

17th annual FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet
"Spirituality: Foundation for Christian Communication"
Surat Thani Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Thailand
November 12-17, 2012

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The FABC-Office of Social Communication held its 17th annual "Bishops' Meet" on November 12-17, 2012 at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Surat Thani, Thailand. The meeting was attended by 22 participants, including seven bishops, from eight Asian countries. Resource persons included the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in the Vatican.

The venue provided the proper atmosphere and enabled us, the participants, to devote all our attention to this year's theme, "Spirituality: Foundation for Christian Communication."

The background input included the following topics expounded by the invited resource persons: Spirituality of Communication, Spirituality of the Christian Communicator, Jesus Christ as Communicator, The Role of Silence in Communication, Communication Spirituality in Asian Cultures, and Pope Gregory's Pastoral Rule.

The input, coupled with our prayerful reflection, has led to a deeper understanding of the following points:

1. The Holy Trinity is in itself a mystery of communication. Created in the image and likeness of the Triune God, human beings are communicators at the deepest level. (cf. *Communio et Progressio*, no. 7; Bishops' Meet, 1996)
2. God is "a God who speaks" (Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 6) in the „polyphonic“ language (VD, 7) of *liber naturae* and of salvation history reaching ultimate expression in Jesus Christ, WORD made flesh. Christian communication partakes of this polyphonic language.
3. Communication then leads, and is geared towards openness to –
 - God
 - Self, and
 - Others.
4. Communication calls for:
 - authentic human language that is simple and adapted to present times, forceful and creative of meaning,
 - authentic spiritual language that is coming from a mind attuned to the Good News and from a heart transformed by the Word through prayer and silence.
5. Silence is essential to communication – meditative silence of the speaker, as well as attentive silence in the heart of the listener. Christian communication starts with the "Beginning" (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1) in which the Trinity utters its Unique Word of Love in the original silence. The same silent Word is the message of the 30 years of Nazareth. Its final expression is what St. Paul calls "the Word of the Cross" (1 Cor. 1:18), when the ultimate Word of Love is proclaimed in the silence of Jesus on the Cross.

6. But there is also the negative silence enforced on victims of oppression. Christian communication is called to be the prophetic voice of the voiceless (cf. BM, 1999). This is the prophetic challenge of the Christian communicator.
7. Asia is a spiritual continent and cradle of world religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism, and Asians have a relentless quest for God (cf. BISCOP IV, 2002). Asia becomes more and more conscious of traditions and values in one's culture as well as in the political, economic and socio-cultural realities.
8. The "new culture created by modern communications" (Redemptoris Missio, 37c), while bringing economic progress in Asian societies, is also often destructive of Asian and Christian values and traditions, especially of the youth (BM, 1996). In this electronic and digital era, Asia has been profoundly impacted by the communication revolution in the world.
9. Communication spirituality as characterized by total Openness to God, Self and Others, calls for a deeper living out of evangelical poverty, humility and simplicity. Pastoral availability and self-giving at the service of the mission is yet another expression of witnessing to the Gospel.
10. Communication spirituality plays a prophetic role in the life of Asian peoples and cultures. In the materialistic cacophony that dominates the media of our age, it brings a liberative dimension transcending human manipulations.
11. The youth are yearning for deep spirituality and for role models in life. Asian youth today do not want only to be informed about God, but would like to commune with God. They value silence, contemplation and a deep prayer experience. Church leaders need to relate to youth and engage them creatively in the field of social communications as they are attracted by creative and participatory activities, especially liturgical celebrations. When these are not provided, they will be substituted by other values and role models (cf. BISCOP IV, 2002).

Recommendations

As "communication spirituality" is important for the mission of the Church today, we advance the following:

1. The Asian Churches should explore their own cultural and religious traditions on the one hand, and the core experience of communication spirituality on the other, so that in their convergence we might discover the fulfilling character of communication spirituality in Asia.
2. Pastoral leaders and the faithful must give utmost importance to silence towards deeper and more authentic communication with God, self and others.
3. Christian communications need to deepen their understanding of the relation between communication, pastoral ministry and spirituality. This is essential in order to place communication ministry at the very heart of the Church's mission. Prayerful intimacy with God will help the communicator to learn from Jesus Christ, Master of Communication Himself (cf. BM, 1998; BM, 2005).
4. Christian communicators need to provide the necessary spiritual dimension to social communication through continuous reflection on the Word of God and Christian tradition.
5. Liturgical homily and other ways of proclaiming God's Word are important forms of communication which require attentive listening to the needs of the times as well as prayerful preparation.
6. A balanced and mature formation in social communication and media should be given in seminaries, houses of formation as well as in field trainings for clergy and the laity. (cf. BISCOP 3, 2001)

7. On-going formation in communication spirituality for bishops, priests, religious, seminarians and laity should be provided at all levels, particularly in the areas of communication theology, pastoral ministry and communication competence in general.
8. Technology need to be viewed in relation to the mission of the Church and pastoral ministry. (cf. BISCOP 2, 1999; BISCOP 6, 2007; BISCOP 8, 2012)

FABC-OSC