

# Laity

## SOUTH ASIA MEETING ON WOMEN 3 “Women Living the Eucharist in South Asia”

20th to 24th January 2010, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### FINAL STATEMENT

“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME” (LK.22:19):  
AS BREAD BROKEN AND SHARED...



### INTRODUCTION

**BRINGING** our stories of women living the Eucharist, we gathered together. Twenty-five women, four bishops and two priests came from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, and India with our Bangladesh hosts, to the Centre of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) in Dhaka, from the 20th to the 24th January 2010, for the Third South Asia Meeting on Women, organized by the Women's Desk of the FABC Office of Laity & Family.

The theme “**Women Living the Eucharist in South Asia**” stimulated us to draw stories from the rich

depths of the inner well of women's experiences. The more we drew from the well, the better we were able to realise the following objectives of our meeting:

1. *Women who make up the majority in liturgical congregations be helped to understand the meaning of the Eucharist in the context of their lives.*
2. *To promote women's participation in the mission of the Church – especially in the context of the FABC vision of “A Participatory and Co-responsible Church – living as a Communion of Communities.”*
3. *To learn from Mary – how she lived a Eucharistic life.*

### INSIGHTS

OUR VISITS to the survivors of violence and trafficking, sexual exploitation, drug addiction; as well as an encounter with differently-abled women who were empowering economically deprived women with skills; the various inputs, discussions, our liturgical reflections and stories gave us the following insights:

1. The sacramental celebration of the Eucharist and the living of the

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Eucharist are distinct but related. All the baptized are sent forth to live the Eucharist.

2. Living the Eucharist is being bread broken which can become a transforming and liberative suffering for a better world.

3. Due to the sinful structures in society women experience brokenness which they bring to the Eucharist for reconciliation, healing, peace and communion. In their turn they become bread broken and shared for others.

4. The Eucharist is being lived powerfully by broken women, when they make a conscious decision to counter the cause of their brokenness with dignity, and help others to do the same.

5. The Holy Spirit is working actively in and through women in the Church and in wider society.

6. We recognize that women of different faiths are also blessed with living elements of the spirit of the Eucharist.

7. In its totality the Eucharist is a call to wholeness and celebration of life in Christ, of relationships and communion.

8. As exemplified by Mary, the characteristics of a true disciple are listening to God, discerning the will of God, and participating in God's plan to the extent of being bread broken.

9. Mary as a courageous and dynamic person is a powerful



paradigm for women in the 21st century, especially in her spirituality of "the other and otherness".

10. Women living the Eucharist have a special gift to be peacemakers and reconcilers.

### CHALLENGES

1. To transcend the socially conditioned feminine and masculine qualities in order to foster mutuality in relationships and partnership in mission.

2. To deal with the negative forces that diminish woman's dignity and capacity to live the Eucharist meaningfully.

3. To create an awareness of Eucharistic spirituality to enable men and women to live it consciously.

4. To retrieve the Mary of the Gospels who stood up valiantly for the values of the Kingdom.

### COMMITMENT

AS EUCHARISTIC people we commit ourselves to:

1. Continue to work for the empowerment of women and

campaign against violence to women that is so prevalent in the countries of South Asia.

2. Be trained and encourage women to be trained to share the Word so that the faithful have a meaningful encounter with Christ in the Scriptures;

3. Promote the Mary of the Gospels in theology and devotion as a powerful and prophetic paradigm for discipleship;

4. True discipleship which entails a courageous following of Jesus free from all fears, with deep conviction and commitment to the Kingdom Mission;

5. Bring peace and justice to our South Asia region inspired by "Mary of the Magnificat";

6. Acknowledge and promote the contribution of women in building and maintaining Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and in the broader mission of the Church.

### CONCLUSION

IN FOLLOWING the Lord's mandate we strive as Spirit-activated ecclesia in South Asia to rediscover the significance of the Eucharist and live it meaningfully.

We are grateful to our hosts the Women's Desk of the CBCB Laity Commission and the Chairman Bishop Patrick D'Rozario c.s.c. for their warm welcome and hospitality. We appreciate the partnership of men and women that facilitated the smooth process of the meeting.

We are thankful to God for the blessings received for a grace-filled meeting. ✨



Women at the South Asia Meeting

## Message from...

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY OF JESUS is the historical expression of God's compassion and love for humankind. In the passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus, we are all enveloped with the mystery of God's faithful and abiding (hesed) love. Obedient to the Father, The Suffering Servant humbly assumes our guilt and sins. Dying on the Cross, the Son of God has paved the way to a new life for us. The Risen Christ becomes our New Life. All because of LOVE! 'Deus Caritas est.'

The human family to its core can only survive and be what it is meant to be with this experience of God's love given to all through Jesus' death and Resurrection. The human family must welcome this sacrificial love of Jesus, and must respond to it in no other manner than love itself! "Love one another as I have loved you."

May our celebration of the Paschal Mystery of our Lord during the Holy Triduum lead us to a deeper and greater appreciation of what Jesus has done for us, and how He continues to manifest the Divine Mercy to us all. In this vast continent of Asia, may our proclamation of the 'Lord is Risen' inspire us to live our Christian lives faithfully and generously.

The Office of Laity and Family (FABC-OLF) prays for a truly meaningful memorial celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and greets you all  
"A GLORIOUS and HAPPY EASTER."



+Rolando J. Tria Tirona, OCD  
Chairman, FABC-OLF

## Implementation of the Resolutions of FABC Plenary Assembly 8

In 2011 we hope to have the first Bishops' Institute of Lay Apostolate ON FAMILY

By Bishop Agnelo Gracias, Auxiliary Bishop of Mumbai and bishop member of the Office of Laity and Family.

### BACKGROUND

In 2004 the 8th Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences focused on the theme "The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life." The bishops realized that, "For the past two decades rapid cultural, scientific and technological developments alongside economic and political developments have been impacting human society heavily. At the very center of this social ferment is the Family, the cellular receptor of emerging cultures as well as initiator, for good or for bad, of influential cultural forces." (FABC PA 8 Final Document).

Preceding, and during the Assembly the bishops with their collaborators reflected on the different threats and challenges facing the family especially in the context of economic globalization which has spawned massive migration of people in search of employment and better economic returns. This reality has posed great challenges to the family and to the Church in the area of pastoral care to families of single parents, or grand-parent headed families as well as to the migrant workers. The change in family values and relationships are completely new areas where many bishops feel they need help to respond to these realities. The Bishops drew up an extensive list of Pastoral Recommendations for Family Ministry.

The FABC Office of Laity is given the responsibility of responding to the needs of Conferences in the area of Pastoral Care for Families. Our Office has decided to take

up some very urgent concerns for pastoral ministry. Given the social, cultural, and religious realities in Asia, we see the need for family ministry to aim to prepare couples and families to meet the challenges of economic and cultural globalization like poverty, migration, gender, youth, new work structures, advances in communication technologies, use of the internet for information & entertainment, etc.

In the recent FABC Offices' business meeting held in May 2006, our Secretary General Abp. Orlando Quevedo urged the FABC offices to study the final document on the Family closely, and find ways to respond to the needs of conferences in their particular area. To this end, the FABC Office of Laity has planned the BILA I on Family sometime in March/April 2006 with the following objectives:

- a) To explain to the bishops how the family is affected by the policies of economic globalization and present day work culture in Asia.
- b) To make the bishops aware of the different avenues/ approaches to family ministry they can use to respond to the challenges in pastoral care to families in the 21st century.
- c) To promote networking for sharing resources and training personnel to assist the younger churches in Asia.

## BANGLADESH - LAYWOMAN DEVOTES LIFE TO EDUCATING SLUM KIDS

Published: January 14, 2010



Sabita Ignatia Gomes teaching slum children at her schoolroom located beside a railway station in Dhaka

DHAKA (UCAN) — Primary school teacher Sabita Ignatia Gomes has been helping to educate slum children for 25 years.

Gomes, 57, told UCA News that she was inspired by the examples of Florence

Nightingale and Blessed Teresa of Kolkata.

Over the years she has taught thousands of mostly Muslim children from railway slums in Dhaka.

She came to the capital in 1968 from Chorakhola village near Dhaka, first earning her living as a private tutor.

“When I graduated in 1974, my parents pressed me to get married but I ignored everything and decided to spend my life working for the poor in addition to my job as a school teacher,” Gomes said.

Gomes is now head of the Ibrahim Poor Welfare Educational Institute

which has seven teachers providing Grade 1-4 education for 200 students every year. The students then move to another school to continue their studies.

“In 1985, I started with open-air schooling in a slum area with a few students. Soon afterward, the Sheikh Russell Children-Adolescents Organization, a local Muslim organization, provided me four rooms to hold two sessions of classes,” Gomes told UCA News.

Gomes, who is the coordinator for the Believers in Christ Community, a community of consecrated Catholic laywomen, also has a program to help illiterate adults. She has opened a vocational training sewing center for poor women and also runs a small healthcare clinic for the poor. ✂

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### PROCESS

The Office of Laity & Family sent out a questionnaire to Conferences to study their needs and respond accordingly. 50% have responded, others are being encouraged to send their responses as well.

From the responses already received, we see an urgent need to help Family commissions in Conferences, especially of new conferences and young Churches to be creative and realistic in their pastoral outreach to families in the context of the challenges posed by the rapid changes in the economic situation of the 21st century.

The recent Asian Youth Day had as its theme “Youth Hope of the Asian Family”. It helped to bring awareness to the youth present of their role and responsibility to their family. At the BILA on Family we would like to get the youth to connect with the Family Commissions so that they can in turn involve young people to work together in the family apostolate. It will also help to reinforce the commitment of the youth to this ministry. ✂

### JAKARTA - YOUNG CATHOLICS LEARN TO RECYCLE

JAKARTA (UCAN) -- A Church group dedicated to recycling waste is taking its practical environmental program beyond Catholics to the wider community.

“Now we want to move beyond Church circles because the waste issue is faced not only by the Church but all society,” says Devi Christina, coordinator of Gropesh, a Jakarta archdiocesan group.

Gropesh was established in 2007. Since then it has put in place programs to recycle non-organic waste and make compost from organic waste which it sells. It also runs environmental training campaigns in schools and universities.

The group recently took part in the Green Festival in Jakarta ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

Gropesh displayed items such as bags, dolls and stationery made from recycled materials. Members also explained how to recycle non-organic waste and make organic compost at the event organized by media groups and local corporations.

Christina told UCA News that Gropesh joined the event to motivate other young people to pay attention to the waste issue and be more creative in making use of waste. “Waste can create money,” the laywoman said.

Profits from the sale of organic compost and recycled products are donated to disaster victims or used to fund church and school programs.

Besides the Church groups, some 40 secular groups dealing with environmental issues also participated in the Green Festival. ✂

## INDIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH DIALOGUE WITH THEIR BISHOPS

February 24-26, 2010

THE YOUTH MINISTRY commission of India has taken a major leap through an assembly with their bishops from February 24-26, 2010. With the theme of “Youth for Peace and Harmony”, 40 youth chaplains, animators and youth leaders from various regions and movements throughout the country met with 163 Indian bishops to share their common concern for the young in India.

The program had plenary talks and sharing, workshop discussions in groups and moments of prayer and reflection. Young people animated the bishops with lively action songs and sat beside them for sharing and interaction.

Prior to this gathering, a nationwide survey on Catholic youth was conducted by the commission. The results were presented and served as a stepping stone for the discussions.

Another important highlight was the YouthCafé. Following the methodology of world café, an innovative approach in group discussion, the bishops were given the chance to share their views in small groups on five important aspects – development, poverty and

fundamentalism, youth spirituality, media sexuality, drugs and alcohol and parish life. This exercise animated the bishops to talk about their views and opinions that resulted in suggestions on how to better reach out and minister to the young. Many opined that it was the most participative assembly they had in years. Some came out talking about plans they want to undertake for their youth in their diocese.

There were deep discussions in the aspect of youth spirituality. Many bishops expressed the need for more relevant and effective ongoing catechesis for the young people. The church community can only build youth for peace and harmony if they are in a transforming personal relationship with Jesus. Likewise, as they were challenged by the youth to pay more attention to them, the bishops asked the youth what they can do for their church. This implied their claim to a shared responsibility in the task of building the church and the young.

The bishops were impressed by the youth leaders present in the gathering. The youth were likewise moved

by the experience of interacting with their church leaders. One of them even shared at the end of the assembly that she feels the courage now to call her bishop for a chat in the future whom she earlier thought were unapproachable

The experience was a breakthrough especially in promoting youth ministry in the Catholic Church. Though the bishops had to still deliberate on the recommendations in their main assembly and in subsequent regional gatherings, they will certainly bring home what they have experienced. Their listening, sharing and interacting with them has raised awareness on the urgency of paying more quality attention to youth ministry. Serving them demands a collaborative effort of all commissions as the young are both affected by other issues the Church is responding to.

In turn, the Indian Catholic Youth Movement along with other international organizations (AICUF, IYCS, Jesus Youth, Youth United for Christ, etc.) set its sights forward - Towards a truly youth friendly and youth empowered church in India.



# Women's Desk

## REPORT ON 3rd South Asia Women's Meeting

### “WOMEN LIVING THE EUCHARIST IN SOUTH ASIA”

20th to 24th January, 2010, Dhaka, Bangladesh

by Mrs Virginia Saldhana, Outgoing Executive Secretary, Office of Laity and Family and Women's Desk.

THIS SEMINAR was part of an ongoing series of sub-regional meetings on women to focus on the problems of the region and to encourage the Church to respond to the challenges posed by the reality of women.

Women make up the majority of persons attending the daily Eucharist. I felt it important to help women make the Eucharist become more meaningful to them in the context of their lives.

Violence to women is the worst in South Asia. Poverty is the worst in South Asia. Women form the majority of those living in poverty for various reasons, one important

being the strong bias in favour of the male in South Asian society. Religion is an important mainstay in the lives of Asian women.

Often taking action to stop violence is a risk; but when women see the positive side of the risk and the strength they can draw from the Eucharist; they are willing to go ahead and act. We saw this in a practical way in the visits to the NGOs where there is outreach to victims, or survivors (as they are called by the NGOs). These women were not only Christian but of other religions as well. But it reflects the inherent spirituality of women to be bread broken for others.

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# AsIPA Desk

## NEWS of EVENTS coming soon!

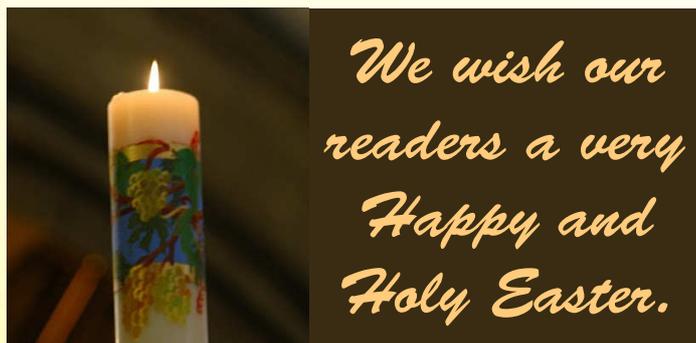
**THE ASIIPA RESOURCE team** will meet in Sri Lanka in April from the 12th to the 15th, to study the results of a survey that has been conducted since the end of 2008 by the East Asian Pastoral Institute at the request of the AsIPA desk.

In this survey Small Christian Communities in a few parishes from 5 dioceses in 5 different countries have been studied. The aim of the study is to discover how well the SCCs who have used the AsiIPA process are doing and what challenges they face in terms of renewal of members & leaders, leadership in general, training, use of the Bible and in reaching out. The impact of these SCCs for the dioceses may also be seen from the responses of the bishops of these dioceses.

In addition to the survey instrument, Focus Discussion Groups were conducted in the 5 centres. Results of the survey will be published by the East Asian Pastoral Institute soon after this meeting. The whole project was funded by Missio, an agency of the German Church.

**BILA I on SCCs** – For the very first time, there will be a Bishop's Institute on Lay Apostolate that focuses on the vision and features of Small Christian Communities. This Institute aims at assisting bishops who are new in their dioceses or for newly set up dioceses who wish to understand the vision of FABC and a process for building up the 'communion of communities' and a participatory church. All other bishops, newly appointed national or diocesan coordinators of Small Christian Communities, Bishops' Conference personnel and any others are also welcome. The Institute will take place in Pattaya in Thailand from October 18 to 22. Invitations to this event will be sent out soon. You can also contact [asipafabc@singnet.com.sg](mailto:asipafabc@singnet.com.sg) for more information.

**AsIPA One Training and Formation programme** – following on from the *BILA I on SCCs* there will be a foundational training programme for national and diocesan teams responsible for building the participatory church through Small Christian Communities. From October 25 to 29, participants will be helped to discover a process which will enable them to build Christ-Centred, Mission oriented communities. The theology and skills for building SCCs will be woven into the week which will embody an experience of community. ☺



He is Risen, As He Promised,  
**ALLELUIA!**



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Right through the meeting we felt the command of Jesus "Do this in memory of me", and "bread broken and shared.." running through the stories of women shared during the meeting.

We reflected on the life of Mary and how she lived the Eucharist in her life. The example of Mary made a deep impact on the participants of the meeting.

They went back fired with a deeper appreciation of the Eucharist in their lives and to share this with other women in their country. They also appreciated the new image of Mary as a woman who speaks to them today in the 21st century, as dynamic and relevant to our time.

Another objective was to promote women's participation in the mission of the Church – especially in the context of

the FABC vision of "A Participatory and Co-responsible Church – living as a Communion of Communities." Women are already participating in the SCCs as animators. The SCC is a very important unit of the parish life in the Church in Asia, as it is a venue of building community as a community of faith and support to the families comprising the community. In the neighbourhood it also can be a venue of inter-religious dialogue and of evangelization. Women have to be encouraged in this important mission of the Church. They need to see their work as part of living the Eucharist. We want to encourage the official Church to appreciate this role women play in Church Mission.

I am happy to report that our objectives were largely met by this meeting. Now its success depends on how much the message percolates to women at the parish level in the region. ☺

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