

Asian and Pacific Presence

H A R M O N Y I N F A I T H

A STATEMENT OF THE U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS



Asian and Pacific Presence

H A R M O N Y I N F A I T H

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The document *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* was developed by the Committee on Migration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It was approved by the full body of U.S. Catholic bishops at its November 2001 General Meeting and has been authorized for publication by the undersigned.

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First Printing, December 2001
Second Printing, April 2002

ISBN 1-57455-449-2

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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
THAT IS FAITHFUL BOTH TO HER OWN
TRADITION AND TO THE ASIAN SOUL.

—*The Church in Asia (Ecclesia in Asia)*, no. 6

I. Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters: In a spirit of heartfelt pastoral concern for the Asian and Pacific people in our midst, we Catholic bishops of the United States write this statement to all Catholics and especially to our Asian and Pacific brothers and sisters to recognize and affirm with loving assurance their presence and prominence in the Lord's house. We pray that this pastoral statement will facilitate a fuller appreciation of their communities in our local churches and will encourage Asian and Pacific Catholics to take on active leadership roles in every level of church life.

In our solicitude as pastors, we hope that, by their vital participation, our Asian and Pacific sisters and brothers will help the Church in the United States shine as a sacrament of unity and universality. The post-synodal document *The Church in Asia (Ecclesia in Asia)* promulgated in 1999 by Pope John Paul II in New Delhi, India, echoes the Second Vatican Council as it describes the Church:

In accordance with the Father's eternal design, the Church, foreshadowed from the world's beginning, prepared for in the old Covenant, instituted by Christ Jesus and made present to the world by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, "progresses on her pilgrimage amid this world's persecutions and God's consolations," as she strives towards her perfection in the glory of heaven. Since God desires "that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit," the Church is in the world "the visible plan of God's love for humanity, the sacrament of salvation."¹

In November 2000, in the pastoral statement *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, we bishops outlined ways that the Church in the United States—a church of many races and cultures—might become more fully a sacrament of unity and universality. As a direct application of that statement, we welcome our Asian and Pacific sisters and brothers and encourage all members of the Church in the United States to do the same.

We will briefly present a portrait of the members of the Asian and Pacific communities—Catholics and non-Catholics—celebrate their gifts and contributions, reflect on the pastoral needs and concerns of the Catholics among them, acknowledge the efforts that have begun, and suggest helpful pastoral

approaches to build our common future. It is our hope as bishops that Asian and Pacific Catholics will experience a warm welcome and sense of belonging in our local churches, building on the many gifts with which they have enriched our church communities over many decades.

CHRIST WAS BORN IN ASIA

Pope John Paul II begins his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* by saying, “The Church in Asia sings the praises of the ‘God of salvation’ (Ps 68:20) for choosing to initiate his saving plan on Asian soil. . . . In ‘the fullness of time’ (Gal 4:4), he sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Savior, who took flesh as an Asian!” He points out that “because Jesus was born, lived, died and rose from the dead in the Holy Land, that small portion of Western Asia became a land of promise and hope for all mankind.”²

Many may be surprised to realize that Jesus was born in Asia. The Asian Synod of Bishops, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service commonly describe the continent of Asia as comprising Western Asia (or the Middle East), Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.³ (See Appendix A.) This description is broader than the commonly held understanding of Asia as comprising South, Southeast, and East Asia.

The history of the Church in Asia is as old as the Church herself. “From this land, through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church went forth to make ‘disciples of all nations’ (Mt 28:19).”⁴ Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Antioch to Rome, and beyond. Ancient tradition relates how in the first century, St. Thomas the Apostle preached and was martyred in India; thus the subcontinent traces its Christian roots to apostolic times. The Church of Armenia traces its origins to Sts. Thaddeus (Jude) and Bartholomew—two of the twelve apostles.⁵ Because of this apostolic evangelization, Christianity began to take root in Armenia, and three centuries later the country became the first to embrace Christianity as a nation. Also in the third century, ascetic communities of Syria were a major force of evangelization in Asia. By the fifth century, the Christian message had reached the Arab kingdoms, and Persian merchants took the Good News to China where it flour-

ished for nearly two centuries. In the thirteenth century, the Good News was announced to the Mongols and the Turks, and was reinforced to the Chinese. The apostolic labors of St. Francis Xavier and thousands of heroic missionaries continued to bring the faith to Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, and this mission continues today.

Christianity first made contact with the peoples of the Pacific in 1595 during the Spanish expeditions from Latin America to the Philippines and in 1668 during expeditions to the Marianas. Full-scale missionary outreach began in the early nineteenth century through the great works of religious orders and congregations.⁶

This profound history of mission and journey of faith is the inspiration and joy of the Asian and Pacific Catholic communities who have migrated to the United States. The precious gift of the Catholic faith is manifest in a splendid variety by reasons of origin, historical and cultural development, and diverse spiritual and liturgical traditions. Yet all are united in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ through Christian witness and solidarity.



A TEACHING MOMENT

Today the Asian and Pacific communities in the United States—both native-born, that is, born in the United States, and immigrants who came to the United States—span several generations. Many among the Chamorro,⁷ Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, and Samoan Americans trace their heritage to more than a century of migration; yet Asian and Pacific peoples have remained, until very recently, nearly invisible in the Church in the United States. A further increase in the number of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the episcopal leadership will be a positive development. Some among us bishops have endeavored to become informed through a genuine pastoral love and concern, and some have responded to the generous invitation extended by Asian and Pacific episcopal conferences and individual bishops to be present at gatherings in their homelands. The many pastoral visits of our brother bishops from Asia and the Pacific have made us more aware of the urgency for the Church in the United States to recognize the gifts of our Asian and Pacific brothers and sisters.

The tremendous increase in Asian and Pacific Catholics across the United States at the beginning of the third millennium is a teaching moment. It is also a teaching moment because of the welcoming spirit to which we are called in *The Church in America (Ecclesia in America)* and in the recent pastoral statement *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*: the Church in the United States is enjoined “to offer a genuine and suitable welcome [to newcomers], to share together as brothers and sisters at the same table, and to work side by side to improve the quality of life for society’s marginalized members.”⁸ To underline the spirit of conversion, communion, and solidarity with newcomers called for in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us*, this pastoral statement focuses attention on the little-known Asian and Pacific communities rooted in the United States, as well as new immigrants about whom we should learn more, and whom we should acknowledge as integral parts of the Church in the United States.

Though this pastoral letter is a teaching instrument about all of our Asian and Pacific sisters and brothers, most sections will focus on Asians from the South, Southeast, and East Asian regions (see Appendix B) since more than two-thirds of Americans of Asian heritage and a majority of recent immigrants are from these regions. In addition, this pastoral statement will refer to Pacific Americans from countries in the Pacific Basin including Micronesia (see Appendix C).

II. Harmony Among Diverse Realities

Homelands. Asian and Pacific Americans come from many national backgrounds, speak many different languages, and encompass a wide variety of physical and social characteristics. Their homelands include fifty-three Asian countries and territories in geographic regions commonly referred to as Near East (or Western Asia or Middle East), Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia (see Appendix D), as well as twenty-six Pacific Island states (see Appendix E) of three indigenous population groups—Polynesians, Micronesians, and Melanesians.⁹ Two-thirds of the world's population live within this vast continent.

Language. Linguistically, Asian and Pacific communities are even more diverse. Each country has its own language or languages. For example, India has many languages as well as an official language, Hindi, and China has more than one hundred dialects, which are distinct spoken languages. The Philippines has eight major languages and eighty-seven dialects. Indonesia's official language is Bahasa Indonesia, but hundreds of other languages are used by distinct ethnic groups such as the Balinese, Batak, Dayak, and Madurese. In the Pacific Islands, French and English are commonly used as well as almost one thousand indigenous languages. Asian languages are a source of unity and joy for Asian ethnic communities when they gather among themselves.

Religion. The Asian continent is the birthplace of many of the great religions of the world: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, in addition to Christianity. It is also the birthplace of other social and religious traditions including Confucianism, Sikhism, and Taoism.

Ecclesia. The presence of Eastern Catholic churches brings an ecclesial diversity. They are cultural as well as ecclesial minorities struggling to maintain their identities. There are twenty-two Eastern Catholic churches, most of which are represented by faithful and clergy and, in many cases, hierarchies in the United States.

In short, there are many Asian and Pacific communities and identities. Respect for the differences among the varied cultures is a significant part of accepting our sisters and brothers into U.S. society and the Church in the United States.

THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC AMERICAN POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The Asian and Pacific American population in the United States is growing rapidly. The almost twelve million¹⁰ Asian Americans, as reported by Census 2000, reflect a growth of 48 percent since 1990, making them the fastest-

growing racial group in the country. The Asian American population is expected to double by 2010,¹¹ and the six largest Asian groups—Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese—account for 87.5 percent of Asian Americans overall (see table one). Smaller Asian ethnic groups listed in the census include Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, and Thai.

Table 1. Largest Asian and Pacific U.S. Populations*

	Total Population in the United States	Percent of Total Asian Americans
Chinese	2,432,585	23.7%
Filipino	1,850,314	18.1%
Indian	1,678,765	16.4%
Vietnamese	1,122,528	11.0%
Korean	1,076,872	10.5%
Japanese	796,700	7.8%
		Percent of Total Pacific Americans
Hawaiian	140,652	35.2%
Samoa	91,029	22.8%
Guamanian (<i>Chamorro</i>)	58,240	14.6%
Tongan	27,713	6.9%

* Single race
Source: Census 2000

Pacific Americans total 874,414, among which are U.S. citizens from Hawaii, Guam, the Northern Marianas, and Samoa (American). It also includes people from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tonga, and Western Samoa, among others.

The Asian and Pacific American population is present in large numbers throughout the country. More than two-thirds of this population live in six states: California, Hawaii, Illinois, Texas, New Jersey, and New York (see table two). Thirty dioceses count more than 100,000 persons of Asian and Pacific heritage.

Asian and Pacific American communities exhibit great complexities and disparities. Their challenge is that of diversity—ethnicity, language, culture, place of birth, religious tradition, recency of U.S. arrival, and endowment of human capital. They are among the best endowed and yet the least endowed of all Americans. They are among the best and least educated. Many Asian and Pacific Americans are socially and economically well integrated as a result

of a tradition of up to five generations of American citizenship. Some Asian and Pacific Americans enjoy the advantages of having arrived lawfully as students or skilled workers or with the support of family members who sponsored them. Yet others struggle with inhumane conditions as irregular migrants in dead-end jobs—if they have jobs at all. Some Asian Americans earn more than other U.S. ethnic groups, while other Asian Americans do not receive even the minimum wage. Low proportions of Asian and Pacific American households receive income from public assistance or social security; yet some households are clearly welfare-dependent.

ASIAN AND PACIFIC CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES

Except for the Filipinos, the majority of Asian and Pacific people in the United States are followers of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Islam. Asian and Pacific Catholics have been present in the Church in the United States since the beginning. The presence of Eastern Catholics in the United States is primarily the result of late nineteenth-century migration from Eastern Europe and the turmoil and upheaval in the Middle East in the opening decades of the twentieth century. As Pope John Paul II describes in *Ecclesia in America*, the sizeable numbers of Eastern Catholics from the Middle East were added to the Catholic population already in the United States including Eastern Catholics from Europe:

Table 2. Thirty Dioceses with the Highest Asian and Pacific American Population

Los Angeles	1,317,890
Honolulu	985,899
Brooklyn	650,868
San Jose	474,218
Oakland	473,687
San Francisco	445,347
Orange	440,577
Seattle	407,738
New York	327,491
Chicago	323,865
San Diego	323,865
Sacramento	312,714
Galveston-Houston	258,976
Boston	221,872
Newark	221,858
Arlington	208,909
San Bernardino	185,650
Washington, D.C.	172,966
Atlanta	172,539
Philadelphia	155,971
Fresno	147,794
Minneapolis-St. Paul	143,450
Dallas	143,358
Metuchen	142,072
Portland (Oregon)	136,783
Detroit	123,592
Rockville Centre	113,600
Stockton	111,094
Richmond	105,634
Las Vegas	103,792

This made it pastorally necessary to establish an Eastern Catholic hierarchy for these Catholic immigrants and their descendants. . . . Therefore, we cannot but rejoice that the Eastern Churches have in recent times taken root in America alongside the Latin Churches present there from the beginning, thus making the catholicity of the Lord's Church appear more clear.¹²

As early as 1763, a Filipino settlement had been established at Saint Malo in the bayous of Louisiana. Known as “Manilamen,” these settlers jumped ship to escape brutalities during the galleon trade between the Philippines and Mexico. They lived together, governing themselves and living in peace and harmony. Although most were Catholics, a priest rarely went to the village to minister to them.¹³ In the early 1920s, Archbishop Edward J. Hanna of San Francisco founded the Catholic Filipino Club in Stockton, California, to provide hospitality to newcomers. Among the Asian workers who toiled on the U.S. transcontinental railroad and among the agricultural workers who opened up the American West were Catholics deeply rooted in their faith. In 1856, Joseph Sadoc Alemany, OP, the first archbishop of San Francisco, invited a Chinese priest to minister to the Chinese migrant laborers. On December 9, 1884, the Paulist fathers took over the administration of Old St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco to begin a mission to the Chinese that continues to the present day. To strengthen the apostolate to the Chinese, in 1884 San Francisco’s Archbishop Patrick Riordan invited the Helpers of the Holy Souls Sisters (now known as the Society of Helpers) in St. Louis, Missouri, “to establish a foundation in San Francisco to help the poor, the immigrants, and the Chinese.”¹⁴

In 1912, finding no one who spoke his language, a young Japanese Catholic in Los Angeles wrote to the Bishop of Hakodate, his hometown in Japan, to ask whether it was possible to confess his sins by registered mail and be pardoned in the same way. The Church’s pastoral care for the Japanese on the West Coast originated with this incident. At the request of the Bishop of Hakodate, the Maryknoll Catholic Foreign Mission Society sent their priests and women religious to Los Angeles in 1915 to establish Japanese schools and orphanages, where many children of Japanese immigrants, American citizens by their birth on U.S. soil, would encounter Catholicism through education both in English and Japanese.

Today the number of Asian and Pacific Catholics in the United States presents a difficult and complex question. Hard data are difficult to obtain or are non-existent. Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza has pointed out that “Catholics from Asia, especially from the Philippines and Vietnam, make up the third largest group of people of color and account for about 2.6 percent of the Catholics in the United States.”¹⁵

One way to estimate the number of Asian and Pacific Catholics in this country is to look at the percentages of Catholics in their homelands. These percentages range from 8 percent in Korea to 85 percent in East Timor (see table three). While the percentages are small, the numbers may be large—for example, less

than one percent in China are Catholic, but this percentage represents about ten million Catholics. It is also worth noting that the Philippines is home to the third largest Catholic population in the world, after Brazil and Mexico.¹⁶

Today the Catholic Church in Korea exhibits the highest annual adult baptism rate in the world, a trend also true among Korean Americans. Korean Catholics have a strong sense of mission, sending missionaries to various parts of the world.

Vietnamese Catholics in the United States—who have blessed the Church in the United States with many priests and religious—are estimated to number 300,000, or 30 percent of Vietnamese Americans. The percentage of Catholics in Vietnam, however, is only 8 percent because many Catholics left Vietnam as refugees during the war.

Pacific Islanders have a high percentage of Catholics in the homelands. Samoans are 22 percent Catholic, while in the Marianas 84 percent are Catholic.

Many Asian and Pacific Islanders—native-born and immigrants—belong to the Eastern Catholic Churches. Accurate figures for the number of Eastern Catholics originating in Asia are likewise difficult to determine. It is estimated that there are 500,000 faithful from the Armenian, Chaldean, Maronite, Melkite, and Syriac churches, which include Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara, in the United States.

While the number of Asian and Pacific Catholics as a percentage of U.S. Catholics may be small, many Asian and Pacific Islander non-Catholics have attended Catholic schools and have been the recipients of services offered by the numerous and well-respected social programs conducted by local churches, Caritas, and other international Catholic organizations in their countries of origin. In Hong Kong, for instance, one-third of the children graduate each year from Catholic schools. In other countries,

Table 3. Estimates of Asian and Pacific Catholics

Ethnicity	U.S. Population	U.S. Catholics*
Chinese	2,432,585	300,000**
Filipino	1,850,314	1,536,590
Indian	1,678,765	285,390
Vietnamese	1,122,528	325,000
Korean	1,076,872	74,887
Japanese	796,700	31,868
Samoan	91,029	20,290
Guamanian (<i>Chamorro</i>)	58,240	48,921
Tongan	27,713	4,000

* Estimates for some groups are based on a percentage adjusted to the greater proportion of Catholics who emigrated than who remained in their homeland.

** Chinese includes Catholics from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Catholic schools are the preferred institutions of learning. John Paul II explains further, “Throughout Asia, the Church’s involvement in education is extensive and highly visible. . . . Catholic schools play an important role in evangelization, inculturating the faith, teaching the ways of openness and respect, and fostering interreligious understanding.”¹⁷ Because the graduates of these educational systems carry a great deal of influence, it is important for evangelization and outreach to continue the ties that have already been established. The challenge in the United States is then to strengthen that Catholic connection.

THE GROWING ROLE OF LEADERS

Leaders are emerging from among Asian and Pacific peoples here in the United States. Among them are two governors, a U.S. senator, several representatives in the U.S. Congress, and cabinet members. There are also Nobel Prize winners, U.S. Olympic athletes, national sports champions, respected scholars and scientists, information technology entrepreneurs, hundreds of thousands of professional managers, and small business owners.

The Church is blessed with Asian and Pacific pastors, social workers, educators, diocesan directors, and lay leaders who are actively and selflessly contributing to building the Kingdom of God in this country. The number of Asian and Pacific Catholics who have been given responsibility in church structures or are well known in their fields of endeavor is growing. Among them are a mother general of a community of women religious, the president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the former chair of the National Advisory Council of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and a Maronite priest elected as the first Eastern Catholic president of the Canon Law Society of America.

FOLLOWING THE WITNESS OF MARTYRS

Besides these living role models, Asian and Pacific Catholics come to the United States with a long heritage of extraordinary witness of life and martyrdom. The Church recently recognized many Asian saints and martyrs; however, the total number of saints and martyrs could fill an entire Asian and Pacific Litany of Saints.

From India, Gonsalo Garcia was canonized in 1629 and John de Brito in 1947. More recently, Pope John Paul II beatified Blessed Joseph Vaz in 1995.

From Japan the heroic witness of St. Paul Miki and his companions, including Gracia Hosakawa, Ludivico Ibaragi, Michael Kozaki, and Takayama Ukon, has been honored by the Church.

The Church in Korea suffered more than 10,000 martyrdoms. In 1984, Pope John Paul II canonized 103 martyrs in Seoul. Outstanding among those saints are St. Andrew Kim Taegon, the first native Korean priest, and Chung Hasang and Kim Hyoim, who were heroic lay leaders.

The Philippines' first martyr, San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, was canonized in 1987. Catechist Pedro Calungsod was beatified in 2000.

It is estimated that more than 130,000 Vietnamese Catholics died for Christ's sake during persecutions from 1625 to 1886. On June 19, 1988, Pope John Paul II canonized 117 of them, including St. Andrew Dung Lac, St. Phanxico Xavier Can, St. Vincent Diem, St. Phaolo Le Bao Tinh, St. Phero Nguyen Khac Tu, and a woman, St. Agnes Le Thi Thanh. On March 5, 2000, Blessed Andrew the Catechist was beatified by Pope John Paul II in Rome.

Also on March 5, 2000, Blessed Nicholas Bunlert Kitbamrung, the Thai Church's first martyr priest, was beatified.

From China, 120 martyrs were canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 1, 2000. Of these, thirty-three were foreign missionaries and eighty-seven were native Chinese, including Ahan Wen Lan, Pei Xio, Zhan Da Pun, Liu Shui Tin, Cao Gul Ying, Liu Wen Yuen, and Liu Han Zhou.

Among the many Eastern Catholic martyrs and saints are Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified, born of a Syrian family in Galilee, who was beatified in 1983; Blessed Joseph Kassab Hardini, who was beatified in 1998; and from India, Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Blessed Alphonsa Muttathupadath, who were beatified in 1986, and St. Marian Theresia, who was canonized in April 2000.

EXPERIENCING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Part of the sad reality for minorities and many immigrants—among them Asian and Pacific Islanders—to the United States is racial discrimination and prejudice. Racially restrictive laws have ranged from those that affect all non-white populations, including Asian and Pacific groups, to those that target specific Asian groups. Prior to the 1950s, Asian immigrants were denied the

right to become naturalized citizens—a right granted to all other immigrants to the United States. Laws in many states forbade marriages between non-whites (including Asians) and whites, although social pressures were probably the major impediment to interracial marriages. The Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882, which remained in effect until 1943, barred additional Chinese laborers from entering the United States and prevented Chinese aliens from obtaining American citizenship. A 1909 law denied citizenship to 50,000 persons from Arabia because they were considered Asians. Japanese laborers were brought to the United States in lieu of Chinese laborers until 1907, when the Gentlemen’s Agreement with Japan curtailed Japanese immigration temporarily; and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, known as the “Japanese Exclusion Act,” banned immigration of Japanese laborers. Perhaps the most tragic instance of racial discrimination was Executive Order 9066 of 1942, which forced Japanese immigrants, including two-thirds who were American citizens mainly from the west coast, into internment camps under the guise of military necessity. This experience cannot be described without noting the heroic efforts of many religious, such as the Maryknoll fathers, brothers, and sisters, who accompanied the Japanese internees to the camps and stayed with them. Without such loving ministry, many Japanese American Catholics might have felt abandoned and left their Catholic faith.

While legal provisions have changed, discriminatory actions by individuals and groups sadly endure. Throughout history, Asians in the United States, native-born and immigrant, have been characterized as “permanent aliens,” a race of foreigners given externally imposed labels and racial identities and only referred to in passing or even omitted altogether in classic immigration history. Asian and Pacific contributions in building the nation have been mostly unrecognized and ignored. The recent episodes of racial attacks against Asian persons and businesses in Los Angeles and Detroit are tragic reminders of the ongoing need for conversion against any form of racial discrimination.

Some Asian immigrant groups are still relegated to jobs that pay low wages, require them to work long hours, and provide substandard working conditions and unfair labor practices. To escape from such exploitative conditions, some Asian entrepreneurs resort to establishing small businesses in their own communities, sometimes with the help of affirmative action programs, through which Asian and Pacific Americans also have obtained college and advanced degrees.

III. Sharing Gifts and Promoting Harmony

From its inception, the United States of America has been enriched by the gifts brought to its shores from countries and cultures the world over. Likewise, the Catholic Church in the United States has been blessed by the traditions of Catholics from almost every nation on earth.

In 1997 the contributions of Asian and Pacific communities were presented during a consultation for the bishops' Committee on Migration, which stated,

We believe strongly that this is a moment of special grace for the Catholic Church in the United States. As Asian Pacific communities, we bring a strong sense of family with a loving respect for the elderly and a profound and fervent religious faith. We contribute a spirituality which is eastern [and] rooted in Asian Pacific cultures. We also seek to live in harmony with each other and with the whole of creation. We deepen and challenge our understanding of the meaning of the universal Church, enabling all of us to be a church which is complete and whole.¹⁸

This Church that is complete and whole brings to fulfillment the gifts of the Asian and Pacific people:

To bear witness to Jesus Christ is the supreme service which the Church can offer to the peoples of Asia, for it responds to their profound longing for the Absolute, and it unveils the truths and values which will ensure their integral human development. . . . [The Church has sought to discover] the Asian countenance of Jesus [in light of] the universal saving significance of the mystery of Jesus and his Church.¹⁹

HARMONY IS ASIAN AND CHRISTIAN

Harmony is central to the lives and cultures of Asian and Pacific communities. According to the bishops of Asia, "harmony embodies 'the realities of order, well-being, justice and love as seen in human interaction. . . . Harmony is not simply the absence of strife. . . . The test of true harmony lies in acceptance of diversity and richness.'"²⁰

Typically, harmony in the family binds generations together for the spiritual formation of the young. Culturally, the traditional arts of many Asian and Pacific societies link a person's actions with grace in society. Most of the time, harmony is characterized as well by a deep spirit of courtesy—a recognition that human solidarity derives from all persons' common relationship to God, who is the source of all life.

Harmony is authentically Christian and intrinsically Asian. Harmony draws its inspiration and strength from the harmonious relationship of the Trinity. Asians and Pacific Islanders teach a threefold harmony: (1) harmony with a personal God, the source of all genuine harmony; (2) harmony among all people; and (3) harmony with the whole universe. It is, according to Pope John Paul II in his address of May 13, 1981, “an integral part of the Christian concept of life”; he said that harmony’s “object is: the sacred dignity of human person, the image of God; its purpose: the realization of justice as the advancement and liberation of the human person; its foundation: the truth about human nature, learned from reason and illuminated by revelation; and its propelling power: love as the Gospel commandment and norm of action.”²¹

FAMILY AND EDUCATION ARE CENTRAL

For most peoples, the family is of the highest value. Asian and Pacific cultures place a particular emphasis on loyalty to one's family. Asian and Pacific families affirm many basic family values including love, integrity, honesty, thrift, and mutual support. Respect for elders and authority and sacrifice for children figure prominently in shaping their experiences. Harmony is crucial, along with the notion that the individual must sacrifice his or her interests to serve the greater needs of the group, which may be the state, the community, or, especially, the family.

Faith is an important element of life. For Catholics of Asian and Pacific heritage, Catholic identity is intimately connected with family and local community. Parents and grandparents are the primary teachers of gospel values and nurturers of the faith among the young. Vocations to ministry are fostered in the family.

After the family, education is most valued by Asian and Pacific peoples. Thirty-eight percent of Asians in the United States have bachelor's degrees or higher education, compared with 20 percent of the total population. For example, among Asian Indian men, 66 percent have a bachelor's or higher degree.²²

PROFOUND SPIRITUALITY AND POPULAR PIETY

Asian and Pacific Catholic Americans and immigrants migrated with the experience and sensibilities of the great religions and spiritual traditions of the world—Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism—together with Christianity. Their experience of the great religions and spiritual traditions teaches them to live with a profound sense of the sacred, a holistic approach to life and salvation, and a spirituality adapted to their needs and a life-giving vitality. Indeed the Holy Father said on April 19, 1998, “We want to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches of Asia that they may proclaim Christ in the context of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism and all those currents of thought and life which were already rooted in Asia before the preaching of the Gospel arrived.”²³

Even though many Christian immigrants from Asia have suffered persecution in their homelands, we are mindful that their popular piety has roots in their Asian spiritual traditions. Their experience demonstrates the values of these religions and spiritual traditions, and how these values await their fulfillment in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In the small traditional communities from which these Christians come, authority has a predominant place in the Church. Priests and religious hold positions of respect. The elders of the community are also the leaders of the parish community.

The Church is experienced not only as a place for public worship but also as a community where family and friends can find personal warmth and caring, where there is sharing of pains and joys, where there is constant sharing around the table of friendship. These communal activities are celebrated around the seasons and feasts of the church year, feasts in honor of the saints, and popular devotions. The sacramental celebrations of baptism, confirmation, first communion, marriage, and funerals are not only religious milestones, but also occasions for gathering and strengthening bonds of family and friendship.

Asian and Pacific immigrants bring popular devotions from their homelands and share them with fellow parishioners. Many in the United States sustain their faith through devotions to Mary and the saints. Asian and Pacific Catholics have a special love and affection for the Blessed Virgin Mary, revering her as their own mother and the Mother of Christ, and holding many vibrant celebrations in her honor. Throughout Asia are thousands of Marian sanctuaries and shrines where not only Catholic faithful gather, but also followers of other religious traditions. Muslims particularly honor Mary in the Qur'an.

A LONG TRADITION OF LAY LEADERSHIP

Even before the Second Vatican Council, Asians entering the Church in their homelands were imbued with the understanding that the mission of the laity is crucial to the growth of the Church. Partly because of her recent mission-based history, the Catholic Church in Asia and the Pacific Islands emphasizes the baptismal call to mission for all members of the Church. Church leaders place great importance on lay leadership and the active role of women. Many Asian and Pacific Catholics who migrated to this country came with a rich experience of being active lay members and ministers of the Church.

Catholicism in Korea, for example, has a unique history. It began through the initiative of Korean Confucian scholars in 1784 who had visited China and became Christians after reading Christian texts found in Beijing. Korean laity not only kept the faith alive but also shared it with others until the first missionaries arrived in 1836. In Japan, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, lay Catholics similarly kept the faith alive while the country was closed to Christian missionaries.

Many Asian and Pacific communities are familiar with the term “catechist.” Catechists are people of strong faith, well trained in the basics of the Catholic faith, and well respected as religious leaders in the community. They are also sent to remote villages to gather the people in prayer and to teach catechism. In some areas of the Philippines, lay liturgical ministers regularly hold weekend para-liturgical services in *capillas*, chapels in the remote barrios, that might be visited by the clergy only a few times each year.

Lay persons are the primary evangelizers in many parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands. And the tradition lives on among many Asian and Pacific lay leaders now in the United States. In parishes where they are invited, encouraged, and nurtured, they have been active pastoral ministers for many decades. Asian and Pacific lay leaders share their joy and talents in almost all avenues of lay ministries—the liturgy, hospitality, social services, and parish and diocesan leadership.



THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Many priests and religious sisters and brothers from Asia and the Pacific minister to the Church in the United States. Most not only serve their ethnic groups, but also are pastors and associates in parishes, and teachers and principals of Catholic schools throughout the country. In many instances, Asian and Pacific priests and religious have established parish religious education programs in their native languages. Volunteer teachers in these programs are usually from particular ethnic groups; for instance, Hmong, Samoan-speaking, and Tongan priests, religious, and deacons often work with lay leaders in family evangelization programs.

Vocations are quite high in Asian and Pacific American communities both in number and in proportion to the current population. In 1999, 9 percent of those ordained to the priesthood in the United States were of Asian or Pacific heritage, yet Asian and Pacific persons composed only 2.6 percent of the Catholic population in the United States.

THE HERITAGE OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES

The Eastern churches, principally of the Middle East and India, merit special attention. “From Apostolic times they have been the custodians of a precious spiritual, liturgical and theological heritage. Their traditions and rites, born of a deep inculturation of the faith in the soil of many Asian countries, deserve the greatest respect.”²⁴

Although their own priests served some of the Eastern Catholic faithful from Asia, the faithful were under the jurisdiction of the local Latin Church bishops until the 1966 appointment of the Maronite and Melkite bishops. Bishops were later appointed to serve other communities. The appointment of bishops to serve the Armenian, Chaldean, Syrian, and, most recently, the Syro-Malabar churches followed.

Today the eparchies and exarchates of patriarchal or metropolitan *sui iuris* churches in the United States include the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn and Our Lady of Lebanon in Los Angeles for the Maronite Catholics; the Eparchy of Newton, Massachusetts, for the Melkite Greek Catholics; the Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance in Newark, New Jersey, for Syrian Catholics; the Armenian Catholic Exarchate of the U.S.A. and Canada with parishes in several states; the Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle of Detroit for the Chaldean Catholics; and the most recent Eparchy of St. Thomas in Chicago for the Syro-Malabar Catholics.

IV. Building Communion and Harmony: Challenges and Our Responses

The whole world is facing the phenomenon of increasing ethnic diversity. Technological advances in communication and travel facilities, globalization of business, and international migration are taking place on every continent.

In the United States, the unprecedented growth of immigration from Asia and the Pacific in the last century calls all Catholics to truly understand a different way of thinking, acting, and feeling. The arrival of immigrants—even of those who come bearing gifts of time, talent, and treasure—creates challenges and tensions. The very gifts they bring challenge the Church to view itself and the world in a different perspective. Asian and Pacific communities present different ways of relating to other people, of believing, of praying, of being Church.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

To face the pastoral challenges of ministering to and with Asian and Pacific communities, steps have been taken by the Church at the national, diocesan, and parish levels. The following is a brief chronology of significant measures.

- 1975: Resettlement of refugees from Southeast Asia becomes a priority of the U.S. bishops' department of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS). The work of refugee resettlement continues in more than one hundred dioceses to this day.
- 1982: To establish a fraternal channel of communication and collaboration, bishops of the United States send delegates to the meetings of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences—a practice that continues today.
- 1989: The bishops' Committee on Migration and the national MRS office convene diocesan directors and leaders to discuss the pastoral care needs and opportunities for the Asian and Pacific communities in the United States.

- 1990: The first national consultation with the Asian communities is called by the National Catholic Educational Association. Involvement in this awareness-raising on the part of the MRS Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees (MRS/PCMR) led to the hiring of more Asian and Pacific persons as diocesan and national MRS staff.
- 1994: The first national gathering of Asian and Pacific Catholic leaders in Menlo Park, Archdiocese of San Francisco, is convened by MRS/PCMR.
- 1994: A network of diocesan directors involved in Asian and Pacific ministry is established.
- 1996: The first Asian Pastoral Experience Program to the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Korea is organized by the network.
- 1997: A National Task Force is convened by the Committee on Migration to study contributions, issues, concerns, and common trends in the Asian and Pacific communities.
- 1997: The Committee on Migration organizes a symposium on the Church in China, which is attended by sixteen bishops from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) (now called the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB]).
- 1999: The Second Asian Pastoral Experience Program to the Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan/Thailand is conducted.
- 1999: A Convocation on Asian and Pacific Concerns is organized by the University of Notre Dame Institute of Church Life. Three bishops participate.
- 1999: Five bishops led by the president of the NCCB visit Vietnam.
- 2000: Many Asian and Pacific leaders actively participate in diocesan jubilee celebrations and the national gathering Encuentro 2000, which was held in Los Angeles.

In many dioceses, offices or ministries focus on pastoral care for Asian and Pacific communities as well as support apostolates for particular ethnic groups. Some dioceses have begun annual Asian and Pacific gatherings that

strengthen the unity of all the communities and celebrate their traditions and cultures. In addition, a few seminaries have conducted workshops on the Asian presence and spirituality.

Some bishops have established Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese parishes or missions. Pastoral centers for small ethnic communities, such as the Cambodian, Hmong, Khmhu, Laotian, Samoan, and Tongan communities, have been organized in several dioceses, and multiple pastoral centers in different parts of the country provide ministry to the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Catholics. These centers not only offer catechesis, Bible studies, prayer services, and linguistically appropriate religious education materials, but also provide a place for members of these communities to experience their own language and culture and to affirm their own cultural and ethnic roots. Special tribute must be given to priests, religious, and lay leaders from the United States who have worked hard to learn Asian languages and cultures in order to become more effective ministers.

On the part of particular Asian and Pacific Islander groups, creative and effective initiatives in the parishes and sometimes in the region have helped to bring together and support community development and interaction among themselves and with other cultural groups. Chinese, Korean, Samoan, and Tongan families gather for Bible study. Indonesian, Khmhu, Korean, Laotian, and Vietnamese youth hold summer camps at which catechesis is conducted in their own languages. Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Samoans, Tongans, and Vietnamese have vibrant music ministries and choirs.

Some Asian and Pacific ethnic communities have successfully formed national structures to build collective identity: for example, the Hmong-American Catholic National Association; the Federation of Vietnamese Clergy, Religious, and Lay Leaders; the Korean Priests Association of America and Canada; the Indian American Catholic Association, Inc.; and the National Filipino Ministry Council. Unfortunately, these communities sometimes exist side by side, mainly in isolation, with little or no connection between diocesan structures or between other ethnic and cultural communities in the Church.

We bishops pray that this pastoral statement will motivate members of the Church at every level to build on these achievements and strengthen ties to the local church. The following section describes some challenges and offers suggestions around which national, diocesan, and parish responses can be planned.

MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE FAMILY

Family. Though the family is a highly prized gift, Asian and Pacific Americans experience grave difficulties in maintaining the integrity of traditional family structures and values. Traditional values, such as marriage stability, the discipline of children, filial reverence, respect for the elderly, veneration of ancestors, and emphasis on extended family relations, are lived out in very different ways in each culture.

Adaptation to the dominant culture is never easy for immigrants. Because migration puts a great strain on family life, many traditional families have become dysfunctional as Asian and Pacific immigrants adapt themselves to changes and demands of their new life and their new country. The numbers of broken homes, gangs, teenage pregnancies, runaways, drug abusers and their victims, and attempted suicides continue to rise as parents find it difficult to balance the demands of making a living and spending sufficient time with their families. Whereas in their native countries, most wives and mothers were able to remain at home to care for their families, in the United States, they must join the labor force in order to pay their bills. The context of the extended family system, which provides a healthy, nurturing, and supportive family life, is sorely missing. Migration cuts people off from their extended family and leaves them isolated.

In Asian and Pacific cultures, the traditional roles for men and women tend to be clearly delineated. In American society, the roles are different, especially in regard to childrearing and discipline, money management, gender relations, and generational relations. While change is inevitable, it often leads to tension and other problems within the Asian and Pacific family.

The economic pressures placed on families force young couples to work long hours. Asian and Pacific parents usually leave their children with babysitters or with their elderly parents. The transmission of faith, however, is not part of a babysitter's job. In addition, even if grandparents desire to transmit faith or traditional values to their grandchildren, they are often unable to do so because of language handicaps or lack of religious environments. For the most part, children grow up exposed daily to a secular society, and their faith formation is relegated to the background, if not neglected completely. Through family enrichment programs, dioceses and parishes should intentionally invite and aid Asian and Pacific parents to become more effective channels in developing the faith life of their families.

Youth. Second- and subsequent-generation Asian and Pacific youth struggle not only with the pains of growing up but also with the conflict of cultural values between their parents and American culture. On the one hand, they experience an environment at home where family is the most important consideration, where mutual support among family members is fostered, and where smooth interpersonal relationships or family harmony is stressed. Outside their homes, they experience emphasis on different values: individuality, independence, and competition. Caught between seeming contradictions, many Asian and Pacific youth experience a deep identity crisis that becomes more serious as the communication and generation gap between the youth and the elders widen.

In their desire to be like their U.S.-born counterparts, Asian and Pacific youth, like other immigrant youth, tend to reject the traditional values of their families and begin to assert themselves. Those left without any form of guidance and supervision after school spend their time in the company of their peers and sometimes are led astray. These youth must be taught Asian and Pacific histories, cultures, values, stories, and myths as a way to help them appreciate their cultural heritage. At the same time—as a way to develop understanding of the Asian and Pacific peoples, the gifts they bring, and the challenges they face—parish and diocesan educational materials can utilize evocative pedagogy using stories, parables, and symbols respectful of Asian and Pacific heritage, faith practices, and teaching methods.

Single Asian and Pacific young adults are often left alone to find their place either in society or in the Church. They need guidance during the difficult period of cultural adjustment, career change, vocation discernment, and other important decisions young people have to make. They should be encouraged to take part in parish youth and young adult formation and leadership programs and become actively involved in the organization of program activities. More importantly, as Pope John Paul II has stated,

the many complex problems which young people now face . . . impel the Church to remind the young of their responsibility for the future of society and the Church, and to encourage and support them at every step to ensure that they are ready to accept that responsibility. . . . The Christian formation of young people . . . should recognize that they are not only the object of the Church's pastoral care but also "agents and co-workers in the Church's mission in her various apostolic works of love and service."²⁵

Elderly. Elderly parents experience an identity crisis of a different nature. Once figures of authority in their native country, Asian and Pacific elderly parents in America might become totally dependent on their children. This contrasts painfully with the reverence traditionally shown to elders in their native lands. Unable to communicate even with their own grandchildren, they are often engulfed in a deep sense of loneliness and isolation. Unless they become part of a senior center, many spend their time within the confines of their homes, unable to articulate their needs, to socialize, and to feel a sense of family belonging. Parishes are encouraged to develop family ministries that incorporate more sensitive ways to reach out to elderly immigrants for social and spiritual nourishment.

YEARNING FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

As mentioned earlier, a great number of Asian and Pacific immigrants (both Catholic and non-Catholic) have received Catholic education in their homelands and desire it for their children as well. Catholic schools can be more open and inviting to all, especially to those of other religious traditions who might have attended Catholic schools in their homelands. This would continue the long tradition of educational and social service structures, serving as effective channels of evangelization.

In addition, families with children in the public schools wish to continue religious education for their children. Creative options need to be developed to offer Catholic children in public schools opportunities to learn and celebrate their faith.

Moreover, Catholic schools are attractive for their solid education and discipline. Many Asian and Pacific parents would like to send their children to Catholic schools in the United States; however, these schools have become very expensive, especially for many young families with two or more children. As a remedy, some scholarship options are being explored by Catholic schools.

A THREEFOLD DIALOGUE WITH RELIGIONS, CULTURES, AND THE POOR

Since the Second Vatican Council, our brother bishops in Asia, who gather regularly as the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, have developed a pastoral approach that emphasizes a threefold dialogue: with other religions,

with cultures, and with the poor. Such dialogue can also be explored for its enriching fruitfulness at all levels of the Church in the United States.

Dialogue with Other Religions. Like other immigrants before them, those from Asian and Pacific communities want to be companions on the faith journey with the American people. Essential to an understanding of Asian and Pacific communities is the dialogue with other religions. This means recognizing key themes of the spirituality and theology of religions, especially Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Taoism, and some indigenous religions. In beginning the dialogue, as the Holy Father points out, several religious values exist that are of the highest significance: for example, in Islam, the centrality of the will of God; in Hinduism, the practice of meditation, contemplation, renunciation of one's will, and the spirit of nonviolence; in Buddhism, detachment and compassion; in Confucianism, filial piety and humanitarianism; in Taoism, simplicity and humility; in other traditional religions, reverence and respect for patience.²⁶ Interreligious dialogue at its deepest level is always a dialogue of salvation, because it seeks to discover, classify, and understand better the signs of the age-long dialogue that God maintains with humanity. This dialogue will bring about truly inculturated theology, liturgy, and spirituality among Asian and Pacific Americans in order to live and announce the message of Christ.

Dialogue with Cultures. For too long, Catholicism and Christianity have been seen by Asian and Pacific people as "Western." Despite the Catholic Church's centuries-long presence and many apostolic endeavors, in many places it is still considered foreign to Asia and the Pacific Islands and is often associated in people's minds with the colonial powers. Pope John Paul II writes,

The test of true inculturation is whether people become more committed to their Christian faith because they perceive it more clearly with the eyes of their own culture. . . . [Furthermore,] through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission. . . . But it has a special urgency today in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural situation of Asia.²⁷

Jesus came to bring salvation to all persons of every culture and language. The Catholic Church is universal in nature and reaches out to all peoples with the Good News of the Lord. In the United States, inculturation has particular significance for the Asian and Pacific immigrants who arrived in the 1800s and the early half of the nineteenth century, when cultural assimilation was

encouraged and was the criterion for acceptance by society and the Church. Establishing contact with the cultural and social life of immigrants will probably remain the most serious challenge for the Church in the matter of inculturation. This challenge emerges on all levels, especially on the level of parish or neighborhood, where persons of different cultural backgrounds meet.

The Holy Father points out that “it is indeed a mystery why the Savior of the world, born in Asia, has until now remained largely unknown to the people of this continent.”²⁸ The Holy Father expresses his hope that—as the Church became well established during the first millennium in Europe and the Western countries, and in the second millennium grew and flourished in Latin America and Africa—the third millennium will see the Church in Asia come into its own.

At the same time, the religious practices of some Asian and Pacific peoples must be formed by authentic biblical and ecclesial theology and not submerged in a popular piety that is in need of a fuller Catholic catechesis. “As a vital dimension in Catholic life, there exists in Christian communities, particular expressions of the search for God and the religious life which are full of fervor and purity of intention. . . . This is a rich yet vulnerable reality in which the faith at its base may be in need of purification and consolidation.”²⁹ For others, situations of oppression or of isolation in their homelands have sometimes prevented the dissemination of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council or of the Church’s magisterial teachings and liturgical practices since the Council. The characteristic loyalty and devotion of Asian and Pacific Catholics make their authentic formation in Catholic faith and piety all the more essential for their important role in the future of the Church in North America. The duty of catechesis for inculturation of the faith is “to recognize a cultural dimension in the Gospel itself while affirming, on the one hand, that this does not spring from some human cultural *humus*, and recognizing, on the other, that the Gospel cannot be isolated from the cultures in which it was initially inserted and in which it has found expression through the centuries.”³⁰

Dialogue with the Poor. This framework for dialogue with our Asian and Pacific communities comes out of the reality of their homelands. Despite the persistence of the myth of Asian Americans as the “model minority,”³¹ in reality, many Asian Americans are poor and in need of help. Among the poorest Asian and Pacific families are those who came as refugees challenged to compete in a society very different from the ones they left behind; those who came in the hulls of ships under irregular immigration situations, often ending up in sweat shops or being trafficked into illegal activities, and living

under deplorable conditions; and those who work in jobs that take them away from their families and residences, such as seafarers, migrants, and circus workers. Many are exploited, and their human rights, violated. But John Paul II's words offer the hope that "Hers [the Church's] is always the evangelical cry in defense of the world's poor, those who are threatened and despised and whose human rights are violated."³²

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Learning about intercultural communication is doubly important because it is needed not only to work effectively in various ministries, but also to help the different ethnic and cultural communities in our parishes understand what is happening to them. Sometimes it is mistakenly presumed that everyone knows all about intercultural communication because American society is multicultural.

Basic communication between cultures becomes a challenge not only because of language but also, more importantly, because of differing cultural modes of expression. In particular, the importance of the individual and the right to self-expression practiced in American culture often clash with traditional values of Asian and Pacific families. One example that reveals the need for education about intercultural communication for both immigrants and native-born Americans is the Asian cultural ideal of harmony, expressed by silence in the face of situations of conflict. By nature, Asian and Pacific people keep questions and problems to themselves and articulate only those that they must. As a result, full account of their struggles is not seen in its totality. Pastoral workers have difficulty understanding this deep reticence to bring difficulties and complaints into the open. Ancient Asian cultural tendencies must be understood and respected even as ministers help Asian and Pacific peoples to become more expressive of their needs.

In addition, Asian and Pacific Islanders are reared in cultures of hospitality where person-to-person relationships are vital to human interaction and communication. Emphasis is upon relationships. Therefore, contact needs to be made and relationships established between parishes and these peoples. Asian and Pacific immigrants are drawn into the life of the parish via these relationships. Parishes can offer diversity and intercultural communications training to leaders and parishioners to develop awareness and skills for more effective hospitality and empowerment processes.

EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP FOR SOLIDARITY AND COMMUNITY

Clergy and Religious. Most of the Asian and Pacific clergy and religious sisters and brothers ministering in the United States received their training in their home countries, and several are here only on limited term assignments from their home dioceses or religious congregations. Their basic approaches to ministry may differ from those in the United States, reflecting various understandings of the role of the priest in the Catholic community, the role of lay leadership (particularly the role of women), the U.S. parish structure and sense of stewardship, devotional practices, and religious organizations. Some immigrant priests and religious have difficulty integrating into their new situation and connect more with their home diocese than with their U.S. diocese; they relate better to priests and religious from their own land than to priests and religious in their new land. To adapt to their new land and ministry requires time and a balanced approach. Dioceses can help by offering solid programs of hospitality, orientation, and continuous support.

Many Asian and Pacific priests and religious have quietly experienced deep frustration in their ministry in the United States. Some express a sense of isolation and loneliness and a lack of support from the diocese. To address this, several Asian and Pacific priests and religious associations have been formed and meet regularly. These organizations have helped in building morale, strengthening a missionary spirituality, and introducing their membership to American pastoral approaches.

Laiety. “All lay people are missionaries; and the arena of their missionary work is the vast and complex worlds of politics, economics, industry, education, the media, science, technology, the arts and sport. In many Asian countries, lay people are already serving as true missionaries, reaching out to fellow Asians who might never have contact with clergy and religious.”³³ The enormous potential and charism of the laity as equal partners in the common mission of the Church cannot be emphasized enough. The ultimate responsibility for ministry with one’s ethnic community belongs to the community itself, with the guidance of the local bishop. Through mutual cooperation, the Asian and Pacific communities can provide religious education for youth, care for the elderly, entrance into intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and care for the poor. Asian and Pacific Catholics have come of age and are not merely objects of the Church’s pastoral care. Rather they have grown and should continue to grow as participating agents and coworkers in the apostolic mission of Jesus Christ. Parishes and dioceses should draw upon the Asian and Pacific communities as sisters and brothers in Christ, as important resources

who contribute to the Church in the United States. Asian and Pacific peoples have much to contribute regarding close family ties, community, hospitality, inculturation, liturgy, lay ministry, subsidiarity, spirituality, and collaborative ministry at all levels.

Structure. Each immigrant group has sought to maintain its community—for Asian and Pacific groups this is particularly important. At the beginning of the twentieth century, bishops established personal parishes, and during the latter half of the century, many other structures were put into place. Now there are multicultural parishes, pastoral centers, ethnic liaisons and consultants, missions, and chaplaincies. Sometimes space for liturgy and/or programs is provided. And where communities are small, language resources limited, and the community scattered, a pastoral center or a roving chaplain provides the sense of a “home away from home.” On the other hand, it is important to balance the community’s need for a sense of security with the need to experience what it truly means to be Catholic in the local church with strong ties to the bishop.

Solidarity. A major challenge is overcoming national divisions and building an Asian and Pacific American solidarity that can be a unifying and solidifying force. Asian and Pacific groups have their own prejudices and biases among themselves and toward other ethnic groups. For Asian and Pacific communities a conversion that addresses historical animosities against former enemies within their own homelands or outside them is encouraged. The call of the Lord to a change of heart needs to be heeded by all.

PASTORAL RESPONSES

In the United States today awareness and loving concern on the part of many bishops for the presence and contributions of our Asian and Pacific Catholic sisters and brothers is growing. To continue to fully support the growth and maturity of our Asian and Pacific communities, we bishops recommend the following strategic actions:

- That dioceses and parishes make every effort to welcome and to evangelize Asian and Pacific people and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Catholic faith;
- That in parish and diocesan ministries, Asian and Pacific communities be encouraged to participate as active caregivers, family evangelizers, advocates and promoters of priestly and religious vocations, and pastoral agents who contribute energies, idealism, and insights to the evangeliza-

tion work “not just with worldly wisdom and efficiency, but with hearts renewed and strengthened by the truth of Christ”³⁴;

- That Asian and Pacific Catholic leadership explore the potential of Asian and Pacific pastoral institutes to offer continuing education to clergy, religious, and lay leaders in the United States; theological courses—especially in the area of liturgy—that present an Asian and Pacific perspective; orientation programs; catechetical materials; and language and intercultural skills training;
- That Asian and Pacific Catholic leadership promote coalitions between Asian and Pacific communities and their organizations to build a strong advocacy network and establish solidarity. In addition, while structures to build ethnic identity and community strength are beneficial, they need to be complemented by structures of inclusion and communion with other communities in the multicultural local churches and especially with the local bishops. In this manner, the strengths of both diversity and unity can reinforce each other.
- That Asian and Pacific church leaders explore together with the USCCB an appropriate national structure for Asian and Pacific Catholics that would give recognition, active voice, and official liaison with the USCCB for the third millennium;
- That dioceses and parishes fully explore the potential benefits of the threefold dialogue with religions, cultures, and the poor among Asian and Pacific communities by offering intercultural communication training opportunities for pastors, seminarians, leaders, and staff; encouraging ecumenical and interfaith prayer services with the various celebrations rotating among different religious worship facilities; encouraging social action offices to advocate on behalf of the human rights and dignity of immigrants, migrants, and refugees; and addressing the various forms of racial prejudice and discrimination within the Church and society at large;
- That dioceses and parishes, where appropriate, develop mobile ministries to reach small and isolated Asian and Pacific Catholic communities;
- That we bishops maintain systematic communication with the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences and the Federation of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Oceania for (a) theological developments in the Asian and Pacific context; (b) policy developments for the exchange of ministers; and (c) support of the evangelization work of Radio Veritas–Asia, a Catholic station based in Quezon City, Philippines, that broadcasts to Asia.

V. Conclusion

Asian and Pacific communities rejoice that they are called to the house of the Lord. As the bishops of the Church in the United States, we rejoice in their presence. “Blessed be God for the peoples of Asia, so rich in their diversity yet one in their yearning for peace and fullness of life.”³⁵

By being authentically Christian and truly Asian in the footsteps of Christ, they have brought to us a more profound understanding of what it means to be truly Catholic. They have taught the Church in the United States the meaning of harmony; the necessity of dialogue with their cultures, with other religions, and with the poor; a renewed sense of family loyalty; the unity between diverse cultures and diverse Catholic church communities; and the closeness of all God’s creation.

As bishops of the Church, we acknowledge the contributions of all Asian and Pacific persons, especially their many creative initiatives that assist our ministries in our dioceses and parishes. “They are lively in faith, full of the hope and vitality which only love can bring.”³⁶



We hope in this third millennium—with the yearning of the universal Church and the foresight of the Holy Father—to concretely strengthen our ties with our Asian and Pacific communities here in the United States and in their homelands. We will enable their voice to be heard among ourselves and the Church at large.

We pray that the Church can be truly a sacrament of harmony and unity, a Church that is complete and whole.

Notes

- 1 John Paul II, *The Church in Asia (Ecclesia in Asia)*, 1999, no. 24.
- 2 *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 1.
- 3 For the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia in 1998, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples prepared *The Churches of Asia Ready for the Challenges of the Third Christian Millennium*, which identified fifty-one countries in the continent of Asia. Refer to the list in Appendix D.
- 4 *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 1.
- 5 Rev. Fr. Arten Ashjian, “The Armenian Orthodox Church” in Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, *The Oriental Orthodox Churches in the United States*, ed. Robert F. Taft, SJ (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986), 3.
- 6 Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Oceania, *Jesus Christ and the Peoples of Oceania: Walking His Way, Telling His Truth, and Living His Life (Instrumentum Laboris)* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), nos. 5, 6.
- 7 The primary indigenous group of the Marianas is Chamorro. The term “Guamanian” also refers to the people of Guam but does not speak to any particular cultural heritage.
- 8 U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 4.
- 9 The U.S. Census Bureau refers to Asian and Pacific Islanders as “any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.” The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and the State Department add countries in Western Asia (or the Middle East) including Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.
- 10 Census 2000 counts 11,898,828 Asians in racial categories that include East, South, and Southeast Asians, and mixed-race Asians. Persons of the Middle East are included in the white race category.
- 11 Sharon M. Lee, “Asian Americans: Diverse and Growing,” *Population Bulletin* Vol. 53, No. 2 (June 1998).
- 12 John Paul II, *The Church in America (Ecclesia in America)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1999), no. 17.
- 13 Veltsezar Bautista, *The Filipino Americans from 1763 to the Present: Their History, Culture, and Traditions* (Midlothian, Va.: Bookhaus Publishers, 1998).
- 14 Charles A. Donovan, CSP, “The Paulist Mission to the Chinese in San Francisco since 1903,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 18:1 (Winter 2000): 126.
- 15 Joseph A. Fiorenza, “A Global Microcosm,” *America* 181:16 (November 20, 1999): 6-9.
- 16 *Annuario Pontificio* 2000.

- 17 *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 37.
- 18 Committee on Migration, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Contributions, Concerns and Issues: Common Themes of the Asian Pacific Communities from the National Consultations* (February-July 1997), 2.
- 19 *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 20.
- 20 The bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) conducted a series of dialogue encounters with the followers of other religions between 1991-1996. This quote is from a compilation of the documents from those conferences: Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1992 to 1996*, vol. 2 (Manila, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997), 278.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 227.
- 22 Census Bureau, "We Are the American Asians" (September 1993).
- 23 Pope John Paul II's homily during the opening Mass of the Synod of Asian Bishops (April 19, 1998).
- 24 *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 27.
- 25 *Ibid.*, no. 47.
- 26 Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, no. 33. Also repeated in the *Relatio ante Disceptationem* report given by Cardinal Paul Shan, SJ, with the assistance of Archbishop Thomas Menampampel, SDB, in the section "The Spirit of God at Work in Asia."
- 27 *Ecclesia in Asia*, nos. 22, 21.
- 28 *Ibid.*, no. 2.
- 29 Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), no. 195.
- 30 *Ibid.*, no. 203.
- 31 That is, the myth that some immigrants adjust successfully to life in the United States with no help or needs.
- 32 John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1995), no. 5.
- 33 *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 45.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*, no. 50.
- 36 *Ibid.*

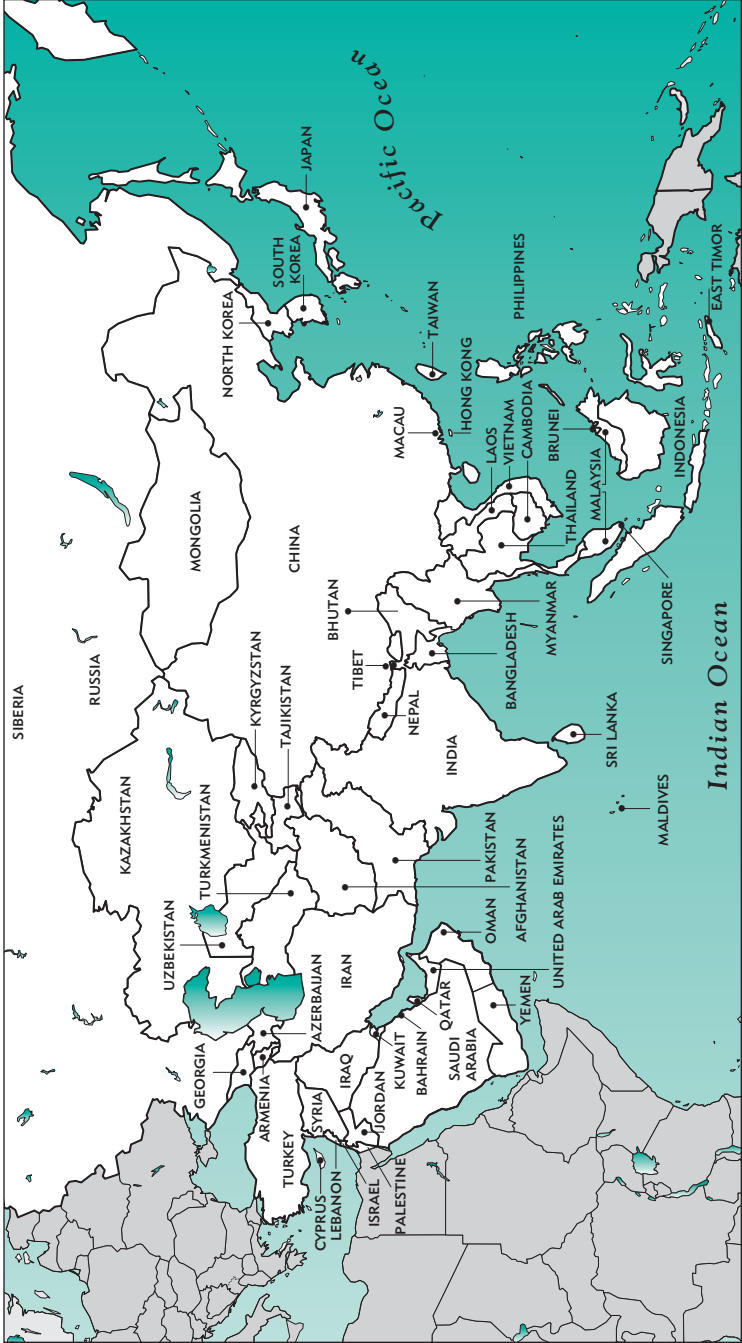
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Appendix A

MAP OF THE CONTINENT OF ASIA



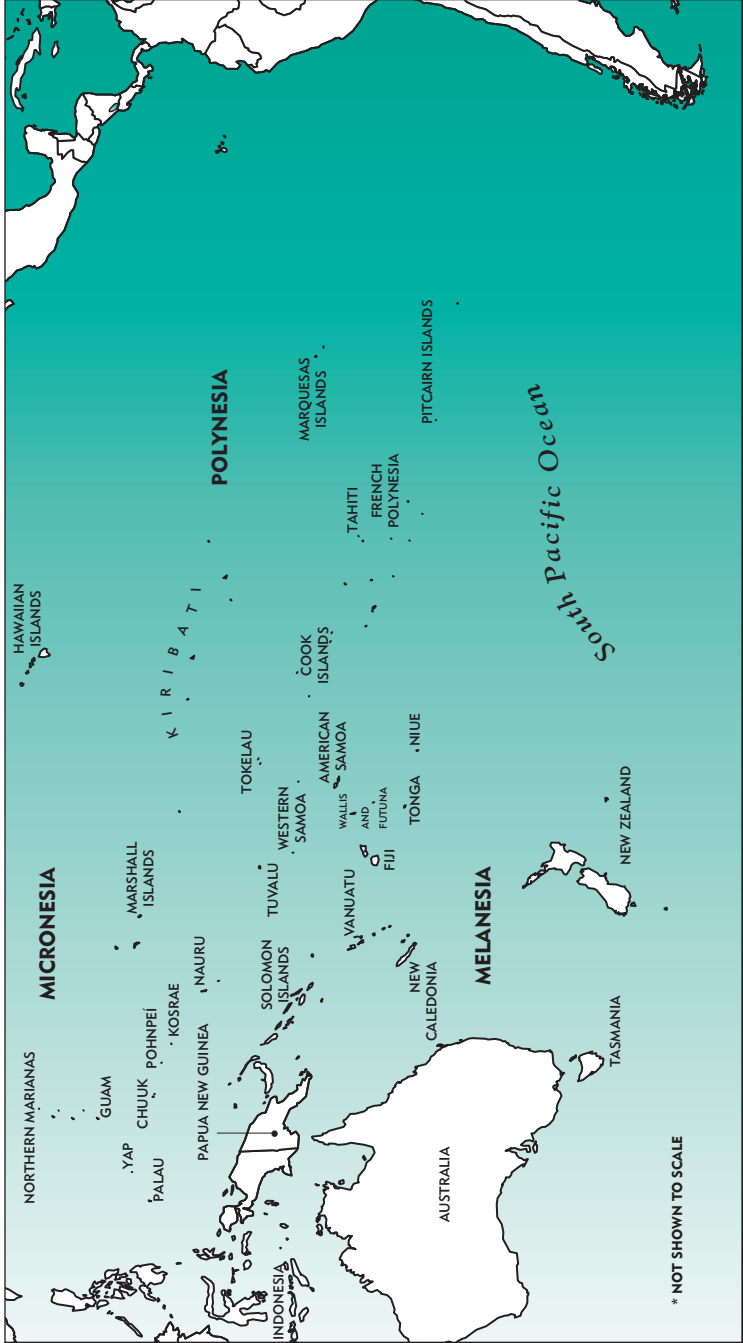
Appendix B

MAP OF SOUTH, SOUTHEAST, AND EAST ASIA



Appendix C

MAP OF THE PACIFIC STATES*



Appendix D

ASIAN COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

(East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia,
Central Asia, and Near East [or Middle East])

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Afghanistan | 31. Nepal |
| 2. Armenia | 32. North Korea |
| 3. Azerbaijan | 33. Oman |
| 4. Bahrain | 34. Pakistan |
| 5. Bangladesh | 35. Palestine* |
| 6. Bhutan | 36. Philippines |
| 7. Brunei | 37. Qatar |
| 8. Cambodia | 38. Saudi Arabia |
| 9. China | 39. Siberia |
| 10. Cyprus | 40. Singapore |
| 11. East Timor | 41. South Korea |
| 12. Georgia | 42. Sri Lanka |
| 13. Hong Kong | 43. Syria |
| 14. India | 44. Taiwan |
| 15. Indonesia | 45. Tajikistan |
| 16. Iran | 46. Thailand |
| 17. Iraq | 47. Tibet* |
| 18. Israel | 48. Turkey |
| 19. Japan | 49. Turkmenistan |
| 20. Jordan | 50. United Arab Emirates |
| 21. Kazakhstan | 51. Uzbekistan |
| 22. Kuwait | 52. Vietnam |
| 23. Kyrgyzstan | 53. Yemen |
| 24. Laos | |
| 25. Lebanon | |
| 26. Macau | |
| 27. Malaysia | |
| 28. Maldives | |
| 29. Mongolia | |
| 30. Myanmar (<i>formerly Burma</i>) | |

Source: Congregation for the
Evangelization of Peoples, *The
Churches of Asia Ready for the
Challenges of the Third Christian
Millennium*, 1998.

* Palestine and Tibet were not
included in the Congregation's list.

Appendix E

PACIFIC STATES

1. American Samoa
2. Chuuk (*formerly Truk*)
3. Cook Islands
4. Fiji
5. Guam
6. Kiribati
7. Kosrae
8. Marquesas Islands
9. Marshall Islands
10. Nauru
11. New Caledonia
12. Niue
13. Northern Marianas
14. Palau
15. Papua New Guinea
16. Pitcairn Islands
17. Pohnpei
18. Samoa
19. Solomon Islands
20. Tahiti
21. Tokelau
22. Tonga
23. Tuvalu
24. Vanuatu
25. Wallis and Futuna
26. Yap

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