


# 目錄

2023 No.404

● 教宗方濟各第31屆世界病患日文告 -----	2
● 亞洲主教團大會致亞洲人民的訊息 -----	8
● 關於大洲會議執行方法的闡述 -----	12
● 亞洲主教團協會為大洲階段會議訂定工作計劃 -----	16
● 大洲階段常見問題 -----	20
● 泰國宗教交談研討會 -----	27
	
● “URBI ET ORBI” Message of His Holiness Pope Francis -----	36
● Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 56th World Day of Peace -----	40
● Message of His Holiness Pope Francis XXXI World Day of The Sick -----	46
● Message from the FABC General Conference to the Peoples of Asia -----	51
● Methodological Note on Continental Assemblies -----	55
● FABC Plans for Continental Phase of the Synod -----	59
● Frequently Asked Questions on the Continental Stage -	63



教宗方濟各

## 第31屆世界病患日文告

2023年2月11日

「請你用心看護他。」（路十 35）

慈悲為懷是同道偕行的療方

親愛的弟兄姊妹們：

人生必然會經歷疾病，但病患若遭人遺棄，不被人關愛和無人憐憫，獨自躺臥病榻，身心的痛苦必定會難以忍受。我們與人同行時，有人因不適、勞累，或遭遇不幸被迫停滯不前，也非意外之事。正是在這時候，我們需要止步來反思我們要如何並肩同行：我們究竟是否真正地**同道偕行**，或僅是與他人萍水相逢，各不相謀，也素不相識。因此，在第 31 屆世界病患日，我邀請大家一



起反省：我們如何以天主的風格——親近、憐憫和溫柔——正是要藉著病弱的經驗，在同道偕行的歷程上一起同行。

上主在厄則克耳先知書中所說的一番話，構成天主啟示的高峰：「我要親自牧放我的羊，親自使他們臥下——吾主上主的斷語——失落的，我要尋找；迷路的，我要領回；受傷的，我要包紮；病弱的，我要療養（……）；我要按正義牧放他們」（則三十四 15~16）。困惑、患病、軟弱，都是人生必經之路，我們作為天主子民的，非但沒有因為這些經歷被天主摒棄在外，反而因此成了祂關注的焦點，因為祂是我們的父親，祂要自己孩子在路途上，一個也不失散。讓我們向祂學習，現在就成為一個能抵制丟棄文化、真正並肩同行的團體。

《眾位弟兄》通諭鼓勵我們，重溫福音裡「慈善的撒瑪黎雅人」的比喻。我引用這個比喻，在此說明我們能夠如何走出使世界封閉的「陰霾」，為能「設想和經營一個開放的世界」（參閱：《眾位弟兄》，56）。耶穌所說的比喻，與現今兄弟情誼被世人以不同的方式否定這種狀況，有著深遠的關連。故事中，那遭受毆打和洗劫後，**被遺棄**在路旁的人，代表了許多弟兄姊妹們正是在最需要幫助的時候，同樣遭到冷眼旁觀的這種現實情況。如今，我們已很難區分對生命和人性尊嚴的侵犯，哪些是由自然因素、是因不公義和暴力的攻擊所導致，以致難以認定那種經驗僅有「自然」的原因。所有的痛苦都是在「文化」及其各種矛盾的背景下所產生的。

然而，辨認出孤獨和被遺棄的狀況，尤為重要。克服這種殘忍的現實比克服其他不義行為，較為容易，因為——正如比喻指出——只要一刻的關注、內在的憐憫之情，便可以消除這種行為。可是，那兩名被視為虔誠的司祭和肋未人，僅看了看傷者，便選擇了從旁邊走過，沒有停步關懷，然而，第三名路人——那名被社會藐視的外邦人、撒瑪黎雅人——卻動了憐憫之心，把在路上遇到的這名陌生人，當作自己的兄弟來照顧。他也許沒想過自己的這個行為改變了世界，使世界變得更加有愛。

弟兄姊妹們，我們總不會準備好自己去面對疾病，很多時候，甚至也不會承認自己正在衰老。生命的脆弱，使我們感覺到害怕，而社會要求我們有效率的文化，迫使我不敢面對自己的脆弱，以致社會不再給予脆弱的空

間，而在這時候，其他人也可能拋棄我們；在我們軟弱時，我們或許會避免成為別人的負擔，甚至離他們而去。孤獨的感覺就是這樣產生，荼毒我們的心靈，使我們心中有一種不公平的感覺，好像天主也離棄了我們。的確如此，當我們與他人和自己的關係受到損害時，我們也難以感受到主臨在時的平安。因此，尤其重要的是，整個教會在面對病患時，都必須參照福音中「慈善的撒瑪黎雅人」的榜樣，好能成為真正的「戰地醫院」，因為教會的使命就是隨時隨處展現天主的愛與關懷，特別在我們這個時代裡、一個歷史性的環境下。我們都是軟弱和易受傷害的人，都需要那份憐憫之情幫助我們學會暫緩腳步、主動關心、治療照顧和重新振作。因此，「病患」這困境是一個呼喚——它能破除冷漠，使那些獨來獨往者，因像似有弟兄姊妹的人，減緩步伐。

世界病患日，不僅呼籲我們要親近受苦的人，為他們祈禱，而且也是要喚醒天主子民、醫療機構和民間團體，以一個嶄新的方式與人同行。以上所述的厄則克耳先知書章節，強烈譴責那些掌控政治、經濟和文化權力人士的企圖：「你們吃羊奶，穿羊毛衣，宰肥羊，卻不牧養羊群：瘦弱的，你們不扶養；患病的，你們不醫治；受傷的，你們不包紮；迷路的，你們不領回；遺失的，你們不尋找，反而用強力和殘暴去管治他們」（則三十四3~4）。天主的話，不管是譴責或是建議，總具有其啟發性及適時性。的確，那「慈善的撒瑪黎雅人」比喻的教訓，給了我們一個兄弟情誼的模範，如何從以身作則，透過人與人的接觸開始做起，實踐博愛，擴展到無微不

至的照顧。如同故事中的撒瑪黎雅人，先為傷者包紮，再把他帶到旅館，還留下銀錢，請店主用心看護傷者，更承諾會了解傷者的情況，並在回程時補還尚有的額外花費（參閱：路十34~35），這一切都與現今的聖職人員、健康照護及社會工作人員、家人與志工等人士的事工相關，藉著他們，美善能每天佇立在世界每個角落，以對抗邪惡。

這些年來，新冠疫情令我們對每天在健康照護這領域服務及研究的人更為感激。然而，面對這個巨大的集體悲痛事件，僅是褒揚醫護英雄，是不足夠的。新冠疫情還導致了龐大的專業知識和網路系統承受壓力，並顯示了當前社會福利體系的結構性局限。因此，除了感激，我們還必須在每個國家積極尋求有效的策略和資源，以保障每個人能得到其基本的醫療權益和有尊嚴的看護。

撒瑪黎雅人請旅館的店主，說：「請你小心看護他」（路十35）。向我們每一個人重複這句話，最後呼籲我們：「這個比喻是一個光照我們的圖像，強調我們為重建這個痛苦的世界，應作出的基本抉擇。面對眾多的痛苦、眾多的創傷，唯一的出路就是效法慈善的撒瑪黎雅人。其他所有抉擇要不是使我們成為強盜，就是成為從旁邊走過、對路旁這個受苦的傷者沒有絲毫憐憫的人。這個比喻向我們展示，我們應怎樣重建一個團體：對別人的脆弱感同身受，拒絕建立一個排斥他人的社會，讓自己成為近人，扶持和看護倒在路旁的人，為共同福祉作出貢獻。同時，這個比喻告誡我們不要只顧自己，而不願承擔人生不可逃避的責任」（《眾位弟兄》，

67）。的確，「我們受造是為了獲得圓滿的生命，而這生命只能在愛中實現。我們不應對受苦者漠不關心，不能容許任何人遭受排斥。」（同上，68）

在2023年2月11日，讓我們的心思轉向露德聖母朝聖地——一個給現代教會的先知性訊息：重要的並非在於運作良好的事物，或具生產力的人物。天主子民所關注的，重心是在病人，而教會時刻與他們同行前進，作為先知性的標誌：在人類中，每個人都是珍貴的，沒有人應該被丟棄或被遺忘。

我將所有病患，以及在家中負責照顧病患的人們、透過研究工作和志工服務的人們，都託付於聖母瑪利亞——病人之痊的代禱，連同那些致力使個人、教會和人民在兄弟情誼中聯繫結合起來的人。我衷心頒布給各位我的宗座遐福。

教宗方濟各

羅馬，拉特朗聖若望大殿

2023年1月10日

（天主教臺灣地區主教團 恭譯）



# 亞洲主教團大會致亞洲人民的訊息<sup>1</sup>

泰國曼谷班富萬 (Baan Phu Waan)  
牧民培訓中心，  
2022年10月30日

我們身為亞洲天主教會的牧者，與亞洲人民分享這喜樂、希望和休戚與共的訊息。我們感謝天主，藉由我們亞洲主教團協會 (FABC) 給亞洲帶來的祝福，該協會由 17 個主教團和兩個東方教會主教團組成。「作為亞洲人民一起同行」是本次大會的主題，在會議期間我們尋求對過去50年旅程的再肯定，振興教會，並設想新的服務途徑。

我們非常感謝泰國皇家政府的熱烈歡迎，並在開幕式上邀請文化部長出席我們的大會。我們也對泰國天主教主教團，尤其是曼谷總教區主辦 FABC 第50屆大會深表感謝。我們很高興有羅馬教廷和其他大洲主教團的代表與我們共襄盛舉。這是祈禱、傾聽、分辨和互相鼓勵之富有成果的時間；這也是從新冠肺炎大流行造成的痛苦中痊癒的時刻。

通過我們在會議中的討論和思考，我們碰觸到亞洲的靈魂。與此同時，我們也被亞洲教會所表現出的希望、勇

氣和決心所鼓舞，他們攜手前行，更加投身地為建設更美好的亞洲而努力。

亞洲多重面貌的同聲音向我們發出挑戰，我們聽到呼求幫助和伸張正義的呼喊：

- 窮人、被剝奪者和被邊緣化者所遭受的苦難，他們渴望有尊嚴的生活。
- 難民、移民、流離失所者和原住民的煎熬，他們尋求真正的人性尊嚴和安全的地方。
- 大自然的呻吟，它帶著剝削、氣候變化和全球變暖的傷口，懇求得到更充分的照顧。
- 年輕人的夢想是在教會和社會中尋求更重要角色。
- 婦女的聲音，要求一個尊重她們的尊嚴、肯認她們應有地位之更具包容性的教會。
- 家庭的渴望是尋求更好的穩定性和從大家獲得更多支持。
- 我們還深切關注：
- 某些教會的痛苦和苦難，需要通過我們的同理和休戚與共而得到緩解。
- 極端主義呼聲越來越高，需要明智應對。
- 對生命之更大尊重的迫切需要，要灌輸在社會內。
- 在亞洲大陸不斷升級的暴力和衝突需要對話與和解。
- 一個受到數字革命挑戰的社會，數字革命對所有人都

<sup>1</sup> 原文：<https://www.fabc2020.org/post/message-fabc-general-conference-to-the-peoples-of-asia>

產生了積極和消極的影響。

在祈禱和合作精神中，我們希望依靠愛、同情、正義和寬恕的力量來應對這些挑戰。我們相信，和平與和解是唯一的出路。我們已經為我們的事工設想了新途徑，基於相互傾聽和真正分辨的新途徑。

在福音和教宗方濟各最近的教導啟迪之下：

- 我們致力於走向邊緣地區。我們蒙召喜樂地為最需要幫助的人服務。
- 我們蒙召投入牧靈與生態歸依，積極回應「大地的呼聲和窮人的呼聲」。
- 藉著在真正對話中聆聽他人，我們希望踐行互補與和諧的精神。
- 與我們鄰近的宗教和傳統的兄弟姐妹合作，我們試圖促進和平與和諧文化。
- 我們致力於架起橋梁，不僅在宗教和傳統之間，亦在人權、消除貧困、人口販運、關愛地球和其他共同關心的議題上，有原則地參與政府、非政府組織和民間機構。
- 我們需要提升自己，通過培養一種「相互傾聽」的文化，我們在這種文化中互相傾聽，且我們所有人都傾聽天主的聲音。
- 因此，我們打算改善我們在信仰中塑造自己和陪伴我們的家人及團體的方式，尤其是那些在困難中的人。

沿著這些道路的同道偕行，我們將更投身於服務這個世界。我們向亞洲人民保證，在亞洲的天主教會將永遠為更美好的亞洲和我們全體人民的福祉而努力。我們向你們保證我們的祈禱時，也謙卑地請你們在祈禱中想起我們。我們一起踏上為人類家庭和所有受造物服務的旅程。

發自泰國曼谷，2022年10月30日

- ✠ 亞洲主教團協會主席——貌波（Charles Bo, SDB）樞機
- ✠ 亞洲主教團協會第50屆大會召集人——格拉西亞斯（Oswald Gracias）樞機
- ✠ 曼谷總主教——戈威瓦尼（Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij）樞機
- ✠ 亞洲主教團協會祕書長——菊地功（Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, SVD）總主教

（天主教台灣地區主教團祕書處 中文翻譯）

世界主教代表會議總祕書處  
大洲階段

## 關於大洲會議執行方法的 闡述

### 1. 目標

正如世界主教代表會議（2021年5月21日）公布，大洲會議旨在「促進各大洲地區教會之間對〈大洲階段工作文件〉（DCS；前稱〈工作文件1〉 *Instrumentum Laboris* 1）的彼此對話，並加強各大洲獨特文化背景的深入辨析。」

2021-2023年世界主教代表會議開展的大洲階段，是天主子民清楚表達其基本問題的一個時刻：「今天不同層次上的『同行』（從地方教會的層面到普世教會的層面）如何讓教會能以符合天主託付給教會的使命來宣揚福音？」（《準備文件》，2）

在此階段，我們同時從教區層面及世界主教代表會議層面聆聽及深化會議前一階段的工作，好能更準確地提出問題，並從大洲的角度更好地論證和具體化這些見解和願景。然而，這階段尚未達到指出答案或決定行動方案的時刻。

〈大洲階段工作文件〉（DCS）正是這項工作的重點，而非最終文件的初稿，僅供持分者補充或修正，且作為未來工作的參照。

### 2. 大洲會議的組成

大部分向世界主教代表會議總祕書處給予回應的主教，都期望來自全球天主子民的代表能參與大洲階段的工作。基於此，建議：

- 所有會議要具教會性，且不僅包括主教；須確保與會者能充分代表天主子民的多樣性：主教、司鐸、執事、度獻身生活的男女、男女平信徒。
- 主教們在大洲會議結束時彼此會面，以合議方式從他們特定的神恩和角色出發，重新閱讀生活中的會議經驗。

關於大洲會議的參與者，必須特別注意以下群體的參與：

- 婦女和年輕人（男女平信徒、正在接受培育的男女會士、修士）；
- 生活在貧困或邊緣條件的群體，以及服務他們的人士；
- 來自其他基督教教派的友好代表；
- 其他宗教和信仰團體的代表；以及沒有宗教信仰的人士。

各大洲負責機構經與世界主教代表會議總祕書處協商後，可自行決定與會者的人數和任命方式。

### 3. 大洲階段的工作程序

大洲階段會議包括七個洲：非洲及馬達加斯加、拉丁美洲及加勒比海、北美洲（即美國和加拿大）、亞洲、歐洲、大洋洲、中東（特指天主教東方禮教會）

## 準備工作

各大洲須在可行的具體範圍內，配以創新的精神，編製適合其教會發展的路向及架構，以確保大洲會議不是一件獨立的事件，而是一個能與世界主教代表會議其他階段整體互相連結的進程。

- 世界主教代表會議總祕書處將提供同行及系統的支援，並在尊重各大洲差異的前提下，協調其工作路向。各大洲須任命一個小組負責大洲階段的籌備工作，並委任一名人員負責與世界主教代表會議總祕書處作協調。
- 各大洲可自行決定是否召開子大洲籌備會議，以確保在各大洲內不同地方教會的文化和社會觀點能得到充分的考慮。
- 聽取那些在世界主教代表會議提供顧問意見的負責人，又或當前會議架構的成員，尤其是那些策劃者的意見非常有趣。無論如何，我們建議要讓已在不同層面建立了的世界主教代表會議團隊繼續參與，以善用他們的寶貴經驗。
- 同樣重要的是，不要讓任何人被排斥在外，要想方設法讓在第一階段被排除在外的群體參與，並要找到具體途徑加入處於邊緣的人士和群體（專題論壇或小組），他們至今仍在努力爭取被受重視和聆聽。我們還建議在為每名參與者作準備時，應與他們來自的地方教會進行對話，並與那些已參與世界主教代表會議的人建立聯繫。

## 大洲會議的慶祝活動

每個大洲可按各自的情況，經與世界主教代表會議總祕書處協商後，以不同形式組織大洲會議及選擇適合其代表參加會議的日期和時間，以強化大家共同努力的成效。

對於大會的展開，請謹記「心靈交談」（見《手冊》（Vademecum），附錄B，#8）在世界各地已取得豐碩的成果。在一切情況下，它的三個步驟應予以重視：每名參與者的發言、聆聽其他與會者的反饋、對會議成果的深入辨析；以及對2023年10月世界主教代表會議的貢獻。

- 大洲會議的工作應致力為大洲各教區及其文化建立橋梁，並在考慮彼此語言差異的前提下促進有效的溝通。
- 儘管「混合型」（結合現場和線上）的工作模式在籌備時有一定的成效，然而，我們極期望大洲會議能盡量在一個所有參與者可親臨相聚的形式下進行。

## 大洲會議的最後文件

各大洲會議須負責起草其〈大洲階段最終文件〉，並於2023年3月31日前把該文件送交總祕書處。總祕書處隨後會按有關文件起草〈工作文件2〉（*Instrumentum Laboris* 2）（2023年6月）。

- 各大洲的主教應以適當的方式確認和核准〈最終文件〉，以確保它是會議進程的真實成果，且反映具尊重會議進程的實際過程及各大洲天主子民的心聲。
- 關於大洲會議〈大洲階段最終文件〉的進一步建議和闡述，將於稍後與〈大洲階段工作文件〉一起提供。



## 亞洲主教團協會為大洲階段會議訂定工作計劃

致：亞洲主教團協會全體成員  
主教團、東方教會主教團及聯繫會員

2022年11月6日

### 2022年10月26日核心委員會會議動議 — 應如何做好亞洲主教團協會的回應

亞洲主教團協會（簡稱FABC）已於早前為大洲階段的世界主教代表會議成立了專責工作小組，訂定了大洲會議的日期，以及為草擬亞洲區的問題回應制定了工作時間表。

在亞洲主教團協會主席貌波樞機（Cardinal Charles Bo）和祕書長菊池功總主教（Archbishop Isao Kikuchi）的領導下，委派以下人員為FABC專責工作小組成員：Clarence Devadass神父、Estela Padilla女士、Enrico Emmanuel Ayo神父、Pablito Baybado教授、Joseph Gonsalves神父，助理祕書長William LaRousse神父將同時兼任聯絡人及協調員，以協調專責工作小組成員與主席、祕書長、主教團及其他人員之間的溝通。

請全體共17個主教團、兩個東方教會主教團及3個聯繫會員（Associate Member），從即日起至2023年1月15日，對〈大

洲階段工作文件〉（DCS）進行深入反思及擬定回應（附上常見問題集供參考）。各FABC成員可自行決定其工作模式，核心委員會已同意各實體可按其所在地的實況制定計畫，有建議指可由堂區、教區、主教團先討論及制定初稿，再提交至國家或大洲主教團的層面審議。

每個主教團在籌備大洲會議時，須擴大其服務對象至首階段未被納入的群體。

〈大洲階段工作文件〉，109：所有教區主教將收到〈大洲階段工作文件〉，請於查收文件後與協調首階段工作的教區主教團小組，組織一個關於〈大洲階段工作文件〉的深入反思程序，並按該文件第106號所述的三個議題進行深入辨析，期望藉此有助各地方教會聆聽匯總在〈大洲階段工作文件〉中其他地區教會的心聲，並從各自的經驗中深入反思。

為開展這個集聆聽、交談和深入反思的進程，請大家重點思考以下三個議題（〈大洲階段工作文件〉，106）：

- 「在閱讀〈大洲階段工作文件〉及祈禱後，有甚麼生活經驗和實況與你們所在大洲教會在直觀上有強烈的共鳴？哪些經驗是新的，哪些對你們有啟發？」
- 「在閱讀〈大洲階段工作文件〉及祈禱後，以你們大洲的觀點，有哪些實質性的張力或分歧是特別重要的？有哪些難題或議題需要在下一階段的工作進程關注及處理？」
- 「經討論及縱觀前兩個議題，有哪些優先事項、反復出現的課題和須採取的行動適合與全球其他地方教會分享？並在2023年10月召開的第一次會議上討論？」

請所有主教團及其他成員把反饋和反思匯總在一份10頁版的

報告，並在2023年1月15日或之前送交亞洲主教團協會中央秘書處。

專責工作小組稍後會整理相關的回應，並為亞洲區撰寫一份回應草案，草案將會在2月15日或之前發送給所有主教團，以便大家能在大洲會議前研讀。專責工作小組可能會邀請其他人員加入這項綜合及撰寫工作的行列。

大洲會議已訂定於2023年2月23日至27日舉行，24日至26日是為期三天的會議，23日及27日分別是報到及離會日期，會議地點為泰國曼谷班富萬（Baan Phu Waan）牧民培訓中心。

我們期望格雷奇樞機（Cardinal Grech）和霍勒里什樞機（Cardinal Hollerich）能蒞臨指導，有關日期是經聽取霍勒里什樞機後選定的；Susan Pascoe委員參與了核心委員會會議，她在FABC 50大會發言後，議決了這個行動計畫的開展，我們期望她能出席，也期待Mauricio Lopez等嘉賓的光臨。

FABC領導層及核心委員會（全體主教團的主席及主教，FABC核心委員會及三個特許會員的一位主教）將會出席是次大洲會議，其他與會者包括FABC辦事處的9位主教主席及各辦事處的9位執行秘書。

各主教團或主教可安排兩名隨行人員，專責工作小組將於稍後就有關人選的類別或職階提供建議，以便各地區共識人選的安排。我們期望能從多元化的天主子民代表中取得平衡及共識恰當的與會人數，煩請耐心等待專責工作小組的指示。

專責工作小組可能會因應實際情況增加獲邀出席大洲會議的參與人數。

此外，我們正在探討邀請亞洲基督教協會（Christian

Conference of Asia）及其他友好宗教團體的參與。

亞洲區將在此大洲會議上發表大洲階段的亞洲區最終回應。

## 摘要

1. 請各教區／主教團研讀2022年11月開始的〈大洲階段工作文件〉。
2. 請各教區／主教團把〈大洲階段工作文件〉提出的三個議題進行討論及反思，並匯總成一份10頁版的報告。
3. FABC主教團和世界主教代表會議在收到工作組的建議後，將甄選兩名代表參與大洲會議，日期待定。
4. 前述的10頁版匯總報告／綜合反思〈大洲階段工作文件〉，將會在2023年1月15日或之前送交FABC中央秘書處。
5. FABC專責工作小組將起草一份有關亞洲區的回應，並在2023年2月15日或之前發送給所有主教團。
6. 大洲會議將於2023年2月23日至27日舉行，24日至26日為會議日，23日及27日分別為報到日及離會日。
7. 大洲階段的FABC最終文件將會在2023年3月31日或之前呈交主教代表會議總秘書處。

（主教團秘書處中文翻譯）

# 大洲階段常見問題

## 1. 何謂大洲階段？

大洲階段由一系列大洲地方教會召開的會議構成，是天主子民彼此聆聽及分辨的時期。

這並不表示，大洲階段要重複已進行過的諮詢、聆聽和分辨的歷程——那是向全球天主子民發出的邀請——此階段，應該說，是由於各大洲具迥異的做事風格、文化及語言元素、地理環境及背景，所以大洲階段，是在各大洲與議題有相關人士和地方代表，在世界主教代表會議前會，對在教區階段的報告，深入理解。

這大洲階段最有代表性的是〈大洲階段工作文件〉（DCS），融合東西方教會主教團的，以及各教會體及平信徒運動的綜合報告，經過審慎思考彙整後，預計將於十月底公布。

## 2. 為何加進大洲階段？

大洲階段為共議性歷程的一部分，為了強調普世教會與地區教會（教區）之間的對話（《天主教法典》368；《共融概念》（Communionis Notio）第7條）。這個過程包括辨別世界主教代表會議核心主題：「**我們今天如何一起同行**」，而這階段的相關優先事項，是盡可能以最大的包容度彙整出來。我們堅信一個共議性的教會，是一涵蓋著普世教會和各地方教會的教會，其願景是：

普世教會與地區教會（教區）彼此對話和連結起來。

除此之外，在這個階段，我們儘量鼓勵搭建或鞏固各地方教會間的連結（參閱：《眾位弟兄》，151），因為每個大洲及地區，一直充斥著歷史上特定且有跡可循的動亂、衝突、挑戰和差異，所以普世教會與地區教會的關係仍是很重要的。

為了更好琢磨各洲的特色，所以放下一個純粹是基於時間及空間的願景（首先是教區階段，接著大洲階段，再來普世階段，最後各地方教會執行），重要的是，反而要採取以一種普世教會與地區教會間（在**主教領導的教會管轄地域或信友羣體**，而「**唯一的天主教是在當中及由此存在的**」（《天主教法典》368；《共融概念》（Communionis Notio）第7條）的**對話方式**，以這種對話方式**作為焦點**，這是一種獨一無二的過程，涉及整個天主子民，卻是以不同的方式進行。

## 3. 大洲階段何時展開？

一般而言，教區階段於2021年10月17日開始，至今年的8月15日，而大洲階段則在此後展開。然而，去年10月9號及10號，教宗方濟各主持的世界主教會議揭幕儀式，就讓人們期待歷程中的不同階段之間是互相連接的。因為在其他地區，事前有與大洲階段相關的活動，所以大洲階段並沒有一個確切開始的日期。此外，有些教區及主教團參考了來自世界主教代表會議總祕書處的建議，保留了教區為了聆聽和辨別能使用的人力和設備。這些建議正在實行中，並結出果實，例如有更多教友投入教

區。這就是共議性教會的生活模式。

各洲[的主教團]應迅速於2023年3月31日前確認有那些人員負責計劃地區性大會及其歷程中的步驟。

#### 4. 屆時有五個大洲的聚會嗎？

不會。雖然是「大洲階段」，但五個大洲不會自己的大洲[國際]會議。事實上，從地理的角度解釋會更好，一般而來，國際主教團協會，在組織架構上與地理上的分配，是互相對應的（有不同的名稱：委員會、聯合會、研討會……），這些教會體（通常）是集合在某一地理區域裡的主教團之下。

為本次世界主教代表會議，以下為各子團體：

1) 與五大洲相對應之五個國際主教團會議：歐洲（CCEE）、拉丁美洲及加勒比海（CELAM）、非洲及馬達加斯加（SECAM）、亞洲（FABC）和大洋洲（FCBCO）。2) 北美（美國與加拿大）和中東（特指天主教東方禮教會）

#### 5. 大洲階段的目標？

大洲階段的目標是深入分辨來自我們在上個階段的當地及全國的結果，以便更準確地提出開放性的問題，並鞏固和充實來自地方教會的觀點，但現在的角度是大洲的角度。〈大洲階段工作文件〉會有助於反思分布世界各地教會的天主子民的諮詢結果。〈大洲階段工作文件〉也是要再給一次機會，聆聽在前一階段被教會遺忘且沒有納入的現實議題，但這個階段仍不是提出答案的

時候，也不是決定行動方向的時候。

#### 6. 大洲階段如何融入到共議性的歷程？

重要的，是了解「同道偕行」（共議精神）是教會一開始採取的前進方式，這前進方式有一股屬於同一教會身分的張力及動力，也就是說，是教會的本質和行動。這是在實踐中學習的過程從中產生的一股教會生命動力。所以，為這世界主教代表會議具體而言，在教區階段中重新發現教會生命時已開始的那股動力，並沒有，也不能有終點、限制及是否達成目標的最終時間。共議精神就等同在生活上互相需要對方的人們的共融。由此而言，極為重要的，是要強調現在進行中的歷程，不會在舉行教區階段、大洲階段或世界主教代表會議後就結束。這些階段會被融合到教會獨特和持續的「共議性的轉變」的動力中。大家都被邀請在每天信仰經驗中，活出共議性轉變的召叫，按照自己牧者們的指導全力以赴，繼續聆聽及分辨。

如同前面所提出，尤其是大洲階段，它並不是單獨的，而是要藉著為2023年世界主教代表會議所準備的工作，作為延續「當地-全國」階段的「聆聽-分辨」事工。

以下的文件：〈大洲階段工作文件〉——先稱為《工作文件》（Instrumentum Laboris）——會確保這樣的連接，繼續運作。此文件應被視為真正的工作資源，為促進在各大洲的對話、聆聽以及分辨事工。它是上個階段（地區性階段）所收到的綜合報告，經過分辨而彙整出來的結果。



重要的是，**不要把此〈文件〉視為一份對普世階段有什麼要作更改、修正或補充的文件**，而是真正用來持續分辨的指南、藉由聆聽天主子民而獲得的成果。

## 7. 大洲階段的進行方式及時間？平信徒如何個別地參與？

大洲階段的舉辦並不局限於一次過的事件，而是一個在**大洲層次真正聆聽和分辨的探討過程**，因為事關共議性歷程中同一個也是唯一的議題，即：這「同道偕行」（共議精神）如何在不同的層次（從當地到普世），讓教會宣揚的福音，符合託付給她的使命？（〈準備文件〉，2）。至於教會如何在特定一大洲面對這使命上的挑戰，唯一的不同的地方，這次是從大洲角度來處理這個議題。

這個與在各大洲大會相關的過程，大洲階段可能於2022年10月發布〈大洲階段工作文件〉後開始。這〈文件〉將會公布，並發送給世界各地的主教。我們由衷期盼，在〈大洲階段工作文件〉發布後，那些在教區階段曾聚在一起數千個地方小組，會針對這份文件集思廣益，依循他們牧者的指導，能在地區階段繼續深入探討自己當地的共議性歷程。然而，重要的，是強調這個會前過程的主要人員，是那些被認辨和指定，在大洲大會中代表地方教會的人們。

此外，尤其為了要帶領在其大洲內進行的共議性歷程，我們將會或可能已成立了一些「大洲階段工作小組」。這「大洲階段工作小組」的人員，將由主教會議總祕書

處的一個工作小組陪伴，其任務是推動整個大洲階段的歷程，並支持大洲大會。

大洲大會將在**2023年1月至2023年3月之間舉行**。這七個過程的建議（透過一份〈最終文件〉）必須在**3月31日之前提交**。

## 8. 誰會參加大洲階段會議？

全部大洲大會不能只是主教會議（只有主教），而是**普世教會的會議**（全體天主子民的）。因此，參與者應該呈現天主子民的多元性：主教、聖職人員、執事、男女修會會士及男女平信徒。這正是在進行的**主教會議進程的最初成果之一**，因為它符合世界主教代表會議總祕書處就此事諮詢過的大多數主教團的期望。

然而，可能在大洲大會最後，主教們會被邀請在某個時間，因他們特別的神恩和角色，共同重新解讀所經歷過的同道偕行經驗，尤其是在上主前承認：經歷過的過程，整個是真實的，而且是自由運作的，而不要是糾正或添加主題及話題。最後，由於大洲大會要繼續教區階段的聆聽和分辨的事工，為那些生活在貧困以及邊緣的人或族群——那些在教區階段中無法聆聽到他們（或與他們有聯繫的人），對於他們而言，是個好機會。

我們也期待其他基督教教派、其他宗教和信仰傳統的代表，以及一些無宗教信仰的人參與，並意識到他們的「一起同行」對我們團體的重要性。大洲工作小組或許可以根據他們的特定現實面和可能性，找到不同的方法來確保天主子民的積極參與，但始終牢記在這些大會中

一個廣泛代表教會多元化的期望。

### 9. 一直在討論主教團以及國際主教團會議，但大洲中的修會、協會與平信徒運動的角色是什麼？

在這共議性的歷程中，有些團體正在內部落實那些在前一階段經過聆聽和分辨的果實。我們懇請地方教會將上述團體的代表，納入大洲階段的會議中。

### 10. 大洲階段如何劃下句點？

大洲階段將在每個「大洲」以大洲階段的會議和撰寫〈大洲階段最終文件〉的時間點畫下句點。這份文件必須是真正同道偕行的成果，尊重實際執行的共議過程，從而反映大洲天主子民的聲音。〈大洲階段最終文件〉將與〈大洲階段工作文件〉共同提供有關落實〈大洲階段工作文件〉更準確的指示。

七份大洲文件將最晚於 3 月 31 日發送給世界主教代表會議總祕書處，並將構成〈工作文件〉的基礎。

大洲階段的結束並不是在教區階段啟動的天主子民諮詢會議的終點，因為我們的「同道偕行」可以轉變為我們作為整個天主子民參與教會的基礎。

(主教團祕書處中文翻譯)

## 泰國宗教交談研討會

天主教會台灣地區主教團，宗教交談與合作暨基督徒合一促進委員會為促進國內外的宗教交談研習與進修，委派執行祕書林之鼎神父與祕書劉君浩弟兄參加2022年11月11日至14日於泰國佛統府Baan Phu Waan牧職培育靈修中心舉行的第12屆亞洲地區基督徒家庭運動(Christian Family Movements, CFM)研討會，主題為：「宗教交談——促進亞洲基督徒家庭運動」。參與的國家包括泰國、柬埔寨、印度、印尼、寮國、馬來西亞、緬甸、菲律賓、新加坡、斯里蘭卡、越南以及台灣等12國。亞洲是一個容納多元宗教的大熔爐，透過討論及反省實踐家庭內的宗教交談，能夠塑造與更新思想，讓基督徒們更能正面及真誠地為社會做出貢獻。

來自國際基督徒家庭運動(International Confederation Christian Family Movements, ICCFM)及菲律賓基督徒家庭運動的神師——Gerardo Aminaza主教，特別提醒與會者教宗方濟各的呼籲：「聖神向你訴說了什麼？」在若望福音十六章13節中說道：「當那一位真理之神來時，祂要把你們引入一切真理……，並把未來的事傳告給你們。」主教說道：「我們聚集在一起，永遠需要聆聽及尋求聖神的指引、以及耶穌的話語，來回應我們當下的需要。如今，在亞洲，家庭的自由、安全及生命價值持續受到危害，經歷了來自各個亞洲國家在社會上的不平等、戰爭的危險、倫理暴力、宗教迫害、政治壓迫及自







然環境的破壞，耶穌基督在這樣的情況之下與我們相遇。耶穌是為我們受苦的天主。我們還是罪人的時候，天主就拯救了我們；我們受苦的時候，天主最靠近我們。耶穌也因此讓我們成為了傳教使徒，與其躲回自身的舒適圈，或者被恐懼與冷漠所癱瘓，這時代所帶來的挑戰，其實也是在基督內強化我們信仰的機會，並將點燃我們福傳的熱忱。而在鼓舞、保存及散播這信仰上，家庭扮演了核心的角色。在全人類大家庭的尺度下，我們更是一同在走向天主圓滿計畫的路上彼此對話與分享生命，以及在天主聖三內共融與合而為一。（參：若十七21）」

本次研討會的宗旨包括（一）在教會文獻、聖經以及教會傳統中理解宗教交談。（二）在多樣化的宗教環境中體會聖神的推動與其所帶來的和諧。（三）建立基督信仰和亞洲其他主流宗教的相互尊重及理解，以促進亞洲基督徒家庭運動的繁榮。

在第一天的講習中，來自斯里蘭卡的Prakash Fernando神父強調了在聖經中的宗教交談。天主跟人之間救恩的盟約是漸進式的，且逐漸擴大。天主一開始與亞當及厄娃訂立個人的盟約，後來與諾厄及其後裔，還有與他們在一起的生物立約，之後又使亞巴郎成為信仰之父，賜給亞巴郎如星辰一般數不清的後裔，以及為這些後裔準備流奶流蜜的國度。天主覺得這樣還不夠，天主又立了梅瑟做了先知，給以色列子民頒布了法律的盟約，凡是遵守這法律並履行的，必要成為天主的子民。「**但是天主既然愛了世上屬於自己的人，就愛他們到底**」（若十三1），天主於是賜下自己的獨生子，與所有受造界訂立

了一個新約，使耶穌基督成為「在一切內充滿一切者的圓滿」（弗一23）。因此天主救恩的尺度，從來就包含了所有的人。在教會的文獻中也印證了這個真理，像是《教會憲章》（*Lumen Gentium*）、《論教會在現代世界牧職憲章》（*Gaudium et Spes*）以及《教會對非基督宗教態度宣言》（*Nostra Aetate*）。在天主無限的愛內，我們會發現，天主所渴望的就是所有人都能夠被拯救，而人們因這份愛所帶來心靈的悔改也不限於基督宗教。耶穌正是透過這樣的大公教會把自己給予所有的人。

在台灣鮮少有印度教寺廟與聚會場所，可是，盛行的瑜珈以及許多四面佛的廟，其實也是來自印度教。在第二天的研討會中，我們拜訪了泰國的Dev Mandir印度教寺廟。印度教強調平衡，在其眾多神明中，我們看到有許多都是一對對夫妻，其中包括三相神（Trimurti）——宇宙的創造者梵天（Brahma）、維護及保護者毘濕奴（Vishnu）以及毀滅邪惡者濕婆（Shiva）。原來在台灣盛行的四面佛，其實就表徵著梵天！梵天的四張臉代表著四部吠陀，而對梵天的敬拜演變成四個祈求面向：事業、感情、財富及健康。印度教神明甚至有許多的化身（avatar），比方說，梵天有七個化身、毘濕奴有十個、濕婆則有十九個之多，在不同派系中數量也略有不同。黑天（Krishna）是最受歡迎的毘濕奴化身，在廟中我們也看到另外兩個毘濕奴化身Narayana以及Rama。特別的是，除了人形的神，印度教的神明也包括動物，像是哈奴曼（Hanuman）即是猴神，象徵智慧、力量與勇氣，甚至有「孫悟空」原型一說！另外一個是象頭神（Ganesha），象徵智慧、繁榮與成功，是濕婆的兒



子，象頭神往往是祈求的第一個對象，以接近更高的神明。儘管有如此眾多的神明，與天主教的一神論似乎不同，但其實印度教相信有所謂單一的終極實在，祂沒有形狀、沒有型式，而這個終極實在以能量的形式展現，祂是對稱的，有男性能量（Shiva）及女性能量（Shakti），因此出現了成對的神明。對於這看不見的終極實在，人們往往難以想像及相信，因此誕生了眾多「有形」的神，而在許多瑜珈循環（yoga cycle）中，許多的英雄因其偉大事蹟而被稱為這些神明的化身。

在泰國，佛教是最盛行的宗教，並由歷代泰國君王建立及推廣。與會者因此也去拜訪了泰國有名的金山佛寺，裡面有一座泰國最大的釋迦牟尼雕像，佛塔裡供奉著釋迦牟尼的遺骨舍利子。若追溯歷史，我們會發現佛陀曾經是印度教的遵行者，但佛陀所發展出來的成佛之道，卻與印度教有諸多不同。比方說印度教因強調至高無上的神權而有嚴格的階級制度，而佛陀卻強調眾生平等，神明亦只是在六道輪迴中的天道；印度教裡有「我」，而佛教裡則「無我」；印度教說「梵」為宇宙的超越本體與終極實在，佛教說緣起性空，一切緣起緣滅，萬物變化無常、相互依存而無獨立之本質。

即使各個宗教有不同的信仰面向，「愛」卻凝聚與包容這些不同，並在這「愛」的「道路」上，更深地認識「真理」與孕育「生命」。在亞洲，混合宗教的家庭非常普遍，對天主教徒而言，我們是否能夠在家庭內更深的去彼此理解與共融？在這次研討會當中，一些混合宗教夫妻分享了他們的見證。其中有一對是佛教徒與天主教徒，先生的父母親原是佛教與天主教，但他的父親後

來因婚姻而改信天主教。因此這位先生從小在天主教的環境下長大，遇到了信奉佛教的妻子，但先生並沒有強迫妻子一定要改宗，反而心胸寬大的讓佛教與天主教的聖像及聖物擺放在一起，彼此之間有一個動態的平衡，佛教所加持過的水，與天主教所祝聖的水，也一同擺放在聖龕前，彼此用各自的方式祈禱。先生會去參加妻子家人們的佛教法會，妻子也會參與天主教的彌撒與祈禱，他們的孩子，已受洗為天主教徒，也在這當中體會不同信仰。擁有不同宗教信仰的伴侶時，往往最大的困難就是來自於長輩們的期待，但是透過彼此理解、尊敬與共融，他們讓愛充滿了這個家庭。

在泰國除了佛教、印度教、另外還盛行所謂「萬物有靈」的民間信仰。所謂萬物有靈，就是指受造界所有的事物都有靈性，信者稱之為神明。在這信仰中，一週會有一次只可待在家中，並且不可拿起房子周圍任何一物。我們聽到來自另一對夫妻的見證，他們家庭原本都屬於這份民間信仰，可是當先生的母親遇到天主教的傳教士，並被這位傳教士的慷慨捐獻與慈祥的笑容所感動，先生因此受洗為天主教徒。然而即使先生在各方面都很尊重並遵守民間信仰，村落的居民難免懷疑一位天主教徒的舉動。當這對夫妻有了孩子後，他們決定全家還是需要只有一個信仰，因此妻子也改宗成為了天主教徒。在他們的信仰歷程中，有非常多的包容、尊重與溝通，這次他們穿了民間信仰結婚典禮中的服裝，妻子婚前需穿白色，象徵貞潔，而後需穿紅色與黑色。先生的服裝需配合妻子的顏色，在前後都有V領的開口，象徵不論在妻子前面或背面，都保持忠貞不二。短袖表示潔

淨，且無任何傷痕。衣服沒有口袋，表示互相坦承沒有任何秘密。在他們的見證當中，有艱辛與困難，但也有祝福與喜樂。

為了與其他講者有更深入的對話與共融，台灣地區主教團宗教交談與合作委員會執行祕書林之鼎神父也獲得邀請成為講者之一，在第三天給了一個簡短的演講，呼應了印度教成對的神明所展現出的平衡與對稱之美。林神父舉出我們的大腦有左右「兩」個半球，彼此的互通而成為「一」個腦，以及婚姻內的「兩」性所組成的「一」個家庭為例，娓娓道來天主教神學中三位一體的概念，並以哲學的語言，融合了老子道學的「有無相生」、「有生於無」與佛家的「緣起性空」的「無」的概念，以表明「神」、「道」與「佛」都在各自的表述之中體現真理（truth），而真理（truths）是相通的，其源頭就是終極實在（Truth）。乍看之下，天主教信仰中士林哲學裡的「存有」，彷彿排除了「無」的可能性而與另外兩家抵觸，但其實若從「有」、「無」及「有無之間的關係」三者來看，這三家其實都在用各自的語言描述三位一體。對「有」而言，「無」就是「非有」，而對「無」而言，「有」就是「非無」，有與無必定是相生的關係，因為「無」的概念是相反相成於「有」，而「有」的概念是相反相成於「無」。三位一體中的父、子與聖神也可用此概念理解，對「父」而言，「子」就是「非父」；而對「子」而言，「父」就是「非子」；而父「生」子、子「顯示」父，兩者之間所產生的互動關係即是愛，可稱為「聖神」。當「父」把一切的存有都給了「子」，「父」成了「無」，而

「子」卻成了「有」，因此子的「有」是緣於「父」的「無」，這才能理解「有生於無」，並且因此看見這份授受「關係」而理解「有無相生」。

筆者依此而推，思索著，佛家中的「緣起而有」與「緣滅而散」，似乎也是兩相對的概念，緣起與緣滅，萬事萬物皆「無常」，好像動態性不斷地「生」與「顯示」，故性「空」；不是一直只講「有」與「無」，而需要反過來看到「非有」與「非無」，從而以「空」來表達本體或本質。正如耶穌親自說：「我在父內，父在我內」。如此，我們在宗教交談的同時，透過彼此的認識與反思，更加深了我們對自己信仰的認識，在「真理的一致性」（「unity of truth」，《信仰與理性通論》，34）下，更開放的與對方一同走向那最終極的真理。筆者認為，林神父的演講，對基督與其他宗教信仰的家庭、對以非基督宗教為主流的亞洲，以及對整個東西方文化互相影響的華語地區，確實開創出交談的可能性，並在這充斥著戰爭、迫害與不平等的情勢下，讓人們放下競爭對立，而更多的去看自己與對方的關係與合一的整體觀，期許人們所殷殷期待的和平能夠更深的扎根與落實。

主教團宗教交談與合作暨基督徒合一促進委員會  
祕書 劉君浩

2023.02.06

## “URBI ET ORBI” Message of His Holiness Pope Francis

CHRISTMAS 2022

Sunday, 25 December 2022

**D**ear brothers and sisters in Rome and throughout the world, happy Christmas!

May the Lord Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, bring to all of you the love of God, wellspring of confidence and hope, together with the gift of the peace proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem: “Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those whom he favours” (Lk 2:14).

On this festive day, we turn our gaze to Bethlehem. The Lord comes to the world in a stable and is laid in a manger for animals, since his parents could find no room in the inn, even though the time had come for Mary to give birth. He comes among us in silence and in the dark of night, because the word of God needs no spotlights or loud human voices. He is himself the Word that gives life its meaning, he is the Light that brightens our path. “The true light, which enlightens everyone” – the Gospel tells us – “was coming into the world” (Jn 1:9).

Jesus is born in our midst; he is God with us. He comes to accompany our daily lives, to share with us in all things: our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears. He comes as a helpless child. He is born in the cold night, poor among the poor. In need of everything, he knocks at the door of our heart to find warmth and shelter.

Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, surrounded by light, may we set out to see the sign that God has given us. May we overcome our spiritual drowsiness and the shallow holiday glitter that makes us forget the One whose birth we are celebrating. Let us leave behind the hue and

din that deadens our hearts and makes us spend more time in preparing decorations and gifts than in contemplating the great event: the Son of God born for us.

Brothers and sisters, let us turn our eyes to Bethlehem, and listen to the first faint cries of the Prince of Peace. For truly Jesus is our peace. The peace that the world cannot give, the peace that God the Father has bestowed on humanity by sending his Son into the world. Saint Leo the Great summed up the message of this day in a concise Latin phrase: *Natalis Domini, natalis est pacis*: “the Lord’s birth is the birth of peace” (Serm. 26, 5).

Jesus Christ is also the way of peace. By his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection, he has opened the way that leads from a world closed in on itself and oppressed by the dark shadows of enmity and war, to a world that is open and free to live in fraternity and peace. Brothers and sisters, let us follow that road! Yet in order to do so, to be able to walk behind Jesus, we must divest ourselves of the burdens that weigh us down and block our way.

What are those burdens? What is that dead weight? The same negative forces that prevented King Herod and his court from acknowledging and welcoming the birth of Jesus: attachment to power and money, pride, hypocrisy, falsehood. These forces hold us back from going to Bethlehem; they exclude us from the grace of Christmas and they block the entrance to the path of peace. Indeed, we must acknowledge with sorrow that, even as the Prince of Peace is given to us, the icy winds of war continue to buffet humanity.

If we want it to be Christmas, the Birth of Jesus and of peace, let us look to Bethlehem and contemplate the face of the Child who is born for us! And in that small and innocent face, let us see the faces of all those children who, everywhere in the world, long for peace.

Let us also see the faces of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters who are experiencing this Christmas in the dark and cold, far from their homes

due to the devastation caused by ten months of war. May the Lord inspire us to offer concrete gestures of solidarity to assist all those who are suffering, and may he enlighten the minds of those who have the power to silence the thunder of weapons and put an immediate end to this senseless war! Tragically, we prefer to heed other counsels, dictated by worldly ways of thinking. Yet who is listening to the voice of the Child?

Our time is experiencing a grave famine of peace also in other regions and other theatres of this third world war. Let us think of Syria, still scarred by a conflict that has receded into the background but has not ended. Let us think too of the Holy Land, where in recent months violence and confrontations have increased, bringing death and injury in their wake. Let us beseech the Lord that there, in the land that witnessed his birth, dialogue and efforts to build mutual trust between Palestinians and Israelis may resume. May the Child Jesus sustain the Christian communities living in the Middle East, so that each of those countries can experience the beauty of fraternal coexistence between individuals of different faiths. May the Christ Child help Lebanon in particular, so that it can finally rebound with the help of the international community and with the strength born of fraternity and solidarity. May the light of Christ illumine the region of the Sahel, where peaceful coexistence between peoples and traditions is disrupted by conflict and acts of violence. May that light lead to a lasting truce in Yemen and to reconciliation in Myanmar and Iran, and an end to all bloodshed. May it inspire the political authorities and all people of good will in the Americas to attempt to calm the political and social tensions experienced by various countries; I think in particular of the people of Haiti who have been suffering for a long time.

On this day, as we sit around a well-spread table, may we not avert our gaze from Bethlehem, a town whose name means “house of bread, but think of all those, especially children, who go hungry while huge amounts of food daily go to waste and resources are being spent on

weapons. The war in Ukraine has further aggravated this situation, putting entire peoples at risk of famine, especially in Afghanistan and in the countries of the Horn of Africa. We know that every war causes hunger and exploits food as a weapon, hindering its distribution to people already suffering. On this day, let us learn from the Prince of Peace and, starting with those who hold political responsibilities, commit ourselves to making food solely an instrument of peace. And as we enjoy gathering with our loved ones, let us think of families that experience great hardship and those that, in this time of economic crisis, are struggling as a result of unemployment and lacking in the necessities of life.

Dear brothers and sisters, today as then, Jesus, the true light, comes into a world severely sick with indifference, a world that does not welcome him (cf. Jn 1:11) and indeed rejects him, as it does with many foreigners, or ignores him, as we all too often do with the poor. Today may we not forget the many displaced persons and refugees who knock at our door in search of some comfort, warmth and food. Let us not forget the marginalized, those living alone, the orphans, the elderly – who are wisdom for their people – who risk being set aside, and prisoners, whom we regard solely for the mistakes they have made and not as our fellow men and women.

Brothers and sisters, Bethlehem shows us the simplicity of God, who reveals himself not to the wise and the intelligent but to the little ones, to those with a pure and open heart (cf. Mt 11:25). Like the shepherds, let us too set out in haste and allow ourselves to be amazed by the unthinkable event of God who becomes man for our salvation. He, the source of all good, makes himself poor,<sup>1</sup> asking as alms our own poor humanity. Let us allow ourselves to be deeply moved by the love of God. And let us follow Jesus, who stripped himself of his glory in order to give us a share in his fullness.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. SAINT GREGORY NAZIANZEN, Or. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*



Message of His Holiness Pope  
Francis  
for the  
56th World Day of Peace

1 JANUARY 2023

*No one can be saved alone.*

*Combatting Covid-19 together, embarking together on paths  
of peace*

*“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians, 5:1-2).*

1. With these words, the Apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian community to remain steadfast, their hearts and feet firmly planted and their gaze fixed on the world around them and the events of history, even as they awaited the Lord’s return. When tragic events seem to overwhelm our lives, and we feel plunged into a dark and difficult maelstrom of injustice and suffering, we are likewise called to keep our hearts open to hope and to trust in God, who makes himself present, accompanies us with tenderness, sustains us in our weariness and, above all, guides our path. For this reason, Saint Paul constantly exhorts the community to be vigilant, seeking goodness, justice and truth: “So then, let us not fall asleep as others

do, but let us keep awake and be sober” (5:6). His words are an invitation to remain alert and not to withdraw into fear, sorrow or resignation, or to yield to distraction or discouragement. Instead, we should be like sentinels keeping watch and ready to glimpse the first light of dawn, even at the darkest hour.

2. Covid-19 plunged us into a dark night. It destabilized our daily lives, upset our plans and routines, and disrupted the apparent tranquillity of even the most affluent societies. It generated disorientation and suffering and caused the death of great numbers of our brothers and sisters.

Amid a whirlwind of unexpected challenges and facing a situation confusing even from a scientific standpoint, the world’s healthcare workers mobilized to relieve immense suffering and to seek possible remedies. At the same time, political authorities had to take measures to organize and manage efforts to respond to the emergency.

In addition to its physical aspects, Covid-19 led to a general malaise in many individuals and families; the long periods of isolation and the various restrictions on freedom contributed to this malaise, with significant long-term effects.

Nor can we overlook the fractures in our social and economic order that the pandemic exposed, and the contradictions and inequalities that it brought to the fore. It threatened the job security of many individuals and aggravated the ever-increasing problem of loneliness in our societies, particularly on the part of the poor and those in need. We need but think of the millions of informal workers in many parts of the world left without a job and without any support during the time of the lockdown.

Only rarely do individuals and societies achieve progress in conditions that generate such feelings of despondency and

bitterness, which weaken efforts to ensure peace while provoking social conflict, frustration and various forms of violence. Indeed, the pandemic seems to have upset even the most peaceful parts of our world, and exposed any number of forms of fragility.

3. Three years later, the time is right to question, learn, grow and allow ourselves to be transformed as individuals and as communities; this is a privileged moment to prepare for “the day of the Lord”. I have already observed on a number of occasions that we never emerge the same from times of crisis: we emerge either better or worse. Today we are being asked: What did we learn from the pandemic? What new paths should we follow to cast off the shackles of our old habits, to be better prepared, to dare new things? What signs of life and hope can we see, to help us move forward and try to make our world a better place?

Certainly, after directly experiencing the fragility of our own lives and the world around us, we can say that the greatest lesson we learned from Covid-19 was the realization that we all need one another. That our greatest and yet most fragile treasure is our shared humanity as brothers and sisters, children of God. And that none of us can be saved alone. Consequently, we urgently need to join together in seeking and promoting the universal values that can guide the growth of this human fraternity. We also learned that the trust we put in progress, technology and the effects of globalization was not only excessive, but turned into an individualistic and idolatrous intoxication, compromising the very promise of justice, harmony and peace that we so ardently sought. In our fast-paced world, the widespread problems of inequality, injustice, poverty and marginalization continue to fuel unrest and conflict, and generate violence and even wars.

The pandemic brought all this to the fore, yet it also had its positive effects. These include a chastened return to humility, a rethinking

of certain consumeristic excesses, and a renewed sense of solidarity that has made us more sensitive to the suffering of others and more responsive to their needs. We can also think of the efforts, which in some cases proved truly heroic, made by all those people who worked tirelessly to help everyone emerge from the crisis and its turmoil as best they could.

This experience has made us all the more aware of the need for everyone, including peoples and nations, to restore the word “together” to a central place. For it is together, in fraternity and solidarity, that we build peace, ensure justice and emerge from the greatest disasters. Indeed, the most effective responses to the pandemic came from social groups, public and private institutions, and international organizations that put aside their particular interests and joined forces to meet the challenges. Only the peace that comes from a fraternal and disinterested love can help us overcome personal, societal and global crises.

4. Even so, at the very moment when we dared to hope that the darkest hours of the Covid-19 pandemic were over, a terrible new disaster befell humanity. We witnessed the onslaught of another scourge: another war, to some extent like that of Covid-19, but driven by culpable human decisions. The war in Ukraine is reaping innocent victims and spreading insecurity, not only among those directly affected, but in a widespread and indiscriminate way for everyone, also for those who, even thousands of kilometres away, suffer its collateral effects – we need but think of grain shortages and fuel prices.

Clearly, this is not the post-Covid era we had hoped for or expected. This war, together with all the other conflicts around the globe, represents a setback for the whole of humanity and not merely for the parties directly involved. While a vaccine has been found for Covid-19, suitable solutions have not yet been found for

the war. Certainly, the virus of war is more difficult to overcome than the viruses that compromise our bodies, because it comes, not from outside of us, but from within the human heart corrupted by sin (cf. *Gospel of Mark 7:17-23*).

5. What then is being asked of us? First of all, to let our hearts be changed by our experience of the crisis, to let God, at this time in history, transform our customary criteria for viewing the world around us. We can no longer think exclusively of carving out space for our personal or national interests; instead, we must think in terms of the common good, recognizing that we belong to a greater community, and opening our minds and hearts to universal human fraternity. We cannot continue to focus simply on preserving ourselves; rather, the time has come for all of us to endeavour to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and to commit ourselves seriously to pursuing a good that is truly common.

In order to do this, and to live better lives after the Covid-19 emergency, we cannot ignore one fundamental fact, namely that the many moral, social, political and economic crises we are experiencing are all interconnected, and what we see as isolated problems are actually causes and effects of one another. Consequently, we are called to confront the challenges of our world in a spirit of responsibility and compassion. We must revisit the issue of ensuring public health for all. We must promote actions that enhance peace and put an end to the conflicts and wars that continue to spawn poverty and death. We urgently need to join in caring for our common home and in implementing clear and effective measures to combat climate change. We need to battle the virus of inequality and to ensure food and dignified labour for all, supporting those who lack even a minimum wage and find themselves in great difficulty. The scandal of entire peoples starving remains an open wound. We also need to develop suitable

policies for welcoming and integrating migrants and those whom our societies discard. Only by responding generously to these situations, with an altruism inspired by God's infinite and merciful love, will we be able to build a new world and contribute to the extension of his kingdom, which is a kingdom of love, justice and peace.

In sharing these reflections, it is my hope that in the coming New Year we can journey together, valuing the lessons that history has to teach us. I offer my best wishes to Heads of State and Government, to Heads of International Organizations, and to the leaders of the different religions. To all men and women of good will I express my prayerful trust that, as artisans of peace, they may work, day by day, to make this a good year! May Mary Immaculate, Mother of Jesus and Queen of Peace, intercede for us and for the whole world.

*From the Vatican, 8 December 2022*

Francis



## Message of His Holiness Pope Francis XXXI World Day of The Sick

11 February 2023

*“Take care of him”*

*Compassion as a synodal exercise of healing*

Dear brothers and sisters!

Illness is part of our human condition. Yet, if illness is experienced in isolation and abandonment, unaccompanied by care and compassion, it can become inhumane.

When we go on a journey with others, it is not unusual for someone to feel sick, to have to stop because of fatigue or of some mishap along the way. It is precisely in such moments that we see how we are walking together: whether we are truly companions on the journey, or merely individuals on the same path, looking after our own interests and leaving others to “make do”. For this reason, on the thirty-first World Day of the Sick, as the whole Church journeys along the synodal path, I invite all of us to reflect on the fact that it is especially through the experience of vulnerability and illness that we can learn to walk together according to the style of God, which is closeness, compassion, and tenderness.

In the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, the Lord speaks these words that represent one of the high points of God’s Revelation: “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God.. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak [...] I will feed them with justice” (34:15-16). Experiences of bewilderment, sickness, and weakness are part of the human journey. Far from excluding us from God’s people, they bring us to

the centre of the Lord’s attention, for he is our Father and does not want to lose even one of his children along the way. Let us learn from him, then, how to be a community that truly walks together, capable of resisting the throwaway culture.

The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* encourages us to read anew the parable of the Good Samaritan, which I chose in order to illustrate how we can move from the “dark clouds” of a closed world to “envisaging and engendering an open world” (cf. No. 56). There is a profound link between this parable of Jesus and the many ways in which fraternity is denied in today’s world. In particular, the fact that the man, beaten and robbed, is *abandoned* on the side of the road represents the condition in which all too many of our brothers and sisters are left at a time when they most need help. It is no longer easy to distinguish the assaults on human life and dignity that arise from natural causes from those caused by injustice and violence. In fact, increasing levels of inequality and the prevailing interests of the few now affect every human environment to the extent that it is difficult to consider any experience as having solely “natural” causes. All suffering takes place in the context of a “culture” and its various contradictions.

Here it is especially important to recognize the condition of loneliness and abandonment. This kind of cruelty can be overcome more easily than any other injustice, because – as the parable tells us – it only takes a moment of our attention, of being moved to compassion within us, in order to eliminate it. Two travellers, considered pious and religious, see the wounded man, yet fail to stop. The third passer-by, however, a Samaritan, a scorned foreigner, is moved with compassion and takes care of that stranger on the road, treating him as a brother. In doing so, without even thinking about it, he makes a difference, he makes the world more fraternal.

Brothers and sisters, we are rarely prepared for illness. Oftentimes,



we fail even to admit that we are getting older. Our vulnerability frightens us and the pervasive culture of efficiency pushes us to sweep it under the carpet, leaving no room for our human frailty. In this way, when evil bursts onto the scene and wounds us, we are left stunned. Moreover, others might abandon us at such times. Or, in our own moments of weakness, we may feel that we should abandon others in order to avoid becoming a burden. This is how loneliness sets in, and we can become poisoned by a bitter sense of injustice, as if God himself had abandoned us. Indeed, we may find it hard to remain at peace with the Lord when our relationship with others and with ourselves is damaged. It is crucial, then, even in the midst of illness, that the whole Church measure herself against the Gospel example of the Good Samaritan, in order that she may become a true “field hospital”, for her mission is manifested in acts of care, particularly in the historical circumstances of our time. We are all fragile and vulnerable, and need that compassion which knows how to pause, approach, heal, and raise up. Thus, the plight of the sick is a call that cuts through indifference and slows the pace of those who go on their way as if they had no sisters and brothers.

The World Day of the Sick calls for prayer and closeness towards those who suffer. Yet it also aims to raise the awareness of God’s people, healthcare institutions and civil society with regard to a new way of moving forward together. The above-quoted prophecy of Ezekiel judges harshly the priorities of those who wield economic, cultural, and political power over others: “You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them” (34:3-4). God’s word is always illuminating and timely; not only in what it denounces, but also in what it proposes. Indeed, the

conclusion of the parable of the Good Samaritan suggests how the exercise of fraternity, which began as a face-to-face encounter, can be expanded into organized care. The elements of the inn, the innkeeper, the money and the promise to remain informed of the situation (cf. *Lk* 10:34-35) all point to the commitment of healthcare and social workers, family members and volunteers, through whom good stands up in the face of evil every day, in every part of the world.

These past years of the pandemic have increased our sense of gratitude for those who work each day in the fields of healthcare and research. Yet it is not enough to emerge from such an immense collective tragedy simply by honouring heroes. Covid-19 has strained the great networks of expertise and solidarity, and has exposed the structural limits of existing public welfare systems. Gratitude, then, needs to be matched by actively seeking, in every country, strategies and resources in order to guarantee each person’s fundamental right to basic and decent healthcare.

The Samaritan calls the innkeeper to “take care of him” (*Lk* 10:35). Jesus addresses the same call to each of us. He exhorts us to “go and do likewise” (*Lk* 10:37). As I noted in *Fratelli Tutti*, “The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good” (No. 67). Indeed, “we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love. We cannot be indifferent to suffering” (No. 68).

On 11 February 2023, let us turn our thoughts to the Shrine of Lourdes, a prophetic lesson entrusted to the Church for our modern times. It is not only what functions well or those who are productive that matter. Sick people, in fact, are at the centre of God’s people, and the Church advances together with them as

a sign of a humanity in which everyone is precious and no one should be discarded or left behind.

To the intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick, I entrust all of you who are ill; you who care for them in your families, or through your work, research and volunteer service; and those of you who are committed to weaving personal, ecclesial, and civic bonds of fraternity. To all, I impart my heartfelt blessing.

*Rome, Saint John Lateran, 10 January 2023*

FRANCIS



## Message from the FABC General Conference to the Peoples of Asia

**Baan Phu Waan, Bangkok, 12-30 October 2022**

We, the Pastors of the Catholic Church in Asia, share this message of joy, hope, and solidarity with you, Peoples of Asia. We are grateful for the blessings that God has showered on Asia through our Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) comprising 17 Episcopal Conferences and two Synods of Oriental Churches. "Journeying together as Peoples of Asia" was the theme of our conference in which we sought to reaffirm our journey of the past 50 years, revitalize the Church, and envision new pathways of service.

We are deeply thankful to the Royal Thai Government for the warm welcome and for honouring our general conference with the presence of the Minister of Culture during the opening ceremony. We express our deep appreciation to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, especially the Archdiocese of Bangkok, for hosting the FABC 50 General Conference. We were happy to have with us representatives of the Holy See and other Continental Conferences. It was a fruitful time of praying, listening, discerning, and encouraging each other. It was also a moment of healing from the pain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through our discussions and deliberations at the conference, we touched the soul of Asia. At the same time, we were inspired by the hope, courage, and determination shown by the Churches in Asia to

journey together and work with more dedication for a better Asia.

We were challenged by the different voices of our multifaceted continent that we hear crying out for help and justice:

- the sufferings of the poor, deprived, and marginalized longing for a dignified life,
- the anguish of refugees, migrants, displaced and indigenous peoples seeking genuine human dignity and safe places,
- the groaning of nature with wounds of exploitation, climate change, and global warming, pleading for being more adequately cared for,
- the dream of youth seeking for more significant roles in the Church and society,
- the voices of women asking for a more inclusive Church that respects their dignity and recognizes their rightful place,
- the desire of families looking for better stability and more support from all.

We are also deeply concerned about:

- the pain and suffering of some churches that need to receive relief through our empathy and solidarity;
- the rising voices of extremism that need to be responded to wisely;
- the urgent need for a greater respect for life to be inculcated in society;
- the escalating violence and conflicts in our continent that call for dialogue and reconciliation;

- a society that is challenged by the digital revolution, which has impacted all both positively and negatively.

In prayer and in a spirit of collaboration, we desire to respond to these challenges by relying on the power of love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness. We believe that peace and reconciliation is the only way forward. We have envisaged new pathways for our ministry based on mutual listening and genuine discernment.

Inspired by the Gospel and by the recent teachings of Pope Francis:

- We commit ourselves to reach out to the peripheries. We are called to serve the most needy joyfully.
- We are called to a pastoral and ecological conversion to positively respond to “both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”
- We wish to live out the spirit of complementarity and harmony by listening to others in genuine dialogue.
- We seek to promote a culture of peace and harmony in collaboration with our brothers and sisters of neighbouring religions and traditions.
- We commit ourselves to bridge-building not just among religions and traditions but also by principled engagement with governments, NGOs, and civic organizations on issues of human rights, eradication of poverty, human trafficking, care of the earth, and other common concerns.
- We need to transform ourselves by fostering a culture of “reciprocal listening” where we listen to each other and all of us listen to the voice of God.
- We thus intend to improve the way we form ourselves in faith

and accompany our families and communities, especially those in difficulty.

By journeying together along these pathways, we will serve the world with greater commitment. We assure our people of this continent that the Catholic Church in Asia will always work for a better Asia and the good of all our people. As we assure you of our prayers, we humbly ask you to remember us in your prayers. Together we journey at the service of the human family and all creation.

Given in Bangkok, Thailand, on 30 October 2022

- ✠ **CHARLES CARDINAL BO S.D.B.** *President of FABC*
- ✠ **OSWALD CARDINAL GRACIAS** *Convener of FABC 50 General Conference*
- ✠ **FRANCIS XAVIER CARDINAL KRIENGSAK KOVITHAVANIJ**  
*Archbishop of Bangkok (Thailand)*
- ✠ **TARCISIO ISAO KIKUCHI S.V.D.**  
*Secretary General of FABC*

General Secretariat of the Synod  
Continental Phase  
Methodological Note on the Continental Assemblies

## Methodological Note on Continental Assemblies

### 1. Objectives

As published in the Note of the Synod of Bishops (May 21, 2021) the purpose of the Continental Assemblies is "to promote dialogue at the continental level regarding the text of the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS; formerly called *Instrumentum Laboris* 1) and to deepen discernment in the specific cultural context of each Continent."

Within the unfolding of Synod 2021-2023, the continental stage is one of the stages in which the consultation of the People of God articulates itself on the basic question: "How does this "journeying together," which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her" (*DP* no. 2).

Particularly, this is the stage in which we deepen what emerged from the previous stage of listening at the levels of the Diocese and the Episcopal Conference, with the aim of more accurately formulating the open questions, and better substantiating and concretizing the insights and overall vision from a continental perspective. This stage is not yet the time to suggest answers or even to decide on courses of action.

The DCS is at the service of this work and should not be interpreted as a first draft, only to be amended, of a final Document, but as a text that offers working perspectives.



## 2. Composition of Continental Assemblies

The vast majority of Episcopal Conferences that responded to the consultation sent by the General Secretariat of the Synod want representatives from the entire People of God to be involved in the continental stage. From this perspective, it is therefore asked that:

- all Assemblies be ecclesial and not merely episcopal, ensuring that their composition adequately represents the variety of the People of God: bishops, presbyters, deacons, men and women religious, laymen and women.
- the bishops meet with each other at the end of the Continental Assemblies to collegially reread the lived synodal experience from their specific charism and role.

With respect to the participants in the Continental Assemblies, it is important to pay special attention to the presence of the following groups:

- women and young people (laymen and laywomen, religious men and women in formation, seminarians);
- people living in conditions of poverty or marginalization, and those who have direct contact with these;
- fraternal delegates from other Christian denominations;
- representatives of other religions and faith traditions; and some people with no religious affiliation.

It is up to the continental bodies, in consultation with the General Secretariat of the Synod, to determine the number of participants and the manner of appointment.

## 3. The Procedure for the Continental Stage

The Continents in which this stage will take place are seven: Africa, Latin America, North America (i.e., the United States and Canada), Asia, Europe, Oceania, Eastern Churches.

### Preparation

Each Continent is called upon to creatively identify, within the concrete limits of its possibilities, the paths and organizational arrangements which will ensure that the Continental Assembly is not an event, but rather part of a process that is connected to the other stages of the synodal journey.

- The General Secretariat of the Synod offers accompaniment and organizational support, in order to harmonize the paths of the different Continents while respecting their differences. In this perspective, it is requested that a team be appointed for the preparation of the Continental Stage, with one person who is responsible for coordinating with the Synod Secretariat.
- It is left to each Continent to decide whether to hold sub-Continental preparatory meetings, which could ensure that the variety of cultural and social perspectives within each Continent are effectively taken into account.
- It might be interesting to hear from those who have been responsible in the synod consultations of the Episcopal Conferences, or those who are members of the current synod structures, especially as animators. In any case, it is recommended to continue involving the synodal teams already established at the different levels, so that their valuable experience be used and not lost.
- It would also be important to seek ways to involve groups excluded from the work of the first stage and to find specific paths (thematic forums or groups) for people(s) and groups on the margins, who have so far struggled to be heard as protagonists. It is also recommended that the preparation of each participant be carried out in dialogue with the local Churches from which they come and by establishing contacts with those who have already participated in the synodal journey.

## 4. Celebration of the Continental Assemblies

Depending on the situation of each Continent, various options are possible for the organization of the Continental Assemblies in consultation with the General Secretariat of the Synod, choosing dates that will allow its

representatives to attend the proceedings. It is also recommended that the duration of the Assembly be congruous to effectively nourish work that is shared.

For the unfolding of the Assembly, keep in mind that the method of so-called "Spiritual Conversation" (see *Vademecum*, Appendix B, No. 8) has borne much fruit in different parts of the world. In any case, its three steps should be valued: taking the floor by each participant, resonance of listening to others, and the discernment of the fruit of the Assembly along with the contribution to be brought to the General Assembly of the Synod in October 2023.

□ The work of the Continental Assemblies should be organized in such a way as to build bridges between the various regions and cultures of the Continent, allowing for effective communication that takes into account linguistic differences.

□ While a "hybrid" way of working (combining presence and online work) might have been useful in the preparatory paths, for the Continental Assembly it is recommended as much as possible to organize a meeting in which the participants are present.

### **The Final Document of the Continental Assemblies.**

Each Continental Assembly is to draft its own Final Document, which is to be sent to the General Secretariat by March 31, 2023. Based on these Final Documents of the Continental Assemblies, the *Instrumentum Laboris* will be drafted (June 2023).

□ It is up to the bishops of each Continent to find the appropriate way to carry out their task of validating and approving the Final Document, ensuring that it is the fruit of an authentically synodal journey and is respectful of the synodal process that actually took place, thus reflecting the voice of the People of God on the Continent.

□ Further suggestions and clarifications with respect to the conduct and Final Document of the Continental Assemblies will be offered together with the DCS.

## **FABC Plans for Continental Phase of the Synod**

To: All FABC Members

Conferences, Synods of Oriental Churches and Associate Members

6 November 2022

What needs to be done to prepare our FABC response. This comes from the Central Committee Meeting of 26 October 2022.

The FABC has constituted a Task Force for the continental phase of the synod and set the dates for the Continental Assembly with a schedule for working on the response from Asia.

Under the guidance of Cardinal Charles Bo, the FABC President, and Archbishop Isao Kikuchi, the FABC Secretary General, the FABC Task Force for the Synod are the following: Fr. Clarence Devadass, Ms. Estela Padilla, Fr. Enrico Emmanuel Ayo, Prof. Pablito Baybado, Fr. Joseph Gonsalves and Fr. William LaRousse, the Assistant Secretary General, as the contact person and coordinator. He will coordinate the communication among the members of the Task Force and the President and the Secretary General and the conferences and others.

From now until January 15 all of the 17 conferences, two Synods of Oriental Churches and 3 associate members will work on their responses and reflections to the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS). (Attached are copies and FAQ if you need them.) Each FABC Member will determine how they will do this. The Central Committee decided to allow each entity to make their own plans based on their local reality. Some have mentioned that they

will start with their parish and diocesan synod teams and work up to the national or conference stage.

The outreach to groups that might not have been included during the first phase will take place in each of the conferences as they prepare for Continental Assembly.

*DCS 109: The DCS will be sent to all diocesan bishops; each of them, together with the diocesan synodal team that coordinated the first phase, will arrange an ecclesial process of discernment on the DCS, starting with the three questions indicated above in no.106. Each local Church will thus have the opportunity to listen to the voice of the other Churches, gathered in the DCS, and to respond to it from its own experience.*

*Note there are three questions (DCS 106) for this phase: To pursue this process of listening, dialogue and discernment, the reflection will focus on three questions:*

- *“After having read and prayed with the DCS, which **intuitions** resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?”*
- *“After having read and prayed with the DCS, what substantial tensions or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent’s perspective? Consequently, what are the **questions or issues** that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?”*
- *“Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions, what are the **priorities, recurring themes and calls to action** that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of*

the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?”

**On or before January 15** all conferences and others will submit

their responses or reflections in a 10-page document to the FABC Central Secretariat.

The Task Force will then work on the responses and come up with a draft response for Asia. This will be sent to all conferences on or before **February 15** so that they can study it before the Continental Assembly. The Task Force may invite others to join in this work of synthesizing and writing.

**The Continental Assembly will be on February 23-27, three full days, 24-26. February 23 is for arrival and February 27 is for departure.** This will be held in Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Centre, in Sampran, Bangkok, Thailand. This will be over a weekend.

It is hoped that Cardinal Grech and Cardinal Hollerich will be able to attend. These dates were chosen after the comments of Cardinal Hollerich. Susan Pascoe attended the Central Committee Meeting that decided on this plan of action after she had spoken to the FABC 50 General Conference. She can hopefully attend. Others like Mauricio Lopez would be welcome too.

This Continental Assembly will be attended by the **FABC Leadership, the Central Committee.** (All of the Presidents of the conferences and synods will attend. This is the FABC Central Committee which also includes one bishop from the three Associate Members.) All of the 9 Bishop Chairmen of the FABC Offices will attend. All of the 9 **Executive Secretaries of the Offices** will attend.

**Each conference or synod will bring two other delegates.** The Task Force will suggest the profile or the categories of the delegates so that there will be a balance of those delegates. Please wait until you hear from the Task Force so that we can have a balanced number of delegates from the different categories of the People of God.



The Task Force might suggest additional people who could also attend the Continental Assembly.

We will explore inviting the Christian Conference of Asia and others of our neighborly religions.

From that Continental Assembly the final response from Asia will be made for the Continental Phase.

### Summary

1. Dioceses/Conferences read and study Document for the Continental Stage starting November 2022.
2. Diocesan/Conference step of the Continental Phase will produce a 10-page in response to the 3 questions on the Document for the Continental Stage.
3. The FABC Conferences and synods will choose two delegates to the Continental Assembly after they receive the suggestion of the Task Force. Date to be determined.
4. On or before 15 January 2023, these 10-page reports or synthesized reflections will be submitted to the FABC Central Secretariat.
5. The FABC Task Force will draft an Asian response that will be distributed on or before 15 February 2023.
6. The Continental Assembly will be on February 23-27, three full days, 24-26. February 23 is for arrival and February 27 is for departure.
7. The FABC Final Document for the Continental Phase will be submitted by 31 March 2023 to the General Secretariat of the Synod.

## Frequently Asked Questions on the Continental Stage

### 1. What is the Continental Stage?

The Continental Stage consists of **a time of listening and discernment of all of the People of God** and of all local Churches **on a continental basis**, leading to a series of continental assemblies. **This does not mean a replication of the consultation, listening and discernment that has already taken place**, which was an invitation to all of the People of God.

This is, rather, a deepening of that discernment process by the people identified to represent the local Churches in the pre-assembly processes prior to each Continental Assembly. It is understood that there will be differences in approach that take account of the established practices, cultural and language elements, geography, and logistics of each continent.

This Continental Stage is marked by the *Document for the Continental Stage (DCS)*, which will be written after careful reflection on the fruits of the first stage from syntheses of all of the Episcopal Conferences of the Universal Church, as well as the Eastern Churches, and groups such as Religious Institutes, Lay Movements and so on. The DCS will be released at the end of October.

### 2. Why was this Stage added?

This Continental Stage is part of this synodal process to emphasise the dialogical movement between the universal Church and the particular Church (cfr. CIC 368; *Communio in Notio* n.7). This process involves a discernment on the main synodal theme "**how**

**we walk together today"** and its priorities are developed in a manner as inclusive as possible. We are convinced that a synodal Church is a Church of local Churches with the vision of a mutual dialogue and connection between the universal Church and the particular Church.

Furthermore, with this stage, we intend to encourage the creation or strengthening of links of neighbouring Churches (cf. *Fratelli Tutti* n.151) because, while it is true that the relationship between the Universal Church and the Particular Church remains fundamental, it has become evident over time that there are dynamics, tensions, challenges and historical-cultural peculiarities specific and traceable at the level of the individual continent and region.

To better grasp the peculiarities of this continental stage, it is important to **move away from a merely temporal and spatial vision** (first a local stage, then the continental stage, the universal stage and finally the local implementation stage), **and adopt the dialogical approach** existing between the Universal Church and the particular Church (the individual Christian communities of a circumscribed territory, led by a bishop, and "in which and from which subsists the one and only Catholic Church" (CIC 368; *Communio Notio* n.7) within a single and unique process that always involves, but in a differentiated manner, the entire People of God.

### 3. When does the Continental Stage start?

In a very general and functional sense, the Continental Stage begins after the local-National Stage, which mainly started last 17th October 2021 and completed last 15th August 2022. However, it is hoped that the worldwide synodal process opened by Pope Francis last 9-10 October 2021 will have a continuity among stages, and a seamless movement from one to the other. There is not an exact

starting date as some regions have already activities planned that dovetail with the Continental Stage. In addition, some dioceses and Episcopal Conferences have heeded the advice of the General Secretariat of the Synod to maintain the people and infrastructure used for the listening and discernment in dioceses, thus already implementing some of the fruits from that listening process,

such as a greater involvement of lay people in parishes. This is now the *modus vivendi* for a synodal Church.

All Continents are urged to ensure they have people and processes in place to plan the steps in the journey toward their regional ecclesial assembly to be completed prior to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023.

### 4. Will there then be five continental meetings?

No. Although referred to as the "Continental Stage", the proposed subdivision does not correspond exactly to the five continents. In fact, it is better to speak of geographical areas generally corresponding to the International Meetings of Episcopal Conferences (called by different names: Council, Federation, Symposium...), which are the ecclesial bodies that group together (generally) the national Episcopal Conferences of a given geographical area.

For this synod, the subdivision decided upon is as follows:

1) That expressed by the 5 International Meetings of Episcopal Conferences (indicated in brackets), corresponding roughly to the five continents: Europe (CCEE), Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM), Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), Asia (FABC) and Oceania (FCBCO).

2) North America (USA+Canada) and the Middle East (which will specifically see the contribution of the Eastern Catholic Churches).

## 5. What is the goal of this Continental Stage?

The intent of the continental stage is to deepen our discernment on what has emerged from the previous stage of local and national listening, with the **aim of formulating open questions more accurately, and to better substantiate and flesh out the insights coming from the local Churches, now at a continental perspective.** The DCS will assist the reflection on what has emerged from the consultation of the People of God in the local Churches around the world. This stage also wants to be an opportunity to listen to those realities on the margins of the Church not integrated in the previous stage. **This stage is not yet the time to suggest answers, nor to decide on courses of action.**

## 6. How does this stage fit into the synodal process?

It is important to understand that synodality was the way of the early Church and consist of a tension and dynamism that belongs to the very identity of the Church, that is, to its very being and acting. As a dynamism of ecclesial life, it is a **learning by doing process.** For this reason, the process of rediscovering this dynamism of ecclesial life, begun in this particular Synod with the diocesan phase, **does not, nor can it, have an end, a limit,** a deadline by which to acquire it or not. Synodality is like communion among people, demanding the daily yes of those involved. In this sense, it is important to note that the current process does not end with the diocesan stage, the continental stage, or the celebration of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. These events are integrated into the ongoing unique dynamic of synodal conversion in the Church. Everyone is called to live this call to synodal conversion every day in their faith experience and to continue the concrete work of listening-discernment according to the guidelines of their respective pastors.

As noted above, this Continental Stage, in particular, is not a stand-alone stage, but is intended to express the continuity between the work of listening-discernment of the local-national level (first stage) and the work of listening-discernment of the next stage, the universal one, constituted by the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

This connection will be ensured by working from a document: the **Document for the Continental Stage**, formerly called *Instrumentum Laboris 1*. This document is **to be understood as the real working resource, which should facilitate the work of dialogue, listening and discernment** at the continental level. This document is the fruit of the discernment of the previous stage (that of the local one) and will be developed from the syntheses received from the local level.

It is important to understand the Document for the Continental Stage, **not as a document to be amended**, corrected or enlarged in view of the universal stage, but as a true guide for an ongoing discernment, fruit of listening to the People of God.

## 7. How and when will these continental meetings take place? How will individual believers be able to participate in them?

The celebration of the Continental Stage is not limited to the celebration of an event, but **is a real process of listening and discernment at the continental level**, on the same and unique question of the synodal process as a whole, namely *How does this "journeying together," which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church ?* (DP No. 2). The only difference lies



in approaching this question with a continental perspective, with respect to the challenges posed to the mission of the Church on a given continent.

This specific process related to the Continental Assemblies begins with the publication of the Document for the Continental Stage, which we expect to be ready by October 2022. This document will be made public and sent to all the bishops of the world. We have the fervent hope that, following the release of the Document for the Continental Stage, the thousands of local groups that were assembled for the local stage will then also extend their reflection on this document to continue deepening themselves in their own local synodal processes with the guidance of their pastor. However, it is important to underline that the main subjects of this pre-assembly process are the people identified to represent local Churches at the Continental Assembly.

In addition, specific continental Task Forces will be or have already been set up to guide the synodal journey within their continent. They will be accompanied by a Task Force of the General Secretariat of the Synod, which has the task of animating the full continental process and of supporting the continental assemblies.

As for the continental assemblies, these will take place **between January and March 2023**. The contributions (through a Final Document) from these 7 processes will have to be submitted **by March 31<sup>st</sup>**.

## 8. Who will participate in the Continental Assemblies?

All Continental Assemblies should be **Ecclesial Assemblies** (of the entire People of God) and not only Episcopal Assemblies (of bishops only). Thus, the participants should adequately represent the variety of the People of God: bishops, priests, deacons, men

and women religious, laymen and laywomen. This is one of the **first fruits of the ongoing synod process**, as it corresponds to the wish of the majority of the Bishops' Conferences consulted on the subject by the General Secretariat of the Synod.

However, the bishops are invited to have their own specific time to meet with one another, most likely at the end of the Continental Assemblies, to collegially reread the synodal experience lived from their own specific charisma and role, especially to recognise the authenticity and freedom of the path taken before the Lord, rather than to correct or add themes and topics.

Finally, because the Continental Assemblies continue the work of listening and discernment of the local phase, they are a good opportunity to listen to those persons or groups that might have been excluded in the previous stage, particularly those living in conditions of poverty and marginalisation (or those who have direct contact with them) to whom the local phase had not been able to listen.

We also hope for the participation of fraternal delegates from other Christian denominations and representatives of other religions and faith traditions, as well as some people with no religious affiliation but aware of the importance of "walking together" also for our societies. The continental task forces might find different ways to ensure a broad participation of the People of God according to their particular realities and possibilities, but always keeping in mind the desire of a broad representation of the diversity of the Church in these Assemblies.

## 9. There is much talk of Bishops' Conferences and International Meetings of Bishops' Conferences, but what is the role of religious congregations, associations and movements that have a continental level or a continental

body?

At this point of the synodal process, some of them are already engaged in implementing internally the fruits of the listening and discernment time of the previous stage. For the continental assemblies, we asked the local Churches to include some of them in their respective delegations.

10. What will happen at the end of this Continental Stage?

The Continental Stage will conclude in each 'continent' with the celebration of the Continental Assemblies and the drafting of a Final Document of the Continental Stage. This document will have to be the fruit of an authentically synodal path, respectful of the synodal process actually carried out, thus reflecting the voice of the People of God within the Continent. More precise instructions on how structure this document will be offered together with the DCS.

The 7 continental documents will be sent, no later than March 31<sup>st</sup>, to the General Secretariat of the Synod and will form the basis of the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

The conclusion of the continental stage does not mean the conclusion of the synodal process of the People of God that began with the consultation of the local phase. Our journeying together can thus become the foundation for how we participate in Church as the whole of the People of God.

98-04-43-04 郵政劃撥儲蓄存款單		◎寄款人請注意背面說明 ◎本收據由電腦印錄請勿填寫			
帳號	19700247	金額 (小寫)	元	拾	元
通訊欄 (限與本次存款有關事項)	爲主教會月誌奉獻	戶名	財團法人天主教會台灣地區主教團		
劃撥款項		姓名	寄款人		
通訊欄	建議:	通訊處	□□□□-□□□□		
		電話	經辦局收款戳		
		存款金額	經辦局收款戳		
		電腦紀錄	經辦局收款戳		
		收款帳號戶名	經辦局收款戳		

虛線內備供機器印錄用請勿填寫

發行所：台灣地區主教團月誌雜誌社

發行人：李克勉

主編：主教團祕書處

地址：台北市安居街39號

郵政劃撥：19700247

戶名：財團法人天主教會台灣地區主教團

電話：(02) 2732-6602

傳真：(02) 2732-8603

Website：www.catholic.org.tw

Email：bishconf@catholic.org.tw

印刷所：至潔有限公司

電話：(02) 2302-6442

出版日期：2023年2月

