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Oct - Dec 2017

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FABC OLF Timeline

1982
FABC Committee on Laity – Fr Jess Brenna purpose is to assist the Pontifical Council on the Laity.

1986
IV FABC Plenary Assembly on Laity sets up the FABC Office of Laity - Executive Secretary Fr Tommy Murphy, a Columban missionary working in Taiwan. He was assisted by Ms Cora Mateo a missionary also working in Taiwan.

1993
Cora Mateo takes over as Executive Secretary.

1995
VI FABC Plenary Assembly set up the Women’s Desk with Mrs Virginia Saltdana as executive secretary.

1999
Youth Desk is set up with Mr Jun Hashimoto as secretary.

2000
AsIPA Desk was set up separately under Ms Cora Mateo while Mrs Virginia Saltdana takes over as Executive Secretary as well as the Women’s Desk.

2004
Youth Desk is taken over by Joy Candelario (Philippines) till 2011

2009
Wendy Louis (Singapore) takes over as AsIPA Desk Executive Secretary.

2010
Bibiana Joo-Hyun Ro (Korea) takes over as AsIPA Desk Executive Secretary.

2010
Wendy Louis takes over as Executive Secretary for Laity and Family and FABC Plenary assembly on the same theme.

2010
Youth Desk is taken over by Joy Candelario (Philippines) till 2011

2011
Fr Patrick Simon Gomes (Bangladesh) takes over Youth Desk.

2015
Fr Gustavo Benitez (Cambodia) takes over the Youth Desk.

2017
December, Wendy Louis and Bibiana Ro end their terms in the FABC Office of Laity & Family.

Editorial

I have just had the wonderful privilege of welcoming Pope Francis to Bangladesh. We all have much to reflect on and much to do. Most of all he asks us to continue working for the most vulnerable, to keep our hearts open and meet the poor heart to heart and eye to eye…

In this issue of our office newsletter, it is my bitter-sweet duty, as Chairman of this office to bid farewell to two outgoing secretaries and thank them sincerely while welcoming the two incoming secretary.

Wendy Louis and Bibiana Ro have worked for the past 8 years. Wendy with the FABC Office of Laity and Family, having also responsibility for Women’s desk and Bibiana for the AsIPA desk. They have been organising & joining conferences, workshops, training programmes and doing research for bishops’ conferences and their relevant commissions, as well as visiting countries where bishops have invited them to provide training locally. Wendy has been with the AsIPA Resource Team, providing resources and training for the development of SCCs since 1993. She
Editorial

has also coordinated, edited and published the quarterly ‘Laity’ newsletter.

I wish to put on record my sincere thanks for their full-hearted commitment in-spite of working full time in their own local churches. One would not realise this as the work they put into the FABC was thorough, professional and deeply committed to the vision of FABC. We wish them both all the best in their future endeavours.

Cardinal Patrick d’Rosario csc

Message from the two outgoing secretaries

Bibiana Ro of AsIPA Desk and myself, Wendy Louis, as executive secretary for Laity, Family and Women have really enjoyed our work for the bishops of Asia and we have enjoyed especially the fact that our work has taken us to the grassroots in many conferences and workshops. We are truly grateful to our bishop members and especially Cardinal Patrick our chairman who has been most encouraging, supportive and always keeping us on track with the vision of FABC and our office. Thank you for all that has been and we count on your prayers for the future. We have handed all our work including Laity, Family, Women and AsIPA Desks over to Fr Cajetan Menezes of Mumbai Archdiocese who will be Acting Executive Secretary until the meeting of the Central Committee in February or March. Here is a picture taken during our handing over meeting in Dhaka from Dec 18-19 2017.

Peace, Joy and Hope for Christmas and the New Year!
“Study Days on the Family”
8-12 October 2017
Theme: “The Good News of the Family”
based on Amoris Laetitia and FABC Plenary Assembly XI Document.
Venue: Camillian Pastoral Centre, Latkrabang, Thailand

Report

Introduction
These study days were a follow up to the Synods on the family, the publication of Amoris Laetitia, the FABC OC & OLF Seminar on the Family “Shepherding the Family” in May 2016 and the FABC Plenary Assembly XI in December 2016.

Personnel from the FABC Office of Theological Concerns, Office of Clergy and Office of Laity and Family initially worked together to propose resource persons. However, the FABC OTC and OC were both unavailable for any further collaboration. The organiser was the FABC Office of Laity and Family, Executive Secretary, Wendy Louis, under Chairman, His Eminence, Cardinal Patrick d’Rosario csc.

A small but significant number of Pastoral theologians, heads of Family Ministry Commissions and Bishops, came together to study Amoris Laetitia with reference to the FABC PAXI Document on the family. The Asian perspectives on the family came through in all the presentations and country based sharing.

The last two days saw the emergence of a set of guidelines for Family Ministry in our local churches. These guidelines will also be a part of the study and discussion at the November 2018 conference on the Family which will be co-organized by the FABC Office of Clergy and the FABC Office of Laity and Family.

Objectives that were articulated for the conference were as follows:
1. To explore, and articulate the theological foundations of marriage and family life
2. To understand the pastoral implications of the theology on the family – the “Good News of the Family” and why we need to proclaim it.
3. To begin to develop a set of guidelines for Family Ministry which will be presented in the following year’s Conference.
4. To develop Asian Pastoral and Theological insights to support a more far reaching and stronger family ministry.

Participants
Participants came from 10 countries of Asia with Two Bishops from Sri Lanka and Thailand, one married couple from India, a layman from Thailand, three lay women from Pakistan, India, and Singapore, one religious sister from Pakistan and ten priests from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand (2), Philippines (2), Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

Preparation
From the following report you will discover that we did succeed in fulfilling our objectives as stated above. Prior to the conference, all participants were asked to suggest a topic they would like to present, related to the conference theme. Subsequently a detailed programme was circulated and all participants very willingly undertook the assigned tasks. Whether it was preparing the prayer, Presiding at Mass, working in the Steering Committee or presenting a paper, all the tasks were assigned in detail which made the running of the conference very smooth and swift. As the group was small, the presentations and subsequent discussions could achieve greater depth.

Keynote Address and Presentations
On 9th October 2017, the day began with the keynote from Fr Francis Gustilo SDB from the Philippines, who used the framework...
of “See, Judge, Act”. In the ‘see’ part he took on the concept of the Post-Modern Family; in the ‘judge’ segment he explained the need for an interdisciplinary approach to Family Ministry, as one hallmark of the post-modern family is their experience of ‘fragmentation’. We need to see the strong links between faith and science and all the created world and fight this rugged individualism and ‘selfie’ culture. The theology underpinning the family comes from the nature of God himself as Trinity which is also reflected in our cosmos, from the largest elements of our universe to the most minute, we are built for relationships. In the ‘act’ segment he reflected on the need to pray, to learn how to discern and to accompany. We need to encourage and empower families to become ‘missionary disciples’.

Responding to the Keynote was Bishop Norbert Andradi OMI from Sri Lanka, who focused on why we call Marriage a Sacrament and why we can assure couples that they can live a ‘graced’ life. Fundamentally, the ministers in the Sacrament of marriage are the man and woman themselves. They are the conduits for Christ in their marriage while the Church is a witness to this fact. The call in Christian marriage is to ‘reproduce in their lives the pattern of the love and life of Christ’, he said emphatically. He also emphasized that the main purpose and meaning of marriage seems to be escaping us, as we move away from the openness to children which is central to the existence and flourishing of humanity.

In the third presentation, Fr Claude Nonis of Sri Lanka spoke of the Family as ‘Oasis of Hope’. The health of the family has its impact on the health of society and thus the importance of addressing the internal well-being of every family. His contention was that every problem or issue in the family and society has a spiritual source therefore we need to find spiritual solutions as well. He explained that we urgently need to empower families with strong spiritual tools and resources and shared his way of doing this.

Small groups then discussed the key elements in a theology of the Family, drawing on their own experience and on what they had heard in the morning.

The challenge of Chapter 8 of Amoris Laetitia was taken up by Fr Joseph Phuwanart of Thailand together with Bishop Silvio Siripong. The session was facilitated by Fr Chalerm Kitmongkhol. Getting into the texts of chapter 8 there was a good discussion and agreement that what we really need is “Pastoral Conversion” and receptivity of papal teaching to do family ministry. There is no change in church teaching but a development that takes seriously the call of the Gospel for Mercy. Quoting from Cardinal Ouellet, Bishop Silvio called for our attitudes in ministry to be welcome, listening, dialogue, and mercy.

10th October 2017
On Day two, we focused on the more practical and contextual aspects of Family Ministry. Formation programmes, Marriage Preparation, the reality of couples and families from the various countries represented. The day began with a comprehensive recap of the previous day’s reflections by Fr Claude Nonis.

The presentation by Fr James Gascon SJ offered tools and frameworks that can be used to
developed modules and competencies for family ministries. However, prior to any framework or tool we need to clarify our vision – whether we have a ‘curative’ or ‘formative’ mindset or vision; our approach - if we see families as ‘problems to be solved’ we will use curative tools and always treat families as ‘sick’ and in need of care. If we see families as places of happiness where life is rich in life and love we will pursue a more formative approach to further strengthen and enrich families. Fr James also insisted on the need for value clarification. He proposed that we build Resiliency through stronger communication, clearer role models and spirituality in the family. The second part of his presentation focused on approaches for developing formation modules in family ministry based on their actualities and strengths.

Fr Milton Gonsalvez from India then presented the topic “Family Apostolate, Marriage Preparation and Parenting support - key features for Family Ministry”. He stated that marriage preparation starts from birth. The personal experience of family is what the young man or woman entering marriage is most impacted by. Children tend to follow the parenting style of their parents too. Marriage preparation was presented in its stages of ‘remote’, ‘proximate’ and ‘immediate’.

The parish family cell can be a very helpful structure to support young couples or young families and the parish can also provide care through the Basic Ecclesial Communities. Finally, our family ministry programmes need to take account of the ‘developmental’ stages in family life.

Dr Trudy Dantis presented the preliminary findings of a research being conducted called Marital Relations Knowledge Study. It is a longitudinal study of 78 couples in her segment of the research in Mumbai, India over the first two years of their marriage. 16 couples are inter-faith. Some initial findings are: that the boys were more concerned about finance while the girls were more concerned about ‘adjusting’ especially in inter-faith contexts; while they professed themselves as adherents to the Catholic faith they were not regular church goers but claimed to be spiritual rather than religious; they expressed great appreciation for the marriage preparation programme they participated in; the quality they liked most in their partner was the ability to care. The information related to conflict handling and in-law relationships would help greatly in how we design our programmes and accompany young couples in their first few years of marriage. The research is only in its first stage and will continue to provide a resource for preparation and formation programmes in family ministry.

Mr Alwyn Dantis stated that the crises in marriage and family today was due in part to the lack of proper faith formation, sexuality education and moral education. He showed the need for clarity in moral and sexual education today as we face a very confusing situation with regards to the gender question. There seems to be what he called ‘ideological colonisation’ trying to undermine the traditional concept of marriage as between a man and a woman. He called for a more systematic sexuality education which could be called ‘Education for love’ and he provided the syllabus which they are currently rolling out in the Mumbai archdiocese.

For Pakistan, Sr Genevieve SCJM and Ms Fauzia Jacob presented the situation of the family in Pakistan. We heard about the context of the family and the numerous challenges they face. The concerns of the Church to provide adequate formation and accompaniment for young couples. The minority status of the Church together with many other minorities who receive unequal treatment and suffer from the majority Muslim government and society. Particular to the culture is also child marriages, forced marriages and dowry as well as an extremely patriarchal context. Ms Fauzia focused on the way the Council for Women’s Organizations helps women and their families through education, livelihood projects and awareness building. The emphasis is on faith formation for family life while continuing the education in legal matters pertaining to women as well as helping single families and families in second marriages.

The next seven presentations were based on specific contexts: From India, Mrs Virginia Saldhana offered a reflection based on Amoris Laetitia, on the impact of patriarchy and power dynamics in families, especially on women and the girl child. She appealed for the transforming of power and control to love and equality. Love must be demanded of the man as well as the woman and decision making needs to be shared in all aspects of family and married life. Her presentation also focused on the need to be inclusive with members of our families who are LGBTQ or in our ministry to them. The need for sexuality education in families and in schools was also highlighted and was emphasized in the next presentation.
From East Asia we heard from Fr Stephen Ip of Hongkong. Family Ministry services are widespread and systematic, provided by Caritas Hong Kong and the Diocesan Family Commission. Counselling is widely available as well as many Pre-marriage and Marriage enrichment programmes. While the programmes are many and well organized there is a need for more work to support young couples in the early years of marriage to prevent breakdowns.

Taiwan was represented by Fr Alex Doan who expressed concern regarding the lack of family values today. Far fewer children; more pets than children in some cases; delayed marriages and now with the new legislation legalizing same-sex unions, the church has taken a stand together with leaders of other faiths, to say that marriage is understood as the union between a man and a woman. Sexuality education in schools is ambiguous on this question and children are confused. It seems like the family is under attack and family life is at risk with divorce rates rising, more single parent families, more inter-cultural couples and more couples co-habiting rather than marrying. Marriage preparation is carried out systematically.

Japan was represented by Fr Thomas Masaki OSA who reminded us that the Catholic Church is 0.5% of the population and there are many migrants and foreigners who often make up the majority of church goers. The main challenge to families to live their faith comes from the secularism and consumerism that dominates Japanese society with more and more double-income families working long hours. School extra-curricula activities and competitiveness also makes it difficult for children to attend the faith formation programmes. There has been a steady erosion of family values and respect for the elderly especially.

South East Asian countries present were Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, Fr Francis Gustilo for the Philippines, presented the results of a consultation on Amoris Laetitia from the Catholic Bishops’ conference of the Philippines. The focus was on the attitudes and aptitudes needed in those ministering to families.

Mr Jimmy Lozare coordinator for Couples for Christ in Thailand shared how the CFC prepares couples, parents and children in their regular gatherings. He shared a little of the Church in Thailand and how he works in a team with Bishop Silvio.

Fr Joseph Dung from Vietnam explained that the sense of family is still strong, however the younger generation has lost some of their devotion to family as a result of moving to an urban setting. The prevalence of materialism and consumerism has brought about a major cultural shift to a more liberal attitude to love and marriage with a concomitant loss of values.

11th October 2017

On the third day of the conference it was time to propose guidelines for family ministry.

The day began with a thorough recap of the previous day by Mr Alwyn Dantis.

The presentation by Wendy Louis from the FABC OLF on Families and Basic Ecclesial Communities situated family ministry within the context of the parish and the Vatican II and FABC vision of Church as a ‘communion of communities’ where families can be both agents for mission and recipients of pastoral care. She developed the concept of communion in widening concentric circles from the domestic church to the Basic Ecclesial Community to the Parish. The BEC as an ‘intermediate’ body that facilitates families for mission while also providing the support of neighbours and a Christ-centred community.

Developing Guidelines for Family Ministry

After this presentation participants went into three small groups to discuss guidelines for family ministry and any recommendations they may like to suggest. The Steering Committee sat together to work on the text of the Guidelines’ opening paragraphs provided by Fr James Gascon SJ, chairman of the steering committee. He put in great effort to incorporate all the ideas and suggestions coming from the committee. Members of the steering committee were: Bishop Silvio Siripong, Thailand, Fr James Gascon SJ, Philippines, Fr Alex Doan, Taiwan, Sr Genevieve SCJM, Pakistan and Dr Trudy Dantis, India. Wendy Louis and Dr Trudy Dantis played an active part to develop the guidelines.
The evening of Wednesday 11th October, host country, Bishop Silvio provided refreshments and we enjoyed a cultural evening with participants sharing their talents.

**Thursday 12th October 2017**

The Guidelines were drawn up after receiving the input from the small groups and during a plenary discussion facilitated by Dr Trudy Dantis and Wendy Louis. Many points were raised during a very lively discussion. The guidelines were finalized, and a brief evaluation was held during which participants agreed that the objectives of the “Study Days” were fulfilled and the guidelines were completed only in their first phase. They will need to be approved and published after the conference by the FABC OLF. The Conference concluded with Eucharist and Lunch.

**Conclusion**

Each day we celebrated Eucharist in a simple, prayerful manner in the beautiful chapel of the Camillian Fathers. These days we worked hard, prayed hard and enjoyed the reflecting and studying together being truly inspired by Pope Francis and his Post-Synodal Exhortation “Amoris Laetitia”

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**AsIPA Workshop in Myanmar for Trainers**

**Date:** November 6 – 10, 2017  
**Venue:** Chan Tha Gon Center in Mandalay, Myanmar

**Objectives:**

To deepen understanding about the vision and the process of becoming a Church as Communion, Gospel sharing method, to learn more skills to facilitate and how to start SCCs and how to become an enabling leader

**Topics:**

- Review and deepening of the 7 steps Gospel sharing method, Group Response, Four marks of SCCs, Why SCCs, Leadership styles and attitudes of a guiding leader, how to start and how to maintain SCCs

**Participants:**  
15 diocesan core teams (51 participants joined with 21 priests and 30 lay leaders, catechists and Religious Sisters)

**Local Facilitators:**  
Fr. Stephen Ano and Fr. Lucas Sum.

**ART Facilitators:**  
Cora Mateo (Philippines), Br. Michael (Thailand)

The first national facilitators’ workshop for Myanmar on Nov. 6 to 10th, 2017, gathered 15 diocesan teams out of the 16 dioceses in the whole country. It was held just before the arrival of Pope Francis’ first visit, at the Chan Tha Gon Center in Mandalay Archdiocese. In spite of the busy time, 51 participants joined with 21 priests and 30 lay leaders, catechists and Religious Sisters.

Except for one diocese that was doing the workshop for the first time, all the other participants have done several workshops and a good number have facilitated workshops at the local level.

A good number expressed that their difficulties were how to start and the lack of support from the parish priests.

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**Canadian Video Resource on Amoris Laetitia**

https://youtu.be/Cpq5WwTBN6E

**9th World Meeting of Families – DUBLIN, IRELAND**

August 2018:  
Like other AsIPA workshops, we had six groups every morning to do Gospel sharing. After going through deepening on the 7 steps and linking it to the “Three Stars”—Growing in Christ-centeredness, becoming a community and carrying out the Kingdom mission, one priest came to say: “Now I see the light, Gospel sharing is so important!”

Archbishop Nicholas of Mandalay Archdiocese came to give some words of encouragement on the importance of SCCs to be a Church of Communion in Myanmar.

Bishop Lucius also came in spite of his busy schedule and spent 2 days with the group, joining and participating in the sessions. Aside from his words, his humble patience and attentive listening inspired the participants.

At the Meeting of the XIV ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, presided by Pope Francis, stock was taken of what has already been done and of what is planned.

Among the scheduled activities, special attention was given to the pre-synodal meeting of young people, convened by Francis in Rome, from 19 to 24 March 2018. In addition to the young people who will be invited to the meeting, the proposal was approved to broaden their participation through social networks.

The local churches are very actively working on the topic. The Youth Ministry Office of the Italian Bishops’ Conference has gathered in a video some interviews with young people, and online answers to the questionnaire of the Instrumentum Laboris are available, for example from the Archdiocese of Chieti-Vasto, while the archbishop of Trieste, Msgr. Giampaolo Crepaldi, has published a pastoral note on the Synod of Youth, with the aim, he writes, “to offer some inspiration and orientation for starting, in a serious and thoughtful manner, a reflection on the pastoral issues concerning the world of youth and, jointly, mature, necessary and farsighted pastoral choices.”

A document prepared in France sums up the replies to the questionnaire: 110 responses, reports the Sir News Agency.
including responses from 69 dioceses, 18 communities, 6 movements, and 15 Catholic schools, for a total of 450 pages. While the percentages of membership and ecclesial participation vary according to the sources, the data reported indicates that “there is a certain spiritual and religious renewal among the young in France,” of whom 42% say that they are Catholics. The answers also show that “those who are far away do not expect anything,” but those who express themselves ask “in a strong and recurrent manner for an exemplary, true, credible, coherent, and irreproachable Church.”

Spain has also published the results, presented at a press conference a few days ago: the answers came from 47 dioceses (out of 70), 12 national movements, and 2 secular institutes involved in youth ministry. In all, 5,253 young people participated: 60% of these feel that the Church hears them and they “appreciate” this effort, “but the percentage falls—the document indicates—when it comes to being understood and when it comes to welcoming their contributions.” We need “time and people” to listen, even “outside ecclesial structures,” and “new spaces, with more openness and reception free from judgments” are proposed. The young Spaniards feel that the greatest challenge is “to reach out to young people who are far from the Church” and “to have guarantees for the future.”


A few weeks ago while doing a search on the internet I came across an article about children’s storybooks. The authors had done extensive research on storybooks for children in different countries and a few different languages. What they found shocked them as they realised that girls were often either invisible, compliant, very helpful but not considered significant. Heroes were mostly boys or men and great things were almost always done by boys. They were determined to improve on this imbalance so they set out to write a book for children, written and illustrated on women who have made a difference through their actions, inventions or thinking. In one page, in simple English they write the story of a woman with a full page illustration on the opposite page. Very inviting and easy to read. There are stories about women doctors, writers, archaeologists, spies as well as judges, musicians, sports persons and explorers. There are 100 stories covering a vast spectrum of women. This is an excellent example of what we ourselves can do within our own cultural milieu, if we believe that we need to encourage both girls and boys to believe in themselves and to be equally confident of the future in which they have an important part.

The fear that I can almost see arising out of such a suggestion is that we may undermine the essential role of women as wives and mothers. Not at all. We are simply correcting an imbalance and not suggesting the abolition or avoidance of marriage and motherhood. This is not a reason for keeping women from fulfilling their God given potential. Let us become more aware of the cultural messaging our girl students, daughters, wives and employees are receiving continuously.
Pope Francis tells bishops to be close to the laity

Pope Francis meets the Catholic Bishops of Bangladesh - AP

(Vatican Radio) Pope Francis has urged the bishops of Bangladesh to cultivate their relationship with the laity and to be close to them, especially to young people and families who have much to contribute to the Church according to their particular gifts… At the heart of his discourse the Pope asked the bishops to show “even greater pastoral closeness to the lay faithful.”

“Recognize and value the charisms of lay men and women, and encourage them to put their gifts at the service of the Church and of society as a whole” he said as it is they who reflect the cultural, social and economic reality of a country.

He asked them also to increase and develop what he called “a third way in the Church: the way of consecrated life” as consecrated persons, he said, have a crucial contribution to make to Catholic life in the nation.

And, in a country where Catholics are a tiny minority - just 0.2 percent – of the population and where the Church counts only 12 bishops and 372 priests, there are almost 1 and a half thousand catechists and almost as many lay missionaries, Francis did not forget to shine the light on the precious apostolate of “many dedicated catechists” whom, he said, are essential for the growth of the faith and for the Christian formation of the next generation.

The Pope also focused on the need for the Church to accompany young people and for bishops to “think about how best to share with our young people the joy, the truth and the beauty of our faith,” he said they must make sure that young people know their roots so they can nourish them and transmit their fruits.

“Encourage them, he said, to spend time with their grandparents and with elder priests.”

And praising the Bangladeshi Church’s outreach to families he said “the people of this country are known for their love of family, their sense of hospitality, the respect they show to parents and grandparents, and the care they give to the aged, the infirm and the vulnerable.”

He commended what he called the “farsighted” 1985 “Pastoral Plan for the Church in Bangladesh,” which he said, “laid out the evangelical principles and priorities that have guided the life and mission of the Church in this young nation” with its preferential option for the poor, but he emphasized, “in light of the present refugee crisis, we see how much more needs to be done!”

01/12/2017 16:15, Vatican News