the OLF and Rev. Fr. Thomas Vijay new Ex.-Secretary for the OLF-AsIPA (BEC) desk.

Inspired by Christmas, let us live our life in communion with truth in the midst of falsehood, with love in the midst of hatred, with forgiveness in the midst of revenge, with reconciliation in the midst of dissension and with commitment to build communion – an example of God who has come down to build communion with us amongst all the people of other faiths.

Let the joy of communion be my greetings, prayers and blessings in this Christmas season and for the New Year.

Cardinal Patrick D’Rozario, C.S.C.
Archbishop of Dhaka, Chairperson FABC – OLF
22nd December 2018
THE FABC-OFFICE OF CLERGY & FABC-OFFICE OF LAITY & FAMILY
23rd November 2018, Mahatai Centre, Pattaya, Thailand.

Message from the Bishops, Priests and Pastoral Workers Gathered at the FABC Seminar
"Pastoral Perspectives on Accompaniment of Families in the Light of Amoris Laetitia"
Organised by the FABC Offices of Clergy & Laity and
Family at Pattaya, Thailand to the Pastors and Catholic Families in Asia

The Lord is also with us today, as we seek to practise and pass on the Gospel of the family (AL 60)

During these days (19th - 23rd November 2018), we have been reflecting on Amoris Laetitia and the
 teachings of the Church on Family since Vatican II. We have felt a renewed call to listen deeply to the
Word of God and the concrete situation of the families in Asia today. The Church has a mission of
mercy especially to those who are in irregular situations and feel excluded. We realise the need to
encourage pastors and pastoral workers to welcome and accompany families in all situations. Inspired
by Jesus who walks with us as He did on the road to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35), this accompaniment
needs to be consistent and ongoing. We also recognise that experienced couples and stable families
have a great potential to support and evangelise other families. In order to respond to the urgent needs
of our time and to strengthen family ministries we make the following recommendations:

• Pastoral workers and experienced couples need to be trained in the art of accompaniment. This
would include helping them to master the skills of listening and discernment.
• Preparation for the vocation of marriage needs to be intentional from the early stages of life,
including educating in family values and authentic Christian sexuality.
• Parishes need to review their ability to become places where everyone feels welcomed and part of
a parish community, thus making the parish a family of families.

In order to provide further assistance in shepherding families in Asia it is highly recommended that
priests and family ministers familiarise themselves with the FABC Office for Laity and Family
'Guidelines for Family Ministry'. We appreciate and encourage the Christian witness of families in
their mission of becoming shepherds of mercy to other families.

Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. What we have been promised is
greater than we can imagine. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop
seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us. (AL 325)

Holy Family of Nazareth Grant that our families too may be places of communion
and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Fr. C. Meneses
Fr. Cajetan Meneses
Executive Secretary,
Mumbai, India

Fr. Philip Lazatin SDB
Executive Secretary, FABC-OC
Tagaytay City, Philippines

Most Rev. Patrick Cardinal D'Rosario, C.S.C.
FABC-OLF Chairman – FABC-OLF
Archbishop of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Most Rev Mylo Vergara DD, STD
Chairman – FABC-OC
Bishop of Pasig, Philippines
In July 2018, the 4th Bishops’ Institute for the Lay Apostolate on Youth (BILA IV on Youth) was organized by the Youth Desk of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences - Office of the Laity and Family, participated by sixteen countries with 1 archbishop, 9 bishops, 10 priests, 3 religious brothers and sisters, and 41 lay people, including 6 youth delegates to the Pre-Synodal Meeting held last March in Rome. One of the aims of the institute was to draft a message from the Asian youth in preparation for the Synod of Bishops in October this year. From the preparatory document, the Pre-Synodal Meeting final document and the Instrumentum Laboris, as well as the sharing of the different representatives to the Pre-Synodal Meeting, the following reflections emerged: The youth in Asia are joyful and grateful that the Church is sharing the Gospel and engaging them in the preparatory process for the Synod. They receive the Gospel and share it with others in different languages, expressive forms like music, dance, drama and through their lifestyle. However, the young people want to be heard! They want to be the subjects and protagonists in the life of the Church rather than recipients. They want their ideas to be taken into consideration and hope for the Church to see situations and issues from their point of view. From the in-depth discussion on the topic of vocation and discernment, we affirmed that everyone has a vocation, unique and personal. Every vocation is a divine call that gives meaning to our life. It is an encounter with Jesus who calls us in love and shows us the way. It is a choice for us to walk with him, in whatever way he is leading each of us. It is necessary for the youth of today to be given opportunities by the Church through capable and committed vocation directors and counselors to help them reflect on their vocation. The need for a guide is primary and critical to the one who is responding to the divine call to walk with Jesus in every aspect of life and society. The young people need authentic and credible witnesses to accompany and guide them, to recognize their needs, interpret the plans made for them, and draw them closer to Christ through the Church. The Holy Spirit is the principal mover of the heart that empowers a person to respond to this divine call. Responding to any vocation makes a person a free and responsible disciple capable of bearing good and lasting fruits. Indeed, the fruition of one’s vocation lies through charity and service.

The BILA IV on Youth in Asia suggests:

1. The Church should reach out and welcome the young to take part in her life and mission. The youth should be given more opportunities to be trusted, empowered, formed, and sent on mission.

2. The need for formation with a universal framework for all, including non-Catholics (in the context of dialogue, language, culture, and the needs of the young) arises to help the young person discern among the variety of vocations.

3. The youth leaders should be given wholistic formation so that they may accompany and lead young people to follow Christ.

4. The Church should provide a solid platform and sustainable programs to follow up the Synod on Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment; not to let it remain just a written document for archiving, but a living and life-giving action by the Church and her young people. We hope and pray, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the youth, that we may learn to follow her virtues of humility, obedience, faith and action in accompanying and forming the youth, their ministers and the ministry. Amen. “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38)
Cardinal Bo to be new FABC President

Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay and President of the Indian Bishop's Conference (CBCI), welcomed the election of Cardinal Charles Maung Bo SDB, Archbishop of Yangon (Myanmar), as his successor at the helm of Asia's Catholic bishops.

“We are pleased with the election of cardinal Bo who takes over as the next FABC President,” Cardinal Gracias told AsiaNews. “His Eminence will take forward the FABC with creative mission.”

FABC Acting Assistant Secretary General Fr. William LaRousse announced Card Bo's appointment, noting that Myanmar's first cardinal will take over as of January 1, 2019 at the end of the mandate of the Indian cardinal (who was in office for two consecutive terms). He said that the election took place on November 16, in Bangkok (Thailand), during a meeting of the FABC Central Committee.

Cardinal Gracias also announced a “plenary Asian Council of Bishops to discuss different matters about the possibilities of us being at the service of the country, at the service of the people and at the service of the Church in Asia.”

According to Cardinal Gracias, “Cardinal Bo is the right person to lead us as we are preparing for this big plenary Council in 2020”.

Cardinal Bo was born in 1948 in Sagaing Region of Myanmar to peasant parents. He was sent to a Salesian run boarding school in Mandalay, and later joined a Salesian seminary in Anisakan village.

Bo was ordained a Salesian priest in 1976, and appointed prefect of the Diocese of Lashio in 1986. Four years later, he was consecrated Bishop of Lahio. In 1996, he was transferred to the Diocese of Pathein.

In 2015, Pope Francis named him cardinal. In April 2015, he was appointed a member of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pontifical Council for Culture, and Secretariat of Communication.

~ The Examiner

WYD 2019 journey continues

Few days before the beginning of World Youth Day (WYD) that will take place in Panama from January 22 to 27, 2019, and after the announcement of the official agenda of Pope Francis for his apostolic visit to the country, the activities continue to multiply in the archdiocese in preparation for the arrival of the Holy Father.

On Sunday, November 18, thousands of young people who make up the Panamanian delegation “Peregrinos Panama” for the next WYD, gave life to a march from the University of Technology to the University of Santa Maria la Antigua (USMA), where they ended the day with the Mass presided by the Archbishop of Panama, Msgr. Jose Domingo Ulloa Mendicta, who, in his homily, told them; “Dear young people, you are the reason for this great effort that, as a Church and nation, we are doing, in the organisation of WYD.” He also recalled that “the goal of WYD is to meet Jesus, to continue living our baptismal commitment with joy, humility and the availability of believers.”

On Thursday, November 22, the symbols of World Youth Day – the Pilgrim Cross and the Icon of the Virgin – arrived in the Archdiocese of Panama, to continue their journey, after their pilgrimage through Venezuela. The Day of Prayer for the Nation in the Church of La Merced, in the historic centre of Panama City, took place on this day, which this year had a special meaning. The Commission for the Prayer of the Archdiocese gathered together with hundreds of young people to ask God's blessing, not only for the country, but also for the fruits of WYD 2019, through the prayer of the Rosary and the Eucharistic celebration.

Also this same week, the Pope's message was broadcast in preparation for the XXXIV World Youth Day in Panama 2019, in the form of a video message, in order to reach as many young people as possible, precisely on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, November 21. In the message, the Pope, among other things, urges young people to carry out “the revolution that can upset the great powers of this world, the revolution of service” – all this being “in
dialogue with God and with an attitude of listening, just like Mary.”

~ Agenzia Fides

South Korean missionaries bring medical care and hope to the poor

Bringing the announcement of God's love, giving a word of comfort and hope and practical help to the poor and marginalised in the Philippines; with this spirit, 26 Catholic lay missionaries, nurses and medical personnel from South Korea offered their services to patients who cannot afford medical treatment, bring joy and hope. These health workers took part in a five-day medical mission in November organised by the 'Catholic Health Association of Korea', in collaboration with Fr. Andreas Chang, priest of the Sacred Heart parish of Jesus in the city of Malabon, near Manila.

Fr. Chang is a South Korean missionary who lives in the diocese of Caloocan, committed to proclaiming the Gospel and serving the poor who live in urban slums on the outskirts of the metropolis. The priest noted the extreme poverty and need to provide healthcare to people who remain cut off from any kind of public or private healthcare. This is why he contacted the Catholic Health Association of Korea.

Health professionals from South Korea provided healthcare and services to over 2,500 patients in five days by voluntarily engaging in minor surgery, otorhinolaryngology, internal medicine, and dental care.

Fr. Chang said that “the poor need medical attention, but also a health awareness programme to prevent diseases. This commitment is part of the Church's mission, which brings hope and healing to the needy.”

Evelyn Lopez, one of the patients, said: “It was a great gift for us. Doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, radiologists helped us, offering us their services for free.” The mission was not limited to medical assistance. “It was much more; there was a sharing of life and an exchange of faith; we say in them the proximity of the Good Samaritan,” she concluded.

The Catholic Health Association of Korea was approved in 2004 by the Korean Episcopal Conference. The organisation is made up of about 30,000 members of Catholic hospitals, doctors, nurses and Catholic pharmacists. Among the important initiatives carried out – campaigns for life, preventive health campaigns, overseas medical missions, local healthcare services.

Filipino Catholics name 2019 as 'Year of the Youth'

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has dedicate 2019 as the “Year of the Youth”.

The year-long celebration, which started on the first Sunday of Advent on 2nd Dec. 2018 carries the theme ‘Filipino Youth in Mission: Beloved, Gifted, Empowered.” It's observance, which the bishops described as part of the “nine-year journey for New Evangelization,” will end on 24 Nov. 2019, the Feast of Christ the King.

In 2013, the bishops' conference launched a “nine-year journey” to 2021, the fifth centenary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines, with a different theme each year.

Activities next year are aimed at “youth in formation, youth in communities, church and society, youth in mission, and youth ministry and youth ministers.”

~ UCANEWS

World Day of Peace 2019

The theme of the 52nd World Day of Peace – to be observed on 1st Jan. 2019, and of the Pope's Message for the occasion is “Good Politics at the Service of Peace,” announced the Vatican on 6th Nov. ’18. The Vatican's press release emphasized the responsibility of each one in politics. “Political responsibility belongs to every citizen and, in particular, to those that have received the mandate to protect and to govern.” And see in what this responsibility consists, which passes through dialogue: “This mission consists in safeguarding the right of and in encouraging dialogue between the actors of society, between the generations and between the culture.”

~ Zenit
VIII AsIPA General Assembly(GA) FABC OLF AsIPA (BEC) Desk in Batam Island (Indonesia) 18 to 24 October, 2018

Theme: “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) evangelize families towards communion and mission.”

State Governor Nurdin Basirun inaugurating the VIII AsIPA General Assembly(GA) at the Pacific Palace Hotel in Batam Island on 18th October 2018.

Bishop Peter Kang (Korea) giving the keynote address on 19th October 2018.

Participants of VIII AsIPA GA 2018 enjoying the cultural night on 23rd Oct. 2018.

AsIPA Resource Team (ART) members cutting a cake to celebrate 25 years of OLF AsIPA Desk on 23rd Oct. 2018.

The FABC Office for Laity & Family (OLF) members from 1st January 2019

Most Rev. Archbishop Gilbert A. Garcera (Archbishop of Lipa, Philippines)
Bishop Chairman of the FABC – OLF.

Member Bishops: Most Rev. Bishop Joel Z. Baylon (Phillippines), Most Rev. Bishop Mathew Mar Arackal (India), Most Rev. Bishop John Wong Soo Kau (Malaysia), Most Rev. Bishop Basil Cho Kyuman (Korea).

Secretaries: Rev Fr. Emmanuel K. Rosario (Bangladesh) Executive Secretary (OLF) and Rev. Fr. Thomas Vijay (India) Executive Secretary (OLF-AsIPA Desk), Ms. Estella Padilla (Phillippines), Consultant BEC Project and Rev. Fr. Gustavo Benitez (Cambodia) FABC OLF Youth Desk (till early 2019)
Seminar on Pastoral Perspectives on Accompaniment of Families in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia* organised by FABC Office for Clergy (OC) and Office for Laity & Family (OLF) at the Mahatai Redemptorist Centre in Pattaya, Thailand 19 -23 November 2018.

H.E. Cardinal Luis A. Tagle giving the keynote address at the Seminar on Pastoral Perspectives on accompaniment in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia* organised by FABC Office for Clergy (OC) and Office for Laity & Family (OLF) at the Mahatai Redemptorist Centre in Pattaya, Thailand 19-23 November 2018. Chairman Bishop of FABC - OC Bishop Mylo Vergara in the chair.

Cardinal Tagle interacting with participants at the seminar on Pastoral Perspectives on accompaniment in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia* in Pattaya, Thailand on 20th November 2018.

Most Rev Bishop Mylo Vergara giving out certificates to the participants of seminar on Pastoral Perspectives on accompaniment in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia* at the Mahatai Redemptorist Centre in Pattaya on 23rd November 2018.

Couples For Christ (CFC) representative speaking about role of Family Movements in accompanying families at the grassroots at Seminar on Pastoral Perspectives on accompaniment in the Light of *Amoris Laetitia* at the Mahatai Redemptorist Centre in Pattaya, Thailand 22nd
Thank you... and Welcome!!
The FABC Office for Laity & Family (OLF) with its member Bishops

We Thank...
The OLF are deeply grateful to His Eminence Cardinal Patrick D’Rosario (Archbishop of Dhaka, Bangladesh) for his wonderful leadership and immense contribution in guiding the OLF for 2 three year terms, and as member bishop for one term. We thank Fr. Cajetan Menezes (India) for his service to the OLF as interim Executive Secretary for the last one year. We Thank Fr. Gustavo A. Benitez (Cambodia) for his service to the FABC OLF Youth desk for last four years.

We welcome...
Most Rev. Gilbert A. Garcera (Archbishop of Lipa, Philippines) as the new Bishop Chairman of the FABC – OLF. Rev Fr. Emmanuel K. Rosario (Bangladesh) as the new Executive Secretary of the OLF and Rev. Fr. Thomas Vijay (India) new Ex.-Secretary for the OLF-AsIPA (BEC) desk. (These appointments take effect from 1st January 2019). We wish them all the best as they serve the Church in Asia.