Your Eminences,

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Greetings and peace from the FABC Office of Laity and Family and AsIPA, Youth and Women’s Desks.

In all our countries, whether Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Malaysia, South Korea or Singapore, there are families and women experiencing hurts and threats as well as bearing heroic witness of the Gospel and youth searching for meaning in life and acclaiming the joy of finding it. Our Small Christian Communities are doing very well but often suffer from lack of pastoral focus and integration. We are hopeful seeing the real actions on behalf of all our people under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

During the East Asian Regional Meeting on Family we committed ourselves to work for the family in ways inspired by Pope Francis’ exhortation “Amoris Laetitia.” We agreed that we need to work ‘together’ to be more effective. The first AsIPA workshop in Vietnam offers new opportunities for the faithful and the preparation for the next General Assembly of AsIPA is underway. The Synod on Youth is a call to connect our youth to the institutional church so we can listen to them and learn from them. We have highlighted these events in this issue of ‘Laity’.

The FABC Office of Laity & Family is following up closely on the Synods on Family and the Exhortation and on the Final Document of the XI Plenary Assembly of FABC. All resources and documents can be found on the FABC website.

If you have requests for documents, please do not hesitate to write to the relevant offices as given in the newsletter.

Cardinal Patrick D’Rozario, csc
Archbishop of Dhaka
Chairman, FABC OLF
FABC OLF
INTRODUCTION
Pope Francis in the last three years has focused our attention on the ‘Good news of the Family’ and the Church’s mission to provide adequate Pastoral care for the Family. The two Synods of 2015 and 2016 followed by the landmark post-synodal exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” inspired the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) to follow up on Family ministry for the Churches in Asia.

In May 2016, the FABC Office of Laity and Family (OLF) and the Office of Clergy (OC) jointly organized an Asian Conference on the family entitled “Shepherding the Family”.

http://www.fabc.org/offices/olaity/Laity%20&%20Family/docs/Shepherding%20the%20Family%20Seminar%20Final%20REPORT%202016.pdf

In December 2016, the FABC Eleventh Plenary Assembly in Sri Lanka reflected on the family under the theme “The Catholic Family In Asia: Domestic Church Of The Poor On A Mission Of Mercy”.


In May 2017, this recently concluded East Asian Regional Conference intended to go deeper into the context of families in East Asia and continue the reflection with those responsible for Ministry to the family.

In October 2017, ‘Study days on the Family’ to be held in Bangkok will further explore the implications of the Exhortation Amoris Laetitia for Family Ministry.

Our Objectives:
Specifically, this conference meant
1. To understand socio-cultural and economic challenges impacting marriage and family life from an East Asian perspective.
2. To motivate participants to enhance their pastoral approaches to enable the Christian family to witness to the joy of the gospel with reference to ‘Amoris Laetitia’.
3. To empower Bishops and their teams with new insights and tools to strengthen marriages and accompany families.

The Programme
Participants arrived on 15th May and were welcomed by a group of very enthusiastic and hospitable volunteers. Departures were after lunch on 19th May.

To achieve the above goals, talks, group work, panel discussion and feedback were organised over the three full days. Resource persons were the following:

1. Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri
Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, graciously agreed to give us two days as part of his visit to East Asian countries to prepare for the Synod on Youth and Vocations.

a. His presentation of ‘Amoris Laetitia’ (AL) focused on the key approaches to Pastoral Care of the Family and how to assist those who accompany families. He insisted that there was no change in doctrine but rather a change in approach.
b. He explained that chapter four is the ‘beating heart’ of the exhortation and asked that ministers to the family review their programmes and approaches on the content of chapter four - on love, passion and sacramental grace.

c. He spoke about chapter 7 on the upbringing of children and then moved on to address the issue of families and couples in difficult situations as described in chapter 8 of AL. He insisted, as does Pope Francis, that we must find all the possible creative ways to reach out to those families who have been relegated to the margins.

d. The last part of the Cardinal’s address was devoted to the importance of taking time in preparing couples for marriage. Preparation is not one ‘programme’ but a long term and thorough process of discernment and formation for life. The responsibility of preparation belongs to the whole community. Quoting from AL207 “Pope Francis calls for the renewal of Christian communities through a greater attention to the preparation of engaged couples for marriage. The parish is not only to assist and welcome new families but to grow itself as the family of families.”

e. Cardinal Baldisseri’s session concluded with questions and clarifications during which a few participants asked if only clergy could accompany couples in difficult situations or if trained lay people and ‘peer ministry’ be considered as many clergy will not be able to cope with the amount of time and expertise required and there may be too many people to accompany. The Cardinal agreed that while we need to raise the capability of the clergy to accompany couples and families in difficulty we also need to develop many other ministers and approaches to ensure that couples and families receive the support and accompaniment they need.

2. **Professor Tran Van Doan**

Professor Tran Van Doan emeritus of Taiwan National University and currently dean at Taiwan Christian University. Professor of philosophy, he spoke on the topic “The Joy of Love /or the responsibility of being human, Amoris Laetitia in East Asian Culture”.

a. Prof Tran provided us with deep insights into current ways of thinking about love, marriage and family influenced by modernity. Using the video clip from ‘Fiddler on the roof’, Prof Tran used the song “Do you love me” which evokes the response by the wife of obedient duty, function and usefulness rather than love that gives life.

b. He insisted, using many examples, that we have lost the sense that love equals life. Instead we have gone to the extremes of love, diminished to a usefulness or elevated to the idealized romantic love which loses its connection with daily life.

c. Love has to do with the everyday life, the inner life consisting of the actions, gestures and attitudes in daily life that engender life. Love intends to be life-giving. Utilitarianism and Romantic ideals undermine love and marriage.

d. Prof Tran then went on to develop the concept of love, especially love in marriage, that comes with responsibility and the ‘work’ of making life meaningful for oneself and for the other.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5KF_WJwXe8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5KF_WJwXe8)

3. **Fr Charles Sim SJ**

Fr Charles Sim SJ from the Ignatian Spirituality and Counselling Centre in Singapore and an expert in Couple and Family Therapy gave practical guidelines for developing an effective Family Ministry. His topic was “Pastoral / Practical Approaches to Family Ministry in the East Asian Context.”

He developed a three-part conceptual framework to review the way we are doing ministry. A comprehensive approach to family ministry should embody the following:

a. A systemic and developmental perspective

b. A Marital and Family Spirituality component

c. A Training / Formation and Therapeutic Approach.

Fr Charles developed these three areas explaining the importance of using them as a criterion for reviewing our pastoral programmes and approaches to Family Ministry. Counselling at parish and diocesan level with para counsellors and trained counsellors was encouraged as an important tool for the important work of reconciliation and re-building lives and supporting families.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcfF2eIYJZ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcfF2eIYJZ8)

4. **Panelists on 18th May**

Panelists on 18th May included husband and wife team Anthonio Huang and Angela Chen of Taipei who advocated for the ‘ongoing’ support of couples and families through support groups or communities like the Christian Life Community which they belong to. Weekend programmes are very good and have a major impact but the ongoing support is what can save or rescue couples in trouble or who want to make their married and family life more meaningful.
Other panelists
Other panelists were Bishop John Lee who called for trained laity to patiently and skillfully journey with the young, the newly married and those who find themselves in trouble. Fr Charles Sim SJ also on the panel challenged all those present to work together to serve the family in the region and to exchange resources.

Moderator
Moderator for the panel discussion was Wendy Louis, Executive Secretary, FABC OLF, who called on those who belong to movements and organizations to offer their strengths but to move beyond the limits of their movements to work in Family Ministry at a broader level. She also asked that family ministry be well integrated with diocesan structures such as Basic Ecclesial Communities to serve families and be supported by families.

5. Group Work
Group Work each day consisted of Country Group or Mixed group discussions and reports. On 16th May country groups finalized their reports and presented their reports based on the three questions sent earlier. The three questions were:

a. What are the main challenges that families in our diocese face?

b. What are the particular challenges faced by Catholic families?

c. What is our response to these challenges in our Ministry towards Marriage and Family?

In the East Asian setting the main challenges listed were the rush for wealth, materialism, urban sprawl leading to poor housing, long hours of work and competitive education as well as aging populations, the impact of globalization and social media.

On 17th May mixed groups discussed the keynote address and talk of Prof Tran to deepen their understanding as well as sharing their experiences of family ministry.

On 18th May country groups met again to gather their learnings and look at what changes they would like to see for their family ministry. They reported on their plans, hopes and dreams.

Prayer and Liturgy
Throughout our conference morning and evening prayer and Eucharists were well prepared, meaningful and beautifully celebrated. They were prayerfully led by Sr Mary Beth and Sr Ann with Fr Anthony Hoang as master of ceremonies. A comprehensive liturgy booklet was printed for all participants.

Other events
A most inspiring addition to the programme was a piano recital by Cardinal Baldisseri after dinner on the evening of 16th May 2017. Also on 18th May most enjoyable and rich in culture and fellowship was the tour of the National Museum of Taipei and a visit to a shrine of Our Lady concluding with a generous Chinese Dinner.

Where to from here?
On the last day of the conference the four country groups shared their hopes for the growth of their ministry to families. The general hope expressed was to grow in understanding of how to accompany families and to prepare them better for marriage using more informal tools with the young and with young couples. Hong Kong expressed the desire to strengthen their trained personnel and counseling services and to set up an IT platform for sharing resources.

For Japan and Mongolia, their ministry still requires basic structures and more consciousness of the need for this ministry. Japan felt the need to include migrant families more and Mongolia needs to educate on the meaning of family life for people who in their nomadic life-styles have developed unstable families with many abandoned women and children.

For Taiwan, they committed to working in partnerships and with better networking to tap the expertise that is spread out over the country. The big word was accompaniment and training. Due to the hectic pace of life there was not much optimism towards prolonged programmes of marriage preparation.

**Thank you**
This conference would not have been possible without generous donations from a wide variety of people from Singapore and from Aid to the Church in Need. Most of all, however, the host country, Taiwan and the Family Department of the Chinese Bishops Regional Conference has been very generous in supporting many expenses and finding sponsors for some items. Volunteers also provided some essential services saving much expense. The sisters who run the Pastoral Centre gave us unstinting service and generous discounts. All this meant that we came well within our budget.

**Conclusion**
This relatively small gathering has great potential to strengthen family ministry in the East Asian countries. All talks were recorded and all group reports and the panel discussion were fully documented. All files have been made available to participants via a drop-box link.

The IT Platform requested by Hong Kong and affirmed by all participants will be hosted on the FABC website in due course as the FABC website is being revamped.

This conference has managed to shift in a small way the way we see family ministry and to change attitudes from being the top-down teaching institutional church to the open, embracing and merciful ministry that takes people where they are and takes small steps towards the vision of a meaningful and loving marriage and family.

Fr Claude Nonis has spent a few years working for the family in the Archdiocese of Colombo. As Director of the Family Commission he has the huge task of accompanying facilitating couples who...
Family

conduct the marriage preparation weekends and marriage enrichment programmes. He has 80 such couples whom he accompanies, providing regular formation and direction. Fr Claude is a great believer in peer ministry for the Family and has been encouraging couples to strengthen their own marriages by helping other families and engaged couples.

The curriculum for marriage preparation is currently being revamped by Fr Claude and his team in order to include the questions and problems facing newly married young people in Sri Lanka today. A presentation which is compulsory for parents has been introduced mainly because of the demand of to-be-married couples and this has been well received by parents.

The document Amoris Laetitia has encouraged him and inspired him to continue in this work and look at those couples in difficulty and how we can accompany them. Thus, a few initiatives have been taken in helping individuals and couples who are in problematic situations. Firstly, marriage enrichment programmes are conducted at a regular basis in schools. Secondly, Healing the Wounds of Trauma for adults and also Healing the Wounds of Trauma for children have been introduced in the diocese in collaboration with the Ceylon Bible Society. Thirdly, on the invitation of His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archdiocesan Family Apostolate in Mumbai has conducted a Retrouvaille Weekend which is meant to help hurting couples, though 90% of other couples can take part and profit by it. Fr. Claude and his team are now getting ready to conduct the same in English, Sinhala and Tamil from the year 2018.

His Eminence is keen on strengthening family ministry in the diocese. Thus, he has visited 12 out 15 deaneries within a short time so as to establish Family Life Committees in each parish. This group is supposed to help their parish priests to promote family life in the parish.

A total of forty-three women and three men participated in this Family Day celebration and day of formation. The speaker was Fr Raphael Mehnga, the parish priest of Shahdara parish. Organiser of the event was the Catholic Women’s Organisation (CWO) of Lahore under the care of Ms Shaheen Yousaf.

The purpose of the day was to celebrate Families under the UNO theme “Families: Education and Wellbeing”. To stress that the family is the most significant community in a person’s life and to focus discussion on how to put in place long-term measures for the education and well-being of families.

Topics discussed in the seminar were the Current situation of the Christian families in Pakistan; the Family as ‘domestic church’ and Solutions and ways to face the challenges.

Rev. Fr. Raphael thanked the CWO coordinator for organizing the event to give this opportunity for the women to reflect on how to strengthen their families through education etc.

He pointed out that the spirit in Christian families was eroded and values of love, trust and honesty have diminished with divorce and separation cases increasing in Christian families. He deplored the growing materialism among the young boys and girls and asked for serious response to this situation.

Fr Raphael then went into some depth to explore the meaning of well-being in the family relating it to love, holiness and trust as well as dignity for every person.

The women shared their experiences and examples from their lives when they took firm decisions to strengthen and save their families’ future. This was most moving and inspiring for all participants. Ms. Nusrat and Ms. Shaheen Yousaf thanked Rev. Fr. Raphael for his effective input on the family and shared with participants that Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw (Archbishop of Lahore Diocese) had announced to all parishes and institutions to work on these same issues throughout this year 2017 and to bring the plans to reality. She encouraged the women to play an active and effective role in education and the formation of their families.
Thai delegation, 63 participants from 6 dioceses (clergy 19, Religious sisters 20, and laity 24) under the leadership of Archbishop Louis Chamniern Santisukniran, Archbishop of Thare-Nongsang visited Jeju diocese in Korea for the BECs Exposure Programme in April 24-28, 2017.

The Committee for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) of Catholic Bishops Conference of Korea (CBCK) and Jeju Diocese co-hosted it.

They gathered together in order to share with one another their experience on BECs/SCCs, deepen their understanding of BECs/SCCs in a new way of being Church and seek how to animate and accompany BECs/SCCs in our context.

THAI PASTORAL TEAM’S BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES (BECs) EXPOSURE PROGRAMME
JEJU, KOREA, April 24-28, 2017

Archbishop Louis Chamniern Santisukniran remarked
“People of our time do not want to hear only the proclamation but they also want to see the result of the Good News. They need to see Jesus through his disciples who love and care for one another. BECs is the means that helps all the parishioners become better disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. On our visit to JeJu diocese in 2017 we wish to meet with our Korean Brothers who have gone through experiences of how to be good evangelizers of Christ.”

Bishop Peter U-il Kang, bishop of Jeju, said that “Though the Diocese of Jeju is the smallest one among 16 dioceses of Korea, I am confident we have the most consistent experience in promoting SCCs in the diocesan level since 2003...... And I am very certain that this time also your visit and our sharing will be a great occasion for us to reconstitute and recharge our experience...... I personally got involved in SCCs since 1990 on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly of FABC in Bandung Indonesia and it is my reflection that building of SCCs is a very long-range plan which could be implemented very gradually with considerable patience and persistence.”

Mr. Michael Phichit Sukeewat from Nakornratchasima (Korat) Diocese, Thailand, exclaimed, “Jeju diocese has been implementing SCCs for quite a while, at the meantime, many dioceses in Thailand also put BEC in their pastoral plan. In short, we are doing the same thing in our own context......Jeju diocese or Korean Catholics revealed the strength within them and quietly

There were several presentations and sharings entitled ‘a Model Plan for Revitalizing the SCCs of Jeju Diocese’, ‘Priestly Leadership and SCCs in Korea’, ‘Parish Pastoral Structures centered on SCCs’, ‘Our Journey Together (RCIA)’ and personal testimonies on SCCs as well as two parishes’ presentation on SCCs.

The most appreciated and inspiring programme was the visit to parishes to participate in the SCCs gatherings. 50 SCCs from 10 out of 27 parishes were visited by the Thai delegation and Korean participants.
dared us to express our own strength. They also impressed us with the collaboration among the hierarchy and most significant with lay people."

Thai participants made concrete pastoral plans to implement and strengthen BECs in their dioceses or parishes for the next two years.

This BECs exposure programme brought us inspiration, encouragement and hope for BECs/SCCs. We hope we can continue to support one another and journey together towards a participatory Church through BECs and pray “we are filled with the Holy Spirit and continue to speak the Word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

**ASIPA WORKSHOP IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAIGON, VIETNAM**
31 July – 4 August 2017

The Archdiocese of Saigon, Vietnam will hold an AsIPA Workshop from 31 July – 4 August 2017 at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Saigon.

Fr. Louis TUAN Anh NGUYEN, director of the Archdiocesan Commission on Family Life and Secretary of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Vietnam (CBCV) is co-organizer with FABC OLF, AsIPA Desk.

Ten local organizing team members for this AsIPA workshop and two AsIPA Resource Team Members—Br. Michael Thinaratana

Komkris and Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro met for a preparatory meeting March 13, 2017 at the CBCV center.

Expected to attend are about 70 participants from 14 deaneries of the Archdiocese of Saigon, 20 representatives from associations/movements and 15 from neighboring dioceses. Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Kham of My Tho Diocese will give the keynote address with Archbishop Paul Bui Van Doc presiding at the opening mass and Bishop Joseph Do Manh Hung at the closing mass.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**AsIPA Resource Team (ART) Meeting**
2017 Annual ART meeting will be held in June 26-30 at the Assumption Personal Development Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. It aims at planning AsIPA (BEC) desk activities for 2017-2018 onwards and dealing with AsIPA research projects in a long term plan.

**Coming in 2018**

VIII AsIPA General Assembly
Date: October 17th – 24th, 2018
To be held on the island of Batam, in the Diocese of Pangkalpinang, Indonesia.
The logo for World Youth Day 2019 has a distinctively Marian theme, reports Aleteia.

The archdiocese of Panama on Sunday unveiled the official logo for World Youth Day, set to take place on January 22-27, 2019.

Drawn in blue, white and red — the three colours of the Panamanian flag — the logo is composed of various symbols, including the Isthmus of Panama as a place of welcome; the Panama Canal, symbolising the way of the pilgrim who discovers in Mary the way to encounter Jesus; a silhouette of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her fiat, with a crown of stars representing the five continents; and the World Youth Day pilgrim cross.

The logo as a whole forms the letter M, for Mary, in the shape of a heart, pointing to the motto: “Bridge of the World, Heart of the Universe,” and to Our Lady’s selfless heart as a mother.

Indeed, for the first time since its founding by Pope John Paul II in 1985, the World Youth Day 2019 will have a Marian theme: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done until me according to thy word.”

According to Panama Archbishop José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta, the logo was chosen for its ability to communicate “the message we [Panamanians] wish to send to young people all over the world: the smallness of our country and the greatness of our heart, which is open to all without exception.”

The logo was designed by Ambar Calvo, a 20-year-old Panamanian studying architecture at the University of Panama.

World Youth Day is an international gathering of youth organised by the Church. It meets every two to three years in a different city around the world.
procreation). The edict also states that zina (adultery or sexual act outside of marriage) is different from rape, whose victims must not be punished. …

Lastly, the third fatwa is about environmental protection…

**STATEMENT OF THE INDIAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS’ FORUM (IWTF)**

**Annual Meeting, 21st – 24th April, 2017,**

We, the members of Indian Women Theologians Forum met for our annual meeting from 21st to 24th April 2017 at De Nobilli College, Pune, to deliberate on the theme: The Politics of the Reign/“Kin-dom” of God in the Indian Context: A Feminist Theological Search. We based our reflections on the notion of “Kin-dom” popularised by Mujerista theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, as it reminds us that we are all kin to each other in the family of God. Understanding the ‘Reign of God’ as Kin-dom has special significance in the Indian context as it serves to challenge the hierarchical implications of domination and power associated with the term ‘Kingdom’, which is an expression with patriarchal overtones.

Enacting the foot washing ritual Jesus instituted as the exemplar of service and subversion of existing hierarchies, was a spiritual experience of bonding, reconciliation and an invitation to constant transformation. Conducted at the start of our meeting, this ritual offered us an occasion also to connect to the community of some of the tribes in North East India for whom foot-washing is a gesture of purification and connectedness. It was an exercise that motivated us to assert that we are Church and to commit ourselves to the Kin-dom of God that welcomes with humility and loving care, the least and the last.

Our sharing on the lived experiences of the ‘Kin-dom’ of God in our personal lives brought out the different facets of the Reign of God in the context of India. It was an invitation to engage consciously in the politics of inclusion against the backdrop of the practices of exclusion, as exercised by the mainstream systems of power including that of religions.

Our reflections were based on a series of papers presented on the changing Indian scenario where economic and social inequalities are growing, and hyper-nationalism and communalism are surreptitiously being mainstreamed through the shrinking of democratic spaces and the tacit complicity of those in power.

We observe the deliberate attempt in the global political economy to institutionalize exclusion by focusing on growth and the supremacy of the market, and using religion to polarize people. The irreparable damage inflicted on the environment, led by the greed for profit, forces displacement of masses of people. It destroys particularly the livelihood and the cultural practices of the Adivasis/tribal communities who live in harmony with nature. This has increasingly led to the feminization of migration, exploitation of labour and increased vulnerability of the poor.

We problematized the concept of ‘kin’ in the Indian context as the caste system in our society is a hierarchy that is defined by one’s family identity. Ethnicity and religion also create barriers to kinship. Within the family itself, traditional kinship relations are marked by discrimination on the basis of gender. While we reaffirm the need for kin-ship, and interdependence even with nature as a responsibility beyond self-interest, we also affirm that Jesus’ call to “Kingdom” is universal and inclusive. Being subversive of hierarchy it challenges exclusive sectarian practices and oppressive traditions. In using loving, humble service as the key to the Kingdom, Jesus binds humans to each other and the cosmos in interdependence and responsibility to the well-being of all. In this context, we feel called to push with prophetic courage the existing boundaries of divisions and discriminations that mark our society and Church, in the name of blind adherence to tradition.

We see the Kin-dom as a gift and a task; a home coming of Sophia, a new wisdom that awakens us to be and become a transforming presence. The Kin-dom is at work in all social movements and various individual and collective initiatives that counter marginalization, discrimination, exploitation and exclusion – of people of minority faiths and genders, ethnicities, and caste hierarchies. We also acknowledge the liberative politics of the Kin-dom being enabled in the several initiatives that demonstrate alternate ways of enhancing sustainable development while preserving God’s creation.

**We are challenged by:**

• the nexus between patriarchy, religious hegemony, market fundamentalism and the exploitation of the poor;
• the various exclusions defined by caste, class, gender, religion, language and culture;
• the need of groups to assert their own identities at the risk of excluding the other;
• the market that draws us into a cycle of consumption and waste, destroying nature from both ends by depleting its resources and using it as our dump yard.

**We commit ourselves to:**

• Building communities of inclusion, reconciliation and service, modeling the liberative symbol of washing of the feet, as illustrated by Jesus;
• Adopting lifestyles that are marked by simplicity and harmony with nature, while making efforts to rejuvenate and conserve our natural resources;
• Entering into partnerships/alliances with individuals, groups and movements who bravely challenge the existing patriarchal development paradigm.

**We draw our energies from the Spirit -**
Wisdom Sophia who is at work in realizing the Kin-dom of God, where all in our shared ecosystem are at peace and in harmony, and experience life in abundance. (Jn10:10)