

Bishops' Institute for
Social Communication (BISCOM) III
**"Social Communication Formation
in Priestly Ministry & Mission"**

*Samphran, Thailand
7 - 12 May 2001*

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We, 43 participants of BISCOM III, Bishops, formators and communication animators involved in priestly formation in Asia met at Samphran, Thailand from May 7 to 12, 2002 to study and discuss how social communication formation can help priestly ministry and mission in Asia. We fully realize and understand the urgent need for social communication formation of formators, pastors and seminarians as also for training in some skills for the use of communication technology in both formation and mission.

The Second Vatican Council (Inter Mirifica, no. 3) declares that "it is the Church's birthright to use and own any of these media which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for pastoral activity."

All communication begins with God's self-communication, as the Trinity desires to share its divine communion with us through the mysteries of creation and redemption. Created in the image of God, we humans participate in God's self-communication, especially the communication of the Good News of Jesus, who is the fullness of God's self-revelation. This motivates all and calls us to a genuine communication. The desire to share in God's creative action and self-communication impels us to embrace communication as integral to theology and to priestly formation.

Jesus Christ as the 'perfect communicator' (Communio et Progressio, no. 11) is the model for all Christian communication. "Christian communicators need to men and women of Spirit-filled prayer, entering ever more deeply into communion with God in order to grow in their ability to foster communion among their fellow human beings. They must be schooled in hope by the Holy Spirit, *the principal agent of the new evangelization* (Tertio Millennio Adveniente, no. 45) ..." (John Paul II, message for World Communication Day 1998). (cf. Bishops' Meet '98, no. 1)

Communication is the soul of the apostolate as all are called to communicate the Good News to the ends of the earth. In our age and time, communication media have reached a high level of effectiveness. The Church cannot lag behind in the use of the media for mission. Fully conscious of the Church's responsibility for this, we present the following orientations and recommendations:

ORIENTATIONS

1. Bishops

1.1 Fully aware of the demands made in Church documents, Bishops should encourage both priests and in particular formators to follow the guidance given in these documents.

1.2 As leaders of their dioceses, Bishops should promote an integral social communication formation for priests and seminarians.

1.3 They should take care that courses in social communication are introduced in the seminary.

1.4 Bishops should promote and foster a greater media exposure for seminarians.

1. Formators and Animators

2.1 Any formation in social communication must start with contemplation and prayer because before we "do", we must "be" (Novo Millennio Ineunte, no. 15) like Jesus based His whole mission on communing with the Father.

2.2 Given the media milieu today, seminary formators and teachers should accompany the students through participation in their daily journey of life.

2.3 They should be models of good communication both among themselves and with students.

2.4 Understanding the language of the e-generation, they need to teach in a given style suited to the perception of the students.

1. Seminarians

3.1 Seminarians should be familiar with the Church documents and structures of social communication.

3.2 They must have a keen desire to be effective communicators by being authentically human, keeping in touch with local culture and the language of the times.

3.3 They must be able to become critical consumers of the media and assist others to become more sensitive to value distortion in society and be able to respond accordingly.

3.4 With *Communio et Progressio*, they should be convinced that "if students for the priesthood and religious in training wish to be part of modern life and also to be at all effective in their apostolate, they should know how the media work upon the fabric of society, and also the technique of their use. This knowledge should be an integral part of their ordinary education." (CP, no. 111)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need for a comprehensive and ongoing programme in social communication for formation of priests and seminarians to become effective pastors and evangelizers.

2. Special issues like pornography, violence and the need for ecumenical and interreligious communication should be given due importance (cf. documents of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, May 7 and Oct 4, 1989)

3. Faculties should prepare the curriculum with an integral approach, which makes communication as part of philosophical and theological subjects.
4. Seminary professors need to adapt their methods of teaching to the new communication environment.
5. FABC-OSC should put up a website on resources and syllabi for formation in communication, media culture and theology.
6. Talents in this field are to be identified and seminarians and priests are to be encouraged to develop them for effective priestly ministry and mission.
7. Pastors should be training "accept and recognize professionals in communication and develop and promote dialogue and collaboration with them" (Bishops' Meet '98, no. 6).
8. Following the demand of the Second Vatican Council, Bishops and Bishops' conferences are urged to implement these recommendations on the diocesan and national levels (cf. *Inter Mirifica*, nos. 20-21).
9. FABC offices should collaborate in joint programmes and activities to implement these recommendations.