

Social Communication in *Ecclesia in Asia* and recent FABC Documents

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The *Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Asia* took place in Rome from April 19 to May 14, 1998 with some 260 participants. The Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* was published as final document of the Synod by Pope John Paul II in New Delhi on November 6, 1999. Like in other continental Synod documents as the ones for Africa (1995) or the one for America (1999) also this exhortation refers several times to Social Communication in the Asian continent.

Similar to sections in the ‘Lineamenta’(L) the first document in the preparation for a synod and the ‘Instrumentum Laboris’ (IL) the second and the immediate working paper for the synod also the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* speaks at different occasions directly or indirectly about social communication.

1. Mass Media as threat to culture

- 1.1 The threat of social communication, especially the mass media is presented in the beginning of the document under
- 1.2 ‘Asian realities’(No.7). After describing the rapid changes taking place in Asian societies like economic development, urbanization, migration, tourism and population growth the “overexposure to the mass media is mentioned as the first “external influence” bearing on Asian cultures. Here the negative influence is underlined without totally denying positive possibilities, which often times are outweighed “by the way they are controlled and used by those with questionable political, economic and ideological interests” Mass media thus are seen as “threatening traditional values” especially “the sacredness of marriage” and the stability of the family and promoting “violence, hedonism, unbridled individualism and materialism.” This threatening “new forms of behavior” are seen as posing a great challenge to the Church and the proclamation of her message. Other areas of “external influences” mentioned after this are poverty and the exploitation of people. But since this is only a description at the beginning of the document, there are no further more detailed considerations how these “great challenges” for the Church can be taken up.

Sections in the ‘Lineamenta’(No.5) and ‘Instrumentum Laboris’(No.9) of the Asian synod show a similar line of thinking. In fact the sentence on violence, hedonism etc. is partly verbatim taken from the ‘Instrumentum Laboris’ referring to answers from bishops conferences to the ‘Lineamenta’.

The full text of this section reads:

“A number of Synod Fathers underlined the external influences being brought to bear on Asian cultures. New forms of behavior are emerging as a result to overexposure to the mass media and the kinds of literature, music and films that are proliferating on the continent. Without denying that the means of social communication can be a great force for the good, we cannot disregard the negative impact which they often have. The beneficial effects at times be outweighed by the way in which they are controlled and used by those with questionable political, economic and ideological interests. As a result, the negative aspects of the media and entertainment industries are threatening traditional values, and in particular the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family. The effect of images of violence, hedonism, unbridled

individualism and materialism ‘is striking at the heart of Asian cultures, at the religious character of the people, families and whole societies’(IL 9).This is a situation which poses a great challenge to the Church and to the proclamation of her message.”

1.2 But it is not only in the “Asian realities” of *Ecclesia in Asia* where the influence of mass media is mentioned. Also in the section on the dignity of the human person (No.33) the “intrusiveness of the mass media” is listed as one of the “degrading forms of exploitation and manipulation, which make them veritable slaves to those who are powerful.” Actually this reference is taken from the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*” (1988).

1.3 The mass media are once again figured as contributing to a cultural globalization “which is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialistic. The result is an eroding of traditional family and social values which until now had sustained people and societies...” (No.39)

1.4 From this follows that “the ethical and moral aspects of globalization need to be more directly addressed.” *Ecclesia in Asia* insists upon the need for “globalization without marginalization.”(No 39). In such a scenario, however, ‘being Asian’ is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework the church can *communicate* the gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own tradition and to the Asian soul.”(No.6) Here are special challenges for Christian communicators also in view of the many young people of Asia. Some of them are listed in the ‘Final considerations’ of the “FABC-OSC Bishops’ Meet 1999” on *Megatrends Asia: Communication Trends for the Church?* in a more detailed way like the following:

- In a more and more market-oriented environment, Christian communication should continue to highlight the plight of the poor, the marginalized, minorities, indigenous cultures, migrant workers, etc. They should treasure the values of dying cultures and help them to survive”(4.1)
- Christian Media need to be the ‘voice of the voiceless’. Since privatized communication enterprises very often ignore the marginalized, we should have courage to highlight their situation and needs.(4.2)
- Christian communication should show the value of traditions but at the same time also help to discern new developments. (8.1)
- Young people , especially in cities, grow up with the latest communication equipment. Church leaders should be aware of the importance and possibilities of modern communication technologies for their communities, especially their young members, and take up these challenges.(6.2)
- Especially young people need guidance in a more diversified society. Christian communicators should be their companions and guides, and not interested only in material or financial gain from their operations.(8.2)
- The growing gap between different ages and cultural groups needs to be bridged through proper dialogue and communication. (3.4)

2. Social Communication in and for Asia

2.1 The *special section on Social Communication* in *Ecclesia in Asia* (No. 48) begins again with a reference to globalization quoting from Pope John Paul II ‘s encyclical letter on Mission *Redemptoris Missio* (1990, 37c) about the role of the means of social communication in the globalization process. They “have become so important as to be for many the chief means of

information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media". Further building on *Redemptoris Missio* the exhortation confirms the emergence of a *new culture* which originates not only from a new content but also from "*new ways of communicating* with new languages, new technologies and a new psychology. The exceptional role played by the means of social communication in shaping the world, its cultures and ways of thinking has led to rapid and far-reaching changes in Asian societies."

2.2 After this general description of an emerging new communications dominated culture in Asia the exhortation also addresses the changes which this brings for the *evangelizing mission of the church*:

- The modern means of communication "assist greatly in the proclamation of the gospel to every corner of the continent because of their "ever increasing influence even in remote areas of Asia".
- This message of the gospel to be spread by the media must, however, be integrated into the *new culture* created by modern communication and it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teachings" (RM 37).
- This demands from the Church to "explore ways of thoroughly integrating the mass media into her pastoral planning and activity, so that by their effective use the gospel's power can reach out still further to individuals and peoples and entire peoples, and infuse Asian cultures with the values of the kingdom."

Together with a general remark on the importance of *radio* and publications the FABC ("Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences") operated *Radio Veritas Asia* is commended as "the only continent-wide radio station for the church in Asia." The Pope together with the Synod Fathers demands: "Efforts must be made to strengthen this excellent instrument of mission, through appropriate language programming, personnel and financial help from Episcopal Conferences and dioceses in Asia."

The role of *Catholic publications and news agencies* is seen as helping

- a) "to disseminate information and
- b) offer continuing religious education and formation,
- c) sustaining and nurturing a sense of catholic identity,
- d) spreading knowledge of Catholic moral principles."

2.3 For the *evangelization through Social Communication* and *human promotion* without going further into detail the Pope lists the following recommendations based on proposals of the Synod Fathers:

- Each diocese should have "where possible, a communications and media office"
- Media Education "including the critical evaluation of Media output needs to be an increasing part of the formation of priests, seminarians, religious, catechists, lay professionals, students in catholic schools and parish communities"
- Ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation is needed "given the wide influence and extraordinary impact of the mass media" to "ensure a place for spiritual and moral values in the media."
- The development of pastoral plans for communications "at the diocesan and national levels" following the indications of the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* is encouraged. They must, however, pay "appropriate attention to the circumstances prevailing in Asia."

This special section on Social Communication of *Ecclesia in Asia* brings nothing new beyond what has been said already several times in other pontifical documents in the past. But it summarizes some important points which are considered as especially relevant to Asia. All this is based on the view of *Redemptoris Missio* (1999, No. 37c) which sees the world of communication as the “first Areopagus of the modern age.” This *new culture* which “originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology” grows also rapidly in Asia and is shaping especially the life of young people who comprise more than 50 % of the Asian population. What still remains to be done is to study the “far reaching changes” of this *new culture* created by modern technologies. The ‘evangelizing mission’ of the church in Asia can only be fully integrated into such developments if church leaders and those responsible for social communication become fully aware of this new situation with new possibilities and challenges.

Within the overall arrangement of *Ecclesia in Asia* of this section on social one might be astonished to find it in the last chapter (VII) of the document under “witnesses to the Gospel”. All other parts of this part talk about people as witnesses like the witnessing church, pastors, religious, laity, family, young people and the martyrs whereas social communication is more an activity and situation which for no clear reason is now placed between young people and martyrs. It seems that the editors were somehow at a loss, where to place this important activity of the Church which would have gone well also under chapters V and VI on “Communion and Dialogue for Mission” or “The service of human promotion”. In *Ecclesia in America*, the Apostolic Exhortation after the Synod on America (January 22, 1999) the media are placed in the chapter on ‘new evangelization’ together with activities like catechesis, evangelization of culture and education as “evangelizing through the media”(No.72).

The full text of this chapter reads:

“48. In an era of globalization, ‘the means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media’ (John Paul II: *Redemptoris Missio*, 37c). The world is seeing the emergence of a new culture that ‘originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new technologies and a new psychology’ (*ibid.*). The exceptional role played by the means of social communication in shaping the world, its cultures and ways of thinking has led to rapid and far-reaching changes in Asian societies.

Inevitably, the Church’s evangelizing mission too is deeply affected by the impact of the mass media. Since the mass media have an ever increasing influence even in remote areas of Asia, they can assist greatly in the proclamation of the gospel to every corner of the continent. However, ‘it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is necessary to integrate that message into the >new culture< created by modern communications’ (*ibid.*). To this end, the Church needs to explore ways of thoroughly integrating the mass media into her pastoral planning and activity, so that by their effective use the Gospel’s power can reach out still further to individuals and entire peoples, and infuse Asian cultures with the values of the Kingdom.

I echo the Synod Father's commendation of *Radio Veritas Asia*, the only continent-wide radio station for the Church in Asia, for its almost thirty years of evangelization through broadcasting. Efforts must be made to strengthen this excellent instrument of mission, through appropriate language programming, personnel and financial help from Episcopal Conferences and Dioceses in Asia (*Propositio 45*). In addition to radio, Catholic publications and news agencies can help to disseminate information and offer continuing religious education and formation throughout the continent. In places where Christians are a minority, these can be an important means of sustaining and nurturing a sense of Catholic identity and of spreading knowledge of Catholic moral principles. (*Ibid.*)

I take up the recommendations of the Synod Fathers on the point of evangelization through social communications, the 'areopagus of the modern age', in the hope that it may serve human promotion and the spreading of the truth of Christ and the teaching of the Church. (*Ibid.*) It would help if each diocese would establish, where possible, a communications and media office. Media education, including the critical evaluation of media output, needs to be an increasing part of the formation of priests, seminarians, religious, catechists, lay professionals, students in Catholic schools and parish communities. Given the wide influence and extraordinary impact of the mass media, Catholics need to work with the members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, and with the followers of other religions to ensure a place for spiritual and moral values in the media. With the Synod Fathers, I encourage the development of pastoral plans for communications at the national and diocesan levels, following the indications of the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae*, with appropriate attention to the circumstances prevailing in Asia."

3. *The Social Communication Dimension in Asian Church activities*

Beyond those sections more exclusively referring to social communication and the media there are quite some considerations with consequences and related to a broader view of social communication for the church in Asia.

3.1 Essential elements of a *communication theology* are the Trinitarian God communicating within himself but also revealing himself through creation and grace, finally becoming one of us in the Word becoming flesh (Jo 1.14). The theological foundations of *Ecclesia in Asia* go into the same direction when the document says on the **Trinity** that "we can not isolate or separate one person from the other, since each is revealed only within the communion" – communication – "of life and action of the Trinity. The saving action of Jesus has its origin in the communion" – communication – "of the Godhead, and opens the way for all who believe in him to enter into intimate communion" – communication – "with the Trinity and with one another." (No.12)

God's *Revelation* is carried out on the two levels of creation and grace. In the *Ecclesia in Asia* understanding, "creation is God's free *communication* of love, a *communication* which, out of nothing brings everything into being." (No.15)

In *grace* Jesus "as the Father's definite word makes God and his saving will known in the fullest way possible." *Ecclesia in Asia* describes his mission as the *perfect communicator* (Communio et Progressio No.11) in stating: "The mission of Jesus not only restored communion" – communication – "between God and humanity, it also established a new communion" – communication – "between human beings alienated from one another because of sin" (No.13). He re-establishes, as Carlo Martini says (1996,33), the communication line between God and people

and between themselves. “ In all that he said and did, Jesus was the Father’s voice, hand and arms, gathering all God’s children into a family of love...Sent by the God of communion” – communication –“ and being truly God and truly man, Jesus established communion” – communication - “between heaven and earth in his very person.” (No.13)

Finally, “even for those who do not explicitly profess faith in him as savior, salvation comes as a grace from Jesus Christ through the *communication* of the Holy Spirit.”(No.14) Like Jesus “speaks from the very heart of the human condition”(No.14) also a Christian communicator must speak from such a grounding. The mission of the Church is to prepare “the peoples of Asia for the saving *dialogue* with the savior of all. Led by the Spirit in her mission of service and love, the Church can offer an encounter between Jesus Christ and the people of Asia.”(18)

“Jesus the savior: proclaiming the gift” is the title for the whole chapter IV of *Ecclesia in Asia* (Nos.19-23) and a chapter on “Communion and Dialogue for Mission” follows (Nos. 24-31). Both go hand in hand within the Church, within other churches and other religions. “Only if the people of God recognize the gift that is theirs in Christ will they be able to *communicate* that gift to others through proclamation and dialogue.”(No.13)

3.2 The *Ecclesia in Asia* considerations on “proclaiming Jesus Christ in Asia” (Chapter IV, No.20) have to be seen as the obligation to communicate Christ in Asia through words and deeds. Here ***as ways of communicating*** “narrative methods akin to Asian cultural forms are to be preferred” and “the proclamation of Jesus Christ can most effectively be made by narrating his story as the gospels do.” Here the church “must be open to new and surprising ways in which the face of Jesus might be presented in Asia.” This is especially recommended for the initial stage of the evangelization process which familiarizes people in a more general way with Christianity. But also for the second step, the catechetical instruction “ an evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols so characteristic in Asian methodology in teaching” are recommended. In such communication the evangelizer has “to take the situation of the listener to heart.” Any communication must be “adapted to the listener’s level of maturity, and in appropriate form and language. In this perspective, the Synod Fathers stressed many times the need to evangelize in a way that appeals to the sensibilities of Asian peoples, and they suggested images of Jesus which would be intelligible to Asian minds and cultures.” Such images of Jesus could be Jesus Christ as:

- the teacher of wisdom
- the healer
- the liberator
- the spiritual guide
- the enlightened one
- the compassionate friend of the poor
- the good samaritan
- the good shepherd
- the obedient one

“Jesus could be presented as the incarnate wisdom of God whose grace brings to fruition the ‘seeds’ of Divine Wisdom already present in the lives, religions and peoples of Asia.”

Christian communication has to be done according to the “cultural patterns and ways of thinking” of the Asian people as it is exemplified in Asian mission history by persons like Giovanni de Montecorvino, Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili.

3.3 The “proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia” (No.23) can not be fully understood and executed without a deep **communication spirituality**. Proclamation is basically communicating. This ‘proclaiming communication’ must originate and is based on the deep-rooted “experience of God which flows from a living faith”. Carlo Martini in analyzing the constants of God’s communication writes that this “Divine communication is prepared in the secret silence of God.”(*Carlo Martini, 1996, 36*). Every Christian communication and proclamation has to start the same way especially in Asia. Because “Mission is contemplative action and active contemplation” (EA 23) a communicator or “a missionary who has no deep experience with God in prayer and contemplation will have little spiritual influence or missionary success ...” In Asia “the church is called to be a praying church, deeply spiritual even as she engages in immediate human and social concerns. All Christians need a true missionary spirituality of prayer and contemplation.” After all “a fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire.”

Following the Asian Synod in Rome the FABC Communication bishops in their annual meeting in November 1998 already stated: “With the many challenges being faced today, we felt that the spirituality of those involved in social communication must be re-emphasized. Such a spirituality ‘flows out of the communication of the Holy Trinity’ (*Bishops’ Meet’96*).” They further quote Pope John Paul II from his World Communication Day message of the same year: “Christian communicators need to be 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...”

3.4 Christians who communicate Christ must embody him in their lives and this means finally once again the **‘witness of life’** as the first means of evangelization and communication as underlined already by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975, No. 41). This means that Christian social Communication is not only concerned with technology but first and foremost with the inner disposition and attitude which must be based on a deep spiritual experience of the Lord.

“Any spirituality of communication” the FABC-OSC bishops said in their ‘Final Considerations’ 1998, “is first and foremost expressed through the witness of life which means for the communicator in Asia:

- to be a person of contemplation and prayer, similar to the missionary, whom Pope John Paul II describes as a ‘contemplative in action (*cf. RM, 91*);
- the ability to build communities through love, sharing, communion, relationship and equality;
- the content of one’s communication should reflect one’s spirituality rooted in the Incarnation – communicators need to be people-oriented
- the proclamation of Kingdom values amidst a society of violence, corruption and evil forces.”

3.4.1 Part of a witness of life as communication is also the Christian community in celebrating the **liturgy** (No.22), which is listed in *Ecclesia in Asia* as one of the “key areas of inculturation”: Since “the liturgy is the key and summit of all Christian life and mission”, it is also “a decisive means of evangelization, especially in Asia, where the followers of different religions are so

drawn to worship, religious festivals and popular devotions.” This has considerable consequences and challenges for social communication.

- 3.4.2 Another element also listed under the key area of inculturation is the **biblical apostolate (No.22)**. It is the biblical word which has to be communicated in “passing on the message of salvation to the peoples of Asia, where the transmitted word is so important in preserving and *communicating* religious experience.” The sacred text must be made “the basis of all missionary proclamation, catechesis, preaching and styles of spirituality.” Here beside others the narrative style of many of the biblical books has a special “affinity with the religious texts typical for Asia.” Christian communication has to be narrative communication if it wants to follow God’s ways of communicating. In a similar vain the “**formation of Evangelizers**” demands according to *Ecclesia in Asia* “to adapt the formation of evangelizers to the cultural contexts of Asia” which must also hold for the training of communicators.
- 3.5 The FABC concern for **a new way of being Church in Asia** (No.24) is also reflected in *Ecclesia in Asia*. Referring to the Synod Fathers the diocese is described as a “communion of communities” which are “engaged in a ‘dialogue of life and heart’ sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit”. The ‘FABC-OSC Bishops’ Meet 1997’ has spelled out in more detail the communication consequences of such an approach which demand from the bishops e.g. “to create a new style of leadership which is enabling and facilitating, being real leaders and not mere followers.” *Ecclesia in Asia* sees in such a ‘communion of communities’ the “clergy, consecrated persons and the laity” being “engaged in a dialogue of life and heart.” The FABC communication bishops underlined that “the laity must be heard louder and clearer. The marginalized and the poor too have a voice to be recognized in the church.”
- With the Synod Fathers *Ecclesia in Asia* sees as the result of a ‘communion of communities’ a ‘*participatory church*’ “in which all live their proper vocation and perform their proper role.” In order to build up the ‘communion for mission’ and the ‘mission of communion’, every member’s unique charism needs to be acknowledged, developed and effectively utilized.” (No.25) The FABC communication bishops expressed 1997 a similar concern when they demanded a “communication that encourages co-responsibility at all levels both vertically and horizontally. We have to find mechanisms to effectively bring about this communication.”
- 3.6 It is also the vocation of **Lay people** (no. 45) to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are called missionaries in their proper area of profession in “politics, economics, industry, education, *the media*, science, technology, the arts and sports.” They are “serving as true missionaries, reaching out to fellow Asians who might never have contact with clergy or religious.” *Ecclesia in Asia* sees it as “the task of pastors to ensure that the laity are formed as evangelizers able to face the challenges of the contemporary world.” This reminds one on the pastoral priorities and challenges of the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* (1992, No.19) “to develop and offer programs of pastoral care which are especially responsive to the peculiar working conditions and moral challenges facing communication professionals.”
- 3.7 The “deep thirst for spiritual values” especially of the **young people** in Asia is mentioned already right at the outset of *Ecclesia in Asia* (No.7) in speaking of Asian cultural and religious values. These young people very often do not grow up any more in traditions but options as the FABC-OSC bishops said in their ‘Meet’ 1999. Referring to this section of *Ecclesia in Asia* they find that former traditions are “very often substituted through different options available to the individual and community in a growing globalization which is not only economic but also cultural and “made

possible by the modern communications media.” Such cultural globalization, *Ecclesia in Asia* states, “is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularistic and materialistic” and eroding “traditional family values which until now had sustained peoples and societies.”

- 3.8 In the listing of positive church movements in Asia are also “associations and ecclesial movements devoted to the ***promotion of human dignity and justice***”, who make “accessible and tangible the universality of the evangelical message of our adoption as children of God”(No.9). This dignity and integrity of the human person, “created in the image of God” is in more detail taken up later in *Ecclesia in Asia* (no.33) where also the “*intrusiveness of the mass media*” is mentioned, which contributes that even 50 years after the declaration of human rights “many people are still subjected to the most degrading forms of exploitation and manipulation which make them veritable slaves to those who are more powerful, to an ideology, economic power, oppressive political systems, scientific technocracy..” As special groups exposed to such exploitation and being in the special care of the church *Ecclesia in Asia* lists beside others: migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, aboriginal populations, children and women. This are groups of the Asian population which have been also the special concern of the FABC as expressed in the final statements of the 6th and 7th General assemblies in Manila (1995) and Samphran, Thailand (2000). They should as well be of special concern to the Church’s communication in the defense of human rights

4 ***The Final Statement of the 7th FABC General Assembly***

The vision of social communication of *Ecclesia in Asia* is basically repeated in the final statement of the 7th General Assembly of the “Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences” (FABC) January 3-12, 2000 in Samphran, Thailand which convened two months after the publication of *Ecclesia in Asia*.

- 4.1 In the FABC “***Vision of Renewal***” the church is mentioned as moving towards the poor and young and being on the side of the multitudes. A church “incarnate in a people”(I A,2)and being an “authentic community of faith”(I,A,4) can only be a communicating church in word and deed. “To be attentive and open to the mysterious stirrings of the Spirit in the realities of Asia and of the church”(I,B) is an essential prerequisite for any communication. From such a holistic spirituality flows the missionary engagement and the ability, to “tell the story of Jesus and announce his gift of new life to our Asian world of lights and shadows.”

The primacy of the spirit is once again invoked for the formation program of the church under the “practical directions” (III,C,2) as well as the ‘witness of life’: “Asian people will recognize the gospel that we announce, when they see in our life the transparency of the message of Jesus and the inspiring and healing figure of men and women immersed in God” (III,C,1)

- 4.2 The “*over-saturation of the mass media*” as contributing to the ***cultural globaliztion*** is mentioned in the first part of the section on “issues and challenges in the mission of love and service”, which refers to the overall theme of the assembly. Quoting *Ecclesia in Asia* (No.7) the text repeats that such an over-saturation draws Asian societies into “a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialistic.” (II,A) Especially the ethical and moral issues from such a development can not be ignored.
- 4.3 In “***The challenge of discerning the Asian way***” (Part III) it is not any more the consideration of individual issues like evangelization, inculturation etc. which are repeated and considered, but they

are now “but aspects of an integrated approach to our mission of love and service.” The church needs to feel and act ‘integrally’ also in her communication activities. “Only by the ‘inner authority’ of authentic lives founded on deep spirituality will we become credible instruments of transformation.” Also communication in Asia must be on the level of depth, rather than on the level of ideas and action.” “Only in this framework “of complementarity and harmony, the church can *communicate* the gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own tradition and the Asian soul.”(EA6) The need for “a credible and integrated approach is repeated by the bishops later in the “Thrust of our response” (III,B). It must be “involving the other person or community.”

- 4.4 First in the “**pastoral concerns**” (III,A) of the FABC statement are the *young* being the majority of Asia’s population. “The swift and drastic changes taking place in our world – globalization, political changes and the *media explosion* – radically affect the lives of the youth in every part of Asia.” Because of this the church has to journey with the youth rather see them “as resources and not problems...Only when the youth are recognized as agents and co-workers of the evangelizing mission of the church will their full potential blossom.”(III,A,1) Other pastoral concerns refer to women, family, indigenous people, migrants and refugees.
- 4.5 Under the “**practical directions**” of the document the mass media and new information technologies are listed as deeply affecting “the church’s evangelizing mission.” At the same time the potential of these means “in the proclamation of the gospel to every corner of the continent” is underlined. The operations of *Radio Veritas Asia* are given as a concrete example.

The demand of John Paul II’s Encyclical letter on Mission *Redemptoris Missio*, to integrate the church’s message into the *new culture* created by modern communication (RM 37c,EA 48) is repeated but not further developed. The full text of this section (III,c,3) reads:

“3. The Church’s evangelizing mission is deeply affected by the impact of the *mass media* and new information technologies. Nevertheless, the media can assist greatly in the proclamation of the Gospel to every corner of the continent, as it is done now by the FABC initiative, Radio Veritas Asia. However, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications (EA 48).”

It is up to the Asian communicators to en flesh this short statement with concrete proposals and action. Some steps in this direction have been made already in the past years by the different initiatives of the FABC Office of Social Communication in the annual meetings of the communication bishops (“FABC-OSC Bishops’ Meet”) and other conference on specialized themes like the “Bishops’ Institute for Social Communication” (BISCOM). But still more has to be done. This probably should include deeper study and research e.g. on:

- the impact of modern communications means, mass media and multimedia on young people and Asian societies at large
- the creative use of these means for evangelization also on the diocesan level and in basic Christian communities
- a better and more systematic application of media/communication education on different levels
- the ethics and moral implications of modern communication in Asia especially in relation to globalization, family, justice and peace, environment, migrants and minorities
- the social communication formation for church people, especially seminarians, priests, religious but also interested and capable young people with church involvement

Practical training and social communication formation must be based on a solid analysis of the situations, needs and possibilities. Do we have really enough qualified people for this? Social communication application and involvement needs a long range planning and should go beyond short term initiatives, without losing the necessary flexibility for new developments and opportunities.

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