

15th Annual FABC OSC Bishops' Meet
"Communication Formation for Priestly Ministry in Asia"
Camilian Pastoral Care Centre, Bangkok, Thailand
15-20 November 2010

FINAL STATEMENT

We, the 30 participants of the 15th Annual FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet from 10 Asian countries, comprising bishops-in-charge for communication, national communication directors, and communication experts together with the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, met in Bangkok, Thailand, from November 15-20 to study the theme "Communication Formation for Priestly Ministry in Asia."

We re-visited all Church teachings on the need for proper communication formation of seminarians and priests in order to fulfill the mandate of Jesus. In the process, we come to realize that after years of repeated calls, there remains a serious gap between teaching and praxis because communication formation focuses more on imparting skills than developing internal disposition reflecting the communicative disposition of Jesus Himself.

The dynamics of Communication Formation must be modeled upon the Trinitarian Communication – The Father communicating to the Son and both to the Holy Spirit and the whole Trinity communicating themselves through creation which culminated in the Incarnation and continue through the Spirit in the Church. Created in the image and likeness of communicating God, human beings necessarily are communicating beings.

"God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now, in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son." (Heb 1:1) This self-communication of God continues in space and time through the Church, the Body of Christ. "The Church by her essence is communication" (cf. Avery Dulles and Carlo Cardinal Martini), and communication is the "soul of the apostolate" (BISCOM III, 2001).

The Church responds to the commission it has received from the Lord: "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21) Particularly in our time, this mandate has become more urgent, given the rapid technological developments and corresponding changes in people's lifestyle, attitude and worldview.

Priests are called to be shepherds leading their flock. They must continually encounter Christ's self-emptying love in their own lives in order to be authentic replicas of Christ. They should be in constant communion with God through prayer so as to communicate effectively. "Being" always precedes "doing".

Effective communication then involves an internal disposition and attitude. The priest's efficacy as a communicator is expressed in his ability to listen attentively and in being open to God, to himself and to others: the faithful, the poor and people of other faiths and cultures.

Communication formation must seek the integral development of human person not only of academic qualification but more so of authentic human and Christian qualities. To this end, we encourage seminaries and formation houses to review existing formation programmes. Thus, the following recommendations:

1. Communication formation should not be viewed simply as technical training. Rather, it is forming the person into the communicative likeness of Christ, the perfect communicator (cf. *Communio et Progressio*, no. 11). This should be incorporated in modules and programs in seminaries and houses of formation.
2. Formation should seek a holistic understanding of communication as a basic, underlying principle in all pastoral ministries. The integration of communication into the various branches of study should be better understood and incorporated. Formation should seek a deeper understanding of all relevant Church teachings on Communication.
3. Bishops should promote communication formation programs in the dioceses and formation institutions through national policies and concrete strategies eg. the establishment and provision of enabling resources and facilities.
4. Formators and Spiritual Directors must effectively accompany the seminarians and those in formation in the development of genuine communication spirituality.
5. Formators should employ evaluation schemes to measure the communication competence of future priests. Extensive third party feedback could be useful in evaluation process.
6. FABC-OSC could initiate resource teams to support countries which may not be so equipped to carry out communication formation programs. Networking and sharing of resources in the area of communication formation should be the practice adopted by all FABC-member conferences in co-operation with Church-related academic institutions, religious organizations and media centers.