Dear Shepherds, Colleagues and Friends,

Peace and Joy in the Lord!
We have just 5 months left of this year of Mercy. I pray that we have all had opportunities to express and receive this redeeming Mercy of God. The mercy, tenderness and charity called for in this special year greatly influenced how we discussed “Shepherding the Family” at our May Seminar. In this issue we are happy to publish the report of this event co-organised by the FABC Office of Clergy and the Office of Laity and Family. The renewed understanding of the importance of knowing the context of our families, accompanying them and providing opportunities for discernment and integration was inspired by the Post-Synodal Exhortation of Pope Francis - “The Joy of Love” or Amoris Laetitia.

The AsIPA Desk of FABC OLF continues to accompany National teams with the development of their Small Christian Communities and you will find a report of the latest round of workshops and meetings in Pakistan. The Youth Desk, under new executive secretary Fr Gustavo has held a meeting in Cambodia celebrating the 10th anniversary of COYA and a short report on this is under the Youth Desk section.

The Laity section carries some information on the UN inspired Sept 21 International Day of Peace and also some reflections on the Laity from recent talks of Pope Francis. As Laity we have a role to play to engage with national and international partners to collaborate in working towards Sustainable Development Goals and to be peace makers.

May we continue to grow as tender, merciful and competent shepherds and leaders.

Editor
REPORT of the FABC OC & OLF SEMINAR SHEPHERDING FAMILIES IN ASIA

Contemporary challenges and responses for Bishops, Priests and Lay Leaders

From 16th – 20th May 2016

at Salesian Retreat House in Hua Hin, Thailand

Introduction

From May 16 – 20, 2016 ninety-nine (99) participants composed of 14 bishops, 24 priests, 2 religious sisters, and 59 lay leaders, who are all involved in family ministry, gathered at the Salesian Retreat House in Hua Hin, Thailand. They came from 14 distinct Asian neighbours (Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam) in order to listen and reflect together on Shepherding Families in Asia, focusing on current challenges and responses.

Our Objectives:

Specifically, this community meant

1. To understand current challenges from specifically Asian perspectives on marriage and family life that are contrary to genuine Christian teaching;

2. To empower bishops and priests with insights, means and guidelines in strengthening and safeguarding the sanctity of marriage and family life; and

3. To motivate the participants to identify, explore and devise pastoral plans to promote and strengthen good Christian families after the example of the Holy family in Nazareth, sustained by the Trinitarian relationships.

The Programme

To achieve the above goals a series of lectures, interactions, plus appropriate workshops by regional groups followed:

1. Bishop Mylo Vergara (from Pasig, Philippines) gave a situationer of families in Asia, sharing with us the results of FABC Survey done in November 2015. The data included:
   a. The types of families in Asia as well as challenges that the families face.
   b. Challenges mentioned were: mixed and interfaith marriages, marriage problems and conflicts, need for catechism and faith formation, poverty, migration, lack of prayer life or practice of faith, & deterioration of family members.
   c. Each country identified its own more pressing challenges.

2. Fr. Francis Gustilo, SDB (from Parañaque, Philippines), gave a Theological Foundation for Family Ministries, namely a Theology from Below (moving up) that sets its foundation on the anthropological centrality of the person highlighting his/her intrinsic value as God given; and a Theology from Above (moving down) that focuses on the Trinity’s selfless self-emptying, loving relationship as the family’s basis for human relationships.

3. Mr. Frank Padilla (from Manila, Philippines) shared the intimate and critical relationship between family and evangelization. To shepherd the families is not only to equip families with skills nor know about the Shepherd, but a conversion experience, metanoia, which is at the heart of family ministry, grounded in knowing the Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

4. Mr. & Mrs. Chan Chee Seung (from Hong Kong) shared how they grew as a Catholic family as well as their ministry with families. Very significant were the real cases they presented, which showed how these families went through difficulties and coped with their different situations needing assistance from Pastoral Family Ministers. The sharing highlighted the importance of concerted efforts to respond to the different needs of families, especially in terms of appreciating and living the Catholic Faith amidst secularism and multiple religious beliefs.

5. Fr. Cajetan Menezes (from Mumbai, India) proposed a Pastoral Support to Families through Diocesan Parish and BEC (Basic Ecclesial Communities) or SCC (Small Christian Communities) structures. Highlighted was the “Family Perspective” as a whole parish approach to effective grassroots pastoral care. Through the Parish Family Cell’s networking with other organizations, three goals were set, namely:
a. To make the family aware of its role and mission in the Church (Educative Goal)
b. To develop healthy family life (Preventive or Formative Goal)
c. To reach out to families in distress (Therapeutic or Curative Goal)

Activities of parish family cells (PFC) fall under three areas: formative, fellowship and service.

6. Archbishop Patrick D’Rozario (from Dhaka, Bangladesh) talked on the Spirituality of Family as an Essential Component of Pastoral Care. He drew up a spirituality for family as proposed in chapter 9 of Amoris Laetitia (AL) and from his personal experience as Pastor “who had visited 95% of the families in his previous diocese of Rajshahi.” This inspires us as shepherds being with our sheep. Pastoral visits by pastoral leaders is one key way of accompanying families.

7. Five three hour workshops were conducted simultaneously on day two to deepen our understanding on the various dimensions of Family Ministry. Formation, Structures, Socio-Economic factors, Accompaniment & listening and Spirituality. Fr James Gascon SJ and Bishop Gilbert Garceras of the Philippines as well as Fr Cajetan, Mr & Mrs Chan and Archbishop Patrick worked with the different regions with about 15 to 20 participants in each group.

Where to from here?

8. On the last day, the country groups sat down to review, evaluate and plan their next steps.

The following is a summary of their reports:

- All countries present have been inspired by the “Joy of Love” of Pope Francis and want to deepen their understanding of Family and their Ministry by a deeper study of the document. They would like to study it with collaborators in the ministry in their own countries.
- All have also been very much touched by the call of Pope Francis to Accompany, Discern and Integrate in their ministry and to reveal and share the Mercy and Love of God.
- Accompaniment became the byword for Ministry rather than Programmes. Empowering Lay people for ministry was important for many groups.

The following are some more specific plans from the various countries present:

1. **Bangladesh**
   - To train more lay collaborators for Family Ministry; To introduce a course in the Seminary on Family; To enable couples to see marriage as a vocation

2. **India**
   - To accompany those couples in the first five years of marriage with special attention to inter-faith couples; improve Marriage Preparation and link accompaniment and formation to the network of SCCs which are an existing resource and structure where families can be reached.

3. **Indonesia**
   - To raise greater awareness of marriage as a vocation. To better prepare couples to understand family and marriage, in particular inter-faith couples.

4. **Malaysia**
   - Emphasized the need to help couples understand marriage as a vocation. To strengthen spirituality in marriage. To connect the Family Commission to the BEC commission and work through BECs to reach families. The importance of accompaniment of couples through BECs.

5. **Myanmar**
   - To improve faith formation of couples so that families can be strong and transmit faith to the children. Establish a hotline for assistance to families.

6. **Pakistan**
   - To see families as Evangelizers. To train more lay collaborators; to introduce a program in the seminary; to accompany young couples more closely; to set up a cell system in the parishes.

7. **Philippines**
   - To strengthen regional structures and train Family and Life coordinators; to build partnerships and collaboration between all the various organizations to have better faith formation, seminary formation etc. To improve the marriage preparation resources available.

8. **Singapore**
   - Networking among organizations serving the family and Small Christian Communities. Train more lay collaborators. Accompany newlyweds.

9. **Sri Lanka**
   - To empower and sustain couples in Family Ministry through ongoing formation and to implement accompaniment as a mainstay of Ministry.

10. **Thailand**
    - To train the Family Ministry team in July this year in order to have a greater impact.

11. **Vietnam**
    - To have a strong Family perspective in all we do, developing trained team members, developing SCCs to reach out to families at the grassroots and to strengthen all family ministry programs and structures at parish level.

These are a few of the plans mentioned. The challenges are many and the pastoral responses will need to be creative and multi-faceted. All are determined to study well the Post-Synodal Exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” and to develop ways to walk with families more lovingly and compassionately.

Conclusion

This gathering happened as a joint effort of two FABC offices: the Office of Laity & Family and the Office of Clergy. Both offices noticed the four days were characterized by a unique
Family

combination of a prayerful atmosphere through community participation in the daily Eucharist, praying the Liturgy of the Hours at different moments of the day, the spontaneous socialization during meals and breaks, plus the hospitable disposition of the hosts, that created felt experiences of family, God’s big family – the Church. For all that has happened, we thank the Triune God, and the Holy Family. We put our efforts at shepherding families in the Good Shepherd’s hands.
AsIPA Desk

Family

A SEMINAR-WORKSHOP SHEPHERDING FAMILIES IN ASIA

AsIPA Training Workshop In Pakistan

On Going Formation Program for young priests

The ongoing formation program for the young priests was co-organized by the Commission for Clergy and the Commission for Laity of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Pakistan from 4th to 8th April 2016 at the Pastoral Institute, Multan in Pakistan. The theme was ‘Year of Mercy and AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach)’. The participants were 34 priests from six dioceses out of seven dioceses in Pakistan. Also Most Rev. Bishop Benny Travis, the bishop of Multan, Bishop Samson Shukardin, the bishop of Hyderabad and chairman of above two commissions and Rev. Fr. Samuel George, Executive Secretary of the Commission for Clergy were present at the program.

Bishop Samson Shukardin

Co-facilitators for the program were Fr. Patras Samuel, the National Coordinator of AsIPA in Pakistan and Fr. Abid Habib, the Diocesan Coordinator for AsIPA in Hyderabad diocese and Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro, the Executive Secretary of AsIPA Desk of Office of Laity and Family of FABC.

The program was started with a procession to honor and venerate the Holy Bible. After placing the Holy Bible on the altar, every one individually adored the Holy Bible to honor their love and respect.

Bishop Benny Travis addressed in his welcoming message that many local Churches in Asia have planted a deep root of AsIPA into their Church. However, in Pakistan priests are not so aware of it. That is a main reason AsIPA has not been implemented in Pakistan. He remarked “AsIPA is quite related to Pope Francis’ theology, pastoral vision and approach.”

During the program, a vision of the Church in Asia as a new way of being Church—a participatory Church and the meaning of AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) were presented. It showed the different symbols and pictures of the new way of being Church according to Scriptures, and method to build Small Christian Communities (SCCs). The Seven Steps Gospel Sharing was introduced and practiced in small groups. The priests were interested in the program and actively shared their situation and ideas.
They gave positive remarks for their new learning and insights. Participants by diocese made plans for the next two years. The participants from the diocese of Faislabad reported that “we will start SCCs in five parishes and form an animation team. We will have an AsIPA workshop in all three regions in cooperation with national and diocesan team for AsIPA.” The participants from the diocese of Hyderabad planned to have regular monthly AsIPA diocesan team meeting and visit several parishes to introduce it. Bishop Samson Shukardin remarked that “Young priests are the hope for the future of the Church. A participatory Church has been realized in Asia through AsIPA. AsIPA is the platform of it.”

Prepared by Rev. Fr. Patras Samuel, Diocesan and National director for AsIPA in Pakistan; Edited by Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro, Executive Secretary, FABC OLF AsIPA Desk.

We are very sad to report that the Bishop of Pangkal Pinang, Indonesia, Bishop Hilarius Moa Nurak, who was to host the next AsIPA General Assembly passed away suddenly on April 29th after a stroke. He was a good friend and truly believed in the participatory church. Many of you will remember him from the AsIPA workshop II in Batam in 2011 and at many other AsIPA events.

Born Feb 21, 1943, he was a bishop for 29 years and a member of the Divine Word Missionaries. He will be much missed by his people, his priests and all of us. Please remember him in your prayers. May he have eternal rest.
COYA Annual Meet

From May 10-13, 2016 at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, Phnom Penh, Cambodia members of the Catholic Organizations of Youth in Asia (COYA) gathered in their annual Assembly around the feast of Pentecost to share with one another and cooperate with the FABC Youth Desk.

This year we come to celebrate the 10th year anniversary with the theme “Strengthening Communion as One Body for the Asian Youth”. Together, with the presence of Rev. Fr. Gustavo Adrian Benitez, Executive Secretary of FABC-OLF Youth Desk, and other five organizations we reflect on our journey for the past ten years and the direction of COYA for the next years. At the same time to discover the different challenges of Catholic youth organizations and movements in Asia today. During the days of the meeting, we shared three very specific and concrete activities that led us to get in touch with the reality of the local Church and the tragic history of Cambodia at the time of the Khmer Rouge. At first we visited three places where religious and lay people care (charity in action) about poor’s, homeless, sick and people with different abilities. Then we met some youth at the CCSC (Catholic Church Students Center) for a program and prayer with them and, at the end we visited two places where the genocide of around three million people during Pol Pot’s time took place.

Finally, it was a wonderful spiritual experience of prayer and meeting because we confirm once more our commitment at the service of the Universal Church and especially to the youth in Asia. It is our great joy to help our youth to grow in faith, hope and love.

Reported by Rev. Fr. Gustavo Adrian Benitez, Executive Secretary FABC-OLF Youth Desk

International Day of Peace
September 21, 2016


The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were unanimously adopted by the 193 Member States of the United Nations at an historic summit of the world’s leaders in New York in September 2015. The new ambitious 2030 agenda calls on countries to begin efforts to achieve these goals over the next 15 years. It aims to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

The Sustainable Development Goals are integral to achieving peace in our time, as development and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

“The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world’s leaders and the people,” said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. “They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success.”

Sustainability addresses the fundamental needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Modern challenges of poverty, hunger, diminishing natural resources, water scarcity, social inequality, environmental degradation, diseases, corruption, racism and xenophobia, among others, pose challenges for peace and create fertile grounds for conflict. Sustainable development contributes decisively to dissipation and elimination of these causes of conflict and provides the foundation for a lasting peace. Peace, meanwhile, reinforces the conditions for sustainable development and liberates the resources needed for societies to develop and prosper.

Every single one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is a building block in the global architecture of peace. It is critical that we mobilise means of implementation, including financial resources, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building, as well as the role of partnerships. Everyone has a stake and everyone has a contribution to make.

On 16 September 2016, …The United Nations Education Outreach Section will hold a global student videoconference…, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., …at United Nations Headquarters. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs
Laity


In a letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet in his role as the head of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America..., Pope Francis says he wants to speak to the members of the commission about how to better serve what he terms “the Holy Faithful People of God.”

...priests often “fall into the temptation to think that the committed layperson is he or she who works for the Church and or in things of the parish or the diocese, and we have reflected little on how to accompany a baptized person in their public and daily life.” “Without realizing it, we have created a lay elite believing that only those who work in things of priests are committed laypersons; and we have forgotten, neglected the believer that many times has their hope burned away in the daily fight to live the faith,” states the pontiff.

“These are situations that clericalism cannot see, because it is more worried with dominating spaces than creating processes,” he continues. “We must then recognize the layperson for their reality, for their identity.” “It is illogical, and even impossible, to think that we as pastors should have the monopoly on solutions for the many challenges that modern life presents to us,” states Francis. “On the contrary, we must remain at the side of our people, accompanying them in their work and stimulating that capable imagination of responding to current problems.”

“Our role, our joy, the joy of the pastor, is truly in the helping and the stimulating,” he continues. “Laypeople are a part of the Holy Faithful People of God and therefore are protagonists of the Church and the world; we are called to serve them, not them to serve us.”

Pope Francis to Judges on Human Traficking and the role of lay people in politics. Vatican, Friday 3rd June, 2016

The Pope, who was speaking to a group of judges and legal experts from around the world, said it was not true that the Church should keep out of the political realm. He said the Church must immerse itself in “greater politics,” quoting Paul VI’s remarks that: “Politics is one of the highest forms of charity.”

During his speech on Friday, organised by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, the Pope stressed the need for judges to be independent and to remain free from the pressures of governments, private institutions and “the structures of sin” such as organised crime.

Note From The Editor

How can we as Catholics, who are more deeply convinced of the need for sustainable development, enter into these concerns through partnerships and joint projects? We are invited also to make our unique contribution in the way we understand God’s plan for creation and the spiritual and mystical aspects of life on our planet. Whether we are business leaders, farmers, spiritual directors, pastors, teachers, families, students or youth, we are called to engage with these goals to bring about a world more in line with our Gospel values. We need to get our youth excited about the beauty of God’s plan for creation and support them to build a positive future for themselves. Let us pray for courage to go forward to do what needs to be done.

Gender Equality is one of the goals

The vital role of women and the need for their full and equal participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development was reaffirmed in the Future We Want (paragraph 236-244), as well as in the Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. The proposed Sustainable Development Goal 5 addresses this and reads “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/genderequalityandwomensempowerment