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ASIA'S DYNAMIC, MISSIONARY LOCAL CHURCHES
FABC Perspectives

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The leadership of the Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists (PACM) has chosen to concentrate on an "Asian" vision of Church and Mission for its annual plenary assembly this year (2005). This current moment is four decades after the pivotal event of the Second Vatican Council and its missionary decree *Ad Gentes* (December 7, 1965), and three decades since Pope Paul VI's inspirational apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), as well as fifteen years after John Paul II's mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (December 7, 1990). The local Churches in Asia continue to explore their understanding and commitment to the Church's mission of evangelization. The Christian communities of this vast continent seek to listen to "what the Spirit is saying to the Churches (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). They seek to follow Jesus, the first evangelizer and missionary of the Father, who took flesh as an Asian; the Savior of the world was born in Asia. With renewed zeal and vigor, Asia's Churches accept their missionary vocation; with John Paul II they hope and pray that "in the third Christian Millennium *a great harvest of faith* will be reaped in this vast and vital [Asian] continent" (EA 1b).

This presentation explores the vision and most significant contributions of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

for the renewal of missionary evangelization in Asia over the four-decade experience following upon the Council; some auxiliary material is also drawn from *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA). After a brief introduction to the FABC and a statistical panorama of Asian realities, this paper highlights pivotal areas where the Asian bishops have contributed to enabling the Churches of Asia to accomplish their mission of evangelization. The six major themes unfolded in this presentation are: **(I)** Local Church and Mission; **(II)** Approach of Dialogue; **(III)** Positive View of Religions; **(IV)** "Pastoral Spiral" Methodology; **(V)** Motivation for Mission; and, **(VI)** "Asian-born" Mission Initiatives. This overview of the FABC contributions enables one to validly assert that the FABC is truly "Asia's Continuing Vatican II."

An FABC Introduction. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has been the most influential body in the Asian Church since the Second Vatican Council. FABC's roots are found in the 1970 meeting of 180 Asian bishops with Pope Paul VI in Manila; the FABC documents, spanning over three decades, are an essential source and wellspring for comprehending the dynamic development of mission, theology, dialogue, ecclesiology, and evangelization in Asia's local Churches. A Spirit-inspired instrument, the FABC has fostered the genuine local reception of the teachings of the Council, enabling them to be concretized for all the peoples of Asia.

The FABC is a transnational episcopal structure that brings together fourteen bishops' conferences from the following countries as full members: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. FABC has eleven associate members drawn from the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of East Timor, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Siberia, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Thus, in total, twenty-eight countries are represented in the FABC.

Aside from a modest central structure, there are nine FABC offices, which carry out many concrete initiatives and projects. The offices, purposely scattered among various Asian nations, are focused on evangelization, social communication, laity, human development,

education and student chaplaincy, ecumenical and interreligious affairs, theological concerns, clergy, and consecrated life. Each of these offices sponsors a wide variety of activities that promote the growth of the Asian local Churches. The offices of human development, evangelization, interreligious dialogue, and theological concerns have been particularly productive.

The supreme body of the FABC is the Plenary Assembly, which convenes every four years. Official delegates from member conferences and the FABC offices attend; there are many invited consultant participants. It is noteworthy that the "non-bishops" in attendance often reach well over fifty percent of the total participants. The themes, places, and dates of the eight plenary assemblies have included the following: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" (Taipei, Taiwan: 1974); "Prayer—the Life of the Church in Asia" (Calcutta, India: 1978); "The Church—Community of Faith in Asia" (Bangkok, Thailand: 1982); "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia" (Tokyo, Japan: 1986); "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium" (Bandung, Indonesia: 1990); "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life" (Manila, Philippines: 1995); "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service" (Samphran, Thailand: 2000); and, "The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life" (Daejeon, Korea: 2004).

The FABC has strengthened the bonds of communication among the bishops in the region and has contributed to the development of a shared vision about the Church and her evangelizing mission in Asia. The initial impetus for the FABC theological orientation was given by the first plenary assembly in 1974; for the Church in Asia to truly discover its own identity it must continually engage in a three-fold dialogue with the peoples (especially the poor), the cultures, and the religions of Asia. This programmatic vision has guided the FABC for over three decades. Through the FABC, an ecclesiology and missiology of the Asian Churches has been shaped. A "new way of being Church" uniquely adapted to the Asian context and challenges has emerged; FABC has fostered an "Asian Pentecost"!

Statistical Panorama of Asia. Following the Second Vatican

Council's injunction to "scrutinize the signs of the times [and] interpret them in the light of the Gospel" (GS 4), Asia's local Churches always begin their faith-reflection with a respectful attention to Asian realities, statistics, and concrete challenges. This inductive approach (characteristic of contemporary Asian theology) fosters a healthy exploration and discernment of the challenges facing the Church and her mission on the immense Asian continent, home to 60% of humanity.

Asian statistical realities surprise and challenge. Approximately four billion people (nearly two-thirds of humanity) are Asians. Both China and India each have a population of over one billion people. 85% of all the world's non-Christians live in Asia. Catholics (approximately 110 million in 2000) represent less than 3% of all Asians. Significantly, well over 50% of Asian Catholics are found in one country alone—the Philippines; thus, Catholics in most Asian nations are a small—even tiny—minority (frequently less than 1%). Islam numbers some 700 million followers in Asia alone; this means that two-thirds of the world-wide Muslim population lives in Asia. The world's two largest Islamic nations are found in Asia: Indonesia and Bangladesh; each has well over 100 million Muslims.

To capture the minority status of the Church in Asia and its missionary implications, one need only look at various countries and compare the total population with the percentage of Catholics: **Bangladesh** (145.8m / 0.27%); **Bhutan** (1.8m / 0.02%); **Burma/Myanmar** (48.8m / 1.3%); **China** (1,239.5m / 0.5%); **Hong Kong** (6.9m / 4.7%); **India** (1,003m / 1.72%); **Indonesia** (202m / 2.58%); **Japan** (127.7m / 0.36%); **Korea-North** (22.6m / ?); **Korea-South** (47.2m / 6.7%); **Laos** (6.2m / 0.9%); **Macao** (0.5m / 5%); **Malaysia** (22m / 3%); **Mongolia** (2.5m / ?); **Nepal** (23m / 0.05%); **Pakistan** (142.6m / 0.6%); **Philippines** (74.8m / 81%); **Singapore** (3.1m / 6.5%); **Sri Lanka** (20.8m / 8%); **Taiwan** (61.6m / 0.4%); **Vietnam** (78.2m / 6.1%).

No Asian Church is so small or poor that it does not have something to give, and likewise, no Asian Church is so large and powerful that is does not have something to receive. The five local Churches generally

recognized as having clear mission potential beyond their borders are: Philippines, India, South Korea, Indonesia, and Vietnam. It also remains true that, independent of size or numbers, each local Church is called to mission in the power of the Spirit.

I. Local Church and Mission

Explore any major document that has emerged from the extensive reflection of the FABC and you will probably find several creative insights on the local Church in the Asian context. Historically, it was the 1970 Asian pastoral visit of Pope Paul VI with the Asian bishops that gave the impetus for the local Churches to begin formulating a vision of Church and mission adequate to the "new world being born" in Asia in the post-colonial period. They asked themselves: How would local faith-communities respond to the grace that was the Second Vatican Council? How would the Churches incarnate a decisive "turning to history" and a "turning to the Gospel" within history "for all the peoples of Asia"? Consistent, prolonged, pastoral and theological reflection on the Church and her mission of evangelization has enabled the FABC to articulate an overall vision that captures what "being Church in Asia today" truly means. The insights have grown out of a belief that the Spirit was speaking to the Churches.

FABC pastoral-theological reflection is decidedly inductive—emerging from life's concrete realities. Therefore, an ecclesiology with local Church as its focal point most adequately captures the hopes and aspirations of local peoples. As the community of Jesus' disciples in Asia, the Church consistently links her identity with Asia's peoples and their life situations. She seeks to be—in fact, not only in theory—the "Church of the poor" and the "Church of the young." She shares the vicissitudes of the "Church of silence" in several parts of Asia. Her pastoral priorities concern the displaced (refugees and migrants), women and the girl-child, youth, families, the poor, the followers of Asia's great religious traditions. The following selected panorama of documents gleans key FABC insights into a vision of the local Church.

The First FABC Plenary Assembly **(FABC I)** was held in Taiwan in 1974; it focused on the theme: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia." The Asian Churches through their bishops defined the central and most urgent mission duty incumbent upon them: "The primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local church.... The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own" (FABC I, 9, 12).

Three years later in 1977, during the Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church **(ACMC)** held in Hong Kong, the theme of local Church received another impetus: "...the decisive new phenomenon for Christianity in Asia will be the emergence of genuine Christian communities in Asia—Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others.... If the Asian Churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future" (ACMC 14). "Asian Churches then must become truly Asian in all things. The principle of indigenization and inculturation is at the very root of their coming into their own. The ministry of Asian Churches, if it is to be authentic, must be relevant to Asian societies. This calls on the part of the Churches for originality, creativity and inventiveness, for boldness and courage" (ACMC 26).

The Second FABC Plenary Assembly **(FABC II)** held in India in 1978 was organized around the theme: "Prayer—The Life of the Church of Asia." The bishops noted that an important motive for their assembly was "to deepen our knowledge of our local churches" (FABC II, 1), and they addressed "the tasks which the carrying-out of the mission of the Church in Asia demands: commitment to the upbuilding of Asian communities in the life of the Gospel, to inculturation of Christian faith and life, to the endeavor for total human development and authentic liberation of peoples in justice and love, to interreligious dialogue and to renewed missionary formation" (FABC II, 3).

The successful International (though predominantly Asian) Mission

Congress **(IMC)** held in 1979 in Manila once again strongly affirmed the centrality of the local Church for a "new age of mission" in Asia. The congress noted: "What is the newness of this 'new age of mission'? First, the realization in practice that 'mission' is no longer, and can no longer be, a one-way movement from the 'older churches' to the 'younger churches,' from the churches of the old Christendom to the churches in the colonial lands. Now—as Vatican II already affirmed with all clarity and force—every local church *is* and cannot be but missionary. Every local church is 'sent' by Christ and the Father to bring the Gospel to its surrounding milieu, and to bear it also into all the world. For every local church this is a *primary task*.... Every local church is responsible for its mission, and co-responsible for the mission of all its sister-churches. Every local church, according to its possibilities, must share whatever its gifts are, for the needs of other churches, for mission throughout [hu]mankind, for the life of the world" (IMC 14).

The congress statement continued: "Once again, what is the newness of this 'new age of mission'? We believe that the Spirit of the Lord calls each people and each culture to its own fresh and creative response to the Gospel. Each local church has its own vocation in the one history of salvation, in the one Church of Christ. In each local church, each people's history, each people's culture, meanings and values, each people's traditions are taken up, not diminished nor destroyed, but celebrated and renewed, purified if need be, and fulfilled (as the Second Vatican Council teaches) in the life of the Spirit" (IMC 15). In addition, IMC Workshop VII noted: "We recognize that the local church is the center and source of evangelization" (1). "Each local church is co-responsible with its sister churches everywhere, Rome being the foundation and center, for the building up of the kingdom of God throughout the world" (9).

The Theological Advisory Commission (TAC) of the FABC devoted a five-year period of extensive study and consultation to the exploration of the theology of local Church; this effort culminated in a comprehensive document entitled "Theses on the Local Church: A Theological Reflection in the Asian Context" **(TLC)**. This piece

of Asian theological reflection, one of the longest documents ever produced by the TAC, is, in the opinion of this author, probably one of the best and most comprehensive treatments worldwide on *local Church.* Some salient quotes serve to capture the spirit of this presentation on the local Church.

"Already, as we have noted, the First Plenary Assembly of the FABC spoke of building up of the local Church as the present focus of the Church's mission in Asia. That discernment remains valid today [1991].... More and more the local Churches in Asia must see themselves as responsible agents for the self-realization of the Church" (TLC: C, 3-4). "We grasp something of the significance of local Church and inculturation in this context; those who cannot understand this fail to resonate with the signs of our time, and the heartbeat of our peoples" (TLC: C, 5). "We must surely be grateful that we experience today the 'rush of the Spirit' in our Churches. For it is a privileged moment for local theological reflection and discernment, for the gathering and spending of energies, for the upbuilding of authentic local Churches in our part of the world" (TLC: C, 6-7).

The Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly **(FABC V)** held in Indonesia in 1990, with the theme "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium," added new clarity and focus by asserting that it is the local Church which is "the acting subject of mission."

The FABC V final document stated: "The renewal of our sense of mission will mean ... that the acting subject of mission is the *local church* living and acting in communion with the universal Church. It is the local churches and communities which can discern and work out (in dialogue with each other and with other persons of goodwill) the way the Gospel is best proclaimed, the Church set up, the values of God's Kingdom realized in their own place and time. In fact, it is by responding to and serving the needs of the peoples of Asia that the different Christian communities become truly local churches" (FABC V, 3.3.1). "This local church, which is the acting subject of mission, is the people of God in a given milieu, the whole Christian community—laity, religious and clergy. It is the whole diocese, the

parish, the Basic Ecclesial Community and other groups. Their time has come for Asia" (FABC V, 3.3.2).

The Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly **(FABC VI)** held in Manila, Philippines in 1995 in conjunction with the visit of Pope John Paul II for the World Youth Day summarized key themes of the 25-year history of FABC. The final statement entitled "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life" noted that: "The overall thrust of activities in recent years has been to motivate the Churches of Asia towards 'a new way of being Church,' a Church that is committed to becoming 'a community of communities' and a credible sign of salvation and liberation" (FABC VI, 3).

Many are the challenges of being an authentic local Church in Asia. Asian Catholics admit: "We may hesitate because we are a minority group. Indeed we are a little flock in Asia. But it is from this position of weakness that God's gift of divine life in Jesus Crucified, the power and wisdom of God, is most significant" (FABC VI, 14.3). Most local Churches in Asia continually discover and live their identities as minorities within their national societies.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* **(EA)** promulgated by Pope John Paul II in New Delhi, India on November 6, 1999 echoed the ecclesiology of the Asian Synod Fathers of the FABC region. EA notes that "the Synod Fathers were well aware of the pressing need of the local Churches in Asia to present the mystery of Christ according to their cultural patterns and ways of thinking" (20h). It is necessary that "each local Church should become what the Synod Fathers called a 'participatory Church,' a Church, that is, in which all live their proper vocation and perform their proper role" (25b). The pope's exhortation praises the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences by name, because it has "helped to foster union among the local Churches" and has "provided venues for cooperation in resolving pastoral problems" (26b).

In *Ecclesia in Asia* Pope John Paul II identifies important responsibilities of the local Churches in Asia: "where possible the local Churches in Asia should promote human rights activities on behalf of

women" (34g); "local Churches, for their part, need to foster awareness of the ideal of the religious and consecrated life, and promote such vocations" (44c); mission is the task of each local Church, and the pope recommends "the establishment within each local Church of Asia, where such do not exist, of missionary societies of apostolic life, characterized by their special commitment to the mission *ad gentes*, *ad exteros* and *ad vitam*" (44d).

The Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly **(FABC VII)**, the first major Church gathering of the Jubilee Year 2000, was held in Thailand from January 3-12, 2000. The assembly of 193 participants explored the theme: "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service." Once again, the integrating theology of local Church came to the fore in the final statement: "The thirty-year history of the FABC has been a concerted series of movements toward a renewed Church." One pivotal initiative has been the "movement toward a 'truly local Church,' toward a Church 'incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated'." The assembly statement boldly affirmed: "This is the vision of a renewed Church that the FABC has developed over the past thirty years. It is still valid today" (FABC VII: I-A).

Conclusion. The experience of the pilgrim local Churches in Asia since Vatican II has been an exciting and inspiring faith-journey. It has been an experience in ecclesiogenesis, the birthing and development of local Churches. It has verified the ancient adage that the Church is always *in via*, on the road, in process—as she awaits her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The road has not been a well-trodden path; Asian Churches are making the pilgrim way in the very process of walking it—under the guidance of the befriending Spirit. Asian Christians "see themselves as responsible agents for the self-realization of the Church" (TLC: C-4). They experientially know that they are "the acting subject of mission" (FABC V, 3.3.1). They rejoice in their "new way of being Church" (FABC VI, 3). The dream of vibrant local Churches within an authentic catholicity continues to grow and take on flesh. Christians frequently meditate on the wondrous mystery that in the power of the Spirit the Church is for believers *donum Dei atque officium nostri*, at one and the same time, both God's gift and our task!

II. Approach of Dialogue

Surveying the vast amount of FABC literature and the invaluable insights it provides, one can validly assert that there is a fundamental pattern or paradigm of Church and Mission at work. This paradigm can be described by noting that (1) the local Church is always the acting "subject" or "protagonist" in the entire process; (2) the "approach" of engagement is always dialogue, a mutual or reciprocal missionary dialogue; (3) the "dialogue partners" are Asia's people, especially the poor, Asia's myriad cultures, and Asia's venerable religious traditions. This is the famed FABC "triple dialogue," which has served the Church in Asia so well.

The programmatic document "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" from the First FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974 outlined this three-fold dialogue; it noted that building up a truly local Church, one that is "indigenous and inculturated," demands a faith-community that is in "continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs and its artistry. Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For so did God's Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin) so that He might make it truly His own, and redeem it in His paschal mystery" (FABC I, 12).

This "triple dialogue" paradigm which has been verified in subsequent FABC assemblies (and more importantly in pastoral-missionary *praxis*) revolves around three key poles: local Church, dialogue, and Asian peoples and their realities. Almost simplistically, it can be represented in a schema:

Local Church	**<<<**	**DIALOGUE**	**>>>**	**Asia's Peoples**
(subject)		(approach)		**(focus on poor)**
				Asia's Cultures
				Asia's Religions

One must point out that the arrows on either side of the word *dialogue* move in two directions. Certainly, this indicates that this dialogical approach is always a two-fold process of dynamic interaction. There is always mutual reinforcement; this means that while the Church influences the people, their cultures and religions, the Church herself is concomitantly being shaped and molded. In a word, the dynamic of inculturation is always at work.

In the opinion of this writer, this *operative paradigm* of Church and Mission [the "triple dialogue" approach] is the *interpretive key* to understanding and appreciating the evangelization process in Asia today. This is how the Church "lives and breathes" in Asia. Here one finds the Holy Spirit at work. This is an authentic reception and continuation of the Second Vatican Council in Asia. It is a palpable presence of God's action in and through the Asian Churches and their missionary endeavors. Through this missionary dialogue, much has been achieved—with God's grace. Yet, much doing remains to further the Church's evangelizing mission in Asia.

The "triple dialogue" paradigm of the FABC harmonizes well with a contemporary vision of evangelization, described by the Philippine Church in its 1991 Second Plenary Council, as "Renewed Integral Evangelization" (PCP-II, Part III). This is the current vision and praxis operative in Asia's local Churches; in fact, it is a concrete implementation of Paul VI's description of evangelization: "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (EN 18). In Asia, this is accomplished through dialogical mission. Asia's bishops have underscored this dialogical approach: "Mission may find its greatest urgency in Asia; it also finds in our continent a distinctive mode ... dialogue" (FABC V; 4.1).

To dispel any misperceptions, it must be stated that, while Asian local Churches are committed to the approach of dialogue, they are concomitantly committed to the proclamation of Jesus Christ and the forming of the Church; this has never been questioned by the FABC. Asian Jesuit theologian Catalino G. Arévalo succinctly expresses this

commitment: "The proclamation of Jesus Christ is the center and primary element of evangelization, without which all other elements will lose their cohesion and validity. In the same way, evangelization will lead to gathering together a believing community, the Church" (Arévalo, 51).

However, in their dedication to the Church's mission, Asians have asked serious questions about evangelistic approaches. *Ecclesia in Asia* provides several insights: "The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia" (EA 10b). "The great question now facing the Church in Asia is *how* to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts, namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ" (EA 19c). "The presentation of Jesus Christ as the only Savior needs to follow a *pedagogy* which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery" (EA 20f). "In this perspective, the Synod Fathers stressed many times the need to evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples, and they suggested images of Jesus which would be intelligible to Asian minds and cultures and, at the same time, faithful to Sacred Scripture and Tradition" (EA 20g).

Undoubtedly, a solid mission commitment is present among Asia's Christian communities; they desire to be holy, zealous missionaries, burning with God's love. Again, these dimensions are captured in *Ecclesia in Asia*: the Church is "a community aflame with missionary zeal to make Jesus known, loved and followed" (EA 19a). She understands that "a fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire" (EA 23b). Jesus came to cast fire upon the earth, and "the Church in Asia shares his zeal that this fire be rekindled now (cf. Lk. 12:49)" (EA 18c). The Church in Asia, through its "triple dialogue" approach which inherently includes the desire to make Jesus known, loved, and followed, seeks to verify in deeds the maxim stated by Emil Brunner: "The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning."

III. Positive View of Religions

From the inception of FABC, the bishops of Asia have always

taken a very positive perspective on the religions of Asia and their many faithful adherents. In the *Message of the Asian Bishops' Meeting* that emerged from the 1970 gathering of 180 Asian bishops with Pope Paul VI in Manila, one reads: "In the inculturation of the life and message of the Gospel in Asia, there have been hesitations and mistakes in the past, but we are more than ever convinced that dialogue with our fellow Asians whose commitment is to other faiths is increasingly important. We also urge on all a deep respect for the culture and traditions of our peoples, and express the hope that the catholicity of the Church, the root of our diversity in the oneness of faith, may serve to help Asians remain truly Asian, and yet become fully part of the modern world and the one family of mankind" (ABM 24).

Again, in the First Plenary Assembly in 1974, this positive orientation toward the followers of various religious tradition continues; FABC I includes this affirming statement—expressed with poetic elegance. It asserts that building up a truly local Church "involves a dialogue with the great religious traditions of our peoples. In this dialogue we accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognize and respect profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values. Over many centuries they have been the treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength. They have been (and continue to be) the authentic expression of the noblest longings of their hearts, and the home of their contemplation and prayer. They have helped to give shape to the histories and cultures of our nations" (FABC I, 13-14).

Springing from this positive assessment, the bishops continue: "How then can we not give them reverence and honor? And how can we not acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them? Only in dialogue with these religions can we discover in them the seeds of the Word of God (*Ad Gentes*, c. I, 9). This dialogue will allow us to touch the expression and the reality of our peoples' deepest selves, and enable us to find authentic ways of living and expressing our own Christian faith. It will reveal to us also many riches of our own faith which we perhaps would not have perceived.

Thus it can become a sharing in friendship of our quest for God and for brotherhood among His sons. Finally, this dialogue will teach us what our faith in Christ leads us to receive from these religious traditions, and what must be purified in them, healed and made whole, in the light of God's Word" (FABC I, 15-17).

Dialogue with Asia's religious traditions is also an occasion to give witness to Christian faith: "On our part we can offer what we believe the Church alone has the duty and joy to offer to them and to all men: oneness with the Father in Jesus His Son, the ways to grace Christ gives us in His Gospel and His sacraments, and fellowship [in] the community which seeks to live in Him; an understanding too of the value of the human person and of the social dimensions of human salvation" (FABC I, 18). Indeed, this is a wonderfully positive assessment of Asia's religions; and, it is remarkable that the FABC expressed this vision in 1974—over three decades ago!

To promote its vision of interreligious respect and dialogue, the FABC established the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA). This office has initiated several activities to help foster genuine dialogue. For example, the OEIA designed several "Bishops' Institutes for Interreligious Affairs" (BIRA) beginning in 1978. Specific dialogues were organized with the major religions in Asia; there was: BIRA I on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue (Thailand, October 1979), BIRA II on Muslim-Christian Dialogue (Kuala Lumpur, November 1979), and BIRA III on Hindi-Christian Dialogue (India, November 1982).

The OEIA also designed a seven-year plan (1984-1991) of twelve sessions within BIRA IV; this program enabled every bishop in Asia to have an opportunity for both an in-depth exposure experience and reflection period on the Church's involvement in dialogue. Some of the learnings and insights from the BIRA IV experiences can be expressed succinctly: • Dialogue can reveal the action of the Holy Spirit in all religions; • Dialogue should also involve an ecumenical dimension/approach; • Dialogue in Asia is "the essential mode of all evangelization"; • Dialogue "is not and should never be a tactic in proselytism"; • FABC stresses the importance of a genuine "dialogue

of life"; • Asia's Christian communities need to be "communities of dialogue"; • One sees the need to recognize and transcend historical problems/difficulties; • Dialogue promotes "the Kingdom, God's gift and initiative"; • Dialogue demands "a life of deepening prayer and contemplation"; • Peace "between nations is not possible without peace between religions"; • Dialogue promotes "God's great design for universal harmony"; • As Church we are to be "true messengers of harmony and reconciliation."

The FABC has been particularly active in promoting a variety of dialogue initiatives. Of particular note is the comprehensive document published by the FABC-TAC in 1987: "Theses on Interreligious Dialogue" (TID). This was the very first document of the TAC, reflecting the fact that in Asia a proper understanding of Christianity needs to be seen in its relationship to the Asian world. Dialogue is foremost a practice, but when this activity is reflected upon, it also leads to a theological vision, particularly to a theology of religions. This integrated vision and approach is skillfully elucidated in the dialogue theses; these theses (1987), along with the "Theses on the Local Church" (1991), are hallmarks of the TAC's contribution.

IV. "Pastoral Spiral" Methodology

How do the local Churches of Asia envision implementing their insights on being Church and fulfilling their mission? How will the Church in Asia be a "communion of communities," "a participatory Church," and an "inculturated local Church" that "witnesses to the Risen Lord"? In response to these perennial questions, the FABC has evolved a unique approach of pastoral engagement. This four-stage "Asian" methodology has been termed: the "Pastoral Spiral" (cf. BISA VII: III, 8-13).

The process begins with *exposure-immersion;* it may also be called "entering into a dialogue-of-life." Exposure-Immersion follows the basic principle of the Incarnation; local Christians seek to share the daily lives of their neighbors and communities. They seek to understand and appreciate—through direct experience and interaction—the life

situation shared by Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians. In a word, all are invited to practice "good neighbor-ology."

The second stage of *social analysis* follows. Communities try to evaluate the social, economic, political, cultural, and religious systems in society. They observe and analyze events and trends, discerning the impact of rapid social change on human lives. They evaluate the signs of the times, the voices of the contemporary age, the events of history, as well as the needs and aspirations of people and communities. It is an interfaith effort to comprehend the realities that shape their lives.

Asians have seen the necessity of integrating social analysis (stage two) with the *contemplative dimension* (stage three) of evangelization and human development; this third stage of faith reflection emerges from Asia's religio-cultural heritage. Through this contemplation people discover God's presence and activity within social realities, discerning not only negative and enslaving social aspects, but also the positive, prophetic aspects of life that can inspire genuine God-awareness and spirituality. This stage in the total process has proven very beneficial; for example, it enables the poor to make their unique contribution to the Church's mission; it brings prayer and spirituality into the endeavor.

The third stage of ongoing spiritual-theological reflection issues into the fourth stage called *pastoral planning,* which seeks to translate the previous three stages into actual, realizable mission plans of action. Indeed, concrete programs of evangelization are ultimately necessary, but they are better conceived through this Asian process that actively discerns what the Lord of history is challenging the Church to be and to do.

One should note that this process is a *spiral*—it must be repeated frequently; hopefully, at each turn or cycle it moves upward and forward. The local Churches in Asia have committed themselves to this demanding approach to mission and evangelization.

A final, brief "footnote" may be added to link the FABC pastoral spiral with the "see, judge, act" methodology, traditionally associated with programs of Catholic Action. This approach to social

transformation encourages Christians to "see" (observe concrete social realities), "judge" (analyze and evaluate these realities), and "act" (make decisions and take concrete steps to transform the reality). FABC V has enunciated a similar approach, expressed with the "3-D" terminology; Asian Churches must "dialogue" with life's realities, then prayerfully "discern" the situation in faith, and lastly, engage in appropriate Christ-like "deeds" to transform the situation (cf. FABC V, 4.1-4.6). There are, ultimately, many parallels in these inductive pastoral approaches (whatever name one may give to them); the crucial factor is that the Christian community, motivated by faith and the Gospel values of the Kingdom, remains actively engaged in the transformation of the world.

V. Motivation for Mission

The vastness of the Asian continent and its billions of peoples, the number, complexity and tenacity of its problems, the minority status of the Church, the many challenges to mission and missionaries—all these realities could cause paralysis and discouragement in Christians. The local Churches of Asia constantly need grounding and renewal in their motivation for mission. A creative expression of a renewed sense of mission is found in the FABC documents; five core motives can respond to the question: "Why evangelize?"

1. "We evangelize, first of all from a deep sense of *gratitude to God*, the Father 'who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing' (Eph 1:3).... Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God. That is why it is so important for us Christians to have a deep faith-experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39).... Without a personal experience of this love received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish" (FABC V, 3.2.1).

2. "But mission is also a *mandate*. We evangelize because we are sent into the whole world to make disciples of all nations. The one who sends us is Jesus.... He sends us on a mission which is part of the epiphany of God's plan to bring all things together under Christ

as head (Eph 1:9-10). We cannot fulfill this mission apart from him (Jn 15:4-5)" (FABC V, 3.2.2). Asian Christians strive to take Christ's mission commands to heart, to go to the ends of the earth.

3. "We evangelize also because we *believe* in the Lord Jesus. We have received the gift of faith. We have become Christians.... Unfortunately for many Catholics, faith is only something to be received and celebrated. They do not feel it is something to be shared. The missionary nature of the gift of faith must be inculcated in all Christians" (FABC V, 3.2.3).

4. "We evangelize also because we have been *incorporated by baptism into the Church*, which is missionary by its very nature.... The Church exists in order to evangelize.... Each member, by virtue of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation has received the right and duty to the apostolate from the Lord himself" (FABC V, 3.2.4).

5. "And, finally, we evangelize because the Gospel is *leaven* for liberation and for the transformation of society. Our Asian world needs the values of the Kingdom and of Christ in order to bring about the human development, justice, peace and harmony with God, among peoples and with all creation that the peoples of Asia long for" (FABC V, 3.2.5).

In addition to the motives for mission, so sensitively expressed by the FABC for the Asian context, one finds helpful insights for engagement in mission in John Paul II's *Ecclesia in Asia,* where, in many places, an incipient "gift missiology" appears. This author believes that mission viewed and practiced as an "exchange of gifts" is most appropriate for Asian peoples, their sensibilities, temperaments, and values.

"The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia. Sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with others is the solemn duty of all who have received the gift of faith" (EA 10b). "Blessed with the gift of faith, the Church, after two thousand years, continues to go out to meet the peoples of the world in order to share with them the Good News of Jesus Christ.... The great question now facing the Church in Asia is

how to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts, namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ" (EA 19a, 19c).

John Paul II continues: "...the effort to share the gift of faith in Jesus as the only Savior is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in light of the beliefs of Asia's great religions, deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific world views" (EA 20c). "Only if the People of God recognize the gift that is theirs in Christ will they be able to communicate that gift to others through *proclamation* and *dialogue*" (EA 31f).

VI. "Asian-born" Mission Initiatives

This panorama of significant FABC contributions to forming inculturated local Churches with a commitment to evangelization can be augmented by a description of the "Asian-born" missionary societies. Significantly, all these societies have been founded in the Vatican II era. They are: Mission Society of the Philippines: MSP (1965); Mission Society of Saint Thomas the Apostle [India]: MST (1968); Catholic Foreign Mission Society of Korea: KMS (1975); Thailand Mission Society: TMS (1990); and, Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society [Philippines]: LRMS (1997). Currently, Vietnam and Myanmar are in the process of establishing their own missionary groups; Indonesia is also exploring some concrete options to become further engaged in *ad gentes* mission.

In addition to their uniqueness as "Asian-born" mission societies of the Vatican II era, these five missionary communities reflect a specific charism: Mission Society of Apostolic Life. Three characteristics describe their unique identity and mission contribution: *Ad Gentes*, *Ad Exteros*, and *Ad Vitam*. Such societies direct their efforts of evangelization *ad gentes* (to those who have not yet heard the liberating and salvific Good News of Jesus Christ), *ad exteros* (to peoples outside their own country, cultural milieu, and language group), and *ad vitam* (through a life-long commitment to this unique form of missionary witness). The Asian Synod (Proposition 28) and *Ecclesia in*

Asia (44d) specifically recommended "the establishment within each local Church of Asia, where such do not exist, of missionary societies of apostolic life."

FABC perspectives and insights have certainly been integrated into the mission approaches of these "Asian-born" missionary groups. In addition, FABC's Office of Evangelization (OE) has been promoting missionary cooperation among the five Asian-born Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life (AMSAL). This AMSAL group, now a semi-autonomous organization, began with a FABC-sponsored gathering in Thailand (1997), continued with meetings in the Philippines (1999), India (2001) and Korea (2003); plans are fixed for the 2005 assembly in Thailand. Although modest in its organization, AMSAL continues to promote renewal and cooperation through its Asian assemblies held on odd-numbered years; AMSAL members join the world-wide gatherings of Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life (MISAL) held on the even-numbered years. AMSAL hosted the MISAL in Bangkok in January of 2004, focusing on the topic of interreligious dialogue and contemporary mission. The initial history, vision, and activities of AMSAL are documented in the book *Asia-Church in Mission* (1999) and in *FABC Papers 88*.

More specifically, how has the mission vision of the *ad gentes* missionary institutes been implemented in Asia? To answer this question concretely, a brief synopsis of each Asian-born missionary society will be presented. As noted earlier, the commonality of all these "Vatican II" mission institutes lies in their unique and specific missionary charism: *ad gentes, ad exteros*, and *ad vitam*. All are focused on "apostolic" life; they do not pronounce "religious" vows, though they bind themselves permanently (*ad vitam*) for specifically *ad gentes* and *ad exteros* mission.

Missionary Society of the Philippines. On the fourth centenary of the evangelization of the Philippine Islands (1565-1965) the Catholic Hierarchy declared that "to express in the concrete our gratitude to God for the gift of our Faith we will organize the Foreign Mission Society of the Philippines." The official or statutory name of the society is: Mission Society of the Philippines (MSP), often popularly

referred to as "Fil-Mission." It is a diocesan Filipino clerical mission society of apostolic life.

The MSP defines its charism in these words: "In love and gratitude to the Father, ours is a joyful missionary spirit flowing from deep union with Christ through Mary and in the power of the Holy Spirit, willing to spend and be spent in sharing His Gospel to all." From its beginnings, the MSP desired pontifical status; Rome requested the MSP to begin on the local level. The Society has a juridical personality under the Archbishop of Manila (current statutes approved on January 29, 1989). The Catholic bishops of the Philippines have designated one Sunday each year as "Fil-Mission Sunday" to help support MSP as a commitment of the entire local Church.

Membership in the MSP is open to natural-born Filipinos; the Society also welcomes Filipino diocesan priests as associate members to serve in foreign mission. The MSP considers its mission apostolate in *de jure* and *de facto* mission territories as its foremost duty and privilege. Asia has always been the highest priority in the choice of mission apostolates. MSP statistics (2004) count 62 permanent members, 37 seminarians, and 5 associate priests. Presently, MSP missionaries work in Taiwan (8), Japan (5), Thailand (2), South Korea (3), Papua New Guinea (10), New Zealand (2), Cook Islands (2), Guyana, South America (2), and American Samoa (2).

In the first years of the new millennium (2000-2004) the MSP undertook several new mission initiatives: (a) care for the numerous Filipino migrants so as to enable them to become active partners in the work of evangelization; (b) establishment of a mission center in Thailand focused on the aged and sick, especially those affected with AIDS; (c) opening of additional "frontier" mission stations in Papua New Guinea; and, (d) organization of mission animation programs for local lay faithful focused on mission *ad gentes*.

The MSP Father Moderator, Socrates C. Mesiona, listed some current challenges their missioners face: (a) challenge of globalization and its effects, along with a consumerist mentality, resulting in reduced interest in religious matters; (b) issues of social justice and human rights

violations among foreign workers; and, (c) the missioners' ongoing struggle to understand and immerse themselves into the new cultures of host countries; this can debilitate some missioners and they have to withdraw from their mission posting.

However, in the assessment of the MSP leadership, *ad gentes* mission has also brought fulfillment and "success" as seen in the "real contact and dialogue of life with the poor, the sick, the old and neglected," in the effective work with Filipino migrants as "vital and important," in bringing the gospel to very remote areas on Papua New Guinea, and in being part of the team for "formation of local clergy."

Missionary Society of Saint Thomas the Apostle. The Missionary Society of Saint Thomas the Apostle (MST) in India is an indigenous missionary institute of the Syro-Malabar Church. In 1960, Mar Sebastian Vayalil sought the permission of the Holy See to found a mission society. Rome asked Bishop Vayalil to submit a draft constitution of the proposed society in 1963; he accomplished this in 1964. The nascent society began as a Pius Union of Diocesan Clergy in 1965. Additional steps were taken, and the MST was founded at Deepti Nagar, Melampara, Bharananganam on February 22, 1968. The founding members of MST were 18 diocesan priests who made their Promise of Incorporation to MST on July 16, 1968. On July 3, 1997 the MST was raised to a "Society of Apostolic Life of Major Archiepiscopal Right"; equivalently, this corresponds to "Pontifical Right" in the Roman Church.

The scope of the Society is "mission *ad gentes*" in the less Christian regions of India and beyond, "remaining faithful to the heritage and identity of the Syro-Malabar Church." MST now (2004) serves three mission regions (Ujjain, Mandya, and Sangli). In 1995 the MST accepted to begin work in Leh-Ladakh; the Society sent three people to work in this area known as the "Roof of the World." Some MST members also render service in 19 Indian dioceses and in Tanzania (2), Papua New Guinea (3), South Africa (1), Sweden (2) Germany (13), Canada (2), and in the USA (10).

The growth of MST in its first three decades of existence has

been phenomenal. Today there are 287 permanent members and 154 students at various levels of formation. In 1993 when the MST celebrated its silver jubilee, the Syro-Malabar bishops through a joint pastoral letter again owned the Society and exhorted the faithful to support its missionary activities. The current MST Director General is Father Kurian Ammanathukunnel.

New mission activities undertaken in the years 2000-2004 are focused on prison ministry (services, rehabilitation and reintegration of released prisoners), care of HIV/AIDS patients, mission animation in the Church of origin, and the establishment of a missiological research center. MST superiors noted four important mission challenges: Hindu fundamentalism in India, consumerist society's negative influence on missioners themselves, slackening spirituality, and less enthusiasm of personnel to take up challenging missions.

The evaluation of the positive results achieved in mission noted the following areas of growth: prison ministry, women empowerment programs, rehabilitation programs for the physically and mentally challenged, as well as programs for street children. The constant growth of MST is a significant factor, providing a sense of optimism as well as allowing for the implementing of new mission endeavors.

Catholic Foreign Mission Society of Korea. In late 1974 a Korean preparation committee was established to explore the possible formation of a mission society. By a decision of the Korean Bishops' Conference, the Korean Foreign Mission Society was founded on February 26, 1975. A formation house was opened in 1976, and the first priest for the society was ordained in 1981. In the same year the first missionary was sent to Papua New Guinea.

The KMS (Korean Mission Society) seeks to proclaim the Gospel and imitate Jesus Christ, the model for all missionaries. The KMS statutes note: "We also model ourselves on the evangelical spirit of the 103 Korean martyrs who witnessed to Jesus even unto their death... [and] make a preferential option for the poor and are in solidarity with their spiritual and material sufferings."

According to 2004 statistics, there are 49 permanent members of

the Society; 46 are priests; 3 are deacons; there are 30 seminarians in formation. Members work within Korea (Suwon and Seoul dioceses) and also in Hong Kong (3), Taiwan (6), Papua New Guinea (9), Cambodia (3), Mainland China (4), Russia (2). The present KMS general superior is Father Augustine Kim.

The KMS has taken new mission initiatives in recent years. It began mission in Cambodia and Russia in 2001; it established a small mission research center in 2004. A firm decision has been taken to open a mission presence in Mozambique in 2005; in preparation, KMS missionaries will already begin language study in late 2004 in Portugal.

In response to the 2004 Mission Societies Questionnaire, the KMS noted three specific challenges it currently faces: (a) the recruitment of vocations in Korea, where nationally there is a low birth-rate at present; (b) the ongoing effort to stabilize KMS mission funds; and, (c) the challenge to instill a deeper mission consciousness among the Catholics of South Korea. The hope is that the newly established mission research center will help to address these difficulties.

Thailand Missionary Society. In March 1987, the Superior of the Paris Foreign Mission Society in Thailand addressed a letter to the Bishops' Conference suggesting the formation of a missionary group of Thai priests. They were to work with the Hill Tribe peoples in northern Thailand. The idea was well received by the bishops; contacts were made with diocesan seminarians, religious congregations, and lay people. The responsibility for the project came to rest upon Bishop Banchong Aribang from Nakorn Sawan.

In 1989 four seminarians volunteered to become members of the Society. In June 1990 and in January 1991 the first two priests were ordained for the Thailand Missionary Society (TMS); this is considered the real beginning of TMS (popularly called the "Thai Missionary Society"). This society of secular priests aims to do "apostolic work among those who do not know Jesus Christ in Thailand and out of Thailand." Currently, they serve in Northern Thailand among the Hill Tribe peoples as well as in Cambodia. Planning has been undertaken

to assist the Church in Laos, knowing full well that for the time being, it is impossible to send anyone inside Laos.

As a Society of Apostolic Life, TMS is responsible to the Bishops' Conference of Thailand; the bishops appoint the superior of the society. Full members are secular, diocesan priests who join the society with the approval of their bishop; they keep a special relationship with their home diocese, even though they are incardinated into the TMS. Currently, the main challenge facing TMS is to evolve a better organized structure as well as to have a place that would be their own home and center in Thailand. TMS membership counts 8 priest members, but they have 9 sisters as associate members. Two seminarians in the National Major Seminary have expressed their intention of joining TMS at the time of their ordination to the diaconate.

The main TMS successes, as reported in the 2004 survey, have been the development of a mission presence among the hill tribe people, especially the Hmongs. Equally fruitful has been the work in Cambodia/Kampuchea, "especially with the foundation of a new religious branch of the 'Lovers of the Cross' Sisters"; in March 2004 two Cambodian sisters made their first profession (they had been prepared by the TMS associate members who work in Kampuchea).

There is a fine relationship between the TMS and the Bishops' Conference of Thailand; good financial support comes from the Bishops, but additional personnel from them would be appreciated. TMS members keep a close relationship with their diocese of origin. Regular articles in the Catholic newspaper feature the TMS work and personnel. Bishop Banchong Aribang is responsible through the Bishops' Conference, which has approved a temporary TMS constitution. Father Jean Dantonel, MEP is the current superior of the TMS (a Bishops' Conference appointee); a Thai priest acts as his assistant. Given the small number of members, there is no current plan to expand beyond the present mission commitments.

Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society. In 1949 during civil disturbances in China, the Saint Joseph Regional Seminary which was under Jesuit administration was transferred to Manila. In the ensuing years about 60

Chinese seminarians were ordained in the Philippines; they went on to found 14 Filipino-Chinese parishes and 18 Filipino-Chinese schools.

To facilitate the continuation of these apostolates and to recruit and train younger clergy, Jaime Cardinal Sin of Manila established the Lorenzo Mission Institute (a Filipino-Chinese seminary) in 1987. Pope John Paul II has also requested Cardinal Sin to help prepare missionaries for China. During the Pope's January 1995 sojourn in Manila, he visited this seminary, instructing the Cardinal to "maintain and preserve the said seminary at all cost."

In this context the Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society (LRMS) has been formed; it received its decree of approval from Cardinal Sin on January 14, 1997. It is a Clerical Society of Apostolic Life of diocesan right with its ecclesiastical seat in the Archdiocese of Manila. The LRMS draws its inspiration from Saint Lorenzo, the first Filipino saint who was of mixed Filipino and Chinese descent. He was martyred in Japan where he went as a lay catechist with Spanish Dominican friars in the 1600s.

The LRMS is "intrinsically and eminently missionary in spirit and finality." The members are committed to the Church in China, the Filipino-Chinese Apostolate, and other overseas Chinese Communities. In 2004, there were 17 permanent members and 32 seminarians. Some members have studied language and culture in northern China. The Archbishop of Manila governs the Society through his delegate; Father Esteban U. Lo is the current superior.

The LRMS recently (2000-2004) took several important mission initiatives: (a) Establishment of the Taiwan Mission by sending a priest to the Hsinchu diocese to study Mandarin (2001); (b) Expansion of LRMS Taiwan presence by placing a priest in the Taipei Archdiocese to study Taiwanese (2002); (c) Acceptance by the LRMS priest in the Hsinchu diocese of the pastoral care of three mountain parishes (2002); (d) Expansion in the Hsinchu diocese with the arrival of two additional LRMS priests (2004). As an integral part of its mission vision, the LRMS takes concrete steps to keep the local Church-of-origin focused on its *ad gentes* missionary obligations.

One important initiative that the LRMS has taken is the formation of future priests from the People's Republic of China. Some priests have returned to China; others still remain outside China for further studies and experience. One of these alumni priests was ordained bishop on January 6, 2004 in China under very difficult circumstances. Presently, LRMS has seven seminarians from China in formation. In addition, the LRMS desires to send its own personnel to China, beginning in 2006.

Finally, it must be noted that a complete panorama of Asian mission initiatives would also have to include the numerous Asians that are serving in *ad gentes* mission through international societies of religious women and men. Various lay movements also send personnel for evangelization in many Asian nations; for example, lay mission movements have been established in Japan, Philippines, and Hong Kong. The vast majority of these missionaries serve in other Asian countries. Inspired by both the FABC vision as well as local theologies, spiritualities, and pastoral visions, there are many Asians committed to serving and evangelizing their Asian neighbors.

Concluding Reflection

This presentation has highlighted some significant Asian developments in mission vision, theology, and pastoral practice since the Second Vatican Council; it has described the "Good News from Asia" about mission. Special emphasis was given to some of the pivotal contributions made by the FABC. Other areas of mission fostered by the FABC could have been chosen (e.g. laity, social communications, liberation and development, etc.); however, those presented here provide a foundational orientation to the remarkable contribution by the FABC for the renewal of the Church in Asia. This piece has also shown how Asia's local Churches have tried to follow the Gospel injunction: "What you have received as a gift, give as a gift" (Mt. 10: 8).

Pope John Paul II has frequently referred to the third millennium as the Asian Millennium in mission (e.g. EA 1-2); this challenge has

been received with optimism and commitment by the local Churches in Asia. They have rededicated themselves to proclaiming Christ, his Gospel, his love, his compassion, to billions of Asians who have not yet come to know Jesus. For Asia's local Churches, her mission societies, her laity, religious, and clergy, the Church's mission is pivotal to her very life and future. To be and become the Church is a solid commitment. Authentic Christian living and joyous evangelizing always go hand-in-hand—in Asia and throughout the entire missionary Church. To live is to evangelize!

Abbreviations

ABM - Asian Bishops Meeting (Philippines: 1970)

ACMC - Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church (Hong Kong: 1977)

AG - *Ad Gentes* (December 7, 1965)

AMSAL - Asian-born Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life

BIRA - FABC Bishops' Institutes for Interreligious Affairs

DM - *Dialogue and Mission* (June 10, 1984)

DP - *Dialogue and Proclamation* (May 19, 1991)

EA - *Ecclesia in Asia* (November 6, 1999)

EN - *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975)

FABC - Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

FABC I - First FABC Plenary Assembly (Taiwan: 1974)

FABC II - Second FABC Plenary Assembly (India: 1978)

FABC III - Third FABC Plenary Assembly (Thailand: 1982)

FABC IV - Fourth FABC Plenary Assembly (Japan: 1986)

FABC V - Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly (Indonesia: 1990)

FABC VI - Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly (Philippines: 1995)

FABC VII - Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly (Thailand: 2000)

FABC VIII - Eighth FABC Plenary Assembly (Korea: 2004)

FABC:OE - FABC: Office of Evangelization

FAPA - *For All the Peoples of Asia: I - II - III*

GS - *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965)

IMC - International Mission Congress (Philippines: 1979)

LG - *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964)

KMS - Korean Mission Society

LRMS - Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Society

MEP - Missions Étrangères de Paris

MISAL - Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life

MSP - Missionary Society of the Philippines

MST - Missionary Society of Saint Thomas the Apostle

OEIA - FABC Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

OR-EE - *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition)

PACM - Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists

PCP-II - Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991)

RM - *Redemptoris Missio* (December 7, 1990)

TAC - Theological Advisory Commission of the FABC

TID - *Thesis on Interreligious Dialogue* (FABC)

TLC - *Theses on the Local Church* (FABC)

TMS - Thailand Missionary Society

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