

East Asia Bishops' Institute on Lay Apostolate (BILA) on Women II
St. Theresa's Activity Centre, Hsinchu Diocese, Taiwan.
4th – 7th May, 2010
“Mary Truly A Woman of Our Times”

Introduction:

“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour”

In this spirit we were drawn to attend the BILA II on Women in East Asia, in Taoyuan, Taiwan from 3rd May to 7th May, 2010 on the theme “Mary, Truly A Woman Of Our Times.” Delegations from Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Macau & Taiwan comprising of women, women religious, men, bishops and priests met to encourage the Church to look at Mary as a woman who lived through many of the trying situations that women experience today, and to encourage them to draw strength and inspiration from her as Mary has a universal message for all Christian disciples today.

B. Insights:

“The Almighty works marvels for me, Holy is God's name”

The celebration of liturgies, the talks, silent reflections, sharing from countries in the region and our discussions brought us to a deeper sensitivity of women's plight and an urgent need for all men and women to follow Mary's model of femininity (recovering the femininity of God), virginity (filled with the Spirit closely following God's Word), and maternity (nurturing life through work for peace and justice).

“God has scattered the proud; has brought down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.”

In the country sharing:

1. We heard the cries of women

- i In the environmental problems, as women are closely connected to the earth;
- ii In women carrying the double burden of family care and career;
- iii In the impact of modern day work culture on people – causing stress and conflict in families; resulting in the destruction of the family system, where young women do not want to marry and start a family.
- iv In the neglect of human dignity seen in the commodification of the human person in mistreatment of migrant workers, exploitation of women's sexuality in the entertainment and advertising industry, abortion, and human trafficking.
- v In the sexual harassment of women in the Church.
- vi In their desperation due to desertion, infidelity, divorce, and family disintegration.
- vii In the split between gospel and culture that has allowed the widespread violence to women to continue unaddressed.

2. We felt the wounds of women:

- i. In the migrant and multi-cultural families (with imported foreign brides);
- ii In working as care givers, domestic workers;
- iii In grappling with inequality of men and women in the Church;
- iv In domestic violence;
- v In the impact of globalization seen in the negative attitudes towards the aged and their care;

- vi In the phenomena that have affected the family and marriage such as poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, gambling, internet game addiction, and suicide.

“God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty”

We are extremely concerned about the influence of unbridled consumerism and greed in our society today. All these in one way or another affect the lives of many, particularly the lives of women in a very profound way. We need to approach these problems from the perspective of women, in order to understand their reality and to respond accordingly.

During Mary’s time she too encountered the wounds of women battered, raped, and marginalized in her society.

Mary’s Magnificat today would denounce greed, materialistic values, selfishness, unfaithfulness, violence done to women and to all the weak and wounded of society. She calls us to examine the structures in which we live and the cultures that have formed us as women.

C. Challenges & Recommendations:

“God has shown mercy to Abraham and his descendants forever”

- i. To model equality and mutual respect in relationships between women and men within the Church which would affect the way they relate to each other in life.
- ii. To examine the underlying reasons why women in East Asia are choosing not to marry and start a family.
- iii. To empower aboriginal women who marry, have children, live in poverty and suffer domestic violence.
- iv. To support victims of sexual harassment as well as create awareness on sexuality in the Church for both men and women.
- v. To denounce modern trends such as the mushrooming of casinos, violence to women, mistreatment of foreign workers and the insatiable desire for pleasure
- vi. To restore the sacredness of women’s bodies and sexuality from its devaluation in popular culture.
- vii. To pastor and support immigrant women and foreign spouses in their integration into local society and the parish.
- viii. To raise awareness and consciousness of women’s issues through the Small Christian Communities.

D. Conclusion:

“God has kept the promise he has made to our ancestors and has come to the help of His servant Israel”

We are grateful to FABC Office of Laity & Family, Women’s Desk, The Chinese Regional Bishops’ Conference, Bishop John Lee and the Hsinchu diocese, and the local organizing committee, for their generous hospitality in hosting the meeting.

With the song of Mary’s Magnificat stirring us to action; with the Spirit of God burning in our hearts, we return with expectation and hope and invite the Church in

East Asia to consider seriously the challenges and assist in implementing the recommendations, knowing that *God is doing great things for us*.