



# OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (OHD)

## Climate Change Desk (CCD)

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: FABC

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## Editor's Column

### Pandemic Impact – from Offline to Online

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly turned our world upside down. It's been more than a year and half since the first outbreak of the Corona virus cases were reported and yet the situation is still very precarious and the Damocles sword of uncertainty continues to hang over our heads. While we are barely able to contain the spread of the virus, discussions and debates about the impact and the aftermath of the pandemic carry on unabated. The pandemic is challenging human beings to respond to the crisis and adapt ourselves to the new normal of the virtual world as adopted by corporates, educational institutions and even religious leaders all across the world.

However, the Corona Virus pandemic has shown to us that creation has the ability to bounce back and heal itself. While people all over the world are suffering, mother earth is slowly and gradually rejuvenating. We hear of clearer skies and bluer water and a reduction in global pollution levels indicating that a renewal is taking place in nature and in Creation.

In this issue of the newsletter we highlight the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Asia and the response of the Church.

In the first article, Archbishop Isao Kikuchi, Archbishop of Tokyo and Secretary General of FABC summarizes the various impact that the pandemic had on the Asian continent. In the article he highlights the new and growing importance of online world in creating a digital-divide, the situation of the migrants and the educated unemployed. Finally, he challenges us to be bold and creative to evangelize the gospel in the post pandemic world.

In the second article, 'Response of the Church in Asia to the Covid-19 Pandemic', Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD shares a few insights from in his new book edited by him and Fr. John Mi Shen entitled 'Pastoral Creativity amid the Covid-19 Pandemic: Global Experiences'. Fr Anthony writes about how the church responded pastorally to the pandemic situation of reaching out to the lay faithful through the digital media, communicated proper messages about the importance of wearing masks and also fostered unity in times of misleading and false information.



The last part covers the various initiatives taken by FABC-OHD/CCD especially organizing various webinars like responding to the Guide Document FABC 50, *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

During this ongoing Season of Creation, we intercede with Mary the Mother of Jesus to heal the world from the scourge of the pandemic and guide the church to effectively respond to the pandemic crisis and reach out to those who are unable to have access to the digital world.

**Fr Joseph Philip Gonsalves**  
Executive Secretary

## **“Covid-19 Pandemic & its impact on Asia”**

**Archbishop Isao Kikuchi, SVD: Archbishop of Tokyo,  
Secretary General FABC, Member Bishop of OHD**

“Diversity and solidarity united in harmony, this is the way.” On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020, in the midst of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Holy Father Pope Francis, during his very first General Audience with the people after some period of pause due to preventive measures against the infection, called for the importance of solidarity as the key and core value for the Post-Pandemic World Order.

However, on 2021 Easter Sunday, during his “Urbi et Orbi” message, the Holy Father lamented over the insufficient commitments made by the international community in realizing solidarity saying that “sadly, the pandemic has dramatically increased the number of the poor and the despair of thousands of people.” The Holy Father, in particular, mentioned the unfair distribution of vaccines and pointed out that “vaccines are an essential tool in this fight. I urge the entire international community, in a spirit of global responsibility, to commit to overcoming delays in the distribution of vaccines and to facilitate their distribution, especially in the poorest countries.”

As we all know, the Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most serious global threats to public health in our recent history. It started in December 2019 in China and rapidly spread all over the world. According to some official accounts, more than 3.8 million deaths have been reported worldwide as of June 2021.

Though the impact of the pandemic, especially in the early stage, was less severe in Asia compared with the situation of some European and American countries, we now have begun to feel another wave of “new variant” among us even in Asia. The Reuters News reported on 16 June 2021 that “the variant, now known as B.1.617, triggered a catastrophic wave of coronavirus cases in India and has since spread to more than 40 other countries. In May, the World Health Organization termed it a variant of concern, citing its high transmissibility.” It seems that talking about Post Corona is still too early and we are still not able to assess the real impact of the pandemic over our society. It is still going on.

First and foremost, I must point out that though we are living in the time of digital communication, we have much more difficulties to know the reality now than in olden days. Since February 2020 up till today, I have no opportunity to set foot in any airport. Moreover, since September 2020, I have been confined



within the limits of my own Archdiocese. Even in such situation, thanks to digital communication, I “know” what is going on all over the world. At the same time, I also know that there is quite a huge accumulation of “fake news” circulating around the world through SNS. Negative impacts of this easy communication tool have been reported all over. We have to admit, before talking about the social impact of the pandemic in Asia, what we know is just the tip of the iceberg. We are facing a situation in which we don’t know the “real” face of it.

At the same time, even though some believe that the present situation is not really a pandemic considering the number of infected people and death cases which are relatively low in Asia, we cannot escape from the reality of the globalized world community where coordinated and united response is required to prevent such pandemic and to have it contained as soon as possible. Therefore, regardless of the number of patients in one’s own country, we all have to take some degree of preventive measures, such as lock down of community or “stay-home” policy or on-line working from home.

Of course, because of the prohibition of mass gatherings or of social events ordered by several governments which have affected many with psychological fatigue, the real problem would be the deepening of already existing disparity between the rich and the poor in many countries.

In Japan, although those in permanent employment are not affected as such, those who were in non-regular employment have been losing their jobs. Especially, seniors and undocumented immigrants are most affected. On January 2021, the “2021 New Year Adults’ Canteen” event, in which free food was served, was organized at St. Ignatius Catholic Church in Tokyo for 2 days. More than 500 people including women with young kids visited the Church to receive free food.

The Mainichi News reported on 3 January about “a 42-year-old Japanese woman with a degree from a junior college, whose career has been a series of non-regular jobs, suddenly found she was facing “real poverty” – circumstances she always thought had no relation to her life.” She was among the 500 who visited the St. Ignatius Church.

Already in November 2020, OECD and WHO in its report “Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2020” predicted that; “while many measures have been taken to protect jobs, businesses, and ease the strain on health systems, they are not without consequence. Higher government spending and lower revenue collection has driven increased government borrowing, leading to surges in public debt.”

After the Pandemic, much more worldwide solidarity is needed to support each other and save the life of the poor and vulnerable. We still need time to evaluate but the COVAX facility to provide fair distribution of vaccine could play as a role model for much needed worldwide solidarity among nations to support each other.

The Catholic Church has been severely affected. As we gather in our Church on Sundays, we sing, pray aloud and hug during the Mass and we share meals quite often, all these actions are regarded to create high risks of infection. The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong suspended public Mass in February 2020, Tokyo Archdiocese followed in March, and many other dioceses all over Asia. Though other activities especially charitable activities continued with caution, Parish community life has been affected. However, this negative situation challenged many and provided opportunity to be more creative in evangelization. Thanks to the digital advancement, today, in many parts of Asia, the Catholic Church reaches out to people through SNS, YouTube and other internet facilities. This could be a great opportunity for new evangelization in Asia. However, it also creates a so called “digital divide” as the poor had been deprived of access to stable and free internet access.

As for the medical service, I do not have to mention it anymore. In many parts of Asia, the pandemic made it clear that there is a deep gap between the rich and the poor in terms of medical insurance and modern technology in medical service.

The Catholic Church in Asia is now facing a great challenge of initiating new evangelization. The pandemic forced us to leave the old way of being Church and is demanding us to find a new way of being Church. The Holy Father Pope Francis in “Evangelii Gaudium” invites us that “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.” So, let us find the new way of evangelization at this time of crisis.



# Response of the Church in Asia to the Covid-19 Pandemic

## Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD<sup>1</sup>

As the coronavirus pandemic subsides in some countries, in others it has surged in more disruptive third and fourth waves. Thailand and Vietnam, which went through a relatively mild 2020, are now experiencing the largest number of infections since the pandemic began. In India, even though the situation has much improved since the daily rate of infection being in the hundreds of thousands, the number of people falling victim to Covid-19 daily still remain in the tens of thousands. Although mass vaccination presents the greatest hope to finally push back the pandemic, and return to some sort of normalcy of life, political, economic and other systemic obstacles have made vaccination efforts in many countries go at a slow pace, unable to make the desired impact on the crisis.

Amid this unprecedented challenge in contemporary human history, the Catholic Church continues to find ways to respond to the crisis, despite having to deal with her own losses and other negative impacts on the life of the Church. In India alone, over 400 priests and nuns have died from Covid-19, most of the deaths taking place in the two months of April and May 2021<sup>2</sup>. The loss of lives of the clergy and laity lies on top of the countless ways that the normal life of the Church has been disrupted by the pandemic, as well as the new pastoral needs that have emerged from the crisis itself.

Nonetheless, from the perspective of the Church, if there were ever an occasion to display herself as truly the Sacrament of Christ, affirming that “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ,”<sup>3</sup> it would be this ongoing Covid-19 pandemic itself. The Church in Asia, at the various levels, has attempted to carry out her mission in multiple ways in order to deal with the ever evolving and changing situation presented by the pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup>Fr. Anthony Le Duc, SVD is a priest in the Society of the Divine Word. Presently, he is teaching at Lux Mundi National Major Seminary of Thailand. In addition, he is the Executive Director of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication as well as the Editor-in-chief of ARC’s scholarly journal, Religion and Social Communication. His research interests focus on the intersection between religion and contemporary social issues such as the ecological crisis, migration, and technological development.

<sup>2</sup>Vatican News, “India: More than 400 priests and nuns have died of Covid-19,” (29 May 2021), <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2021-05/india-church-priests-nuns-deaths-Covid19.html>

<sup>3</sup>Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, no. 1.

## **Pastoral Efforts<sup>4</sup>**

In the face of many pastoral needs arising from the pandemic, pastoral agents in the Church have attempted to respond in creative ways, oftentimes with the support of information and communication technology (ICT). Online daily and Sunday Masses are currently a familiar source of spiritual nourishment in the midst of church closings and social distancing measures. For the first time, many bishops and priests have agreed to appear in front of a solitary camera with only a small number of people in attendance in order to celebrate the liturgy to be broadcasted to the faithful on social media and other internet platforms. In addition to Masses, dioceses and parishes also organize Holy Hours, Adoration, retreats, catechism classes, and Bible study sessions online in order to respond to the spiritual needs of the faithful, and to continue to provide proper religious formation for all members of the Church. In some dioceses and parishes, some activities have been created especially for the circumstances of the pandemic, such as online Bible competitions, Christmas carols, and pandemic prayer groups. In addition to providing spiritual nourishment for the faithful, these online religious programs also help the people who are spending an excessive amount of time online during the pandemic to be able to watch more than just secular entertainment programs and random videos on social networks.

The pastoral leaders and agents in the Church have also responded to the different pastoral needs arising from the pandemic with their own outreach efforts. In the Philippines, Fr. John Mi Shen acted as a bridge to deliver support from the Filipinos to China when the pandemic was raging in the country. When the crisis became serious in the Philippines, Fr. Mi Shen helped to deliver support from the Chinese in return. In Japan, Fr. Dominic Nguyen worked with his parish volunteers to set up a support hotline for people suffering from depression due to the crisis. In Thailand, the Pastoral Committee for Vietnamese Migrants set up a Facebook hotline in order to provide relevant and updated information on the local situation for Vietnamese migrant workers who cannot access the news through the traditional channels due to lack of language fluency. In Malaysia, Fr. Anthony Liew worked with his parish leadership team to help poor families apply for free cell phones with data plan so they stay connected to the world during periods of lockdown. These are but some of the numerous creative ways that the Asian Church's pastoral agents have tried to respond to the needs of the pandemic.

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<sup>4</sup>For detailed accounts of various pastoral efforts implemented during the pandemic, see Anthony Le Duc and John Mishen, *Pastoral Creativity Amid the Covid-19 Pandemic: Global Experiences* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc, 2021).

## **Communicating Examples of Proper Behavior**

During the pandemic, one of the unexpected controversies that arose was whether or not to wear a mask in public places. In countries such as the US and Brazil, this became a contentious political issue where the act of wearing a mask came to be identified with political party affiliation. This political polarization was also seen in the churches where priests and the laity also held their own stances on mask wearing. Thus, in some parishes, there were priests and parishioners who refused to wear masks during public liturgies and other activities as required by local regulations.

This controversy has not been witnessed in the churches in Asia where there is a wide consensus that mask wearing is appropriate and necessary for flattening the infection curve. Whether online or offline, the faithful can see Church leaders wearing masks while celebrating liturgies or conducting other activities. Even in liturgies where it does not seem that the celebrant is standing in close proximity to anyone to be infected or cause others to be infected, the celebrant also wears a mask.

This action by Church leaders have been interpreted by many faithful as not only displaying responsibility as an individual, but also communicating proper examples of behavior to the people. When Church leaders refuse to comply with regulations provided by the local government, they may negatively affect the attitude of the faithful who look to them for models of behavior. Thus modeling proper behavior for the public on a variety of matters pertaining to the pandemic has also been part of the ways that the Church in Asia has contributed to the effort to overcome the virus.

## **Communicating Messages of Unity**

The Covid-19 pandemic has been accompanied by an “infodemic” of misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. These various forms of false information not only exacerbate the negative impacts of the pandemic, but also cause social, political and interreligious division. Religious divisiveness in the Covid-19 pandemic has been seen in India where the Muslim minority was falsely accused to intentionally spreading the virus in the country.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in South Korea, the Shincheonji Church of Jesus (SCJ) was vilified by the government and the media for its role in causing the outbreak of the coronavirus in February 2020.

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<sup>5</sup>Joana Slater and Niha Masih, “As the world looks for coronavirus scapegoats, Muslims are blamed in India,” Washington Post (23 April 2020), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/as-world-looks-for-coronavirus-scapegoats-india-pins-blame-on-muslims/2020/04/22/3cb43430-7f3f-11ea-84c2-0792d8591911\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/as-world-looks-for-coronavirus-scapegoats-india-pins-blame-on-muslims/2020/04/22/3cb43430-7f3f-11ea-84c2-0792d8591911_story.html)



In May 2021, in Vietnam, a Christian group called Phuc Hung in Ho Chi Minh City was widely criticized by the public. They are also facing criminal prosecutions with the charge of being responsible for the new wave of infections in the city.

In the face of this hostility towards the Christian group, Archbishop of Saigon Archdiocese, Joseph Nguyen Nang issued a pastoral letter on 31 May 2021, calling on Catholics to be responsible citizens in taking proper steps to prevent the spread of the pandemic. In addition, the letter also reminds the faithful that the members of the Phuc Hung group are also victims of the virus with whom they ought to stand in solidarity. Archbishop Joseph writes, “When the spread of the virus is blamed on a particular religious activity, we should not forget that the parameters of religion also include all of us. Therefore, we ask that priests and the Catholic faithful always live in the spirit of justice and charity, not resorting to words and attitudes of judgment. Instead, display the spirit of sympathy, sharing, and prayer, as well as re-examining our own activities.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, part of the communication effort of the Church in Asia during the pandemic concerns imparting the correct information to the public. At the same time that the Church cooperates with the local and national leadership in order to overcome the crisis, the Church also has the important task of steering the faithful away from sentiments that would contribute to social and interreligious conflict and division.

In conclusion, despite the tremendous pressure placed on the Church in Asia, the Church leadership and faithful have searched for ways to respond to the crisis with patience, creativity, courage and love. The experience of responding to the pandemic promises to present many valuable lessons for the post-pandemic Church in Asia if there is an effort to critically reflect on all that have been done. Lessons drawn from these signs of the times will positively shape the pastoral directions of the Church in Asia now and in the future.

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<sup>6</sup>Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Nang, Pastoral Letter (Saigon Archdiocese, 31 May 2021), no. 4.



## Prevention versus Cure: The Climate and Health Agendas

Speech (July 09, 2021) prepared for delivery at ‘Public Health from Climate-Related Threats’, on the margins of the 2021 United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic cost a lot of lives and caused hardships globally. But the sad reality is **however terrible COVID-19 has been**, the triple planetary crisis of **climate change, of nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste, will amplify public health challenges, almost beyond comprehension.**

"As **climate becomes warmer** and weather patterns shift, **diseases will travel further and faster.** As the IPCC noted, factoring in climate change would increase the number of people at risk of malaria in 2050 to 1.95 billion. This is 200 million more than if disease control efforts were not opposed by higher temperatures and shifts in rainfall patterns.

**Rapidly melting permafrost will unleash diseases buried for hundreds of years.** And as the recent **heatwaves in Canada**, have revealed, **climate impacts are leaving no country untouched,**" said Inger Andersen in her speech delivered at ‘Public Health from Climate-Related Threats’, on the margins of the 2021 United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

She added, "The **choices** we make in **pandemic recovery** and in our **everyday lives**, can save **millions of lives** and billions of dollars each year, preserve the natural world and take us all, together, into a greener and healthier future. So let us all **choose wisely.**"





## **Full text of the speech:**

We have learned many things from the COVID-19 pandemic, but the most important lesson is this: the health of people, economies and societies are one and the same.

This was a hard lesson. It cost millions of lives. Caused physical and financial hardship. Kept families and loved ones apart. But the sad reality is however terrible COVID-19 has been, the triple planetary crisis of climate change, of nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste, will amplify public health challenges, almost beyond comprehension.

As climate becomes warmer and weather patterns shift, diseases will travel further and faster. As the IPCC noted, factoring in climate change would increase the number of people at risk of malaria in 2050 to 1.95 billion. This is 200 million more than if disease control efforts were not opposed by higher temperatures and shifts in rainfall patterns. Rapidly melting permafrost will unleash diseases buried for hundreds of years. And as the recent heatwaves in Canada, have revealed, climate impacts are leaving no country untouched.

As we relentlessly chip away at the natural world, we are destroying our “natural” buffers against emerging and infectious diseases. Research suggests that as we alter landscapes for farming and new cities, 30 per cent of emerging contagion can be attributed to “land use changes”. Not to mention that we risk the loss of the world’s pharmacy because we know that 25-50% of pharmaceutical products are derived from genetic resources.

As we continue to pollute our environment through the release of antimicrobials through pesticides, herbicides, for example, anti-microbial resistance (AMR) is growing and it is threatening our ability to treat a range of deadly infections. Studies state that antibiotic resistance increases with local temperatures.

So we must act on five fronts to ward off the health impacts of the climate emergency.

### **First, and most obvious - act on climate.**

Actions to curb climate change are actions to protect public health. Any healthcare worker will tell you that prevention is better than cure. Prevention means decarbonizing our economies. Prevention means investing in zero-emission technologies and infrastructures. Preventions mean phasing out coal. Prevention means that all nations update their Paris commitments to include all net-zero promises and set clear, time-bound plans to meet them. And as we borrow unprecedented sums of monies from future generations for stimulus packages, these must go to financing green solutions.

### **Second, back nature-based solutions.**

Nature does many things better than we do. We need to let it do its job. This means pushing hard during the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration to protect, restore and manage ecosystems. Research shows that time spent in nature improve health outcomes: from children’s brains becoming better wired to deal with anxiety and hyperactivity, to our bodies producing the same de-stress chemicals that are prescribed to patients in pill form.

### **Third, invest in adaptation.**

As we know only too well, climate effects are often unequal, disproportionately impacting populations who have contributed the least to the problem. Vulnerable populations were exposed to an additional 475 million heatwave events globally in 2019. Low-income countries need support and solidarity, or millions will suffer poorer health outcomes. Nations need to step up to meet the promises made on adaptation support under the Paris Agreement.

### **Fourth, adopt one-health approaches.**

Human health. Veterinary health. Atmospheric health. Planetary health – are all one and the same. At the end of the day, we cannot achieve universal healthcare without expanding the depth of our understanding on all these issues. Now is the time for us to bring climate science and medical science together, in a unified effort to improve human health.





**Fifth, all of us must make better food choices.**

Our individual choices can make a real difference – increasingly unhealthy diets are becoming more common worldwide. It is time for all of us to reconsider diets and make food choices that work for people and the planet in the long run. Our food systems, with their focus on cheap, processed food, are contributing to both an obesity epidemic and climate change– while playing a major role in the threatened extinction of one million plant and animal species.

At today’s event, at the Global Conference on Health and Climate Change, at COP 15, at COP 26 and many other critical meetings, we must ensure that climate change, nature loss and pollution become central public health issues.

The choices we make in pandemic recovery and in our everyday lives, can save millions of lives and billions of dollars each year, preserve the natural world and take us all, together, into a greener and healthier future. So let us all choose wisely.

Thank you.

**Inger Andersen**  
Executive Director

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Source: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/covid-19-updates>

## Past Updates/ Events

WEBINAR: A FRATERNAL DIALOGUE ON FRATELLI TUTTI

**A webinar titled A Fraternal Dialogue on Fratelli Tutti was organized by FABC: OHD/CCD in collaboration with Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

Pope Francis' new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*, stresses that all human beings are sisters and brothers, members of one human family. It encourages a culture of encounter, dialogue and social friendship that crosses borders. While the encyclical speaks of political borders, we know that our ecclesiastical borders don't always match the nature and



scope of the social and ecological justice and peace issues facing the peoples of Asia and the Pacific. Hence in this context a webinar was organised that crosses the borders of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) and the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) in order to create a space for fraternal dialogue among bishops who have responsibility for social and ecological justice and peace issues.

The aim of the webinar was two-fold:

- ▶ to explore together what *Fratelli Tutti* means for our local churches, for Asia, the Pacific, and for the wider Asia-Pacific region;
- ▶ to build friendship and mutual understanding among Bishops with responsibility for social and ecological justice and peace issues across the FABC and FCBCO.

There were short presentations from Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong and Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen each reflecting on *Fratelli Tutti*. There was an effort to break up in small groups for deeper reflections and conversations. The webinar was concluded with a decision to explore the possibilities of ecclesial network for solidarity and action on issues of human rights, justice and climate change.

VALUING WATER – A PUBLIC CONVERSATION inspired by *Aqua fons vitae* - “Water and integral ecology”

As part of the series of the programs organized by The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. This webinar was organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in collaboration with Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences – Office of Human Development/Climate Change Desk (FABC-OHD/CCD)

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 (World Water Day) from 07:00AM Rome time, 11:30 AM IST (Length 2 hours, Language: English.)

The webinar began with an opening prayer by Fr William LaRousse, Assistant Secretary General of FABC followed by participants welcome by Bishop Yvon Ambroise – Chairman FABC -OHD/CCD. Context of the webinar was shared by Tebaldo Vinciguerra from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Thereafter the four panelists spoke on water. Mr. Luke Mendes talked on the 'Water as a Human Right' while an activist from RAOEN: talked





on water as the resources. Sr. Alphonsa Kiven then shared her experiences of working on Water and Sanitation in Health care. Lastly ...an Expert from SIWI talked on sanitation in poverty stricken areas. The Q & A session was moderated by Bishop Allwyn D'Silva. Mons. Bruno-Marie Duffé, Secretary of the Dicastery delivered the concluding summary and the webinar was closed by a vote of thanks by a staff from OHD/CCD.

## ASIA LEVEL CONSULTATION ON FABC 50 GUIDE DOCUMENT

“FABC 50” is the planned General Conference to be organized by next year (2022) by the Federation of the Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) to celebrate the 50 years of its inception. The preparatory process includes several consultations with the Bishops through the Episcopal Bishops’ Conferences and FABC offices to seek comments, observations and feedback the FABC 50 Guide Document.

In continuation of this process The OHD/CCD also initiated a process to include a wide range of individuals and groups working at the grassroots for reflection, observation and feedback on the FABC Guide Document. Accordingly, an Asia Level Consultation was held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 from 15:00- 17:00 hrs. (Indian Standard Time) to discuss, share comments, observations and feedback on the FABC 50 Guide Document.

47 participants from 14 countries actively participated in the consultation which started with the FABC prayers by Fr Joseph Gonsalves the executive secretary of FABC: OHD/CCD.



Most Rev Yvon Ambroise, FABC: OHD/CCD Bishop Chairman welcomed the participants followed by an input by Fr William LaRousse, FABC Assistant Secretary General on who FABC-historical perspective where in basically FABC journey was highlighted with the focus on the coming General Conference and a short introduction to the FABC 50 guide document.

The Secretary FABC 50, Bishop Allwyn D'Silva-then discussed the FABC 50 Guide Document in detail highlighting the main themes of the document followed by session

to share their views, Feedback and comments. The session was moderated by Bishop Allwyn D'Silva. Participants shared their feedback, reflections and comments on the THREE PARTS of the DOCUMENT and the session were moderated by Bishop Allwyn D'Silva.

[Click here for detailed report.](#)





## Laudato Si' ACTION PLATFORM: THE ROADMAP TO ACHIEVE TOTAL SUSTAINABILITY

A webinar by FABC: OHD/CCD & Laudato Si' Movement (then Global Catholic Climate Movement) Date: July 22, 2021, Time: 15:00-17:00 IS

The poster is for a special webinar for Asia. The title is 'LAUDATO SI ACTION PLATFORM' and the subtitle is 'THE ROADMAP TO ACHIEVE TOTAL SUSTAINABILITY'. The date is July 22, 2021, with times 3:00 PM IST / 4:30 PM WIB / 5:30 PM PHT. The registration link is <https://bit.ly/3LSAPASIA>. The poster features two speakers: Fr. Joshtrom Kureethadam, Director of the Vatican Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, and Reba Elliot, Global Catholic Climate Movement. It also lists members of the LSAP Working Group: Bishop Alwyn D. Silva (Chairman, Ecology Commission, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India), Rev. Fr. Antonio Labiao (Executive Secretary, NASSA/Caritas Philippines), and Clare Westwood (Ecological Commission for Creation Justice of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei). The webinar is brought to you by the Office of Human Development, Climate Change Desk, FABC, and the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform (LSAP) was launched by His Holiness Pope Francis during the closing ceremony of *Laudato Si'* Week on May 25, 2021. The action platform is both a tool and a roadmap for all church institutions to achieve total sustainability in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*. To discern collectively on how the different sectors in Asia can implement the goals at the local level with the help of LSAP, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC): Office of Human Development (OHD)/Climate Change Desk (CCD) & (then GCCM) the *Laudato Si'* Movement organized a special webinar on July 22, 2021.

About 500 participants registered for the webinar from all over the world. However about 300 participants actively took part in the webinar not only from Asia but Europe and Africa as well. The webinar was hosted by Fr Joseph Gonsalves, Executive Secretary, FABC: OHD/CCD. Bishop Yvon Ambrose, Chairman: FABC: OHD/CCD led the Opening Prayer. In his Welcome Address, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo SDB, FABC President, underscored the message of

*Laudato Si'* as candid and urgent. He stressed the need to move from using nature to contemplating it and spoke about the urgent need for a green evangelization. It raises three cries – the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor, and the cry of the young. He gave the insights for LSAP *Laudato Si'* Action Platform which is an action oriented 7 year ecological conversion journey in the spirit of integral ecology intended to support and empower families, communities and institutions to achieve total sustainability.

Cheryl Dugan, Program Manager- English Speaking Animators and the Asia Pacific, *Laudato Si'* Movement in setting the context, lauded the Church in Asia for protecting creation as one of its priorities even prior to the publication of the encyclical. It was hoped that through this event, LSG through LSAP could be implemented by the different sectors and a strong support network be developed in Asia to help each other in the *Laudato Si'* journey.

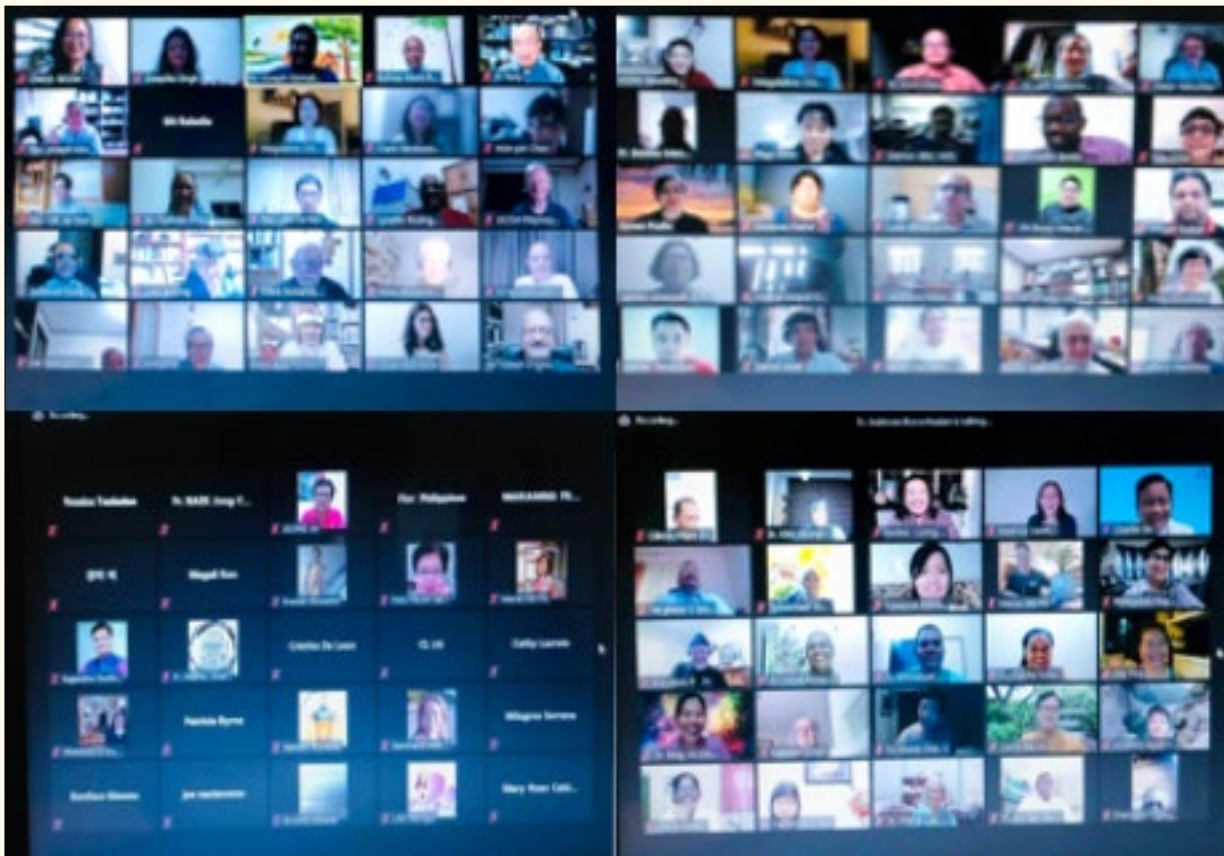
### *Laudato Si'* Goals and *Laudato Si'* Action Platform

Fr Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam SDB, Coordinator of the Sector of “Ecology and Creation” at the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, presented the reasons and processes undertaken in the formulation of LSG and LSAP. He pointed out that though there was much similarity between the *Laudato Si'* Goals (LSG) and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the LSGs were deeper as it included spirituality. The LSG focused on redefining and rebuilding people’s relationship with each other and the common home. It was a cross cutting response to the Cry of the Earth, the Cry of the Poor and the Cry of Children.

He highlighted the *Laudato Si'* goals, in which he mentioned about Response to the cry of Earth, Response to the cry of poor- a call for global solidarity, Ecological Economics, Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles, Ecological Spirituality and Education and about community Engagement and participatory Action. He categorically stated about the roles of working group also.



The LSAP is an action-oriented 7-year ecological conversion journey based on the spirit of integral ecology, intended to support and empower families, communities, and institutions to achieve total sustainability.



The most important message was to act now! Hence, as Fr. Josh stated, it is the prayer of Pope Francis along with the entire church, to initiate a people's movement from below that could bring the radical change needed given the urgency of the crisis of our common home. He also highlighted the *Laudato Si'* goals, in which he mentioned about Response to the cry of Earth, Response to the cry of poor- a call for global solidarity, Ecological Economics, Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles, Ecological Spirituality and Education and about community Engagement and participatory Action. He categorically stated about the roles of working group also.

#### LSAP Application -

Reba Elliot, the Director of Special Projects, *Laudato Si'* Movement, presented the technical features of LSAP. The LSAP is a tool to implement the LSG practically; it is clear yet flexible considering the varying local context and culture. Currently, it is available in English, Filipino and eight (8) other languages. It is designed to assist the seven (7) sectors wherever they may be, on 2 their ecological conversion journey. The LSAP creates opportunities to directly link with communities around the world. It has a repository of resources such as webinars, events, existing projects, and initiatives of partners to share and learn the good works done. It offers concrete and practical guidelines on ways to take actions. The planning guide is process oriented which could be used by communities in a way that works best for them. It follows the See-Judge-Act methodology and will be available starting October 4, 2021, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. The planning guide will be made available to interested parties once their commitment is registered at the LSAP website.

#### LSAP Working Groups and LS initiatives in the Region

The second part of the webinar was a sharing session on the LS National Programs, the LSG and the LSAP Working Groups. The moderator for this session was Bishop Allwyn D'Silva,





Chairperson of the Commission for Ecology at the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI). Presentations were made by Clare Westwood, Fr. Antonio Labiao and Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, who are all members of the LSAP Working Groups.

Clare Westwood, the Regional Director of the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, gave an overview of the LSAP Working Groups in the Parishes and Health Care Sectors. She highlighted the importance of translations, ecological ministries and support of the Bishops Conferences for implementation of LSAP in the Diocese. She also stressed the role of core teams, technical expertise, environmental health education, networking, resilience building and the integration of LSAP with the existing activities of the sectors.

Fr. Antonio Labiao, the Executive Secretary of Caritas Philippines, presented the National *Laudato Si'* Program of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). It was launched in March 2021 by Archbishop Romulo Valles and Bishop Jose Colin M. Bagaforo with the blessings of His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle across all the 85 dioceses in the country. The program includes ecology ministries, national divestment campaigns, the Right of Nature, Season of Creation, Indigenous Peoples Sunday, collective advocacies and actions as well as the plan to establish a good research and database center.

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva shared his journey of ecological conversion which began in 2011. Under the direction of His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias, the Archdiocesan Office for Environment was established in 2013 and in 2018 the Archdiocese of Bombay in India launched the Green Diocese initiative which has given momentum to the LSAP program. A Discernment Team involving all stakeholders has been formed to draw up an action plan and 'Prithvi Parivar', a secular ecological movement of all faiths has been started to spread LSG. Participants from the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, India and Africa shared their best practices - a platform for publishing environmental stories, plastic banks, tree planting campaigns, eco-spirituality seminars, carbon footprint reduction, circular model of business financing and the implementation of LSAP at the Vicariate. Suggestions were made to make all dioceses in India green, to share experiences of transition to renewable energy and to appreciate and celebrate small success stories. The participants expressed their gratitude for the awareness created on LSG and LSAP.

Cheryl Dugan, Program Manager for Asia Pacific for the *Laudato Si'* Movement, briefed the participants on the Signature Campaign for the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to raise the Catholic Voice.

## Wrap Up

The concluding remarks of the webinar were given by Fr William LaRousse, the Assistant Secretary General of the Federation of Asian Bishops (FABC). He congratulated Bishop Yvon Ambrose, Fr Joseph Gonsalves and Ms. Deepika Singh, Coordinator, FABC: OHD/CCD for bringing together people from different countries, even beyond Asia. He thanked Fr Josh and the Dicastery for collaborating with the FABC on climate change and migration. He summed up the learning outcomes of the webinar reiterating the importance of integral ecology, total sustainability, new lifestyles, new ways of doing things and the need for immediate action. All that we can take from this is hope and enthusiasm and sense of celebration in the tremendous difficulties and many disasters which will teach people the integral ecological response and obtain total sustainability and change of lifestyles. Looking forward for more such events in terms of continuing Action Platform, to reflect and evaluate. He also added the thought of other people who mentioned that "We must act, and we must act now. We don't have time to wait". He thanked everyone for their active participation.

The webinar concluded with the Vote of Thanks which was proposed by Ms. Deepika Singh, the Program Coordinator. She thanked the resource persons especially Fr Josh, Reba Elliott, Bishop Yvon Ambrose, Fr Joseph Gonsalves, Cheryl Dugan, Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Clare Westwood, Fr. Antonio Labiao and the participants. She expressed the hope that this journey of ecological





conversion would help one and all to listen to the cry of the poor and the Earth and to respond with concrete action with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As the program drew to a close, there was a feeling of renewed hope, positive energy, fresh enthusiasm and great excitement. The webinar had indeed presented the participants with a clear understanding of the seven year journey of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform: The Roadmap to Achieve Total Sustainability. Report by Gradate Davey, Rowena Rivera & Viveka Anand Singh

**Geradette Davey and Rowena Rivera** are volunteers for the *Laudato Si'* Movement and have completed LSM's *Laudato Si'* Animators Program. **Ms. Viveka Anand Singh** is a student of Btech Electronics & Communication Engineering, an intern with Office of Human development (OHD/Climate change desk (CCD) of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC).

### **PREPARATORY MEETING TO PLAN THE CELEBRATION OF THE WDMR 2021**

A Preparatory Meeting was held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to plan the celebration of the WDMR 2021. Archbishop Isao Tarsicius Kikuchi, Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, Fr. Fabio Baggio, Fr. William LaRousse, Fr. Jaison V, Ms Deepika Singh and Fr. Joseph Gonsalves participated in the meeting, Main points: M&R resources for six months – could be used for 6 weeks or 6 days prior to the WDMR 2021. 5 Theological reflections on issue of migrants & refugees. Kit for liturgical celebration will be uploaded soon. The kit and the theological reflections will be translated in 5 languages.

Confirmation of WDMR 21 Webinar on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2021, 3 to 5 pm (IST) and a tentative schedule was drawn.

Following suggestions were made:

Listen to the voices of the migrants- We should invite them and hear their stories. May be we can have one more webinar with more focused sharing from the migrants to share their struggles and journey. Hence it was decided to invite Migrants from three countries India, Philippines and Japan to share their stories. Migrants voices points to be integrated in sharing: difficulties/crisis faced by migrants, what is their relationship with the church and how does that help them away from home?

Fr Fabio offered to prepare a video of best practices – reaching out to the migrants by the M&R section. Suggestion for the 6 sessions by M&R, 1 minute video message – by 5/6 participants – self recorded and sent to M&R (by Bishop Allwyn, Bishop Kikuchi, Fr Bill, Fr Jaison, etc.)

### PROGRAMMES ATTENDED:

#### **Deepika Singh: OHD/CCD Coordinator Participated in following programs**

› **WATCH: RAOEN Virtual Launch:** Drawing from the interconnectedness of Oceania and Asia, the River above Asia Oceania Ecclesial Network (RAOEN) was launched on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020. The network seeks to sustain dialogue and collaborative engagements among the Church, indigenous and local communities, youth, and other faith-based organizations within and beyond Asia and Oceania. Through RAOEN, a territorial biomes approach in networking and dialogue is being fostered to facilitate collaboration and sharing of limited resources towards an understanding of what is possible in the care for our forests, oceans, and peoples. It was an effort to listen to messages of hope, opportunities, and support during the virtual launch of RAOEN. **Some of the key concerns after the ROVEN launch of the network:**

- How can the Catholic Church in Asia and Oceania listen to the life and concerns among forest and coastal peoples, enabling their voices to be heard?
- River above Asia Oceania Ecclesial Network (RAOEN) seeks to sustain dialogue and collaborative engagements among the Church, indigenous, and local communities,



youth, and other faith-based organizations within and beyond Asia and Oceania, as we work towards an understanding of what is possible in the care for our forests, oceans, and peoples.

› **FABC and M&R Section 2021 Regional Strategic Planning:**

An online discussion was held on 3 March 2021. The entire FABC: OHD/CCD and the M & R section team participated in the in-depth discussion on the FABC- M&R collaboration. Possible activities were discussed and decided with possible deadlines to be completed. A document consisting of the action steps to take following the meeting based on the initial document on the presentation of the M&R Section's 2021 strategic plan for Asia to the FABC was shared.

› **Pastoral Orientations on Intercultural Migrant Ministry (POIMM) Document: Regional Consultations: "Towards an Ever Wider We"-**

3 Regional Consultation titled "Towards an Ever Wider We" were held with south, East



Asia, Southeast Asia & Oceania in July 2021 organized by the M & R Section of the Dicastery. The Bishops Conferences, FABC: OHD/CCD and M & R Section well attended the consultations. The Background Paper (Pastoral Orientations on Intercultural Migrant Ministry (POIMM) was the main resource for these Consultations

› **International Online Launch of ASIAN SCHOOL OF WISDOM (ASW)**

The Online Launch of ASIAN SCHOOL OF WISDOM (ASW): About 87 persons from about 12 countries Participated in the Launch on July 20, 2021.

This has established An Institution named ASIAN SCHOOL OF WISDOM (ASW) which will be based in Thailand.

The launched ceremony was marked by Bishop Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana of Chiang Mai leading the inauguration of the 'domus' of the Asian School of Wisdom.



The aim is to shape youth and communities in partnership with farmers, indigenous communities thus enhance the efforts of all in creating a Religio-Cultural Communities. ASW is primarily a nurturing educational institute to contribute to a more humane interconnected locality, nation, region and the world.

**For more details please visit - <https://www.asianschoolofwisdom.org>**



## Future Programmes

- ▶ Training of trainers using the LS handbook to promote care for our common home is under planning however actual plans are subject to the corona virus situation in respective countries. *Laudato Si'* In Continuum. The Asian Outreach – Handbook for trainers to take the encyclical's message to the grassroots has been translated in 6 languages namely Chinese, Hindi, Sinhalese, Filipino, Tamil and Thai. 6 workshops in 5 countries will be conducted in Chinese, Hindi, Sinhalese, Filipino, Tamil languages in collaboration with our network partners in their respective countries to continue promoting *Laudato Si'* among bishops, priests and people at the grassroots.
- ▶ OHD/CCD has initiated process to create a data base and document the “human face” of the migrants, the trafficked & the displaced.
- ▶ **WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS & REFUGEES (WDMR) 2021 AND VOICE OF MIGRANTS: A Webinar to plan the WDMR 21 (26<sup>th</sup> September 2021) to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2021, from 15:00- 17:00 hrs. (Indian Standard Time).**

