

BILA II ON SCCs
SCCs LEADING TO NEW EVANGELIZATION
FABC Office of Laity & Family, AsIPA(BEC) desk
Bangkok Sept 25 - 30 2014

FINAL STATEMENT

We, the 122 participants from 11 countries of Asia (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Srilanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam) – (composing of 17 Bishops, 80 Priests, 12 Religious Sisters, 13 lay persons came together at the Camillian Pastoral Care Center, Bangkok, Thailand, from September 25 -30, 2014, for the BILA II (Bishops Institute on Lay Apostolate) on SCCs. We thank the FABC Office of Laity and Family AsIPA (BEC) Desk, the AsIPA Resource Team, and the National BEC Team of Thailand for organizing this event. We also thank the Church of Thailand for their generosity as host.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit and encouraged by Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, "*Evangelii Gaudium*" (The Joy of the Gospel) we prayerfully reflected and shared on the theme: "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Leading to New Evangelization".

1. Fruits of Evangelization

Our assembly believes that the Gospel brings joy. The fruits of Evangelization in our SCCs/BECs spreading in many parts of Asia, are:

- a. People becoming Christ and community- centered through Gospel Sharing.
- b. Families deepening their faith in neighbourhoods through sharing the Word of God. Reconciliation and healing taking place in families, among neighbors and between groups.
- c. Young people getting involved and taking leadership in SCCs/BECs.
- d. Those who left the Church for other denominations and those who were nominal Christians returning to their fold.
- e. An increase in the number of adult baptisms and the rectification of many marriages.
- f. A sense of communion and belonging in the Church.
- g. People being helped to discern and evaluate the use of mass media and technology.
- h. People being motivated to contribute financially in SCCs/BECs making them self-reliant and self sustaining communities.
- i. Lay leaders emerging and taking on more roles in community building.
- j. Laity, clergy and religious learning to work as a team and growing in animation skills.
- k. Women participating in the life of the church as leaders.
- l. Social Justice issues being dealt with (e.g. taking up the cause of the weakest and concern for environment.)
- m. SCCs/BECs becoming a nursery for political leadership and helping to promote a just society.
- n. Some SCCs/BECs initiating the formation of Small Human/Neighborhood Communities to foster peace and harmony and eventually to build the Kingdom of God from the grassroots.

2. The Source of Our Joy

We believe that the encounter with Christ transforms and fills us with joy. (*EG* 1). It serves as the driving force which guides our purposes and causes us to reassess our goals. We are a people loved and called by God. Joy is the evidence of Christ's nearness for us who share in his life as a result of baptism. Through the sacrament of reconciliation and Eucharist, we experience His touch of mercy. The joy and enthusiasm we radiate becomes a sign of God's love and presence.

In the SCCs, as living community of believers, we experience the love of God in the Liturgy and in Gospel Sharing. Enlivened by this love, we encounter Him ever anew and share what no one can deny: a personal experience of God's redeeming work in our own lives.

SCCs develop a spiritual taste for being close to people's lives and that in itself is a source of greater joy. The encounter with God inspires a renewed encounter with humanity. Closeness to the person of Christ reveals to us who we really are as persons. "Only our readiness to encounter our neighbors and to show them love makes us sensitive to God as well. Only if we serve our neighbor can our eyes be opened to what God does for us and how much he loves us." (*Deus Caritas Est* 18).

3. The challenges faced by SCCs/BECs

The SCCs/BECs in various parts of Asia face the challenges of today's world which Pope Francis describes in *Evangelli Gaudium*. Among these, is economic and cultural globalization. The neo-liberal capitalist system has become the dominant economic system all over the world. This system has brought progress to a few nations and social classes but has excluded and marginalized the poor. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened. It has resulted in greater inequality and injustice which fuels violence.

The economic globalization that affects culture and is characterized by individualism, materialism, consumerism, sexual permissiveness and secularism, poses a threat to Asians whose local culture is more family-oriented, community-centered and deeply religious. (*EG* 52-67)

Our SCCs/BECs in Asia live among the adherents of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religious traditions. Our efforts to live in harmony and to engage in dialogue with them are sometimes threatened by religious fundamentalism proposed by the more militant and violent branches of these religions and our freedom to exercise and practice our faith is sometimes limited.

4. Agents of Evangelization

We recognize that we are also challenged in our inner life as pastoral workers – bishops, priests, religious and laity. Pope Francis reminds us of the temptations we face (*EG* 76 – 109) which we believe can hamper the growth of SCCs/BECs and their capacity to become agents of new evangelization. Among these are: an inordinate concern for personal freedom and relaxation, individualism, cooling of fervor, attachment to personal security, lack of missionary enthusiasm,

working without spirituality and lack of energy, loss of contact with the people, selfishness, spiritual sloth, pessimism, and clericalism.

5. Aware of our own weaknesses but impelled by the joy of the Gospel we commit to:

a. As lay persons

1. Actively participate in Christ's three-fold mission grounded in baptism and confirmation.
2. Witness Christian values in social, political and economic spheres. (EG 102).
3. Participate in our formation for evangelization of professional and intellectual life.
4. Actively take part in structures that promote participation such as Parish/Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Pastoral assemblies.
5. Be formed and empowered as men and women in the life and mission of the Church.

b. As members of religious congregations

1. Radiate the joy of the Gospel when faced with temptations such as disillusionment, sadness and hopelessness.
2. Go out of ourselves and join others in solidarity, learning to find Jesus in their faces, voices and pleas.
3. Accompany the laity in their formation so that they can carry out their responsibility to actively participate in the Church's mission.

c. As bishops and priests

1. Deal with individualism, consumerism, relativism and other challenges we are facing in the world and within the Church.
2. Reflect deeply and constantly on our primary vocation, that is, to be more faithful to our common priesthood from baptism in order to face the negative impact of clericalism.
3. Be the first evangelizers and authentic preachers in our local Church and therefore, share our pastoral and administrative activities with the laity and religious through SCCs/BECs.
4. Be more appreciative of the charisms of the laity and involve women in our administrative and pastoral work which will bring more effectiveness with their expertise and loving care.
5. Grow closer to simple and ordinary people.
6. Personally commit ourselves to promote SCCs/BECs.
7. Prepare homilies that edify people's faith and challenge them to build up communities.

6. Together as pastoral agents we will:

1. Strive to make our SCCs/BECs truly communities of 'missionary disciples' (EG 119-121) that reach out to others as agents of new evangelization so that God's Kingdom of peace, justice and love be truly experienced.
2. Ensure that the missionary dynamism of the SCCs/BECs flow from an encounter with Christ and from ongoing personal and ecclesial conversion.
3. Reach out to more families and youth, encouraging a communion which heals, nourishes faith, becoming living cells and agents of evangelization in the SCCs/BECs and parish.
4. Carry out our social action praxis based on an authentic spirituality and culture of kindness, compassion and urgency to do more.

5. Lead our SCCs/BECs to hear the cry of the poor, make an option for the poor, be in solidarity with the poor, work for the social inclusion of the poor and thus become truly a Church of the poor - where the poor are cared for, made to feel at home and treated as friends following the example of Jesus. (*EG* 186-216)
6. Transform our SCCs/BECs to be truly prophetic communities - denouncing social evils (e.g. corruption, drug addiction, human trafficking, extreme poverty, etc) and participating in structural transformation thus helping build a better world.
7. Strive to make our SCCs/BECs instruments of peace, a peace based on integral development and that engages in dialogue with other people of good will and religious traditions. (*EG* 217-221).

7. Conclusion

The Holy Spirit sets our hearts on fire and fills us with joy as we and our SCCs/BECs fearlessly proclaim the Good News not only with words but through lives transformed. We are convinced that a life with Jesus is richer and more joyful than a life without him. As we go forth from here with renewed fervor and commitment, may our Mother Mary, Star of New Evangelization be our model and intercessor in our mission of New Evangelization in Asia.

30 September 2014
Bangkok, Thailand