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PAKISTAN: 43RD WORLD COMMUNICATION DAY

The Catholic Church in Pakistan has celebrated the 43rd World Communication Day on Ascension Sunday, May 17. The theme proposed by the Holy Father "New Technologies, New relationships: Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship" was the framework of the celebrations. As specific theme, "Her Ghar Main Naqib" (Naqib in Every Home) was taken to further promote *Katholic Naqib* (The Catholic Herald), the "most historical" Catholic fortnightly in the country, published by the Church in Pakistan for 80 years. The newspaper's Board of directors, under the direction of Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha of Lahore, took this decision in January 2009. (RABITA MANZIL)

PHILIPPINES: 'NATIONAL OFFICE OF MASS MEDIA' CLOSES, DIRECTOR RETIRES

The National Office of Mass Media (NOMM), the long-time communications arm of the Philippine Church, has closed its operations on May 30 following the retirement of its executive director, Jesuit Fr. James Reuter. The priest, who celebrated his 93rd birthday on May 21, has decided to retire and close the office after undergoing health crises in recent months which left him confined in hospital for days. Fr. Reuter is best remembered for helping set up *Radio Veritas Asia*, the continental short-wave station of the Asian Bishops, in the Philippines. In 1986, he teamed up with veteran broadcaster June Kiethley and directed *Radio Bandido*, the station known to help topple the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. Fr. Reuter has filled many roles in his life - as a priest, teacher, counselor, friend, sports coach, theater director, and singing coach. Just days before his birthday, Fr. Reuter bade farewell to readers of his weekly column "At 3am" in the major broadsheet, "The Philippine Star." In his article, he says he hopes for universal peace in the Philippines, home to the native American priest since he was a 22-year-old philosophy student in 1938. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), which NOMM has served for more than 40 years, has yet to appoint a successor to the post left behind by Fr. Reuter. (OSC/ PDI)

TIMOR LESTE: FORMER GANG MEMBERS FORM CHURCH CHOIR

Members of the youth gang *Triste* ("sad" in Portuguese, an official language in Timor Leste), sought after by police in Dili, have formed a choir and now sing in Church. This turn of events came about after a parish catechist asked the youths to form a Church choir. After some hesitation, they agreed, and received training from the well-known Santa Cecilia choir of Balide parish in Dili. Gang leader Joao Paulo da Silva, 25, said that he was happy to be in the choir. He admitted feeling bored at Mass, but this is not the case now that he is part of the Church choir and has left the gang. (UCANEWS)

CHINA: 17TH CENTURY GERMAN JESUIT FEATURED ON TV

China Central Television (CCTV) Channel 10 has aired a documentary on March 22 on the 17th century German missionary, Jesuit Fr. Johann Adam Schall (1591-1666), highlighting his role as a bridge between east and west. The 36-minute documentary showed Fr. Schall's important contributions to science and astronomy. This was a joint production of the Jesuit-run Kuangchi Program Service in Taiwan, and Jiangsu Broadcasting Corporation in Nanjing, China. Fr. Schall arrived in Macau in 1619 but was only able to move into the mainland after the persecution waged by Kio Shin in 1622. He is credited for his work on the annual calendar, one of the state's most important concerns. The documentary on Fr. Schall's life was aired as part of a series called "Exploring," which mostly carries scientific and educational themes. (SE)

INDIA: 'LIVE' WAY OF THE CROSS ON BELGAUM STREETS

Catholics in Belgaum, Karnataka experienced the Passion of Jesus Christ through a live enactment of the Way of the Cross on the streets on March 29. The procession depicted dramatic scenes of The Passion, following the Mass at Fatima Cathedral. The special Way of the Cross was organized as part of the golden jubilee celebrations of Fatima Cathedral in Belgaum. (SAR NEWS)

TAIWAN: EXHIBIT ON 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF EVANGELIZATION

An exhibit called "The Course of History" was staged in Taipei to remember 150 years of evangelization in Taiwan. The exhibit featured historical religious artifacts, paintings and manuscripts depicting the journey of Catholics and the Catholic faith in Taiwan. Many religious congregations took part in the exhibit, organized by the Archdiocese of Taipei and the Research Center for Liturgy, Theology Department of FuJen Catholic University. (FIDES)

SINGAPORE: YOUTH THEATER GROUP

The youth group called "Theater of Gifts" of Christ the King parish performed a half-hour Passion play on April 9, Maundy Thursday. The play titled "The Fallen Ones," presented the Passion of Jesus Christ through the eyes of Peter and Judas, the two disciples who betrayed their Lord. "Theater of Gifts" evangelizes through dance and drama. It is the longest serving youth group in the parish, says Fr. Kenny Tan, its spiritual director. The group has committed to produce at least one play a month for the parish in the first half of 2009. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: RESPONSIBLE INTERNET USE

Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal said that some contents circulating on the Internet can be "destructive" and called on its users, especially the youth, to be responsible. Cardinal Vidal said that like anything man-made, the medium can also be used for good or evil purposes. "I am encouraging our young people to be discerning and responsible in their use of the Internet," the prelate said. (CBCP MONITOR)

RADIO VERITAS ASIA CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF BROADCASTING

Radio Veritas Asia (RVA), the only continental Catholic radio station in the world beside Vatican Radio, celebrated 40 years of broadcasting with the theme “Crossing Borders, Sharing Christ” on April 15-16 at the studio premises in Quezon City, Metro Manila. A symposium on April 15 entitled “Catholic Radio Broadcasting in Asia” preceded the main celebration on April 16. The symposium heard talks about RVA broadcasting experiences in China, India, Myanmar (Burma) and other countries. Guest speakers included Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, president of Saint John’s University in Bangkok, and Irmgard Icking, the European funding coordinator for RVA programs. The jubilee on April 16 was capped with a Eucharistic celebration presided by Archbishop Claudio Ma. Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications at the Vatican, along with two Cardinals, the Apostolic Nuncio in the Philippines, Archbishop John Edward Adams, and about 17 Bishops. More than 300 guests were present. RVA started broadcasting on April 11, 1969. Today, it broadcasts in 15 different languages throughout Asia, parts of Europe and Russia. (FABC)

VIETNAM: RADIO VERITAS ASIA REMAINS A LIFELINE TO RURAL CATHOLICS

Catholics in Vietnam say broadcasts from the Philippines-based radio station of the Asian bishops help them practice their faith and evangelize others. *Radio Veritas Asia* (RVA) programs “are very useful to our faith life,” says John Sung Bla Gienh, an ethnic Hmong Catholic living in northern Vietnam. The 65-year-old community leader started listening to the station’s Vietnamese program in 1975. He has tuned in to the Hmong language service since it began in 1996. He said, his parish and three other parishes in the area, with a total of 7,000 Catholics, have no resident priest. “The station’s services are the only spiritual food for local Catholics here,” the father of 12 said. RVA programs have also attracted listeners among other tribal groups. In a Van Kieu village, Paul Ho Y Duoc, 35, listen to the programs. His fellow Catholics would gather at one home to say prayers, sing hymns and listen to the Mass the station airs on Sundays. (CNUA)

INDIA: CHRISTIANS SING, DANCE EASTER JOY ON STREETS

More than 2,000 Christians of various Churches and denominations sang and danced as they marched through the streets of Kolkata in a united celebration of Easter Sunday on April 12. The United Christians of Kolkata (UCK), an ecumenical forum, organized the rally starting from four different points around the eastern city and converged for a thanksgiving service at a school ground. Leaders of Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and other Christian groups in Kolkata support UCK. (UCANEWS)

BANGLADESH: RURAL CATHOLICS’ LENTEN TRADITION

Catholic laymen in Toomilia parish, northeast of Dhaka, carried on this year a 60 year-old tradition called *Koshter gan*, the singing of Lenten songs as a form of prayer. *Koshter gan* is performed in six parishes in the Bhawal region of Dhaka archdiocese. Catholic families usually invite groups from the village or parish to sing in their homes for reasons like the well-being of family members, recovery from illnesses or even petitions for rain. Fr. Gabriel Corraya, coordinator of Dhaka’s archdiocesan Liturgy commission, said the Church is inspired and encourages such traditional Lenten devotions. A group of Catholic women in Dhaka’s Atharogram region also carries on a similar Lenten tradition. (CNUA)

+ IN MEMORIAM +

Divine Word Bishop George Marian Anathil of Indore died on May 2 after a long illness. Thousands of people, including Jains, Hindus and Muslims, came for the funeral service at St. Francis Assisi Cathedral, Indore on May 4. The 77-year-old prelate was the first Divine Word (SVD) Bishop in India, and has served Indore diocese since 1972. Bishop Anathil was chairman of the FABC-Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC) for two three-year terms till 1998. He was president of the Commission for Proclamation and Communication of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India from 1991 to 1994. Bishop Anathil is one of the few Bishops who led the process of inculturation of Catholic liturgy in Indore and beyond. He is best remembered for working for interreligious harmony. At the funeral Mass, Jain, Muslim and Protestant leaders gave testimonies about his efforts for “peace.” He has also promoted women’s rights and allowed girls to become altar servers along with altar boys. In his capacity as chairman of the FABC-OSC and working on behalf of the Asian bishops who are responsible for *Radio Veritas Asia*, Bishop Anathil helped lead the station through a difficult period of transition in the early 1990s when the Home service separated from the Overseas service. His successor in Indore is Divine Word confrere, Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal. (UCANEWS)



Funeral Mass for Bishop Anathil, 77, at St. Francis Assisi Cathedral, Indore on May 4 (courtesy of UCANEWS)

INDONESIA: BISHOP’S PASTORAL WORK ONLINE

Bishop Johannes Maria Trilaksyanta Pujasumarta is believed to be the only Indonesian bishop with accounts in Facebook and Multiply, the Internet social networking sites. The bishop said modern communications technology is helping him in his pastoral work. He joined Facebook in December 2008, now he has more than 5,000 friends in the network. They email questions about faith to the Bishop who never fails to answer back. The Internet not only helps develop a “virtual community” but a great “spiritual community” as well, the prelate said. He called on young people to not only use the Internet for entertainment but also for evangelization. Bishop Pujasumarta celebrated one year anniversary as Bishop on May 17. (UCANEWS)

SINGAPORE: PULPITS ARE NOT FOR SOCIAL ACTIVISM

The National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS) president Anglican Archbishop John Chew issued a statement on April 30 saying while the NCCS does not discourage Christians to participate in matters of social concern, “we do not condone the use of the pulpit for this purpose.” The NCCS clarified its view amid public debates arising from the alleged involvement of a senior pastor in a controversy surrounding a women’s advocacy group. (UCANEWS)