

# Dialogue and Culture for Mission and Proclamation in Asia

Rev. Dr. Gilbert de Lima

## Asian Context

Asia is a vast mosaic comprising over forty countries where two thirds of the world's population live. Two countries alone, China and India, together make up half of the world's population. Many would say that it is impossible to characterize the Asian situation in general. In fact great disparities are present.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless there are some general characteristics of Asia that we could identify if we were to study Asia closely.

## Asia has a plurality of cultures:

The most striking feature of the continent is the variety of its peoples who are "heirs to ancient cultures, religions and traditions". We cannot but be amazed at the sheer size of Asia's population and at the intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions, which comprise such a substantial part of the history and patrimony of the human family.<sup>2</sup>

In the realm of culture there are two factors relating to it that make Asia special.<sup>3</sup> First, the multiplicity of cultures existing in the same country. One would be amazed for example, if one moved from South India to North India that the language, the modes of dress, the food habits, the mentality and even ethnic origin are totally different. Secondly, these cultures are highly developed cultures. Some of the most ancient civilizations in the world have their roots in Asia.

Now the people of Asia take pride in their religious and cultural values<sup>4</sup>, such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry.<sup>10</sup> They hold dear the values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, and a highly developed sense of community. In particular, they hold the family to be a vital source of strength, a closely knit community with a powerful sense of solidarity. Asian peoples are known for their spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Without denying the existence of bitter tensions and violent conflicts, it can still be said that Asia has often demonstrated a remarkable capacity for accommodation and a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures. Moreover, despite the

influence of modernization and secularization, Asian religions are showing signs of great vitality and a capacity for renewal, as seen in reform movements within the various religious groups. Many people, especially the young, experience a deep thirst for spiritual values, as the rise of new religious movements clearly demonstrates.

All of this indicates an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of “being Asian” is built. This “being Asian” is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. 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 to the Asian soul.

**Asia is a land of a great plurality of religions:**

Eighty-five percent of all the world's followers of other living faiths (besides Christianity) are Asians. Many of the world's major religions were born in Asia: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Sikhism, Jainism and Shintoism.<sup>5</sup> Christians in Asia are less than three percent of the total population. In short, except for the Philippines and East Timor, Christians are a small minority. There are seven times more Muslims in Asia than there are Christians; the four largest Islamic countries in the world (2007) are in Asia: Indonesia (216 million), Pakistan (161 million), India (147 million), Bangladesh (122 million). These brief Islamic statistics do not include world religions like Buddhism and Hinduism. Besides, of course, there are any number of tribal religions in Asia. What stands out here is not only that there is a big number of religions, but also the fact that they have survived for hundreds and thousands of years.<sup>6</sup> The Church has the deepest respect for these traditions and seeks to engage in sincere dialogue with their followers. Religion is the essential element of culture, indeed it is its determining core. It is religion which determines the structure of values and thereby forms its inner logic.<sup>7</sup> The Church has also used in her preaching the discoveries of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, to probe it and more deeply understand it, and to give it better expression in the liturgy and in the life of the community of the faithful.<sup>8</sup>

Asia is a land where much poverty can be found.<sup>9</sup> A majority of the world's poorest people today are in Asia - partly because it holds a majority of the world's population. Of course some Asian countries like Japan and South Korea are not as poor as others like India and Cambodia, with Asian poverty being concentrated in South Asia. Poverty in some Asian countries is largely due to the pressure of population growth on scarce resources and inadequate governments allowing strongly negative caste discrimination. Education, medicine, clean water and sanitation are often inadequate also. In some Asian

countries land ownership being problematic also encourages poverty. Asia till recently attracted less foreign investment than Latin America, but more of it has been stable longer-term European investment. Some of Asia has shown good progress on poverty in recent years, like China and South Korea. (in China notably helped partly by controls on population growth) But Asia, holding the largest populations, still has many extreme poor.<sup>10</sup>

There are economic giants, it is true, but there are also some of the countries with the lowest per capita income in the world. The same would be true within a country itself. To give an example of India: in big cities like Mumbai and Delhi, some of the world's richest families live side by side with slums where people lack adequate food, clothing or shelter. While many urban areas show signs of progress and great hope, many rural areas remain deprived of the benefits of progress and sink into ever deeper poverty.

Against this backdrop one can also notice a growing political maturity in Asia. Colonization has practically disappeared. Even though there exist different forms of Government, the sovereignty of the people is being recognized more and more. People dissatisfied with their rulers are able to change Governments peacefully - though besides the Communist countries, there still remain pockets where oppressive or semi-oppressive Government rule.

Asian countries are no longer insular. Globalization has had its inevitable impact on Asia. Development in the field of communication coupled with globalization has resulted in the media flooding Asian homes and offices with consequent influences on the value systems of our people. Barriers that governments attempted to put up have gradually been crumbling and it is inevitable that this will happen all over. A resultant factor is also becoming more visible, the secularization of society. The media is largely responsible for this and family life is affected and a materialistic mentality is infecting particularly urban Asia.

### **Dialogue**

Given the multiracial, multi-linguistic, multi-religious, and multicultural reality of Asia, the earth's largest continent and home to nearly two-thirds of the world's population, a dialogical approach is the only possible avenue. Such a dialogical approach is not a mere external methodology that the Church in Asia will adapt; the Church herself is called to be "a community of dialogue. This dialogical model is in fact a new way of being Church".<sup>11</sup>

Now the FABC from the very outset pointed out the significance of dialogue to realize the Church's mission in the Asian context. It declared in its seminal document, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" (1974). that the a truly local

Church, which is indigenous and inculturated is built up through the local faith community engaged in a continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the local cultures, religions and the poor, in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own."<sup>12</sup> This "triple dialogue" paradigm has been verified in subsequent FABC assemblies. In fact, the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly in 2000 noted that the "triple dialogue" that the FABC developed "over the past thirty years ... is still valid today".<sup>13</sup>

#### **Vatican II and Culture<sup>14</sup>**

Very significantly the question of culture was placed by Vatican II as among the, "more urgent problems deeply affecting the human race at the present day in the light of the Gospel and of human experience".<sup>15</sup>

Now culture almost defies definition because it is an all embracing climate rather than an articulated system. It is a social force that encompasses individuals and welds them into communities. It shapes their prejudices, ideas, values, habits, attitudes, tastes and priorities. In his Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, Pope John Paul II points out that culture is more comprehensive than either economics or politics because it deals with the deepest questions of life. Whereas politics and economics are concerned with proximate and limited goods, culture has to do with the meaning of human existence as a whole. It inquires into what we are as human beings, and what reality is in its most comprehensive dimensions.<sup>16</sup>

Hence very significantly the opening passages of *Gaudium et spes*<sup>17</sup> that propose a cultural analysis of the contemporary world. Consequently, it was as a result of historical and social analyses of culture, understood as a source of sociological and ethnological meanings and identity, that the Church began acknowledging the richness and value of plurality of cultures.<sup>18</sup> Thus the Council affirmed, the right of each to one's own culture and at the same time, conscious of its universal mission, encouraged the Church to "enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves."<sup>19</sup>

However, while identifying positive elements of culture, there is also warning about potential dangers that modern culture can be exposed to phenomenism and agnosticism, self-sufficiency, and rejection of the divine by human sciences which "no longer seek higher values".<sup>20</sup> Hence the challenge for the Gospel, to constantly readdress the life and culture of fallen humanity.

In a pastoral approach to culture<sup>21</sup>, what is at stake is for human beings to be restored in fullness to having been created "in the image and likeness of God"<sup>22</sup>, tearing them away from the anthropocentric temptation of considering

themselves independent from the Creator. Therefore, and this observation is crucial to a pastoral approach to culture, "it must certainly be admitted that man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This 'something' is precisely human nature: this nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition of ensuring that man does not become prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being".<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Dialogue between Gospel and Culture**

##### **i) The Gospel is incarnate into the local Culture**

Indeed, "the rift between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly an unhappy circumstance of our times just as it has been in other just as it has been in other times."<sup>24</sup>

(Cardinal) Ratzinger notes very pertinently, "the elements Christianity has in common with the ancient cultures of mankind are greater than those it has in common with the relativistic-rationalistic world. The latter has severed itself from the common sustaining basic insights of mankind and led man into an existential vacuum threatening his ruin if no answer is forthcoming. For the knowledge of man's dependence on God and eternity, the knowledge of sin, repentance and forgiveness, the knowledge of communion with God and eternal life, and finally the knowledge of basic moral precepts as they have taken shape in the Decalogue, all this knowledge permeates the cultures. It is not relativism which is confirmed. On the contrary, it is the unity of the human condition, the unity of man who has been touched by a truth greater than himself."<sup>25</sup>

Therefore cultures today need to be evangelized and regenerated through an encounter with the Gospel. Hence, the imperative need for the Gospel to be incarnate in the local cultures with a critical discernment.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, current cultural analysis, and a comprehensive description of culture in its historical, anthropological, sociological and ethnological aspects,<sup>27</sup> provides a serviceable framework for incarnating the Christian message in actual real-life situations.

In the light of the above, the interaction between the Gospel and the world (cultures) can be compared to what happens to a seed when it is sown in the field.<sup>28</sup> The Word of God, the Gospel, is like a seed that falls into the furrows and folds of every new historical situation, a new culture, a new age, a new society and new religious conceptions and sensitivities. There it dies and rises to a new existence; and the sapling draws

sustenance from the milieu, builds itself up with the human and the religious resources that are there, and grows strong in God's light.

For instance, a true encounter happened in the early Church. The disciples had to allow their particular Jewish-Christian experience die to its local cultural and racial concreteness in order to rise to other particularities. Within a generation the Gospel, originally born in the rural, northern Palestinian culture of Galilee, flowered in the urban culture of the Greeks. The dawning of this awareness and the crisis it endured are reflected in several New Testament passages such as Acts 15; Gal 2; Acts 10; Jn 4. This is the true meaning of announcing Christ to the world. Through this process the Gospel becomes universalized. Hence, as the world hears the Word according to this methodology of the germinating seed; hidden riches of the Gospel become manifest through the symbol systems of various cultures. The almost infinite variety of structures and forms which the Gospel message can assume truly reveals the universal character of the Good News.

#### **ii) Inculturation and Inter-culturation**

It is also very important to understand that inculturation is a process of interculturalization. The Gospel itself comes to a culture with previously acquired particular cultural expressions. Hence, inculturation is a process of mutual fecundation between Gospel and cultures, i.e., the dynamic relationship between the Christian faith and cultures is a meeting of two cultures, or inter-culturation. "This phenomenon of interculturalization draws attention to the enriching as well as dehumanizing factors that are operative in the values and meaning-systems of all cultures.<sup>29</sup> In this intercultural process of enrichment and critique the inculturating community discerns the chaff of false hopes and false values from the wheat of genuine growth. Accordingly, inculturation is not a project that is planned and executed by humans but a process wherein the community allows itself to be led by the Spirit. In such a case inculturation just happens in much the same way that the first Christians became Jewish Christians and the Gentiles became Gentile Christians (cf. Gal 2 & 3; Acts 10, 11 & 15)."<sup>30</sup>

In the light of this, inculturation becomes a need both for the true fulfillment of the mission of the Word of God in the world and for the very manifestation of the vitality of the Word itself.

#### **iii) Hence, the Gospel purifies, elevates and renews cultural values and ways of the people.<sup>31</sup>**

Indeed, the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the Gospel go hand in hand, in a reciprocal relationship which presupposes constant

discernment in the light of the Gospel, to facilitate the identification of values and counter-values in a given culture, so as to build on the former and vigorously combat the latter. "Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within."<sup>32</sup> As a consequence, through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission"

Consequently, inculturation consists not only in experiencing, understanding and appropriating the Gospel and the Christian faith but also expressing the same through the cultural medium as well as the cultural resources of the people. "Thus, inculturation plays a prophetic role to cultures. Cultures need to be open to the gospel and converted to Christ, and the gospel also needs to be opened to the local culture so that it may attain fullness of meaning among the local populace. ...In this way, inculturation brings about mutual enrichment, which usually occurs when the gospel engages the culture"<sup>33</sup>

**iv) This dialogue between Gospel and culture would eventually result in the creation of genuine local Churches in Asia** which seek to identify with the hopes, joys, griefs and aspirations of the Asian people.<sup>34</sup> Such local Churches would also speak a language that is understood and credible in their respective contexts. Indeed, only if the Churches become authentically Asian, will they possess a prophetic voice and work for a cultural transformation from within.<sup>35</sup>

## **5. Cultural diversity and religious plurality**

Religions are an expression of man's search for God, and evidence of the spiritual dimension of the human being.<sup>36</sup> In a world at the mercy of secularization, they are a reminder of the divine presence and the importance of spirituality as the living core of cultures. The countries of the immense continent of Asia have ancient cultures, which are profoundly influenced by non-Christian religions and traditions of wisdom, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Confucianism and Islam, which need to be considered very carefully.

The FABC adopts a positive approach to religions<sup>37</sup>, promoting constructive collaboration, dialogue, and critical interaction among them. The presence of the "seeds of the Word" and the action of the Holy Spirit in these religions is affirmed. Thus, they have insights, values, and virtues that can inform the Church's inculturation process. Over many centuries they have been the

treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength. They have been (and continue to be) the authentic expression of the noblest longings of their hearts, and the home of their contemplation and prayer. They have helped to give shape to the histories and cultures of our nations.

And it is only in dialogue with these religions that we will be able to discover in them the seeds of the Word of God (cf. AG, 9)<sup>38</sup> This dialogue will allow us to touch the expression and the reality of our peoples' deepest selves, and enable us to find authentic ways of living and expressing our own Christian faith. It will reveal to us also many riches of our own faith which we perhaps would not have perceived. Thus it can become a sharing in friendship of our quest for God and for brotherhood among His sons.

For instance, many elements of spirituality and mysticism, like holiness, self-denial, chastity, universal love, a love for peace, prayer and contemplation, bliss in God and compassion, which are very much alive in these cultures, can lead on to faith in the God of Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup> Pope John Paul II recalls this, "In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought."<sup>40</sup>

Dialogue with Asia's religious traditions is also an occasion to give witness to Christian faith: "On our part we can offer what we believe the Church alone has the duty and joy to offer to them and to all men: oneness with the Father in Jesus His Son, the ways to grace Christ gives us in His Gospel and His sacraments, and fellowship [in] the community which seeks to live in Him; an understanding too of the value of the human person and of the social dimensions of human salvation."<sup>41</sup>

## **6. Dialogue with the Poor and the Marginalized**

In the context of Poverty the Synod of Bishops (1971) was quite clear that action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world is "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel".<sup>42</sup> In fact, Paul VI, in "Evangelii Nuntiandi" had asked: "How in fact can one proclaim the new commandment of love without promoting, in justice and in peace, the true and authentic advancement of man?"<sup>43</sup> (EN 31). In particular, the pastoral priorities of the Church in Asia would concern the displaced (refugees and migrants), women and the girl-child, youth, workers, families, the indigenous peoples, etc.<sup>44</sup> Consequently the Christian message of love and justice needs to be incarnate in society and manifested in concrete action it can never gain credibility with the people of our times. Hence the Churches in Asia would need to address these areas of special



concern through a theology and a consequent praxis which will be at the "service of life."<sup>45</sup>

The need therefore for the development of "appropriate" ministries, inculturated ministries. As the Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church noted: "The servant Church accomplishes her mission "by creating new forms of ministries, alongside the existing ones.... The exact form of these ministries will depend to a great extent on the local situations in our countries."<sup>46</sup>

### **8. Proclamation**

Now dialogue goes hand in hand with proclamation, since both are part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Indeed, there is a great need to rediscover the close connection between proclamation and dialogue as elements of the evangelizing mission of the Church<sup>47</sup> It will be seen that these elements are not interchangeable, nor are they to be confused, yet they are indeed related.<sup>48</sup> Proclamation aims at conversion in the sense of free acceptance of the Good News of Christ and becoming a member of the Church. Dialogue, on the other hand, presupposes conversion in the sense of a return of the heart to God in love and obedience to His will, in other words, openness of the heart to the action of God. It is God who attracts people to himself, sending His Spirit who is at work in the depths of their hearts.<sup>49</sup> The post-Synodal document *Ecclesia in Asia* pertinently points out that interreligious dialogue and the Church's mandate to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth are not mutually exclusive, since they complement one another. While on the one hand, the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ must always be made with deep respect for the conscience of those who hear it and with respect for all that is good and holy in the culture and religious tradition to which they belong (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2); on the other hand, freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion in society are basic human rights, rooted in the value and dignity inherent in every person and recognized in many international documents and agreements, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.<sup>50</sup> Hence as John Paul II declared, 'Our proclamation of Christ and our bearing witness to him must be done in a way we respect consciences and do not violate freedoms.'<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, for proclamation to be effective in any context, it must necessarily be inculturated. The post-Synodal document, *Ecclesia in Asia* spells this process very well it says, "In the process of encountering the world's different cultures, the Church not only transmits her truths and values and renews cultures from within, but she also takes from the various cultures the positive elements already found in them..... (and)... the various cultures, when refined and renewed in the light of the Gospel, can become true

expressions of the one Christian faith."<sup>52</sup> Authentic dialogue thus implies proclamation and proclamation must always be done in a spirit of dialogue.

In this context, Archbishop Thomas Menampampil in his presentation at the Symposium organized by the FABC Office of Evangelisation, 2002 entitled 'Towards an Asian Way of Sharing the Faith', made an appropriate intervention! He pointed out that of late, a lurking fear has arisen in the hearts of many a believer that, while Christian teaching is welcome in Asia, the unique person of Christ is a stumbling block. However, on a deeper reflection of the question, one realizes that there is no aversion to Christ himself and what he stands for. When Christ comes unto his own, his own people will not refuse to receive him. As AG, 4 declared "without doubt, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified". And so we bear in mind that the Spirit of Jesus has already preceded him. Indeed there are abundant "seeds of the Word"<sup>53</sup> in the local religious traditions and cultures. Consequently, it becomes necessary, as 'Nostra Aetate', 2 points out, to "preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people, as well as the values in their society and culture."<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, it is "in Christ, that the authentic values of all religious and cultural traditions, such as mercy and submission to the will of God, compassion and rectitude, non-violence and righteousness, filial piety and harmony with creation find their fullness and realization."<sup>55</sup>

(Cardinal) J. Ratzinger made a very significant point in this context, "In his letters from prison, Paul develops the cosmic significance of Christ and thereby opens up for us an "inclusive" Christology in the sense of what we said earlier about conversion. Faith in Jesus Christ becomes a new principle of life and opens up a new space for living. The old is not destroyed but finds its definitive form and full meaning.

This transforming conservation as the fathers splendidly practiced it in the encounter between biblical faith and its cultures is the real content of "inculturation," of encounter and cross-fertilization of cultures and religions under the mediating power of faith.

It is here that the great tasks of the present historical moment lie. Without a doubt, Christian mission must understand and receive the religions in a much deeper way than it has until now. On the other hand, the religions, in order to live authentically, need to recognize their own adventistic character propelling them forward to Christ. If we proceed in this sense toward an intercultural search for clues to the one common truth, we will find something unexpected."<sup>56</sup>

And so it is Christ himself who responds to the persistent longings of the peoples of Asia and contemplating Jesus in his human nature, they have found their deepest questions answered, their hopes fulfilled, their dignity uplifted and their despair conquered.<sup>57</sup> For example, Mahatma Gandhi, coming across the Sermon on the Mount for the first time, felt all his childhood learning was affirmed. He did not perceive it as an alien message. He felt that the Gospel message was more intimate and native to him than many other teachings he had made his own over the years. In recent times when certain Hindu fundamentalist groups met with Church leaders in India recently, they exclaimed, "Christians cannot pretend as though they own Christ." Indeed, Christ belongs to all!

Unfortunately the adherents of some religions have seen proclamation of the Gospel as a threat to them. Fundamentalist groups have therefore sought to stop the preaching and even the socio-economic activities by Christian missionaries.<sup>58</sup> Influenced by these powerful groups some Governments have imposed restrictions on the activities of clergy and religious, e.g., restricting the numbers of priests and in controlling their activity and accessibility to funds, enacting a conversion legislation, etc. This however, has not in any way, dampened the fervour of missionaries ready to preach the Gospel and to live and die for it. The last decade has produced many martyrs for the faith Asia, but the blood of martyrs continues to be the seed of Christia even today, as it was from the very beginnings of the Church.

Concretely to lead people to a deeper appreciation and experience of the mystery of Christ, Pope John Paul II in 'Ecclesia in Asia' appealed for a Pedagogy of Evangelization "which will introduce people step-by-step to the full appropriation of the mystery" through "a progressive preaching", and one which would also follow "an evocative pedagogy."<sup>59</sup> Hence people are gradually introduced to the person of Christ. Indeed 'Ecclesia in Asia' invites the Asian Churches to legitimately devise a "variety of approaches in their proclamation of Jesus."<sup>60</sup>

### **9. The 'Anubhav' (Experience) of Jesus Christ:**

In the ultimate analysis, in order to respond generously to the call to proclaim Jesus Christ in mission, we need to recognize the primacy of the experience of the Risen Christ. It is precisely from this personal encounter with the Risen Lord that a fresh impetus to mission will surely emerge today. The litmus test therefore of our missionary identity in this country of mysticism, is the quality of our witness (Jn 13,13-16). We recall the challenging invitation of Pope Paul VI, "our generation listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers!"<sup>61</sup>

Truly the evangelizer who lives a life of service and is prepared to give up his/her life for the Gospel, is the most powerful witness! That is the calibre of persons that are needed today and only these persons can awaken an apathetic society to a new life.

It is also important to remember that since Baptism makes everyone participate in the mission of Christ, today, more than ever before, there is the need to awaken the entire Catholic community to the missionary vocation of each and everyone. Without the active involvement of the laity, the Church cannot adequately fulfill her mission in the world. Facing the new challenges of the Asian Continent and of a world in travail, we find inspiration and strength in the Words of the Risen Lord; "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn. 20:21), for indeed, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:20).

#### **Conclusion:**<sup>62</sup>

The proclamation of the Gospel urges us to build living communities of faith, hope and love, to bring about and nurture in Asia a civilization of truth and love and a culture of life, in which each human person will be able to respond both as an individual and as part of a community to his or her vocation as one of God's children in "the fullness of Christ."<sup>63</sup>

In fact, the pastoral approach to culture in its many forms has no other aim than to help the Church to fulfill its mission of proclaiming the Gospel. On the threshold of the new millennium, with the full force of the Word of God, "the inspiration of the whole of Christian living"<sup>64</sup>, it is helping man to overcome the drama of atheistic humanism and to create a "new humanism"<sup>65</sup> capable of giving birth, throughout the world, to cultures transformed by the prodigious newness of Christ who "became man so that man might become God", renew himself in the image of his Creator<sup>66</sup> and "put on a new nature".<sup>67</sup> Christ renews all cultures through the creative power of the Holy Spirit, the infinite source of beauty, love and truth.

#### **(Endnotes)**

- 1 On one side there would be a vast population which is a-religious, if one takes into account, for example, the situation of people officially under Communis regimes, On the other hand there is deep religiosity in a vast number of people. There are vaste areas of peace and co-existence; but in some parts the bitterest of conflicts are being fought for decades. Some parts of Asia are the most developed and very affluent; in other parts the people are among the most deprived in the world [Cf. (Archbishop) O. Gracias, "Mission in Asia Today – Relations with Other Religions Existing in Asia", in Vidyajyothi 71(2007) p. 87].
- 2 EA, 6
- 3 (Archbishop) O. Gracias, p. 87

- 4 EA, 6
- 5 EA, 6
- 6 (Archbishop) O. Gracias, p. 87
- 7 (Cardinal) J. Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures", in [www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 8 GS, 58
- 9 (Archbishop) O. Gracias, pp. 88-89
- 10 Poverty in Asia, at <http://world-poverty.org/povertyinasia.aspx>
- 11 FAPA I, p. 332 (quoted by J. H. Kroeger, in "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia", in [www.cca.org.hk/resources/ctc/ctc08-03/10\\_J.H.Kroeger,M.M.93.pdf](http://www.cca.org.hk/resources/ctc/ctc08-03/10_J.H.Kroeger,M.M.93.pdf), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 12 FAPA I, pp. 14-15
- 13 FAPA III, p. 4 (quoted by J. H. Kroeger, in "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia")
- 14 E. Monteiro, SC, Church and Culture, ISPCK: Delhi, 2004, pp. 153-157.
- 15 GS, 46.
- 16 (Archbishop) Renato Martino, Address to the Third Committee of the 55th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Moral-Cultural Dimensions of Development, in L'Osservatore Romano, 11 October 2000, page 4
- 17 GS, 4-10
- 18 LG, 13.
- 19 GS, 58
- 20 GS, 57
- 21 Pontifical Council for Culture, "Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture", Vatican City, 23 May 1999, No. 2, at [www.vatican.va/.../rc\\_pc\\_pc-cultr\\_doc\\_03061999\\_pastoral\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../rc_pc_pc-cultr_doc_03061999_pastoral_en.html), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 22 Gen 1, 26
- 23 "Veritatis splendor", Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, Rome, 6 August, 1993, No. 53 at [www.vatican.va/.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 24 Evangelii nuntiandi, 20
- 25 (Cardinal) J. Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures", in [www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 26 AG, 10.
- 27 GS, 53.
- 28 P. Puthanangady, SDB, "Clarifying the Notions of Culture and Inculturation", in *Rooting Faith in Asia*, ed., M. S. Dias, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2005, pp. 248-249.
- 29 Despite the rich cultural heritage Asia possesses, we also recognize the dominating power structures, the discrimination against and oppression of women, the cultural and religious communalisms and conflicts, the pervading corruption in public life, the abuse of children, the lack of a true participative democracy, etc. etc. To these traditional problems we could add the more modern ones of individualism and competition, the growing dichotomy between the secular and the sacred, the alienations of the modern media and the wanton destruction of ecological resources.
- 30 FAPA III, p. 218
- 31 GS, 58
- 32 RM, 52

- 33 Oborji, F. A., *Concepts of Mission (The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology)*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2006, pp. 110-111
- 34 GS, 1.
- 35 S. M. Michael, "Cultural Diversity and Inculturation", in India, in *Vidyajyothi* 73(2009) pp. 49-50: Michael points out that, "Through the process of inculturation, the Church inserts itself in the culture of a people. It integrates the Christian life and its message into a given culture. It involves itself in the life-realities of the people by participating in their historical struggle for meaning and emancipation. This process of inculturation is very important for the local Church to play a creative role in the midst of constant change."
- 36 Cf. NA, 2
- 37 Cf. J. H. Kroeger, in "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia"
- 38 Cf. J. H. Kroeger, in "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia".
- 39 Pontifical Council for Culture, "Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture", 22-23
- 40 Fides et ratio, 72
- 41 FABC I, p. 15
- 42 Synod of Bishops (1971), Introduction at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1971\\_Synod\\_of\\_Bishops](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1971_Synod_of_Bishops), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 43 EN, 31
- 44 cf. FAPA III, pp. 9-11
- 45 Cf. FAPA II, pp. 226-227
- 46 FAPA I, p. 78 as quoted by J. H. Kroeger, in "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia"
- 47 *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 77-85
- 48 Cf. Redemptoris Missio, 55
- 49 (Cardinal) F. Arinze, "Letter to Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on the Spirituality of Dialogue", Vatican City (1999), No. 6, at [www.adoremus.org/1002-ArinzeLetter.html](http://www.adoremus.org/1002-ArinzeLetter.html), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 50 John Paul II, "Evangelization and Interreligious Dialogue", in *Osservatore Romano*, Nov. 24, 1999, in
- 51 RM, 7
- 52 EA, 21
- 53 AG 11, 15
- 54 Cf. (Archbishop) T. Menampampil, "Towards an Asian Way of Sharing the Faith", in *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, M. S. Dias, ed., Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2003, p. 132.
- 55 EA, 14
- 56 (Cardinal) J. Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures", in [www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM), accessed on 13/09/2009
- 57 Cf. EA, 14
- 58 Cf. (Archbishop) O. Gracias, p. 93
- 59 EA, 20
- 60 Cf. EA 23; Cf. (Bishop) J. Rodrigues, "Response to Evangelization as Proclamation as seen in Ecclesia in Asia", in *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, M. S. Dias, ed., Claretian Publications, 2003, p. 172
- 61 EN, 41
- 62 Cf. Pontifical Council for Culture, "Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture", Conclusion
- 63 Eph 4, 13

64 Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 36, in [www.vatican.va/.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_10111994\\_tertio-millennio-adveniente\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html) -, accessed on 13/09/2009

65 GS, 55

66 Col 3, 10

67 Cf. Eph 4, 24

## SOURCES

FLANNERY, A., O. P., General Editor, *The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents of Vatican II*, Pauline Publications, Mumbai, 1975.

JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), Pauline Publications: Mumbai, 1990.

JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis splendor*, (6 August, 1993), at [www.vatican.va/.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html), No. 53

JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, (10 November, 1994) in [www.vatican.va/.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_10111994\\_tertio-millennio-adveniente\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html) -

JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, (15 September, 1998), at [www.vatican.va/.../encyclicals/.../hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_15101998\\_fides-et-ratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../encyclicals/.../hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html)

JOHN PAUL II, "Evangelization and Interreligious Dialogue", in *Osservatore Romano*, Nov. 24, 1999

JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (2000), Pauline Publications: Mumbai, 2000

BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Spes salvi* (2007), on Christian Hope (2007) at [www.vatican.va/.../encyclicals/.../hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../encyclicals/.../hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html)

BENEDICT XVI, *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*, Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on The World Day of Peace, 1 January 2009

BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in veritate* (2009), on Integral Human Development in charity and truth, in [www.vatican.va/.../hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE & CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, Vatican City, Pentecost 1991

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Vatican City, 23 May 1999, at [www.vatican.va/.../rc\\_pc\\_pc-cultr\\_doc\\_03061999\\_pastoral\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/.../rc_pc_pc-cultr_doc_03061999_pastoral_en.html)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Journeying Together, (The Catholic Church in Dialogue with the Religious Traditions of the World)*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1999

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pauline Publications: Mumbai, 2004.

ROSALES G. & AREVALO C. G., Eds. *For All the Peoples of Asia, Volume I*, (FAPA I) FABC Documents 1970-1991, Claretian Publications, 1997, Quezon City

ROSALES G. & AREVALO C. G., Eds. *For All the Peoples of Asia, Volume II*, (FAPA II) FABC Documents 1992-1996, Claretian Publications, 1997, Quezon City

ROSALES G. & AREVALO C. G., Eds. *For All the Peoples of Asia, Volume III*, (FAPA III) FABC Documents 1997-2001, Claretian Publications, 2002, Quezon City

### BOOKS AND JOURNALS

AMALORPAVADASS, D. S., *Gospel and Culture, Mission Theology for our Times*, NBCLC: Bangalore, 1978.

DIAS, M. S., (ed.) *Evangelization and Inculturation*, Pauline Publications, New Delhi, 2001.

DIAS, M. S., (ed.) *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2003.

D'SOUZA, P., (Bishop) "Keynote Address", in *Evangelization and Inculturation*, M. S.

DIAS (ed.) Pauline Publications, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 30-47.

ECONOMY WATCH, Indian Economy Statistics & Indicators: 2009, in <http://www.economywatch.com/indianeconomy/india-economy-statistics.html> - 31k (2009)

(Archbishop) GRACIAS, O., "Mission in Asia Today – Relations with Other Religions Existing in Asia", in *Vidyajyothi* 71(2007) p. 87

HENRIQUES, G., "Evangelization as Proclamation as seen in *Ecclesia in Asia*," in *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, S. DIAS (ed.) Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2003, pp. 157-169.

KANJI MALA, A., (ed.) *Integral Mission Dynamics (An Interdisciplinary Study of the Catholic Church in India)*, Intercultural Publications, New Delhi, 1995

KROEGER, J. H., M. M. in "The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia", in [www.cca.org.hk/resources/ctc/ctc08-03/10\\_JamesH.Kroeger93.pdf](http://www.cca.org.hk/resources/ctc/ctc08-03/10_JamesH.Kroeger93.pdf)

MALIPURATHU T. & STANISLAUS L., (eds.) *A Vision of Mission in the New Millennium (Proceedings of the Research Seminar)*, St Pauls, Mumbai, 2001

MANATHODATH, J., *Culture, Dialogue and the Church*, Intercultural Publications, New Delhi, 1990

(Archbishop) MENAMPARAMPIL, T., "Towards an Asian Way of Sharing the Faith", in *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, M. S. Dias, ed., Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2003, p. 122-148

MICHAEL, S. M. SVD., "Beyond Inculturation", in *Vidyajyothi* 54(1990), pp. 6-18.

MICHAEL, S. M., SVD., "Cultural Diversity and Inculturation", in India, in *Vidyajyothi* 73(2009), pp. 44-54

MONTEIRO. E., SC., *Church and Culture*, ISPCK: Delhi, 2004.

OBORJI, F. A., *Concepts of Mission (The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology)*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2006

Poverty in Asia, at <http://world-poverty.org/povertyinasia.aspx>



PRAKASH. C. S.J., "Impact of Globalization on Mission in India," in *The Church in India in the Emerging Third Millennium*, ed. T. D'Sa., NBCLC: Bangalore, 2005, pp. 114-121.

PUTHANANGADY, P. SDB., "Clarifying the Notions of Culture and Inculturation", in *Rooting Faith in Asia*, ed., M. S. Dias, Claretian Publications: Bangalore, 2005, pp. 243-254

RAEBURN J., "The 21st century spirituality revolution: Are there implications for migrants?", in [www.aen.org.nz/journal/2/2/Raeburn.html](http://www.aen.org.nz/journal/2/2/Raeburn.html) - 25k (2009)

(Cardinal) RATZINGER, J., "Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures", in [www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM)

(Bishop) RODRIGUES, J., "Response to Evangelization as Proclamation as seen in Ecclesia in Asia", in *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, M. S. Dias, ed., Claretian Publications, 2003, p. 172

SALDANHA, J., S.J. *Mission Today: Themes and Issues*, Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2006.

STANISLAUS. L., SVD., "Gospel and Culture, Encounter in the Life of the People", in *Third Millennium*, V(2002)2, 46-62.

TELESPHORE, T., (Archbishop) "Evangelization as Service of the Poor," in *Evangelization in the Light of Ecclesia in Asia*, S. DIAS (ed.) Claretian Publications, Bangalore, 2003, pp. 274-283.

CHECKENATH, J., "Evangelization and the Asian Faces of Jesus", in *Evangelization and Inculturation*, S. DIAS (ed.) Pauline Publications, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 166-197.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- AG = "Ad Gentes Divinitus", Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, 1965.
- CV = "Caritate in Veritatis", Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI on Integral Human Development in charity and truth (2009)
- EA = "Ecclesia in Asia", Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II on Jesus Christ the Saviour and his Mission of Love and Service in Asia (1999).
- EN = "Evangelii Nuntiandi", Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI on the Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975.
- FR = "Fides et ratio", Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II (1998) on Faith and Reason
- GS = "Gaudium et Spes", Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II (1965).
- LG = "Lumen Gentium", Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II (1965).
- NA = "Nostra Aetate", Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions, Vatican II (1965).
- RM = "Redemptoris Missio", Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate (1990).
- SS = "Spes et salvi", Encyclical Letter of Benedict XVI on Christian Hope (2007)
- TMA = "Tertio Millennio Adveniente", Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II on the preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000 (1994)
- VR = "Veritatis splendor" Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II (1993) on the Church's moral teaching