

**FABC-OSC**  
**13<sup>th</sup> annual Bishops' Meet '08**  
**Salesian Retreat House, Hua Hin, Thailand**  
**November 17-22, 2008**

**Theme: "Communication Challenges for Bishops' Conferences"**

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

We, the 33 participants, bishop chairmen and secretaries of Episcopal Commissions for Social Communication from 14 countries in Asia together with Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, gathered for the 13<sup>th</sup> FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet in Hua Hin, Thailand, from 17-22, November, 2008 to discuss the "Communication Challenges for Bishops' Conferences."

The meeting acknowledged the growing upsurge of communication all across Asia as expressed in the rapid expansion and diffusion of technology, fast growing digital media, access to mobile phones, internet and other means of communication. This phenomenon has impacted every strata of society. We also noted with concern the rise of religious fundamentalism, suppression of religious freedom, ethical relativism and growing anxiety due to the financial crisis each of which has an effect on free and healthy communication. It is against this background that the participants reflected on the theme.

**Guiding Vision**

The participants examined the past documents and communication priorities of the Office for Social Communication in the light of the evolving vision of the FABC. The focus of Asia's bishops has been on the nurturing of a "new way of being church", namely the building up of a participatory and prophetic communion of communities in dialogue with Asia's cultures and religions ever close to the poor. We are called to be a listening church open to a symphony of voices. We witness to hope by crossing boundaries and launching into new ways with courage and creativity.

**Strengths**

We acknowledge with satisfaction the achievements of the FABC-OSC during the past 12 years, meeting annually to plan, share and build communication ministry in the church in Asia. The regular meetings that reported, studied and reflected on relevant and significant themes have provided a clear roadmap for the communication ministry by way of inspiration, orientation and recommendations. The documents which are the fruit of these meetings provide a rich communication resource for ministries such as youth, inter-religious dialogue, the formation of the clergy, family, public relations, facing the challenge of new communication technologies and managing communication in and for the bishops' conferences.

## **Challenges**

In spite of these commendable achievements, we feel that we still have a long way to go before this vision and priorities are realised in the dioceses.

Considering the fact that women in Asia are emerging as important stakeholders in the area of communication, there is need to ensure a greater presence and participation of women in the church's ministry.

In the context of emerging digital culture which is characterised by commercialism, consumerism and individualism, the importance of a more focused formation in media ethics must be underlined.

Being aware of the importance of the spirituality of the communicator, there is need for a more effective and efficacious formation in communication spirituality for the pastors and shepherds in the church. "Communications should be an integral part of every pastoral plan, for it has something to contribute to virtually every other apostolate, ministry and programme. (*Aetatis Novae* 17)

Networking and public relations among various communication ministries within Episcopal Conferences, regional structures, dioceses, parishes, religious communities and other institutions are an important challenge.

The need for much greater research and evaluation in this rapidly changing world of communications is strongly felt.

There should be greater efforts in communication ministry to promote the dialogue between faith and culture, inter-cultural exchange and social networking.

There is a need for evolving a new kind of leadership, paying greater attention to the voice of laity, in particular that of women and youth.

We are witnessing a shift of emphasis from the parish to the wider community, and the means of communication should enable Christian communicators to explore new ways of reaching out to the wider network of the world of communication. The modern means of communication especially the Internet and other media are to be used with greater effectiveness.

Dialogue between faith and culture cannot be measured only by use of Asian liturgical music and dance, but also by print media, films, literature, drama, popular art and music that portray Christian values which reach out to civil society.

## **Recommendations**

1. We need to develop a servant leadership, which pay greater attention to the voice of laity, in particular that of professionals and women in communication ministry.
2. We need to create greater opportunities for youth and women to work in the communication of our parishes, on diocesan, regional and national levels in a spirit of collaboration.

3. We need to promote a pastoral plan for social communication which is closely related to other ministries so as to have an interactive, dialogic, credible and visual Christian communication.
4. We need to undertake more serious research and evaluations to take stock of our resources, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and direction of our communication ministry.
5. In order to bear witness to the wider (secular) community, our means of communication should enable Christian communicators to explore new ways of reaching out to the world of communication. Press, radio, television, Internet and alternative media are to be used with greater effectiveness in the service of Christian mission.
6. We need to evangelise culture through the means of communication including drama, music and popular art forms to portray Christian values that reach out to civil society.
7. We need to foster greater efforts to promote inter-cultural exchange and social networking through community participation of local media and prophetic witness wherever possible ecumenically and with people of other faiths.
8. We should be more involved during times of conflict and crisis to bring the truth from a Christian perspective of the victims to the public media.
9. We need to evolve effective financial strategies to realize pastoral plans for social communication.