



## AsIPA General Assembly VIII

### **"SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES EVANGELIZING FAMILIES FOR COMMUNION & MISSION - a family and a home for everyone"**

*Co-organized by FABC OLF AsIPA Desk & Diocese of Pangkal Pinang*

18<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) – 24<sup>th</sup> (Wed) October 2018

Pacific Palace Hotel, Batam, Diocese of Pangkal Pinang, Indonesia

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## FINAL STATEMENT

### Introduction

1. We, the 83 participants – 35 lay, 11 religious, 32 priests and 5 bishops - from 12 countries (Bangladesh, Germany, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam), gathered on the island of Batam, to participate in the Eighth Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) General Assembly from October 18th to 24th, 2018. We aimed to discover how Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities (SCCs/BECs), nourished by the Word of God, can be instruments to live the Gospel of love in families; To find ways and means for families to be involved in the mission of the Church in the neighbourhood through SCCs/BECs; To discover how SCCs/BECs as a family of families, can promote the wellbeing of the family and to explore how children, youth, men, women and the elderly find their fuller growth in SCCs/BECs. The theme of our assembly was "SCCs/BECs evangelizing families for communion and mission".
2. The assembly has been successful thanks to the following:
  - ✓ the willingness of the late Bishop Hilarius Moa Nurak SVD, to host the assembly in Batam and subsequently, the commitment of his successor Bishop Adrian Sunarko, OFM;
  - ✓ the local host working committee who have spared no effort to ensure a fruitful, enriching and comfortable assembly. Every SCC/BEC in Pangkal Pinang Diocese who contributed in cash and kind, as well as local Catholic individuals and parishes;
  - ✓ our partners who have journeyed with us from the outset – Missio Aachen who supported us and sent their representative to be with us these days. Support also came from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and Aid to the Church in Need;
  - ✓ The Bishops who readily agreed to be our resource persons.
  - ✓ the FABC Office of Laity & Family (OLF), acting Executive Secretary and the AsIPA Resource Team (ART) for long and detailed preparation of the programme and process of the Assembly.
  - ✓ The contributions of the participants of the Eighth AsIPA General Assembly.

### In union with the Church

3. We are well aware that during these days the Synod on Youth is taking place in Rome. We share the deep concern of the Holy Father and bishops for the young and their need for good mentors, accompaniment and a listening ear. AsIPA General Assemblies have always taken up the themes and concerns of the Synods and the FABC Plenary Assemblies. The two Synods on

the Family and the FABC Plenary Assembly on the family in Sri Lanka in 2016 were the inspiration for the theme of our assembly. The keynote and talks were inspired by the Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortations *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) and *Gaudete et Exultate* (GE) by Pope Francis.

### **SCCs evangelizing families for communion and mission**

4. The keynote address which covered historical, biblical and pastoral aspects of our theme in an integrated and comprehensive manner included the following points:
  - a. The early church made the *oikos*(house),that is, the Graeco-Roman city family house, the pastoral basis of the whole of the Christian movement:
  - b. Early primitive Christianity was a brotherhood and sisterhood of equal partners.
  - c. When Christianity was first lived in Korea lay people learned the catechism through their family members. Faith was transmitted to their descendants through the family.
  - d. The challenge of Pope Francis to all of us, "Do we have the courage to welcome with tenderness the difficulties and problems of those who are near to us,... How much the world needs tenderness today! The patience of God, the closeness of God, the tenderness of God."<sup>1</sup>
  - e. Going after the lost one is what the Church should do following the way of Jesus. The most important pastoral care for family is what we should do for the wounded, broken fragile families.
  - f. The Church's way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement... true charity is always unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous".<sup>2</sup>
  - g. Central to pastoral care is accompaniment and guidance to strengthen families.

### **The Family today challenges and joys**

5. Country groups reflected on the keynote address and their own situations. They shared the many challenges and joys experienced by families today. Some of the challenges are:
  - a. Socio-economic problems caused by migration, poverty and cultural upheavals are adversely affecting family life.
  - b. Thousands of families left homeless by natural disasters and conflict all over Asia.
  - c. Many families internally displaced, fleeing persecution and war, losing lives, livelihoods, homes and neighbours. Many of those affected are women and children.
  - d. Addiction to alcohol and drugs as well as pornography, gambling, video games, the Internet and social networks.
  - e. The negative impact of work on the well-being of the family as people work away from home or for long hours.
  - f. Difficulty in relationships and communication. Whether it be tensions and conflicts in a marriage due to a lack of mutual trust and intimacy or the domination of one marriage

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<sup>1</sup> *Homily for the Midnight Mass on the Solemnity of Christmas*, 24 December 2014.

<sup>2</sup> A.L. n.296: Homily at Mass Celebrated with the New Cardinals (15 February 2015): AAS 107 (2015), 257.

partner over the other or the inter-generational conflict between parents and children, all hinder the building of family relationships.

### **Faithful love in marriage and Family**

6. The joys and fruitfulness of family life were also shared:
  - a. Families that pray together and live out selfless love.
  - b. The witness of compassion and forgiveness that they give.
  - c. Families that strive to live Christian values.
  - d. Youth, generous and self-giving in their families and in society.
  
7. The joy of love and communion in the family was evident from the testimony of a young couple with three daughters who belong to a Small Christian Community in Batam and have found Christ and friendship in their SCC. The young families support one another, and the influence of the SCC was what led the husband to baptism.

### **Living the *Joy of Love* in our SCCs**

8. From the talk on ways to use and live out the Apostolic exhortation *The Joy of Love* in our SCCs/BECs we shared a few points:
  - a. We agreed that it was necessary to relook the way we do pastoral care of families.
  - b. Pastoral intervention in support of the family is urgent and can be carried out through SCCs/BECs.
  - c. Train SCC/BEC animators, so they are enabled to follow up with young families in the first five years of their marriage.

### **The Call to Holiness**

9. Through the talk on the Call to Holiness and the role of the family and SCCs/BECs were highlighted the following from the exhortation *Rejoice and be Glad* of Pope Francis.
  - a. Community life keeps us from the “growing consumerist individualism that tends to isolate us in a quest for well-being apart from others” (GE 146)
  - b. We need the family and the community to live our faith and to be Christ for others.
  - c. Holiness can be found in the small gestures and details. Holiness is found in our next-door neighbors, those who reflect God’s presence.” (GE 7)
  - d. The Beatitudes are a ‘roadmap to holiness’ (GE Chapter 3 & 4).
  - e. “...discernment is an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God, who helps us to carry out the mission to which he has called us, for the good of our brothers and sisters” (GE 175)

### **Engaging children, youth, couples and elderly in our SCCs**

10. During the four workshops on Children, Youth, Spouses, Elderly and SCCs/BECs we explored the various ways we are engaging and caring for the whole family through SCCs/BECs.
  - a. For children, the importance of having rituals and activities appropriate for them to participate with their parents. Gospel Sharing can be taught as part of the catechism

programme to involve the children more. Use the Church's rich liturgical traditions and rituals with colour, drama, symbols and prayer to catch their imagination & deepen faith.

- b. For youth, it is important to include them in decision making regarding community activities if they are expected to participate. Respect their autonomy and needs; recognize their potential and contributions. Youth are also our neighbours and can be invited to take an active part in the SCCs/BECs. It is important that pastors and SCC leaders give special attention to youth and strive to establish & nourish closer relationships with them.
- c. For spouses accompaniment and timely interventions are crucial before and in the first five years of marriage. Simple ways to keep in touch on anniversaries, inviting them to remain in touch with their mentors. When SCCs/BECs are unable to assist adequately the couples can be referred to the parish family ministry for counseling or other types of assistance.
- d. For elderly, to engage them according to their ability and activeness. To bear in mind that after retiring from work and even when immobile, the elderly continue to grow as disciples on mission. Ageism is the mindset of seeing the elderly as a problem and as people unable to contribute anything. It is important to change the language we use and treasure our elderly as a resource.

11. For the purpose of encouraging SCC/BEC leaders and national teams to design their own modules, we studied and experienced one module on Marriage and Family using a participatory methodology including the three step - See, Judge (understand) & Act.

### **An Experience of the Early Church from the Acts of the Apostles**

12. The highlight of our program was a visit to the six parishes of Batam Island and to families and SCCs/BECs. The visit was a moving experience of hospitality and how the Word of God through Gospel Sharing can transform and support families: the intergenerational dialogue in the Gospel Sharing and discussions and their spirit of sharing and friendship.
13. We learnt that behind these communities was a clear diocesan vision and pastoral plan which included systematic, regular training of leaders at the diocesan, vicariate, parish and SCC/BEC levels. The laity were animated and empowered. We congratulate the diocese of Pangkal Pinang and thank them for their generous welcome.

### **Sanctuary of Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us.**

14. The visit to Galang island, sanctuary of Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help was a stark reminder that even today thousands of families are fleeing wars & persecution. Galang was the place where 250,000 Vietnamese Refugees were settled in camps and a chapel was built by the refugees themselves. The sanctuary was built not only to immortalize that human tragedy but to remind us of our role to be peacemakers and the role of our SCCs/BECs to be a home and family for everyone, welcoming and caring for the stranger in our midst.

## 15. Recommendations

1. That pastors affirm those families who make many sacrifices to live faithful, loving lives and raise children, educating them and working hard for the family's well-being.
2. That pastoral leaders support and encourage all those working in family ministries and SCCs/BECs accompanying families and supporting those who are vulnerable and hurting.
3. National and diocesan teams have a clear pastoral plan for formation of SCCs/BECs to animate families for mission.
4. National, diocesan & parish teams relook their pastoral strategies related to SCCs/BECs to include the whole family, enabling each member to participate more fully.<sup>3</sup>
  - a. That youth be included in SCCs/BECs with special attention to their specific needs.
  - b. That children be nurtured in SCCs/BECs through catechesis and joining in meetings in their own way.
  - c. That spouses be encouraged to come together and work together in SCCs/BECs.
  - d. That the elderly be enabled to participate and contribute and value their wisdom.
5. Pastoral plans for the family take up the urgent task of training couples and individuals to accompany families especially in the early years of their marriage. Every SCC/BEC can provide a family or couple who can be trained to take this up as a ministry.
6. SCCs/BECs be enabled to care for inter-faith couples to support and integrate them and their children.
7. That formation in Seminaries and Religious Houses include the ecclesiology of SCCs/BECs, and opportunities for learning through immersion in SCCs/BECs.

## GOING FORWARD as AsIPA marks 25 years (1993-2018)

16. The Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly (FABC5) held in Bandung, Indonesia, called for a pastoral process to make concrete and visible the New Way of Being Church. The FABC Office of Laity was mandated to organize the training provided by the late Bishop Oswald Hirmer and Bishop Fritz Lobinger of the Lumko Institute, South Africa in 1991. In 1993, a consultation with two offices of the FABC, bishops, executive secretaries and experts was called and the term Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) was formulated to describe the tool that was to spearhead the implementation of the New Way of Being Church. From Vatican II to Bandung was 25 years. After Bandung, in 1993, from the beginning of the AsIPA process to Batam is another 25 years.
17. AsIPA has been adopted by many countries and has been contextualized and the materials adapted and translated into the local languages. "The AsIPA texts and modules have been translated into more than 25 Asian languages." (AsIPA GA4 3.3) The latest languages to be added are Burmese and Vietnamese.
18. The AsIPA desk has been conducting Bishops' Institutes on SCCs and International training workshops as well as national programmes since 1994.
19. It is important to note that AsIPA is about moving towards the New Way of Being Church and is not only about SCCs/BECs although they are a crucial aspect of this 'new way'. AsIPA is also building the new way of being a diocese and parish, of preparing for the sacraments, building

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<sup>3</sup> Amoris Laetitia 202, "The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish which is the family of families where small communities, ecclesial movements and associations live in harmony.

catechumen communities, developing Pastoral Councils etc.<sup>4</sup>

### **AsIPA Desk to be discontinued**

20. The FABC Central Secretariat announced 'new initiatives' regarding the FABC Office of Laity and Family, AsIPA(BEC) Desk. The AsIPA(BEC) Desk has been discontinued and there is a gap until the new initiatives can be put in place. There will be a disruption in the training and formation that has been provided by the AsIPA(BEC) Desk up to now. This very unexpected announcement led many to seek the reasons for such a decision being made without any prior consultation or information.
21. Many assembly participants seek assurance that there will be no disruption in the work of building A participatory Church, communion of communities in the New Way of Being Church. It is very important to many dioceses and countries in Asia that the coordination is done by a recognized desk and team under the auspices of the FABC without disruption. Any new initiatives have to respect the immediate and on-going pastoral needs of the people.

### **CONCLUSION**

22. Many teachings of the Second Vatican Council towards the New Way of Being Church are still waiting to be put into practice. If we want our young families, youth, women, men, elderly and children to continue to live the faith in their daily lives, to meet the Risen Lord in the Word of God through SCCs/BECs, to love the sacraments and feel they share in the mission of the Church, we have to be faithful stewards of the grace entrusted to us and continue to sustain and nourish our SCCs/BECs.
23. We thank all the pastoral teams and SCC/BEC members for the dedication and love they have shown in their efforts to build up the grassroot Church and enable families for communion and mission.
24. We place our hopes and prayers in the hands of our Mother Mary, who brings them to our Risen Lord. We remain confident in Christ Jesus who shares his mission of love and mercy through the Church, through families and the Small Christian Communities.

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*Eighth AsIPA General Assembly  
24<sup>th</sup> October 2018*

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<sup>4</sup> FABC5, paragraph 8