Bishops' Institute for
Social Communication (BISCOM) II
**"Modern Communication Technologies:
Challenges for the Church in Asia?"**
*Bangkok, Thailand*
*6-11 September 1999*

## ORIENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*We, the 44 Bishops and other participants from ten different Asian countries gathered in Bangkok, Thailand from September 6 to 11, 1999 for the second "Bishops' Institute for Social Communication" (BISCOM II). Having studied and reflected on modern communication technologies as challenges for the Church in Asia, we humbly submit the following **"Orientations and Recommendations"** to the Bishops' Conferences and associate members of the FABC for guidance, direction and action.*

## INTRODUCTION

1. Good communication is essential for the success of any Church ministry. Modern communication technologies provide additional tools to accomplish this more effectively while helping to bring about "a new way of being Church in Asia" (FABC Bandung, 1990; FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet 1997, Final Considerations).

2. Communication technologies are not just tools for organizing the Church or its activities or building communities of faith, but they also speak a new language depending heavily on the interactive use of stories, images, music and sound effects, as well as text, information and data. This is becoming the preferred language of the new generation. Communication technologies are creating a new culture and are radically influencing the way we live. They have the potential of effectively bringing about mutual knowledge, understanding, familiarity, appreciation, harmony and love throughout the human community and drawing it forward toward the Kingdom of God (cf. Redemptoris Missio, no. 37c).

3. The local churches in Asia have had different experiences in the use of modern communication technologies. Learning from one another, they become more open to the potential of these technologies for pastoral care and evangelization. Lessons gained from other continents such as the Red Informatica de la Inglesia en America Latina, the computer network of the Church in Latin America) experience reinforce these challenges. BISCOM II delegates note the growing presence of new communication technologies (NCTs) in schools, parishes and church offices.

4. The new media urge the Churches in Asia to be more interactive among themselves and with the outside.

5. The effects of NCTs are wide-ranging. Any kind of information is available at the click of a mouse and offers opportunities to broaden the horizon. Differences between race, religion or culture can be reduced by the democratic use of the Internet. Distances and times are shrinking. Interaction and dialogue foster communion and community. However, the global nature of the NCTs can also threaten local cultures and communities.

## ORIENTATIONS

1. NCTs are emerging tools or means for processing and dissemination of information. They combine the use of computer, telecommunications and television; develop digital language and new ways of transmission such as satellite, fiber optics, cable. They give new opportunities and challenges to the Church in Asia.

2. NCTs create a new vocabulary and new relationships via internet, e-mail, websites and other technologies which the Church can not neglect.

3. NCTs can greatly increase communication within the Church (ad intra) through e-mail, Internet, chat rooms and an ongoing flow of information, ideas and experiences. They can help connect communities and individuals in a more intimate way, and can be an effective instrument for pastoral care.

4. For the communication of the Church with the outside (ad extra), NCTs can help to improve her contact with the general public. They open additional new missionary frontiers for evangelization in developing cyber missionaries and relevant programs. Their possibilities for distance education should be explored.

5. "We are not to lose sight of the truth that it is the person and not the technology that is the best means of communication, especially in Asian cultures" (FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet 1996, Final Considerations). Despite the new communication technologies, we should not forget that it is people which matter most. NCTs must help, not enslave them. Personal relationships, a warm smile, time for one another are still important. The advent of NCTs should not undermine or diminish human and traditional means of communication.

6. NCTs demand in a special way teamwork and mutual cooperation.

7. Since NCTs diminish boundaries, distances and regulations, there is a special need to develop a sense of responsibility, commitment to proper ethics and an appropriate spirituality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Church communities should identify talents and develop dedicated teams at the parish, diocesan and national levels. They should network with each other and profit from experiences in other parts of the world like Latin America (RIIAL).

2. NCTs demand a fresh approach to Formation and Training of media practitioners and consumers. They require a proper introduction and continual updating of Bishops, priests, seminarians, religious and lay people with church responsibilities.

In her education, the Church should empower all media consumers, especially the young, in the proper use of NCTs.

Priests, seminarians, religious and lay people should be trained as cyber missionaries to fully utilize NCTs for evangelization. The expertise of professionals for such formation should be invited.

3. Since the journalists are no longer the only ones to select and present information, any Internet user becomes his own journalist and must learn how to handle and select from the information overflow in the web. This calls for a special effort of the Church especially in her pastoral and educational apostolate.

4. Learning from others' experiences and joining forces demand a close cooperation between all who are committed and working with NCTs for the Church. We recommend the development of technical and program consultancies beyond national and continental borders.

5. Parishes, dioceses, religious organizations and Bishops' conferences are encouraged to be connected by e-mail and develop their own webpages. The webpages should be simple but informative and must be updated regularly. As much as possible, they should be interactive, visually attractive, and foster dialogue with different peoples, cultures and religions (FABC). Links with other Asian episcopal conferences and Church networks should be provided.

6. Radio Veritas Asia, "The Missionary Voice of the Church in Asia," gains through NCTs an added importance beyond mere short-wave transmission. These technologies, including satellites, open new possibilities for internet programming and localized transmissions.

7. The different offices of the FABC should develop closer cooperation among themselves in using NCTs for their programs and activities. The further development and support for the FABC website (www.fabc.org) is recommended.