Dear Friends,

Greetings of PEACE!

"Cultivate with love the seeds of goodness, beauty and truth that God sows in every generation."

Pope Francis uttered these words in Krakow at the recent World Youth Day, which was attended by close to two million young people, some coming from our Asia. Although I was not fortunate to be there, I felt I also shared in the spontaneous joy, fraternal camaraderie and prayerful enthusiasm of those days in Poland, which are so characteristic of every WYD.

Next year 2017, from July 30 to August 9, we will be celebrating the 7th Asian Youth Day in Jogjakarta, the Archdiocese of Semarang, Indonesia! With the theme, Joyful Asian Youth! Living the Gospel in Multicultural Asia, we hope to reflect on and share about how to translate into our Asian context the above-mentioned words of the Holy Father.

On those days we will be reflecting on various realities obtaining in our region, social concerns like migration and religious tensions, the challenge of engaging our young people in the task of evangelization and mission, as well as opportunities for mutual support in coming up with programs to help our respective churches reach out to the “unchurched” in our midst.

We are ending the Jubilee Year of Mercy. I am certain that this period of grace has touched us in so many ways that we have striven to find concrete expressions of becoming “merciful like the Father” in our dealings with our neighbours, especially the poor, the oppressed and the disadvantaged.

Let us join our hearts and minds in praying for one another. Let us pray for the success of the 7th Asian Youth Day 2017. And invoking the intercession of our Blessed Mother and the Saints, let us ask our merciful God to look kindly on our region and bless it with progress, harmony and peace!

Bishop Joel ‘Bong’ Baylon,
Office of Laity & Family, Youth Desk.
KOCHI, INDIA
- AsIPA Resource Team Working Sessions

From August 9 to 13 2016, 7 of the 9 ART members gathered at the Syrian Catholic Renewal Centre in Kochi to work on a few matters. Firstly, to complete the publication of the General Assembly documentation, to complete the editing of those AsIPA modules distributed as trial texts at the last 7th General Assembly and also to plan for 2017 and work on initial plans and details for the 2018, 8th General Assembly to be held in Batam, Indonesia. Joining this meeting was the representative contact person for the diocese of Pangkal Pinang, Indonesia, Fr Francis Mukim.

ART members are an ‘on-call’ group of trainers and resource persons who have been providing training in the various countries of Asia on request as well as finalising and producing the AsIPA texts and training material since 1993. They are coordinated by the AsIPA desk of the FABC OLF. Some members have been there from the outset while others have joined more recently. It is a very slow and challenging process to find members for the Asian team.

Currently, the members hail from 6 countries – India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore. All have held or currently hold national positions with respect to Small Christian Communities and the building of the Participatory church in the ‘New Way of Being Church’. The team was a result of the ongoing formation and training that began with the 1990 Bandung initiative to bring the South African Lumko method to Asia. This method was used, adapted and evolved into what is now known as the AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) which has the aim to implement the vision of Vatican II and the FABC as articulated in the FABC 5th Plenary Assembly.

LASHIO, MYANMAR
- AsIPA Diocesan Workshop

In the Diocese of Lashio there are 20 Parishes with 35 Priests, 8 Religious Priests, 129 Women Religious, 120 Catechists and the Catholic population is 25,151. (As of Dec 2015.)

The concrete step taken by the Diocese in response to challenges faced is to introduce the Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) to promote the life and mission of the Diocese.

July 25-30, 2016, the Diocesan AsIPA Resource Team organized the Seminar at St. Theresa’s Hall in Lashio. The workshop was facilitated by AsIPA Resource Team: Ms. Bibiana Joohyun Ro (Executive Secretary of AsIPA Desk) and Bro. Michael Thinaratana Komkris fsg. (National Coordinator of Basic Ecclesial Communities of CBCT) in coordination with National team members from Myitkyina, Yangon and Mandalay Diocesan AsIPA Resource Teams. There were 79 participants representing all the parishes in the Diocese - Bishop, 27 priests, 1 religious brother, 24 religious sisters, 18 catechists, 9 lay members.

Bishop Philip Lasap Za Hawng in his keynote address explained that, “In our Lashio Diocese, the hope and reason of having AsIPA seminar is to have a community filled with trust and unity among neighbors. The community will be encouraged to read the Word of God, reflect upon and live the inspirations. Hoping that a number of the faithful will get together in neighborhoods to read the Bible together, reflect together, pray together and face the difficulties and obstacles ahead in life with the power and strength from the Word of God.”

Since the National AsIPA Resource Team has translated all the AsIPA text into Burmese, we were able to use it more effectively, accompanied by the original text in English.

At the end of the seminar, we could form a new team for implementing the SCCs and draft some action plans as follows:
1. To revitalize the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) through the new way of being Church in the grassroots;
2. To give opportunities for AsIPA Formation for the leaders of SCCs;
3. To sustain the local Church by means of promoting SCCs at village level and at Parish level in the town.
The plan was led by the vision and mission, objectives statement drawn up after the seminar. All the participants were so touched by the generosity and enthusiasm for the growth of unity in the Diocese. The power of the Word of God was experienced by each one and we came to have a clearer picture of the Small Christian Communities to build the Kingdom of God here on earth now. May the Powerful God, the Living Word of God, bless each and every one in all the endeavors as well!

Report by Fr. Bosco Aung AungHtun & Sr. Teresa Ling On behalf of SCC Core Team of the Diocese of Lashio

There were 76 participants from all the eight dioceses of Bangladesh including CCP team members and facilitators. The workshop was facilitated by CCP team members with two AsIPA Resource Team members - Bibiana Joo-Hyun Ro and Fr. Arthur Pereira.

The workshop started with a short prayer service and Bible enthronement. Archbishop Patrick D’Rozario csc, Archbishop of Dhaka, gave an orientation session.

Integral to the workshop was an exposure program at Nagori Parish to visit Small Christian Communities. It was a really good experience for the participants to learn from others.

All actively participated in the five-day workshop. They felt it was very beneficial. During this workshop all the Dioceses made a one-year plan for their own Diocese and presented/shared it with others. The workshop concluded with a thanksgiving Mass on
KERALA, INDIA
- Immersion Program visiting BCCs (Basic Christian Communities)

Before the AsIPA Resource Team (ART) meeting (Reported earlier), on August 8, Bibiana Joolhyun Ro (Executive Secretary of AsIPA Desk), Fr. Thomas Vijay (Executive Secretary of National Service Team for SCCs of CBCI) and Mr. Gordon Morris (Member of the ART) met Archbishop Francis Kallarackal of the Archdiocese of Verapoly with two vicar generals.

Archbishop Francis Kallarackal articulated that in Kerala region ‘a participatory Church’ was announced clearly as a vision of the Church and forming BCCs (Family Units) became a pastoral priority to implement this vision since 2012 although BCCs had been promoted from the early 1980s in Kerala. BCCs have permeated into all 12 arch/dioceses of Kerala as a miniature of the Church itself. He explained that in the archdiocese of Verapoly there are 105 parishes, 125 priests and 2,165 BCCs based on 65,000 families. In Kerala a guideline for BCCs has been provided. Therefore, BCCs have more or less the same structure and program. During the BCC meeting, they begin with a prayer, usually the rosary and read a biblical text given by the diocese and get some input on the biblical text from a parish priest or religious sister or BCC central committee member of the parish who also join BCC regular meeting once a month. After that they discuss several questions related to the biblical text provided and listen to the report of the previous meeting of the BCC and some announcements. They also discuss in which ways they can help out not only members of the BCC but also others in the neighborhood. Many BCCs are actively involved in charitable works such as visiting the sick, offering a scholarship for poor students and supporting the poor etc. In BCCs, a leader, assistant leader, secretary and treasurer are elected every two years.

After the ART meeting from August 13 to 19, 2016, Bibiana visited 6 BCCs of 5 parishes in three dioceses of Kerala, India - the archdiocese of Verapoly, the diocese of Cochin and the diocese of Kottapuram. Fr. Gregory Arby, Kerala regional coordinator for BCCs arranged this immersion program very well in cooperation with above diocesan coordinators for BCCs arranged this immersion program very well in cooperation with above diocesan coordinators for BCCs, Fr. Sibichan of Cochin diocese and Fr. Clifford of Kottapuram diocese.

When Bibiana met Bishop Joseph Karikkassery of the diocese of Kottapuram on the occasion of the Regional Vocation Congress on August 14, he remarked that he has continuously attended BCCs of the parish. It shows his pastoral priority on BCCs. Fr. Sibichan, Cochin diocesan coordinator for BCCs explained there are 43 parishes, 118 BCCs and 56,500 families.

The 6 BCCs visited in Immersion Program were family based consisting of many children and youngsters with parents. Most of them had quite a big number, around 40-70 members for their BCC gathering. When they were asked what they had gained from
AsIPA Desk

BCCs for their life and family, many of them appreciated BCCs as follows:
- learning more about the Word of God - growing in faith
- sharing life and faith in unity
- support others in need
- participating in various ministries of the parish
- developing leadership and talents, specially children’s talents
- know and understand one another closely including our difficulties and problems
- inspiration and encouragement to engage in reaching out to others and social issues
- BCCs as platform to transmit faith to new generation and for formation

In Kerala, in terms of forming and nourishing BCCs a firm and good ground has been cultivated — making common understanding of a vision of the Church as a participatory Church, establishing the structure of BCCs at regional/diocesan and parish levels, providing monthly materials for BCCs gathering and regular formation programs for BCCs leaders under the auspices of all the bishops of Kerala.

Finally, Bibiana joined the Kerala regional meeting of BCCs on August 19. BCC Diocesan coordinators attended. The main agenda discussed was the forthcoming big event, “Mission Congress BCCs Convention” which will be held from October 6 to 8, 2017 at the National Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Vallarpadam. Actually it was initially inspired by the first SCCs National Convention in Goa in 2014. Therefore, it has been prepared and developed as a three-year long project. For this event, they expect 4,000 delegates from all 12 arch/dioceses of Kerala.

Reported by Bibiana Joohyun Ro
Executive Secretary of FABC OLF AsIPA Desk

Youth Desk

KRAKOW, POLAND
- WORLD YOUTH DAY, July 25-31, 2016

Dear Brothers and sisters,
The theme of the last WYD in Krakow was:
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7).
With this theme the WYD became a Youth Jubilee at world level. It was an experience of pilgrimage with Saint John Paul II and Saint Faustina. The traveling companion was the Divine Mercy that led us in every event bringing together more than three million young people into one family: the family of Christ that is, the family of the Universal Church. As Pope Francis said to the Youth: “Mercy has a young face”, and at the same time invited all the youth to be instruments of God’s mercy in a world where war, violence, hatred and injustice is daily bread. So, the spirit that animated the WYD was the encounter between different churches, communion with the Universal Church through the presence and prayer with Pope Francis and the catechesis meetings.

As Asian Youth we had the opportunity to meet and pray together in a Taizé Prayer led by Taizé Brothers. We have lived a spiritual experience that has helped us to strengthen our ties and to seek what unites us and identifies us as a continent rather than that which divides us and, therefore, produces breaks and fractures among us. Brother Alois, the Brother Superior of the Community of Taizé in France, had some words of welcome to Asian countries present for the occasion and encouraged us to live according to the Christian values. Taizé prayer was a pause on the way, to rest and together, again, strengthen us to continue our pilgrimage. It was a great joy to see many Asian countries pray together.

Finally, we have taken the opportunity to announce to all Asian countries the official launch of the upcoming Asian Youth Day (AYD) to be held in Indonesia in 2017. WYD has given us the joy of
meeting and sharing. WYD invites us as Young Youth from Asia to live the God’s mercy in our daily lives and be instruments of that same mercy. WYD has encouraged us to play an active role in the societies in which we live and not be indifferent to the current events in the world. In this WYD in Krakow God invited us to open our eyes.

I would like to thank all the delegates from Asia who have participated and wish that this experience lived in Krakow continue in your respective countries and youth groups as a result of the encounter with Christ.

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

ANNOUNCING Asian Youth Day
August 2-6, 2017, in INDONESIA

The 7th Asian Youth Day (AYD) will be hosted by the Archdiocese of Semarang in Central Java, Indonesia
Co-organised by hosts from the Archdiocese of Semarang and the FABC OLF Youth Desk.

Theme: “Joyful Asian Youth! Living the Gospel in Multicultural Asia”
Bible Verse: “Speaking in our own languages the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:1-12)
Venue: Yogyakarta City, Central Java.
Dates for AYD: August 2 – 6, 2017.

Dates for Asian Youth Ministers’ Meeting:
August 6 – 9, 2017
Venue for Asian Youth Ministers’ Meeting:
Muntilan, 25 kms from Yogyakarta.

Days in the Dioceses (DiD) will be held from 30 July to 2 Aug 2017. 11 participating Archdioceses and Dioceses in Indonesia: Palembang (in Sumatra island), Pontianak (in Kalimantan island), Makassar (in Sulawesi island), Denpasar (in Bali island), and 7 archdioceses and dioceses of Java island (Jakarta, Bandung, Bogor, Semarang, Purwokerto, Malang, Surabaya).

For further queries related to AYD7, countries are invited to write directly to the committee at secretariat@asiانيouthday.org and Fr Gustavo, FABC OLF Youth Desk at guscini@yahoo.com.ar

On August 16, 2016 morning, I was privileged to spend a few moments with Fr. Milton Gonsalves of the CCBI Commission for Family. The offices of the CCBI are in Bangalore in a beautiful oasis of green where the secretariat operates. The previous day Fr Milton had returned from a training tour and in the next couple of days after catching up on office work and reports he was off again on another training tour. I was very keen to know what constituted the priority for the National Catholic Family Commission of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India - CCBI and to take a look at some of the resources being used. As you can see from the photo above, sitting on Fr Milton’s table were three key resources. Firstly, the guiding principles for all their work with the family comes from the Pastoral Vision and Mission statement of the CCBI crafted by all the bishops in their Plenary Assembly. Secondly, the Manual and Resource book that had been put together for Marriage Preparation (both for the trainers and trainees). There is also a resource for Remote Marriage Preparation for youth called “Life is Beautiful”. The current top priority is helping dioceses to implement the national marriage preparation curriculum while taking into serious consideration local and regional adaptations needed for the couples preparing for marriage. Marriage customs and local arrangements may sometimes require reflection in the light of church teachings for example on the role of women.

Fr Milton believes in a training method that is strongly interactive and takes no knowledge for granted since those helping to prepare couples are sometimes themselves in need of basic education on family and doctrine matters.

The topics and methodology in the Manual are still being further refined as the material is being used in various dioceses. The importance of an improved marriage preparation for all the various Asian conferences is the need of the hour, since it is found that many couples experience difficulty in their early years of marriage. The recently concluded Synod on the Family also emphasised the need to prepare couples well and added that it is essential to Accompany, Discern Together and Integrate young couples in their married life. Currently most conferences are in the process of studying their curriculum for Marriage Preparation and refreshing them in the current context. We are expecting to collect several commonly covered topics and develop them into relevant modules which could be uploaded on the FABC website in the future.

Reported by Wendy Louis, Executive Secretary OLF
Family, Parish and School
- Catechesis in Sexuality Education guidelines published.
Family

The SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION has released a lengthy document called “EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN HUMAN LOVE - Outlines for sex education”

This document contains teaching on an area that has been buffeted by uncertainty in recent times. The full document can be found at the following link:

Laity

Future of Christology in the Context of Pakistan

A report from the Maktaba-e-Anaveem Pakistan (MAP), a theological institute for the Laity describes a four-day summer theological training session organised for MAP coordinators, to enable the laity to reflect on their identity and the Person of Jesus in their current context. They took various perspectives, their current realities, the historical Jesus of the Bible and Jesus in Pakistani history as well as the inter-faith perspective by looking at how other faiths express their belief, for example in the Sufi tradition or in Sikhism. The exposure day brought them to a shrine nearby where they heard the story of faith of this famous sufi mystic. The process pushed them to see themselves as Pakistani and Christian. Followers of Christ who are citizens, parents, workers etc. The laity felt empowered to express their faith from within their lived reality. The theological reflection included a reflection on our understanding of Christ from the woman’s perspective. The final sessions were dedicated to a book launch on the topic of contextual Christology.

The 50 participants from 8 different parts of Pakistan felt strengthened in their faith and inspired to return, share and reflect together with their people who Jesus is for them in their part of Pakistan today.

http://maktabaanaveempakistan.org/

Women’s Desk

EXTRACT OF HOMILY BY POPE FRANCIS FOR FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

Let suffering women soon have a 'life of peace, justice, love'

Published: 16 August 2016

Pope Francis has prayed on August 15th 2016 for all exploited women and girls as he celebrated the Feast of the Assumption just three days after visiting a group of young women rescued from the sex trade, reports the Catholic News Service.

“The Lord bows down to the lowly in order to raise them up as is proclaimed in the Magnificat,” Mary’s hymn of praise to God, the Pope said yesterday.

“Mary’s canticle leads us to think of many painful situations today and particularly those of women overpowered by the burdens of life and the drama of violence, women who are slaves of the abuse of the powerful, girls forced into inhuman work, women forced to surrender body and spirit to the greed of men,” Pope Francis told thousands of people gathered to pray the Angelus with him.

Francis prayed that exploited women soon would be able to live “a life of peace, justice, and love in expectation of the day they finally will feel held by hands that do not humiliate them, but tenderly lift them and lead them on the path to life.”

Violence and Discrimination against Women in the News

- Domestic Violence in Australia “370 instances reported daily in New South Wales” according to one safe haven donor’s appeal;

- A pay lag for women who try to balance motherhood with the work place shocked many in the UK who believed that equality had been achieved;

- In the recently concluded Rio Olympics the sexist reporting in many events was the substance of an article in the BBC News website where, for example, reporters focused more on the sequins and leotards of gymnasts rather than their competence and skill.

- More recently, an article in ucanews by Virginia Saldhana highlights a painful reality which is too hard to face regarding the abuse of women religious by the clergy in some places. Again, this is the result of the concepts of priesthood and women where the inequality breeds violence and abuse. This has prompted once again the development of church policy to correct the situation in India according to an article in CAN.

- In the news we have heard of a 15-year-old unaccompanied minor arriving as a refugee from across the Mediterranean and she is 8 months pregnant.

- Violence against women in Bangladesh (see below), Pakistan and so many other places.
Women’s Desk

Pope Francis actively pursuing reflection on the role of Women in the Church has in a few cases put women and lay men in positions previously reserved for the clergy. He has demonstrated his determination to show equal treatment by including women in the washing the feet in the Holy Thursday ceremonies. However, the root causes of male domination, violence and abuse are not adequately addressed. The status quo in our families, parishes, seminars and work places perpetuates the mentality seen in the article on violence again women in Bangladesh. Our parenting programmes are not addressing these issues effectively; our preaching steers clear of these issues.

Whether it is in the economy, in our families, in our churches or parishes, we must begin to act to go beyond age-old prejudices, out-dated customs and mentalities that perpetuate the inequalities, abuse and violence being meted out to women and children.

We must bring about real change in our own neighbourhoods and families as a start and we must reach out to women and children wherever we find them in difficulty and distress.

Social stigma spurs unreported cases of violence against women in Bangladesh’s male-dominated society, violence against women is considered a corrective measure

Patriarchy, obsolete social norms, fear of repercussions and poor legal protection force a majority of the victims of domestic violence to keep silent, Bangladeshi women activists say.

Only 4 percent of women who have suffered sexual and gender-based violence reported their case or sought support from institutions like the police, courts and hospitals, according to a study released on Aug. 21. Many kept silent and only a few went to informal institutions like “Salish” (village courts) and local union councils to seek redress.

The study was part of a three-year “Accelerating Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender Based Violence” project jointly sponsored by the United Nations Development Program for Bangladesh and Korea’s international development agency. The findings echo results of a 2013 survey carried out by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics that found nine out of 10 women would face some form of domestic or sexual violence in their lifetime.


By Rock Ronald Rozario, Dhaka, Bangladesh,
Published August 24, 2016, UCANEWS.

Mothers’ pay lags far behind men
BBC News item on August 22

Women who return to work part-time after having a baby continue to earn less than men for many years afterwards, says a report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The study shows that not only are women paid less for exactly the same work, they are also not promoted because of their child bearing and child rearing responsibilities.

The situation is probably similar in many Asian countries but the women themselves are not protesting as they feel they are unable to focus on their work in the way that men are able due to the much larger share of parenting expected of them.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In 1993, the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women provided a framework for action on the pandemic.

But more than 20 years later, 1 in 3 women still experience physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner.