

# MISSIONARY PROJECT OF THE CLARETIANS IN ASIA



2005

### **Documents' Abbreviations**

BIRA: Bishops' Institute for Inter-religious Affairs  
ChL: Christi Fideles Laici  
EA: Ecclesia in Asia  
FABC: Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences  
GS: Gaudium et Spes  
LG: Lumen Gentium  
NMI: Novo Millennio Inneunte  
OTC: Office of Theological Concerns (FABC)  
RM: Redemptoris Missio  
Starting  
Afresh ...: Starting Afresh from Christ  
TTHL: That They may Have Life  
VC: Vita Consecrata

# Introduction

Asia, the earth's largest continent, is the cradle of the great religions of the world and the birthplace of varied spiritual traditions. The Asian population comprises 60% of the world population. They are heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions. The Asian situation manifests certain common features but also great diversity.

In this milieu, Christianity stands as a vital source and a force of life and energy to the Asian people of today. The Asian holistic approach and reverential attitude to life are enshrined in the people and in the ancient cultures of Asia. Asians understand God as the fountain of life and He has shared this life with His creation. Through this sharing, all nations, individuals, and members of the Church have their being.

In the Post Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) John Paul II took note of the joy of the Church in Asia because Jesus was born in Asia and, from Asia, it spread throughout the different parts of the Roman Empire and to the whole world. Yet paradoxically Jesus is often perceived as foreign to Asia, a Western rather than an Asian figure (EA 20). The Synod also recognized that despite her centuries old presence and her many apostolic endeavors, the Church in many places is still considered as foreign to Asia, and indeed was often associated in people's minds with colonial powers (EA 9). It rightly points out that the greatest and most urgent

challenge for the Church's work of evangelization is the encounter of Christianity with the ancient Asian cultures and religions (EA 2). How do we share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts, namely the Good News of Jesus Christ the Savior and his Mission of Love and Service in Asia: "That they may have Life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10) (EA 2 & 19)?

As Asian Claretians, sharers of this "abundant Life", we have the responsibility of sharing it with the people with enthusiasm and vigor in the style of Jesus himself. The XXIII General Chapter has identified the "sharing of life" to others, especially those living in the fringes of society, as a concrete way of being Claretian Missionaries today. It stresses that "Our vocation and prophetic mission place us at the service of life" (TTHL 04).

# **1. PRESENT SITUATION IN ASIA**

## **1.1. Situation of Pluralism: Religious and Cultural Diversity**

The greatest challenge that the Church faces with respect to Mission is the question of the diversity and plurality of the Asian milieu, with its myriad religions, cultures and peoples. How the Asian local Churches could find themselves at home with such diversity and plurality?

Religious pluralism is not something negative, but a source of richness and strength: “peace and harmony in Asian societies, composed as they are of many cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups, would require recognition of legitimate pluralism and respect for all groups. Unity, peace and harmony are to be realized in diversity. The test of true harmony lies in the acceptance of diversity as richness” (BIRA IV/11, art. 15). These pluralities of religious traditions are “expressions of the presence of God’s Word and of the universal action of his Spirit in them”. God’s Spirit is active in all peoples, religious traditions and cultures. It is the same Spirit who has been active in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the Church (BIRA IV/3. art. 6).

The diversity of Asian cultures, with their constellations of collective symbolic values, world-views that touch the totality of life, human relationships, community, people’s relation to nature, people’s beliefs

and customs, etc. are the concrete people's way of being human. It embodies the values of the human person and the community, esteemed virtues such as hospitality, compassion, faithfulness, sense of the sacred, ethical-religious traditions and society's institutions. It includes people's stories, myths, the folk wisdom, etc. These are gifts of God and the fruits of the Spirit. They too contain "germinative seeds of the Word" sown by the Spirit (OTC, FABC Papers, 96, 3.2.1).

### *1.1.1. Political Situation*

With the exception of some totalitarian military or communist regimes, most Asian countries have some sort of democratic governments, though they do not follow the same model of democracy. The results of elections are at time questionable. Frequently, after elections, the governed have very little say in governance. A common feature is that those who are elected pursue their own interests. Further, there is a tendency towards centralization of power and decision-making. Pervasive corruption is a reality at various levels of government. On the other hand, governments are forced to adopt policies and practices dictated by the IMF, WB and the WTO. These policies are devoid of a human face and social concern. Likewise, the model of economic development promoted by the transnational corporations in Asia leaves more and more people in the fringes of society (7th Plenary Assembly of FABC, Final Statement, II, C).

### **1.1.2. *Economic Situation***

The socio-economic realities of Asia are diverse and complex. While the process of economic globalization has brought certain fast and amazing positive effects, we are aware that it has also worked to the detriment of the poor, tending to push poorer countries to the margin of economic and political relations. Many Asian nations are unable to hold their own in a global market economy (EA 39). The phenomenon of marginalization and exclusion are its direct consequences. It has produced greater inequalities among the people. It has enabled only small portion of the population to improve their standards of living, leaving many to remain in poverty. Another consequence is excessive urbanization, causing the emergence of huge urban conglomerations and the resultant migration, crime and exploitation of the weaker sections.

On the other hand, “cultural globalization” through the over-saturation of the mass media is “quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularist and materialist”, undermining or causing the erosion of traditional social, cultural and religious values that have sustained Asia. Such a process is a great threat to Asia’s cultures and religions, resulting in “incalculable damage” (EA 7). Globalization is an ethical and moral issue which could not be ignored.

### **1.1.3. *Other Disturbing Issues***

Religious fundamentalism or extremism continues to bring division to Asian societies and suffering to the people. To confront this challenge it is necessary to encourage Christians' full participation in social and cultural activities, at the local and national levels, in order to bridge the gaps between communities and build harmony. The endeavor to promote the human rights of all people, regardless of caste, color, creed or religion, by raising our voices against all such violations is a must.

The development being promoted in Asia and its impact on the ecological environment is causing a steady, ongoing deterioration of the environment, as a result of uncontrolled pollution, degrading poverty, deforestation, etc. The effect worsens when some Asian countries become dumping grounds for toxic wastes, hazardous industrialization proceeds without any environmental standards.

Another disturbing challenge is the increasing militarization of societies. Peace-building, including disarmament, becomes imperative, calling for urgent responses to such issues as the banning of land mines, trade in small arms and nuclear proliferation. Both conflict-prevention as well as conflict resolution constitute critical challenges. Asian religions, including Christianity, are called to contribute to the building-up of peace. This is a central area for dialogue with religions and cultures leading to reconciliation (7th Plenary Assembly of FABC, Final Statement, II, B, D, E).

#### ***1.1.4. Movements for Social Transformation***

Movements for social transformation in different areas of human life, going on in Asia today, are great signs of hope. These movements embody the commitment of people to transform themselves and societies. This commitment manifests the Spirit's presence. In liberation movements there is an awakened consciousness and commitment to justice, dignity, freedom, solidarity, and for the transformation of life and society. Some of the Asian Movements of special importance are: Women's Movements, Tribal Movements, Ecological Movements, Movements of the Poor and People's Movements.

## **2.EVANGELIZATION IN ASIA TODAY**

### **2.1. Being at the service of the reign of God as Goal**

Being at the service of the Reign of God is the reason for the existence of the Church. The Reign of God surpasses the boundaries of the Church and is present and initiated well before the birth of the Church. It belongs to the whole humanity and cannot become the monopoly of any particular community. It is manifested in the diversified cultures, religions and people. "Christian communities in Asia must listen to the Spirit at work in the many communities of believers who live and experience their own faith, who share and celebrate it in their own social, cultural and religious history and that they (as a community of the Gospel) must accompany these others "in a common pilgrimage towards the ultimate goal, in relentless quest for the absolute," and that thus they are to be "sensitively attuned to the work of the Spirit in the resounding symphony of Asian communion" (FABC 111 art. 8.2).

### **2.2. Dialogue as Evangelization**

Dialogue suffers from misconception when it is understood as sharing of ideas with the followers of other religions. There are people who think that, in inter-religious dialogue, one should consider all religions as

equal and should give up the uniqueness of one's religious identity. Dialogue is much deeper than simply the sharing of ideas and the purpose is not self emptying but mutual enrichment.

The Asian bishops have understood evangelization as the building up of the Local Church through a three-fold dialogue with the cultures, the religions and the poor of Asia. It means that inculturation, inter-religious dialogue and liberation are the three fold dimensions of evangelization (FABC- Theses on Inter religious Dialogue Art. 6.4). It is through this three fold dialogue that the person of Christ can be credibly made known among the communities of Asia.

### *2.2.1. Dialogue with Asian Cultures:*

Evangelization in Asia must acknowledge that the diversities of cultures and traditions are indeed a richness. The kernel of Christianity is faith in the person of Jesus. There is no such thing as Christian culture that has to be promoted by the Church, neither are there non-Christian cultures which deserve to be subjugated. The Christian faith and the cultures of Asia can enrich each other. Real evangelization is not to expand the Church but to allow the Church to be born anew in each new context and culture with its own theological reflection, its own celebration of faith and Christian praxis, and with the categories and symbols proper of the culture.

At the same time, the Gospel is always something new in relation to any culture and cannot lose its transcendence in relation to cultures and situations. It has

always a critical and purifying dimension. For this reason, no culture can absorb the Gospel completely into its own system.

### ***2.2.2. Dialogue with Asian Religions:***

The humanity of Asia is wounded and torn by religious conflicts. It is through dialogue with religions that the church discerns "what deeds the Lord wills to be done so that all humankind may be gathered in harmony as His family" (FABC. V. Art. 6.3). Promotion of inter-religious harmony through dialogue has to be a constitutive element of the Church's mission in Asia.

Through dialogue the Church shares with others how the salvific plan of God revealed in the person of Jesus is comprehended by us and, at the same time, she listens to the workings of the Spirit in other religious traditions.

### ***2.2.3. Dialogue with the Poor:***

The saving mission of the Church is concretely revealed in her solidarity with the poor. The authenticity of her mission is manifested in the dialogue that she has with the poor and the marginalized. It demands that the Church, then:

- ❖ shares the life and the predicament of the poor.
- ❖ adopts a simple life style and a deep sense of reverence to the people.

- ❖ struggles along with them towards liberation.
- ❖ promotes integral socioeconomic development, and more just structures which, in turn, will empower the marginalized.
- ❖ works in partnership with the people of good will in creating a just world order.

### **2.3. Contemplation as mission**

Asia has discovered God by contemplating on his works made manifest in the realities of people and nature. The seekers of God need to be contemplatives in order to read the will of God in the course of history. Following Jesus who was in deep communion with the Father, the church in Asia must become a deeply praying community whose contemplation is inserted in the context of our time and the cultures of our people. Integrated into everyday life, authentic prayer has to engender in Christians a clear witness of service and love (FABC VII, 1, 3). The missionary agenda should be drawn by listening to and contemplating on the social realities in the light of the Gospel.

### **2.4. Mission towards Harmony**

Many Asian countries suffer strife and tension that have reddened the face of Asia with the blood of her children due to religious, ethnic, political and class conflicts (E.g. religious conflicts in India, Muslim-

Christian friction in Indonesia and the Philippines, Tamil-Singhalese unrest in Sri Lanka, aggressive theocratic positions in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, etc). In such a context, the church should be a sacrament –a visible sign and instrument of forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion and harmony. This is to be prophetic in the true sense of the word.

## **2.5. From “Missio ad Gentes” to “Missio inter Gentes”**

There has to be a paradigm shift in the understanding of the mission of the Church in relation to other religions. The approach to the ancient religious traditions of Asia as “missio ad gentes” has been found inadequate as it implies the superior and triumphalistic notion of the Church as the sole custodian of truth and of other religions as having only fragments of it.

The relevant mission mindset that is required in Asia today is comprehended as “missio inter gentes” – meaning, mission among the nations, which demands that the Church exercise this mission in dialogue with and immersion among the people of Asia. For us Claretians in Asia, mission, which is the center and reason for our being, must mean dialogue. And if mission is dialogue, we have to assume its urgent and significant implications in the spheres of community life, prayer, liturgy, catechism, structures, formation, etc.

## **2.6. Implications of “Missio inter Gentes” for the Church of Asia**

First of all, “Missio inter Gentes” implies that the Church immerses and pitches her tent in the reality of Asia. The kenosis and the Incarnation of Jesus must be seen as a picture of a human child born of a woman in history. The Asian Church, therefore, has to be Christ-like and must experience the life of the people of Asia. Though the Church in Asia is a minority, oftentimes we speak, act, and behave from the perspective and position of influence, power and privilege. We must divest and strip ourselves of all our illusions of grandeur and greatness so that we may be able to walk humbly with the poor and the marginalized of Asia.

Secondly, it implies that the Church renounces the triumphalistic attitude of giving all the truth to the nations. “Triumphalism and exclusivism of any kind are diametrically opposed to spirituality. They fail to recognize and appreciate the thousand flowers God has let grow, flourish and blossom in the garden of the world” (Felix Wilfred, Fifth Assembly of FABC: An Interpretation of its Theological Orientation, Vidyajyothi 54 (1990) 590). As a sign of following God who emptied himself, the Church must also shed triumphalism.

Thirdly, it implies that the Church becomes a pilgrim contemplating the working of the Spirit present and operative in the realities of Asia. She has to meditate on the workings of the Spirit in the history and the cultures of the Peoples, receiving guidance along the way.

Fourthly, it implies that the Church is witness to the Reign of God through Christ-like life. The basic call of Jesus is to follow him, living a life patterned after his life. The proclamation of the uniqueness of Jesus is primarily through living and witnessing, not through dogmatic propositions.

And lastly, it implies that the Church considers growing qualitatively and not just numerically; the evaluation of her growth must be done not so much from the perspective of numbers but most importantly, from the perspective of the quality of the Christian life of her members. If the life of Christians resembles the life of Jesus, then the Church can be considered to have grown.

## **3. THE CLARETIANS IN ASIA**

### **3.1. Historical Note**

The Claretian Missionaries set foot in Asia for the first time in 1929, when the Holy See offered them the supervision of Kaifeng Central Seminary, in China; though later on, they would carry out their missionary activities in the Apostolic Prefecture of Tunxi (the actual Huangsan). They were expelled from China definitively in 1952, but by that time there was already another new foundation in Asia.

The Claretians from United States opened a mission in Santa Barbara, Pangasinan, Philippines in 1947. This particular mission did not last long but was nevertheless instrumental in opening up new missionary perspectives in the southern part of the country. In 1963, the Prelature of Isabela, Basilan, was created and entrusted to the Congregation. The Congregation was not yet healed of its trauma caused by the terrible persecution some of its members suffered in China when in the Philippines another persecution erupted. The tense situation created by the Moro rebels would have its most dramatic expression in the burning of our hospital in Basilan in 1977, though this proved to be only the beginning of a series of nightmares that would make us suffer several kidnapping cases and finally the tragic killing of Fr. Rhoel Gallardo in 2000.

The Claretian missionaries established themselves for the first time in Imaichi Parish, Osaka, Japan in 1951. Other foundations followed soon after in different parts of the country.

The foundation in India came a bit later. Though some Indian youth had been in contact with the Congregation as early as 1961, the foundation had to wait until 1970 when the first novitiate house was established in Kuravilangad, India.

After India, new and important foundations followed across the Asian continent: South Korea in 1983, Indonesia in 1989 and Sri Lanka in 1991. Recently, the Congregation had opened new frontiers: first in Vietnam, where in 2002 some missionaries arrived in order to learn the language and to accompany some candidates, and secondly, in Myanmar, where the Congregation has just started to be present this year.

In 1995, some Claretian missionaries entered anew the vast mainland China to study the possibilities for a future foundation in Tunxi, the same place where the Claretians had a mission post before. This visit was made by the members of the Taiwan community established in 1994 specifically for the re-establishment of mission in China. Soon after, in the same year, other missionaries from the Korean communities visited Harbin, northern China, with the same objective. These different visits helped us decide in creating a more stable presence in China during a meeting held in Manila last February, 2005.

The growth in some areas, especially in India, demanded new juridical status with the creation of new

Major Organisms. The Province of Bangalore was erected in 1984, and later in 1994, the Province of Chennai. The Syro-Malabar Independent Delegation that was erected in 2001 became St. Thomas Province in 2004. The last Major Organism has been that of Indonesia-East Timor which became officially an Independent Delegation in April 2005.

There have been many and significant missionary enterprises carried out by the Congregation in Asia. It would be impossible to enumerate them all. However, we would like to mention a few: the Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia (ICLA), established in Manila, Philippines in 1997; the Sanyasa Institute, founded in Bangalore, India in 2002; the Claretian Publications in Manila and in Bangalore, with the remarkable apostolate of the publications in Manila to translate and spread the Bible in many Asian languages, including Chinese.

It is not easy to summarize in few lines the Claretian missionary presence in Asia, but what is important is not to forget that we owe all these things to that great historical event that started in 1929 in China and which persistently prods us on to look beyond and dream of new missionary enterprises for the whole of Asia.

### **3.2. The Mission of the Claretians in Asia**

In the process of outlining our Mission as Claretians in Asia, we take into consideration the rich patrimony of our process of renewal crystallized in our

General Chapter Documents, especially about our Charismatic Identity in the Church, the Mission of the Claretian Today, Our Prophetic Missionary Service of the Word and Service to Life. It is in the above described context of Asia, with its many signs of life and death, lights and shadows, where we are “called and consecrated” to continue the mission of Jesus stressing our charismatic gift and heritage in the Church.

### *3.2.1. Revival of our Missionary Vocation*

As Claretians in Asia, first of all, we are called to revive our Claretian “missionary” vocation and “consecration” in our mission of love and service to the peoples of Asia, deeply respectful of Asian cultural, religious and social values and as compassionate companions, partners and servants of the people in their journey toward full life in God’s Kingdom (FABC VII, Part I, A, 5). This missionary principle inspired St. Paul’s missionary life and that of Claret: “I make myself a Jew to the Jews ... For the weak, I make myself weak... (I Cor 9:20-22).

The revival of our missionary vocation to continue the mission of Jesus will demand real starting afresh from Christ, passion for Christ and humanity and building up true communion and solidarity with the people (Staring Afresh..., 21). Also needed are alertness to the signs of the times and listening to the call of the Spirit who is the principal agent of mission at work in Asian realities (RM 21). This attitude will help us “to be with the people, responding to their needs, with sensitivity and great

respect to the presence of God in their cultures and religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom, through presence, solidarity, sharing, dialogue and word" (FABC V, 3.1.2).

### ***3.2.2. Witness of Evangelical Lifestyle***

The message of the Gospel, the Good News of the incarnated Word, is best proclaimed today by the witness of the evangelizer. The silent witness of an evangelical life is a clear and eloquent witness to Christ, especially, when it is rooted in the experience of God in prayer and contemplation and is accompanied by the life style of renunciation, detachment, humility, simplicity, silence and by the work of justice, charity and compassion. This kind of evangelical witness is most suitable among the peoples and cultures of Asian people (EA 23, 44).

### ***3.2.3. Witness of Prayer and Experience of God***

The most striking dimension of the prophetic ministry of Jesus was his amazing prayer life and experience of God. We, called and consecrated to continue his mission, will not be able to carry it out without following Jesus in this essential dimension. "A Claretian missionary without this experience is as a soldier without weapons in the battle field" (Autobiography N.).

Witnessing in the context of Asia is impossible without a deep spirituality nourished in God's experience.

Religion in Asia is more an experience than a theory or doctrine. As religious, we are called to be “spiritual guides,” showing the way as witnesses of compassion and harmony, detachment and solidarity with the poor. This kind of witness readily wins respect and following in Asia (EA 23). The contemplation of the face of Jesus leads religious to contemplate the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: “I was hungry...” (Mt 25:35-36) (NMI 16; Starting Afresh..., 34).

#### **3.2.4. *Prophetic Role in the Mission***

Living and acting as prophets, in the common mission of the Church, demands from the religious to give preference to the witnessing and symbolic dimension of their life. The way we live and act in our mission must be a constant provocation which disturbs the hearts of the people and invites to conversion and hope. Our fraternity, communion, compassion and solidarity make us signs and icons of the loving and compassionate God among his people, even his voice among them. Witness is the first form of evangelization in Asia and gives credibility to our mission.

### **3.3. Contextualizing our Claretian Mission**

The charismatic fire of our origins has to be, not just transplanted or implanted, but enfleshed in the Asian realities of our mission. This charismatic heritage, which

we have received through the mediation of our Founder, is the transforming force and power of the Spirit, our consecration and habilitation for mission. The law of mission must follow a loving and incarnated process of rootedness among the people. In the context of Asia this will demand a humble ever ending process of dialogue and inculturation at various levels: Asian cultures, religions, the poor and other Christian denominations (Cf. section II).

### **3.4. Guiding Criteria in Our Mission in Asia**

It is obvious that the reality of the Claretians in Asia must respond to the different contexts of the local or particular Churches they are inserted. However, in line with the magisterium of FABC and our own charism, we suggest some fundamental options for the mission of the Claretians in Asia:

#### ***3.4.1. Agents of a “New Way of Being Church”***

The Ecclesiology of Communion and Mission, of participation and corresponsibility that Vatican II (LG, GS), the post-conciliar Magisterium (ChL, VC) and the theological reflection have offered us are a clear sign that the Spirit is leading the Church towards an organic and charismatic communion of all the forms of Christian vocation in the life and mission of the Church. The organic and charismatic communion of all the vocations

or states of life in the Church, as well as their correlation and complementarity in the life and mission of the Church, demand that all the members of the Church, each one according to their specific vocation, as ordained ministers, as laity or as religious take an active role in her life and mission. This is the great challenge the Church is facing at the beginning of the new millennium. The FABC, along this line, in several occasions, even in the Synod of Asia, has called the Church of Asia to a “new way of being Church”, especially, through the promotion and formation of BEC (Basic Ecclesial Communities) and the promotion and formation of the laity. Only in this “new way of being Church” or in this “new model of Church” of participation, complementary and corresponsibility, can we speak of “shared mission” without manipulations or monopolies. This kind of Church needs a serious process of conversion and commitment, especially on the part of her leaders.

### *3.4.2. Promotion and Formation of Evangelizers*

Formation of evangelizers was one of the great concerns of Claret in his Episcopal ministry. There are some specific frontiers in Asia (in some of them the Congregation has already entered or is in the process of entering – Vietnam, China, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, etc.) where the most felt need is the Formation of priests, religious and laity. To strengthen the humble service that the Claretians are already giving through its Publications and Institutes of Consecrated Life could be one of the priorities at this moment for the Claretians in Asia.

### 3.4.3. *Marching on with the Movements of the Spirit in Asia Today*

The best way of implementing lines of action suggested for the unfolding of our charismatic ministry, as prophetic missionary servants of the Word, is to insert ourselves in the “movements of the Spirit going on in Asia today”, giving them support and empowerment. This aspect was also stressed by the Synodal Fathers during the celebration of the Synod of Asia. We should give special commitment to the following Asian Movements:

Women’s Movements. Supporting their struggle not only for justice, equality and rights, but also for a new vision of society, for wholeness in human relations, with a vision to move towards a just, humane, participatory, compassionate and peaceful world.

Tribal Movements. Supporting Tribal peoples’ struggle to protect their identity, their cultural heritage, their ancestral lands and their rights in situations where they are exploited, displaced and marginalized.

Ecological Movements. Supporting the ecological and environmental movements that link the justice and the rights of the people to the goals of preservation of a healthy environment and conservation of nature and its resources.

Movements of the Poor. Supporting and empowering the people still suffering from massive poverty: victims of deprivation, dispossession, humiliation, exclusion and oppression. Their struggle for dignity, freedom, solidarity, and a life worthy of their

humanity is a clear liberating presence of the Spirit of God.

People's Movements. Supporting workers' movements, people's movements for human rights, non-violence movements, etc.

#### 3.4.4. *Shared Mission*

The bringing up of the Reign of God is the common mission project of all the people of good will. In this project we have to become partners along with the people and the movements who work for the justice, peace and the empowerment of the weaker sections of humanity. Our characteristic feature of itinerancy should help us always to be reaching out to the people, as against becoming an institution that settles itself and invites people as beneficiaries. Itinerancy implies that we are not for ourselves but for others, and it advocates revision and updating of knowledge, positions, structures, etc (Cf. TTHL 66).

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

As corollaries of the above reflections, the following mechanisms and lines of actions are proposed so that we will become agents of life in Asia.

- 1) It is incumbent upon us to form ministries that promote dignity of life and integral development of the poor and the marginalized, and of the depressed communities. We must facilitate their proper education, whether formal or non-formal, with special emphasis on those with disabilities, women, children, elders, immigrants, indigenous people, and those suffering from alcohol, drugs and HIV.
- 2) The Pastoral Plan of every Province, Delegation, or Mission should give importance to the apostolate of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation and thereby set up commissions that shall take up seriously the different aspects of this apostolate. We must help in the defense of human life and in the common efforts of various people of good will in building bridges of peace, harmony, and reconciliation. (TTHL 67)
- 3) We must, furthermore, grow in all our endeavors of dialoguing with other religions and cultures. We should do this first by growing in our knowledge and awareness of the other religions and cultures, as well as by growing in our appreciation of their valid and legitimate place in the world and in the history of salvation

for all humanity. We must also collaborate with them in our collective efforts of working for justice, peace, harmony, and human promotion. Immersion with them is therefore a must if we want to grow in our knowledge and reverence of these religions and cultures. We must also help popularize indigenous/minority cultures and arts, and work for the inculturation of the Word of God through them.

- 4) In view of Formation for Mission, we must include exposure and dialogue with cultures and religions in our formation programs both for our missionaries-in-formation and for our lay collaborators in the field. To facilitate a better insertion into the missionary context where we work, we also need to emphasize the study of languages and local cultures for our missionaries-in-formation. At the same time we need to inculcate in them the sense of availability for universal mission.
- 5) Asia, being the continent where most of the world's major religions were born, we must develop ministries that enhance deep and profound spirituality. We must also create centers for biblical studies where knowledge, appreciation, and love of the Bible are deepened. We should make use of all kinds of media for the works of evangelization and promotion of Asian theologies. In this regard, we must harness the full potential of our Publishing ministries in our unique work of

evangelization as Claretians, and see that they reflect the Claretian commitments for Asia.

- 6) St. Anthony Mary Claret who, a century ago, had seen and understood the essential role of the laity in the work of evangelization. Assuming this insight, we must continue to cultivate and form lay partners in mission. This demands a certain level of kenosis on our part in our willingness to divest and strip ourselves of the old mentality that looked at the laity as second-class citizens.
- 7) We must come up with concrete programs and activities that will enhance ways of collaboration and cooperation among the Claretians in Asia in the fields of formation, apostolate, common projects, etc.
- 8) We must create permanent structures and make a plan of action for intercultural collaboration and exchange of experiences at the level of ASCLA in the following ways:
  - a. Providing opportunities for missionary immersion and exposure, both locally and in other countries. If we want to walk and dialogue with our Asian brethren who are non-Christians, we must know, understand, and be exposed to their way of life, their cultures, their religions, the way they pray, etc.
  - b. Exchanging of people for exposures and inviting Claretians from other countries for

sharing on, say, the cultures and dominant religions of their countries of origin, and their other expertise.

- c. Sharing of the best practices, resources and experiences among Provinces in terms of formation programs, ministries, structures, etc.
- d. Reviving structures where missionaries coming from different countries gather together in one country for exposure and immersion, and for an intensive course on Claretian materials.

9) Lastly, ASCLA, as a collective body, must maintain the Asian-ness of our Claretian charism and the Claretian-ness of our call to mission in Asia.

ASCLA meeting, Hirakata, Japan

August 24, 2005

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