

FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '01
Novo Millennio Ineunte:
FABC Concerns - Communication Challenges.
FABC Offices present their vision & concerns

Stanley, Hong Kong
October 22-27, 2001

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We, the 33 Bishop-chairmen and secretaries of episcopal commissions for social communication of 12 countries in Asia and some officials of Catholic media organizations have come together for the 6th "FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet" in Hong Kong from 22 to 27 October 2001.

Having had the opportunity to listen to the concerns of the FABC - Offices of Evangelization, Laity and Human Development as well as representatives of the Christian Conference of Asia, and studied the Holy Father's apostolic letter "Novo Millennio Ineunte" we offer the following reflections on our communication apostolate in the new millennium.

The Spirit of Novo Millennio Ineunte (NMI) is expressed in the Gospel verse *duc in altum!* (*put out into the deep*). The document is a call to renewal of life, attitudes, structures, approaches, programs and activities giving way to new zeal, new methods and new expressions for a more effective evangelization. It is a call to holiness, a deeper spirituality, braving divisions and barriers and taking up the challenges of countercultures to a spirituality of communion.

It arises from a right understanding of the paschal mystery and the Trinitarian relationship that was made accessible and tangible through Incarnation i.e. God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ. It urges us to the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ.

NMI implies, beside others, going beyond, launching into action, having courage, creativity, venturing, listening as well as finding new ways in our apostolate. It is a going forth based on hope and faith. It demands a change in one's personal ways of living because "without Christ, we can do nothing" - Jn. 15:5 (NMI, 38).

We are called to live this life rooted in the context where we are, with the right knowledge, attitude and skills required to communicate.

Some Communication Challenges

In the context of Asia, the challenge of communication lies primarily in the person of the communicator, who accepts the cross and vulnerability of the God-man and shuns all pomp, triumphalism and ambivalence. The Christian communicator must become a credible and relevant messenger of the Good News.

We realize that in the areas of evangelization, laity and human development, whose concerns we have heard, communicators and media practitioners must have a clear understanding of the concerns and work of these FABC offices, and consider the implications for their work. We especially recognize the following challenges:

1. Communicators must develop a deep spirituality of communication, rooted in prayer, emulating Jesus Christ - the perfect communicator (BM'98, 1; BM'00, 1). To catch the fish *in altum*, one needs to be with the Lord.
2. Communicators in the Church need a deeper understanding and adequate skills in analyzing social, political, cultural, religious and moral issues.
3. Communicators should promote the communion of communities (cf. "A New Way of Being Church in Asia" BM'97; "Communicating Love and Service" BM'00; NMI, 43f).
4. Communicators need to become more the voice of the poor, oppressed, exploited and marginalized, than of the rich, powerful and influential (BM'97; BM'00).
5. Communicators must promote human dignity and human rights with special emphasis on women and children; they are to answer issues on morality, religion, spirituality.
6. Communicators should accentuate the good rather than the bad news that sells, and should not be afraid to denounce evil (BM'97; BM'99).
7. Communicators must promote media education, helping people especially the young in the right use of Internet, television, radio, print and film (cf. BM96, 5.4; BM97, 5d).
8. Communicators should promote values that strengthen family relations as antidotes to domestic violence, generation gaps, broken families, child abuse (BM '99).
9. Communicators must promote greater participation of the laity in the life and mission of the Church (BM '00).
10. Communicators should encourage everyone in the Church to promote Radio Veritas Asia and other vital means of missionary work (BM '96).
11. Radio Veritas Asia, FABC's project, should devise and effect a new approach to program and audience research. A feasibility study to reintroduce English programs and broadcasting through the Internet (streaming) is strongly suggested. English is fast becoming the unifying language also in Asia.
12. Social teachings of the Church should be spread through the media, e.g. using websites, in a language that is easily understood by ordinary people (cf. BM '96, 5.2). Young people should be invited to help Christian communicators in this area.
13. Communication formation and training especially in new media for Bishops, clergy, religious and lay must be undertaken.
14. Communicators should network among themselves and exchange information especially during crisis situations (cf. BM '97).

In conclusion, we suggest that:

n The Church must invest more personnel and finances to achieve professionalism in the work of communication.

At the 7th FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet 2002, these final considerations and their fulfillment should be the basis for evaluation and national reports.

