

FINAL STATEMENT: BEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Nov. 11-15, 2002

Holy Family Retreat House, Cebu City

We are 185 participants coming from 51 dioceses all over the Philippines – from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Among us are lay leaders and pastoral workers, priests, religious and guests from other countries. We have also been accompanied by seven bishops.

We come together eleven years after the celebration of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines that affirmed the Basic Ecclesial Communities as a way of being Church – an expression of a renewed Church.

Over the years we have been actively involved in the building and strengthening of BECs. We came to this Assembly asking ourselves the question: are BECs a dream or reality?

As we shared our stories and discussed our concerns we have come to believe that BECs are indeed a dream that is becoming a reality. The building up of BECs has become the pastoral thrust in many dioceses in the Philippines. Many parishes are becoming a network of BECs, a communion of communions. These BECs are becoming a basic unit of the local church and a way of life to many lay faithful. Through the BECs, the lay faithful respond to the call to discipleship and actively participate in the life and mission of the Church. It is in the BECs that the Church is becoming truly a Church of the Poor.

We know there is still much to be done. The promotion of BECs is a lifetime process. There are still many dioceses and parishes where BECs remain a dream. There are BECs that were established that are now inactive. Many are struggling for survival. Others are crying for support from their pastors. There are many BECs that need to address the problems of poverty, injustice, traditional politics, armed conflict and the destruction of the environment. We also see the need to dialogue with the lay organizations, movements and associations and encourage their members to actively participate in the building up of BECs in their locality. The BECs have to participate in the inculturation process so that the Church in the Philippines will truly become an inculturated Church. They must also be involved in interreligious and interfaith dialogue especially in this time of intensive globalization. The family and youth with BECs need to be evangelized.

As we face these challenges, this assembly adopted the following resolutions:

1. That the BEC Desk at the national level be set up by the CBCP to
 - strengthen the initiatives of the different arch/dioceses;
 - facilitate logistical support (financial, training, materials, expertise, etc.) for the different arch/dioceses
 - assist and animate BECs of the different arch/dioceses
 - provide necessary linkages with the Episcopal commissions

2. That a BEC National Assembly be convened every three years to

- provide the venue for exchange of experiences, training, materials, learning
- read the signs of the times to set new directions
- provide opportunities for immersion and exposure
- enrich our experience through the sharing of persons with BEC experience outside the country

We believe BECs have a vital role in shaping the Church of the future. The BECs can renew the Church and transform Philippine society. We journey towards the future with confidence, fully aware of the presence of the Risen Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary – the patroness of the Philippines, together with San Lorenzo Ruiz and the Blessed Pedro Calungsod intercede for us in our endeavor to build, strengthen and sustain BECs.

September 19-22, 2005 Lahug, Cebu City, Philippines

Final Statement 2005 BEC National Assembly

The birth and growth of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) in the Philippines has opened the forty years (40) of the Second Vatican Council's efforts to share humanity's joys and hopes, pains and anxieties. Inspired by the Council Fathers' call for **Aggiornamento**, BECs mushroomed in different parts of the country, seeking to make the Universal Church truly local, veering away from a Church popularly conceived as a physical or hierarchical structure, to one that is incarnated in the concrete life – settings of grassroots communities. BECs could not but thank Vatican II's grace of inner renewal. They are indeed children of the Spirit's workings of rebirth in our land.

Looking back these past 40 years, we — the number of significant attempts to collectively understand the nature and set up of BECs and to discern the challenges they pose to the bigger Philippine Church. We do recall the BEC consultations spearheaded by the **Lay Formation Institute** (1982), the **Bishops' Businessmen's Conference** (1985), the **BCC-CO** National Assemblies, the **Layko** (1989), **NASSA** (1997) and the **Bukal ng Tipan** (2002). Their initiatives to support the promotion of BECs truly bespeak BECs' thrusts of growth from below, renewal from within and strength in collaboration.

But what makes this National Assembly, held from Sept. 19 to 22, 2005 at Cebu City quite unique and truly historical is not merely the fact that it is thus far the best-attended gathering of BEC practitioners. There are 232 delegates and observers from 66 dioceses in the Philippines (11 bishops, 109 lay people, 88 priests, 16 religious sisters and brothers including 7 observers from Korea and 1 from India). Equally worth noting is the fact that this is **the first time** our beloved bishops in the Philippines through the CBCP – BEC desk have formally embraced the initiatives of such concerned institutions to undertake a nationwide BEC consultation. We thank CBCP for this significant step in the BECs' journey in faith.

We commence our Assembly deeply aware of the latest and updated profile of the BECs in the country. Most dioceses have BECs and have designated commissions to monitor and supervise their process of growth. We recognize the Parish priests' most critical role in nurturing their development or in weakening their participation.

The events BECs consider significant to their sustainability refer to the increase in their participation in the Church and their being considered a priority pastoral agenda of the Parish and Diocese.

Paradoxically, the most difficult value to practice in BECs are the same values that sustain them, namely, sense of community, faith activities, community service and action and sustained participation.

The operative values that weaken BECs are, at the same time, those that make it difficult to sustain community action: indifference, competition, factionalism, pride, leaders' failures, "ningas cogon."

Lastly, the environmental factors of politics, poverty, vices and corruption are what militate against community action.

Faced with these realities, affecting not merely the birth and promotion of BECs but more importantly their sustainability, all of us participants in this National Assembly have discerned the underlying convictions – we need to make **vis-à-vis Philippine Culture and BECs, Church Culture and BECs** and **Social Transformation and BECs**.

These are our convictions:

With John Paul II, we affirm that "a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived." The Gospel message of salvation has to be announced within the cultural contexts of every people and generations. It is precisely in the life-situation of the communities, their way of life – their culture – that BECs are meant to grow and flourish. It is in the interplay between Church and culture, through the Word and Sacrament, that faith becomes culture. **WHEN THIS TAKES PLACE CULTURE ITSELF BECOMES THE SUSTAINING FORCE FOR THE BEC AS A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH.**

To be communion and participatory, the Church has to foster the "Spirituality of Communion" among the priests and the laity, among various sectors of the laity, among the clergy and religious themselves and with the Bishop. As a family where equality in dignity and diversity of functions are promoted and respected, where co-responsibility for the one mission of the Church is recognized, the BECs can be guided to develop new paradigm and contexts of relating to each other and to the bigger, more diverse community of believers. BECs have to be really a community where diverse gifts and functions fully participate in the building up the family of God. **WHEN THIS TAKES PLACE IN THE BEC, COMMUNION AND PARTICIPATION BECOME A FUNDAMENTAL AND POWERFUL FORCE IN SUSTAINING ITS CULTURE.**

To be a sign of the Kingdom of God, the Church's task of social transformation must be seen as constitutive of her mission to evangelize and be evangelized. The local Churches, in particular, at the levels of the Diocese, Parish and BECs, must embrace the plight of the poor and the disadvantaged in their midst, and through their prophetic ministry and social action apostolate, travel with them on the road of justice, peace and integral development. **WHEN THE BECs TAKE ON THIS TRANSFORMATIVE MISSION AND IS FAITHFUL TO IT, ITS ACTIVITIES AND MINISTRIES BECOME INTEGRAL PARTS OF ITS SUSTAINING CULTURE.**

To be truly the Sacrament of salvation, the Church as God's people has to be sustained in its mission through the Word and its living Tradition, and the Eucharist and the Sacraments. In this year of the Eucharist, we take special note that with the Word, we the BECs are born of the Eucharist, the living legacy of our Good Shepherd among us. We are to become a "Eucharistic" community; loving, sharing, serving and sacrificing.

WHEN THESE DIVINE TREASURES OF THE CHURCH, THE WORD AND THE EUCHARIST, BECOME THE SUSTAINING FORCE OF BECs, THEN OUR SHARED MISSION WILL FIND FULL REALIZATION AROUND THE TABLE OF THE DIVINE MASTER HIMSELF.

In the light of the above convictions, we return our respective dioceses and BECs with the following renewed commitments

Confronted by the challenges of the Megatrends affecting the Philippine culture, bringing about dislocations among the poor, families and youth and creating alienation and spiritual hunger among our communities, we have to review the thrust, priorities and methodologies we have identified in the light of the “evangelization of the culture and cultures.”

We also have to implement systematically the task of inculturation.

To foster a “spirituality of communion,” we seek to create a culture that promotes “unity in diversity”, a proper “contextual reading” of issues affecting interpersonal relationship, participation and co-responsibility in pursuing the one mission of new Evangelization.

To intensely pursue the thrust of social transformation, we seek to mobilize our human and logistical resources to accompany the impoverished and marginalized, the un-evangelized and oppressed, along the road of integral, renewed evangelization and human development.

To further strengthen the development of BECs in our respective Dioceses, taking into account the cultural settings, needs and problems and levels of BEC development that they have achieved.

To ensure that the CBCP – BEC National Office is an effective partner in our efforts to renew our Church through BEC building.

Aware of our weaknesses and failures as ecclesial communities, we believe that on-going conversion is a requirement of our being disciples of the Lord as well as of sustaining our BECs. We placed all these convictions and commitments humbly and prayerfully in the hands of the Lord. In the final analysis, it is the Lord who builds his house, we are but his co-workers. In the journey toward a new ways of being Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, “the Woman of the Eucharist” remains, as she does throughout history, our companion, intercessor and Mother.

2008 BEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Theme: BECs and Rural Development

Nov. 5-8, 2008 Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

- 1) The National BEC Office and consultants will study the recommendations of the 2nd CBCP-BEC National Congress to be presented to the CBCP-BEC Committee Board for approval, especially taking into account the following
 - a) Information network (e.g. website, directory, newsletter, etc.)
 - b) Establishment of BEC Regional offices
 - c) Facilitate access to BEC Formation programs, materials, and resource persons, Assist in the networking on Rural Development initiatives (e.g. marketing, processing, etc.)
 - d) Assist in advocacy actions for common issues (e.g. environment, farmers' rights, good governance, etc.)
 - e) Suggest to include BEC in the seminary formation and on-going formation of the clergy,
 - f) Stress that BECs are catalyst for total human development
 - g) To organize a group to facilitate the publication of BEC guidelines and manuals as prescribed by PCP II
- 2) That the BEC National Office level-off with other CBCP bodies to further their collaboration in assisting the dioceses and regions in the implementation of the BEC thrust.
- 3) That the participating delegates to the 2nd CBCP-BEC National Congress commit themselves to implement their diocesan / regional / national initiatives and plans, especially in establishing coordination and linkages.