

Proposal for an Agenda for  
**CHURCH / RELIGION AND  
SOCIAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH  
IN ASIA**

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**RATIONALE**

As an institution or as a community of people in worship of God, the Church needs effective communication. To paraphrase St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, the Church needs to communicate encouragement and hope (Ephesians 4:29-32).

As the world becomes a global village and enters the Information Age, the Church needs to keep in step with the changing times, and keep itself abreast with new ways and novel technologies of communicating, especially with and of the youth. It needs research to be able to do this.

As early as 1961, 25 years after the publication of *Vigilanti Cura*, Pope John XXIII in a letter to the president at that time of the Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio and Television at the Vatican, spoke of the need for research "into subjects that have to do with the study of the human mind, the art of teaching, criticisms and the proper understanding of beauty, insofar as these things apply to the questions raised by the film art." At that time, film was the new mass medium. Today, we have global television, computers, satellite, internet, and newer information technologies.

There is a "new culture" created by modern communications, to quote Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, which "originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and new psychology" (RM 37c).

The Church therefore urgently needs to do communication research for the following reasons:

1. To help the Church do a better job at communication--within the institution, with its community of believers, with people of other faiths, and with the world at large.
2. To provide the Church a sound basis for dealing with matters relating to Church and society.
3. To help the Church reassess its role and mission in the changing communication environment.

4. To help the Church discover new expressions of faith.
5. To help the Church promote understanding and peace among various cultural groups and religions in society.
6. To help the Church improve the human condition, by promoting social justice, equality and human rights.

## **PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS**

### **A. Communication within the Church**

Levels of research:

1. Local
2. National
3. Continental

Research Areas:

1. Communication patterns within the church at various levels
2. Structure and flow of communication in the church: strengths and weaknesses
3. Communication styles and leadership patterns in the church
4. Nature and effectiveness of communication practiced by the church
5. Church efforts in creating awareness of and implementing church documents and recommendations
6. Church formation, including ongoing communication training for church personnel and laity

### **B. Church, Communication and Society**

Levels of research:

1. Local
2. National
3. Continental

Research Areas:

1. Communication roles of the church in society
2. New approaches to Media Education
3. Church's response to and responsibility towards local, national and regional issues
4. People's perceptions and expectations of the church especially those of the youth
5. Role, function, levels of participation and problems of laity in the church and society
6. Communication strategies and influence of charismatic groups and other religious movements
7. Social communication potential of communities of love in promoting peace and harmony in society
8. Different modes/Effective ways of communicating Christian ethics and values
9. Impact and influence of music video channels and other new communication / information technologies on value systems and life styles of the youth and family

## **C. Religion, Culture and Communication**

Levels of research:

1. Local
2. National
3. Continental

Research Areas:

1. Role of social communication in promoting interreligious dialogue
2. Role and use of media in promoting religious understanding
3. Relationship / Influence between religion and communication (interpersonal, folk & traditional, mediated)
4. Role of religion and religious expressions in culture and communication

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

1. Qualitative and quantitative methods or combination of both
2. Participatory action research
3. Exploratory research
4. Experimental research

### **STRATEGIES FOR RESEARCH**

1. Submission of research agenda to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).
2. Documentation of basic research done on church/religion and social communication in Asia (databases, directories, organizations, groups, and individuals).
  - a. Circulate results of Roundtable discussion through church media outlets, secular press, FABC conferences, Christian universities and institutions, ecumenical institutions involved in research, NGOs and professional research organizations, communication organizations, seminaries, etc.
  - b. Convene/Utilize special meetings of Church personnel to share research findings.
  - c. Include communication and research elements in church programs.
  - d. Show how research will be beneficial to church and society.
3. Networking with schools of communication, Christian universities, religious institutions, research institutions, and other groups involved in social communication.
3. Involvement and training of church personnel and laity in the planning and implementation of research.
4. Identifying professional groups that will help to (a) develop concrete research proposals, and (b) secure funds/grants for conducting research.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Establishment of an Asian Research Center (ARC) for Religion and Social Communication based at St. John's University, Bangkok, Thailand, in cooperation with FABC-OSC.