Catholic Families in Asia:
Living The Eucharist As Domestic Church Of The Poor

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Introduction

Often, students have shared the marked contrast between the excitement of their First Holy Communion when they were seven or eight years old and the current dull monotony of going to Sunday Mass with their family as 18–20-year-old young adults. The disinterested feelings towards Mass may not be confined to Catholic teenagers but could very well be a common family experience. Among Catholic families in Asia, some may be tempted to think of the Sunday Mass as simply fulfilling a weekly obligation before eating Sunday family lunch, with no real bearing on their daily life.

As part of their pastoral recommendations, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), in its Ninth Plenary Assembly, prescribed the need for programs of integral catechesis and faith formation regarding the Eucharist with the application to everyday life.[1] At the same time, Catholic families in Asia may see their being a family from a purely secular point of view, without much to do with God's plan for marriage and the family. The FABC's eleventh plenary assembly emphasizes that the Catholic family in Asia is not only a domestic church but a domestic Church of the Poor and, consequently, a missionary

1 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," Ninth Plenary Assembly Final Document, FABC Papers, no. 129 (Manila, Philippines: FABC, 2009), 24, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20paper%20129B.pdf (accessed 11 March 2020).

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disciple of Christ.[2] Through the optic of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' plenary assembly documents, "Living the Eucharist in Asia" (FABC IX) and "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy" (FABC XI), this paper will discuss the salient parts of the Mass and their contextual pastoral applications for Catholic families in Asia.

The Context of the FABC

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences is a voluntary association composed of bishops' conferences in Asia, approved by the Holy See.[3] It currently has nineteen full-member conferences, including the Philippines, as well as nine associate members, such as Hong Kong and Uzbekistan.[4] In terms of output, the FABC's highest authority lies with the final statements/documents of each plenary assembly. The plenary assembly is convened every four years with a particular theme that addresses current missionary concerns.

In 2009, the FABC held its Ninth Plenary Assembly (FABC IX) on the Eucharist, entitled "Living the Eucharist in Asia." The final document aimed to present a "useful guide in reflecting and acting on how the Eucharist might be better understood, celebrated, and lived in the context of Asia,"[5] bearing in mind the Asian's search for,

2 "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy," Eleventh FABC Plenary Assembly Final Document, FABC Papers, no. 151 (Colombo, Sri Lanka: FABC, 2016), 17, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Papers%20151.pdf (accessed 11 March 2020).

3 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Nature and Functions," *About Us,* http://www.fabc.org/about.html (accessed 11 March 2020).

4 The FABC has nineteen full member conferences and nine associate members. The 19 bishops' conferences are Bangladesh, East Timor, India-CBCI, India-Syro-Malabar, India-Syro-Malankara, India-Latin Rite, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan (Republic of China), Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste. The nine associate members are Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. See Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Members," http://www.fabc.org/mem.html (accessed 11 March 2020).

5 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 3.

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celebration of, and struggle for an authentic life. Undeniably, living the Eucharist comes from believing in it and celebrating it. At the same time, believing and celebrating the Eucharist are rooted in living it out daily. Hence, the document follows this circular methodology of life-belief-celebration-life. In addition, even as the Church in Asia is a Church that exists to dialogue (famous for its triple dialogue: with religions, cultures, and peoples of Asia, especially the poor), so too is the Eucharist about dialogue: the unparalleled experience of God's dialogue with believers and in turn, these believers' response to the dialogue of life and love. In its ninth plenary assembly, the FABC chose to celebrate this liturgical dialogue, using not only the Latin Rite, but also major eastern Eucharistic rites in Asia, such as the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara rites.[6]

6 Ibid., 3-5. Both the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches trace their roots to St. Thomas, the Apostle, who traveled to India to spread the Good News, and was martyred in 52 AD. (They are called Syro, meaning Syrian Christians in India due to the Syrian Rite rather than due to ethnicity, although some would have likewise had ancestors of Syrian blood.) There are three Catholic groups in India: Syro-Malabar Catholics, Syro-Malankara Catholics, and Latin Catholics (who use the Latin Rite of Rome). All three groups are under the pope's authority, and all three Churches may receive communion at each other's liturgies. Whereas most Indian Catholics are under the Roman Rite, the Syro-Malabar Catholics use the East Syrian Rite. Men and women sit separately at different sides of the church, their shoes left outside the church and with prayer rugs strewn all over the church floor. Worship is done facing the East. (This is based on ancient Church tradition that when Jesus returns at His Second Coming, He will come from the East, as seen in Matthew 24,27; and so, they worship Him facing the East to meet Him when He comes). The altar is covered by a red curtain and only opened at the beginning of the Mass, and closed again at the end of the Mass. Aside from the Syro-Malabar Catholics, the Syro-Malankara also use a different rite, the West Syrian Rite, called the Holy Qurbono. Apart from the great emphasis on ritual, gestures, symbols, and much chanting, of the two Indian rites, the Holy Qurbono seems closer to the Latin Rite in form. For more information on the Syro-Malabar Church, see "Syro-Malabar Church," Catholics and Cultures, https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/india/syro-malabar-church (accessed 11 March 2020), and "Syro-Malabar Worship," Catholics and Cultures, https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/india/syro-malabar-church/syro-malabar-worship (accessed 11 March 2020). For information on the Syro-Malankara Rite, see "Syro-Malankara Worship," Catholics and Cultures, https://www.catholicsandcultures.org/india/syro-malankara-church/syro-malankara-worship (accessed 11 March 2020).

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The more recent 2016 Eleventh FABC Plenary Assembly on the Catholic Family in Asia builds on previous plenary assemblies, especially the FABC VIII on "The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life." However, it also provides a critical advancement in the treatment of the family consistent with the spirit of the FABC: that the family is rightly called the domestic church of the poor whose mission is mercy.

How does the FABC define the Church of the Poor? It is a Church that identifies with the multitudes of poor who live in Asia. They are not poor in human values, in character, or in abilities that make one human, but poor because they are denied access to material resources necessary for one to live a decent human life. They are oppressed by unjust structures, whether social, economic, or political.[7] The Church commits to dialogue with the poor, beyond works of charity but truly being the Church of the Poor by proclamation, witness, lifestyle, etc. It means speaking up for those who are helpless and marginalized and working towards social justice.[8]

It demands working, not for them merely (in a paternalistic sense), but *with* them, to learn from them (for we have much to learn from them!), their real needs and aspirations, as they are enabled to identify and articulate these, and to strive for their fulfillment, by transforming those structures and situations which keep them in that deprivation and powerlessness.[9]

All Asian Catholics belong to the Church of the Poor. Whether they be materially poor or rich, all must exercise the spirit of evangelical poverty by detaching from material

7 See FABC, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia: Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Assembly," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970-1991,* ed. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arevalo, vol. 1 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992), 15. Hereafter referred to as FAPA I with page number.

8 Ibid., 5.

9 Ibid., 15.

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possessions and acknowledging that everything is a gift and that all are totally dependent on God. The call includes a clear commitment to the marginalized and oppressed by being in solidarity with them, to defend their rights and dignity since they cannot defend themselves. What is true for the Church of the Poor in Asia holds true for its most basic unit, the domestic Church.[10] Since the Catholic family in Asia is the *ecclesia domestica,* the Church in the home or the mini-Church, she shares the same mission and identity as the Church of the Poor. She is the missionary disciple who is formed and nurtured by the Church but also sent out to nurture others, especially the ones at the peripheries.[11] Like the bigger Church, hers is a theology of the fringes: to seek out those most in need and minister to them, both *ad intra* (within the family) and *ad extra* (outside of the family). She is to go beyond herself and reach out to others, prioritizing the powerless. Within the family, that would mean the weakest among the members: the sick, the elderly, and the infants. Outside of the family, that would mean the voiceless, the oppressed, and the marginalized. And because the domestic Church is a family, there is strength in her numbers and in her unity, as families reach out to help other families.

Today's domestic Church of the Poor is on a more explicit mission of mercy, like Jesus, and like the bigger Church.[12] Concretely, mercy is forgiveness and total generosity, the way God gives his whole self to humanity, asking nothing in return. It is to release anger, violence, and revenge so that one may live joyfully. It is to bring glad tidings to the poor, bind

10 FABC, "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy," Eleventh Plenary Assembly Final Document, FABC Papers, no. 151 (Colombo, Sri Lanka: FABC, 2017), 4, http://www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/FABC%20Papers%20151.pdf (accessed 12 February 2020).

11 Ibid., 17.

12 Ibid., 18.

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the brokenhearted, set captives free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19), when there are too many who are poor, broken, imprisoned, and oppressed.[13]

Living the Eucharist as a Domestic Church of the Poor

What follows is a discussion of the four major parts of the Mass (Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, The Eucharistic Prayer, and The Rite of Communion) as discussed in FABC IX, and the pastoral application for the family as domestic Church of the Poor using the optic of FABC XI.

Introductory Rites

Under the Introductory Rites, there is the Greeting and the Penitential Rite.

1. **The Greeting: Gathered as a Family of God, A Countersign to Divisions**

With the greeting, all the faithful are gathered as God's family. This loving union as a family of Christians becomes a countersign against the divisions that occur in the world. Such a union begins with God. It is He who makes the first move. It is He who takes the initiative. Because of Him, the family of believers becomes *ekklesia,* the community of brothers and sisters under Father God. The faithful are joined together by the truth that they are all God's children. It is a communion that brings hope and a foretaste of what shall be: communion as one family in heaven. All are called to go

13 Francis, *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (Misericordiae Vultus),* 11 April 2015, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.pdf (accessed 27 February 2020), nos. 9, 14-15.

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beyond themselves and out of their selfishness and see the other as brother and sister.[14]

The Catholic family in Asia is accustomed to gathering together. At the same time, gathering for a meal is likewise relatable because Asian families see meals as not merely for nourishment but as an opportunity to connect with the ones they love.[15] And yet, there is the danger of close family ties deteriorating into "closed" family ties, where loyalty to family may reject or discriminate against outsiders. Being overly inclusive of some, this may exclude others. The Eucharist reminds the domestic Church to expand rather than degenerate into an exclusive and closed unit. Living the Eucharist means that the domestic Church of the Poor must reach out especially to the poor so that no one feels left out or forgotten. As for the meal aspect, there is the danger of foregoing communion and family bonding due to a more individualistic and pragmatic lifestyle that erodes strong communitarian Asian family values. Living the Eucharist would mean union, not division. It would mean expanding the notion of family beyond kin to the spiritual family of believers and the human global family even.

Reflection: Have we confined ourselves to our own little family without regard for others outside this family,especially the marginalized? Have we lost family meal time to bond with family members given to us by God?

2. **The Penitential Rite: Recognizing God, Acknowledging Our Sinfulness**

Coming after the Greeting is the Penitential Rite. It is humbly coming before God and family (brothers and sisters in Christ) to acknowledge sinfulness and the need for God.

14 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 5-6.

15 Ibid., 6.

It is asking each other for prayers because of the shared common brokenness.

The Catholic family in Asia shares the gift of the Asian soul to naturally yearn for God and for life, to value humility and harmony.[16] Yet, Asians have fallen prey to violence, discrimination, and war. Biases and prejudices among Asian cultures, ethnic groups, and religions have led to massacres, the burning of homes, and the dislocation of families. Living the Eucharist would mean greater efforts to work for peace and harmony at the family level through the dialogue of life. This means working with other religions, cultures, and ethnic groups toward peace and justice.[17] Living the Eucharist likewise means seeing what is common among those who may not be like them, and extending mercy to other families, even as they need mercy themselves. [18]

Reflection: Are we able to acknowledge that family members may have different thoughts, perceptions, values, etc., even if we come from the same family? Do we respect the differences in opinion and respect them for what they believe? Do we acknowledge how we need mercy, which is love in action, from our family members, oftentimes undeserving though we may be? And in turn, do we extend mercy to our family members, too, difficult as it may be? Are we able to accept differences in other families and extend that mercy towards them?

Liturgy of the Word

Under the Liturgy of the Word, there are five parts highlighted: Listen to the Story of Jesus, Building a Common

16 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 7.

17 "The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy," 8, 20-21.

18 "Living the Eucharist in Asia," 7.

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Memory, Profession of Faith, Prayers of the Faithful, and Offering of the Gifts.

1. **Listen to the Story of Jesus**

The Liturgy of the Word is an opportunity to listen to the story of Jesus. God speaks first. He reaches out to believers where they are and as they are. The faithful listen to His wisdom, to Jesus in the gospel because only Jesus has the words of eternal life (John 6,68-69).

Listening to God's stories is something Asians can resonate with since they value words a lot. This is evident in the many sacred writings and books found in Asian cultures that are held with much reverence. Yet, even apart from religion, words continue to be important for Asian cultures. People are expected to be true to their word and sincere with their words. In like manner, the Word of God, especially in the Eucharist, fortifies relationship bonds between Christ and His Body, the Church. Be that as it may, there are other words that compete with the life-giving words. They are words that promise a good, easy life, most often luring the youth and the poor. The challenge of living the Eucharist in Asia is for families to live by the true Word that is authentic and life-giving.[19]

Reflection: Do the words family members speak build each other up or tear each other down? Do they edify and make our family members better, or do they make them feel insecure and unhappy? Do our words make them feel unworthy and unloved?

2. **Building a Common Memory: Retelling the Word**

From listening to the Story of Jesus, the invitation to God's family is to build a common memory: an experience held together because all have experienced the goodness of the

19 Ibid., 8-9.

Lord. This telling and retelling of stories is something Asians hold dear as they gather to listen to their own hero epics. On the other hand, Asians are threatened by factors that prevent them from keeping the same memories: less time for family meals, migration, and being victims of armed conflict. Some stories are forbidden from retelling because of dictatorial rule, media censorship and suppression of the freedom of speech, and even the presence of governments who rewrite history books to suit their agenda and as propaganda. The Eucharist challenges God's family to continue retelling the stories, especially the story of the life-giving Word.[20]

Reflection: As a family, do we make time to share our stories and to eat together at least at dinner time? Do we share common experiences as a family so that we would have a common history? Do we work for greater bonding between grandparents and grandchildren so that there is a passing on of all that is beautiful and good – values, aspirations, dreams? Do we make time to especially retell the story of our faith – the Bible and the Gospels – to the bigger human family because they need to hear hope amidst the hopelessness?

3. **Profession of Faith: A Joyful but Risky Act**

From listening to God who has spoken, God's family is now asked to respond by professing the faith shared in common. The Creed is the Church's common memory that binds the faithful together with all the communities of believers who have passed on to the next life. The response of faith is a joyful act but also a risky one in parts of Asia where Christians are openly persecuted. It is in these countries that Asian Christians are a minority. Apart from the challenge of religious intolerance, there exists the reality of complacent, baptized Asians who take their faith for granted and even give

20 Ibid., 9-10.

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in to a relativism that rejects the objective basis of faith, or who succumb to practical atheism (where they live as if God did not exist).[21]

Reflection: Does our family discriminate against those who are not Catholic? If we have family members of a different faith, Christian denomination, or if they are atheists, do we highlight our differences or arrogantly push our Faith as the better one or as the one, true Faith and their Faith as false? On the contrary, are we complacent about our Faith, taking it for granted? Do we joyfully witness to the Faith at home or do we keep silent about it? Do we live and act as if God does not exist in our home and in our lives?

4. **Prayers of the Faithful: Imploring God Who Listens**

The Prayers of the Faithful are a united effort to ask God to listen to our yearnings and needs, for we believe that God not only speaks but lovingly listens to us. We pray for the needs of humanity, making them our own. The gift of concern for others is truly Asian. We make sure to take care of each other and speak out for others because we realize the interconnectedness of everyone and everything. However, there are silenced voices in Asia, especially those who are marginalized. The Eucharist calls on us, who are the Church, to speak up for the muted voices since they cannot speak for themselves. It calls us out of our self-imposed deafness that we may bother to love and be our brothers' keeper.[22]

We can apply this to our family as we ask ourselves: Do we take care of each member of the family? Do we speak out against any injustice done to other family members, especially those who cannot speak for themselves, whose voices are silent or muted? Have we become deaf to the needs of

21 Ibid., 11-12.
22 Ibid., 16-17.

our family members because we are wrapped up in our own concerns, distracted by our own addictions (texting, FB, etc.) and vices? Do we play deaf because we do not want to get out of our comfort zone or because it is too much of a hassle?

5. **Offering of the Gifts: Signs of Hope in a World of Injustice**

The gifts we humbly offer in the Offering of the Gifts are signs of hope in a world that fails to be just. The priest prepares the Table of the Body and Blood of Christ. When he prepares the bread and wine, they are a sign that God continues to give life to the world. Asians come together in the Eucharist and realize that our life, our very existence, is a gift. Food is also a gift. Wine is a cause for celebration. What is offered reminds us that we must care for the earth that provides for us. Furthermore, we must cherish the gift of persons and relationships. Instead, we are guilty of sometimes objectifying and instrumentalizing others for our benefit. We put a premium on profit rather than respecting creation and work. In Asia, there are those who do not pay their workers enough and have them work in inhumane conditions. There is also a scandalous gap between the rich and the poor. Businessmen charge exhorbitant prices for goods.

The bread offered dares us to face the stark reality that there are still many who starve and are malnourished. The wine provokes us to reflect on the drunkenness of alcoholic husbands who beat their wives and children. It reminds us of the family debts incurred due to vices. Our offerings from the earth speak to challenge us if caring for the earth has become just another advocacy or worthy cause when originally, God called us to stewardship, to care for creation, especially for future generations.[23]

23 Ibid., 18-20.

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Our Asian family can reflect on whether or not we cherish the gifts we have. Do we cherish the gift of family members and the gift of relationships that God has brought into our lives? Are we grateful for the gift of food, that we are granted daily food on our tables and an abundance of resources due to God's goodness and providence? Do our family members pitch in with the chores at home, careful not to overwork any one member, but working together while also having time for rest?

As we eat at the table, does our family also reach out to those who have nothing to eat? Do we stand up against the violence and abuse caused by a drunken family member? Does our family rise above the vices, like gambling, that lead to debt? Is our family a good steward of food and resources, careful not to waste them?

The Eucharistic Prayer

From the Liturgy of the Word, the next section is the Eucharistic Prayer. Subheadings for the Eucharistic Prayer include these two parts: the Institution Narrative and the Communion with the Living and the Dead.

1. **Institution Narrative: From Betrayal to the Sacrifice of Self-Giving and Service**

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the great Thanksgiving prayer of the Church. We recall the Last Supper of Jesus. It is a healing and purifying remembrance, even though it is filled with betrayal and suffering. We remember the meaning of Jesus's death. In our woundedness, we would rather not remember. The Eucharist teaches us to bravely face the painful memories of the past with the hope of God's victory of love in Jesus. For every dark memory in Jesus's life and, consequently, in our own lives, God moves to transform it into something good and beautiful. For the Lord did say, "unless a grain of

wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." (John 12,24) Christ needed to suffer and die for our sake. Otherwise, we would not have been able to become children of God.

Asians know there is hope for those who suffer from bitter memories and betrayal. The challenge of the Eucharist is to not cling to the bitterness of those who have been unjust to us. This can only lead to violence. It is to not cling to the idolatry of youth and beauty by doing all to delay aging and death at all costs. Rather, it is to oppose the death culture of poverty, abortion, domestic violence, illegal drugs, environmental pollution, sex tourism, human trafficking, and the objectification of women and the girl-child. These are truly dark moments for Asia, but God can transform the evil works through us, who are His disciples. For indeed, we are His hands and feet. We bring the good and the beautiful that God wills for our world when we give the gift of self.[24]

As for our Asian family, do we hold on to feelings of bitterness towards those family members who have been unfair to us or who have wronged us and betrayed us? Do we allow ourselves to acknowledge the pain we feel, or do we pretend that we are not hurt by the words and actions of other family members? At the same time, will we also readily let go of the bitter memories to be healed and for family relationships to be restored?

Reflection: Does our Asian family put an exaggerated premium on youth, beauty and the physical? Are we in denial about the fact that our loved ones will age and die one day? And while they are still with us, do we care for them with tenderness and concern?

24 Ibid., 20-23.

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2. Communion with the Living and the Dead

The Eucharist is a moment when we become Christ's Body together by Jesus's Spirit. We are in communion with the universal Church. This unity goes beyond borders, whether they be ethnic, cultural, economic, or political borders. It is at this point when we remember the dead, especially the saints. Asians know only too well what it means to live in diversity. Asia is the largest and most populous continent in the world. It is a mixture of varied cultures. Neither is the remembrance of our dead far from the Asian heart, for we know that while our beloved dead are not physically present anymore, we shall be united with them one day. Even now, we feel deeply connected with them and believe we can communicate with them.

The challenge of the Eucharist in Asia is not to fall into the trap of division and conflict that may easily arise in such a diverse continent. There are also the unnamed and forgotten who have died as victims of violence in Asia.[25]

Reflection: As an Asian family, do we remember our dead, our beloved family members who have gone before us? Do we pray for them and ask them to pray for us? Do we likewise pray for the unnamed and forgotten, those who have no family to pray for them?

The Rite of Communion

From the Eucharistic Prayer, the Mass proceeds to the Rite of Communion. We receive Jesus' Self-Gift so that we may live in communion with Him. He becomes a part of us, but we also become part of Him, part of His Body.

Subheadings for the Rite of Communion are these four parts: The Lord's Prayer and the Exchange of Peace, Receiving

25 Ibid., 23-24.

Communion, Amen to the Bread of Love, and A Mission to Witness to Jesus.

1. **The Lord's Prayer and the Exchange of Peace: Love is Communion and Peace**

In the Rite of Communion, we find the Lord's Prayer and Exchange of Peace. Love is about communion and peace. When we recite the Lord's Prayer together, we call God Abba because we are adopted sons and daughters in Christ. For the sign of peace, we bless one another with the gift of the Risen Lord. We offer them the love of the Father. This is the love we believe in and celebrate. This is the peace that calls us to reconcile with one another.

Asia's gift of family is an example of communion. The strong Asian family ties are a sign of the Father's love. The challenge of the Eucharist is to conquer the forces that undermine the home in Asia: poverty, war, abusive parents, vices, aggression, rivalry, competition, etc.[26]

Reflection: As an Asian Christian family, how do we bring Christ's peace to our family members? How do we bless one another? This peace is not the peace of this world, a peace that merely maintains the status quo, but the true peace of Christ that authentically restores relationships. Do we protect the peace within our family, robbed by poverty, abusive parents, vices, and sibling rivalry?

2. **Receiving Communion: Superabundant Love**

The peak of the celebration of the Eucharist is the reception of Christ's superabundant love in Communion. We dare to approach God after humbly declaring that we are not worthy. The gift of Christ is more than we deserve. We are not worthy. We are not worthy. We are truly not worthy.

26 Ibid., 24-26.

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Asians enjoy an abundance of natural and human resources. Yet, so many live in dire poverty, seeking bread due to the greed of others. Living the Eucharist means standing against the injustice of poverty. We are challenged to provide bread that fills the hunger of the poor but also the Living Bread that satiates the spirit.[27]

Reflection: Does our Asian family reach out together to those who hunger, both physically and spiritually? As catechists and religious educators, we can initiate efforts for our family to volunteer in parish activities that minister to those who have no food and no proper formation or catechesis.

3. **Amen to the Bread of Love: Commitment to Mission**

When we take Christ in communion, we say Amen to the Bread of Life, who is also the Bread of Love. This Amen is part of the send-off, a missionary moment, calling us to bear much fruit. (John 15,16) Yet, we can only do this if we remain in the love of God. (John 15,4) Indeed, the mystery of the mission is this: to abide as we go and go as we abide.

To live the Eucharist in Asia calls for attentive listening. We are to discern where God is sending us and then go there with joy, zeal, and a mission-ready spirit. In Asia, this must include the teeming masses of the poor, the tired, and the lowly. They are faced with a life filled with bad news. We must offer them the Good News of Christ.[28]

In our Asian family, do we reach out beyond our nuclear family or family of origin to bring forth the joy, zeal, and love that we have experienced in our family with all those we meet? Our family has a mission: to spread love and to become a visible sign of Christ's love to the world!

27 Ibid., 26.
28 Ibid., 27.

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4. **A Mission to Witness to Jesus**

The Eucharist ends with a mission to witness to Jesus. After gathering as a community, hearing God speak and making it part of our memory, gazing with awe at the hope of creation, remembering the painful memory of Jesus's Self-Gift, and tasting the Bread of Life, we must now witness to what we have seen, heard, and tasted. After every celebration of the Eucharist, it ends with the call to mission. Certainly, in most of Asia, the Church is a minority. Nonetheless, the call is there. Perhaps precisely because we are a little flock in Asia, this makes it even more vital for us who are Christians to share the gift of Jesus and make little ripples of love and hope by our deeds of joy, simplicity, and love. Furthermore, the Eucharist challenges us to seek out those who need our care the most, such as the migrants separated from their families, broken homes, the innocent imprisoned for crimes they did not commit, and people contemplating suicide.[29]

Reflection: As an Asian family, we have much to contribute to the Church and to the world. Do we seek out those who need us to accompany them in their journey, especially students and those within our reach? Do we share the Good News of Christ with them? It is the Eucharist that will empower us to do so.

Conclusion

This paper outlined the guiding principles from the two FABC plenary assembly documents toward an ongoing formation and catechesis of Asian Catholic families. The first part discussed the sad reality of viewing the Eucharist as a forced obligation without relevance to daily living. The second part was about the context, content, and contribution

29 Ibid., 28-29.

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of the two plenary assembly documents. The author holds that both the Eucharist and Church of the Poor possess filial or relatable imagery that might help Asian families rediscover their nature, vocation, and mission. The last part was an application of the guiding principles using the parts of the Mass as a framework. Each entry has points for reflection in the hope that Asian Catholic families may remember their calling to 'make disciples' at home, in their ecclesial community, and in the larger society.