The FABC Vision of the Youth as Evangelizers in Asia, Particularly in the Archdiocese of Goa

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The year 2013 was celebrated as the year of faith. Connecting evangelization as a witness of faith, Pope Benedict XVI in his World Youth Day message to the youth called upon them to "go and make disciples of all the nations" (Mt 28:19a).[1] The youth were reminded of their mission to evangelize. Time and again different pontiffs have expressed their trust in the capacity of the young to evangelize. However, the enthusiasm and confidence of the pontiffs may have often lacked the necessary resonance at the local levels.

My personal interest in the topic of "youth as evangelizers" emerges from my experience in the youth apostolate in Goa. This study is influenced by the enthusiasm and capacity of the youth, who form the largest population in Asia,[2] coupled with their quest for God and hunger for justice.

Goa is the smallest state on the western coast of India; it has more than 30 beaches on its coastline of 101 kilometers, making it India's capital of beach tourism. Tourism is one of the significant economic contributors as well as a primary perpetrator of evils like prostitution, pedophilia, human trafficking, drug peddling, substance abuse, school dropouts, gambling, gang crimes, and loss of morality and values,

1 Benedict XVI, "Missionaries of New Evangelization," The Pope's Message for World Youth Day 2013, *L'Osservatore Romano* 47:2272 (21 November 2012): 12.

2 S. Koilmani, "Potentialities and Crises of Modern Youth and the Role of the Church," *SEDOS Bulletin* 42:11/12 (2010): 258.

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among others. Most of the coastal population is Catholic. Hence, the Catholic youth are the most affected by the lure of pleasure, fast money, and a carefree lifestyle. (cf. SDS 65).[3]

The Archdiocese of Goa has a well-established youth apostolate in every parish under Diocesan Youth Centre. Various programs catering to the formation, fellowship, and social outreach are conducted for the youth. However, such activities targeting the youth seem to fall short of checking the negative influences of the tourism culture. The Good News of Jesus is received by those who attend the Church activities. Hence, the need is to take the message to the same avenues where the "bad news" is invading the lives of the youth. Secondly, the Church-centered activities for the youth betray the fact that the youth are often regarded as the object of the Church's mission and may not be recognized as the subject of evangelization itself. The youth are the Church and hence are missionaries.

So, one may ask, WHY the YOUTH? What purpose do they fulfill? Various purposes may emerge depending on the optic of the viewer. This study focuses on youth for multiple reasons. The primary purpose of this study focuses on the youth as evangelizers based on the vision of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) for the Church in Asia. The FABC has articulated many aspects of its vision of "a new way of being Church," like the triple dialogue, forming an Asian Church, Church as communion, participatory Church, Missionary Church, etc. This study does not deal with all those aspects, yet it does not negate them; rather it suggests youth as evangelizers as another approach. This study concentrates on those aspects pertaining only to the participation and contribution of youth in this endeavor.

3 Archdiocese of Goa, *Statement of the Diocesan Synod 2002* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2002).

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Secondly, new evangelization is an inexhaustible topic, especially given the vast and diverse Asian context. Hence, the study looks only at issues pertaining to the youth. As this study tries to correlate theological insights with pastoral applications within the context of the Church in Goa, the study is limited in that it does not take into consideration aspects of being Church in Asia which prevail in various other circumstances.

The study is limited in its scope as it does not explicitly consider evangelization of the non-Catholic youth or the secular realm. The research is also restricted from the point of view of available materials on the topic from the Church in Goa. Given the accepted situation of religious tolerance enjoyed by the Church in Goa and the considerable number of religious men and women, limited efforts have been made in the area of engaging the youth as evangelizers. Hence, some helpful theological and missiological insights and pastoral guidelines presented here may aid the local Church in considering this area so long overlooked as essential to its very mission.

The urgent need is to study, evaluate and revitalize the youth apostolate to engage the youth as evangelizers to one of the new *areopagus*, the youth culture. This article, therefore, seeks an answer to the question: How can the Church in Asia (especially in Goa) engage her youth in the new evangelization to fulfill the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church"? (*FAPA I*, 275)[4]

4 All the references to FABC documents will be generally taken from the five volumes of *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences from 1970-1991* volume I edited by Gaudencio B. Rosales and C. G. Arévalo, volumes II, III, and IV edited by Franz-Josef Eilers and volume V edited by Vimal Tirimanna. The abbreviation FAPA will be used, followed by volume number (e.g. II) and the specific page number(s).

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The Church of Asia in all its richness and variety exists as a minority and "foreign" [5] Church yet, witnesses as a leaven in the world to the pluralistic and contrasting factors in Asia. Various articles, books, and the *FABC Papers*[6] give an idea of the situation of the youth in Asia. Like Asia itself, the youth cannot be understood in one simple definition. Akin to their age and era, they represent the technologically advanced, mobile, digital citizens of the world. The historical changes in the world due to globalization and commercialization have affected the youth both positively and negatively. On the positive side, they have become more advanced, more capable global citizens while on the negative side they are often rendered uncommitted, disillusioned, individualistic, and lacking in meaning in life.

The globalized and secularized context of Asia challenges the Church to be truly Asian. The Church is challenged to be present to the different cultures, to the different faith traditions and to the teeming poor of Asia in a new way: by way of an integral dialogue, qualified by participatory processes of engagement, and imbued with prophetic witness which together can be summed up as a "new way of being Church." [7]

The journey of the Church in Goa is traced from the post-colonial period. At a time when the Church was opening up after the Vatican Council II, Goa too was opening up to changes free from colonial rule (Goa was liberated in

5 Thomas Fox, *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2003), 12.

6 Since 1976 the FABC Central Secretariat in Hong Kong has published various "resource papers" on a wide variety of themes. Presently (2014), over 139 FABC Papers have been published. James H. Kroeger has prepared and published a comprehensive index of these papers in FAPA IV and FAPA V as a special supplement. All references to the FABC Papers will be noted as *FABC Papers* followed by the number of the paper, year of publication, and page number (e.g. FABC Papers 138 [2012], 56-57, 67).

7 *FABC Papers* 92i (2000), 21.

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December 1961). In the post-colonial era, the Church soon plunged itself in the spirit of the Council and entered into the social, political, and cultural life of the people. Devoid of the financial and political privileges of the Portuguese regime, the Church learned to be a prophetic voice in a secular India. However, it can be said that Goa has not yet fully lived to respond to the challenges posed by tourism. Probably low missionary awareness and low lay participation in the mission of the Church seem to hinder the full maturity of the Church of Goa as a *communio*, missionary and participatory Church.[8]

The situation of the youth of Goa is not different from the youth in Asia or other developing countries. Globalization has created a culture of survival of the fittest, leading to migration and unemployment. Another major concern that the Church worries about is the youth affected by the negative influences of unchecked tourism. This research has helped to put the study in the context; the context of the Church of Asia and the Church of Goa, the context of the youth of Goa, and the need for evangelization and involvement of all laity (youth included) in the mission of the Church.

The Need for Youth Evangelizers

Here we are looking for WHY we want the youth as evangelizers. This is answered by exploring three interrelated theological themes: (1) *Communio* Ecclesiology; (2) Evangelization; and (3) Missional Participation. These theological concepts form the backdrop against which the Church of Asia and especially the Church of the Goa lives her pastoral ecclesiality (cf. EA 25, SDS 51).[9] Based on these theological foundations, the Church of Goa has made herself one with the

8 *FABC Papers* 130 (2010), 38.

9 Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, *Statement of the Diocesan Synod 2002* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2002), 16.

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lives of her people which is reflected in her various involvements and the Diocesan Pastoral Plan (DPP).[10]

FABC Perspectives on *Communio* Ecclesiology

Introduction to the FABC

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) is an association that emerged from the call of Vatican Council II for a participatory and communal Church. It was a dream of the Asian Bishops to "see the face of an Asia at long last coming to birth as a true community of peoples." (Message of the (ABM) Asian Bishops' Meeting article 12). This dream was conceptualized and presented during the Asian Bishops' Meeting with Pope Paul VI in 1970 in Manila (*FAPA I*, 4). It has given to the Church a vision of a "new way of being Church," and has helped to shape the "ecclesiology and missiology of the Asian Church."[11]

In response to the vision of Vatican Council II, the FABC builds and sustains the *communio* ecclesiology by creating bonds of sharing, communication, and collaboration among the bishops, different conferences, and at other levels of the Church in Asia. It is theological and pastoral in nature.

One of the commitments of FABC is in fulfilling its commitment made to the youth in 1970 ABM (*FAPA I*, 6). It organized the Youth Desk in 1994 under the aegis of the office of the laity. It has consistently made the youth a major pastoral priority.[12] Through the Youth Desk, the FABC

10 Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, *Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2002* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2002).

11 James Kroeger, "Asia's Dynamic, Missionary Local Churches: FABC Perspectives," *Landas* 19:2 (2005): 177.

12 FABC Office of Evangelization, Statement of the Symposium on "Evangelization in the Light of *Ecclesia In Asia*," in *Evangelization in the Light of Asia,* edited by Saturnino Dias (Bangalore, India: Claretian Publication, 2003), 307-320.

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responds to the needs and concerns of the youth and youth ministry of Asia. It fosters collaboration and networking amongst youth commissions, particularly in its member episcopal conferences. Thus, it aids the Church of Asia to live in communion and missional participation.

Communio Ecclesiology: FABC Perspectives

The FABC, emerging from the vision of the Second Vatican Council, employs the same idea as that of the Council to describe the Church's nature and mission (*FAPA I,* 55). In the 1980s the FABC began to explore the idea of the Church as communion in various plenary assemblies. The third FABC plenary assembly in Bangkok (1982), stressed the Trinitarian foundation of the Church and her role in building human communities:

> The Church is at its deepest level a *communio (koinônia)* rooted in the life of the Trinity, and thus in its essential reality a sacrament *(mysterium et sacramentum)* of the loving self-communication of God and the graced response of redeemed mankind in faith, hope and love (*FAPA I,* 60).

The *communio* aspect is further enumerated in various reflections of the FABC. The Church is endorsed as a "community of authentic participation and co-responsibility" (FABC III: 7.6), "one with its pastors" (FABC III: *7.7*), and in communion with "other communities of faith," and the universal Church (FABC III: 7.8).[13] This communion is expressed in the Church as "a communion of committed disciples; be they clergy or laity; working for the liberation of Asia" (FABC IV: 4.1.3).[14]

A pivotal point was the fifth FABC plenary assembly in Bandung (1990) which coined the phrase "communion

13 *FABC Papers* 32 (1982), 26.
14 *FABC Papers* 37 (1986), 39.

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of communities."[15] It explained that the "new way of being Church" as a "communion of communities" embraces three elements: it is participatory, it is dialogical, and it is prophetic (*FAPA II,* 3). This understanding was reinforced by the sixth FABC plenary assembly (Manila, 1995). It reiterated the need for the Asian Church to move towards a "new way of being Church;" a Church that is committed to becoming a "community of communities" (FABC VI, 3).[16] Dialogue is vital to *communio* ecclesiology as it is through dialogue that the Church is in communion with the context of Asia.[17] During the tenth FABC plenary assembly (2012), it re-committed itself to be a "communion of communities."[18] The growth of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) in Asia is yet another sign of the reception and growth of the *communio* ecclesiology in Asia (*FAPA II*, 107-111 and 137-139). It has been noted that BECs have been the seedbed for co-responsibility and the active participation of the laity in decision-making and action for social transformation.[19]

Repercussions for Youth Ministry

The *communio* ecclesiology signifies that all the baptized are bonded together in Christ, within the Church, and among themselves. It is the core of human existence. Humans are made to be relational beings. This human characteristic is most evident among the youth. Most often they prefer to be

15 Jonathan Tan, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia: The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) at the Service of Life in Pluralistic Asia," *Missiology* 33:1 (2005): 73.

16 *FABC Papers* 74 (1995), 82. See: Tan, "A New Way of Being Church in Asia," 74.

17 Peter Phan, "Asian Perspective," in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church,* edited by Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2008), 286.

18 *FABC Papers* 138 (2012), 10.

19 The Bishops' Institute for Lay Apostolate (BILA), first organized by the FABC Office of the Laity in 1984, has been significant in promoting lay empowerment.

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in the company of their peers, to belong to a group. Their activities, their preferences, and their dealings all reflect the *communio* aspect in its seminal form. Hence, it would not be a difficult task to expect a communal life from the youth. Depending on the circumstances, they often are a homogenous group by themselves and among themselves. However, the challenge is to incorporate the youth in the larger community of believers to complete the *communio* ecclesiology. The FABC guidelines would aid in this task; its participatory and dialogical approach to the youth would help mutual *koinônia*, participation, sharing, and communication.

FABC Perspectives on Evangelization

Evangelization is the second major theological theme. Evangelization is an ecclesial act (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 60). It is neither in isolation nor is it an individual endeavor. The Second Vatican Council stressed the missionary character of the Church which flows from the dynamic missionary character of God himself. God is a communion-in-mission and hence, the Church imitates God as communion-in-mission.[20]

The FABC has given priority to evangelization from its very beginnings. The first Plenary Assembly in 1974 had the theme: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia." Its deliberations and final statement reveal the urgency of the task of proclaiming Jesus to the Asian continent. This mission aims to share the Christian faith with Asian brothers and sisters in answer to their many quests. Evangelization also seeks to offer dignity, freedom and communion to all peoples (*FAPA I*, 13). Furthermore, "new evangelization" reflects on the new contexts, namely the task

20 Robert Rivers, "Eucharist and Evangelization: Two Sides of One Reality," *Origins* 35:11 (2005): 190.

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of evangelizing consciences and cultures which challenge the Church today.[21]

The Indian Church considers the three issues of new evangelization; ardor, methods, and expression from within its context. Cardinal Gracias, in his opening address in 2012 at a seminar on the new evangelization in Pune, India, specified that the mission of evangelization means "an adequate response to the signs of the times, the needs of the individuals, peoples, sectors and their cultures."[22] The FABC reflections on evangelization were re-echoed in some of the 59 final propositions made by the special synod of Asia (1998):[23]

- The need for an Asian approach to Church, theology, mission, etc.;
- Acceptance of the triple dialogue with cultures, religions, and the poor as a way of mission;
- The FABC focus on a "New Way of Being Church" as a "communion of communities";
- Restraining from applying a uniform pattern of evangelization in Asia, yet, stressing the centrality of Jesus as a Savior;
- Emphasis on authentic witnessing and spirituality for evangelization;
- The missionary and evangelizing role of the laity with special focus on women, family, and the youth.

21 Hervé Carrier, "Evangelization and Mission" in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology,* edited by René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad Publication Company, 1994), 286.

22 Oswald Gracias, "New Evangelization: A Prophetic and Revolutionary Call," in *New Evangelization: Asian Perspectives,* edited by Joy Thomas and Victor Sagayam (Mumbai, India: St. Paul's, 2012), 19-25.

23 The Synod of Bishops for Asia, "The Synod's Propositions," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries,* edited by Peter Phan (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 140-165.

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However, evangelization as proclamation cannot be reduced to the proclamation of the text or the creed and doctrines alone. A proclamation divorced from the realities of life and the context of the recipient would be in the abstract. Therefore, FABC's thrust of proclamation is through the triple dialogue: with religions, cultures, and the poor (*FAPA I*, 280). It is a proclamation in word and action. Though the "proclamation of Jesus Christ is the primary and central element of evangelization" (*FAPA I,* 292), yet, evangelization includes being with people, responding to their needs, being sensitive to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing, and word; These are equally important (cf. *FAPA I*, 280).

Repercussions for Youth Ministry

The Church regards the youth as evangelizers of the young and even of others. As evangelizers, they are sent to proclaim through word and action. By nature, the youth are action-oriented, full of energy, and always on the "go." Hence, the FABC repeatedly calls upon the Church of Asia to recognize the dynamic wealth of the youth and evangelize them to be evangelizers. The advantage of the FABC perspectives on evangelization is that every youth can find a way to be part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. Evangelization encompasses proclamation, dialogue, development, social action, liberation, inculturation, prayer, and many more aspects. The FABC presents evangelization as an achievable and appealing goal to the youth.

FABC Perspectives on Missional Participation

Missional Participation is the third theological concept that explains "why" the youth should be evangelizers. Just like *communio* ecclesiology and evangelization, missional

participation too has its foundation in the theology of the Trinity. Human persons are created in the image and likeness of God which is three persons in partnership and in shared responsibility, whose orientation is outward, and whose shared love spills over and beyond itself. The concept of *perichoresis*, or the mutual indwelling/interpenetration of the three persons in a dynamic, circulating movement, offers rich analogies for human interdependence and relational community.

Participation can also be understood as humanity's ongoing participation in God's theological/metaphysical events and realities, such as creation, exodus, exile, return, incarnation, and Pentecost, and also in the ongoing participation in Christ and the Church. Thus, the mutual interpenetration of God in human history and of humanity in God's plan can be termed as participation-in-mission.

Participation in the mission of Jesus belongs to the nature of being Christian. The FABC asserts that communion with Christ by virtue of Baptism invites all the believers to participate in the triple function of Jesus: priest, prophet, and king. Through its various assemblies, the FABC has emphasized missional participation for a participatory Church.

One can notice a gradual broadening of the concept of missional participation in FABC documents. In the first plenary assembly in 1974 the stress was on the common responsibility for preaching the Gospel as the task was considered to have assumed "an urgency, a necessity, and magnitude unmatched in the history of our faith in this part of the world" (FABC I, 8). The third plenary assembly in 1982 recognized missional participation through ministries. It affirmed the Church as a "community of authentic participation and co-responsibility, where genuine sharing of gifts and responsibilities obtains, where the talents and charisms of each are

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accepted and exercised in diverse ministries."[24] It also called the Church to promote "active responsible participation of the laity."[25]

Admitting the lack of incorporation of the laity in the mission of the Church the fourth plenary assembly encouraged the Church to "evaluate the activities and structures that call for and encourage the involvement of the laity in the life of the Church."[26] It also stressed the importance of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) without reducing their status to pragmatic planning organizations.[27] In addition, the fourth FABC plenary assembly emphasized the missional participation of the youth as "evangelizers, messengers, and instruments of God — not only among their peers, but also among their elders and in the wider society."[28]

Later in the Bandung assembly in 1990 (FABC V), the FABC reiterated the participatory view of the fourth plenary assembly when it acknowledged that a participatory Church is one of the means to realize a "new way of being Church" in Asia.

Repercussions for Youth Ministry

The FABC has always expressed its concern for the young people of Asia who form around sixty percent of the population of the continent. In the historic gathering with Pope Paul VI in Manila in 1970, the Asian Bishops were unanimous in stating that "Asia indeed is the Church of the Young," and that the FABC wishes the Church to be worthy of the devotion and hope of the young (*FAPA I* 6). The Youth Desk has come to be organized under the Office of the Laity as an official arm

24 *FABC Papers* 32 (1982), 26.
25 Ibid., 40.
26 *FABC Papers* 47 (1986), 14.
27 Ibid., 16.
28 Ibid., 28.

of FABC.[29] Its main purpose is to support and to respond to the needs and concerns of the youth and youth ministry in Asia and to foster collaboration and networking among youth commissions, particularly of the FABC member Episcopal conferences.

FABC has unfailingly named the youth in the Church in Asia as a major pastoral priority (*FAPA IV,* 256). Yet, greater emphasis has been on the mission to the youth. For example, the ninth FABC plenary assembly in 2009 recommended the Church of Asia to care for the special pastoral needs of the youth, and to listen to them and speak their language (FBC IX, 4.4.4). In 2012, the tenth FABC plenary assembly made recommendations for the faith formation and value education of the young (FABC X, 2). All these illustrate that the young are often at the receiving end. Thus, Joe Mannath asks a valid question: "Do they [youth] have a say in what the whole Church claims to say [to them]?"[30] When they are not participating in the decision-making process of the local Church, they may feel alienated, as Somchai, a youth leader, states.[31]

Following the directives from the universal Church, the FABC suggested a ministry of accompaniment to lead the youth to become committed and zealous evangelizers not only of their peers but also of others (*FAPA IV*, 257). The seventh FABC plenary assembly in 2000 called the Church to journey with the youth and to "see them as resources and not

29 Joy Candelario, "The FABC: Youth Desk Journey an Experience of Emmaus," in *Youth Ministry in Asia: Reliving the Emmaus Story,* edited by Joy Candelario (Rizal, Philippines: FABC-OLF-Youth Desk, 2007), 17-21.

30 Joe Mannath, "Youth Ministry Today: Principles and Ecclesial Dimensions," *Vidyajyoti* 61:5 (1997): 327.

31 Nicholas Somchai, "Youth Involvement in Asian Church," in *The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia,* edited by James Kroeger and Peter Phan (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2002), 39-41.

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as problems" and "to involve them as agents and co-workers of evangelization," in decision-making and not only in the implementation phase (*FAPA III*, 10). Yet, this is not fairly reflected at the local level or even in the main purpose of the FABC Youth Desk. Jerome Vallabaraj notes that a regno-centric youth ministry advocated by the teachings of the Church and the FABC will fulfill the true vision of mission and encourage missional participation of the youth as agents of evangelization.[32]

The Church in Goa towards a "New Way of Being Church"

Having seen the WHY of youth evangelizers, one is gripped with the question HOW? The Church is missionary. The call to new evangelization by the universal Church and the Asian vision of a "new way of being Church" awakens the Church to live her missionary vocation in new and changing situations of society, cultures, politics, economics, and religions. The evolution and the shift in the understanding of mission give a new meaning and purpose to the Church's missionary endeavors. The reality is that the Church who is an evangelizer begins by being evangelized herself (EN 15). Our God is a missionary God who always inspires his people into mission. Therefore, having been sent and evangelized, the Church is inspired to send out evangelizers (cf. EN 15).

To fulfill the vision of a participatory Church, the Church of Goa has tried to strengthen participatory structures at all levels, allowing the laity to participate in the decision-making structures. Some of the structures are the various diocesan bodies, Parish Pastoral Councils, Basic Christian Communities, etc. However, reflecting on the role of youth

32 Jerome Vallabaraj, "Youth Ministry: Beyond the Inside-out and the Outside-in," *Vidyajyoti* 66:7 (2002): 489.

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evangelizers, the young feel that they were not adequately represented in the mission of the Church. Hence, there is a felt need to ensure the missional participation of the youth at parish and diocesan levels.

Answers to these questions may help to clarify "How" the Church can be evangelized and be sent out as evangelizers.

- How can the Church envision training of laity (youth) beyond the church-centered apostolates like liturgy, music, Eucharistic ministers, etc.?
- How can the Archdiocese plan a regular program in orienting and training youth for evangelization?
- How can the Church leadership visualize the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" concerning her ministry to the youth and ministry by the youth in the Archdiocese? What more can be done to concretize this FABC vision?
- How are the youth related to or integrated with the overall pastoral plan of the diocese/parish?

Integrating youth evangelizers into the mission of the Church is not only a daunting task for the Church's leadership, but it is also a major responsibility for the laity to exercise their missional vocation. They have to awake from their passivity, arising from the long period of downplaying the common priesthood of all.

In the course of the research four conclusions have emerged which can be considered relevant and important: The FABC Vision, Youth and Triple Communion, Formation in Mission, and Developing a Relevant Spirituality. A brief look at each of the findings reveals the importance of youth as evangelizers for the Church of Goa.

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Youth and Triple Communion

In the face of the numerous challenges to the Church and the youth of Goa, the Church is moved to creatively foster her communion with the youth. Communion with God is the initiation for Christian being and doing (cf. Jn 15:5). It is an experience of communion with Jesus brought about through active participation in the sacraments, liturgy, popular devotions, personal encounter, and the Word of God. For some, these become a once-in-a-life-time event and there seems to be a lack of follow-up or a process to sustain and deepen the experience. The first experience of communion spontaneously leads one to the second level, that is, communion with the wider Church, including the clergy. This clergy-youth communion is something that has to grow from dependency to co-responsibility, from being spectators to actors, and from the role of assistants to collaborators. Thus, communion with God leads to a deeper communion with the world which is the third dimension of the triple communion. The God-experience becomes the starting point of the missionary venture. The goal of the triple communion is a God-experience leading to a commitment to discipleship, community, and mission. It will help to shift the focus from the center to the periphery. Triple communion will also recapture the initial mission of the Church with Christ and his kingdom as the center.

Formation in Mission

This growth to Christian maturity lays a responsibility on the Church for the formation of the youth. The youth have to be formed in mission. This implies that the young should be formed in theory and at the same time, their formation should be practical and oriented towards mission. It is to be

an experience-based formation that helps them to apply their critical and creative thinking to their being and doing as evangelizers in the mission of the Church.

Relevant Spirituality

This makes one think: Why will the youth want to be missionaries? The answer is: Who can convince the youth to be missionaries other than the Spirit of God? Hence, the youth need to be led to and sustained in their quest for God. They should be helped in having a God-experience; hence, there is a need to develop a relevant spirituality. A few examples of capturing spiritualities can be relevant to the quest of the youth: Incarnational Spirituality (becoming one with, crossing boundaries, pitching one's tent), Discipleship Spirituality (staying with and learning from, being sent out, and a partnership of equals), and Kenotic Spirituality (attitude of receiving, bending low, and washing feet). Mission is and should be the outcome of the God-experience of the youth.

Finally, how could we establish the connection between the Church teaching and lived experience, or seek the integration between the theological and the pastoral insights especially those of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) on the participation of the *youth evangelizers* in the evangelizing mission of the Church *in Asia, especially in the archdiocese of Goa*? The influence of the young on society and the Church is recognized and appreciated by Vatican Council II (*AA* 21). This influence, if channeled in the right direction could be a very powerful tool for evangelization. Their large numbers, magnanimous disposition, and talents of head and heart make the youth potential agents of evangelization to their peers and

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the larger society.[33] However, they need to be evangelized to be evangelizers (cf. *EN* 13-15).

The youth are not only the hope of the Church of Goa,[34] but they are the Church of today. They form horizontal and vertical communion in the Church as "Body of Christ" and as "People of God." Therefore, as Church, they are sharers in her missional identity (*AG* 2). Hence, the participation of youth in evangelization is not a choice but a responsibility. It is a daunting challenge for the Church of Goa to integrate the youth as evangelizers into her pastoral plan. This research, therefore, takes a general look at the various aspects that can help the Church commit to this challenge and orient the vision for a "new way of being Church."

Insights to Praxis

In the previous two sections, we have seen the Why and How. In this section we see the connection between the theory and the practical; the WHAT of youth evangelizers.

Application of *Communio* Ecclesiology for Youth Evangelizers

In this section, the writer seeks the application of *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers in the Church of Goa. The youth [evangelizers] are the special focus of this research.

The identity and the mission of the Church as communion encompassing *Koinônia* (participation) and communication. Church as communion has been one of the most felicitous

33 James Kroeger, ed. *Exploring the Treasures of Vatican II* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Press, 2011), 116.

34 Filipe Neri Ferrão, *Faith Creates Communion, Strengthens Family, Commissions to Renew Society* (Goa, India: New Age Printers, 2014), 20.

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realizations of Vatican Council II and has been emphasized by the FABC and the Church of Goa. The Church as communion is a web of relationships at various levels. *Communio* ecclesiology is lived at two levels; the visible and the invisible. The visible element is seen in the communion of all people and the invisible element is lived by participating in God's life. This communion which is at various levels is not for itself but has a missional orientation. Thus, the responsibility of the laity/youth is not only to pay and pray but also to play a significant part as a "*communio*" Church in their spheres in the parish, family, places of work and study, and social outreach. They are not to be passive and powerless. Hence, the youth are an important link to this *communio* ecclesiology.

The youth live in a digital, mobile, cybernetic, fast-track world which the Church of Goa has to take into consideration while trying to apply *communio* ecclesiology for youth evangelizers. The elders are often suspicious of the youth because of their so-called non-commitment, unsteadiness, increased mobility, increased connectivity, increased activity, etc. These supposed hindrances to communion could be transformed to the very advantage of evangelization. This is a challenge for the Church. This is a new opportunity knocking at the door of the Church; to enter the new *areopagus* and evangelize it. The Church is challenged to bring back her youth gently into communion, not with herself alone, but primarily into communion with Christ. *Ecclesia in Asia* reminds Church leaders: "If young people are to be effective agents of mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care" (*EA* 47). This would include helping the youth to build communion with God, with the clergy, and with society.

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Implications of Evangelization for Youth Evangelizers

Their youthfulness, generosity, and their desire for God, elevate the young above their challenges and their problems, making them special for and in the Church.

The circumstances of the life of the youth, their habits of thought and their relationships with their families and others have been radically transformed by the postmodern, fast-changing culture in which they find themselves. Therefore, the standard methods of evangelization through catechism, popular devotions, and ecclesio-centric activities may fail to entice the modern youth to a large extent. The world has so much to offer to them which catches their attention and absorbs them. In comparison, the evangelizing activities of the Church seem to be outdated and uninteresting. Hence, evangelization of the young has to begin in their context, the context of the complex global village, cultural pluralism, and organized religion.

The FABC broaches the often-repeated idea that evangelization today is proclaiming Jesus in a new language and in ways that are comprehensible by different cultures. We speak of youth as a special culture, the new *areopagus*. This culture too needs to be evangelized in new ways which can be done through accompaniment and presence. The youth need and look for accompaniment and guidance from the Church. Even in the age of over-exposure to myriads of social networking sites, they yearn for human contact. The final statement of the fourth FABC plenary assembly confirms the importance of accompaniment.

Full support and acceptance, trust and confidence, presence and availability on the part of other members of God's

people will surely empower the youth to become evangelizers, messengers and instruments of God, not only among their peers, but also among the elders and in their wider society (*FAPA I*, 182).

During the "Colloquium on Church in Asia in the 21st Century," it was evident that the bishops were not satisfied by just putting up youth concerns on their agenda but wished to seek ways of reaching out to the different sectors of the youth and foster communion between the different sectors of the youth (*FAPA III,* 38). The Asian bishops exhort the Churches to discern the path of "a new way of being Church" by walking with the young and entering the world from their perspective (*FAPA III*, 38). Today, most of the youth are educated and many of them are even intellectuals and professionals. Some of them are drawn toward spiritual concerns and some are engaged in social activities. Hence, an integral approach to engaging their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional giftedness should be part of the evangelization process of the youth evangelizers. Their evangelization can be tripartite: informative (to cater to their intellectual realm) (*FAPA III,* 29), transformative (for accompanying them on their spiritual journey) (*FAPA III*, 70), and performative (to channel their energy, zeal, and determination for social change).

As early as in 1990 the FABC sounded the call for the youth to become evangelizers of other youth (*FAPA III,* 65). Yet, this is not fairly reflected at the local levels. The FABC calls the Church to journey with youth so that many new horizons of love and service will evolve and the objectives of the youth ministry itself (i.e. fellowship, formation, and service) will be realized. A ministry of accompaniment would lead the youth to become committed and zealous evangelizers not only of their peers but also of others (*FAPA III,* 257).

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The new way of journeying with the youth is to see the youth as resources and not as problems; to facilitate their learning from their experiences and not from ready-made answers; to involve the youth more in the decision-making process, and not only to ask them to implement the decisions taken for them by others. To journey with the youth is to reach out to them where they are and not to expect them to come to the animator, not to condemn but to talk to them in the language they understand.[35] The youth are to be recognized as agents and partners in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Replication of Missional Participation for the Youth Evangelizers

The third and final theme is: "Theology of Missional Participation." Inspired by God who participates in human history, the believers are invited to participate in the plan of God. The Church is missionary; hence every member is missionary. This gives ample reason for the missional participation of the youth in the mission of the Church.

The youth are the hope of Asia; they are the mirror of the Asia of today. Their missional participation is expressed through their involvement in the Church as catechists, advocates and workers of social action, Bible leaders, and pastoral and liturgical leaders.[36]

Experience reveals that competent, trained, and committed youth can often make a better impact and can influence winning back the strayed youth to the promise of abundant life. The youth are in a better position to influence by their day-to-day witness in areas of their neighborhood, work,

35 Mannath, "Youth Ministry Today," 329.
36 *FABC Papers* 138, (2012), 25.

schools, and colleges. The FABC document on "Vocation and Mission of the Laity" (1986), recognizes the participation of the youth in the struggle and transformation of society through awakening the consciousness of the people and mobilizing them to work for justice and peace. Being empowered, they can empower their groups, others and societies.[37]

Youth evangelization, however, is not something forced upon the Church and its leadership as something beyond their control. Rather, it is the essential expression of the Church's life and mission.[38] Evangelization is not the prerogative of the leadership alone, as the whole Church is missionary (AG 2). Given the fact that all are called to evangelize, Leo Perera predicted that the youth will be the primary evangelizers of youth, reaching out to their peers in appropriate ways.[39] The Church in India recognizes the missional participation of the youth in evangelization and strives to empower them. The Church of Goa needs evangelized youth as evangelizers of the new evangelization. The youth comprise a substantial population involved in evangelization. The Church needs to replicate this trend to make the missional participation of the youth more vibrant and more visible.

Youth Experiences of Missional Participation

The concept of "youth evangelizers" may seem to be relatively new but, the Vatican Council II had hinted at it and the FABC articulated it in its Bandung plenary assembly in 1990. It called upon the Church to have youth as evangelizers of the young (*FAPA III*, 69). Yet, the journey has not been so smooth for those who have heeded the call. Often the task of evangelization is concealed under the larger umbrella of

37 *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 5-6.
38 *FABC Papers* 33f (1982), 1.
39 *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.

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youth ministry, hence, there is not much reported on youth evangelization or youth evangelizers *per se*. Hence, this author reflects only on the experiences of two youth ministers; Joy Candelario, a Filipina full-time youth minister in the FABC-OL-YD, and Nicholas Somchai, a youth auditor for the Asian Synod.

Joy Candelario recalls her ministry with the youth as walking with them, listening to them, and teaching them like Jesus at Emmaus.[40] Comparing the Emmaus experience of the disciples as a communion that transformed them with the Asia Youth Day experience, she asserts that the youth too are transformed by the immersion experience.[41] She considers the youth as agents of transformation through networking and collaboration for common concerns like peace, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, issues of faith, and other concerns of the Asian Youth. She attributes the formation of the Ecumenical Asian Students Youth Network (EASY Net) and South Asian Youth Apostolate (SAYA) to the efforts of youth towards transformation and a better society.[42]

Despite all these achievements through the FABC and the forums like Asia Youth Day, Youth Ministers' Meeting, and Regional Youth Assemblies, she laments the absence of celebration of the experiences of the youth. Comparing the Emmaus experience with the Pastoral Spiral methodology of the FABC, she comments that Jesus walked, talked and taught and also celebrated in the Emmaus encounter, while in the pastoral spiral methodology, there is immersion, social analyses, contemplative reflection immediately followed by pastoral planning. It misses out on the element of celebrating

40 Joy Candelario, "Evangelization in Asia Today: Youth Perspectives," *Landas* 19:2 (2005): 218.

41 Ibid., 216.

42 Ibid., 217.

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the realizations and reflections before planning.[43] Hence, she recommends that there should be space for integrating the experiences to shape the being of the Church. The vision of a "new way of being Church" demands celebration of life and faith. Life isolated from faith and vise-a-versa would be ineffective. She dreams of empowering the laity and having more youth evangelizers as she feels it is her responsibility to share what she herself had received as a youth; guidance, accompaniment, and animation.[44]

Nicholas Somchai too shares the same reason as Candelario for being in the ministry, namely, giving what he has received. He reflects the sentiments of many of the youth who feel alienated from the Church as they are being left out of the decision-making process and feel that they are often mere objects of the Church's outreach programs.[45] He makes an observation that out of more than 180 Asian bishops present at the Synod, only two or three raised youth concerns. He questions the credibility of any documents that come out regarding the youth in which the youth or their concerns are not sufficiently reflected or heard.[46] His question draws the attention of a critical mind. When the Asian bishops name youth as the major pastoral priority and when the youth population is so copious (around 60 percent), then why is the voice of the youth or concerns regarding the youth not audible? He questions clericalism in youth ministry which often denies the youth animators their rightful place and role; he requests that the youth be helped to belong to the Church. He also observes that the youth representation

43 Ibid., 218.

44 Ibid., 219.

45 Cf. Nicholas Somchai, "Youth Involvement in the Asian Church," in *The Future of the Asian Churches,* edited by James Kroeger and Peter Phan (Quezon City, Philippines: 2000), 39-41.

46 Ibid., 40.

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in the Church structures is inadequate and that there are no practical means to "take care of the youth."[47] He also suggests that the FABC recommendation for regular training and development of evangelizing skills of all including the youth should be implemented and reflected in the plans of the local Church (*FAPA IV*, 27).

The conclusion is that both these youth ministers agree that they were helped; hence, they want to serve. This fact confirms the premise that evangelized youth are important agents for evangelizing other youth.

Bridging Youth Evangelizers and Evangelization in Goa

The youth ministry under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India is called the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM). The ICYM gave a mandate to the youth of the country for three years (2010-2013) with the theme, "Transformed by Faith, Transforming the World." The vision of ICYM is to have enlightened, dedicated, and spirit-filled youth for a better India and world by organizing and empowering the youth that are imbued with a spirit of missionary zeal to become promoters of Gospel values. This mandate seeks to bridge the gap between faith and praxis. What sort of praxis does the Church of Goa experience?

As mentioned earlier, the Goan youth are liable to become prey to unrestrained tourism, sex tourism, drugs, crimes, and trafficking due to an increase in unemployment, migration, and marginalization. They often are pushed into situations where they become antisocial elements and a burden to society. It can be also observed that even though Pope John Paul II reminded the Church of Asia to integrate the youth into her

47 Ibid., 41.

evangelizing mission (cf. EA 47), there still seems to be a gap between the youth as objects of evangelization and youth as subjects of evangelization. There is a visible gap between what is said and what is being done, between evangelization of the youth and evangelization by the youth.

This gap deserves attention. The chasm has to be bridged, not because Vatican Council II states it, nor because the FABC recommends it, nor because the Church of Goa wants it, nor because the needs and situations of the youth and the society demand it. Rather, it is central because God commands it. The vocation of every Christian is to witness. Therefore, it is essential to witness to what God has done in justifying and sanctifying his people. And, this vocation continues into the world as every member, bearing a flame of the Spirit, is sent into the mission field as light, leaven, and salt, to be Christ's apostolic community at work.[48]

It is a fact that the young are capable, talented, and enthusiastic; hence, they are a better choice as evangelizers. The basic fact is that the Triune God is a communion who calls all to participate in his communion and also to invite others. The youth who are significant as evangelizers are called upon to give witness to the *communio*, evangelizing, and participatory ecclesiology in Goa.

Asia today is young and the Church of Asia is young too. The youth, the face of the Church in the world will lead the Church into the twenty-second century. Now is the time for the Church to choose her future. Does it choose to evangelize in the old, sterile ways or does it dare to dream anew with the youth? The Church is the same, the Church of Jesus; the message is the same, the Good News of Jesus, and the world

48 Cf. Guder, "*Missio Dei*: Integrating Theological Formation for Apostolic Vocation," 72.

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is the same. What is new is the ardor, the methods, and the expressions of communicating Jesus Christ, his person, and his message. Using Jesus' pedagogy of evangelization, the Church can bridge the gap between what it is and what it is called to be. The pedagogy of Jesus is that of inviting disciples to stay with him, learn from him, and then send them out with authority. Pope Francis challenged the clergy to bridge the gap between the pulpit and the street with these words addressed during the twenty-eighth World Youth Day.

> Let us spare no effort in the formation of our young people…. We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, in our parish or diocesan institutions, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! To go out as ones sent. It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome because they come, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people! Let us urge our young people to go forth. Of course, they will make mistakes, but let us not be afraid! The Apostles made mistakes before us. Let us urge them to go forth. Let us think resolutely about pastoral needs, beginning on the outskirts, with those who are farthest away, with those who do not usually go to church. They are the VIPs who are invited. Go and search for them at the crossroads.[49]

There is an enormous task before the Church. It demands deep faith in God and trust in the responsibility and commitment of the youth evangelizers. It challenges the Church to evaluate, plan, identify personnel and resources, train, network, and use media, to incorporate youth evangelizers.

49 Pope Francis, "Homily at a Mass with Bishops, Priests, Religious and Seminarians at San Sebastian Cathedral, Rio de Janeiro," in *Apostolic Journey to Rio de Janeiro on the Occasion of the 28th World Youth Day,* 27 October 2013, available from htpp://www.vatican.va/francesco/2013/papa-francesco-gmg-rio-de-janeiro, accessed on 9 November 2014.

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"The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father (AG 2)." This pilgrim Church is awakened to live her missional vocation in the new and changing situations of society, culture, politics, economics, and religions. The evolution and the shift in the understanding of mission give a new meaning and purpose to the Church's missionary endeavors. However, it would be fatal to live in the glory of the past or the dreams of the future. The reality is that the Church who is an evangelizer begins by being evangelized herself (EN 15). Hence, the Church of Goa needs to reflect on how it is being evangelized. It is also known that God is a missionary God who always inspires his people unto mission. Therefore, having been sent and evangelized, the Church is inspired to send out evangelizers (cf. EN 15).

Often the mission of the Church seems to be "consumer-oriented," trying to "meet the religious needs of the members." The functioning of the youth ministries often reflects such an attitude. In some instances, it has been noticed that the youth ministry in the parishes is at the whims and fancies of the parish priest or the youth animators who often lack proper training and skills.[50] Sometimes the seminarian or young religious, who themselves often need accompaniment, are asked to accompany the youth. Therefore, a common plan or vision at the diocesan level for youth evangelizers would be of great help. This points to the urgency of training youth evangelizers in the diocese.

Taking a broad view of the realities of the youth and the Church *vis-a-vis* the theological dimensions of communion

50 Cf. *FABC Papers* 72g (1995), 12.

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ecclesiology, evangelization, and missional participation, the researcher sketches an integrated formation program.

Formation of Youth Evangelizers

The challenge before the Church is not merely that of renewal, or re-tooling, but conversion — the conversion of the Church to its radically simple missional vocation. Since conversion is a work of God's Spirit, the formation of youth evangelizers for missional participation must be done in a posture of patient and confident prayer, for it is a process.

The practical aspects of formation, however, have also to be addressed. Besides training and formation which have been discussed earlier (informative, transformative, performative), there is a need to consider other means required for training of youth evangelizers and ensure the continuity and viability of the project. A saying in the Konkani language warns to plan before commencing: *anturn polleun paiem sodunk zai;* (stretch the legs according to the bedding). Hence, some of these aspects that may require careful planning are discussed here.

Personnel: The Church of Goa may have to plan and invest in training and preparing personnel as formators and youth animators. The pastoral plan of the diocese should have programs for preparing persons for the project. The archdiocese could also plan to tap the available resources from within the religious congregations and the laity in the diocese.

Infrastructure: It is vital to consider physical infrastructure while planning. The diocesan centers, like the Pastoral Center, Catechetical Center, Youth Centers in North and South Goa, Spirituality Center, Family Service Center, and even other centers could be utilized as is already being done for formation and training. Besides, plans could be made to

use the infrastructures of religious congregations and Catholic educational institutions.

Finances: Finance is always a major concern for implementing any project. Plans should be made to raise funds to support the project. Considering evangelization as a priority, every parish should be encouraged to budget for evangelization.

Mission Avenues: There should be standard criteria for the identification of mission exposure avenues for the formation and training programs. Since, the stress is on formation in mission, practical knowledge through missionary exposure for immersion experience should be envisaged. Preferably in the parishes at the border of Goa, or even in the far-flung Dadra and Nagar Haveli or at Daman.

Formation: An integrated formation program should be planned which includes both spiritual and human aspects. Theological formation should form the main content of the program. The young evangelizers should also be equipped with pedagogical skills, analyzing and evaluating tools, methodologies, and various ministerial approaches.

New Mindset: There is a felt need for the leveling of structures from pyramidal to horizontal and the promotion of the circular pattern of participation and leadership. Hence, the Church leadership should plan how to create and adopt such a new mindset to trust and entrust the youth.

Integrating youth evangelizers into the mission of the Church is not only a daunting task for the Church's leadership, but it is also a major responsibility for the laity to exercise their missionary vocation. They have to awake from their passivity, arising from the long period of downplaying the common

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priesthood of all.[51] The researcher has some queries addressed to the laity and very specifically to the youth of Goa.

- How can the laity be involved in the evangelizing mission of the Church?
- How can the laity contribute to the formation and evangelization of the youth?
- Instead of lamenting the lack of support and collaboration from the Church and elders, how can the youth contribute to the mission of Jesus?
- What is the role of the youth as evangelizers in the mission of the Church of Goa?
- What more can the youth do to translate the formation they receive into lived experiences of evangelization?
- How can the youth contribute to fulfilling the FABC vision of a "new way of being Church" in Goa?

These questions impel the Church to think about the integration and involvement of the youth in the overall Pastoral Plan of the diocese. This challenge invites the whole Church to witness to evangelization as a *communio* Church through active missionary participation. Deeply embedded patterns of cultural captivity of past practices, attitudes, and theological and ecclesiological traditions often tend to pull the Church two steps back when it tries to take one step forward. Hence, a major concern is to ensure the viability, credibility, and continuity of such an endeavor.

51 Cf. *FABC Papers* 40 (1984), 5.

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